



## New Perspectives on China's Evolving Relations with Afghanistan

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### Abstract

*Afghanistan lies within the second and third of four-concentric security circles of China and is very important as the region for stability in the western part of China. The post 9/11 period is marked by the shifts in policies generally by the world and particularly by neighboring countries of Afghanistan: China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, India, and Tajikistan. By reviewing China's non-interventionist policy, the question arises here: what is China's engagement policy towards Afghanistan? The research intends to address the question by analyzing Sino-Afghanistan's economic, diplomatic and security relations. The research finds that China's policy evolves very slowly from calculated indifference to aggressive engagement in Afghanistan.*

**Key Words:** China, Afghanistan, BRI, The New Neighborhood Policy, Afghan Peace Process

### Introduction

International politics isn't a static phenomenon; instead, the most thriving characteristic is the change. Owing to this distinguishing feature, the relation among states has to be varied accordingly. Both internal and external modifications affect states' behavior, reflects in the form of their foreign policies. Therefore, it's a mountainous task to study the state's action, analytically and objectively.

China has maintained a cautious policy towards Afghanistan; a state victim of foreign intervention and domestic violence more than four decades. Changing the nature of the conflict, dynamics of power configuration and evolution of policy response by China have been analyzed in the paper. The Heart of Asia; Afghanistan embraced several internal coup d'états, faced the wrath of the Soviet Union during the cold war and subsequently by world powers. These back-to-back power shows by superpowers had implications for regional security, order and peace. Not only neighboring states had impacts of such major

power shifts but also underwent a policy transformation to respond to this change.

Afghanistan lies within the second and third of four-concentric security circles of China and is very important as the source of stability/instability in the western region of China. However, fewer attempts have been made to explore this western neighbor. China's relations with Afghanistan are historical, and dates back to the ancient times. The 'ancient silk road' had a unique link with Afghanistan through which trade passed out to other parts of Asia. For fluid passage of trade caravans through the area, covering present-day Afghanistan, China's imperial court maintained good relations with the local Afghan royalty. Though some tumultuous moments disrupted diplomatic relations but not to the extent of permanent deadlock.

America invaded Afghanistan with the help of western coalition forces, and the aim was to punish the conspirators of the 9/11 attack. China also supported the international community in condemning the Taliban government after the

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9/11 attack. China actively endorsed the UNO security council resolution 1373 to attack Afghanistan (UNO 2001). However, China refrained from providing logistics and combat troops to the US-led coalition forces against Taliban.

Since 2002, China's foreign policy seems to follow the 'Peripheral Policy' passed by the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress in observance of relationship with other countries. China's foreign policy evolves significantly from very low-level cooperation to active engagement towards Afghanistan (Scoball 2015). China's reconstruction aid in Afghanistan also went up from a very negligible amount. From 2001 to 2012, the Chinese government gave reconstruction aid to Afghanistan that was \$ 250 million (Zhao 2015).

China-Afghanistan began to shape the new friendship based on solid foundations. In 2006, China signed a treaty with Afghanistan known as the "Treaty of Good Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation". In 2012, President Xi announced the new "Neighborhood Policy" which puts more emphasis on active relations with neighbors. By the end of 2015, China's FDI to Afghanistan became one of the main donors (Yao 2016).

China also expanded its security relations with Afghanistan. In July 2016 in the domain of security cooperation, the Chinese government gave Afghanistan security related equipment (Ayaz Gull 2016). Furthermore, China also helped the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF) in training the mountain brigade to fight against terrorism. To make Afghanistan another hub of regional connectivity, China announced to link Afghanistan with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in May 2017. After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan on 30 Aug, 2021, China was the first foreign country to give humanitarian aid to Afghanistan worth \$ 31 million.

China sagaciously follows the policy of friendship and development aid in dealing with Afghanistan and furthering its interests. This study mainly focuses on China's Afghanistan policy since its inception 1949.

### **How will China Seek to Benefit from Afghanistan?**

Sino-Afghan relation dates back to at least two

millennium. The silk road started from China and, ended in Rome. Afghanistan's area falls under the passage of the ancient silk route. Nearly 2000 years ago, Afghan officials contacted the Chinese court and requested formal ties to sort out the bilateral issues (Shen-Yu-Dai 1966). In the coming years, the first Buddhism and then Islam brought the two societies closer.

Moreover, religious dogmas somewhat brought cultural affinity between the two countries. On the base of close historical interactions, the vice president of China Li Keqiang stated that "China and Afghanistan are close neighbor with the long historical course of friendly exchanges. Regarding Afghanistan, a priority in China's neighborhood diplomacy, China is committed to consolidating and developing the China-Afghanistan strategic cooperative partnership and supporting Afghanistan's efforts in safeguarding its national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security" (MOFA China 2016).

It is increasingly evident from the recent unfolding of events that, China values the historical relations with Afghanistan. In the latter half of the 19th century, imperialism came and dismantled the social structure of centuries, and both countries were formally introduced to the demarcation lines. The demarcated border is 76 km long and ending point of the Wakhan corridor.

The Chinese leadership are aware of this historical fact that Afghanistan was being used as a buffer in the geopolitical rivalry of 19th century so to protect its domestic vulnerability, it is pertinent to stop infiltrations into Chinese territory from this border point. Consequently, China pays more heed to border management in Afghanistan. Afghanistan holds the gas reserve of about 5 trillion cubic feet. Given its increasingly expanding economic growth, China needs the energy to feed its industry. And Afghanistan presents the shortest route to transfer power to the interior of China.

So, China is more cautious about the security situation of the country to keep its industry under work. China is also interested in Afghanistan minerals. In 2007, 'Metallurgic Cooperation of China'(MCC) and 'Jiangxi Copper Cooperation'(JCCL) won the bid copper mine project at 'Aynak', the largest investment

in Afghanistan ([Erica 2012](#)). The security concern is also one of the significant reasons that brings China close to Afghanistan. China's foreign policy now embraces a global outlook. Its transcontinental connectivity projects bring different cultures close more than ever.

Afghanistan has a significant abundance of the natural resources such as cobalt, copper, iron ore, gold, silver, molybdenum, fluorspar, beryllium and lithium, these mineral resources are stretched all over the country. The primary resources are iron ore, estimated worth around \$ 421 billion and copper deposit valued around \$ 273 billion. A conservative estimate of Afghanistan's mineral resources is nearly \$ 1 trillion. The New York Times pointed in Afghanistan the largest reserve of lithium that is used for batteries. Therefore, it is called the 'Saudi Arabia of Lithium'. These productive natural mineral resources are the source of attraction for the big powers.

It is estimated that there are five essential sites of oil reserves in Afghanistan; Amu Darya basin is considered the 15th largest oil reserve in the world that is situated in the north and the northwest of Afghanistan, the Afghan-Tajik crude oil zone is the oil reserve in the north and the northeast of Afghanistan, the Herat oil field is in the western Herat province of Afghanistan, the Katawaz oil zone is located in the southeastern part of Afghanistan and Helmand crude oil zone is situated in the southern desert of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's natural gas reserve is also substantial. It is estimated that Afghanistan's gas reserves are around 5 trillion cubic feet. The trans-Afghan gas and oil pipelines also signify the importance of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the neighbor of central Asian states; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan that form the eastern side of Caspian basin full of natural gas and is often dubbed as 'floating hydrocarbons'. TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan India) gas pipeline project that was contemplated from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan, ends at India. This \$ 8 billion project needs stable political Afghanistan.

China promised to expand the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan in 2017; linking it with Kunduz and Central Asia ([VOA Learning English 2017](#)). So,

internal and external security for their projects is the ultimate imperative for China. After the US-led troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, China is too much cautious about the deteriorating security situation and is ready to bring peace by mediating among different Afghan factions.

### China's Afghanistan Policy Since 1949

The People Republic of China established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in 1955. It took five more years, since the closure of the Guomindang mission in Kabul, to restore full diplomatic ties. It was evident from the delay that neither side had genuine interests in restoring the bilateral relations. China preferred Pakistan in the region, and that deterred further development in the Sino-Afghan relationships ([VOA Learning English 2017](#)). The Chinese premier met with Afghanistan king Zahir Shah and Prime Minister Muhammad Daud on 1957. Further, in the same year, on the Chinese government invitation Muhammad Daud visited China ([Hizbullah Khan 2019](#)). In Zhou Enlai's visit in 1957, both sides did a complete discussion on the bilateral cooperation.

China assured economic assistance to Afghanistan. Also, a comprehensive roadmap was prepared for the future financial and technical assistance. To fill the communication gap between the two countries, China agreed to send the students to Afghanistan for learning the Persian language, and it was also planned to send the Afghan students to China. And Prime Minister Daud also thanked Zhou Enlai for showing sympathy to Pakhtoonistan issue (Wilson Center 2019). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British government in India feared Czarist Russia territorial expansion in India. British sought a buffer between India and Russia and subsequently, that was restricted by accepting Afghan sovereignty on the Wakhan corridor. The boundary was carefully carved out between Russia and Afghanistan, but the Afghan border with China remained delimited.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese communist party, however, undertook a program to delineate its boundaries with its small neighbors like Nepal, Burma, Mongolia and Pakistan. The Afghan-China boundary agreement was signed on November 22, 1963

(Wilson Center 2019). The contracting parties also agreed, even after the formal delimitation of the boundary, on 'friendly consultation' in case of later boundary disputes.

So, 'boundary agreement' was a tremendous positive impetus in the Sino-Afghanistan bilateral relations. Until in the late 70s, China did not perceive Afghanistan as a threat. Early on, Afghanistan refused to allow its territory for anti-Chinese activities until the coup d'état of 1978. The new government condemned China for establishing relations with the USA and sending a military expedition to Vietnam and arming the Mujahidin. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan added fuel to the fire and ultimately enhancing the threat perception of China (Starr 2015).

On December 27, 1979, Russia deployed troops in Afghanistan under the pretext of protecting its allied pro-communist regime of Babrek Karmal under Brezhnev doctrine. Immediately after the attack, the Chinese government condemned it by proclaiming it Russian invasion of Afghanistan. China-backed off the formal relations with the newly installed communist government by degrading its embassy to just representative office.

This was the transition period in the Chinese foreign policy. It was not until Moscow invaded Afghanistan and, China, for the first time, shifted its military assistance, not to the Afghan government but the Afghan Mujahedin. The Chinese response to these happenings was abrupt and conclusive. China began to train the Afghan Mujahedeen and, pouring into Afghanistan millions of dollars. That was the time when China also received US military aid given fighting with USSR and Afghanistan communists (Girard 2018).

Even Chinese efforts went beyond this; China tried to foster the international environment, particularly in Asia, antagonistic to the Russian's expansion and the hegemonic designs. China also provided diplomatic and material assistance to its ally Pakistan to counter the Soviet encirclement of China (Hilali 2010). To circumvent Pakistan's restrictions on weapon supplies, China itself established links with the various Afghan warring factions.

China established relations with the 'Tajik Northern Alliance' and supplied it with ammunition and other war materials

(Mulvenon 2013). After withdrawal from Afghanistan, the security circumstances once again compelled China to reconsider it seriously. However, this time, China did not favor any particular Mujahedeen group. Even China didn't fully back the governments of Muhammad Najibullah Ahmadzai and Burhanuddin Rabbani, despite their repeated calls for help. According to a scholar, "for most of the 90s, China was officially absent from Kabul. The only remnants of its presence were three Afghan employees" (People's Daily 2017).

At this time, the most apparent necessity to think towards Afghanistan was not Russia, but under the threat of the Uighur militants, opium and extremism (Mulvenon 2013). After the Soviet withdrawal, Afghanistan lost its political stability and Najibullah could not stand before the surging pressure of the Afghan Mujahidin. He lost his government to 'a coalition of Mujahidin' and ultimately the Taliban came into power in 1996.

### **Beijing's Reluctant Taliban Embrace**

The relations between the Taliban and China became tense and ended with sharp cut-off. China formally cut off the diplomatic relations with the Taliban Afghanistan (1996-2001). However, it consistently maintained its back-channel engagement with the Taliban, with the notion of, curbing safe havens for 'the East Turkistan Islamic Movement'(ETIM). This militant Islamic organization, based in China's Xinjiang province, holds views about its liberation from China. And almost immediately after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, it established bases in Afghanistan in 1990 (Small 2015). The ETIM was not the only problem for China; there were other Central Asian militant organizations, notably the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which moral and material support would later prove necessary to the very survival of the group (Small 2015).

Immediately after the Taliban assumed power in Kabul in 1996, the new Taliban administration provided sanctuaries to the ETIM and other Central Asia militant organizations. China also endorsed the international sanctions on the Taliban, following the attacks on the US embassy in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam (UN News Centre 2004). However, worsening security matters

forced China to have necessary contacts with the Taliban. In 2000, a much lower-level diplomat 'Sun Guoxiang' and the Taliban ambassador in Pakistan, Syed Muhammad Haqqani, met in Islamabad and the Taliban ambassador assured China of help: "some foreign enemies of the people of Afghanistan and vested interests are bent upon creating misunderstanding and differences between the two friendly countries by levelling false and baseless allegations" (Garver 2002).

Lu Shulin, China's ambassador in Pakistan, sent an official request to the Afghanistan ambassador in Islamabad for a meeting with the reclusive Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Umar, that was subsequently granted to have a meeting in Kandahar. Mullah Muhammad Umar assured the Chinese delegation that "Afghanistan never had any interest or wished to interfere in China's domestic issues and affairs, nor would Afghanistan allow any group to use its territory to conduct any such operations or support one to that end" (Zaif 2010).

Relations again experienced a setback at the Bamyan incident. However, both parties again were picking momentum. A Chinese delegation went to Afghanistan to ink an MOU with the Taliban on economic and technical cooperation, which was signed by Mullah Issa Akhund on the 11 September 2001 (Pomfret 2001).

### China and Afghanistan's War on Terror

China condemned the terrorist attacks on the USA and fully supported the US-led initiative to wipe out the terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan. The United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 that fully endorsed the US actions in Afghanistan, China favored this resolution by not using veto power. Immediately after the 9/11 attack, China offered mine-sweepers and intelligence information, as the USA prepared to invade Afghanistan. China allowed the FBI office to be established in Beijing (FBI Office 2002). Also, China shared terrorist financing intelligence (Swaine 2011). China's foreign policy principles 'the non-interference' and military non-engagement abroad; however, barred its leadership from attaching with the US-led military alliance. China didn't allow NATO and the ISAF to use

the Chinese territory and air space (Ludwig 2013).

In Afghanistan, during the early relative peaceful period after the invasion, China picked up, where it left off deal with the Taliban. The ZTE and Huawei, partnership with the Afghan government, (ECFR 2008) returned and established 200000 subscribe lines for the country. A Chinese railway group Shisiju won the contract of \$ 30.6 million to build the line from Kabul to Jalalabad (Cronin 2003). China also built hospitals in Kabul (China Daily 2002) and Kandahar (Afghan Voice Agency 2013). China also made 'Parwan irrigation' project that also boosted the farming in Afghanistan (Xinhua 2012). This came as a turning point for international investment in Afghanistan.

In this 2006 visit of President Karzai, there were many bilateral agreements signed. China announced Continuous support for the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and also granted 80 million RMB immediately. Applicable from 1 July 2006, China gave zero-tariff to 278 Afghan items to export to China. From 2007 to onward, the China government announces 30 scholarships for Afghan students every year. And also took the responsibility of training 200 Afghan professionals because of the consolidating national reconstruction.

Moreover, Afghanistan reiterated its full support for 'One China' policy. China also appreciated Afghanistan in consolidating the regional cooperation under the Shanghai cooperation in the context of 'Contact group Protocol' (MOFA China 2006). And China state-owned enterprise China Metallurgic Company, in 2007, won the bid of \$ 4.4 billion to excavate the Cooper in Ayank mines. Out-circling the other western companies, this is the ever most substantial investment in the history of Afghanistan. This mine would generate the \$ 400 million tax per annum for the Afghan government (Ludwig 2013).

These high-level investments intend to bring immense opportunities in employment, energy generation, and infrastructure development. Further, these investments also spread the right message of Afghanistan in the international community. There are also bilateral high-level diplomatic exchanges between two countries after the formal relations started:

- President Hamid Karzai visited China in 2002. This visit was extraordinary in a sense that, it was the first visit of Afghan head of state after 1964 ([Xu Wei 2019](#)). President Karzai paid his second visit to China in 2006. President Karzai also visited China in 2010.
- Wang Yi, deputy minister of foreign affairs, inaugurated the Chinese embassy in Afghanistan in 2002 ([Sehar Shabir 2018](#)).
- In 2005, Li Zhaoxing, the Chinese Foreign minister, visited Afghanistan. He met with the Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Both discussed the ongoing Afghan reconstruction and peace process (MOFA China 2004).
- In 2006, a Chinese delegation visited Afghanistan and officially reopened its embassy.
- Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited Afghanistan in 2007.
- Wang Yi visited Kabul in 2014.
- In 2017, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi visited Afghanistan as the first-ever attempt to ease the tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Ismail 2018).

### **China's New Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan**

China policy towards Afghanistan observes many vicissitudes but, slowly and surely, leads to more engagement and active participation. After the demise of the Taliban, it participated in no small extent in Afghan affairs, unprecedented in its previous diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan. Still, after 2009, even more, a gradual but robust surge of different activities with Afghanistan was observed. In 2009, President Obama also requested the neighboring countries of Afghanistan, including China, to work for ([Obama 2009](#)) its peace and stability. According to a scholar, China's foreign policy towards Afghanistan is very intertwined with the American plans in Afghanistan ([Sehar 2018](#)). In 2009, the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, starting from 2011 that was the real challenge for neighboring countries, including China ([Obama 2009](#)).

China possibly faces two main concerns from this situation: one, the precarious regional

security situation that would likely impact the neighboring countries. Second, the geopolitical void that may imperil the parochial interests of China. According to a scholar, China fears a US-India alliance in the region that is not good for the broader Chinese economic and geopolitical interests ([Torjesen, Stankovic 2010](#)). The other factor that spurred the Chinese engagement with Afghanistan was the changing perception of Chinese leadership since 2013. The policies were more based on multilateralism, support for international law and, aggressive pursuit in foreign policy. Despite the fact, China is a highly regarded country because of its 'non-interference' approach in the internal affairs of other countries. Still, China's increasing economic engagement not only brings benefits to it but also pressure and the brutal attacks.

The first such incident was reported in 2004, in Kunduz Northern Afghanistan, 11 Chinese workers were mercilessly killed the day after following their arrival in Afghanistan. Chinese authorities requested the UNO to investigate their murderers. The Mes Ayank Copper Mine, managed by two Chinese companies under a consortium MCC-JCL Ayank mineral, in 2008 and 2012, also attacked by the militants that caused a considerable delay and fear among the workers ([Amin 2017](#)). The dominant anxiety in Beijing remains that greater Central Asia and Afghanistan could be used to foment unrest in the Xinjian Uyghur autonomous region and these fears have even seized the firm ground with the escalating radicalization in Central Asia.

On Aug 30 2016, a suicide bomber struck the gate of the Chinese embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in Central Asia. This attack surprised China because the attack on Chinese foreign mission abroad is practically a non-existence phenomenon. Later, even more, appalling for Chinese was the link of this attack to a renowned militant organization working in Syria Al-Nusrat front ([Kemel 2018](#)). The Domestic unrest in Xinjian coincides well with the foreign terrorist organizations and, in recent years, their link has grown deeper. In 2014, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi vowed that he would liberate those who were being suppressed by the Chinese authorities. In the late Feb 2017, the terrorist organization Islamic State released a video in which they

purportedly aired some Uighur militants training camps.

Riddled with the expanding Islamic radicalization, there are five immediate muslim neighbors of China, among them, particularly Afghanistan, have been a continuous source of tension for its domestic security and foreign economic ventures. So, more than ever, the Chinese are ready to assume this responsibility. With the help of China, Afghanistan also got the observer status in SCO.

President Hu made 5 points proposals to deepen the political relations and assured President Karzai of, Chinese companies would invest in Afghanistan (Xinhua 2012). In 2014, many Chinese high-level officials visited Afghanistan. They discussed the security-related matters: the minister of public Security and state councilor Guo Shengkun visited in November and talked the extremism problem and, in the same month, Deputy Chief of Staff PLA Qi Jianguo met with Afghan President as a special envoy of the president of China. This high-level official visit shows China growing interests in Afghanistan ([Huasheng 2016](#)). In 2014, President Ashraf Ghani, on his first visit abroad after the inauguration, met with President Xi and vowed to enhance the bilateral cooperation to fight against the militant organizations such as ETIM. China approved \$ 310 million in aid in the next three years and would train 3000 Afghan professional in the next five years (The Straits Times 2014).

China, since 2001 until 2013, only provided \$ 250 million in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan but only in 2014, it offered a total \$ 330 million in funding that is to be distributed in next three years ([Huasheng 2016](#)). In 2014, Wang Yi, Chinese foreign minister also visited Afghanistan. In the next year 2015, the Chinese vice president, Li Yuanchao, visited Kabul. He said that China would play a hugely commercial role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. He also announced \$ 79 million funds for building 10000 houses in Kabul. He also discussed ways to eliminate the ominous phenomenon that is hindering the Afghan stability ([Michael, Harooni 2015](#)). In 2016, in Amritsar India, the Heart of Asia conference was organized to promote peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. China also participated and played a leading role in it. Before the

initiation of this conference, in the same year, China also delivered its first military aid to Afghanistan.

In April of the same year, President Hamid Karzai National Security advisor, Muhammad Hanif Atmar, visited China and warmly received by Chinese authorities (The Pakistan Today 2016). On September 7, 2016, the first freight train from east China's Jiangsu province, reached at northern rail port Hairatan, in Balkh province, Afghanistan. Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan also attended the ceremony. This freight will bring Chinese mechanical hardware, IT products and clothes to Afghanistan and return with marble, saffron, dry fruits and carpets.

This train would also decrease the Afghanistan dependency on Pakistan ports. (Railway Gazette International 2016). China also planned five nations railway project passing through Afghanistan. Another is the North-South railway corridor that will connect Kunduz to Torkham on Pakistan side ([Rupert Stone 2019](#)). On Dec 26, 2017, Chinese, Pakistan and Afghan's foreign minister discussed the extension of CPEC to Afghanistan. CPEC, Wang Yi explained, would inject 'fresh vitality' not only to the economic life of Afghanistan but also to the local commercial life. And will help shape the new type of international relations based on economic cooperation (MOFA China 2017). In May 2017, Afghan delegation also attended the 'Belt and Road Forum' in China. And in the same year on Oct 2017, Afghanistan joined the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank ([Rupert Stone 2019](#)).

In September 2015, President Xi gave a speech on gender equality and women empowerment at the Global Leader's meeting in UN headquarter. And invited 30000 women from all over the world, mainly from developing countries to participate in the training programs in China. Under this program, over the past four years, 290 women have been invited to Afghanistan for training. China is also giving scholarship to 15 Afghan girls under the Chinese Government Scholarship. A primary girl school was also started in Mazar e Sharif by the Chinese government. Afghan women, martial art team was also invited to China for the tournament. A woman training programs also started in

Zebak. Afghan women were also invited to participate in the SCO women forum (MOFA 2019). In December 2017, China promised to donate \$ 85 million to the Afghan army to set up a mountainous brigade for the protection of the Badakhshan border. This mountainous brigade would not only help Afghanistan but also to China to fight with surging terrorism in the northern Afghanistan (Ariana News 2017).

In Feb 2018, China appointed a very astute diplomat as envoy in Afghanistan. Liu Jinsong is the crucial member of President Xi economic team. He also worked in the critical diplomatic post in India. Before coming to as the new China envoy in Afghanistan, he worked as a director in 'Silk Road Fund' that is poised to facilitate the investment in Africa and Asia with total \$ 15.88 billion funds. He is the combination of both diplomatic and economic expertise ([Teddy, Zhou 2018](#)).

Recently, China has engaged more closely to Pakistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan on border security. In Aug 2018, the South China Morning Post reported that China is building a military base in Afghanistan near to restive border of Xinjiang. It also claimed that China would send the troops to be stationed there after its completion ([Minnie Chan 2019](#)). Both the Afghan and China higher officials denied this report. However, China foreign ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, said, "We have checked on this report, and it is not true" (MOFA China 2018). Even the China Defense ministry officials also denied the report by saying it contrary to the facts. The Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Wu said, "the statement is simply not true" ([John Hayward 2018](#)). In 2021, after the withdrawal of the US-led forces, China promised to give \$ 31 million humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the geopolitical significance of Afghanistan, the politics of great powers have always been a much-debated topic among scholars. Being located at the heart of Asia, Afghanistan's position arguably influences the trade arteries in the whole of Asia. To respond to the emerging political situation, China enhanced bilateral engagement with Afghanistan.

The scholars have diverse opinions about the active re-engagement of China towards Afghanistan. The study concludes that China's re-engagement towards Afghanistan, includes many factors as the precursor. So, the course will help us understand the Chinese perspective on Afghanistan. After the fall of the Taliban government, the Chinese foreign policy underwent many progressive changes. Although China assisted the international community in the Afghan crisis, it remained not as much vigorous in the areas which concern public welfare such as infrastructure investment, humanitarian aid, institution building, security affairs and the Afghan peace process.

First, the power vacuum, after the US withdrawal, would have severe security repercussions for the western part of China. Xinjiang region is susceptible, due to the possible spillover effects of militancy from Afghanistan. Therefore, the post-withdrawal power vacuum, which requires the Chinese government to enhance contacts with the Afghan elite and various stakeholders.

Second, China aspires many economic interests in Afghanistan. China state-owned enterprises invest in the mining sector in Afghanistan, which is the most significant investment ever made in Afghanistan. China also discussed to link the CPEC with Afghanistan in May 2017. This linkage could make Afghanistan another hub of Asian trade.

Third, President Xi's dream of 'Rejuvenation of a Great Nation', the 'Harmonious World and the 'Peaceful Rise' which intended to give a global dimension to the Chinese foreign policy. China restructured its foreign policy on the slogan of win-win cooperation. Chinese government's new 'Neighborhood Policy' puts more emphasis on active engagement with neighbors on the base of self-respect and mutual interests.

So, domestic political factors also fit as the intervening variables. Fourth, the US-led troop's withdrawal would likely create a power vacuum in Afghanistan. As like China, India involves in a wide range of activities in Afghanistan, including Afghan Peace Process, infrastructure development, dam's construction, training of professionals, scholarships for Afghan students.

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