

Challenges and Opportunities for Integrating into the Belt and Road Initiative After the Changes in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, Afghanistan has been willing to join. However, due to the political instability in Afghanistan and the worrying domestic security environment, China has not officially responded to Afghanistan's accession to the Belt and Road Initiative. In 2021, the Afghan Taliban announced that they would take control of state power and form a new government, and although Afghanistan still faces many challenges, there is a trend of improvement. The first part of this paper discusses the significance of Afghanistan's accession to the Belt and Road, and then the second part discusses the challenges of integrating into the Belt and Road Initiative after the changes in Afghanistan and some urgent issues that need to be solved. Then discuss the opportunities faced by joining the "Belt and Road" initiative after the changes in Afghanistan, and what are the benefits for achieving domestic development and strengthening cooperation with other countries. Finally, certain policy suggestions are given.

Keywords: Afghanistan, The Belt and Road Initiative

1. Introduction

As one of the first countries to respond to the Belt and Road Initiative, Afghanistan should have joined the Belt and Road family as soon as possible, but due to decades of war and the unstable domestic political situation, its official accession has not been conclusive. Since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 2021, its domestic political situation has been temporarily stable, and economic and social reconstruction needs to be urgently put on the agenda. This article discusses the new changes in this landmark event and some long-standing problems, and analyzes the challenges and opportunities that Afghanistan will face after the changes to integrate into the "Belt and Road" initiative.

2. The Significance of Afghanistan's Accession to the Belt and Road

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the "Belt and Road" initiative, which was warmly welcomed and supported by relevant countries along the Belt and Road, and it is a win-win choice for China and relevant countries along the Belt and Road. The "Belt and Road" originated in China, but belongs to the world. The Belt and Road Initiative is not a "small circle" that belongs only to China, it is a bridge connecting countries and a cooperation platform that provides development opportunities at the national level. We are good at seizing opportunities for cooperation and creating opportunities for common win-win results, which will surely enable both sides to achieve a win-win situation and carry out a larger range of cooperation and higher level of development.

As an important hub region on the ancient Silk Road, Afghanistan became one of the first countries to actively respond to the cooperation concept of the "Belt and Road" initiative. Afghanistan has been turbulent and rarely peaceful since the 19th century. After experiencing drastic changes in the international landscape, the situation facing Central Asia and Afghanistan has become more complex. Since the beginning of the new century, the

United States and Russia have also intensified regional competition, increasing regional instability. In August 2021, the Afghan Taliban declared that they had taken control of the state and formed a new government. The change in identity has brought some uncertainty to Afghanistan's domestic development. For the people who have been affected by the war, on the premise of ensuring safety, improving the living environment and resuming economic and social reconstruction as soon as possible is the top priority. The Belt and Road Initiative itself has this attribute. Afghanistan's recognition and demand for the Belt and Road Initiative stems from its urgent need for domestic economic development and its positive attitude towards opening up. In recent years, the Afghan economy has faced many challenges, including poor security environment required for project construction, weak infrastructure, and prominent poverty in people's livelihood. The Belt and Road Initiative aims to promote economic cooperation and connectivity among countries along the route, providing Afghanistan with rare development opportunities. Specifically, the Belt and Road Initiative will provide Afghanistan with broad space and opportunities for cooperation. By participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, Afghanistan can strengthen economic and trade cooperation with neighboring countries, promote infrastructure construction, and improve connectivity. At the same time, the Belt and Road Initiative can also bring more investment and technical support to Afghanistan to promote industrial upgrading and economic development.

Afghanistan's integration into the Belt and Road Initiative can play an important strategic role in successfully connecting Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia, and the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan will help the reconciliation process between Afghanistan and Pakistan after the Taliban government in Afghanistan, promote domestic social reconstruction and economic development. Afghanistan is also rich in natural resources and human resources, and the huge development potential of these resources provides a wide space for investors. At the same time, for China, Afghanistan's accession to the Belt and Road Initiative is also of considerable strategic significance. Currently, China's exchanges with Europe, the Middle East and North Africa mainly rely on sea freight. However, although the cost of sea freight is low, it has the disadvantages of long cycles and easy interference. Therefore, China urgently needs to find more stable and safer transportation routes. If the railway can be built in cooperation with Afghanistan through the "Belt and Road" framework, it will greatly shorten the transportation distance and time between China and Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. It will not only drive the economic development of cities along the way, but also bring unprecedented strategic advantages to China.

3. Challenges in Integrating into the Belt and Road Initiative After the Changes in Afghanistan

3.1 *The Legitimacy of the Regime and the Domestic Security Situation*

The security challenges facing Afghanistan are complex and multiple, with issues such as regime legitimacy and the threat of domestic and foreign terrorism affecting the security situation in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, the domestic security environment has improved to a certain extent compared to the past. In order to gain the international community's recognition of the legitimacy of its regime, the Afghan Taliban has also continued to engage in diplomatic interaction. In terms of its effectiveness, although the violence has decreased to a certain extent, the overall security situation in Afghanistan has not improved significantly. At this stage, the outstanding security challenges in Afghanistan mainly come from the Khorasan branch of the Islamic State in Afghanistan and the possible armed resistance launched by former government forces.

The first is the legitimacy of the Taliban regime. Although the Afghan Taliban came to power and established a new Afghan government, the new regime is currently the only country in the international community that has recognized its legitimacy on July 3, 2025.¹ In addition, some countries, including China, have not recognized the legitimacy of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, but have cooperation with it in various fields. Local practice on August 20, 2025, Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited Afghanistan on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Argentina, and in Kabul, he and Afghan Foreign Minister Mutaki focused on "economy-centered", inherited China-Arab friendship, deepened political mutual trust, strengthened exchanges and cooperation between the two sides in the fields of economy and trade, agriculture, poverty alleviation, water conservancy, connectivity, and people-to-people, so that the tree of China-Arab friendship continued to thrive and better benefit the two countries and their peoples. Friendly talks were held to make new contributions to regional peace, stability and development.² Since the Afghan Taliban was previously targeted by other countries and regions as a terrorist organization, a change in its identity after coming to power, from

¹ Ding Xinting, Zhu Yueyao. (2025). Why did Russia take the lead in recognizing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan? *China Academy of Contemporary International Relations*, (07), 17.

² Minister of Foreign Affairs. (2025). Wang Yi holds talks with Afghan Foreign Minister Muttaqi. (2025-08-20) [2025-12-17]. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjzbzd/202508/t20250820_11693118.shtml.

illegal to legal, is a big challenge for the people of Afghanistan and neighboring countries. As a government once elected by the people, the former Afghan government may directly challenge the legitimacy of the Atta government, and most of the leaders of the previous government are no longer in Afghanistan, and they remotely command relevant armed forces to resist the Atta regime, causing a certain reduction in personnel to the Atta army, such as the “National Resistance Front” led by Masood Jr. is the main force of the former government’s armed forces. ¹At present, Afghanistan has also been engaged in ongoing diplomatic interaction. It is hoped that through friendly interaction with other countries, the new government will show its attitude, make some practical and effective actions to gain the recognition of the international community, and win international assistance to restore and develop the domestic economy and protect people’s livelihood. For example, the Afghan Taliban has expressed its willingness to make Afghanistan a drug-free country after coming to power, because it will help the Taliban gain recognition from the international community and create a favorable external international environment for it to firmly hold state power.²

In addition, Afghanistan’s internal security issues also need to be paid attention to, and terrorism remains a major factor affecting its internal security and stability. On August 24, 2021, local time, Afghan Taliban spokesman Mujahid held his second press conference at the Kabul Media Center. He stressed that no terrorist organization, including Al-Qaida, should use Afghan territory to carry out terrorist activities or activities against neighbouring countries. ³By 2025, there will still be many contradictions within the Taliban. In March this year, the Haqqani faction warned Taliban leader Akhundzada to his face, saying that his “authoritarian rule is alienating allies.” After the Afghan Taliban seized power in the country, a prominent security challenge was the Islamic State. Its Khorasan branch in Afghanistan is on the opposite side of Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, a confrontation with Afghanistan was formed. The Islamic State Khorasan branch does not recognize the real results of the Afghan Taliban’s rise to power and believes that the Afghan Taliban are merely compromising with the United States. In August, the Khorasan branch also launched a terrorist attack on the Kabul airport, resulting in hundreds of casualties, which led to dissatisfaction among the Afghan people with the Taliban. The following month, the Taliban announced a crackdown on Islamic State terrorists. According to a news report by the Observer Network on October 4, 2021, the Taliban raided the stronghold of the extremist group “Islamic State” in Kabul on the evening of October 3, local time and cleaned up its members. Judging from the current complex situation within the Afghan state, in order to maintain social order and stability in Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban must draw a clear line with terrorist organizations, which should be the most direct reason for Atta’s attack on ISIS.⁴

3.2 Afghanistan’s Livelihood Problems Need to Be Solved Urgently, and the Domestic Infrastructure Construction Is Not Perfect

Due to long-term armed confrontation and violent conflict, Afghanistan’s domestic infrastructure is imperfect and people’s livelihood problems need to be solved urgently, so that investors lack confidence in carrying out projects in Afghanistan. For a country that has been suffering from war for a long time and its domestic undertakings are in ruins, it is important to achieve a smooth transition and social reconstruction in Afghanistan. Afghanistan should improve infrastructure construction and form a convenient transportation network as soon as possible, and at the same time focus on solving domestic livelihood problems. Under the premise of ensuring Afghanistan’s internal security, the whole country should focus on economic development and alleviate investors’ concerns about projects in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan still faces the world’s largest humanitarian crisis, with a total of 14.8 million Afghans currently assessed as at IPC level 3 (crisis) and above levels of severe food insecurity, according to official World Food Program figures. Of the 14.8 million Afghans, 3.1 million are in the more critical IPC Level 4 (state of emergency), meaning they do not have access to adequate food and will face serious hardship or even deterioration in their livelihoods, livelihoods or nutritional status without humanitarian assistance. In 2024, the World Food Programme provided life-saving food, nutrition and livelihood support to 11.8 million people, including half of them women and girls, totaling more than 319,000 tonnes of food and 1\$4.9 billion in cash

¹ The then First Vice President of Afghanistan, Saleh and Ahmed Massoud (“Little Masood”), formed an anti-Tajikistan armed force. “Little Massoud” is the son of Ahmad Shah Massoud, a prominent Afghan national resistance leader.

² Wang Shida. (2022). The Great Changes in Afghanistan: The Evolution of Geopolitical and Security Pattern. *Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies*, (01), 17-31+154-155.

³ World Wide Web. Taliban’s second press conference: No request to postpone withdrawal. (2021-08-24) [2024-05-15]. <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/44ULiu7mHvU>.

⁴ Observer.com. Afghan Taliban raid extremist group “Islamic State” members in Kabul hideout. (2021-10-04) [2024-05-15]. https://www.guancha.cn/international/2021_10_04_609612.shtml.

assistance.¹ At the same time, due to natural disasters, such as the strong earthquake in Afghanistan on September 4, heavy casualties and property damage were caused. At the request of the Afghan side, the Chinese government decided to provide Afghanistan with 50 million yuan of emergency humanitarian assistance for earthquake relief, mainly including tents, blankets, food and other urgently needed supplies in the disaster area.² In addition, people in parts of Afghanistan still do not have access to a continuous power supply. These objective infrastructure conditions limit Afghanistan's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. The protracted war has led to serious dangers to Afghanistan's energy supply, with power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure destroyed in most countries. According to Xinhuanet news reports on October 24, 2021, an explosion occurred in a transmission tower northwest of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, causing power outages in the capital and surrounding areas.³ Afghanistan's electricity production increased from 972.27 GWh in 2023 to 1530.69 GWh in 2024. Afghanistan's electricity production averaged 1,033.49 GWh from 2008 to 2024, reaching an all-time high of 1,530.69 GWh in 2024 and an all-time low of 827.10 GWh in 2008. The domestic growth rate is good, but there is still a huge gap compared with other countries in the world. Currently, Afghanistan's domestic electricity supply is mainly dependent on electricity imports from neighboring countries, and the operation of reliable local power generation projects as soon as possible is crucial for the country's economic growth. As a landlocked country with no access to the sea, Afghanistan mainly relies on roads and air for transportation, with about 44,000 kilometers of roads in Afghanistan as of 2018.⁴ The number of railway lines in Afghanistan is even more difficult, and at the same time, in the process of building new railways, it is also necessary to consider the problem of matching the track distance with different neighboring countries. But Afghanistan faces serious challenges in the aviation and road sectors, with largely no railway resources. The lack of sectoral planning, including plans to develop, maintain, and govern viable transportation infrastructure, limits the exploitation of some mineral deposits, such as its vast oil and gas reserves and other resources. Due to the low quality of existing roads and railways and the underdeveloped transportation network, Afghanistan's domestic economic development has been hindered.⁵

The main goal of Afghanistan's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative is to promote domestic social reconstruction, give full play to its strategic location advantages, and promote economic development. However, due to inadequate domestic infrastructure and livelihood issues, Afghanistan is still facing many difficulties in achieving this goal.

3.3 Great Power Game

At present, it is the United States and India that affect the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative in Afghanistan. Among them, India is worried that due to the complex problems on the border between China and India, China may use the Belt and Road Initiative to infringe on its related interests. At the same time, due to the different strategic perceptions of India and China, India does not see the Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity, but as a challenge that threatens its position. The Indian government's anxiety about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through the controversial Kashmir region also reflects its anxiety about the Belt and Road Initiative to some extent.

From the perspective of the United States, as the world's largest power, the United States has always had a clear negative attitude since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, and has constantly smeared the Belt and Road Initiative in various public places. Because it does not want to see China strengthen cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road in various fields through the Belt and Road Initiative, thereby increasing China's own international influence and weakening the strategic position of the United States. Both the Trump administration and the Biden administration regard China as a strong strategic competitor of the United States, and the Biden administration regards China as a "prominent competitor", which has led to a more severe situation in the great power game in the relevant regions. The United States interfered with China's Belt and Road construction process in Central Asia, and joined forces with Japan, India, Australia and other countries to form a suppression

¹ World Food Programme. (2025). Afghanistan. (2025-03-27) [2025-12-17]. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/annual-country-reports-afghanistan>

² China Belt and Road Network. (2025). China International Development Cooperation Agency: China provides emergency humanitarian assistance for earthquake relief to Afghanistan. (2025-09-04) [2025-12-17]. <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/00MH75AN.html>

³ Xinhuanet. (2021). Power outage in Afghan capital following transmission tower explosion; "Islamic State" claims responsibility. (2021-10-24) [2024-05-15]. <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/44ULiu7mHvU>.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2025). Wang Yi visited Afghanistan and attended the Sixth Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue between China, Afghanistan and Pakistan. (2025-08-20) [2025-12-17] https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202508/t20250820_11693118.shtml.

⁵ "Sector Assessment (Summary): Energy," Asian Development Bank, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/46392-001-ssa.pdf>.

of the Belt and Road.

4. Opportunities for Integrating into the Belt and Road Initiative After the Changes in Afghanistan

4.1 Take the Opportunity of Joining the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

As an open and inclusive cooperation initiative, China and Pakistan hope to promote extensive participation and in-depth exploration by third parties. At present, third-party participation in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is mainly divided into the following two forms. The first is third-party market cooperation under the framework of the CPEC, and the other is to extend the CPEC to third countries. Afghanistan's accession to the CPEC is mainly the second way. The governments of China and Pakistan have publicly stated on many occasions that they are willing to work with the Afghan side. Follow the principle of mutual benefit and win-win results, and actively promote the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan in an appropriate way.¹

According to the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on May 21, 2025, Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs, presided over an informal meeting between the foreign ministers of China, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Zhu Yongbiao, director of the Afghan Research Center of Lanzhou University, said in an interview with the Global Times on the 20th that the tripartite foreign ministers' meeting is not only a routine arrangement, but also has special significance. On the one hand, the mechanism of the China-Pakistan Tripartite Foreign Ministers' Meeting has been in operation for many years; On the other hand, this is the first meeting of the mechanism in Afghanistan since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, coinciding with the eve of the SCO Tianjin summit, and the recent improvement in Pakistani-Arab relations — in this process, China has played an active role in promoting the easing of relations between the two sides. "Therefore, this meeting is both a continuation and a new starting point." On August 20, 2025, local time, Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs, went to Kabul to attend the sixth China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue. ²The three sides reaffirmed their support for Afghanistan to fully tap its potential as a regional connectivity hub and will promote trilateral cooperation between China, Arabs and Pakistan under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative to promote the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan. ³In 2021, less than a month after the Afghan Taliban seized power, they made a public statement clearly stating their desire to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. After that, the Afghan Taliban put forward the hope of joining the Belt and Road Initiative, but the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded at that time that the situation in Afghanistan can only achieve a smooth transition, the domestic society is rebuilt, and long-term peace and stability can be achieved. Therefore, the most important point is that Afghanistan should ensure domestic security and create an environment suitable for economic construction.

As a landmark cooperation project in the "Belt and Road" initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor connects our country's Xinjiang and Pakistan's Gwadar Port, and on this basis, radiates to neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan and other regional countries, which can not only promote Pakistan's economic development, but also drive the economic prosperity and development of neighboring countries and even the entire region. Afghanistan has large-scale natural mineral resources, etc., if the investment and help of China's "Belt and Road" and the help of countries along the route are added to the premise of ensuring a safe business environment, then Afghanistan's rich resources and energy can find a broader global market through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Afghanistan can take this opportunity by participating in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and taking this as an opportunity to better join the Belt and Road Initiative.

4.2 Promote the Development of Mineral Resources

Afghanistan has a large number of high-quality natural resources and energy, and its investment potential is huge, including oil, natural gas, coal, precious metals, precious gemstones and other mineral deposits. In general, Afghanistan has more than 1,400 proven mineral types, and most of its minerals are undeveloped, and its copper and iron ore holdings are among the top in the world, which are mainly distributed in the northern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, providing unique conditions for local mining development. ⁴Afghanistan's iron ore

¹ Liu Le. (2023). The 10th Anniversary of the Construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: History, System and Enlightenment. *South Asian Studies Quarterly*, (04), 60-79+158.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2024). Country Overview of Afghanistan and Tanzania. (2024-04-30) [2024-05-15]. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676207/1206x0_676209/

³ CCTV. (2023). Joint Statement on the Fifth China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue. (2023-05-09) [2024-05-19]. <https://news.cctv.com/2023/05/09/ARTI8gLZj4m3dMflsDLT31cX230509.shtml>

⁴ Chu Wangtao, Shi Dani, Dong Xiaoqin, Wu Lanyu. (2021). Suggestions on China-Arab Energy and Mineral Cooperation Strategies after the Taliban in Afghanistan Comes to Power Again. *International Petroleum Economics*, 29(10), 42-47.

resources are also very considerable, and its iron ore quality and reserves have high development value. In terms of energy and minerals, Afghanistan is rich in coal resources, mainly distributed in the central and southern regions. These coal resources can not only be used for power generation and heating, but also as chemical raw materials, providing an important energy guarantee for Afghanistan's industrial development. At the same time, Afghanistan's oil and gas resources also have certain development potential, although the current degree of development is relatively low, but with the advancement of technology and the expansion of the market, its development prospects are very broad.

Due to decades of war and domestic technological restrictions, the Afghan government has not been able to rationally and effectively exploit these natural resources, resulting in a small contribution of abundant mineral resources to the country's economic development. And even if these minerals have been developed to a certain extent, most of their investment returns do not flow into Afghanistan to promote economic circular development, but to other countries, so Afghanistan's economic situation has not improved. With the continuous advancement of technology and the continuous expansion of the market, the potential for the development of mineral resources in Afghanistan will be further released, providing a more solid foundation for economic growth. At the same time, the development of mineral resources has also promoted economic and trade cooperation between Afghanistan and other countries, creating favorable conditions for the country's integration into the global economic system. The petrochemical industry has played an important role as a pillar industry in Afghanistan. ¹If Afghanistan truly integrates into the Belt and Road creative cooperation in the future, its mineral resources will be rationally developed and used to enhance domestic economic construction and ensure the good development of people's livelihood, which will be of great benefit to promoting the stability of its regime and obtaining recognition of the legitimacy of its regime by the international community as soon as possible.

4.3 Promote Domestic Economic and Social Development

One of the most important goals of the Belt and Road Initiative is to help countries along the Belt and Road improve their infrastructure construction and further boost their national economies on this basis, so as to cooperate with other countries in the region to promote regional economic integration and achieve a higher level of economic cooperation with other countries. The Belt and Road Initiative is not a simple economic cooperation channel, it provides a development platform for more countries and provides Chinese solutions for countries to cope with world-class challenges. In March 2022, the third meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors was held in Tunxi, Anhui Province, China, attended by seven foreign ministers or high-level representatives. ²On June 17, 2025, on the occasion of the South China Expo, Syed Bilal Farouqi, a carpet merchant from Afghanistan, who is in full swing to prepare for the exhibition, told reporters: "This year, we exported 7 tons of carpets to China, almost doubling from last year." He hopes to use the platform of the South China Expo to further expand its market share in China. ³Through the expectations of this Afghan entrepreneur, it can be seen that the "Belt and Road" initiative has achieved remarkable results in helping countries along the route and the forward-looking development vision of our country's leadership group. Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have expressed their willingness to strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan on some infrastructure projects. ⁴In the process of implementing these cooperation projects between countries, a considerable number of jobs will be created, which will also help solve the livelihood problems in Afghanistan. At the same time, joining the Belt and Road Initiative will increase trade between other countries and Afghanistan, which can better flow into the global market with Afghan local products, and to a certain extent, it will help the Afghan people to start businesses and find employment. The gradual development of Afghanistan's domestic infrastructure will provide a foundation for future economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges. China's infrastructure level is obvious to all, and we have advanced technology and experience in infrastructure development. At the same time, the AIIB we established can also promote the construction of the Asian region and the connectivity of regional countries, and strengthen cooperation between

¹ Khamosh Khoshmorad. (2022). Research on the challenges and opportunities of Afghanistan's integration into the "Belt and Road". Harbin Institute of Technology. DOI: 10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.004417.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2022). Tunxi Initiative on Supporting Afghanistan's Economic Reconstruction and Practical Cooperation in Afghanistan's Neighbouring Countries. (2022-04-01) [2024-05-22]. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202204/t20220401_10661820.shtml.

³ Xinhuanet. (2025). Doubling in ten years, China's economic and trade exchanges with South Asia have developed well. (2025-06-17) [2025-12-17]

⁴ Tajikistan will further develop and build a railway and freight center in the Tajikistan border Penchi Free Trade Zone. Turkey will continue to help Afghanistan develop transportation, transit and communication systems and increase transit passenger and freight volume by maintaining the operation of the "Atamila-Imam Nazar-Akina-Andjuy" railway line. Ukraine will continue to actively participate in the restoration of Afghanistan's domestic infrastructure, especially Mazar-i-Sharif International Airport.

China and other Asian regions and countries. Afghanistan's accession to the "Belt and Road" initiative will reap more development opportunities, its domestic high-quality minerals will be reasonably developed, and special commodities will better flow into the global market. Domestic livelihood problems will also be improved to a certain extent.

5. Respond to Suggestions

5.1 Actively Play the Role of Relevant International Organizations and Mechanisms

Actively play the role of relevant international organizations and mechanisms to solve the existing problems after the changes in Afghanistan and promote reconciliation with relevant countries. In addition to launching the organization's current regional security cooperation mechanism, the SCO has also established the SCO-Afghanistan Liaison Group at the level of deputy foreign ministers and the "China-Arabs and Pakistani Trilateral Foreign Ministers' 3+1" mechanism.

The SCO-Afghanistan Liaison Group, established in 2005 as a consultative mechanism between the SCO and Afghanistan on related issues, aims to make recommendations on promoting cooperation between the two sides. Since its establishment, high-level meetings have been held many times, and the spirit of each meeting emphasizes that all parties should give full play to the active role of the SCO-Afghanistan Liaison Group, continuously implement and practice the "Shanghai Spirit", and contribute to the long-term stability, development and prosperity of Afghanistan and the region. The "3+1" mechanism is a "small multilateral mechanism" formed among SCO member states led by China to promote regional security cooperation. The three foreign ministers agreed to continue cooperation in areas of common interest and reached the following consensus: first, to work together to combat terrorism in all its forms; second, it emphasizes that all parties should strictly resist the "double standards" of counter-terrorism and carry out counter-terrorism cooperation with a unified attitude; Third, no terrorist organization or individual is allowed to use their respective national territories to carry out terrorist activities against other countries. ²In the Sixth China-Afghanistan Tripartite Foreign Ministers' Dialogue to be held in 2025, the three countries should deepen good-neighborliness and mutual trust, understand and support each other, resolutely oppose interference by foreign forces in their internal affairs, and safeguard national sovereignty, security, integrity and territorial integrity. Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed support for Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve and ease bilateral relations and promote good-neighborliness and friendship in order to achieve stability and long-term development. The two sides will deepen cooperation in the economic field, expand trade exchanges, strengthen connectivity, enhance people-to-people ties, and promote regional peace, stability, development and prosperity.³

5.2 Focus on the Role that Afghanistan's Neighbours Can Play

As neighbors of Afghanistan, Central Asian countries and China should help the Afghan government connect with the international community as soon as possible and consolidate national power. All countries should engage in rational contact and dialogue with the Afghan interim government, enhance political mutual trust, take the lead in the new Afghan government's contacts with all countries and regions of the world, support Afghanistan in combating all forms of terrorist organizations, and ensure that Afghanistan is no longer shrouded in the shadow of terrorism. Create a dialogue platform based on the SCO and a cooperation model with the Belt and Road Initiative as a booster to promote normal exchanges between Afghanistan and other countries. It is also necessary to focus on promoting national reconciliation in Afghanistan, achieving political stability in Afghanistan, and avoiding regional security instability.

China assumes responsibility as a regional power, and as a member of the SCO, China is also actively helping Afghanistan to recover its economy. Since 2018, China has opened a "pine nut route" directly imported from Afghanistan, directly or indirectly generating tens of millions of dollars in revenue for Afghanistan. In August 2021, the situation in Afghanistan changed dramatically, with the United States imposing financial controls on Afghanistan, and nearly 40 million Afghans facing a humanitarian crisis. As a neighbor and friend of Afghanistan, China will continue to help Afghanistan solve its economic difficulties and improve its ability to develop independently. Next, China will further strengthen economic docking relations with Afghanistan, encourage the import of agricultural products with Afghan characteristics to China, and effectively help Afghan

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2018). Zhang Hanhui, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, presided over the meeting of the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Afghanistan Liaison Group" at the level of deputy foreign ministers. (2018-05-30) [2024-05-20]. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbxw_673019/201805/t20180530_386548.shtml.

² Xinhuanet. (2021). Joint Statement on Deepening Trilateral Cooperation between China – Afghanistan and Pakistan Tripartite Foreign Ministers Dialogue. (2021-06-04) [2024-05-20]. http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-06/04/c_1127531442.htm.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2025). Afghanistan, and Pakistan hold the sixth trilateral dialogue. (2025-08-20). <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/0DJMDVC0.html>

farmers and improve Afghanistan's economic and people's livelihood to a certain extent.¹

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- Chinese Government Website. (2021). Ministry of Foreign Affairs: China will play a greater role in Afghanistan's economic reconstruction with practical actions. (2021-12-21) [2024-05-22]. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-12/21/content_5662996.htm.
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