

# The Cooperation Between China and Afghanistan Under the “Belt and Road Initiative”

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Afghanistan is a neighboring country to China. The Afghanistan issue has had an important impact on China's national security. Since the establishment of the new Afghan government in 2001, China has been committed to promoting Afghanistan's economic, social, and security reconstruction, and has invested heavily resources in Afghanistan's reconstruction. The main cause of the Afghan problem is that the Afghan government lacked enough resources and can only rely on the foreign powers' aids. Afghanistan eventually loses its independence, and triggers interference in big powers. At present, Afghanistan still has not escaped this predicament. Near 50% of the Afghan government's revenue comes from foreign aids. In 2013, the “Belt and Road Initiative” proposed by China provided opportunity for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Afghanistan, as the crossroads of the land Silk Road and the heart of Asia, has become more prominent in its geopolitical status for “Belt and Road Initiative”. By participating “Belt and Road Initiative”, Afghanistan can help to activate its own economic vitality and promote the cross-border trade. It has changed the situation that Afghanistan is highly dependent on external aids. This helps to solve the problems of reconstruction in Afghanistan.

*Keywords:* China, Afghanistan, Belt and Road Initiative

## **The Rise of Afghan Problem: From the Cross of Silk Road to Buffer State**

From a geographic perspective, Afghanistan is a crossroads of Asia (Carter, 1989) and the hub of the ancient Silk Road. Afghanistan has created splendid civilizations in history, such as the Graeco-Bactrian culture, Persian and Islamic civilizations (Peng & Huang, 2000). At the same time, Afghanistan has become one of the centers of the Eurasia Empire civilization. The glorious civilization of Afghanistan is inseparable from the Silk Road, especially the civilization exchanges on the Silk Road. The ancient Silk Road gave Afghanistan its position as a trade hub for the Eurasian continent, which in turn created a series of ancient civilization cities, such as Herat, Balkh, Kabul, and Ghazni. On the other hand, the Silk Road also made an important contribution to the prosperity of Afghan culture in history. Afghanistan has many important remains of Hellenization (Aruz, & Fino, 2012). The integration of Buddhist culture and Greek culture has produced the famous Gandhara culture which has an important influence on the Buddhist statue art. Therefore, Afghanistan has created such a splendid civilization on relatively barren and mountainous lands, which is largely dependent on the Silk Road.

The historical development of Afghanistan and even Eurasia experienced a turning point in the 16th century. First, the ethnic migration in Eurasia has gradually ceased. Second, the Silk Road declined. Third, some large empires have emerged around Afghanistan. This has led to the economic decline in the Afghan

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region, and Afghanistan has become a “buffer state” (Rubin, 1988) for the first time in history. At that time, four empires raised in the Islamic world: the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Safavid Empire, the Mughal Empire, and the later Uzbek Khanate. Afghanistan is under the fight of the Persian, Mughal, and Uzbek Khanates. Therefore, it has become a buffer state for these empires. The decline of the Afghan civilization took place gradually, and it became a target for the competition among the surrounding great powers.

At this point, Afghanistan’s economic development has gradually lost its autonomy and increasingly dependence on external resources. Durrani Dynasty, established in 1747, was the last Afghanistan Empire. Afghanistan achieved a brief revival. But the dynasty relied on the plundering of India. That is to say, the Durrani Dynasty seized India’s wealth and distributed it to the Pushtun tribes. Durrani Dynasty sustained its rule by this system. The reason is that, Durrani Dynasty was a tribal state; it relied heavily on tribal support and was unable to collect taxes from the tribes. Conquering was an important way to maintain the rule of the Durrani Dynasty (Rubin, 1988). However, with the British’s colonial expansion in South Asia, Afghanistan gradually lost its independent status. After the British established colonial rule in India, Russia gradually annexed Central Asia. As a result, in the second half of the 19th century, Britain and Russia have a great game for Central Asia especially Afghanistan lasted nearly a century (Wyatt, 2011). Until the signing of the Anglo-Russian Treaty in 1907, for this reason, Afghanistan was twice invaded by Britain.

After Abdul Rahman became Shah of Afghanistan in 1880, Afghanistan gradually achieved stability. Abdul Rahman has recognized the dilemma faced by Afghanistan as a buffer state. In order to strengthen the control over the country and fight against rebel of the tribe, Abdul Rahman had to rely on Britain. Thus, the Britain controlled Afghanistan’s diplomacy, and Rahman received subsidies from Britain. Rahman used these external subsidies to integrate Afghan society, combat tribal forces, and built a strong army and government.

In 1929, after the establishment of the Musahiban Dynasty, Afghanistan is in golden age of modern times. However, Afghanistan’s modernization and state building have also not escaped the historical problem. That is, Afghanistan still relies heavily on external resources. After the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union fought in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, because of its special geopolitical status, also receives a lot of aid from the United States and the Soviet Union (Williams, 1988). These aids became the pillars of Afghanistan’s economic development in the 1950s to 1970s (Rubin, 2002). However, this has also led to an increase in the penetration of the United States and the Soviet Union toward Afghanistan, which led to the loss of Afghan neutral diplomacy, and eventually triggered Afghan problem.

Therefore, with the decline of the ancient Silk Road, Afghanistan’s modernization was facing a severe challenge. Afghanistan belongs to the category of “strong society and weak state”; the country cannot collect too many taxes on tribal society, especially Pashtun tribal society. Once the country is involved too much in tribal affairs, tribal society may rebel. Therefore, Afghan modernization depends to a certain extent on external aid. The aid itself is not stable enough and often has a political purpose. This has also become a deep cause of the Afghan problem. In fact, this is still a serious challenge for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. China’s Belt and Road Initiative (B & R) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have in fact provided important prospects for Afghanistan’s reconstruction and prosperity. This article first reviews the evolution of relationship between China and Afghanistan.

### **The Modern Relationship Between China and Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a neighboring country to China. Both countries were linked by Silk Road. There is a long

history of cultural exchanges between Afghanistan and China. In the 2nd century BC, the Silk Road was opened by the Chinese ambassador, Zhang Qian. He went to the Western Regions of China and reached Afghanistan. In the Tang Dynasty, the Master Monk of China, Xuanzang (Wriggins, 2004), once arrived in Afghanistan and has detailed accounts of Afghanistan in his famous book *Buddhist Records of the Western World* (Xuanzang, 1985). At the beginning of the 15th century, China's Ming Dynasty also had direct contacts with the Heart kingdom. Both countries made frequent communications. After the establishment of the Durrani Dynasty in 1747, Qing Dynasty of China and Afghanistan send messengers to each other for several times.

In modern times, the official relationship between China and Afghanistan was established in 1944. At that time, the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) government and the Afghan government signed the *Agreement on China-Afghanistan Friendship*. The two countries formally established diplomatic relations and sent ambassadors to each other. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the relations between China and Afghanistan developed rapidly. Afghanistan recognized the People's Republic of China in 1950, was the one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China.

People's Republic of China attached importance to relations with developing countries. In 1955, China established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. In January 1957, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Deputy Prime Minister He Long led a delegation to visit Afghanistan. The two countries issued a joint communiqué, pointed out that the two countries will further strengthen ties and reaffirmed the principles of the Bandung Conference (Wang, 2007). This is the first time that Chinese leaders have visited Afghanistan. In 1975, Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud Khan of Afghanistan led a delegation to visit China and was received by China's Chairman Mao Zedong. Afghanistan recognized the One-China Principle and Taiwan is an inalienable part of the Chinese territory. Afterwards the political links between China and Afghanistan have developed rapidly. China's Vice Premier Chen Yi visited Afghanistan in 1960 and 1965. In 1966, China's Chairman Liu Shaoqi visited Afghanistan. In 1964, Shah Mohammed Zahir of Afghanistan visited China. Through these visits, China and Afghanistan have signed the *China-Afghanistan Border Protocol*, the *China-Afghanistan Economic and Technological Cooperation Agreement*, and the *China-Afghanistan Cultural Cooperation Agreement*, which resolved the territorial disputes between the two countries in the Wakhan Corridor. These visits strengthened the bilateral relationship between the two states.

The active political relations between the two countries have also promoted cultural and economic communications (Zhang & Chen, 2012). For example, in 1956, a Chinese cultural and arts delegation visited Afghanistan and attended the 38th anniversary of the Independence Day of Afghanistan. In the same year, the Chinese delegation participated in the first session of the International Industry Fair of Afghanistan. The two countries also signed a trade payment agreement and have established close economic and trade ties. After 1957, China began sending students to Afghanistan to study Afghan language and literature. Most of these international students became well-known scholars who focused on Pashto, Afghan literature, and Afghan history in China. For example, Che Hongcai studied in Afghanistan in 1959 and later became professor of Pushtu literature. He devoted to his life time to compiling the *Pashto-Chinese Dictionary* (Che & Zhang, 2015). Professor Zhang Min, who was studying in Afghanistan during the same period, wrote *Culture and Society in Afghanistan* (Zhang, 2007). During this period, although China's economy was also difficult at the time, China continued to assist Afghanistan. China provided economic aid to Afghanistan and helped build a number of factories and infrastructure. From 1950 to 1966, China provided \$73 million aids to Afghanistan, ranking fifth behind the Soviet Union, the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the World Bank (Williams,

1988). The China's aids were mostly interest-free loans and grants without any other conditions. Among them, Parwan water conservancy project has still operated in 2001.

In 1960s and 1970s, the relationship between China and Afghanistan suffered setbacks (Wang, 2007). The Cultural Revolution took place in China in 1966, the relationship between the two countries cooled down. The relationship was improved in early of 1970s, high-level visits between the two countries were frequent, and a series of agreements on bilateral trade and civil aviation were signed. However, the Saur Revolution took place in 1978, and then-President Mohammed Daoud Khan was overthrown by People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Afghanistan was in turmoil. China recognized the new government. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the Sino-Afghanistan relations fell to the bottom. The Chinese government denounced the invasion of the Soviet Union, while refusing to recognize the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party regime and retaining only the embassy in Afghanistan (charge level); the formal official relations with the Afghan regime were broken off, with only consular visas. The PDPA regime pursued a policy of pro-Soviet and anti-China, constantly criticizing China's Vietnam policy. The Chinese government supports the Afghan people's struggle against the Soviet Union, and has been providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan refugees (Peng & Huang, 2000). After the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Afghanistan in 1989, Afghanistan quickly fell into a bloody civil war. Afghan Mujahideen took over the government in 1992, relations between China and Afghanistan normalized. But soon the clashes between the various guerrilla groups took place, and the civil war has intensified. For security reasons, China evacuated the staff of the embassy in Afghanistan in February 1993, and normal intercourse between the two countries was interrupted.

In sum, China has established good political relations with Afghanistan since 1950. This relationship is based on mutual respect for territories and sovereignty, which is the basis of China's diplomatic policy, especially good-neighbor diplomacy. Compared with political relations, China's economic and trade ties with Afghanistan are limited. The outbreak of the Afghanistan issue directly affected China's national security, and the relationship between the two countries experienced setback. China increased its investment in Afghanistan's reconstruction after 2001. The two countries have also established closer bilateral relations.

### **China's Policy on Afghanistan's Rebuilding**

After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan started its reconstruction process. China is involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. China's aid has not deployed military forces in Afghanistan and has not any political conditions. All-round cooperation relationship was established between China and Afghanistan, to promote the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

After the new Afghan government was established, China actively developed political relations, economic and trade relations, and security cooperation with Afghanistan. From 2002 to 2010, Afghan president Karzai visited China four times. Political communications between China and Afghanistan are frequent. China has also actively participated in the process of Afghanistan's reconstruction and participated in the main international mechanism for Afghanistan reconstruction. China's involvement is relatively modest (Zhao, 2012). Some scholars believe presently China is not as actively involved in Afghanistan as western countries are (Mière, 2010). For a long time, China has pursued the principle of respecting the sovereignty of other countries and no-interfering in the internal affairs of other countries for long time. China has been cautiously involved in the Afghan issue and has not participated the military operations in Afghanistan. As China's former Minister of

Foreign Affairs, Yang Jiechi pointed out “China has actively supported, promoted and participated in Afghanistan’s post-war peace and reconstruction effort.”<sup>1</sup>

First of all, China has paid more attention to establish close diplomatic and political ties with Afghanistan, and laid the foundation for promoting the development of bilateral relations. After the establishment of the Afghan Interim Government in 2001, China and Afghanistan restored diplomatic relations. The political ties between the two countries have become increasingly close. China dispatched a working group to Afghanistan in 2001. In 2002, Afghan President Karzai visited China, and China promised to provide \$150 million aids to Afghanistan in the next five years.<sup>2</sup> In February 2002, the Chinese Embassy in Afghanistan reopened. In May 2002, Chinese former Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan visited Afghanistan and met with Karzai as chairman of the interim government, and Zahir as the former king. In December 2002, China also signed the *Declaration on Good Neighborliness and Friendship* with other neighboring countries of Afghanistan, which respects the territorial and sovereign integrity of Afghanistan, supporting Afghanistan’s reconstruction, and encouraging Afghanistan’s transit trade.

In 2006, President Karzai visited China and signed 14 agreements with Chinese. Both countries also announced *Joint Statement Between China and Afghanistan*. Both countries announced the comprehensive partnership, which included the cooperation of Combating transnational crime and terrorist, economy and trade, agriculture, culture, tourism, and other fields. China helps Afghanistan to train police and army, and receives the Afghan international students. During this visit, both countries signed the *Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*<sup>3</sup>, which is the foundation of China-Afghanistan relations. This treaty pointed out the direction of bilateral relations. The main content of treaty includes four parts.

1. China and Afghanistan respect each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and comply with the *Border Treaty of the People’s Republic of China and the Kingdom of Afghanistan* signed in 1963.

2. The contracting parties shall not enter into any alliance or be a party to any bloc nor shall they embark on any such action, including the conclusion of such treaty with a third country which compromises the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of the other contracting party. Neither sides of the contracting parties shall allow its territory to be used by a third country to jeopardize the national sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of the other contracting party. Neither sides of the contracting parties shall allow the setting up of organizations nor should gangs on its own soil which shall impair the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of the other contrasting party and their activities be prohibited.

3. Both countries will promote bilateral cooperation of economic, cultural, and anti-terrorism.

4. The Treaty supersedes the *Sino-Afghan Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression* signed in 1960.

Second, China takes the principle of win-win cooperation and strengthens the cooperation with Afghanistan in economy, energy, technology and trade field, in order to promote the economic prosperity of Afghanistan. The areas of cooperation between China and Afghanistan mainly include: agriculture, infrastructure building, hydroelectricity, and natural reserves. China began to increase its economic aid to

<sup>1</sup> Yang Jiechi attends the regional summit on Afghanistan. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/t654281.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t654281.shtml)

<sup>2</sup> China Promises Karzai \$150 Million Aid. *VOA News*, <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2002-01-24-19-china-66453357/551205.html>

<sup>3</sup> Full text of joint statement between China, Afghanistan. [http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-06/20/content\\_315724.htm](http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-06/20/content_315724.htm)

Afghanistan. From 2001 to 2009, China provided \$205.3 million aids, and 19.5 million dollars as loan to Afghanistan (Tahiri, 2017). On the other hand, China actively encourages Chinese enterprises to invest in Afghanistan and strengthen trade with Afghanistan. In 2008, China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) and Jiangxi Copper Corporation Limited (JCCL) obtained the mining rights of the Ainak copper mine of Afghanistan, one of the world's largest copper mines. Two corporations will invest more than \$30 billion.<sup>4</sup> The project is the largest foreign investment project in Afghanistan. The project will produce 220,000 tons of refined copper annually. The construction period of the project is five years and the mining period is 30 years

In addition, China is also working on different other projects enhancing the economic power of Afghanistan. China has also begun investing in Afghanistan's energy sector. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) was the first foreign oil company to invest in Afghanistan energy field, and it cooperated with Watan Oil & Gas of Afghanistan to explore the oil fields in northern Afghanistan. In 2010, China's companies invested 400 million U.S. dollars in oil fields in the Amu Darya Basin in northwestern and northern Afghanistan. This project will give annually \$304.35 million to Afghan government (Bukhari, 2012). Chinese telecommunication companies, such as Huawei and Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment (ZTE), updated 200,000 Afghanistan's analog telephone lines to digital.

China's trade with Afghanistan has developed rapidly. China gives Duty free s to some Afghani goods, in order to promote the export of Afghan goods. In 2006, China allowed 287 kinds of goods in Afghanistan to be exported to China with zero tariffs.<sup>5</sup> China has become Afghanistan's most important trading partner. From 2002 to 2010, the trade volume between the two countries increased from 17.34 million U.S. dollars to 170 million U.S. dollars, increased of 10 times.

Table 1

*Trade Between Afghanistan and China, 1999-2009*

Year	Chinese export to Afghanistan (USD millions)	Chinese import from Afghanistan (USD millions)	Total value of trade (USD millions)
1999	16.68	2.9	19.58
2000	19.89	5.4	25.29
2002	19.92	0.08	19.99
2003	26.45	0.61	27.06
2004	56.97	0.95	57.92
2005	51.21	1.56	52.77
2006	100.47	0.19	100.66
2007	169.00	2.00	171.00
2008	152	3	155
2009	215	1	216

Note. Bukhari, S. W. H. (2012).

China fully involved in the Afghan reconstruction, and established all-round cooperation relationship with Afghanistan since 2001. China respects Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Politically, China opposes to interfere the domestic affairs of Afghanistan. At the same time, China has developed economic, trade, and security cooperation with Afghanistan. China has provided a large number of aids to Afghanistan,

<sup>4</sup> Is there still hope for China, Afghanistan's long-stalled US\$3 billion copper mining deal? *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2093852/talks-aim-jump-start-china-miners-stalled-afghanistan>

<sup>5</sup> Embassy of China in Afghanistan, *The Outline of Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Afghanistan*, <http://af.china-embassy.org/chn/zagx/ztgk/t1097560.htm>

invested in the field of infrastructure construction and energy, in order to promote the sustainable development and prosperity of Afghanistan's economy.

### **China–Afghanistan Relationship Under “Belt and Road Initiative”**

China proposed the “Belt and Road Initiative” in 2013. One of the goals of this Initiative is to rejuvenate the trade along the ancient Silk Road, to promote the prosperity and development of the countries and regions, to build community of shared future for mankind. China's President Xi Jinping pointed out that the “Belt and Road” is a road of cooperation, and it is also a road of hope and a win-win.<sup>6</sup> As a result, some scholars believe that the “Belt and Road Initiative” is China's globalization scheme. Afghanistan is the cross of the ancient Silk Road, and benefit from this road. The root of the modern Afghan problem is partly from that Afghanistan's economy has not been self-reliant, but heavily depended on external aid. The China's “Belt and Road Initiative” is an important opportunity for Afghanistan's prosperity and stability. In recent years, under the “Belt and Road Initiative”, bilateral relations between China and Afghanistan have developed rapidly.

Since 2011, Afghanistan's position in China's diplomatic strategy has improved. The relationship between China and Afghanistan has reached an unprecedented height. First, as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) withdrew its troops from Afghanistan, the security situation in Afghanistan was worse. Afghanistan is neighboring country of China. Recently, Afghan issue further threatens China's security. Second, China has proposed the “Belt and Road Initiative” and the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor”. Afghanistan is a crossroads of the Asian continent, and an important factor affecting Pakistan's northwest border security. Third, China has played its part as a major and responsible country. In recent years, China has provided more public goods for the surrounding areas, and contributed Chinese wisdom and strength to global governance. Therefore, the cooperation between China and Afghanistan has been significantly strengthened. China pays more attention to Afghan reconstruction.

Firstly, both countries upgrade their relationship from friendly cooperation to strategic cooperation. Two countries signed the *Joint Declaration Between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on Establishing Strategic and Cooperative Partnership* in 2012.<sup>7</sup> The main content of declaration includes three parts:

1. The two sides have undertaken to firmly support each other on issues concerning national sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, and not allow their respective territory to be used for any activities targeted against the other side.

2. The two sides agreed to continually strengthen the pragmatic cooperation in such fields as resources and energy development, infrastructure development, engineering, and agriculture. China will as always provide assistance to Afghanistan within the realm of its capabilities, and continue to encourage capable Chinese enterprises to participate in the construction and development of Afghanistan.

3. The two sides expressed strong rejection of all forms of terrorism, extremism, separatism, and organized crimes. The two sides agree to intensify exchanges and cooperation in security by way of jointly combating such transnational threats as terrorism, illegal immigration, illegal arms, and drug trafficking, and enhancing intelligence exchanges and border management.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-09/05/c\\_129696479.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-09/05/c_129696479.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Joint declaration between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on establishing strategic and cooperative partnership. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China*, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/t939517.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t939517.shtml)

In addition, China and Afghanistan have signed a series of agreements and joint declarations to build political mutual trust and support, which has built a platform for economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries. China also actively participates in the international multilateral mechanism for Afghan issue. In 2014, the fourth foreign ministers' meeting of the Istanbul Process was held in China. China also actively absorbed Afghanistan's entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In 2012, Afghanistan became observer states of the SCO. Most of the SCO member states or observer states are closely related to the Afghan issue. Some countries are Afghanistan's neighbors. Therefore, the Afghan issue is a major issue that SCO cannot evade. SCO is the most important regional organization on the Afghanistan issue.

Secondly, China and Afghanistan reached a consensus on the "Belt and Road Initiative". Both countries jointly promote this initiative. Afghanistan is the crossroads of Asia, connecting Central Asia and South Asia, East Asia and West Asia. The prosperity of regional commodities and energy trade will inevitably promote the development and prosperity of the Afghan economy. This will help Afghanistan to reduce the dependence on external aid. Therefore, after China put forward "Belt and Road Initiative", Afghanistan showed great interests. China is also actively integrating Afghanistan into the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative". In 2012, China gave zero tariff treatment to 95% of the products exported to China. Afghanistan is trying to integrate itself into regional economic and energy cooperation.

In 2017, Afghanistan's ambassador to China, Janan Mosazai pointed out that Afghanistan is part of the "Belt and Road Initiative".<sup>8</sup> China and Afghanistan have begun cooperation under the "Belt and Road" framework. They signed the *Memorandum of Understanding for Jointly Promoting the Construction of the "Belt and Road Initiative"*. In 2016, China and Afghanistan freight trains opened. The train arrived in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan from China and eventually arrived in northern Afghanistan. It carried industrial products and electronic products that Afghan merchants purchased from China. When the train returned, it carried Afghanistan's marble, saffron, dried fruits, and carpets to China. The communication between China and Afghanistan are also very frequent. On average, China annually trains 600 Afghan professionals in various fields and provides 150 Afghan international students with scholarships for further study in China. These personnel have played an important role in building mutual understanding and trust.

Table 2

*Global Imports by Afghanistan June, 2017*

Country (imports from)	Trade value (thousands)	Share (%)
China	174,505	17.59
Pakistan	153,913	15.51
Kazakhstan	121,868	12.28
Japan	88,064	8.87
Malaysia	73,091	7.37
Iran	69,786	7.03
United Arab Emirates	47,566	4.79
India	47,042	4.74
Uzbekistan	44,229	4.46

Note. Afghanistan Major Trade Partners, [http://countries.bridgat.com/Afghanistan\\_Trade\\_Partners.html](http://countries.bridgat.com/Afghanistan_Trade_Partners.html).

<sup>8</sup> Belt and Road will benefit Afghanistan, ambassador says. *Chinadaily*, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017twosession/2017-03/05/content\\_28441163.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017twosession/2017-03/05/content_28441163.htm)

In recent years, China has actively intervened in the Afghan issue with special way, and pays more attention to mediation of the Afghan conflict. In particular, China has used its special influence to mediate the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> As we know, Afghanistan and Pakistan have a lot of contradictions on the Pashtunistan issue. The two countries fought for this for more than half a century. The conflict between these countries will do harm to the stability of region. Therefore, China's mediation has positive influence on the security and stability of South Asia. In short, China's investment and attention on the Afghanistan issue has increased significantly, and China-Afghanistan relations have reached an unprecedented height. The development of regional trade and cooperation will contribute to the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan.

### Conclusion

Historically, the ancient Silk Road linked Afghanistan and China, and witnessed the friendly relations and common prosperity of the two countries. In 2013, China's "Belt and Road Initiative" initiative provided an important opportunity for the reconstruction of Afghanistan to resolve problems of modern Afghanistan. This initiative will further integrate Afghanistan into regional trade, and contribute to the prosperity and stability of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the "crossroads" of Asia and an important country for "Belt and Road Initiative". In addition, Afghanistan, as a neighbor of China, also affects the security and stability of China's frontier to a certain extent. Despite the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, the complex geopolitical game has restricted the further cooperation between China and Afghanistan. However, in recent years, China has gradually increased its investment and assistance to Afghanistan. China and Afghanistan have cooperated extensively in the fields of security, economics and humanities exchanges, and have achieved certain results. In short, under the "Belt and Road Initiative" initiative, China and Afghanistan share common interests and great potential for cooperation. The cooperation between two countries will promote regional prosperity and stability.

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<sup>9</sup> China Hosts Meeting to Improve Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations. *Xinhuanet*, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/26/c\\_136853473.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/26/c_136853473.htm)

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