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AFGHANISTAN'S POLITICAL CHANGE AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

Srikanth KONDAPALLI	<i>PhD, professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, srikondapalli@gmail.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9559-8492</i>
Leila DELOVAROVA*	<i>PhD, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, delovarova@mail.ru, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3163-5933</i>
Bilal JAN	<i>PhD student, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8894-8634</i>
Alibek YERMEKOV	<i>PhD student, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5447-0292</i>

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Abstract. This article explores the intricate relationship between Afghanistan's evolving political landscape and the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Situated at the crossroads of geopolitical complexities, Afghanistan has undergone enduring political transformations, prompting a critical review of its international role. As the nation grapples with transformative political journeys, this study scrutinizes the interplay between internal changes and the broader goals of the BRI. Initiated by China, the BRI represents an unprecedented effort in global connectivity and economic cooperation. The article outlines the dynamics of Afghanistan's political scenario and its potential impact on the BRI, revealing the complex relationship between political changes and the future trajectory of this ambitious initiative within Afghanistan's borders. Central to this exploration is the Belt and Road Initiative, a historic initiative spanning continents with the aim to reshape global trade patterns and strengthen economic cooperation. Originating from China, the BRI vision goes beyond infrastructure development, encompassing diplomatic, economic, and cultural dimensions. Understanding the goals and mechanisms of the BRI is fundamental to assessing how Afghanistan's political transformation might align with this transformative initiative. This article aims to dissect the point where Afghanistan's political trajectory converges with the aspirations of the BRI. By detailing the complex interplay between these two dynamic forces, the study explores synergies, conflicts, and potential implications for Afghanistan's geopolitical position and the broader goals of the BRI. As a scholarly endeavor, it contributes nuanced insights to the ongoing discourse on global politics, international cooperation, and the transformative potential of large-scale infrastructure projects in regions undergoing significant political change.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Political Change, Belt and Road Initiative, Geopolitics, Infrastructure Development, Economic Dynamics, Regional Cooperation.

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада Ауғанстанның дамып келе жатқан саяси ландшафты мен өршіл "Белдеу және Жол" Бастамасы (BRI) арасындағы күрделі қатынастар қарастырылады. Геосаяси қиындықтардың қиылысында Орналасқан Ауғанстан тұрақты саяси өзгерістерге ұшырады, бұл оның халықаралық рөлін сыни тұрғыдан қайта

* Corresponding author: L. Delovarova, delovarova@mail.ru

қарауға итермеледі. Ұлт трансформациялық саяси саяхаттармен күресіп жатқандықтан, бұл зерттеу ішкі өзгерістер мен BRI-дің кеңірек мақсаттары арасындағы өзара әрекеттесуді мұқият зерттейді. Қытайдың бастамасымен BRI жаһандық байланыс пен экономикалық ынтымақтастық саласындағы бұрын-соңды болмаған күш-жігерді білдіреді. Мақалада Ауғанстанның саяси сценарийінің динамикасы және оның BRI-ге ықтимал әсері баяндалып, саяси өзгерістер мен Ауғанстан шекарасындағы осы өршіл бастаманың болашақ траекториясы арасындағы күрделі байланыс анықталған. Бұл барлаудың басты бағыты - "Белдеу және Жол" Бастамасы, жаһандық сауда құрылымын өзгерту және экономикалық ынтымақтастықты нығайту мақсатында континенттерді қамтитын тарихи бастама. Қытайдан шыққан BRI көзқарасы дипломатиялық, экономикалық және мәдени өлшемдерді қамтитын инфрақұрылымды дамыту шеңберінен шығады. BRI мақсаттары мен механизмдерін түсіну Ауғанстандағы саяси өзгерістердің осы трансформациялық бастамаға қалай сәйкес келетінін бағалау үшін өте маңызды. Бұл мақала Ауғанстанның саяси траекториясының BRI ұмтылыстарына сәйкес келетін нүктесін талдауға бағытталған. Осы екі динамикалық күштің күрделі өзара әрекеттесуін егжей-тегжейлі сипаттай отырып, зерттеу ауғанстанның геосаяси жағдайына және BRI-нің кеңірек мақсаттарына синергетиканы, қақтығыстарды және ықтимал салдарын зерттейді. Ғылыми жоба ретінде ол жаһандық саясат, халықаралық ынтымақтастық және елеулі саяси өзгерістерге ұшыраған аймақтардағы ауқымды инфрақұрылымдық жобалардың трансформациялық әлеуеті туралы жалғасып жатқан дискурсты егжей-тегжейлі түсінуге ықпал етеді.

Түйін сөздер: Ауғанстан, саяси өзгерістер, "Белдеу және жол" бастамасы, геосаясат, инфрақұрылымды дамыту, экономикалық динамика, аймақтық ынтымақтастық.

Аннотация. В этой статье исследуется сложная взаимосвязь между меняющимся политическим ландшафтом Афганистана и амбициозной инициативой "Пояс и путь" (BRI). Расположенный на перекрестке геополитических сложностей, Афганистан претерпел длительные политические преобразования, что побудило к критическому пересмотру его международной роли. В то время как нация сталкивается с политическими преобразованиями, в этом исследовании тщательно изучается взаимосвязь между внутренними изменениями и более широкими целями Инициативы. Инициатива, инициированная Китаем, представляет собой беспрецедентное усилие в области глобальных связей и экономического сотрудничества. В статье описывается динамика политического сценария Афганистана и его потенциальное влияние на BRI, раскрывается сложная взаимосвязь между политическими изменениями и будущей траекторией этой амбициозной инициативы в пределах границ Афганистана. Центральное место в этом исследовании занимает инициатива "Пояс и путь", историческая инициатива, охватывающая континенты с целью изменения моделей глобальной торговли и укрепления экономического сотрудничества. Концепция BRI, исходящая из Китая, выходит за рамки развития инфраструктуры, охватывая дипломатические, экономические и культурные аспекты. Понимание целей и механизмов BRI имеет основополагающее значение для оценки того, как политические преобразования в Афганистане могут согласоваться с этой преобразующей инициативой. Цель этой статьи - проанализировать точку, в которой политическая траектория Афганистана совпадает с устремлениями BRI. Детализируя сложное взаимодействие между этими двумя динамичными силами, в исследовании исследуются синергии, конфликты и потенциальные последствия для геополитического положения Афганистана и более широких целей BRI. Как научная работа, она вносит глубокий вклад в текущие дискуссии о глобальной политике, международном сотрудничестве и преобразующем потенциале крупномасштабных инфраструктурных проектов в регионах, претерпевающих значительные политические изменения.

Ключевые слова: Афганистан, Политические перемены, Инициатива "Пояс и путь", Геополитика, Развитие инфраструктуры, Экономическая динамика, Региональное сотрудничество.

Introduction

Political changes in Afghanistan in 2021 encompasses a complex narrative that has unfolded over two decades. The republican regime, established in 2001 with the direct intervention of the United States and NATO, has enjoyed constant financial, political and military support from these allies throughout its life. However, an important moment came with the signing of the Doha Agreement by the United States and the Taliban, leaving the government of the Republic of Afghanistan out of the negotiations, signing the agreement with the United States and its allies, and ceasing to support the republican regime, as a result of which the government could not continue against the Taliban. It fell in 2021. The Taliban, with a long 20-year struggle against the Republic, the United States and NATO,

sought to establish an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan. Their goals conflicted with the vision of the Republic, leading to a long and tumultuous conflict. The Taliban took control.

After the Taliban took control, Afghanistan experienced a profound transformation in its political landscape, which raised concerns about the country's future global interactions. One notable concern surrounds potential participation in China's megaproject known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This ambitious initiative aims to promote global connectivity through infrastructure development, trade and economic cooperation. The implications of Afghanistan's participation in the BRI require thorough scientific research to assess the benefits, risks, and long-term implications of such participation. These considerations reflect the complex web of geopolitical dynamics that shape Afghanistan's evolving

relationships on the world stage and emphasize the need for careful consideration and strategic decision-making in guiding the country's path forward.

Afghanistan, a country rooted in the crossroads of geopolitical complexities, has been the focus of global attention due to its enduring political transformations. In the background of historical turmoil, the recent changes in Afghanistan's political landscape have opened a new chapter and caused a critical review of the country's role in the international arena. This article explores the political changes in Afghanistan and their profound implications for the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As Afghanistan grapples with a transformative political journey, the interplay between these internal changes and the broader goals of the BRI warrants careful scholarly scrutiny. The BRI, initiated by China, represents an unprecedented effort in global connectivity and economic cooperation. It is therefore necessary to outline the dynamics of Afghanistan's evolving political scenario and its potential impact on the BRI, revealing the complex relationship between political changes and the future trajectory of this ambitious initiative within Afghanistan's borders.

To understand the relationship between political change and the BRI, it is necessary to put historical and contemporary political developments in Afghanistan into context. The resilience of the nation in the face of adversities has caused this country to undergo fundamental changes, each of which affects its position on the world stage. Examining the catalysts, actors and consequences of these changes is very important to unravel the complex fabric of Afghanistan's political tapestry.

At the heart of this exploration is the Belt and Road Initiative, a historic initiative that spans continents and aims to reshape global trade patterns and strengthen economic cooperation. Originating from China, the comprehensive BRI vision goes far beyond infrastructure development and encompasses diplomatic, economic and cultural dimensions. Understanding the goals and mechanisms of the BRI is fundamental to assessing how Afghanistan's political transformation might mesh with this transformative initiative.

This article seeks to cross the point where Afghanistan's political trajectory

converges with the aspirations of the BRI. By detailing the complex interplay between these two dynamic forces, we aim to explore the synergies, conflicts, and potential implications for Afghanistan's geopolitical position and the broader goals of the BRI.

As we embark on this scholarly endeavor, we aim to contribute nuanced insights to the ongoing discourse on global politics, international cooperation, and the transformative potential of large-scale infrastructure projects in regions undergoing significant political change.

Significance:

The overarching goals of this research endeavor can be delineated into four key objectives. Firstly, the study aims to comprehensively comprehend Afghanistan's ongoing political transition by conducting a nuanced analysis. This involves identifying the primary drivers, key actors, and discerning the implications these political changes hold for the nation's intricate political landscape. Secondly, an exhaustive exploration of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) constitutes a pivotal goal. This includes delving into the BRI's defined objectives, its expansive scope, and the regional implications it poses. By dissecting these aspects, the research seeks to unravel the BRI's role in shaping global trade patterns and enhancing connectivity on a regional scale. The third goal centers around investigating the intersection of Afghanistan's political changes and the BRI. This involves a meticulous examination of the dynamic interaction between the two elements, elucidating how political transitions in Afghanistan and the goals of the BRI mutually influence one another. Finally, the research aspires to offer actionable policy insights. By distilling practical recommendations, the aim is to provide guidance for policymakers, stakeholders, and international actors engaged with Afghanistan. These insights are intended to contribute significantly to informed decision-making in the evolving geopolitical landscape, fostering effective engagement and cooperation in the region.

Research Problem:

The research problem at the heart of this study is to discern how Afghanistan's ongoing political change influences its role in the international arena, particularly in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. Understanding the implications of this

political transition is essential for anticipating the nation's future trajectory and its impact on global initiatives.

Research Question:

The central research question guiding this inquiry is: How does Afghanistan's current political change affect its engagement with and the future prospects of the Belt and Road Initiative?

Hypothesis:

Building upon existing literature and initial observations, we hypothesize that the political changes in Afghanistan will significantly impact its cooperation with the BRI. These changes may present both challenges and opportunities, shaping the nation's positioning in the evolving landscape of global economic and political collaborations.

Method and material

To address the research question and test the hypothesis, a mixed-methods approach has been employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to comprehensively investigate recent political developments in Afghanistan concerning its engagement with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The integration of these two methodological approaches has served a dual purpose. First, it has ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the research topic. Qualitative methods, specifically an in-depth examination of recent political developments through content analysis, have provided insights into the contextual nuances of Afghanistan's political landscape. Meanwhile, quantitative data, encompassing economic indicators and collaboration metrics, have offered numerical insights for statistical analysis.

The qualitative analysis, using content analysis as the chosen technique, has involved systematically examining the content of text or visual materials related to recent political developments in Afghanistan. This method has aimed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings embedded in the qualitative data, contributing depth and context to the overall research findings.

Simultaneously, the quantitative data collection has encompassed various economic indicators such as trade volume and infrastructure investment, along with collaboration metrics like the number of joint

projects and China-Afghanistan bilateral agreements associated with the BRI. The purpose of integrating quantitative data has been to provide a more objective and measurable understanding of Afghanistan's engagement with the BRI, adding precision to the overall research analysis.

The ultimate objective of this research plan has been to achieve a holistic understanding of Afghanistan's interaction and involvement with the BRI. The qualitative and quantitative findings have been integrated to offer a comprehensive analysis, allowing for a more complete and nuanced interpretation of the research outcomes. This approach reflects a well-thought-out strategy that has leveraged the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, ensuring a robust examination of the intricate relationship between recent political changes in Afghanistan and its role within the Belt and Road Initiative.

Literature review

The geopolitical landscape of Afghanistan has been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, particularly in the context of the nation's complex history of political transitions. Researchers have explored the multifaceted dimensions of Afghanistan's political dynamics and the implications of these changes on regional and global affairs. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing scholarship on Afghanistan's political landscape and its intersections with global initiatives, with a specific focus on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In this analysis, the researcher examines the strategic role of different countries and provides a framework for evaluating Afghanistan's potential contributions and challenges within the framework of the BRI [1]. Besides Maryam Wharij worked on, Afghanistan, a buffer country between Central Asia and South Asia, which has transit, advantages to advance the economic goals of neighboring countries. China, the second-largest economic power, is attempting to monitor and trade with South Asia, West Asia, and Europe through the One Belt One Road project, controlling India as a regional rival. Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, due to its territorial proximity and relative security, is considered a favorable solution for

implementing and stabilizing this economic strategy. Despite its rough topography, Afghanistan's strategic location allows China to reach the Great Middle East and Europe [2]. Otherwise, the works of Jonathan Schell the Belt and Road Initiative Research Center contribute to the broader understanding of the geopolitical implications of large-scale infrastructure projects. These studies offer a theoretical foundation for exploring how political changes in Afghanistan may influence the nation's participation in the BRI [3].

Regional cooperation and economic development are crucial elements for Afghanistan's future. Examining Afghanistan's role within the BRI in the context of economic possibilities and investment is essential for gauging the potential impact on the nation's stability and prosperity [4].

The study delved into the political changes within Afghanistan, offering insights into historical transitions and the role of external actors in shaping the nation's political trajectory. Understanding the historical context is crucial for comprehending the new state of Afghanistan's politics [5]. The comprehensive analysis of the BRI has proliferated, an overview providing valuable insights into the goals and projects associated with this ambitious initiative [6]. Similarly Dr Faisal Javaid's provided study, the New Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Transport Corridor. Here, the author views the perspective for the development of transregional connectivity through the institutional base of the SCO. To provide normal economic development, it should provide a satisfactory institutional basis, and SCO may act as a good platform for further cooperation [7]. In synthesizing these strands of literature, it becomes evident that the interplay between Afghanistan's political change and the BRI is a topic ripe for exploration. Existing studies provide valuable groundwork, but a comprehensive analysis specific to Afghanistan's current political context is notably absent. This article aims to address this gap by offering a nuanced examination of how recent political changes in Afghanistan may shape its engagement with the Belt and Road Initiative.

Afghanistan in the "One Belt and One Road" project

Afghanistan is a landlocked country which shares its geographic attitude with Central and South Asia, is known as the transit crossroads due to its unique geopolitical position. Despite its landlessness and lack of sea routes, Afghanistan serves as a vital economic link in Central, South, Middle East, and East Asia [13].

Afghanistan, a nation rich in natural resources, handicrafts, and agricultural products, can take advantage of the "One Belt One Road" plan to secure affordable access to the markets in Asia and Europe, which will boost sales of its products [14].

Afghanistan can play a pivotal role in the historical Silk Road, featuring two routes, the southern route and a sub-route extending from Balkh to Shekhari Valley, linking crucial destinations like Bamyán, Kabul, Peshawar, and India. In the context of the new Silk Road, known as "One Belt and One Road," Afghanistan has the potential to reclaim its historical significance and positioning. This is evident as Afghanistan lies along two out of the three main routes of this initiative. Notably, it plays a crucial role in the northern route connecting China to Russia, Europe, and North Africa via Central Asia (including Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan). Additionally, Afghanistan is integral to the central route, which stretches from Central Asia to Iran and the Gulf through Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, ultimately linking Iran, Turkey, and the Mediterranean Sea. The inclusion of Afghanistan in these key routes underscores its importance in the overall success of the "One Belt and One Road" project [15].

Afghanistan's vast underground resources and undeveloped commercial and economic markets make it a distinct neighbor for China, as the country is transitioning from an agricultural to an industrial country, and China is in need of an economic partner like Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's interest in engaging with the project stems from two primary reasons:

- 1. Economic Self-Sufficiency:** Afghanistan is not yet economically self-sufficient and relies on the support of the international community and friendly nations. To break free from economic dependence on external aid, Afghanistan seeks a defined

plan for economic autonomy. Participation in regional and global economic projects like the "One Belt and One Road" is viewed as a crucial step toward achieving economic self-sufficiency. It is not only providing an avenue for economic development but also presents an opportunity to forge extensive relations with countries on the regional and international stage.

2. Economic and Development

Goals: The "One Belt and One Road" initiative, proposed around 11 years ago, has demonstrated practical success in numerous countries across Southeast Asia, Africa, and neighboring nations like Pakistan. Recognizing the potential benefits, Afghanistan's new government acknowledges the need for active involvement in significant economic projects. This proactive stance is seen as essential for lifting the country out of its challenging economic circumstances and establishing a robust, independent economy. By strategically aligning with its geographical location, Afghanistan aims not only to elevate its economic standing but also to enhance its political relations within the region. The new government, therefore, expresses keen interest in actively participating in the "One Belt and One Road" project as a key component of its economic and geopolitical strategy.

The new government of Afghanistan, understanding its conditions and needs, wants to expand its relations with China and participate in projects such as "One Belt, One Road" with China. In addition to signing contracts and diplomatic relations with China, this country has also taken practical measures to accelerate the construction of the Wakhan road, which directly connects Afghanistan to China. In a meeting held in Kandahar, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the economic deputy of the prime minister, said about the Wakhan road: "We will build a road for you and God willing, everything will be transported through this road, travel to China. Or trade all the way with China. This will be done and will be completed as soon as possible" [16].

China maintains extensive and enduring interests in Afghanistan, fostering consistently positive relations with the country. Despite historical periods of relative weakness, Afghanistan's ties with China have remained cordial and non-controversial. China serves as a positive

example for Afghanistan, particularly in the context of participating in economic initiatives such as the "One Belt and One Road." Therefore, Chinese government has facilitated a platform for high officials of Taliban to deliver speeches and actively participate in both regional and international meetings. This approach underscores the growing warmth in relations between Kabul and Beijing.

China stands out as the sole nation that has officially recognized the newly formed government by accepting its ambassador. In a symbolic gesture of diplomatic trust, China has handed over credentials to the Chief Minister of the new government through its ambassador [17].

On October 5, 2023, Wang Yi, Director of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, met with Acting Foreign Minister of the Afghan Interim Government Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi at the 3rd China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation. They discussed strengthening cooperation between China and Afghanistan, promoting ecological conservation, sustainable development, and livelihood improvement. Afghanistan actively participated in the 19th Asian Games Hangzhou, sending over 100 athletes, demonstrating openness and inclusivity.

China values Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, respecting the Afghan people's independent choice. China does not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs and hopes for a peaceful and happy Afghan people. China supports Afghanistan in building a broad-based, inclusive government, exercising moderate governance, adhering to good neighborliness, and cracking down on terrorism. China is ready to help Afghanistan develop its relations with neighboring countries and integrate into regional economic cooperation through coordination mechanisms. Wang Yi hopes Afghanistan will continue to combat on terrorism and exterminate the terrorist forces of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. Afghanistan's newly-appointed ambassador to Afghanistan is supportive of bilateral relations and actively participates in Belt and Road cooperation. The country will take concrete actions to safeguard the safety of the Chinese people in Afghanistan [18].

Furthermore, China facilitated to the delegation from the Taliban, led by Nuruddin

Aziz, the Minister of Industry and Trade. for their participation in the third International Cooperation Forum "Belt and Road,". The forum hosted representatives from more than 130 countries. Following the Taliban assuming power, there has been a notable surge in Chinese investments in Afghanistan. China is actively investing \$1.2 billion in various mining projects, including the Qashqara oil field, the second copper mine in Logar, the Ghorian iron mine in Herat, and the gold mine in the Samti area of Takhar province. This increased financial commitment underscores China's growing economic engagement with Afghanistan, particularly in the exploitation of the country's mineral resources.

Following the ascent of the new government in Afghanistan, China has displayed a robust eagerness to invest in the country's mines and subterranean resources. In response, the Afghan government has specifically urged Beijing to initiate mining activities at the Logar Ainak copper mine, Afghanistan's largest copper deposit. Notably, China has demonstrated a keen interest in mining lithium, a highly valuable mineral. Discussions have taken place between China and the Taliban regarding potential collaboration in this sector. Lithium is renowned for its capacity to store electricity and is integral in the production of batteries used in various devices such as phones, electric cars, laptops, and drones. This underscores the strategic alignment between China's economic interests and Afghanistan's significant mineral resources [19].

Now, in the post-Covid period, one can observe the formation of new trends in the field of macro-regional geo-economic processes; the formation of the North-South belt is underway. In this case, two factors also played an important role. First, there is an increase in Sino-Iranian cooperation, where China is busy institutionalizing its influence. Secondly, NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan, which created a power vacuum in the country, but which is apparently being filled by China as the leading player. Given China's strong position in these countries, and the fact that relations between China and Iran, as well as China, are largely purely economic in nature. Considering that Xi Jinping announced the Belt and Road in 2013, the geostrategic situation in those countries was of a different nature, and the

geopolitical configuration in the post-Covid period changed significantly in favor of China.

It can be noted that if earlier, during the 2010s, only Pakistan occupied a central position within the framework of the implementation of CPEC, the relationship between South and Central Asia * (and then, in this respect, it is worth considering the Central Asian region not as a whole, but in the form of XUAR), then at the moment, Iran is completing the logical unification of this process, which will be able to unite South and Central Asia.

The geopolitical attitude of Afghanistan, according to the regional security complex theory, allows to it be crucial figure in the conducting of the regional initiatives. Another factor that attracts attention is the geostrategic position of Uzbekistan as a strategic hub of the region. The geographical and, accordingly, strategic feature of Uzbekistan is that the country plays both an important role and in terms of the implementation of the East-West project, i.e. The Middle Way and North-South. Against this background, it is quite logical to intensify within the framework of regional associations: on November 1, 2023, the First Transport Forum of the SCO member states were held in Tashkent. The forum brought together representatives of nine SCO member states. The plenary session featured substantive speeches by key figures such as Uzbekistan Transport Minister Ilkhom Makhkamov, SCO Deputy Secretary General Sohail Khan and other prominent delegates. Discussions ranged from exploring the development potential of the transport and logistics sectors to the prospects of digitalization and the implementation of infrastructure projects for sustainable economic growth. Deputy Minister of Transport of Kazakhstan Talgat Lastaev said that a memorandum was signed on the sidelines of the forum. The memorandum provides for the creation of a transport corridor Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan. Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Pakistan - the main members of the SCO - are an integral part of this initiative. Afghanistan and Belarus, although they have observer status, are key players in this corridor. Belarus will become a full member in 2024.

Thus, the situation plays in favor of

Afghanistan as a strategic hub; this, on the one hand, can create appropriate institutional mechanisms that will play a positive role in the regional "socialization" of Afghanistan, as well as its involvement in the geo-economic project.

Afghanistan, situated as a neighbor to China, has experienced two years under Taliban rule, during which the group has managed to stabilize the situation within the country. Given these developments, it is natural for neighboring countries, including China, to seek the establishment of relations with Afghanistan. From China's perspective, placing economic influence in Afghanistan holds particular significance, especially with the withdrawal of American troops from the country after a two-decade presence. This withdrawal creates a favorable opportunity for China to enhance its economic influence in Afghanistan.

A key factor contributing to Afghanistan's importance for China lies in the potential use of its influence to counteract separatist tendencies in western China and the Xinjiang province. China views Afghanistan as a strategic partner in maintaining regional stability and preventing challenges that may emerge in its own territory.

By involving Kabul in the Belt and Road project, Beijing is poised to invest several billion dollars into Afghan infrastructure initiatives. In the context of its competition with other global powers, Beijing seeks to diminish their influence in the region, including Afghanistan, striving to establish a power balance. China aims to cultivate trust with Afghanistan, hoping for the implementation of its plan in the country.

On July 8, 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban announced the government's agreement with China Mining Production and Investment Company, committing to a \$350 million investment in diverse sectors of the Afghan economy, such as the electricity and cement industries. Notably, the company's representatives have assured an initial \$350 million investment, with a commitment to encouraging other Chinese companies to participate in Afghanistan's economic landscape. In return, Kabul has pledged to safeguard China's assets and personnel in Afghanistan. Even 540 million \$ contracts have been signed to Chinese companies like oil extraction from the AMU Sea oil field [20].

3. Security Implications and Perspectives for the Regional Engagement

After the Taliban came to power, as well as its natural political and social legitimization, then in this regard, a normal prospect of Afghanistan's involvement in regional affairs arises, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis. The participation of other regional players, within the framework of the formation of the "North-South" economic belt, also plays an important role.

At the moment, since the post-Covid period and the intensification of the Russian-Western confrontation, a new geo-economic trend or process is being formed, the economic belt "North-South", in which the economic and strategic role of Afghanistan will only strengthen. Among other things, the change in the geopolitical configuration with Iran played an important role in this sense. Previously, in the 2000s, China and Russia were wary of inviting Iran to any regional associations, but with the change in global geopolitical configurations, the intensification of the Sino-American rivalry, as well as the Russian-Ukrainian war, all this led to a rapprochement between Iran and its Russian and Chinese projects. Thus, in recent years, Sino-Iranian cooperation has intensified. Given the geographical factor of Iran and its proximity to Pakistan, as well as its continental and oceanic identity, this makes Iran an important partner for China and a participant in the implementation of the Belt and Road. If earlier, in the 2010s, only Pakistan occupied a central position in the implementation of CPEC, the relationship between South and Central Asia, now the inclusion of Iran, and in the future Afghanistan, strengthens the process of institutionalization of the North-South relationship.

Another factor that attracts attention is the geostrategic position of Uzbekistan as a strategic hub of the region. The geographical and, accordingly, strategic feature of Uzbekistan is that the country plays both an important role in terms of the implementation of the East-West project, i.e. the Middle Way, and the North-South economic belt. Against this background, it is quite logical to become more active within the framework of regional associations: on November 1, 2023, the First Transport Forum of the SCO Member States was held in Tashkent. The forum brought together representatives of nine SCO

member-states. The plenary session featured informative speeches by key figures such as the Minister of Transport of Uzbekistan Ilkhom Makhkamov, Deputy Secretary General of the SCO Sohail Khan and other prominent delegates. Discussions ranged from exploring the potential for developing the transport and logistics sectors to the prospects for digitalization and the implementation of infrastructure projects for sustainable economic growth .

Deputy Minister of Transport of Kazakhstan Talgat Lastayev reported that a memorandum was signed on the sidelines of the forum. The memorandum envisages the creation of a transport corridor Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan. Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Pakistan — the main members of the SCO — are an integral part of this initiative. Afghanistan and Belarus, although they have observer status, are key players in this corridor. Belarus will become a full member in 2024 [7].

In this case, as with Iran, it is worth considering the balance of power factor. NATO's presence in Afghanistan, to some extent, interfered with the implementation of Chinese initiatives. However, given the level and extent of Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, as well as the nature of Chinese-Pakistani relations, it will play a positive role in the implementation of the North-South geo-economic project. The creation of this corridor will contribute to the development of new, as well as geo-economic security mechanisms. As Pakistani expert Faisal Javaid points out: "Previous agreements between Pakistan and the Central Asian states faced problems due to unfavorable conditions in Afghanistan. However, with the inclusion of Russia and Belarus, a new perspective has emerged, especially after the war in Ukraine, as Russia is looking for new trade routes to bypass sanctions. The Russians are also looking for access to warm water. Geographically, this region was connected by the old silk road.

Thus, given that the process of institutionalization of Chinese influence in the region is formed within the framework of the change in the balance of power, it can be assumed that the implementation of the North-South project, on a significant scale, has geopolitical prerequisites. As a rule, India has become a member of QUAD, an anti-Chinese association, within the

framework of the Indo-Pacific doctrine, designed to contain China. Given the fact that the institutionalization of Chinese influence in Eurasia has become possible due to the change in the balance of power, then in this case, most likely, the logic of the implementation of the geoeconomic North-South project will occur in the context of confrontation with India, openly from China, and covertly from countries under China's influence.

Thus, the geographical location of Afghanistan plays an important role in China's institution-building in Central Asia, if Afghanistan is considered part of Central Asia. For Russia and the United States, the role of Afghanistan was reduced to a geopolitically significant task, where the military-political factor played a central role. For China, on the contrary, the role of Afghanistan is reduced to a geoeconomic goal, which will play a stabilizing role in terms of the country's development.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of Afghanistan's political change and its impact on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reveals a multifaceted relationship between the new government and China, indicating significant developments in economic, political, and security realms.

1. Active Participation in BRI Projects:

The results of China-Afghanistan relations, which exist in some areas, show that the new Afghan government, arising from political developments, is actively involved in projects such as "One Belt, One Road" with China. And the construction of the Wakhan Road, which directly connects Afghanistan to China, has been accelerated, and high-ranking officials of the Taliban government announced that the Wakhan Road will be completed in the mid-term. This interaction is not only of economic importance, but also has political and security implications for Afghanistan. The commitment of the government to participate in BRI projects emphasizes its strategic approach towards reconstruction, development and overall establishment of peace and security in the country.

2. Strengthened Relations with China:

A noteworthy outcome is the marked

improvement in relations between Afghanistan and China in the aftermath of political change. The new government has signed substantial agreements, amounting to billions of dollars, reflecting the depth and significance of the partnership. This financial commitment from China demonstrates a mutual interest in fostering economic development and stability in Afghanistan. The signing of these agreements highlights the new government's proactive approach in leveraging international collaborations for the betterment of the nation.

3. Emphasis on Inclusivity in the BRI:

China's consistent message that the BRI is not exclusive to China aligns with the active participation of the new Afghan government. The BRI, according to Chinese government officials, is open to any country willing to participate and take ownership of the project. This inclusive approach allows Afghanistan to not only benefit from the economic aspects but also positions it as a responsible stakeholder in the success of the BRI. The new government's keen interest in this initiative reflects a commitment to active participation and shared responsibility.

4. Strategic Diplomacy with China:

Despite the new government not being universally recognized, China has shown a keen interest in establishing close relations with Afghanistan for various political and economic reasons. The signing of numerous contracts and the invitation of government ministers to international meetings on the BRI demonstrate a strategic approach to diplomatic relations. China's interest in the new government suggests a recognition of its potential role in the success of the BRI, emphasizing the strategic importance of Afghanistan in regional economic dynamics.

5. Need for Continued Attention and Cooperation:

While the results highlight the positive trajectory of Afghanistan's engagement with the BRI, there is a clear need for sustained attention and cooperation. The success of the BRI in Afghanistan hinges on the commitment of both the new government and China. It is understandable from the desire and active efforts to get the new government to contribute to the BRI that they emphasize the importance of strategic planning and ensure that the benefits of the plan are aligned with the broader goals of Afghanistan's development.

In conclusion, the results and discussion point to a transformative stage in the political and economic landscape of Afghanistan. Active participation in the Belt and Road Initiative demonstrates the strategic alignment between Afghanistan and China, which provides avenues for economic growth, political stability, and regional cooperation. The success of BRI in Afghanistan requires continuous cooperation and strict policy implementation that emphasizes the joint responsibility of both sides in achieving the overall goals of this initiative.

6. Peaceful development and regional security

There is a problem of stabilization of Afghanistan, internally and externally. In this sense, Afghanistan's participation within the BRI plays an important and crucial role. Afghanistan's engagement to the regional organizations will make mechanical institutions which will defend and clear its diplomacy. Then, eventually, BRI may open good conditions for Afghanistan's trade relations not only with China, but also with Central Asian states and Russia, which leads to political stabilization. In this sense, institutions may lead to the direct and indirect stabilization within the region. BRI maybe a first logical step to the SCO and CICA further memberships.

7. Regional engagement and multilateral relations

Afghanistan's involvement in regional affairs plays an important role in stabilizing the situation in the country. Afghanistan's peaceful development can be supported by the country's involvement in various regional initiatives, and China's Belt and Road Initiative plays a central role in this regard. Afghanistan's involvement and participation in regional institutions should contribute to the development of peace and stability. At the moment, the prospects of the North-South Economic Belt, and the Belt and Road in general, are still emerging. In the future, with the recognition of the Taliban as a legitimate force in the country, this will lead to more broad participation in regional initiatives.

Conclusion

The article concludes that the recently formed government, post-political transformation, is actively implementing significant projects like "One Belt and One

Road" in Afghanistan. according to the geopolitical location of Afghanistan These projects hold substantial economic, political, and security importance for the both countries, aiding in reconstruction, development, and ensuring peace and security. During this period, Afghanistan-China relations have strengthened, marked by billion-dollar contracts, such as a \$540 million deal for Chinese companies to extract oil from the AMU Sea oil field.

Chinese government officials consistently emphasize that the "One Belt and One Road" initiative is not exclusive to China and is open to any participating country. China aims to actively engage and take responsibility for the project on a global scale. Despite the new government's lack of international recognition, China has forged numerous contracts with them, inviting government ministers to international meetings on the "One Belt and One Road" initiative. China's active involvement suggests a keen interest in aligning the new government's contributions with the broader developmental goals of both Afghanistan and China.

In conclusion, China's intention to actively participate in the new government's activities highlights the importance of strategic planning and ensuring that the benefits of the BRI plan are consistent with the common development goals of both countries. In addition, the success of the BRI in Afghanistan requires increased attention and support from China.

China's policy and strategy towards Afghanistan is not solely concerned over the bilateral relations but it can bring the perspectives of the regional engagement which boosts stability and development.

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АУҒАНСТАНДАҒЫ САЯСИ ӨЗГЕРІСТЕР ЖӘНЕ "БІР БЕЛДЕУ, БІР ЖОЛ " БАСТАМАСЫ: ЖАҒДАЙҒА ШОЛУ

Шриконт КОНДАПАЛЛИ, PhD, профессор, Джавахарлал Неру университеті, Нью-Дели қ.,
Үндістан, srikondapalli@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9559-8492>

Лейла ДЕЛОВАРОВА, PhD, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ Ұлттық Университеті, Алматы қ.,
Қазақстан, delovarova@mail.ru, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3163-5933>

Билал ДЖАН, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ Ұлттық Университеті, Алматы қ., Қазақстан, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8894-8634>

Алибек ЕРМАКОВ, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ Ұлттық Университеті, Алматы қ., Қазақстан, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5447-0292>

ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПЕРЕМЕНЫ В АФГАНИСТАНЕ И ИНИЦИАТИВА "ОДИН ПОЯС, ОДИН ПУТЬ": ОБЗОР СИТУАЦИИ

Шрикант КОНДАПАЛЛИ, PhD, профессор, Джавахарлал Неру университеті, Нью-Дели қ., Үндістан, srikondapalli@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9559-8492>

Лейла ДЕЛОВАРОВА, PhD, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан, delovarova@mail.ru, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3163-5933>

Билал ДЖАН, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8894-8634>

Алибек ЕРМАКОВ, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5447-0292>