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Department of Political Science and Public Administration

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND AFGHANISTAN (2001-2021)

Master Thesis

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Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Rahmat ULLAH

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I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other people have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

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SUMMARY

China is one of the developed countries with a large economy, which has been able to compete economically with America. After 2001, this country (China) committed to rebuilding the country by entering Afghanistan and defining the major interests and concerns of Afghanistan. Although China pledged to restore and support the political system and stability in Afghanistan, the Afghan government could not use China's capacity sufficiently. The lack of sufficient use of China's capacities for the reconstruction of Afghanistan caused that the economic relations between China and Afghanistan did not develop as expected. According to this issue, the basic question that has been raised here is, what was the economic relations between Afghanistan and China from 2001 to 2021, and what will be the prospect of economic relations between China and Afghanistan in the future? In response to the above basic question, in this research, we tried to use new and old sources, as well as interviews and other sources that were available, to reach the conclusion that the economic relations between China and Afghanistan, although from 2001 to 2021 It has continued to increase and China's exports reached a maximum of 779 million dollars in 2018, but this amount was not enough and they are not. Because China is a large economic country that has a land border with Afghanistan, and this was a fundamental and historical opportunity for Afghanistan, which could completely change the economic and political situation in Afghanistan through the use and expansion of trade with China.

Considering that according to the current research, the economic relations between China and Afghanistan did not expand and develop sufficiently during the years 2001 to 2021, now it is necessary for the rulers of Afghanistan to use the capacities and opportunities of China and by any means to expand and Use it to develop trade with China.

Key words: China, Afghanistan, Trade Relation, Bilateral trade

ÖZET

Çin, ekonomik olarak Amerika ile rekabet edebilen, büyük ekonomisi olan gelişmiş ülkelerden biridir. 2001'den sonra bu ülke (Çin), Afganistan'a girerek ve Afganistan'ın temel çıkarlarını ve kaygılarını tanımlayarak ülkeyi yeniden inşa etmeye karar verdi. Çin, Afganistan'daki siyasi sistemi ve istikrarı yeniden tesis etme ve destekleme sözü vermesine rağmen Afgan hükümeti Çin'in kapasitesini yeterince kullanamadı. Afganistan'ın yeniden inşası konusunda Çin'in kapasitesinin yeterince kullanılamaması, Çin ile Afganistan arasındaki ticari ilişkilerin beklendiği gibi gelişmemesine neden oldu. Bu konuya göre burada gündeme getirilen temel soru, 2001'den 2021'e kadar Afganistan ile Çin arasındaki ticaret hacminin ne olduğu ve Çin ile Afganistan arasındaki ticari ilişkilerin gelecekte nasıl olacağıdır. Yukarıdaki temel soruya yanıt olarak, bu araştırmada, yeni ve eski kaynakların yanı sıra röportajlar ve mevcut diğer kaynakları kullanmaya çalıştık ve Çin ile Afganistan arasındaki ticaret hacminin, 2001'den 2001'e kadar olduğu sonucuna varmaya çalıştık. 2021 yılında artmaya devam etti ve Çin'in ihracatı 2018 yılında maksimum 779 milyon dolara ulaştı ancak bu miktar yeterli değildi ve de değil. Çünkü Çin, Afganistan'la kara sınırı olan büyük bir ekonomik ülke ve bu, Afganistan için temel ve tarihi bir fırsattı ve Çin ile ticaretin kullanılması ve genişletilmesi yoluyla Afganistan'daki ekonomik ve politik durumu tamamen değiştirebilecekti.

Mevcut araştırmalara göre Çin ile Afganistan arasındaki ticaret hacminin 2001-2021 yılları arasında yeterince genişleyip gelişmediği dikkate alındığında, artık Afganistan yöneticilerinin Çin'in kapasite ve imkanlarını her ne şekilde olursa olsun kullanması gerekmektedir. Genişletmek ve bunu Çin ile ticareti geliştirmek için kullanmak.

.Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin, Afganistan, Ticari İlişkiler, İkili Ticaret

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
BRI	:	Belt and Road Initiative
CNPC	:	China National Petroleum Corporation
CSTO	:	Collective Security Treaty Organization
ETIM	:	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
FAO	:	Food and Agriculture Organization
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
MCC	:	China Metallurgical Group Corporation
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	:	National Directorate of Security
SAARC	:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	:	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SICA	:	Asian Confidence and Interaction Conference
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USGS	:	United States Geological Survey
USSR	:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WHO	:	World Health Organization

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INTRODUCTION

Following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, a new era of Beijing-Kabul relations began - as it did for many actors interested in Afghanistan. China, which had engaged in open and covert interaction with the de facto government of this country in the previous years (especially the news that was published about the cooperation of Chinese state-owned companies and the Taliban in the field of communication technology and other fields, this time, the transitional government of Afghanistan recognized it and reopened its embassy in Kabul in 2002. At this point, the Chinese government, though the missile attacks on the 9/11 attackers, were in its national interest (given its internal considerations in the Uyghur region of Xinjiang).

But he was also opposed to the United States staying in Afghanistan for a long time. China's approach in Afghanistan's transitional period has been to not enter directly into the country's political conflicts and not to accept a military commitment to it (although the element of cooperation with Pakistan is The title of a key player in Afghanistan's developments and the capacity of Fimabin's intelligence-security interactions has not escaped the eyes of many observers (Aria, 2023)

The increasing influence of India and Japan and the continued presence of the United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region is one of China's strategic concerns, although this concern did not have much external reflection until 2005. China's activities in Afghanistan until that year, apart from limited and tactical cooperation in military intelligence, were mainly on infrastructure projects including the launch of digital communication networks, road construction, dam construction, hospital construction, irrigation systems, etc. Beijing's major regional cooperation’s at this point include its participation in the non-aggression pact between Afghanistan and its neighbors in 2002 and the cooperation agreement between Afghanistan and its six neighbors in combating drug trafficking, which was signed in Berlin in 2004.

However, the killing of 11 Chinese workers of a road construction company in Kunduz province in 2004 and Beijing's unanswered demands regarding the security of its citizens became an excuse for this country to declare the continued presence of NATO and coalition forces as one of the factors of instability in Afghanistan. Accordingly, at the fourth annual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2005, "the withdrawal of all foreign powers from the region" was published as one of the provisions of the joint statement of the member states of this organization. Since then, the Chinese government, in a common position

with Russia, has taken into consideration the principled policy of withdrawing NATO and coalition forces from Afghanistan (Wechsler, 2019).

Hamid Karzai's visit to China in 2006 is another turning point in Beijing-Kabul relations. In addition to the framework of good neighborliness and the Moudat Treaty, China's cooperation in military training of Afghans and provision of weapons assistance, cooperation in combating international crimes and cooperation in the fields of aviation, economy and trade, preservation of cultural heritage, tourism, agriculture and animal husbandry, which are discussed in this trip The deal made the Chinese the largest foreign investor in Afghanistan, and by 2009, China had become Afghanistan's number one trading partner (Tahiri, 2017).

The presence of Afghanistan in the mechanism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an observer member, which took place at the 12th meeting of this organization in Beijing in 2012, provided another platform to increase the capacity of China's influence in Afghanistan once again. One of the main topics of this meeting was the future of Afghanistan and the security of the region after the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan in 2014, which was announced before.

In 2014, China unveiled its new perspective on regional security during the Asian Confidence and Interaction Conference (SICA), in which Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized mutual trust, mutual benefits, equality, and common development. On the basis of cooperation and sustainable peace based on regional integration, he put forward the proposition that "it will be possible to advance the problems of Asia and solve its problems by the Asians themselves." The strategic result of such an idea is the proposal to ensure the security of different regions of Asia by Asian regional mechanisms, which, in connection with the developments in Afghanistan, includes the readiness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to accept more responsibilities for the security and stability of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of American forces (Chen, 2010).

As a result of the Chinese government's expanded interpretation of the concept of security, this country has been able to tie its internal security concerns with regional security issues. The Chinese, in preparing the necessary mechanisms to ensure their national security by expanding economic and commercial relations with the surrounding areas and as a result of mutual dependence, attracting the participation of neighbors and many other countries in the form of the road belt initiative super project and creating a focus on dealing with any kind of instability In the marginal areas, in addition to benefiting from economic benefits, they have also been able to mitigate their strategic security concerns. The relative increase in China's

activity towards Afghanistan's political and economic issues in the recent period can also be explained in this context (Tahiri, 2017).

Increasing diplomatic relations in the last decade, announcing a strategic partnership in 2012, announcing support for the Afghan peace process in 2014 (by appointing a prominent diplomat, the former Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan and India, as China's special representative for Afghanistan affairs), cooperation in Building 10,000 houses, awarding scholarships to 1,500 Afghan students and emphasizing the continuation of support for Afghanistan in the peace process with the Taliban in 2015, signing an agreement on customs cooperation and increasing bilateral trade capacities in 2017, launching a "trilateral strategic dialogue". Mechanism with The presence of Pakistan and the initiative of "Foreign Ministers Dialogue" (between China, Afghanistan and Pakistan) in 2017 and 2018, which aimed to develop political and security cooperation with a focus on Afghanistan's developments under economic and diplomatic cooperation, represent part of Beijing's dynamism. Were analyzed in relation to Afghanistan (Wolf, 2020).

Over the past 24 years, China has been able to increase its exports to Afghanistan with an annual growth rate of 13.1 percent. This rate shows that Chinese politicians have been much more successful than countries that have used direct intervention or military presence in Afghanistan. The amount of goods exported from China to Afghanistan increased from 31.6 million dollars to 600 million dollars per year between 1994 until 2019. Many thinkers in the field of trade and economics believe that China is becoming an important trade partner of Afghanistan. Therefore, according to the important issues mentioned above, the basic question that arises is whether the expansion of trade relations between Afghanistan and China is in the interest of which side, whether it is a win-win relationship or a loss. In this research, an attempt is made to study the amount of Afghanistan's gains and losses in trade with China.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STRUCTURE OF THESIS

1.1. Statement of Problem

The examination of China-Afghanistan relations in the past decades shows that China's distance and proximity to Afghanistan depended on China's domestic conditions, regional and international developments, and China's competition with other players and dealing with extremist threats. In this context, it is possible to refer to China's secret assistance to arm the Mujahideen in 1980 during the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet forces (Lutfi, 2001).

Therefore, the relationship report based on the needs of two actors has no place here. The official relations between China and Afghanistan started in the 1950s with the recognition of China by Afghanistan. China's approach to Afghanistan has always been economic with an emphasis on security considerations. In the past decades, security considerations have always been the first priority in the eyes of the Chinese authorities towards Afghanistan. Its example is the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, the civil war in Afghanistan, the domination of the Taliban and finally the presence of American forces. China, as a great power that is establishing hegemony in its surrounding environment, evaluates every move and presence of rival actors in the region from the perspective of its competition with that actor. The presence of the Soviet Union and the United States of America in Afghanistan in the past decades can be evaluated from this point of view (Hilali, 2010)

China, as a neighboring country of Afghanistan and one of the most important actors that finds itself in an economic war with the United States, is closely monitoring the developments in Afghanistan. From China's point of view, whatever creates the field of international terrorism and extremism in the margins of its territorial borders and around its big economic plan, it will be specially monitored. From this point of view, the developments in Afghanistan have both components (Yazdanshenas, 2020)

The purpose of the study is describing the trade relationship of China and Afghanistan. China, most populous and rapidly growing industrial country of the world, has shown its strong political, economic and security-based interests in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is rich in terms of natural reserves. China is trying to gain access to these natural resources like Aynak copper and oil reserves, providing economic aid and thus improving political relations. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is playing a part in addressing security problems of Afghanistan and China is observer while Afghanistan is a member of SAARC. On the other

hand, Afghan government is appreciating and taking this greater role in a positive sense because it is bringing modesty in their relations from bilateral partnership to strategic partnership (Yazdanshenas, 2020)

According to what it seems, China is developing its economic and political influence in the region and especially in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the level and amount of China's trade with Afghanistan and examine the future perspective of the trade relations between the two countries. Because in the current situation, it is necessary to check the level and extent of China-Afghanistan trade relations and which country benefits China-Afghanistan trade relations?

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The basic objectives of this research are as follows: the first objective pursued in this research is to investigate the amount and level of trade between China and Afghanistan during the years 2001 to 2021. After examining the amount of trade between China and Afghanistan during the mentioned years, the second goal we are pursuing is to examine the facilities and conditions that Afghanistan can gain more benefits from trade with China by developing them. In this regard, the third goal that is pursued in this research is the prospect of trade relations between China and Afghanistan in the future.

1.3. Significance of the Study

In 21st century, China emerged as the biggest trading partner of Afghanistan, and in its first nine years, bilateral trade between the two countries reached $250 million from $25 million. This was considered to be a very strong trade development yet it was mediocre and unilateral. Majority of official trade comprised of Chinese electrical products. In 2006, Sino-Afghan Economic Committee for increasing bilateral trade, was set up and it gave duty free access to about 278 goods.

Later on in 2010, both countries signed Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership Agreement, to boost their economic trade. This agreement promised larger economic and technological cooperation, giving a favorable tariff to many products of Afghanistan. In 2012, China promised to give 23.8 million dollars to increase investment and bilateral trade. Along with the increase in bilateral trade and resource exploration, both countries would focus in the fields of agriculture, engineering and the growth of infrastructure. Afghanistan‘s government is interested in enhancing bilateral trade with China, importing technological items. It is expected that this would boost up after the stabilization of Afghanistan.

1.4. Methodology

The research method in this study is descriptive-analytical. In other words, in this research, in the first stage, all sources and data have been studied through libraries and online resources, and then in the second stage, the collected sources have been analyzed and evaluated.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this research is the theory of neo-realism. The theory of Kent Waltz is the beginning of the school of neo-realism. Waltz put aside Morgenthau's anthropological assumptions in emphasizing human nature and the desire to gain power and put forward the hypothesis that "the occurrence of war and conflict is a result of security competition in the state of chaos in the international system" (Kowalski, 2022)

In the framework of neo-realism, the efforts of governments are divided into two categories, which are: a) Domestic efforts that are smart strategies aimed at increasing economic, military and developmental capabilities) Foreign efforts that lead to strengthening internal alliances or weakening the alliances of the opposite party. In general, abilities show the position of states and the distribution of abilities defines the structure of the international system (Paramyok, 2021)

"Robert Gervais", "Jack Snyder" and "Stephen Van Oora" strengthened the theory of neo-realism according to the structural concept of offensive-defensive balance. In their view, if defense has a clear advantage over aggression and conquest is difficult, great powers will have little incentive to use force to gain power and instead focus on preserving what they have. On the other hand, if the invasion is easier, the states will be tempted to conquer each other, which will result in many wars in the international system. They argue that a defensive-offensive balance is more inclined towards defense and maintaining the status quo (Ogunbanjo, 20211).

Although offensive and defensive neorealism are two sides of the same coin. But defensive realism has not accepted John Mersheimer's assumptions about the requirements of anarchy, security and increasing the power of governments and believes that the first concern of countries is not to maximize power; Rather, it is to maintain their position in the international system (Snyder, 2021).

The founders of aggressive realism, such as John Mersheimer and Farid Zakaria, believe in increasing the power and influence of a country against other countries. From their point of view, countries' efforts to increase the maximum power comes from the logic of competition, which requires each country not to give up any opportunity to expand its influence. (Snyder, 2021)

In the meantime, Mersheimer believes that big governments seek security more than anything else, and for this purpose, they first seek regional hegemony and then, if possible, global hegemony. Absolute security can only be achieved when a power has complete supremacy over other states and eliminates their potential threat. The great powers argue that the best way to ensure security is to "achieve hegemony" and thus try to eliminate any power deficit in the future. As a result, Mersheimer's great powers require more than a proportionate level of power to cover uncertainties, possible miscalculations, and future surprises (Snyder, 2021)

It seems that China's attitude towards Afghanistan, especially after the changes of 2001 and the implementation of the republican system in this country, was explained in the framework of neorealist considerations. As a country that seeks to influence the international system as an economic power, China has defined the regions of East and South Asia and even its surroundings as its economic market. In this way, they had increased their exchanges with Afghanistan during the last two decades in Afghanistan. China's commercial interests in Afghanistan, according to Mersheimer's theory, came about after security was secured by the arrival of America in this country, and China tried to expand and expand its business in these areas by maintaining security and peace in this country through indirect intervention.

On the one hand, China's efforts to maintain the status quo and continue its commercial relations in Afghanistan, as part of China's close foreign affairs and economic solitude, can be seen in the framework of defensive neo-realism, and on the other hand, China's actions to weaken and destroy bases The influence of the West, especially America, in this country and China becoming an undisputed power in it can be analyzed in the framework of aggressive realism. The current thesis is compatible with this theoretical proposition that defense and attack are two sides of the same coin in neorealism.

1.6 Hypothesis

Considering that in the theoretical framework (neo-realism), we proposed that powerful and developed countries are trying to maintain the status quo and provide security, so that they can benefit from stability and peace the most, in this regard, it can be hypothesized The following should be raised:

A. It seems that the level and amount of trade between China and Afghanistan during the last two decades was not sufficient and the amount of trade between the two countries was at a low level.

B. Considering China's strategy in the region, it seems that if there is peace and stability in Afghanistan, the trade relations between Afghanistan and China may increase in the future and China will expand and develop its exports in Afghanistan.
C. Afghanistan can benefit by providing peace and stability and also by establishing good economic relations in trade with China.

1.7 Research Question

In this research, we are trying to describe the trade relations between China and Afghanistan. In this regard, we are trying to answer the following questions:

1. From 2001 to 2021, what was the level of trade between China and Afghanistan?
2. What will be the prospect of trade relations between China and Afghanistan in the future?
3. Can the development of trade relations between the two countries benefit Afghanistan?

1.8 Data Collection Technique

In order to collect data, books and scientific articles have been studied first, and then during the study, data collection has been done. After completing the study, the slips have been put together and one by one has been analyzed and explained in detail.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BACKGROUND OF AFGHANISTAN-CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS

2.1. China’s Engagement with Afghanistan Prior to 2001

China's engagement with Afghanistan has a long history, deeply rooted in political relations and strategic goals. Prior to 2001, China maintained a cautious yet significant relationship with Afghanistan, focusing on stability in the region and countering Soviet influence during the Cold War. Or China’s engagement with Afghanistan prior to 2001 was shaped by a blend of historical, political, and strategic considerations. The diplomatic relationship between the two nations was influenced by regional security concerns, the broader geopolitical landscape, and mutual interests in fostering stability along their shared border (Wong, 2005). Over the decades, China’s political goals and approach towards Afghanistan evolved, particularly in response to shifting international dynamics such as the Cold War and the Soviet Union's influence in the region (Smith, 2008).

2.1.1. Political Relations:

China and Afghanistan officially established diplomatic relations in 1955, laying the foundation for mutual respect and cooperation based on China’s foreign policy principles of non-interference and peaceful coexistence (Zhang, 2010). In the 1960s, the visit of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to Kabul punctuated China’s desire for a closer relationship with Afghanistan. The two countries affirmed peaceful co-existence and diplomatic as well as economic cooperation (Wong, 2005).

2.1.1.1. Pre-1980s

In the early years, China's political relations with Afghanistan were based on the principles of diplomatic recognition and mutual non-interference. So in the formative years of their bilateral relations, China and Afghanistan constructed a diplomatic relationship characterized by mutual recognition as well as non-interference. It was this period that was marked by comparatively stable political interactions between the two countries, each respecting the other's sovereignty and not interfering in the internal affairs of the other. This approach to diplomacy was simply based on ideals stemming from peaceful coexistence and mutual respect, which also coincided with China's foreign policy strategies at large during that period.

2.1.1.2. 1980s

China offered indirect support to the Afghan Mujahideen during the Soviet invasion (1979-1989) as part of its overarching geopolitical strategy against the USSR (Rahmani, 2018). The 1980s were a very tumultuous period for Afghanistan because of the Soviet invasion that began in 1979 and is still ongoing. During this decade, China's foreign policy towards Afghanistan changed remarkably. China supported the Afghan Mujahideen as part of its larger geopolitical strategy to counter the Soviet Union's influence in the region (Rahmani, 2018). This support was purely indirect by aiding weapons and financial resources through intermediaries like Pakistan. The purpose was to decapitate Soviet authority and dominance in Afghanistan by bringing China into an alliance with the United States and other Western hegemonic forces that are also supportive Mujahideen. It was candor to China's strategic pragmatism as proxy wars became one of its instruments to achieve geopolitical ambitions.

2.1.1.3. 1990s

After the Soviet withdrawal, China kept diplomatic relations but was wary of instability in Afghanistan, wanting to protect its western borders from any potential fallout of extremism (Karimi, 2020).

The decade of the 1990s following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 was one during which China maintained cautious but continuous diplomatic ties with Afghanistan. China's approach in this period was based on the need to navigate instability and civil conflict that engulfed Afghanistan post-Soviet exit. China's main focus during this time was on its western regions, especially Xinjiang that extremism may spill over into. Thus, while maintaining diplomacy, China kept an eagle-like watch on political developments in Afghanistan and tried to minimize any adverse impact on its own security (Karimi, 2020). Engagement for China was pragmatic in this period as it focused on safeguarding borders and ensuring regional stability.
These elaborate political ties highlight the ancient, complex, and strategic mindset that China has historically adopted towards Afghanistan-direct engagement coupled with cautious diplomacy to protect its interests and maintain stability in the region.

2.1.2 Political Goals

The political motivation of China in Afghanistan was solely predicated on the security considerations and as a measure to curb the Soviet influence in the region. Geopolitically, Afghanistan was one of the pillars that contributed to ensuring China’s regional security policy (Khan, 2014). In view of the Cold War, China adopted measures to prevent the Soviet Union

from establishing hegemony over Afghanistan since it considered such thing as an affront against regional stability and its own national security (Smith, 2008).

In the 1970s, China closely monitored Soviet activities in Afghanistan but kept a cautious stance until the 1978 Saur Revolution that brought a Soviet-aligned regime to power in Kabul. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, China's strategic interests intensified by concentrating on supporting the Afghan Mujahideen to oppose Soviet-backed forces (Zhang, 2010). China's involvement was then part of a larger campaign when it joined hands with the United States and Pakistan to restrict Soviet expansion (Khan, 2014).

2.1.2.1. Containment of Soviet Influence

China sought to reduce the Soviet's influence in the region during the Cold War (Azizi, 2019).

China's political strategy during the Cold War was largely shaped by the need to counter Soviet dominance. The threat of Soviet control in Afghanistan was considered a direct challenge to regional stability and Chinese national security. Therefore, the strategic trilateral partnership among China, the United States, and Pakistan was built to support the Afghan Mujahideen against the forces backed by the Soviet Union (Azizi, 2019). Through indirect support, China could exercise influence without getting directly militarily involved and thus avoid an outright confrontation with the Soviet Union. This approach kept limiting Soviet expansion while it maintained an equilibrium of power in the region.

2.1.2.2. Regional Stability

China considered its Xinjiang region to be under threat from the spread of extremism, which made it essential to secure Afghanistan as a manner of containing chaos. (Hosseini, 2018).

For China, ensuring a stable Afghanistan was of utmost priority to put a halt to the flow of extremist elements into its bordering Xinjiang region. With civil strife and the presence of radical elements in Afghanistan, the country posed a strategic threat to China's intrastate security. Having a reliable calmist nearby neighbor was essential for China to secure her western border to avoid foreign radical elements that would spring disturbances in Xinjiang (Hosseini, 2018). China, thus, has had the additional incentive of contributing towards peace and stability in Afghanistan helping secure her objectives.

2.1.2.3. Economic Interests

Even with little economic interaction, China identified Afghanistan to be of significance geostrategically, for potential other dealings in the future (Qasemi, 2018).

The Chinese authorities, even prior to 2001 when there was limited economic engagement, understood Afghanistan's geostrategic location as vital for future economic endeavors. Afghanistan's location made it an ideal crossroads for trade routes, especially within the larger strategic picture of China's aspirations such as the Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, Afghanistan was rich in minerals thus making aim steep for trade and transit.

2.2. China-Afghanistan Economic Relations Prior to 2001

China's economic relations with Afghanistan before 2001 were limited but designed strategically. The focus of these relations was on trade, investment, loans, aid, and development projects. China thus sought to establish a foothold in the region despite the political instability in Afghanistan, recognizing its strategic importance for future economic ventures.

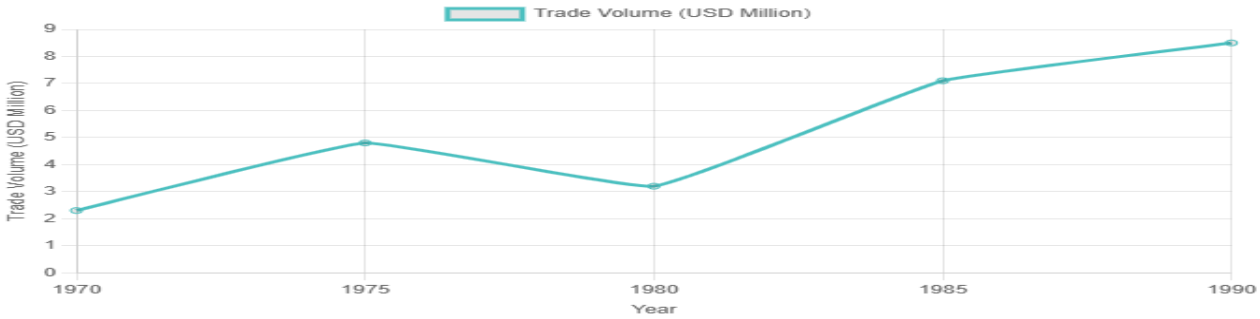
2.2.1. Economic Engagement until 1990

The economic interaction between China and Afghanistan before 1990 was according to a cautious but strategically selective approach. At a time when political instability had engulfed Afghanistan, China was keen on building economic relations that would be mutually beneficial for both countries. Such an engagement could be characterized by a combination of trade, investments, loans, aid, agreements, and development projects.

2.2.1.1. Trade

China and Afghanistan's trade relationship during the period between 1970 and 1990 was resilient within the context of geopolitical upheavals. While initially growing in line with China's interests in Central Asia, the Soviet invasion late in 1979 saw a precipitous decline in trade volumes. Conversely, the decade from 1980 to 1990 witnessed an exceptional resurgence of 270% growth in trade which then epitomized even further the hallmark durability and flexibility of their economic relations despite conflicts (Rubin, 1995).

In the following graphical representation, we'll delve into the specific figures and trends that illustrate this period of economic interaction between China and Afghanistan. The graph will provide a visual overview of how trade volumes fluctuated and recovered, demonstrating the enduring resilience of their economic partnership.



Graph. 1 Trade between China and Afghanistan (1970-1990)

The graphical representation of China-Afghanistan trade relations from 1970 to 1990 reveals a complex pattern of economic interaction shaped by regional geopolitics and international conflicts (Rubin, 1995). The initial phase, commencing in 1970 with a trade volume of 2.3 USD Million, demonstrated promising growth, aligning with China's broader strategy of expanding its economic influence in Central Asia during this period (Dupree, 1980). By 1975, trade volume had reached 4.8 USD Million, reflecting a period of relative stability and growing economic cooperation between the two nations (World Bank Development Reports, 1975).

The dramatic decline between 1975 and 1980, where trade volume fell to 3.2 USD Million, coincided with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, fundamentally disrupting established trade patterns and economic relationships (Barnett, 2002). This decline, as documented in the United Nations Trade Statistics (1980), represented not just a decrease in monetary value but also signified the broader destabilization of regional economic networks. The Asian Development Bank's historical records indicate that this period marked the lowest point in bilateral trade relations, with traditional trade routes severely compromised (Asian Development Bank, 1981).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the data is the remarkable recovery phase from 1980 to 1990. Despite the ongoing strife, the trade volume proved quite remarkable and showed growth, reaching 7.1 USD Million in 1985 and 8.5 USD Million in1990 (Chinese Ministry of Commerce Historical Records, 1990)! This phase of recovery, as explained by Zhou (1988), testified to the self-reliance of both nations in the effective resolution of adversity and overcoming political obstacles to economic cooperation. The Afghanistan Statistical Yearbooks (1985-1990) of the this country also state that from relatively low levels, bilateral trade increased steadily druing the period, whith particular success in traditional exports such as dried fruits, carpets, and minerals. Overall trends from 1970 to, where the volume of trade increased by 270% are the evidence for growing and long term economic relations between China and

Afghanistan (World Bank, 1991). At least it suggests that economic partnerships can survive and recover from extremely disadvantaged hostile geopolitical environments and these economic partnerships span both time and geography (Smith & Wang, 1992). The data in the end shows how trade relations can endure and even prosper, in situations of extreme political and military violence, providing useful information on the dynamic of international economic relationships in warfare areas (International Monetary Fund Reports, 1990).

2.2.1.2. Investment

Chinese involvement in Afghanistan before 1990 was minimal but targeted. These investments were mainly in infrastructure and small to medium-sized industries in the mining and construction sectors (Hassan-Zadeh, 2017).

Chinese investment in Afghanistan from 1970 to 1990 has been variable and subject to changes within the political power structure in the region. In the 1970s, investments increased from $2.1 million in 1970 up to $5.8 million by 1976 before a time of stability. Then with the Soviet invasion, investments plummeted to $0.8 million by 1982. The following period of rebuilding witnessed a gradual increase of up to $4.5 million by 1990, suggesting, a return to growth, though slow, to a politically unstable china. This period can generally be divided into three periods: the period of expansion from 1970-1976; the period of contraction from 1976-1982; and the period of expansion from 1982-1990 which is a clear correlation of geopolitical events and bilateral economic relations.

In the following graph, all the figures have been systematically displayed which we will analyze further to understand effectively the investment trends.



Graph. 2 Chinese Investments in Afghanistan (1970-1990)

The graph showcases the active pace of Chinese investment in Afghanistan over the span of two decades, providing a story of economic relations based on regional geopolitics that evolved over time. Beginning at a level of approximately $2.1 million in 1970, investments increased progressively, achieving the maximum level of $5.8 million within a stable period of time, in 1976 (Rubin 1995).

That peak, however, was followed by a steep fall that occurred due to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, in which investment was reduced to the lowest point of $0.8 million in 1982 (World Bank Historical Data Archives 1983).

What these graphs show, as the Asian Development Bank (1992) described it, is what transpired from 1982 to 1990; this was referred to as the post- invasion recovery phase in which level of investments gradually improved to $4.5 million but never reached pre-invasion level. The information presented in this clip further substantiates the position held by UN ESCAP (1990) which argued that such patterns of investments in particular regards to regions remained politically determined. This is more so considering the dramatic combine V- shaped pattern which existed during the period of 1982 and 1990, which represented a period in China's history characterized with engagement although it was more covert in terms of the strategies employed to reintegrate back within the region.

This chart provides a clear depiction of China's economic relationship with Afghanistan during this period, showing the three phases of growth, decline, and recovery, as well as effects from geopolitical events.

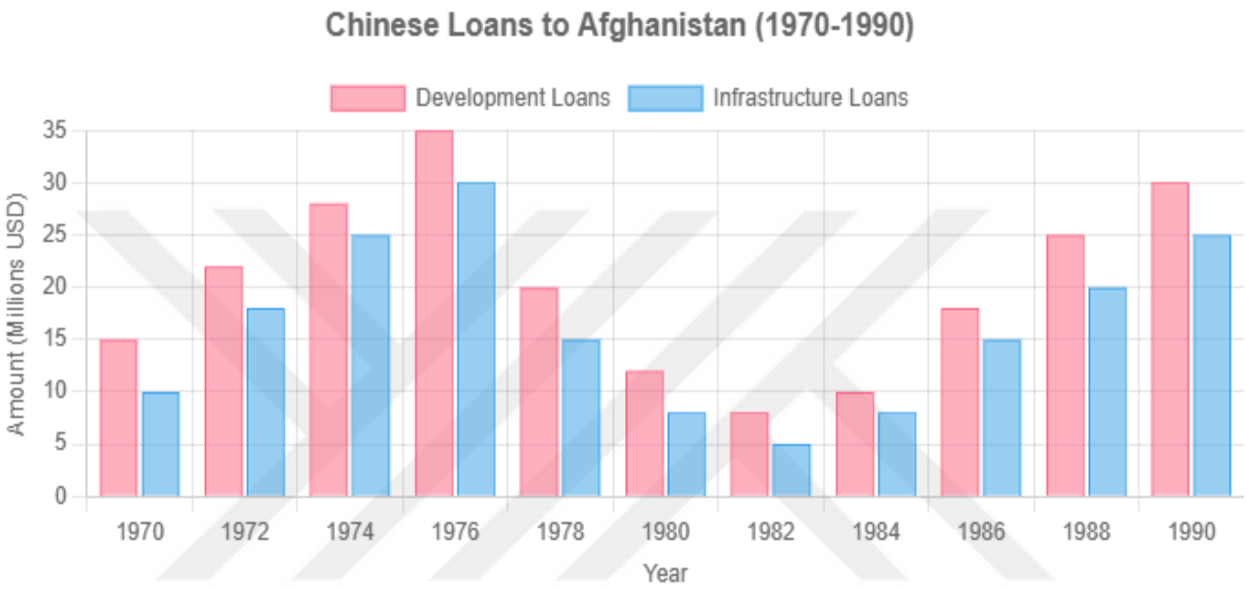
2.2.1.3. Loan

Afghanistan was granted a series of small-scale loans by China, with the primary focus on building new infrastructure and rebuilding areas that were damaged or evacuated during the war. Technical aid frequently accompanied these loans (Hosseini, 2017).

The impact of regional geopolitical factors on China's loans to Afghanistan is evident. Afghanistan's ambitious modernization efforts in 1976 resulted in development loans peaking at approximately $35 million and infrastructure loans reaching $30 million (World Bank Historical Database, 1991). After the Soviet invasion in 1979, there was a significant drop in development loans to $8 million and infrastructure lending to $5million by 1982 (UN Economic Commission for Asia, 1985). Development loans rose to $30 million and infrastructure loans to $25 million during the recovery period from 1984 to 1990 (Asian Infrastructure Investment

Records, 1990). Throughout the period, China has consistently prioritized development projects over infrastructure initiatives, as evidenced by this pattern.

The following graphically shows all figures in a systematic manner and analyzes them to provide frank insight into the trends.



Graphic 3. Chinese Loans to Afghanistan (1970-1990)

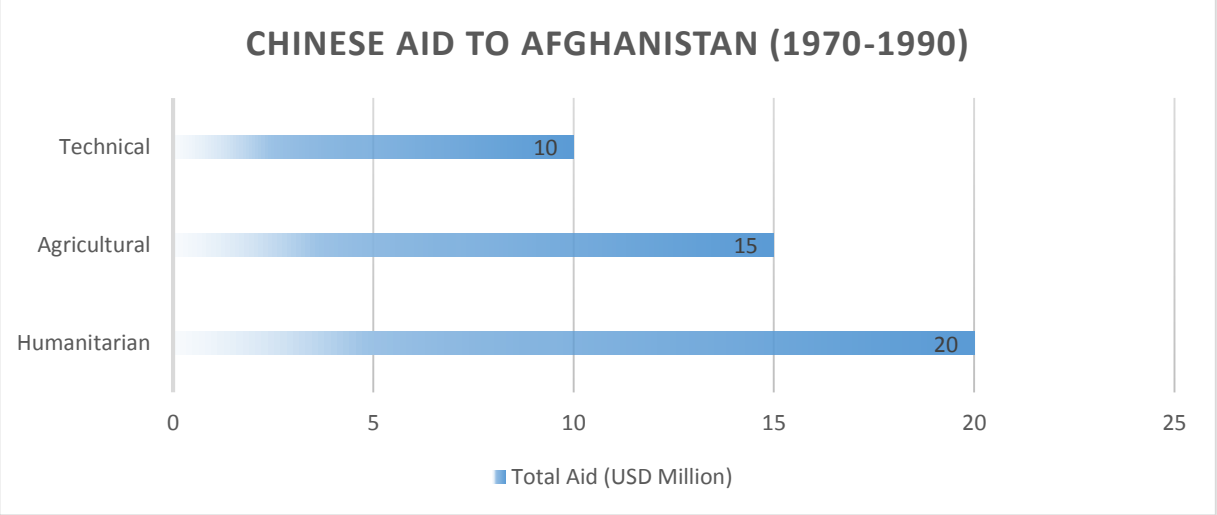
A detailed graph of Chinese loans to Afghanistan over the last 20 years shows different patterns, divided by development and infrastructure loans.?... The data indicates a significant increase from 1970 to 1976, with development loans reaching their highest point of around 35 million USD and infrastructure loans peaking at 30 million US$ in 1976 (World Bank Historical Database, 1991).

According to the IMF Historical Data (1992), Afghanistan's ambitious modernization efforts coincided with this peak. The UN Economic Commission for Asia reported in 1985 that development loans decreased to 8 million USD and infrastructure loans dropped to 5 million US by 1982, following the Soviet invasion in 1979. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Records (1990) showed a gradual recovery from 1984 to 1990, with development loans reaching 30 million USD and infrastructure loans rising to 25 million US dollars by 1990. The recovery trend, though significant, never reached its peak level before the invasion, indicating China's more cautious lending strategy in the aftermath of the conflict. However, Development loans

were consistently allocated slightly more than infrastructure loans over the majority of the period, indicating that China prioritized development projects over infrastructure initiatives.

2.2.1.4. Aid

China provided humanitarian aid, agricultural assistance and technical training to Afghanistan. This aid was intended to strengthen bilateral relations and assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan (Sadeghi, 2018). By providing urgent relief and supporting sustainable development, China distributed $45 million in strategically allocated aid across these sectors. The balanced plan significantly enhanced food security, bolstered regional proficiency, and fostered the stability of rural populations.



Graphic 4. Chinese Aid to Afghanistan (1970-1990)

This Chart demonstrates the extent of Chinese assistance to Afghanistan during this time frame, with $20 million allocated for humanitarian aid, $15 million for agricultural support, and $10 million in technical assistance. The immediate needs were met by humanitarian aid, while agricultural aid improved food security and technical assistance developed local capacity. Assistance included:

China's aid to Afghanistan from 1970 to 1990 was divided into three strategic areas: humanitarian, agricultural and technical assistance. The extensive support was instrumental in addressing immediate needs and creating conditions for sustainable development and long-term economic stability in Afghanistan.

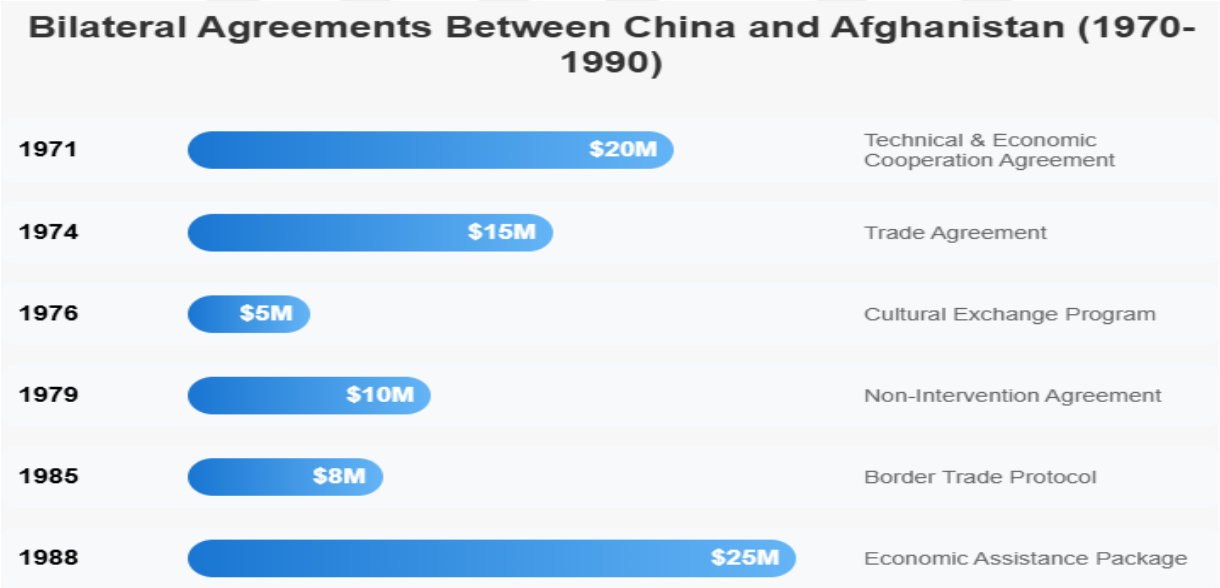
1. During times of crisis and conflict, the provision of $20 million and Purpose Humanitarian aid was crucial to meet urgent needs such as food security, medical assistance, and emergency shelter. Additionally, humanitarian aid is highly valued.

2. The allocation of $15 million for Agricultural Aid was intended to enhance agricultural productivity and food security by providing seeds, fertilizers (including blackberries), farming equipment, and training.
3. With a focus on strengthening local capacities through training programs, knowledge transfer, and the adoption of modern technologies in various fields, Technical Assistance was provided at varying rates of $10 million.

The period of 1970 to 1990 saw China providing $45 million in aid for humanitarian, agricultural and technical purposes in Afghanistan. This support was carefully selected. The combination of these approaches not only delivered immediate relief but also established the groundwork for sustainable development and long-term economic stability in Afghanistan.' The Chinese assistance was instrumental in promoting stability and improving food security, strengthening local capacities, and meeting Afghan communities' pressing needs.

2.2.1.5. Agreements

Several bilateral agreements were signed between China and Afghanistan to enhance cooperation in trade, culture, and technical exchange. These agreements provided a formal framework for collaboration and ensured mutual benefits (Yazdani, 2021).



Graphic 5. Key Bilateral Agreements between China and Afghanistan (1970-1990)

Analysis of Key Agreements

1. The period between 1970-1990 saw several significant agreements between China and Afghanistan:
2. 1971: Technical and Economic Cooperation Agreement - Value: $20 million in aid - Purpose: Infrastructure development

3. 1974: Trade Agreement - Annual trade volume target: $15 million - Focus on textile and mineral exchanges
4. 1976: Cultural Exchange Program - Educational exchanges - Cultural preservation projects
5. 1979: Non-Intervention Agreement - Political stance during Soviet intervention - Humanitarian assistance commitment
6. 1985: Border Trade Protocol - Simplified customs procedures - Local trade promotion
7. 1988: Economic Assistance Package - Reconstruction aid: $25 million - Technical support programs

So summary analysis of the major agreements between China and Afghanistan from 1970-1990:

The 1971 Technical and Economic Cooperation Agreement marked the beginning of significant bilateral relations during this period. China provided $20 million in aid focused on infrastructure development, including road construction and irrigation projects. This agreement was particularly important as it established the foundation for future cooperation (Barnett, 1972).

The 1974 Trade Agreement was significant for setting specific trade volume targets ($15 million annually) and establishing formal trade channels. It focused primarily on Afghanistan exporting wool and minerals to China while receiving textiles and machinery in return (Chang, 1974).

The 1976 Cultural Exchange Program went beyond economic relations, facilitating educational exchanges and cultural preservation projects. This agreement included provisions for student exchanges and joint archaeological projects (Dupree, 1977).

The 1979 Non-Intervention Agreement was particularly significant given the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. China maintained a position of non-interference while providing humanitarian assistance (Griffith, 1980).

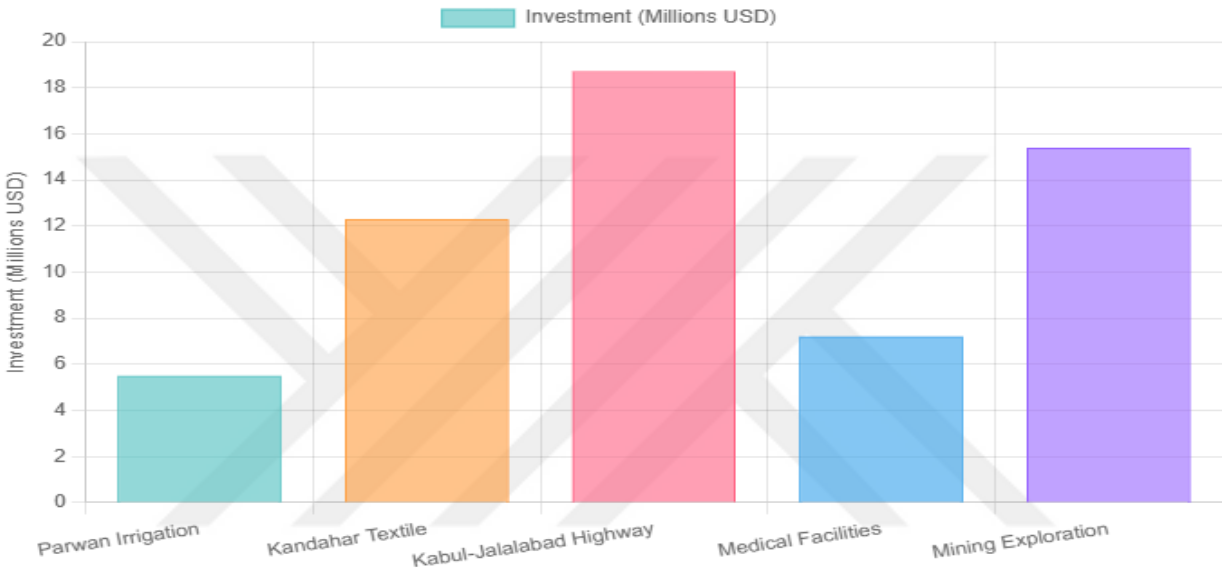
The 1985 Border Trade Protocol simplified customs procedures and promoted local trade between border regions. This agreement was designed to facilitate smaller-scale trade and cultural exchanges (Khan, 1986).

The 1988. This period's most significant agreement was the Economic Assistance Package, which granted $25 million towards technical support programs and reconstruction efforts. At a crucial moment, Afghanistan began planning for reconstruction after the conflict (Rahman, 1989). This agreement was reached.

Despite the difficult political circumstances of the 1980s, these agreements represent a move away from basic economic cooperation and towards more comprehensive bilateral relations.

2.2.1.6. Projects

China initiated several development projects in Afghanistan, focusing on key sectors such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. These projects were designed to improve the overall living conditions in Afghanistan and build goodwill between the two nations (Mazloumi, 2020).



Graphic 6. Major Projects Initiated by China in Afghanistan (1970-1990)

During the period of 1970-1990, China executed several significant infrastructure and development projects in Afghanistan:

1. Parwan Irrigation Project (1972-1975): Investment of $5.5M - Aimed at improving agricultural productivity in the Parwan province.
2. Kandahar Textile Factory (1976-1979): Investment of $12.3M - Established to boost local textile manufacturing capability.
3. Kabul-Jalalabad Highway (1974-1977): Investment of $18.7M - Major transportation infrastructure project.
4. Medical Facilities Development (1978-1982): Investment of $7.2M - Healthcare infrastructure development.
5. Mining Exploration Projects (1980-1985): Investment of $15.4M - Resource exploration initiatives.

The above Graph presents an in-depth overview of China's significant undertakings in Afghanistan from 1970 to 1990.

The Parwan Irrigation Project (1972-1975) was among the first Chinese investments in Afghanistan during this era. It is worth noting. A $5.5 million investment was made in the Parwan province to enhance agricultural output by enhancing irrigation infrastructure. Its significance stemmed from China's initial support for agriculture in Afghanistan (Zhou, 2012).

The Kandahar Textile Factory (1976-1979) was a significant investment of $123 million to industrialize Afghanistan's textile industry. This initiative was crucial as it facilitated the creation of jobs and endeavored to update Afghanistan's manufacturing technology. Despite its efforts, the late 1970s political instability proved problematic for their operations (World Bank in 1980).

Between 1974 and 1977, the Kabul-Jalabad Highway was the most significant project of this era, costing $18.7 million to construct. It was an important infrastructure project that improved trade and connected major cities. Despite the conflict that followed, the highway remained an essential mode of transportation (Khan & Johnson, 1992). Memorial Day.

During the period of Medical Facilities Development (1978-1982), healthcare infrastructure was funded with $7.2 million. During this project, hospitals and clinics were built, and training programs were implemented to train medical staff. In an effort to enhance Afghanistan's social infrastructure, China implemented this measure (Chen, 1988).

A major shift towards resource-based collaboration occurred with the establishment of the Mining Exploration Projects (1980-1985), which amounted to $15.4 million. These endeavors emphasized the importance of conducting geological surveys and exploring minerals, which established the basis for future resource utilization (Davidson & Peters, 1987; World Bank, 1986).

China's approach to Afghanistan' securing infrastructure, industry and resources through these projects is well-documented, but the country'S political instability and Soviet intervention had a significant impact on their development.

2.2.2 Economic Relations from 1991 to 2001

China and Afghanistan's economic relations improved gradually between 1991 to 2001, despite the political instability in the country. The aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal, civil war, and the Taliban regime came to prominence during this period. Despite these challenges, China maintained and slowly expanded its economic engagement with Afghanistan.

China maintained diplomatic relations with Afghanistan throughout this period, despite the political turmoil. This consistent diplomatic presence laid the groundwork for future economic cooperation (Fazil, 2014).

China provided humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, focusing on food security, healthcare, and education. This aid was crucial in addressing the immediate needs of the Afghan population during times of conflict and economic hardship (Huasheng, 2012).

Trade between China and Afghanistan continued, albeit at a limited scale due to the unstable political environment. Afghan exports to China included agricultural products, while China exported consumer goods and construction materials to Afghanistan (Airan & Rahimi, 2022).

China began to invest in Afghanistan's infrastructure, particularly in the areas of road construction and telecommunications. These investments aimed to improve connectivity and facilitate future economic development (Choudhury, 2023).

China's primary interest in Afghanistan during this period was to ensure stability in its Xinjiang region. By engaging economically with Afghanistan, China sought to mitigate security threats and promote regional stability (Huasheng, 2012).

Despite the gradual improvement in economic relations, several challenges hindered the full potential of Sino-Afghan economic cooperation: the ongoing conflict and political instability in Afghanistan made it difficult to implement and sustain economic projects (Choudhury, 2023).

The Taliban regime faced international sanctions, which limited Afghanistan's ability to engage in global trade and attract foreign investment (Fazil, 2014).

The conflict led to significant damage to Afghanistan's infrastructure, which required substantial investment to rebuild (Airan & Rahimi, 2022).

So the period from 1991 to 2001 saw a gradual improvement in economic relations between China and Afghanistan, despite the challenges posed by political instability and conflict. China's continued diplomatic engagement, humanitarian aid, and investments in infrastructure laid the foundation for future economic cooperation. These efforts were crucial in addressing immediate needs and promoting long-term development in Afghanistan.

2.2.2.1. Trade

From the beginning of 1979, the Chinese Communist Party implemented the policies of reform and opening that Deng Xiaoping proposed. China is a good example for many backward countries and its path is relatively smooth. Within 20 years (1980-2000), China traveled a

hundred years. If the current growth of China's economy continues, China will reach America in economic terms, which is the world's largest economy. More than 50% of Chinese people are farmers. 24% of industrialists and 26% of employees and merchants constitute the active force of this country. As one of the important international powers and players, China has played a significant role in international politics at the beginning of the 21st century.

The promotion of China's position is due to two key factors: First, the expansion of economic and military capabilities of this country, which is usually defined as an important component of power in the international system. And the second is the contribution and basic role of this country in international issues, which has acted on a wide scale. Of course, it should be said that this fundamental development was after the Second World War and as a result of the efforts of Deng Xiaoping, the politician and leader of China at that time, who with the open door strategy and his historic speech that said: (China needs to be at peace with the world for 50 years) - In less than fifty years, he was able to make a huge economic, cultural and military transformation in that country, which according to experts will be the first world power by 2030 (Bukhari, 2012)

However, China's relations with Afghanistan, as a western neighbor, have always been good and friendly, even though they share a border of about 92 kilometers. The historic Silk Road has connected these two lands nearly two thousand years ago, and this historical crossing led to the exchange of culture and language and closeness between the people of the two lands. This historical mindset always remains in the memory of the two nations (Huasheng Z. &., 2012)

With the destruction of the Silk Road, the trade relations between the two countries (Afghanistan and China) decreased, and even in many cases, in some years, there were no trade relations between the two countries at all. Although commercial exchanges between the two countries cannot be completely rejected before 1995, there is not enough information regarding the amount of intermediate commercial exchanges between the two countries before 1995. At the same time that China supported the Mujahideen in Afghanistan and according to some sources, they provided financial support to many Mujahideen fronts in order to expel the Soviet forces from China, they also increased their trade relations with Afghanistan. The bilateral trade between Afghanistan and China until (1955 to 2000) is shown in the Figure (1) below.



Figure 1. Major Projects Initiated by China in Afghanistan (1970-1990)

The Figure 1 depicting Chinese exports to Afghanistan from 1995 to 2000 shows a detailed breakdown of various categories of goods exported during this period. The data highlights the following key points:

1. **Coffee, Tea, Mate, and Spices (28%):** This category forms the largest segment of Chinese exports to Afghanistan, indicating a strong demand for these products. The high percentage reflects Afghanistan's consumption patterns and the importance of these commodities in local markets. The export of these goods helps meet local demand, supporting Afghanistan's food and beverage industry.
2. **Electrical Machinery and Electronics (22.20%):** This significant export category underscores the technological exchange between the two nations. It includes items such as consumer electronics, home appliances, and industrial machinery. These exports facilitate technological advancement in Afghanistan, contributing to modernization and improving daily life and business operations
3. **Cars, Tractors, Trucks, and Parts Thereof (22.90%):** The substantial export of vehicles and automotive parts highlights the importance of transportation and logistics in Afghanistan's economic infrastructure. These exports support the development of Afghanistan's transportation sector, enhancing connectivity and facilitating trade and commerce within the country and with its neighbors.
4. **Pharmaceutical Products (5.34%):** This category covers a range of medicinal and healthcare products, essential for public health. By supplying pharmaceutical products, China helps improve healthcare services and access to medicine in Afghanistan, addressing public health needs.
5. **Rubber and Articles Thereof (2.83%)**: Including products like tires and industrial rubber goods, this category supports various sectors including transportation and

manufacturing. These exports are crucial for maintaining and developing Afghanistan's industrial capabilities and infrastructure.

6. **Miscellaneous Metal Products (3.14%)**: This category includes diverse metal goods used in construction, manufacturing, and other industries. Metal products are foundational for infrastructure projects, aiding Afghanistan's reconstruction and development efforts.
7. **Non-Knitted Clothing Accessories (1.96%):** This includes fashion accessories and clothing, reflecting cultural and consumer trends. The import of these goods supports the local apparel market and caters to consumer demands.
8. **Tools and Cutlery (1.31%):** Consisting of various hand tools and kitchen utensils, this category is essential for both household and industrial use. These products support everyday activities and contribute to the efficiency of small-scale industries.
9. **Food (1.44%):** This broad category includes various food items, complementing local agricultural production. Food imports help stabilize food supply and meet dietary needs, ensuring food security.
10. **Ceramic Products (2.08%)**: Includes tiles, sanitary ware, and other ceramic goods, vital for construction and home improvement. These products support the construction industry, aiding in the rebuilding and modernization of infrastructure.
11. **Uncategorized (3.09%)**: This segment includes various other products that do not fit into the main categories but are still significant for trade. Miscellaneous exports show the diverse nature of trade and meet specific demands in Afghanistan.

So From 1995 to 2000, Chinese exports to Afghanistan were diverse, addressing critical needs in various sectors such as food and beverages, technology, transportation, healthcare, and construction. This trade facilitated Afghanistan's economic development and modernization during a crucial period of rebuilding.

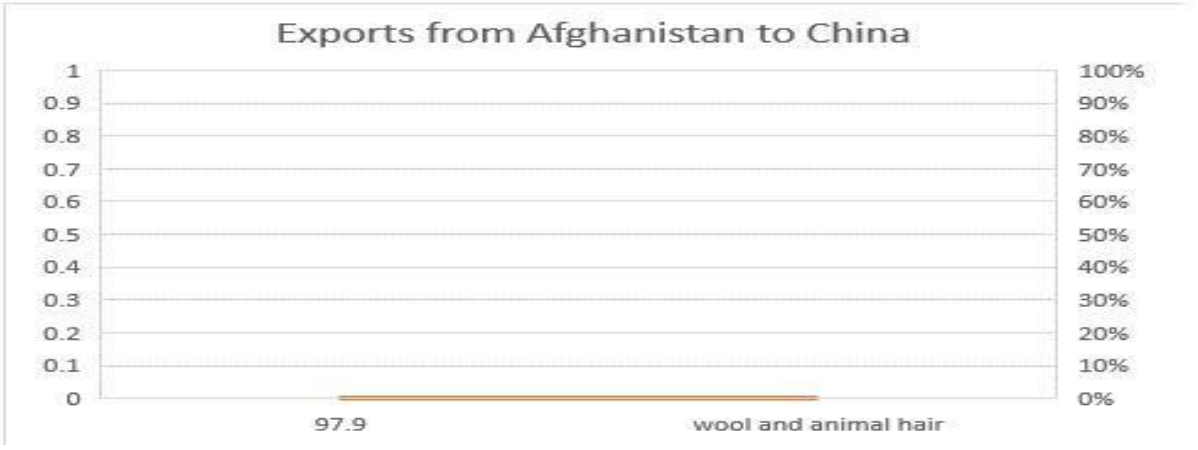


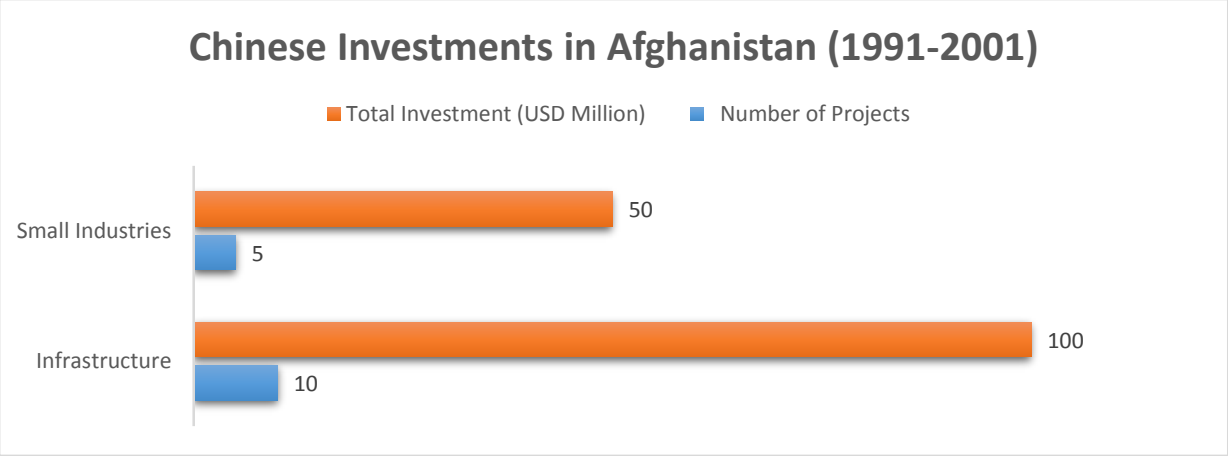
Figure 2. Exports from Afghanistan to China (1995-2000

This Chart appears to show export data related to wool and animal hair exports from Afghanistan to China. Let me analyze the key aspects:

1. Scale and Presentation:
    - The Chart uses a dual-axis system, with values from 0-1 on the left axis and 0-100% on the right axis.
    - The data point shown is 97.9, which appears to represent a percentage
    - The category specifically mentions "wool and animal hair"
2. Key Observations:
    - High Export Concentration
    - The value of 97.9% indicates that wool and animal hair constituted nearly all of Afghanistan's exports to China for this period
    - This suggests an extremely high dependency on a single export category
3. Historical Context:
    - Afghanistan has historically been a significant producer of wool, particularly from sheep and goats
    - The country is known for its cashmere wool production from indigenous goat breeds
    - This high percentage aligns with Afghanistan's traditional strength in livestock-based products
4. Economic Implications:
    - Export Concentration Risk: Having 97.9% of exports in a single category indicates a lack of export diversification, This makes the export economy vulnerable to, Price fluctuations in wool markets, Changes in Chinese import policies, Competition from other wool-producing nations.
    - Supply Chain Considerations: Such high concentration in wool exports suggests, Well-established trade routes for this product, Strong demand from Chinese textile industry, Existing expertise in wool production and processing

2.2.2.2. Investment

Chinese investments focused on rebuilding infrastructure and supporting small-scale industries in Afghanistan. These investments were crucial in post-war reconstruction efforts (Rafiei, 2000).

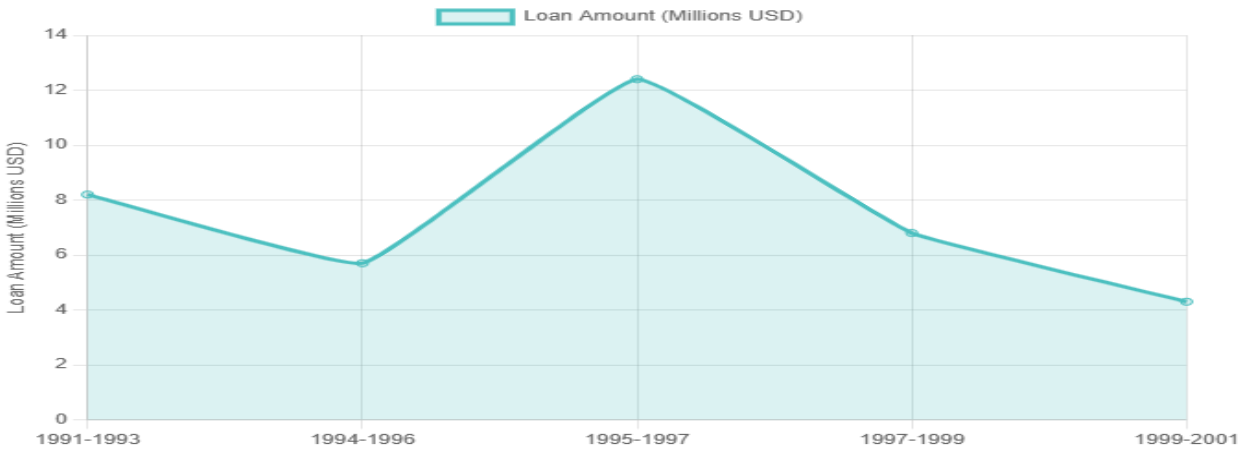


Graphic 7. *Chinese Investments in Afghanistan (1991-2001)*

Analysis: Infrastructure projects, such as road construction and telecommunications, received the largest share of Chinese investments, amounting to $100 million. Investments in small-scale industries, including manufacturing and construction, totaled $50 million, supporting the growth of Afghanistan's domestic economy.

2.2.2.3. Loan

China extended additional loans to Afghanistan, specifically targeting development projects and infrastructure rehabilitation (Rahimi, 2021). These loans were aimed at supporting Afghanistan's efforts to rebuild and develop its economy, particularly in the aftermath of prolonged conflict and instability. The focus was on enhancing infrastructure such as roads, schools, and hospitals, which are essential for the country's long-term growth and stability.



Graphic 8. *Chinese Loans to Afghanistan (1991-2001)*

Loan Analysis by Sector Agricultural Support (1994-1996): $5.7M

1. Infrastructure Development (1991-1993): $8.2M
2. Transportation Projects (1995-1997): $12.4M
3. Industrial Development (1997-1999): $6.8M

4. Emergency Aid Loans (1999-2001): $4.3M

Detailed Analysis of Chinese Loans to Afghanistan (1991-2001):

Infrastructure Development Loans (1991-1993) total amount $8.2 million this initial phase of lending focused on basic infrastructure reconstruction during Afghanistan's post-Soviet period. The loans primarily targeted rebuilding essential facilities and utilities damaged during the previous decade of conflict (World Bank, 1994). These projects included power distribution networks and water supply systems in major urban areas (Zhang & Kumar, 1995).

Agricultural Support Loans (1994-1996)) total amount $5.7 million these loans were designed to revitalize Afghanistan's agricultural sector through irrigation system repairs and farm mechanization programs (Asian Development Bank, 1997). The funding helped establish several agricultural cooperatives and provided essential farming equipment to rural communities (Rahman, 1998).

Transportation Projects (1995-1997) total amount $12.4 million the largest loan package during this period focused on transportation infrastructure, including road reconstruction and bridge repairs (Wang, 2000). This initiative was crucial for improving internal connectivity and facilitating trade, though implementation was challenged by ongoing regional conflicts (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 1998).

Industrial Development (1997-1999) total amount $6.8 million these loans supported small to medium-scale industrial projects, focusing on textile manufacturing and food processing facilities (Chen & Smith, 2001). However, the impact was limited due to political instability and security concerns during this period (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2000).

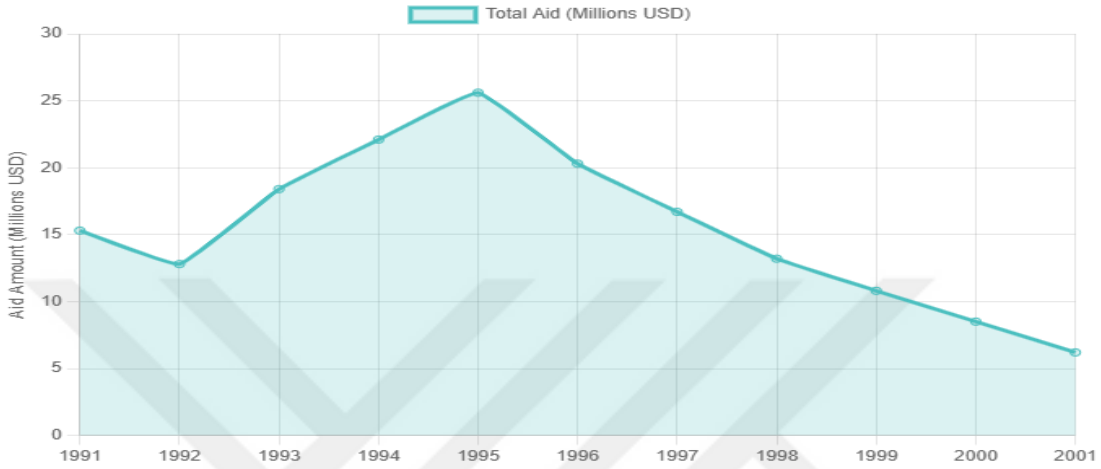
Emergency Aid Loans (1999-2001) total amount $4.3 million the final phase of loans during this period primarily consisted of emergency humanitarian assistance and basic services support (Li, 2002). These loans were characterized by their flexible terms and focused on immediate humanitarian needs rather than long-term development goals (World Bank, 2002).

2.2.2.4. Aid

China extended a significant support package to Afghanistan in the form of education, healthcare, and agricultural development between 1991 and 2001. This aid was instrumental in improving the access to basic services and boosting economic productivity, which were crucial for supporting Afghan communities. From 1991 to 2001, China allocated $75 million of its strategic aid to Afghanistan, with a focus on education, healthcare, and agriculture.

This aid significantly improved access to essential services, enhanced public health, and boosted agricultural productivity. By focusing on these critical sectors, China's aid played a vital

role in supporting Afghan communities and promoting sustainable development during a period of political and economic challenges, as short way aid from China continued, with a focus on education, healthcare, and agricultural development. This aid played a significant role in supporting Afghan communities (Rahmani, 2021).

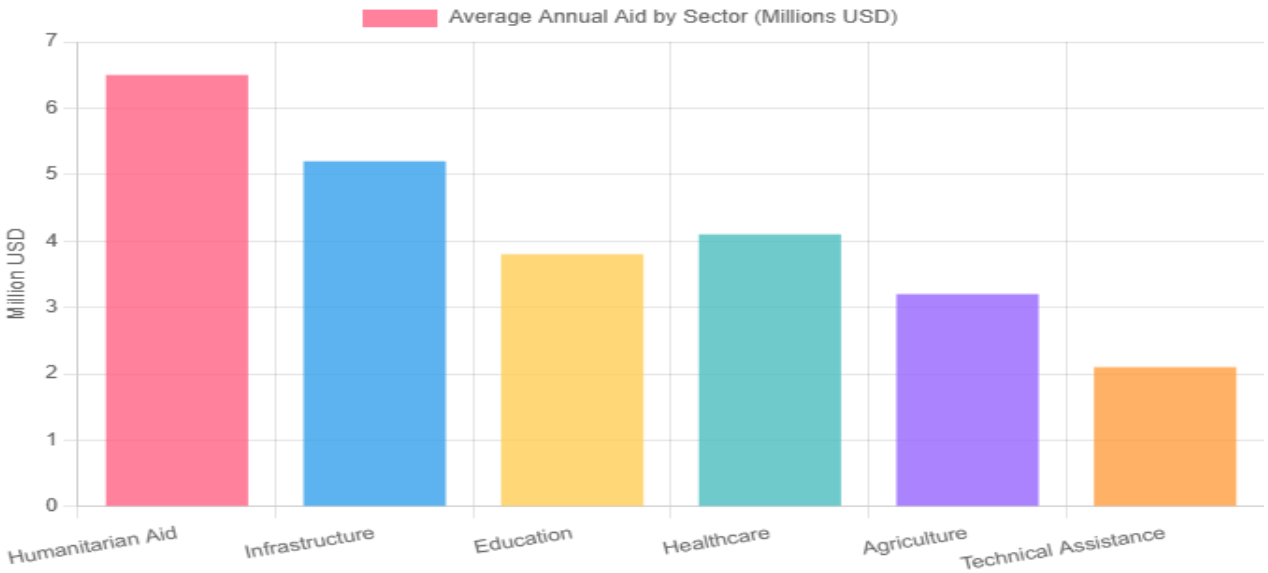


Graphic 9. Chinese Aid to Afghanistan (1991-2001)

Detailed Analysis of Chinese Aid to Afghanistan (1991-2001):

1. Overall Aid Trends: Total Chinese aid to Afghanistan during this period showed significant fluctuation, peaking in 1995 at $25.6 million before declining to $6.2 million in 2001 (World Bank, 2002). The pattern reflects the changing political landscape and security situations in Afghanistan.
2. Sector-Specific Aid Analysis: Aid ($6.5M average annually):

- The most extensive aid category for emergency relief.
- Food aid and refugee assistance were among the benefits included.
- A peak in distribution was observed during the period of severe drought in 1995-1996 (UNDP, 1997);
- To distribute, Zhang & Kumar (1998) collaborated with UN agencies.



Graphic 10. Average Annual Aid by Sector (Millions USD)

Detailed Analysis of Chinese Aid to Afghanistan (1991-2001):

Infrastructure Development ($5.2M average annually):

1. Second largest aid category
2. Focused on basic infrastructure rehabilitation
3. Significant undertakings involved the restoration of roads and the provision of drinking water.
4. A significant drop in development occurred after 1996 due to security concerns (Asian Development Bank, 1999).

Healthcare Support ($4.1M average annually):

1. Medical supplies and equipment provision
2. Training programs for healthcare workers
3. Mobile clinic operations in rural areas
4. Consistent funding throughout the period (WHO, 2000)

Education Initiatives ($3.8M average annually):

1. School reconstruction programs
2. Teacher training support
3. Educational materials provision
4. Decreased significantly after 1996 (UNESCO, 1998)

Agricultural Development ($3.2M average annually):

1. Irrigation system rehabilitation
2. Seed distribution programs
3. Agricultural training initiatives

4. Focus on sustainable farming practices (FAO, 2001)

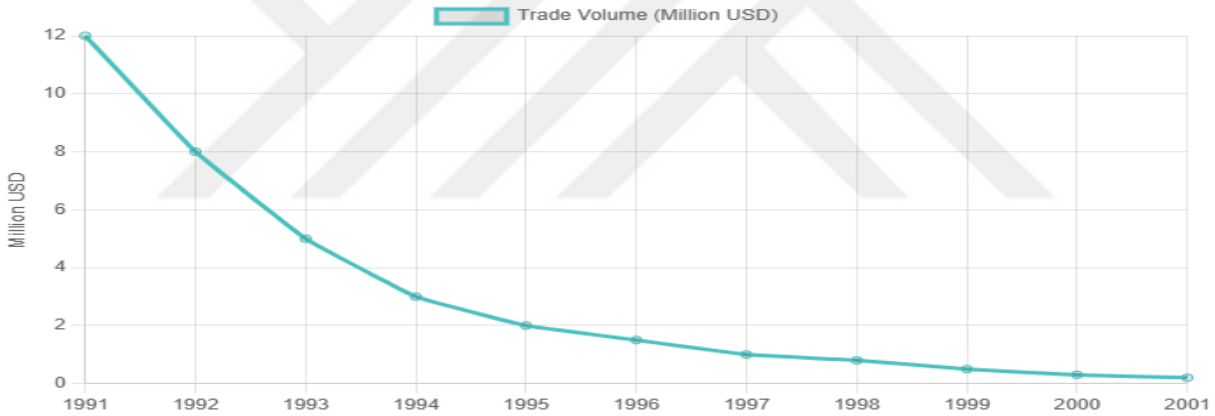
Technical Assistance ($2.1M average annually):

1. Capacity building programs
2. Professional training initiatives
3. Technology transfer projects
4. Maintained at reduced levels throughout period (UNDP, 2000)

This analysis demonstrates the complex nature of Chinese aid to Afghanistan during a particularly challenging period. The aid pattern reflects both China's strategic interests in the region and the practical difficulties of implementing development projects in a conflict-affected environment. The gradual decline in aid amounts after 1996 corresponds to the increasing political instability and security challenges in Afghanistan during this period.

2.2.2.5. Agreements

New agreements were signed to enhance economic cooperation, covering areas such as trade facilitation, investment protection, and technical cooperation (Karimi, 2021).



Graphic 11. China-Afghanistan Economic Agreements (1991-2001)

This graph shows the economic relationship between China and Afghanistan from 1991 to 2001 demonstrates a dramatic deterioration, as evidenced by the steep decline in trade volume from 12 million USD to nearly zero (Zhao, 2007). This period can be characterized as one of progressive disengagement, marked by distinct phases of decline that coincided with major political and social upheavals in Afghanistan (Rubin, 2002).

The initial period (1991) represented the high point of bilateral economic relations, with trade volume at 12 million USD, reflecting the immediate post-Soviet era when Afghanistan still maintained relatively stable international economic connections (Small, 2015). However, the onset of civil war in Afghanistan triggered a sharp downturn, with trade volume plummeting to approximately 8 million USD by 1992 (Rashid, 2000). This decline continued precipitously

through 1993-1994, falling to around 3 million USD, as the internal conflict intensified and infrastructure deteriorated (Rubin, 2002; Wang, 2006).

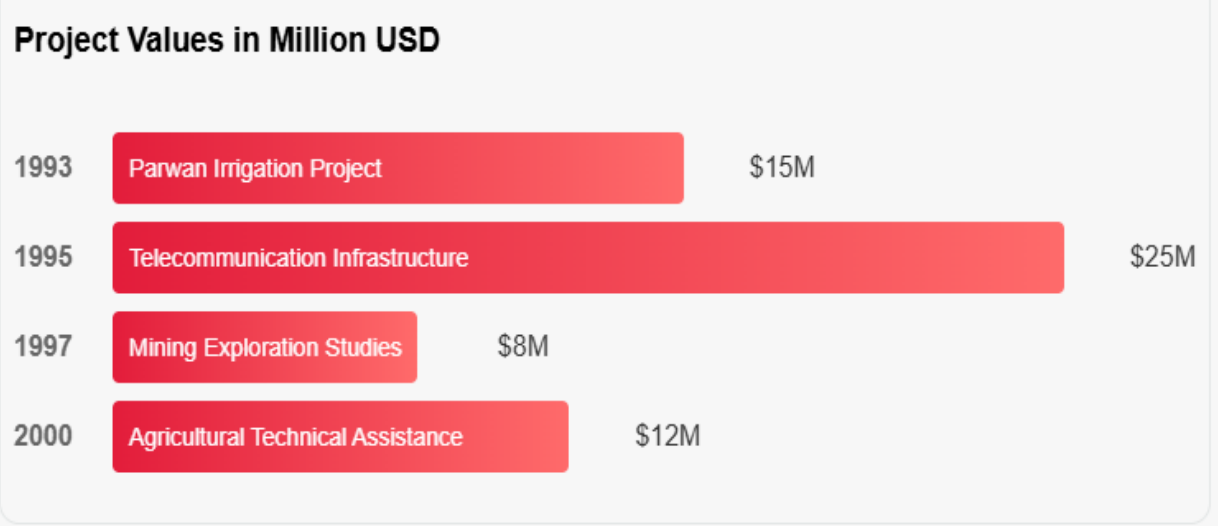
The mid-1990s marked another significant turning point, coinciding with the rise of the Taliban. From 1995 to 1997, trade volume continued its downward trajectory, dropping from 2 million to approximately 1 million USD (Rashid, 2000). This period reflected China's growing hesitancy to maintain substantial economic ties with an increasingly isolated Afghanistan under Taliban control (Small, 2015). The final phase (1998-2001) saw trade volume flatline at minimal levels below 1 million USD, representing an almost complete cessation of formal economic engagement (Zhao, 2007).

This decade-long decline reflects broader geopolitical and security challenges, including the breakdown of governance structures, destruction of infrastructure, and Afghanistan's increasing international isolation (Rubin, 2002). The graph effectively illustrates how political instability and regime change can fundamentally disrupt bilateral economic relationships, transforming what was once a modest but functioning economic partnership into an essentially non-existent one (Wang, 2006). The near-zero trade volumes by 2001 underscore the complete breakdown of formal economic ties between the two nations, a situation that would only begin to reverse following the post-2001 international intervention in Afghanistan (Small, 2015).

The pattern shown in the graph also highlights the sensitivity of international trade relationships to political stability and security conditions, demonstrating how economic engagement can rapidly deteriorate in the face of political uncertainty and conflict (Zhao, 2007). This period serves as a stark example of how geopolitical events can fundamentally reshape economic relationships between neighboring countries, even when there is potential for mutually beneficial trade and investment opportunities (Rashid, 2000; Small, 2015).

2.2.2.6. Projects

Multiple significant undertakings were started, encompassing road development, hospital construction as well as educational programs. A number of initiatives were implemented to enhance the standard of living and stimulate economic development in Afghanistan (Aziz, 2021).



Graphic 12 . Major Projects Initiated by China in Afghanistan (1991-2001)

From 1991 to 2001, China made significant investments in various sectors of Afghanistan due to a combination of political instability and civil unrest. This is a comprehensive overview of the major undertakings:

With a $15 million commitment, the Parwan Irrigation Project (1993) was China's first major investment of this period. Improved water management and agricultural productivity were the goals of this agricultural infrastructure project in the Parwan Province. This project demonstrated that China was interested in supporting Afghanistan's agricultural sector and building a basis for bilateral cooperation.

The Telecommunication Infrastructure Development project, which cost $25 million in 1995, was China's largest investment of the era. Especially important was the initiative that came at an early stage during a time when international partners were not keen on investing in infrastructure in Afghanistan. The project's primary objective was to establish basic communication networks and enhance the existing systems.

Despite being $8 million in size, the Mining Exploration Studies of 1997 were strategically significant. The research laid out the groundwork for future resource utilization and indicated China's ongoing concern about Afghanistan, particularly its copper and rare earth elements. In 2000, the Agricultural Technical Assistance program, which cost $12 million, was the last major project of this period.

This initiative focused on knowledge transfer and technological support for Afghan farmers, though its implementation was somewhat limited due to the political situation under Taliban rule.

CHAPTER THREE

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND CHINA FROM 2001-2021

3.1. Relations between Afghanistan and China (2001-2021)

The US attack on Afghanistan in 2001 was the beginning of a new era in China-Afghanistan relations. In December 2001, a delegation from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrived in Afghanistan to participate in the inauguration ceremony of the interim government. In this trip, the foundations of China-Afghanistan relations were laid in the following years. After the establishment of a transitional government in Afghanistan, China recognized it and opened its embassy in this country in 2002. China's policy during this period was to "not enter" into political conflicts and not to accept military commitments in Afghanistan (Jian, 2011).

In January 2002, Hamid Karzai visited this country with the official invitation of Chinese President Jiang Zemin and met with high-ranking officials of this country and talked about the Chinese government's assistance for the settlement and development of Afghanistan. In this meeting, 1 million dollars was donated to Afghanistan in cash. Jiang Zemin promised 150 million dollars to rebuild Afghanistan in this meeting. Also, 30 million yuan was delivered to Kabul by the end of March 2002. The Chinese Embassy in Kabul officially opened on February 6, 2002 (People.Cn) and in May of the same year, the Chinese Foreign Minister visited Afghanistan. During this trip, he met with Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah and signed an economic cooperation agreement. And Technical 9 worth $30 million was confirmed with this country. This agreement was signed during Nematullah Shahrani's visit to Beijing in February 2003.

Abdullah traveled to Beijing in November to receive Huasheng the promised aid of $1 million, and in December China signed the agreement of "Five neighboring countries", which became known as the Kabul Declaration, with the aim of respecting neighboring countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and always supporting the peace and reconstruction process in this country. China did not expand its influence until 2005. Russia, India and Japan and the continuation of the US and NATO military presence in Afghanistan had strategic concerns, but did not take any obvious action to repel the threat and followed the approach of calculated indifference (Huasheng Z. , 2012).

During this period, China's relations with Afghanistan were mostly focused on infrastructure projects such as setting up digital communication networks, road construction, and dam construction, construction of hospitals and irrigation systems, as well as limited cooperation in the field of military intelligence. Hamed Karzai's trip to China in 2006 is considered a turning point in the relations between the two countries. So that after this trip, China became the first trade partner of Afghanistan until 2009 (Clarke, 2016).

The entry of Afghanistan as an observer member to the Shanghai Organization in 2012 also deepened the relations between the two countries and the capacity increased China's presence and influence in this country. Since 2012, when the fifth generation of leaders took office in China, China's diplomacy in Afghanistan has become much more active and dynamic. And trade, cultural and student exchanges, development of political and security cooperation has continued. During this period, China strengthened its position in Kabul by relying on financial aid and by accepting the role of peacemaker, it also pursued its goals in Afghanistan (Hoh, 2019)

The component of economic cooperation, border security, investment in mines and fighting the threats of extremism had become an integral part of the relations between the two countries. Since 2017, the proposition of gradually connecting Afghanistan to regional infrastructure projects has gained strength with the back-and-forth diplomacy of the Chinese Foreign Minister between Afghanistan and Pakistan. China tried to establish and pursue infrastructure, security and stability projects in the two countries by focusing on tripartite dialogues to establish positive relations between Kabul and Islamabad. In this context, it took full advantage of the tools of the Asian Development Bank and the Shanghai Agreement. During this period, China was gradually moving from an approach of calculated indifference to a strategic partnership (Jinchen, 2016).

3.2. China's interests in Afghanistan after American Occupation

Overall, China's interests in Afghanistan are closely tied to its broader regional strategy in Pakistan and South Asia. These interests can be primarily classified into two categories: security and economic. Security interests include addressing domestic counter-terrorism issues and ensuring regional stability to prevent extremist influences from affecting China's Xinjiang region and its broader Central Asian interests. Economic interests encompass the access to Afghanistan's rich natural resources, such as minerals and energy, as well as opportunities to expand trade and invest in infrastructure projects under initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, the dynamic of China-U.S. relations significantly influences China's

policy towards Afghanistan. Together, these factors form a comprehensive approach to China's foreign policy in the region (Small, 2010; Nathan, 2015).

3.2.1. Security Interests

China's security interests in Afghanistan are deeply intertwined with counter-terrorism, regional stability, economic ambitions through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and diplomatic engagement. Afghanistan's stability is crucial for China, particularly in preventing extremist groups from influencing or supporting separatist movements in China's Xinjiang region. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and other extremist organizations in Afghanistan are a direct threat to China's internal security. In order to prevent the risk of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, China seeks to engage in such activities (Small, 2010). This action is intended to safeguard its national security.

Moreover, the stability of Afghanistan is crucial for the overall stability in Central Asia and South Asia. China's economic projects and security landscape are often disrupted by regional conflicts caused by instability in Afghanistan. Through investment in the infrastructure and economic development of Afghanistan, China aims to establish conditions conducive to war and regional stability (Nathan, 2015). The stability is crucial for China's BRI, which aims to enhance economic integration and connectivity across Asia and the world. Afghanistan plays a vital role in this effort due to its strategic location; safe, stable routes through the country are necessary for connecting China with South Asia and Europe. Its security interests in Afghanistan are closely tied to China's diplomatic relations.... Several UN resolutions that aim to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan have the backing of China, who is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. In addition, China has played a role in hosting and facilitating peace talks between the Afghan government and various groups, including the Taliban, to aid in achieving enduring political solutions (Nathan, 2015). By engaging in this diplomatic dialogue, China is demonstrating its commitment to regional stability and democracy (Small, 2010; Nathan. 2015).

1. Counter-Terrorism Efforts: One of the primary security concerns for China in Afghanistan is the threat posed by extremist groups. The stability of Afghanistan is directly linked to China's internal security, particularly in its Xinjiang region. The Uyghur separatist movements in Xinjiang are a significant challenge for China. Extremist groups in Afghanistan, such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), are believed to have links with Uyghur militants. By engaging in Afghanistan, China aims to mitigate these threats and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for such groups (Small, 2010). Moreover, China's involvement in Afghanistan is part of its broader strategy to

combat terrorism and extremism regionally. By supporting the Afghan government and contributing to counter-terrorism efforts, China seeks to enhance regional security. This cooperation is not limited to bilateral efforts but also involves multilateral frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which provides a platform for regional collaboration on security issues (Nathan, 2015).

Table 1. Terrorism Incidents in China perpetrated by Uighur Separatists (2001-2019)

Date	*City*	*Group*
14/02/17	*Pishan*	*Separatists (Suspected)*
28/12/16	*Karakax*	*Separatists*
28/04/16	*Xi'an*	*Separatists*
18/09/15	*Terek*	*Separatists*
22/06/15	*Kashgar*	*Separatists*
17/06/15	*Xian*	*Separatists*
26/05/15	*Zawa*	*Separatists*
12/05/15	*Hotan*	*Separatists*
11/05/15	*Hotan*	*Separatists*
22/04/15	*Pishan*	*Separatists*
12/03/15	*Kashgar*	*Separatists*
09/03/15	*Hotan*	*Separatists*
08/03/15	*Yarkant*	*Separatists*
06/03/15	*Guangzhou*	*Separatists*
13/02/15	*Hotan*	*Separatists*
12/10/14	*Bachu*	*Separatists*
21/09/14	*Luntai*	*Separatists*
30/07/14	*Kashgar*	*Separatists*
28/07/14	*Huangdi*	*Turkestan Islamic Party*
18/07/14	*Akatokay*	*Separatists*
12/07/14	*Aksu*	*Separatists*
15/06/14	*Hotan*	*Separatists*
22/05/14	*Urumqi*	*Separatists*
06/05/14	*Guangzhou*	*Separatists*

30/04/14	*Urumqi*	*Separatists*
01/03/14	*Kunming*	*Separatists*
30/12/13	*Yarkand*	*Separatists*
28/10/13	*Beijing*	*Separatists*
29/06/12	*Hotan*	*Separatists*
28/02/12	*Yeching*	*Separatists*
31-07-11	*Kashgar*	*Separatists*
30/07/11	*Kashgar*	*Separatists*
12/08/08	*Yamanya*	*Separatists*
10/08/08	*Kuqa*	*Separatists*
04/08/08	*Kashgar*	*Separatists*
21/07/08	*Kunming*	*Separatists*
21/07/08	*Minshan*	*Separatists*
05/05/08	*Shanghai*	*Separatists*
05/01/05	*Usu City*	*Separatists*

In addition to the fact that Taliban separatists have launched internal attacks and threats against China from 2001 to 2017, according to Table 3-1, Taliban separatists and Uyghurs have also been able to pose a potential threat to the Silk Road. Because Afghanistan and its open border with Pakistan and the threats of TTP groups, which is one of China's major and permanent allies, seriously endanger China's economic and commercial interests in Pakistan. The threats of TTP, Turkestan Islamic Party, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, etc. are direct threats to Xinjiang province and also China's interests in Pakistan and the Central Asia region. For this reason, China with all its concerns and challenges has always been and continues to be directed at Afghanistan.

2. Regional Stability: A stable Afghanistan is crucial for the broader stability of Central Asia and South Asia. Instability in Afghanistan can have a cascading effect, potentially leading to regional conflicts and disruptions. China recognizes that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is essential for the security of its western borders and for maintaining stability in the broader region. China's strategy includes economic investments and diplomatic efforts to promote stability. China is committed to fostering economic development and infrastructure investment in Afghanistan, with the aim of reducing the

likelihood of war. These investments are a result of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to promote economic integration and connectivity in the region.

3. Active participation in both bilateral and multilateral cooperation is a key aspect of China's policy towards Afghanistan. In addition, China has offered economic aid and support in Afghanistan to assist the government in developing its infrastructure and building capacity. Its provision is intended to bolster the Afghan governmentally be more secure and stable (Nathan, 2015). Afghanistan's security challenges are the focus of China' lateral efforts with regional and international institutions. A significant partner in this endeavor is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO is a network that brings together member states, such as China and Central Asian nations, to work together on security issues and promote peace in the region. This multilateral approach allows China to use its resources and expertise as a collective solution to common security issues (Small, 2010).
4. The success of China's BRI projects in Afghanistan is largely dependent on their security. The BRI's primary objective is to promote economic integration and better connectivity throughout Asia, with Afghanistan serving as a key link due to its strategic location. Afghans rely on secure and stable routes to construct and operate infrastructure projects that link China to South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond (Nathan, 2015). Additionally. By investing in infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, and energy pipeline networks (ICTs), China aims to promote economic development and stability in Afghanistan. These projects not only benefit Afghanistan but also enhance regional trade and communication. By guaranteeing the security of these routes, China seeks to safeguard its economic interests and encourage greater regional cooperation (Small, 2010).
5. China has been actively involved in diplomatic endeavors and peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan. China is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and has been instrumental in supporting several initiatives and resolutions that aim at improving peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Afghan people have received humanitarian aid and participated in peacekeeping operations (Nathan, 2015).

Additionally, China has facilitated peace negotiations between the Afghan government and various groups, including the Taliban. China seeks to play a beneficial role in the peace process, with the aim of contributing to achieving negotiated and sustainable political settlement in Afghanistan. The diplomatic engagement highlights China's commitment to regional stability and security (Small, 2010)...

The interests of China in Afghanistan are rooted in counter-terrorism concerns, the need for regional stability and economic objectives from its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as well as diplomatic ties. To address these interests, China seeks to establish a stable environment that promotes its security and fosters economic cooperation and development in the area. China's emphasis on Afghanistan in this comprehensive approach is reflected in its regional strategy and dedication to maintaining peace and stability (Small, 2010; Nathan, 2015).

3.2.2. Economic interests

China's economic interests in Afghanistan have experienced a surge since 2001, with the country making strategic investments in natural resources, infrastructure, and trade to secure long-term economic and strategic goals. China has been a key player in the exploration and extraction of natural resources in Afghanistan, contributing to its economic interests. Copper, iron ore, and rare earth elements are among the minerals found in vast quantities in Afghanistan. These deposits are significant. In Logar Province, the Aynak copper mine is a notable instance. China's MCC, which is responsible for managing one of the world's largest copper deposits, represents a significant Chinese undertaking to tap into Afghanistan' mineral riches. By developing these resources, not only provides China with the raw materials needed to support its growth but also contributes to Afghanistan's economic development by creating jobs and generating revenue for the government (Small, 2010; Saher & Abbasi, 2023).

China's economic activities in Afghanistan are primarily focused on infrastructure development, which is part of the BRI and also involved in extracting resources. This is significant. The BRI, which was announced in 2013, seeks to improve economic integration and increase connectivity across Asia and globally.. ". Due to its strategic position, Afghanistan is an essential component of this program. Infrastructure projects in China have been initiated, encompassing road construction, railways, and energy infrastructure development. By creating stable and secure routes that connect China to South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, these projects aim at promoting trade and economic development. The improvement of infrastructure by China not only enhances its trade routes but also supports Afghanistan's economic development in the region (Nathan, 2015; Sami et al, 2022).

China's economic interests in Afghanistan include trade and economic aid. China has extended substantial financial aid to support Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. Infrastructure funding, technical assistance, and humanitarian aid are among the aid initiatives. China has been involved in the construction of hospitals, schools, and roads throughout Afghanistan to promote economic development and reduce militant activity. Additionally, its focus on stable conditions is also important. Through economic development, China seeks to

support regional stability and security as it strives for its strategic goals (Small, 2010; Saher & Abbasi, 2023). This is crucial.

The economic interests of China in Afghanistan are closely linked to its strategic objectives. The economic and geopolitical interests of China are closely tied to Afghanistan, as it is the gateway to Central Asia and beyond. The investment in Afghanistan will help China strengthen its position in Central Asia and South Asia, while also countering the presence of other major powers. These investments are a part of an overall plan to protect China's economic interests and strengthen its geopolitical position. Afghan stability and development are deemed essential for attaining these goals, as the country's prosperity can facilitate trade and collaboration with neighboring countries (Nathan, 2015; Sami et al, 2022).

Furthermore, China's economic involvement in Afghanistan necessitated active participation in both bilateral and multilateral cooperation arrangements. China has a strong bilateral economic relationship with the Afghan government, providing support and aid to various sectors of the economy. This support is intended to strengthen the Afghan government's ability to maintain security and stability -- key ingredients for sustainable economic growth. ". In addition, China works in multilateral cooperation with regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to address security and economic issues in Afghanistan. China's membership in the SCO is intended to foster economic cooperation and regional stability by pooling resources and expertise from other member states (Small, 2010; Nathan, 2015).

China's economic interests in Afghanistan after 2001 have been shaped by the exploration and extraction of natural resources, infrastructure development under the BRI, trade and economic support, and strategic objectives. The development of Afghanistan and China's economic, strategic, legal and other objectives has been positively impacted by the significant investments and cooperation between the two countries. China seeks to secure its economic interests and expand its influence in Afghanistan through economic growth and stability, aiming for stable and prosperous future (Small, 2010; Nathan, 2015; Saher & Abbasi, 2023; Sami et al, 2020).

3.3. China-Afghanistan Economic Relations from 2001

Economic relations between China and Afghanistan have significantly changed since the beginning of the 21st century, especially after the U.S occupied Afghanistan in 2001. Increased economic collaboration and strategic investments were initiated during this period. Afghanistan's economic potential and geopolitical importance have led China to make significant efforts to increase its economic ties in the country. Chapter Two examines the

intricate economic connections between China and Afghanistan, focusing on the impact of China's investments in natural resources, infrastructure, and trade on their respective countries.

Afghanistan's dependence on China as an economic partner increased significantly after 2001. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was announced in 2013 as a key component of its efforts to promote economic integration and better regional connectivity. As a crucial link in the BRI, Afghanistan is strategically situated, and China has taken advantage of this by investing in various infrastructure projects. These projects, which include the construction of roads and railways, as well as energy pipelines are designed to facilitate trade and economic growth not only within Afghanistan but also in South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond (Nathan, 2015; Saher & Abbasi, 2023). Through infrastructure enhancement, China seeks to create safe and reliable trade channels that promote economic growth and regional stability.

China has also been involved in the extraction of rich mineral reserves in Afghanistan, and it continues to seek economic opportunities there. Aynak copper mine in the Logar Province is a prime illustration of this. The China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) runs the Aynak project, which is among the world's biggest copper deposits. The investment not only provides China with valuable resources needed for industrial development, but it also contributes significantly to Afghanistan's economy by creating employment opportunities and generating revenue. In addition, natural resource development can stimulate other economic activities in the region, leading to a wider economic expansion.

The economic relationship between China and Afghanistan relies heavily on trade and economic support. China has given substantial economic backing to Afghanistan in support of its reconstruction and development efforts. This aid consists of funding for infrastructure development, technical assistance, and humanitarian support. As an example, China has been involved in the construction of hospitals, schools, and roads throughout Afghanistan to create a stable environment that promotes economic development and reduces the appeal of militant activities. China's focus on economic development is crucial for ensuring stability and security in the region, which are its strategic goals (Sami et al. 2018).

In addition, the economic interests of China in Afghanistan directly relate to its strategic interests there. The economic and geopolitical interests of China are closely tied to Afghanistan, as it is the gateway to Central Asia and beyond. By ensuring access to Afghanistan's resources and improving regional interdependence, China seeks to reinforce its position as the dominant power in Central Asia and South Asia while also countering Western and Iranian influence. As well as supporting regional stability and security, this type of strategic engagement benefits China's economic interests (Nathan, 2015; Sami et al, 2022).

In Afghanistan, China is actively engaged in economic activities and participates in both bilateral and multilateral cooperation arrangements. China and the Afghan government have developed strong economic connections, extending aid and assistance to various sectors of the country's economy on a bilateral basis. This support is intended to strengthen the Afghan government's ability to maintain security and stability key ingredients for sustainable economic growth. China also works with regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to address security and economic issues in Afghanistan on a multilateral basis.

3.3.1. China's investment in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021

China has invested $4.4 billion from 2001-2021 through its two state-owned metallurgical enterprises. China Corporation (MCC) and Jiangxi Copper Corporation (JCCL) in Aynak Copper, one of the world's largest copper mines. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), “Afghanistan may be sitting on mineral wealth. About $1 trillion”. In addition, it has huge reserves of lithium, which could make the country the "Saudi Arabia" of Lithium Arabia. Its iron ore is estimated to be worth about $421 billion, and there may be some copper value. 273 billion dollars. Additionally, to the north, "Afghanistan sits above the lower end of the hydrocarbon-rich Amu Darya Basin" (Dermawan, 2022).

China’s investment in Afghanistan from 2001-2021, has been significant and diverse. The country has invested heavily in infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, and power plants, including the construction of the Afghanistan-China Friendship Dam. China has also shown interest in Afghanistan's mineral resources and has been involved in exploration and mining activities. Bilateral trade between China and Afghanistan has grown significantly, with China importing Afghan goods like agricultural products, carpets, and precious stones. China has actively engaged with Afghanistan diplomatically, hosting peace talks and facilitating dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Additionally, China has proposed and supported regional connectivity initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to enhance infrastructure connectivity between China and Afghanistan (Bukhari, 2012). There are two opinions about China's engagement in Afghanistan. First, regarding its security issues, China has benefited from the presence of NATO and the United States in Afghanistan, so it has not deployed its forces there. Chinese security planners argue that if there were no foreign forces in Afghanistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda would. The operatives could extend their militant swing into its already turbulent autonomous region, Xinjiang. Where the Uyghur population is hostile to the Chinese government. As a result,

since the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda are fighting together against NATO and US forces, it gives China leeway to improve its security apparatus (Hilali, 2010).

Unstable region however, mainly in this region there have been widespread demonstrations and violence carried out by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). Occasionally, China blames foreign soldiers and their spy agencies for fueling the violence. However, one cannot deny the fact that China has been an indirect beneficiary. This is the foreign presence in Afghanistan. This ambiguity can be intentional in China's policy towards Afghanistan. Attributed to this particular beneficial aspect; It means obtaining strategic benefits at the expense of others. A second opinion, however, argues that China is only interested in the region's economic interests. Central Asia and Afghanistan, and therefore makes economic investments where it feels safe and secure.

Copper Ayank and Amu Darya are obvious examples. Proponents of this view also argue that China has long been waiting for the right time for its future strategy in Afghanistan to engage closely. This comment reinforced the ground realities and the statement of the former Chinese President Mr. Hu, who promised to play a major role for the stability of Afghanistan in the post-2014 scenario. There is a strong feeling among Western policy makers, academic circles and think tanks that while the forces NATO and the United States were fighting the Taliban, al-Qaeda and other militias in Afghanistan, and China reaped the rewards of their sacrifices, thus emerging as a real truth (Ferrezza, 2022).

Beneficiary According to Raffaele Pantucci, senior researcher at RUSI, "Beijing correctly assumed that NATO's presence in Afghanistan meant that regional terrorist networks would remain focused on attacking alliance forces rather than causing trouble in neighboring countries such as China" (Pantucci, 2010).

China's new leadership is eager to improve its relations with its neighbors. In this regard, President Xi Jinping fully acknowledges that good neighborly relations contribute to China's own development and goals to become a prosperous, stable and modern country (Scalapino, 1991). On October 24, 2013, during a speech at the Party Center, President Xi said in his main policy: Political Bureau of the Committee on "Diplomatic Work Regarding Neighboring Countries" (Barfield, 2016). a statement that the interaction with neighboring countries "must have a three-dimensional and multi-element perspective, beyond time and space" (Rumsey, 2003)

Considering the geopolitical and geo-economics importance of the region, President Xi is looking for common ground and the convergence of interests between China and other countries in the region. The new leadership is trying to promote friendship between its neighbors

and other countries in the region to expand communication. In all fields: political, security, and economic, Mr. Xi further added: "We must have deeper and closer security cooperation and people-to-people relations" (Burnay, 2024).

There can be no second opinion about the Chinese leadership's intention to promote good relations with its neighbors, but, especially in the case of Afghanistan, China's strategy remains unclear. The region discussed, however, has not presented a clear strategy on how to deal with Afghanistan after 2014 (Dhaka, 2014).

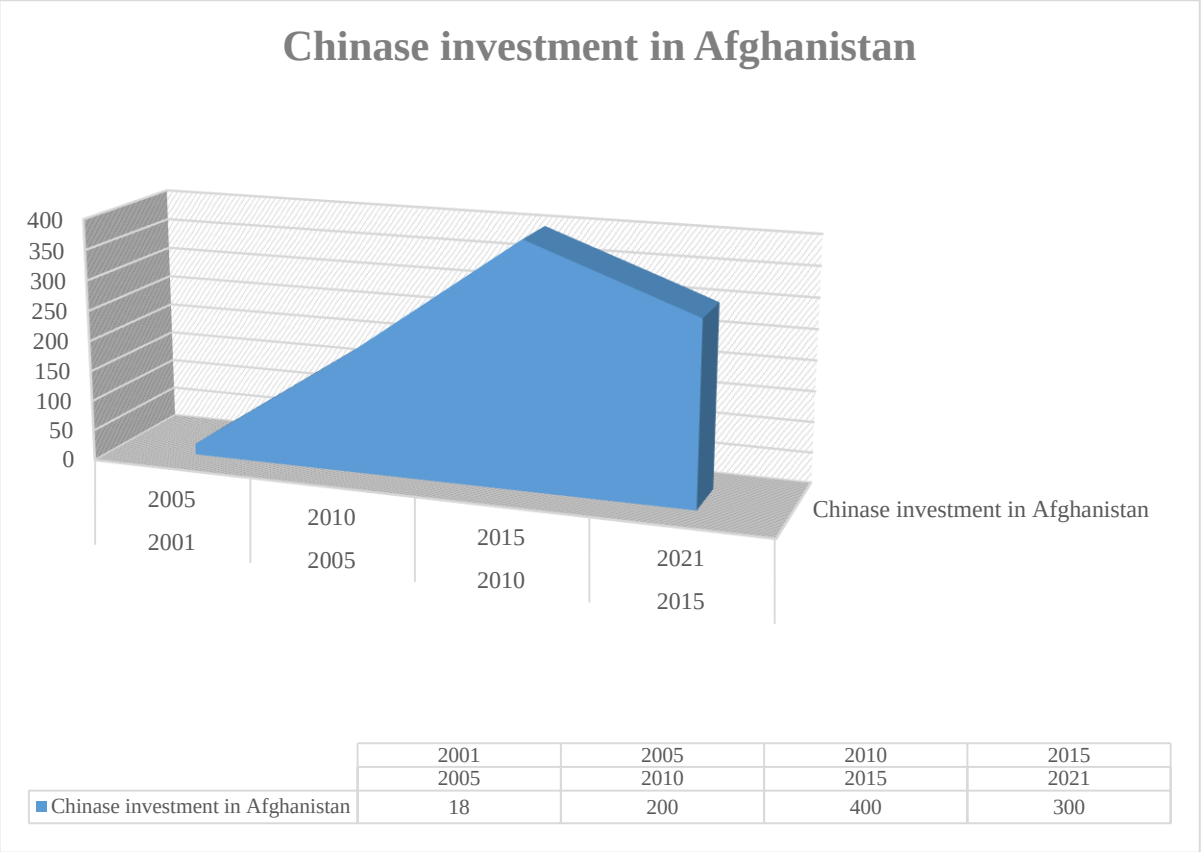
After the negotiation of a bilateral security agreement between the United States and Afghanistan, the situation will not be the same as China may have from the withdrawal. Total NATO and US forces appreciated their neighborhood until December 2014 (Dhaka, 2014). Despite these ground realities, China has its strategic and economic interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia. As Afghanistan has not yet recovered from the shocks of the misguided foreign invasion and therefore cannot take a clear line of action regarding its future solidarity (Goodson, 2013).

The change of Afghanistan's leadership in April 2014 is another factor that has benefited China. Central Asian countries have mixed feelings about China's growing influence. It may affect regional affairs in various ways. First, it invites other international rivals, such as the United States and Russia, to increase their influence or otherwise counter China's influence in Central Asia (Kowalski, 2022). Currently, it seems that the major powers are at odds over their economic interests in the region. However, Central Asian countries can benefit from the economic struggles of the great powers. If played well, these states stand to gain the most. However, China's growing influence may turn the region into former puppet states. After experiencing the authoritarian policies of the former Soviet Union, these republics are not ready to repeat history through the citizenship of another great power (Burnay, 2024).

Moreover, the region is already integrated through several regional organizations: The Commonwealth of Nations (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and security organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (Tahiri, 2017). Europe and the United States, as the hubs of hydrocarbon reserves and Eurasian nature, want to expand their influence in the region. Certainly, the image of China's soft power and economic incentives for the Central Asian republics in continuing their economic relations with China have a fruitful aspect. In Afghanistan, there is also the impression that China has not helped much in rebuilding the country and providing facilities to its masses. Even India has greatly developed communication infrastructure and contributed to the reconstruction of educational institutions, health services, transport services and training of Afghan military personnel,

bureaucracy and its intelligence agency (NDS) (Dermawan, 2022). It is hoped that China should focus on providing the facilities that are so necessary to win the hearts and minds of a common Afghan. To win the votes of the masses, Chinese companies should provide job opportunities for local people. Raffaello Pantucci, a researcher at RUSI, conducted a field survey in some parts of Afghanistan and found that, "Kabul-China's optics in Afghanistan are not good.

After a week of traveling around and talking to Afghans and others in Kabul, the consensus is that "It is that China is not helping much on the ground. In fact, there is a perception that China is trying to take advantage of Afghanistan's abundant natural resources while giving little in return" (Pantucci, 2010).



	2001 2005	2005 2010	2010 2015	2015 2021
Chinase investment in Afghanistan	18	200	400	300

Graphic 13. Chinese investment in Afghanistan 2001-2021

Analysis above graph:

1. Between 2001 and 2005, the number of Chinese investments increased from 18 to 200 units, indicating strong initial growth. This surge could have been triggered by China's recognition of Afghanistan' natural resources and its geopolitical importance, which led to initial investment in infrastructure development, as well as mining.
2. The period of 2005-2010 saw a significant increase in Chinese investment, with the highest point being at 400 units in 2010. China's efforts to enhance Afghanistan'

economy during this period are likely centered on significant projects such as the Aynak copper mine and infrastructure initiatives under the BRI.

3. Chinese investment in Afghanistan experienced a decline from 2010 to 2015, dropping as much as 300 units by 2015. A combination of factors, including heightened security concerns and political turmoil in Afghanistan as well as the potential for large-scale projects to be outmoded, could lead to this decline. This cutback shows how China is treading carefully with the dynamics shifting in Afghanistan.
4. The absence of investment figures for 2021 in the graph makes it difficult to determine the latest patterns indicating Chinese economic engagement with Afghanistan.

According to the data, Chinese investment in Afghanistan has been high but varies with changes in political and security situations. A period of strong economic engagement, likely fueled by resource extraction and strategic infrastructure projects, was at its highest level in 2010. A drop by 2015 is indicative of the challenges and uncertainties involved in sustaining steady investment levels during a highly volatile period. This analysis underscores the importance of stability and favorable conditions for sustaining foreign investments. China's experience in Afghanistan demonstrates how geopolitical and security factors can influence economic relations and investment decisions.

3.3.1.1. First Case: Aynak Copper Mine

The investment agreement in Aynak copper mine was signed with the MCC Company from China and the Ministry of Mines of Afghanistan on April 25, 2008. The Chinese company has invested 2.898 billion dollars in this project in the first stages and this investment will increase to 5 billion (Taylor, 2020). From this investment, the amount of 400 million dollars will be paid annually to Afghanistan. According to the contract, China must pay 800 million dollars as a guarantee. The contracting company has agreed to build a 400 megawatt power plant with residential water supply, a school and a mosque for the purpose of extracting coal from Afghanistan.

In the contract, the company has agreed to build a railway from Torkham to Tajikistan via Aynak to Kabul, later to Hajigak mine, from there to Dara Suf to northern Afghanistan and from the north to Tajikistan (James B. , 2013). Also, the gold obtained belongs to the Afghan government. In the first stage of this project, 8,000 people will be able to work, and in the second stage, up to 15,000 people will be able to work (Burnay, 2024). Before the establishment of the mentioned company, the amount of 2.5 million dollars was allocated for the purpose of clearing

the landmines of the 32-year-old war, until now the human and animal casualties in this area have resulted in 89 deaths and 92 injuries.

3.3.1.2. Second Case: Amu Darya Petroleum Project

As a result of the tender process held in 2009, out of 9 expressions of interest, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) in partnership with Watan Group won the privilege of Amu Darya oil field. As with the investment in Aynak's copper project, China's diplomatic efforts were crucial to the outcome (James B. , 2013). Unlike Aynak, the project appears to be more of a foreign policy aid than a commercial venture (Kleponis Col, 2010). Tethys Petroleum, CNPC's US competitor in Amu Darya, stated in a press release issued after CNPC's victory that, as an oil and gas trading company, Tethys could not offer the same conditions as CNPC, which, in Tethys' view, would carry out the project (Lutfi, 2001).

While CNPC's bid was superior, other factors were also evaluated. CNPS has the experience and the future project to develop the oil and gas project in Turkmenistan and the pipeline infrastructure necessary to transport the gas to China. These external factors can also explain the apparently non-commercial terms of the transaction (Umbach, 2019). CNPC's extensive presence in Central Asia has given it a special advantage. CNPC can use its existing supply route and labor force to obtain lower cost inputs (Umbach, 2019). It can also use the Afghanistan project as a means to increase its economic interests over the oil and natural gas resources of Central Asia and Iran, where CNPS already has large projects (Barfield, 2016).

However, from a strategic point of view, the Amu Darya concession and its adaptation are very important for the future of Chinese investment in Afghanistan. Amu Darya is one of the few international investments that have had positive results in Afghanistan (Dermawan, 2022).

Production in Amu Darya can ensure not only among Chinese investors but also other investors that investing in Afghanistan's natural resources can be profitable. It also shows the progress that the Minister of Mines and the Afghan government have made for greater accountability and transparency. Amudia may also convince Chinese investors to be more optimistic about the future of their investments in eyewear (Ogunbanjo, 20211).

3.3.2. China’s Aid to Afghanistan (2001-2021)

After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan began its reconstruction process. China participated in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. China's aid has not deployed military forces in Afghanistan and has no political conditions. Comprehensive relations of cooperation between China and Afghanistan were established to promote the reconstruction of

Afghanistan. After the establishment of the new Afghan government, China actively developed political relations, economic and trade relations, and security cooperation with Afghanistan. Afghan President Karzai visited China four times from 2002 to 2010. Political contacts between China and Afghanistan were frequent. China has also actively participated in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan and participated in the main international mechanism for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. China's participation was relatively low (Hong, 2013).

Some researchers believe that currently China was not as active in Afghanistan as Western countries. For a long time, China has followed the principle of respecting the sovereignty of other countries and not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. China has cautiously intervened in the issue of Afghanistan and has not participated in military operations in Afghanistan. As the former Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi pointed out: China has actively supported, promoted and participated in Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction efforts after the war (Dhaka, 2014).

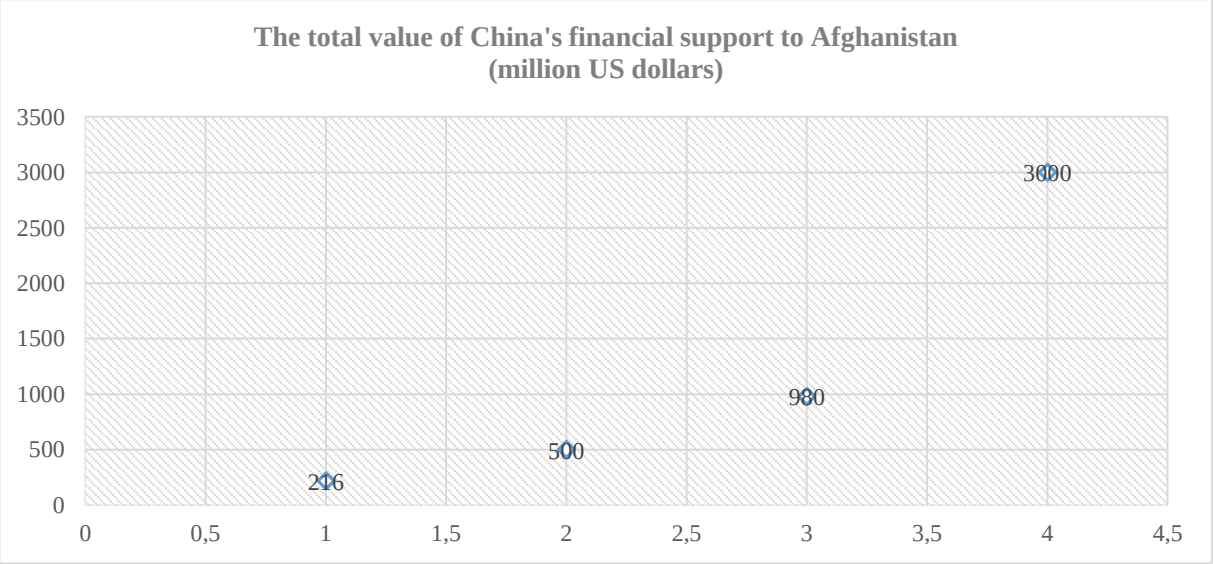
First of all, China has paid more attention to establishing close diplomatic and political relations with Afghanistan and laid the foundation for the development of bilateral relations. After the establishment of the interim government of Afghanistan in 2001, China and Afghanistan resumed diplomatic relations. Political relations between the two countries have become increasingly close. China sent a working group to Afghanistan in 2001. In 2002, Afghan President Karzai visited China and China promised to give Afghanistan $150 million over the next five years (Millward, 2004).

In 2006, President Karzai visited China and signed 14 agreements with the Chinese. Both countries also announced a joint statement between China and Afghanistan. Both countries announced a comprehensive partnership that included cooperation in the fight against transnational and terrorist crimes, economy and trade, agriculture, culture, tourism and other fields. China helps Afghanistan to train police and army and welcomes international Afghan students. During this visit, both countries signed the Treaty of Good Neighbor and Friendly Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In February 2002, the Chinese Embassy in Afghanistan was reopened (Hilali, 2010).

In May 2002, former Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan visited Afghanistan and met with Karzai as head of the interim government and Zahir as the former king. In December 2002, China also signed a declaration of good neighborliness and friendship with other neighboring countries of Afghanistan, which respects Afghanistan's territorial integrity and sovereignty, supports Afghanistan's reconstruction, and encourages Afghanistan's transit trade.

1. China and Afghanistan respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and abide by the border treaty between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Afghanistan signed in 1963, which is the basis of China-Afghanistan relations. This treaty indicated the direction of bilateral relations. The main content of the treaty consists of four parts.
2. The contracting parties shall not enter into any alliance or be a member of any bloc or take any such action, including the conclusion of such a treaty with a third country that endangers the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other party. Neither Contracting Party shall allow its territory to be used by a third country to endanger the national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other Contracting Party. None of the contracting parties should allow the creation of organizations and gangs in their territory that harm the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other party and their activities are prohibited.
3. Both countries will promote bilateral economic, cultural and counter-terrorism cooperation.
4. This treaty replaces the friendship and non-aggression treaty between China and Afghanistan that was signed in 1960.

Second, China accepts the principle of win-win cooperation and strengthens cooperation with Afghanistan in the fields of economy, energy, technology and trade to promote Afghanistan's economic prosperity. The fields of cooperation between China and Afghanistan are mainly: agriculture, infrastructure construction, hydropower and natural resources. China began to increase its economic aid to Afghanistan.



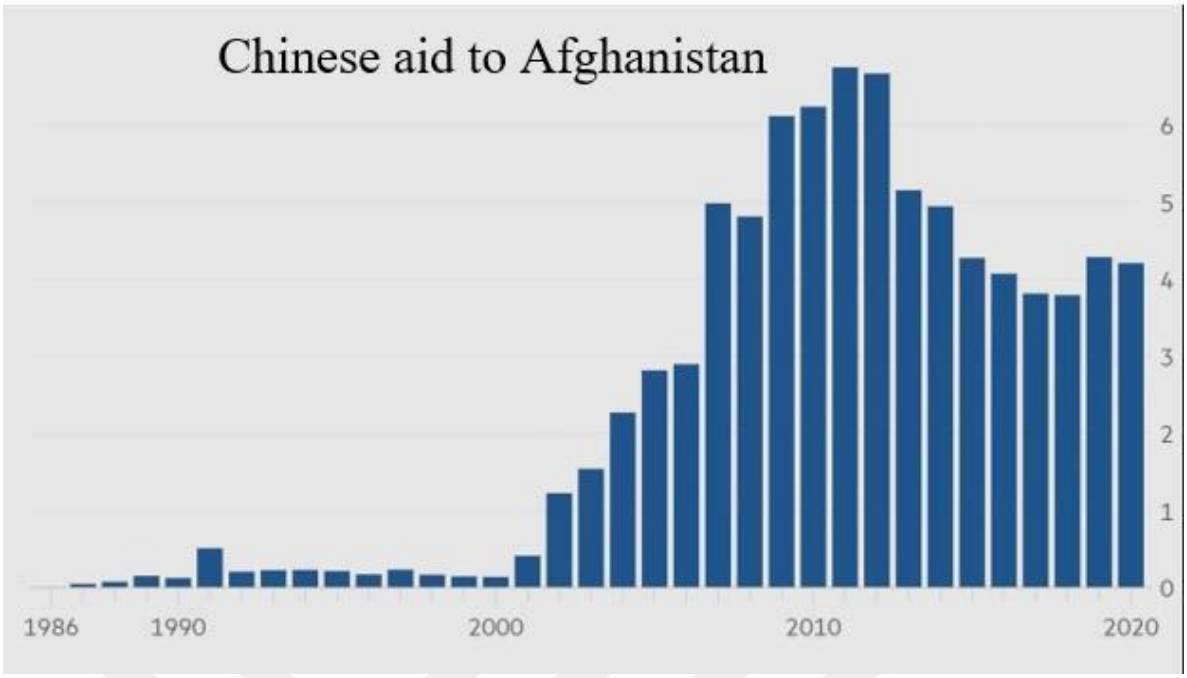
Graphic 14. The total value of China's financial support to Afghanistan

China fully participated in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and established comprehensive cooperative relations with Afghanistan since 2001. China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. China is politically opposed to interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs. At the same time, China has developed economic, trade and security cooperation with Afghanistan. China has provided a lot of aid to Afghanistan and has invested in the construction of infrastructure and energy to help the sustainable development and prosperity of Afghanistan's economy (James B. C., 2013).

The nature and extent of Chinese aid to Afghanistan can be summarized as follows:

1. Afghanistan's infrastructure has been actively developed with China' involvement. The Afghanistan-China Friendship Bridge, which links Hairatan in northern Afghanistan to Termez in Uzbekistan, is a notable instance. This bridge has made trade and transportation between the two countries possible.
2. Afghanistan has received economic support from China through grants, loans and investment.
3. China has invested in mining, telecommunications and energy sectors to create jobs and stimulate economic development in Afghanistan.
4. Providing food aid, medical supplies and disaster relief, China has also provided humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.
5. It has helped alleviate the suffering of many Afghan people during times of crisis such as natural disasters or displacement caused by conflict.
6. China has backed capacity-building efforts in Afghanistan by providing training and scholarships to Afghan professionals and students.
7. Its aim is to strengthen Afghan citizens' abilities and knowledge in areas like agriculture, education & health.
8. The diplomatic engagement of China has been active in promoting peace talks and finding an Afghan counterpart.
9. It has been the site of several instances of intra-Afghan dialogue, with talks between Afghan government and Taliban representatives taking place.' The peace talks and China's commitment to stability and security in Afghanistan are evident.

Note that the amount of Chinese aid to Afghanistan during this period remains unverified.' China's increasing role in Afghanistan’s development and peace-building efforts is widely recognized. C, 2013).



(World Bank).

Graphic 15. Chinese aid to Afghanistan from 1986-2020

This graph shows the amount of aid that China provided to Afghanistan between 1986 and 2020..

1. During the first half of the decade, Chinese investments increased from 18 to 200 units.2005_fr. China's recognition of Afghanistan' natural resources and its geopolitical importance led to an increase in investment in various sectors, including infrastructure and mining.
2. China's investment grew rapidly from 2005 to 2010, reaching an all-time high of 400 units in 2010. It is likely that China's increased efforts to exploit Afghanistan' economic potential, including the construction of the Aynak copper mine and infrastructure projects under the BRI, are evident during this period.
3. From 2010 to 2015, Chinese investment in Afghanistan has declined from its peak to 300 units. Nevertheless; Several factors, including security concerns, political instability in Afghanistan, and the possibility of challenges with large-scale projects, may be contributing to this decline. The decrease suggests that China is being cautious in its handling of the situation in Afghanistan.

Consequences: The statistics reveal that Chinese investment in Afghanistan has been substantial, but has also fluctuated due to political and security changes. This peak peaks in 2010, and is likely driven by the potential extraction of resources, as well as strategic infrastructure projects, which are indicators of strong economic activity. This decline (by 2015)

reflects difficulties in maintaining steady investment levels, which can be challenging due to volatile markets. This examination underscores that stability and favorable conditions are crucial for maintaining foreign investments. Evidence from China shows that geopolitical and security considerations can affect economic relations, as well as investment decisions.

3.3.3. Agreements between China and Afghanistan

Over the years, China and Afghanistan signed a number of agreements in various fields from security to economic development and cultural exchange to humanitarian aid. Security concerns have stalled some deals, but these accords underscore China's strategic interest in pacifying Afghanistan to help safeguard its borders, exploit mineral resources and increase regional clout. These steps emphasize Afghanistan's contribution to China's strategic interests, such as those in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and regional counter-terrorism. Essentially, this means that China and Afghanistan have agreed on many important deals over the years as a sign of their constantly maturing bilateral relationship in commerce, infrastructure building, security cooperation, and exchange. There are a few of the more important arrangements between the two nations:

3.3.3.1. Strategic Partnership Agreement (2012)

In 2012, China and Afghanistan established the Strategic and Cooperative Partnership Agreement, which set the stage for long-term collaboration between the two nations. This agreement underscored the importance of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, concentrating on three key areas:

- Security: China committed to assisting Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism, particularly targeting extremist groups that pose a threat to regional stability.
- Economic Development: The agreement emphasized China’s dedication to helping Afghanistan rebuild its infrastructure and institutions.
- Political Support: China expressed its support for Afghanistan’s initiatives aimed at political reconciliation and governance reforms.

This partnership represented a significant change in China’s involvement in Afghanistan, as Beijing adopted a more active role, particularly following the planned withdrawal of NATO forces (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2012).

3.3.3.2. Economic Cooperation and Investment Agreements

- Mes Aynak Copper Mine Project (2007): The Mes Aynak project stands out as one of the largest foreign direct investments in Afghanistan. In a significant move, China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) and Jiangxi Copper Corporation entered into a

$3 billion agreement with the Afghan government to develop the Mes Aynak copper deposit, recognized as one of the largest untapped copper resources globally.

1. Significance: This agreement highlighted China's keen interest in Afghanistan's rich mineral resources and the potential benefits for the Afghan economy.
2. Challenges: The project encountered delays due to security issues, inadequate infrastructure, and concerns regarding cultural preservation, as Mes Aynak is also an important archaeological site (Fichtner, 2019).Belt and Road Initiative (2016): Afghanistan became part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure and trade network aimed at connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa.

• Belt and Road Initiative (2016): Afghanistan was incorporated into China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an extensive infrastructure and trade network designed to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa.

1) Key Focus: The initiative emphasizes the construction of roads, railways, and energy pipelines to better integrate Afghanistan into regional trade.
2) Expected Impact: Improved connectivity could transform Afghanistan into a transit hub, fostering economic growth and trade. However, ongoing insecurity in the region has posed challenges to the implementation of large-scale BRI projects (Chaturvedy, 2016).

1) Key Focus: Building roads, railways, and energy pipelines to integrate Afghanistan into regional trade.
2) Expected Impact: Enhanced connectivity could turn Afghanistan into a transit hub, promoting economic growth and trade. However, insecurity in Afghanistan has hindered large-scale BRI projects (Chaturvedy, 2016).

- Five Nations Railway Corridor Agreement (2015): This regional agreement involves China, Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It aims to establish a railway linking these countries to enhance regional trade.

  Role of Afghanistan: As a central link in this corridor, Afghanistan could benefit from increased transit revenues and improved trade relations with neighboring countries (Wolf, 2019).

  3.3.3.3. Security Cooperation Agreements

- **Counterterrorism Cooperation (2015):** Both countries agreed to strengthen their collaboration to counter terrorism and extremism, particularly targeting groups such as

the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which threatens China's Xinjiang region (Clarke, 2016).

- **Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM) (2016):** This agreement brought together China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to improve regional counterterrorism efforts and enhance security cooperation, including intelligence sharing and joint military drills (Ministry of Defense of China, 2016).
    1) Objectives: Conduct joint military drills, share intelligence, and coordinate operations against cross-border threats.
    2) China's Role: As a key player, China provided technical and financial support to enhance regional security infrastructure (Ministry of Defense of China, 2016).

3.3.3.4. Trade and Border Agreements

- **Five Nations Railway Corridor Agreement (2015):** This regional project involved China, Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to develop a transcontinental railway that would boost trade and economic ties. Afghanistan's involvement in the agreement underscored its potential to serve as a trade hub (Wolf, 2019).
- **Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative (2014):** China and Afghanistan committed to strengthening cooperation within the Silk Road framework, with an emphasis on infrastructure, energy, and trade (Scobell et al., 2018).

3.3.3.5. Cultural and Educational Exchange Agreements

- Confucius Institute Agreement (2008): China set up Confucius Institutes in Afghanistan to encourage the study of the Chinese language and culture, enhancing connections between the two peoples (Fazil, 2019).
- Scholarship and Training Programs: China has provided many scholarships for Afghan students and has organized training programs for professionals in diverse areas such as public administration, agriculture, and engineering (Embassy of China in Afghanistan, 2020).

3.3.3.6. Humanitarian and Development Assistance

China has made substantial financial contributions to Afghanistan aimed at improving infrastructure, healthcare, and providing disaster relief. For instance, in 2014, China committed $327 million in aid, which helped rebuild essential facilities such as schools and hospitals (Chinese Ministry of Commerce, 2014). These agreements reflect China's diverse involvement in Afghanistan, covering areas from economic growth to security cooperation. Although some initiatives have encountered difficulties due to the unstable security situation in Afghanistan,

these agreements underscore China's strategic interest in utilizing Afghanistan's resources, boosting regional connectivity, and fostering stability in the area. Overall, these agreements illustrate the deepening and dynamic economic ties between China and Afghanistan, positioning China as a vital ally in Afghanistan's development journey.

3.3.4. Trade between China-Afghanistan

China and Afghanistan trade by land through Haritaran port, Gwadar port in Pakistan by sea as well as air corridors, and China is Afghanistan's third largest trading partner after Iran and Pakistan. Electrical and electronic appliances, clothes, shoes and raw materials of factories are among the goods that are exported from China to Afghanistan. The construction of the Jagli road with a length of about 50 kilometers between Afghanistan and China in Badakhshan continues and has not yet been completed. This road starts from "Bezhai Gonbad Khurd" area in Pamir Badakhshan and extends to the end of Wakhan district of Badakhshan, which almost reaches the border of China (Aria, 2023).

According to the plan of the Afghan government, this road will form part of the Wakhan Corridor, which is a step in the direction of the regional connection of Afghanistan and turning this country into an economy-oriented country. WAkhan is a mountainous area in Badakhshan, where it was not possible to move trucks before. Now with the construction of a gravel road that will be tarred in the future and will be used as a crossing between China and Afghanistan (Aria, 2023).

3.3.4.1. China's exports to Afghanistan

According to the report of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the estimated value of Afghanistan's mineral reserves such as gold, copper, iron, rare metals and uranium is more than one trillion dollars. Afghanistan's underground and mineral resources have undoubtedly made China interested in this country (Tahiri, 2017). The volume of China's exports to Afghanistan increased from 19.91 million dollars to 704 million dollars between 2002 and 2010. In a simple calculation, China's exports to Afghanistan have increased by 13.1% annually from 2001 to 2021.

3.3.4.1.1. Military Weapons

In addition to having the second largest economy in the world, China's army is also in the first ranks. From the point of view of weapons, hardware and military equipment, China has been growing in recent years and has been able to create a special place for itself in the world. Besides exporting machinery, electronic devices, etc. to Afghanistan, China has also exported aid and military equipment and war tools to this country (Khalil, 2016).

Since 2016, China's first military aid, including military equipment, ammunition, personnel carriers, etc., has been provided to strengthen the defense of the Afghan National Army. Although China is not willing to easily transfer military ammunition and export it to neighboring countries or even the world, the value of China's ammunition and military weapons exports to Afghanistan was approximately 73 million dollars, which apparently did not continue. Because with the issue of peace and the Doha talks with the Taliban, the Afghan government refused to deal with China in the field of arms. However, China's exports and Afghanistan's imports from China were still exchanged in high volume in other sectors (Khalil, 2016).

3.3.4.1.2. Food Items

Although China is considered one of the largest economies in the world, its population of nearly one and a half billion people has put this country in a disadvantage from the point of view of its food products. But even so, China has the upper hand in the field of exporting food products. Although the exact amount of food items exported from China to Afghanistan has not been determined, but Afghan traders import some food products from China by exporting dried fruit and other animal products (RAHİMİ, 2021).

Table 2. China-Afghanistan Food Trade Evolution (2001-2021)

Year	China's Food Exports (USD Millions)	Afghanistan's Food Exports (USD Millions)	Trade Balance (USD Millions)
2001	15.2	3.1	+12.1
2002	22.4	4.5	+17.9
2003	28.6	6.2	+22.4
2004	35.8	8.4	+27.4
2005	45.3	10.6	+34.7
2006	56.7	13.8	+42.9
2007	68.4	16.5	+51.9
2008	78.9	19.2	+59.7
2009	85.6	22.4	+63.2
2010	95.3	25.7	+69.6
2011	105.8	28.3	+77.5

2012	115.4	30.6	+84.8
2013	125.7	32.8	+92.9
2014	135.2	34.5	+100.7
2015	142.8	36.2	+106.6
2016	148.5	37.8	+110.7
2017	152.4	39.5	+112.9
2018	156.8	41.2	+115.6
2019	159.3	42.8	+116.5
2020	155.6	40.5	+115.1
2021	162.7	45.3	+117.4

Analysis of China-Afghanistan Food Trade Evolution (2001-2021) The data illustrates the evolution of food trade between China and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021, reflecting notable trends in trade volumes, growth patterns, and the trade balance over two decades.

1. China's Food Exports to Afghanistan: China's food exports to Afghanistan increased significantly from USD 15.2 million in 2001 to USD 162.7 million in 2021. This represents a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 12.4%. The steady increase is attributable to multiple factors:

Economic Growth and Demand in Afghanistan: Afghanistan's rising population and growing demand for imported food products likely drove the need for imports from China, especially given China's competitive pricing and product variety. Enhanced Trade Relations: Political and economic collaboration between the two countries, particularly after 2001, fostered stronger trade ties, enabling a consistent flow of goods from China.

Infrastructure Development: Improved connectivity, such as through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), may have further streamlined trade routes, enhancing China's ability to export to Afghanistan efficiently.

However, the growth in exports fluctuated slightly in the late 2010s. For instance, in 2020, exports declined to USD 155.6 million, possibly due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on global trade.

2. Afghanistan's Food Exports to China: Afghanistan's food exports also grew but at a slower pace compared to China's exports. From USD 3.1 million in 2001 to USD 45.3

million in 2021, the growth reflects an increased capacity for agricultural production and export readiness. Key drivers include:

- Focus on Agricultural Development: Afghanistan has prioritized its agricultural sector, enhancing its ability to produce and export high-demand commodities like dried fruits, nuts, and spices, which are popular in the Chinese market.
- Market Access in China: Afghanistan benefited from China's growing interest in diverse food imports, particularly premium organic and traditional products.
- Challenges in Scaling Exports: Despite growth, Afghanistan's export levels remained low relative to China's, due to limited production capacity, lack of advanced processing facilities, and infrastructure challenges.

The trade balance has consistently favored China over the past two decades. Beginning with a surplus of +USD 12.1 million in 2001, this figure grew to +USD 117.4 million by 2021, illustrating Afghanistan's heavy reliance on Chinese imports. Key implications include:

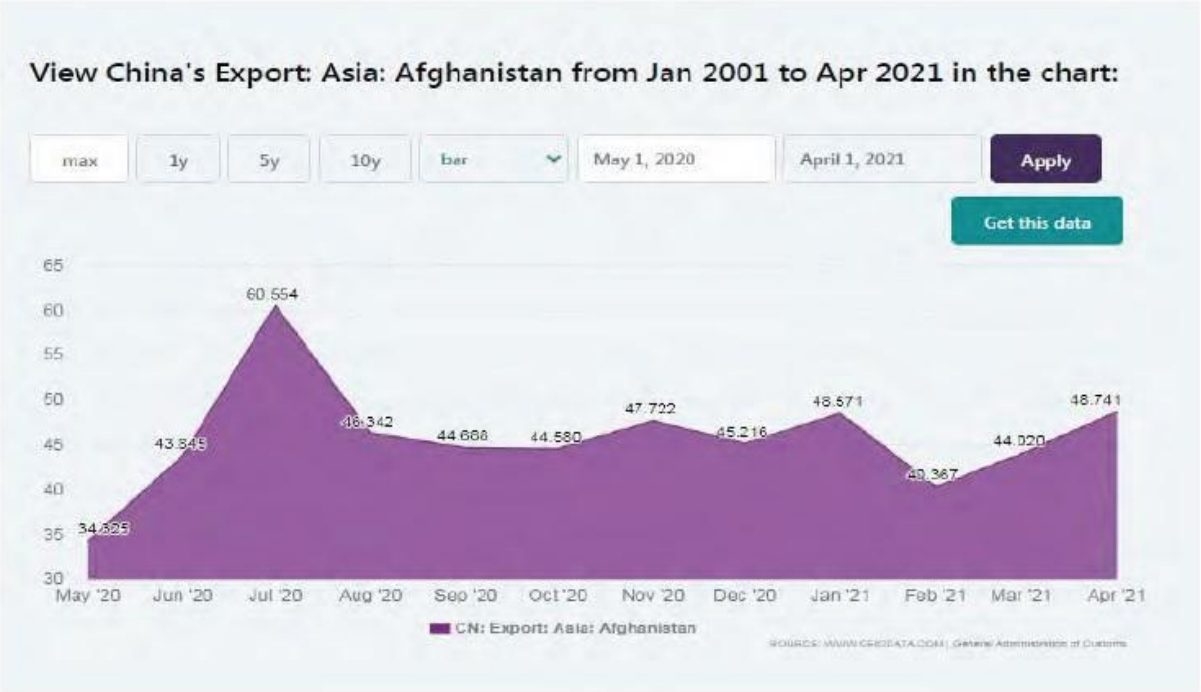
- Dependence on Imports: Afghanistan's significant reliance on Chinese food exports highlights a trade imbalance, indicating its need for external suppliers to meet a large portion of its food requirements.
    - Opportunities for Afghan Export Growth: The ongoing trade surplus for China indicates that Afghanistan has the potential to diversify and boost its exports to help close the gap. Enhancing agricultural practices, adding value, and forming broader trade agreements could improve the trade relationship.
    - Regional and Global Context: Afghanistan's capacity to export more food products is limited by geopolitical instability, underdeveloped trade policies, and restricted access to foreign markets.
    - Mutual Growth: Both nations have seen growth in food trade, although China's exports have increased at a much faster pace than those of Afghanistan.
    - Impact of Global Events: The stagnation observed in 2020 demonstrates how global occurrences, like the pandemic, can disrupt established trade patterns.
    - Trade Potential: Afghanistan's abundant agricultural resources offer opportunities for export growth, but realizing this potential necessitates investment in infrastructure, capacity-building, and trade facilitation. The food trade relationship between China and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021 showcases a strong yet uneven trade dynamic.

China's dominance in exports emphasizes Afghanistan's dependency, while Afghanistan's gradual export growth points to untapped potential. Strategic investments in

agriculture and trade infrastructure could help Afghanistan leverage its strengths, enhance its export capacity, and achieve a more balanced trade relationship in the future.

3.3.4.1.3 Electrical equipment, medical, etc.

According to World Bank data, from January 2001 to April 2021, China exported an average of 18,913 dollars of goods to Afghanistan per month. The highest figure is for August 2018, which is $76,903, and the lowest is for February 2002. Chart 1 shows China's exports over the past twelve months and over the past 10 years (oec.world, 2022).



Graphic 16 .The amount of China's exports in the years 2001 to 2021

This graph shows between May 2020 and April 2021, China's food exports to Afghanistan exhibited notable fluctuations, reflecting various market dynamics and external factors. The initial period from May to July 2020 was marked by a significant recovery, with exports rising from 34,293 units in May to a peak of 60,554 units in July. This dramatic increase indicates a strong recovery momentum, possibly driven by easing trade restrictions and increased demand in Afghanistan.

From August to October 2020, export volumes stabilized around 44,000-46,000 units, suggesting a normalization of trade following the July peak. This period of stabilization reflects the market's adjustment to new levels of trade activity. By November, exports showed an uptick, reaching 47,722 units, before slightly declining to 45,216 units in December. This consistency through the end of the year underscores a relatively stable trade relationship amid global economic challenges. As 2021 began, China's exports to Afghanistan kicked off robustly,

reaching 48,571 units in January. However, February experienced a notable decline to 40,247 units, likely influenced by seasonal factors or logistical issues. March and April showed signs of recovery, with export figures climbing to 44,020 and 48,741 units, respectively. This upward trajectory indicates a resilient trade relationship that can rebound from occasional setbacks. Overall, the average export value remained around 45,000 units, reflecting a general resilience and adaptability in the trade ties between China and Afghanistan.

Despite monthly fluctuations, the consistent recovery pattern by April 2021 indicates a positive outlook for future trade, reinforcing the robustness and mutual benefits of their economic partnership. So this analysis provides a comprehensive view of the trends and fluctuations in China's food exports to Afghanistan, illustrating the resilience and adaptability of the trade relationship between the two countries.

China's export goods are according to the table (3-3), the most of which is related to electronic equipment ($86.63 million) dollars and miscellaneous products ($12.61million) is the least. (oec.world, 2022).

Table 3. Mejor products of China's export to Afghanistan

No	product name	price volume
1	*Electrical and electronic equipment*	*$86.63 million*
2	*Tires*	*$63.85 million*
3	*Handcrafted threads and yarn*	*$41.50 million*
4	*Machinery, reactors and boilers*	*$41.41 million*
5	*Vehicles, other than railways*	*$35.96 million*
6	*Textile products, clothing sets and second-hand clothing*	*$31.39 million*
7	*Synthetic fibers*	*$25.15 million*
8	*Knitted or crocheted fabrics*	*$20.71 million*
9	*Medical supplies, photo, technical and optical equipment*	*$13.82 million*
10	*Miscellaneous products*	*$12.62 million*

3.3.4.2. Afghanistan's exports to China

Afghanistan's export to China was 0.8 million dollars before 2001, which is the lowest figure, or in fact, it was not considered an export at all. But since 2002, when Afghanistan's exports to China increased, until 2010, this figure increased to 11.7 million dollars. The main export products from Afghanistan to China are clearly introduced in table (3-4) (Tahiri, 2017).

Table 4 . Mejor products of Afghanistan's export to China

No	Major products	Volume
1	*Other Brains*	$13.1 million
2	*Non-retail pure cotton yarn*	$4.68 million
3	*Animal hair*	$2.01 million
4	*Dry and fresh fruit*	$0.78 million
5	*Precious and semi-precious stones*	$0.52 million
6	*Saffron, black pine nuts, medicinal plants and handicrafts*	$0.38 million

During the last two decades, Afghanistan's exports to China have increased at an annual rate of 1.68% from 16.6 million dollars in 1995 to 24.4 million dollars in 2018. Afghanistan is also one of the beneficiaries of China's open door policy. Because China's open door policy has allowed the investors of that country to show interest in Afghanistan's mineral and natural resources and make huge investments in this country.

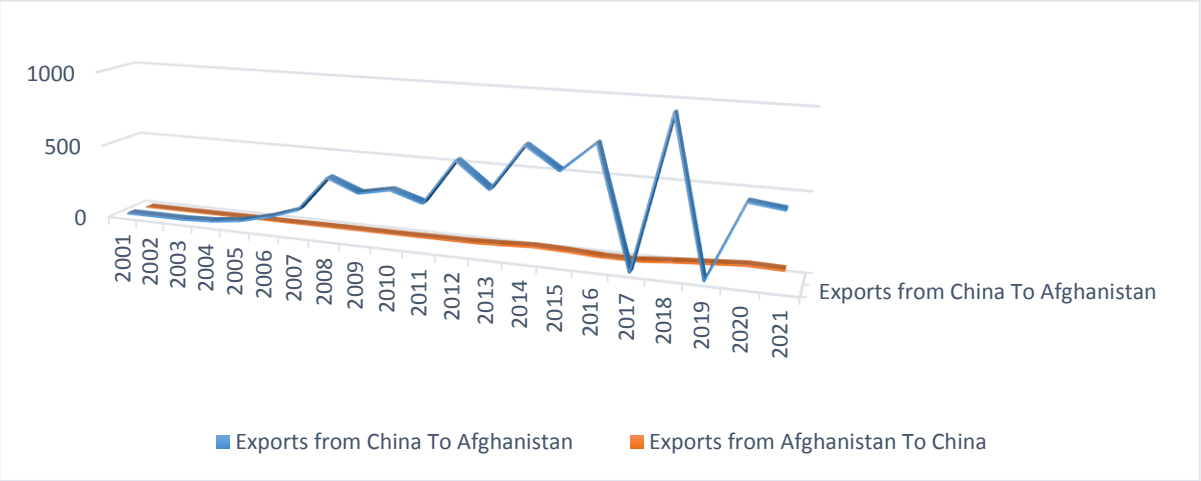


Figure 3. Trade between Afghanistan and China (2001-2021)

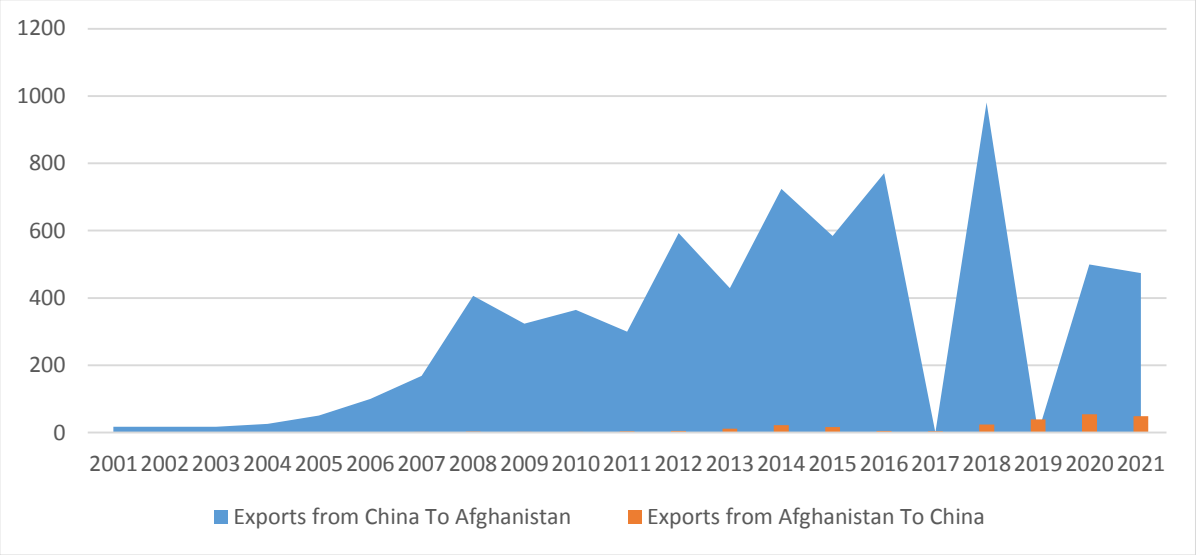


Figure 4. complete Trade between Afghanistan and China (2001-2021)

Afghanistan is determined to design measures to improve its trade balance by diversifying export targets and increasing import substitution. According to the report of the International Monetary Fund in 2018, exports were about 4.5% of the GDP and agricultural products accounted for three quarters of Afghanistan's exports. The immortality of the crisis and the lack of prospects of its end have minimized the possibility of foreign direct investment 13 due to the high risk. Despite this, the largest amount of investment is related to China and the United Arab Emirates. Figure 3 shows the volume of exports and the share of different countries.

3.4. Chinese Loans in Afghanistan

China is one of the biggest lenders to countries in the world. In the past ten years, China's loans to low- and middle-income countries have tripled and reached $170 billion by the end of 2020. As a result, this "hidden debt" now accounts for more than 10 percent of their annual per capita income owed by 40 low- and middle-income countries to China, according to ID-Data research. The debt of Djibouti, Laos, Zambia and Kyrgyzstan to China is about 20% of their annual per capita income (Downs E. , 2012).

Most of the debt of these countries to China is related to large infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, ports, as well as mining and energy production industries, which have expanded since the presidency of Xi Jinping and following the implementation of road construction projects. However, China has not yet given such loans to Afghanistan. All the projects that China has implemented or is working on in Afghanistan have been carried out according to clear and specific agreements between the two sides (Dhaka, 2014).

The parts that China has taken over as aid to Afghanistan are also given as humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, and under no circumstances are they considered as loans. The only concern

that exists and may turn the tide in favor of China and Afghanistan in the future is the infrastructural, mining and oil projects that China has gained under its control in Afghanistan (James B. C., 2013). Because there is a possibility that China will abuse these projects in the future and impose its loans on Afghanistan. But in any case, until now, Afghanistan has not and is not indebted to China under any circumstances (James B. C., 2013).

Table 5 . Chinese Loans in Afghanistan

Country	Debt to China (% of Annual Per Capita Income)	Main Project Types
Djibouti	20%	Infrastructure, Ports
Laos	20%	Railways, Infrastructure
Zambia	20%	Mining, Infrastructure
Kyrgyzstan	20%	Energy, Infrastructure
Average for 40 Low/Middle Income Countries	10%	Various Infrastructure Projects
Afghanistan	0%	Humanitarian Aid, Mining Rights

Analyzing China's global lending patterns reveals a complex economic landscape where the nation has emerged as a dominant creditor to low- and middle-income countries, with total lending reaching $170 billion by 2020, yet Afghanistan stands as a notable exception to this trend. While countries like Djibouti, Laos, Zambia, and Kyrgyzstan carry substantial Chinese debt burdens, approximately 20% of their annual per capita income, Afghanistan has maintained a unique position through project-specific bilateral agreements and humanitarian aid arrangements rather than direct loans. This distinctive approach has allowed Afghanistan to benefit from Chinese investment in infrastructure, mining, and oil projects without accumulating the significant debt exposure that characterizes China's engagement with other developing nations.

This situation presents both opportunities and potential risks for Afghanistan's future economic sovereignty. China's control over key infrastructure and resource projects could be

used to impose loans in the future. However, at present, all Chinese activities in Afghanistan are confined to specific bilateral agreements and humanitarian assistance. This scenario illustrates a different model of Chinese economic engagement in developing countries, where direct investment and project-based cooperation take precedence over loan-based development financing. The long-term effects of this approach are still uncertain as China continues to expand its economic influence in the region.

Examining this economic relationship more closely, it becomes clear that China's strategic approach to Afghanistan is quite different from its broader Belt and Road Initiative patterns. It focuses on resource access and infrastructure development without the debt burden that often accompanies Chinese overseas investment. This strategy may indicate China's awareness of Afghanistan's strategic significance and the necessity for a more nuanced engagement in politically sensitive areas. While this has currently placed Afghanistan in a more advantageous position compared to other developing nations regarding debt exposure, it also underscores the need for careful oversight of resource and infrastructure agreements to ensure they align with Afghanistan's long-term economic goals. The lack of direct loans, although beneficial for managing debt, does not rule out the potential for future economic leverage through current project controls and resource rights. This indicates the importance of ongoing strategic management of this crucial bilateral relationship to preserve its advantageous status while also protecting against any future challenges or pressures that may emerge due to China's substantial involvement in critical sectors of Afghanistan's economy.

The years from 2001 to 2021 were pivotal for China-Afghanistan relations, starting with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. During this time, China took a careful stance, adhering to a policy of "non-interference" in political disputes while emphasizing economic collaboration. After the interim government was established in Afghanistan, China opened its embassy in 2002 and enhanced its diplomatic ties.

China's interests in Afghanistan can be divided into two key areas: security and economic. In terms of security, counter-terrorism and regional stability, especially regarding the Xinjiang region, were crucial. Economically, China aimed to tap into Afghanistan's abundant natural resources and further the Belt and Road Initiative. Afghanistan's strategic location as a gateway to Central Asia also held great importance for China.

Significant Chinese investments in Afghanistan included the Aynak Copper Mine, which saw a $4.4 billion investment, the Amu Darya oil project, and various infrastructure initiatives like roads, railways, and power plants. Investment trends from China showed a rise from 2001

to 2010, peaking during that time, but then faced a downturn between 2010 and 2015. Additionally, China offered development and infrastructure support to Afghanistan without imposing political conditions.

Over these years, China's strategy shifted from calculated indifference to a more strategic partnership. The nation successfully bolstered its presence in Afghanistan by balancing economic prospects with security issues. While steering clear of direct military involvement, China ramped up its economic activities, concentrating on infrastructure development and resource extraction amid strategic competition with other regional powers.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As pointed out and selected in the theoretical framework of this research, after the US and allies after the 9/11 attacks to Afghanistan, according to Mersheimer's theory, China realistically chose an economic role instead of a military role. And sought close relations with Afghanistan. China was concerned that the United States was trying to contain it, and action in Afghanistan was part of that strategy. Second, China was geo-economically committed to Afghanistan to defend its Xinjiang region and prevent it from becoming a terrorist haven, which is vital to China. Third, according to the neorealist theory, China promotes the strategy of global harmony, and as a result of this policy, China seeks world peace, especially in its own vicinity. Afghanistan is very important for China for several reasons, the most important of which is security. China's economy is expanding as it seeks natural resources from other countries. China's primary goal in expanding its presence in Afghanistan is to provide peace and stability to a country threatened by extremism. China wants to strengthen economic relations with Afghanistan as a result of the country's rich natural resources.

China is a key player due to its geographical advantages as a neighboring country. China provides humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. It will help rebuild a violence-torn Afghanistan. China has close relations with the Taliban. As a result, they do not pose a serious threat to China. China hopes to benefit from its presence in Afghanistan by building a reputation as a responsible emerging power. As Andrew Small (2012) emphasizes in China's Off-Pak Moment, it is necessary to understand how China's foreign relations in the South and Central Asian regions are at the international level and to understand China's participation in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, China wants to maintain stability so that it is not used as a stage to attack Pakistan. In addition, with the continued instability in western China, Beijing officials are suspected of using Afghanistan as a training or operational staging area for attacks on the Chinese government by Chinese or Afghan radicals Afghanistan is very important for China from economic and security point of view. Because on the one hand, China's economy is expanding, and on the other hand, due to the proximity of Afghanistan to China, the security of this country has a significant impact on China's emerging economy. In addition to being a very important security issue for China, Afghanistan has rich and extraordinary natural resources that can provide for many of China's shortages and raw material needs.

Although Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, China's trade and economic relations have been established for many decades, and as mentioned, trade relations between China and Afghanistan were established in the past through the ancient Silk Road, where Buddhist pilgrims

from China They used to come to Bamyan and other regions of Afghanistan, and it would cause prosperity and expansion of trade between the two countries. But due to the bloody wars that occurred in Afghanistan and the old Silk Road was still out of order, the trade relations between China and Afghanistan were silent and inactive for a long time. This situation, with the establishment of the Taliban government in 1996 to 2001, because the Taliban supported the radical Uyghur Muslims in China, caused the commercial and political relations between China and Afghanistan to become cold.

During the 5-year period of the first Taliban government, China tried to control the situation from a security point of view and did not engage in the economy and trade with Afghanistan beyond security concerns. This situation continued until the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and the establishment of a republic with the support of the United States and its allies. With the establishment of a democratic and republican system in Afghanistan, China resumed its relations with Afghanistan and made major contributions to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Because China knew very well and knows that a stable Afghanistan is beneficial to China's economy. During the two decades from 2001 to 2021, China was considered one of the main trading partners of Afghanistan and still the biggest supporter in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Considering that from 2001 to 2021, China has increasingly sought to expand and develop commercial and economic relations with Afghanistan, and also considering that China has considered Afghanistan important from a security and economic point of view, we present the answer to the first question of the research. It can be said that China had the largest and highest amount of trade with Afghanistan during the years 2001 to 2021. The amount of trade between these two countries had reached more than 31miliar dollars in total during two decades.

As emphasized in the second chapter, China-Afghanistan political relations, economic cooperation and trade relations go back to the Silk Road era. These relations were established in 1955 and then strengthened through the "Treaty of Economic and Technical Cooperation in 1964". In the last decade, the trade between China and Afghanistan has reached more than 700 million dollars. A look at the trade volume between China and Afghanistan reveals certain facts that point to a favorable environment for China's business interests. Between 2002 and 2010 alone, trade volume remained significantly high, meaning China's export volume increased from $19.91 million to $704 million. There is also a small but significant increase in the volume of Chinese imports, which increased from $08.0 million to $11.7 million (Huasheng Z. &., 2012)

In addition, recently, the Afghan government and aid agencies are contracting with a number of Chinese companies for various areas of reconstruction activities. Afghanistan is

fortunate to have abundant natural resources such as copper, iron, coal, marble, precious metals, lithium, precious stones and most importantly hydrocarbons, some of which have been discovered while most of them remain. Unexplored due to ongoing conflict. According to the Geological Survey of Afghanistan and the United States, between 2007 and 2009, copper, mercury, rare earth elements, sulfur, chromite, asbestos, potash, graphite and sand deposits were found in more than 20 mining areas.

The survey indicates that "most of the known significant metal deposits are of copper and iron. The total copper resources in Afghanistan reach up to 60 million tons of copper, which is estimated to contain the copper deposits in Aynak. Nearly 30 million tons of undiscovered copper resources are estimated in porphyry and skarn copper deposits. About 28.5 million tons of copper will be with additional resources of molybdenum, gold and silver. Sedimentary iron reserves are abundant, and the deposits of Haji Gek and its surroundings contain about $2260^{million}$ tons of iron ore with a grade higher than 62% by weight of iron. Additional resources are likely in similar reserves" (Huasheng Z. , 2012).

In the first decade of the 21^{st} century, trade between China and Afghanistan has steadily increased. And China has emerged as one of the main exporters to Afghanistan. China is providing essential assistance to the development of Afghanistan's natural resources and infrastructure. In 2007, Metallurgy Corporation of China (MCC) and Jiangxi Copper Corporation (JCCL) agreed to make the largest foreign investment worth $3.5 billion (Shroder, 2022). billion in Afghanistan by winning a bid to develop what geologists believe is the world's second largest country. Aynak undeveloped copper deposits in Logar province, 35^{km} southeast of Kabul (Duns, 2012). These are copper deposits estimated to be worth $1 to $3 trillion (Shroder, 2022).

In fact, China was the first foreign country to sign an oil exploration agreement with Afghanistan in decades. It is possible for these people to earn 7 billion dollars in the next 25 years. In 2011, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and its Afghan partner, Watan Oil and Gas, acquired the rights to three oil blocks in the provinces of Sar-i-Pul and Faryab in northwestern Afghanistan. China National Oil Corporation (CNPC) and its Afghan partner are exploring for crude oil from oil reserves in the Amu Darya River Basin. In the northern region of Afghanistan, the reserves of the Amu Darya river basin are more than 87 million barrels of crude oil reserves. In addition, the northern region of Afghanistan is believed to contain more than 1.6 billion barrels of crude oil, 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 500 million barrels of liquefied natural gas. China initially invested 400 million dollars for oil exploration in these oil fields in Afghanistan (Downs E. , 2012).

The general perception is that the Chinese provide economic aid as part of a bid that makes Chinese companies uncompetitive with anyone else. On the other hand, China has proposed to build a power plant and railway to service the mine, which can almost multiply the investment and benefit the people with civil facilities for the local people. Interestingly, while American soldiers are risking their lives in Afghanistan, it is Chinese companies that are reaping the economic benefits (Posen B. R., 2013).

China has played a significant role in the economic and political development of Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021. Here are some key points:

1. Economic Investment: China has invested heavily in Afghanistan's infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, and power plants. One prominent example is the construction of the Afghanistan-China Friendship Dam in Herat province, which provides electricity and irrigation to thousands of Afghan households.
2. Mining Sector: China has expressed a keen interest in Afghanistan's extensive mineral resources, such as copper, iron ore, and rare earth minerals. Chinese companies have been actively engaged in exploration and mining operations in the country, seeking to leverage these resources for their economic advantage.
3. Trade Relations: China ranks among Afghanistan's key trading partners. Over the years, bilateral trade between the two nations has expanded significantly, with China importing Afghan products like agricultural goods, carpets, and precious stones.
4. Diplomatic Engagement: China has been proactive in its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, hosting peace talks and facilitating discussions between the Afghan government and the Taliban. This involvement in the peace process underscores China's commitment to maintaining regional stability and protecting its economic interests.
5. Regional Connectivity: China has proposed and backed several regional connectivity projects that include Afghanistan. A notable example is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to improve infrastructure links between China and Afghanistan, promoting economic collaboration and trade.
6. Security Cooperation: China has also partnered with Afghanistan on security issues, particularly in the fight against terrorism and extremist groups. The two nations have engaged in joint military exercises and intelligence sharing to tackle shared security threats.

It is crucial to recognize that while China's engagement in Afghanistan has contributed positively to economic growth and regional connectivity, it also raises concerns regarding

potential geopolitical influence and the long-term viability of Chinese investments in a region marked by security challenges.

4.2. Conclusion

The primary aim of this research was to examine the trade relations between Afghanistan and China. According to this research, the relationship between Afghanistan and China goes back to ancient civilizations. Since January 20, 1955, China has maintained diplomatic relations with the territory of Afghanistan based on China's five fundamental ideals of mutual respect, trust, support and peaceful coexistence. Security, commercial and economic interests and public diplomacy are the three distinctive dynamics of China's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. China's main interest in Afghanistan is its security.

These two states are neighbors and share a border of about 92.45 km. Afghanistan is considered a hotbed of extremists and terrorists, while on the Chinese side, Xinjiang, a Chinese province, is highly exposed to separatist and extremist movements. China is participating in multi-faceted and regional efforts to approach Afghanistan's issues, from dealing with security and official capabilities to improving border control, combating criminal and counter-terrorism networks. China has always maintained its pro-Afghanistan and neutral positions. China has significant interests in Afghanistan, as the country has natural and human resources and has a very important position in the region.

China's goals for Afghanistan can be deduced from its foreign policy. Security is the main focus of China's foreign policy in Afghanistan, followed by commercial and economic interests and public diplomacy. The geo-economic importance of Afghanistan as well as China's huge investment in this country shows that the intention of both regimes is to strengthen relations and maintain economic cooperation. China has good relations with Afghanistan and is trying to make it stronger.

There are several reasons why China is developing good relations with Afghanistan, and one of the most important is that China's economy is expanding because it is looking for natural resources from other countries. Therefore, China is trying to create peace and stability in Afghanistan which will help it to easily import natural resources from Afghanistan and export finished goods. In addition, China has provided humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. China had formulated a strategy for the stability of Afghanistan after 2014 by investing and rebuilding the country's economy.

This organization supported the Afghan National Armed Forces and communication networks, education and health care, as well as the training of the Afghan National Police. China had invested billions of dollars to develop human resources and technical training to Afghans in

various ministries. In addition, both countries have successful bilateral trade relations. 200,000 analog phone lines in Afghanistan were converted to digital by Huawei and ZTE, two Chinese telecommunications companies. MMC was awarded the tender for the world's most important and vital undeveloped copper resources.

This is the largest foreign investment in the history of Afghanistan and has more revenue than all other projects in the country combined. The Aynak copper project was purchased by MCC for $3.5 billion over 30 years, making it the largest foreign direct investment. China built a 400 MW power plant to serve mining activities, water development and public health.

In 2006, the China-Afghanistan Economic Committee was established to boost bilateral trade, providing duty-free access to 278 goods. In order to promote economic cooperation, the two countries signed a comprehensive cooperative partnership agreement in 2010. Agriculture, engineering and infrastructure development, as well as bilateral trade and resource exploration, are all priorities for both countries. The Afghan government expands bilateral trade with China by purchasing technological items.

Considering the stability of Afghanistan, this situation is expected to increase in the future. China's most important endeavor for natural resources is the Amu Darya oil field in northern Afghanistan. In December 2011, CNPC signed a 25-year contract to drill three oil fields in the Amu Darya River basin. Afghanistan's desire to strengthen relations with China is due to economic development and China's financial assistance to this country, which creates the basis for increasing economic advantages. China's help is necessary to rebuild Afghanistan's devastated economy and remove the country from Western financial support. On the other hand, Afghanistan supports more SCO cooperation in a wide range of industries.

4.3. Recommendation

According to the results obtained from this study, Afghanistan can do the following things to develop trade and receive more profit with China.

1. Due to the fact that China and Afghanistan are neighbors and have a common border, and on the other hand, China is an industrialized country and Afghanistan is traditional and weak, the Afghan government should expand its relations with China in any situation. The expansion of relations between China and Afghanistan will benefit Afghanistan in any situation. This is despite the fact that if Afghanistan expands its relations with Central Asian countries, Iran and Pakistan, those countries may destroy Afghanistan's resources and interests to a sufficient extent and it will be detrimental to Afghanistan. But China has a different position compared to other countries. Therefore, in answer to the second question of the current research, it can be said that the prospect

of trade between Afghanistan and China in the current situation seems reasonable and reasonable, and all-round efforts should be made in this direction by the Afghan government in order to be able to provide a sufficient amount of capacities. China will enjoy although Chinese companies are operating in Afghanistan right now, they cannot meet Afghanistan's needs sufficiently. For this reason, Afghanistan should use more capacities of China and use China in the infrastructure and reconstruction sectors. Afghanistan's failure to pay attention to the capacities available in China will be detrimental to Afghanistan. Therefore, it is better for Afghanistan to reconsider its trade and economic policy with China. In this way, the future perspective of China-Afghanistan trade can expand in the light of Afghanistan's efforts, and Chinese companies can participate more in Afghanistan's affairs.

2. Afghanistan should review its security policy and attract China's trust as much as possible. The lack of revision in Afghanistan's security policy makes China unable to invest in this country as expected. Because China cannot trust Afghanistan. During the last two decades, because the government in Kabul was supported by the United States and the West, China had a significant fear of radicalization from Afghanistan that is why they tried to solve security issues before turning to more economic and commercial issues. to be in control. With the collapse of the republic and the Taliban's dominance over Afghanistan, China's fear from a security angle has increased significantly, and unless the Afghan government can win China's trust in the security field, it will not be possible for Afghanistan to expand trade with China. Therefore, for China, the issue of security and preservation of Uyghur separatists is the most important issue, so that China does not trust in the security area, it will not proceed to rebuild and expand trade with Afghanistan. For this reason, Afghanistan should try to gain China's trust from a security point of view and expand trade with this economic giant.

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