

*Original Paper*

A Study of the Extension of the China-Pakistan Economic  
Corridor to Afghanistan in the Context of the Taliban's Return to  
Power: A Response from Sichuan

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**Abstract**

*On August 15, 2021, the Taliban overthrew the Ghani government and returned to power. The Afghan Taliban government's ability to govern and its foreign policy are still unclear. China, as a neighboring country of Afghanistan, has always been friendly with the Afghan people and has no historical hatred. As a neighbor of Afghanistan, China can play a constructive role in the smooth transition of the situation in Afghanistan by taking advantage of being a neighbor. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a key mechanism for China to develop China-Afghanistan economic and trade relations. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has achieved remarkable results in Pakistan. With the return of the Taliban to power and the return of calm in Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal, the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan has become a common goal promoted by China, Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, it remains to be seen where the Taliban government returns to power, and the international community is cautious about its attitude. On March 30-31, 2022, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi hosted the third meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors in Tunxi, Anhui Province, attended by the foreign ministers or representatives of Pakistan, Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Wang Yi also hosted the "Afghanistan Neighbors + Afghanistan" Foreign Ministers' Dialogue and invited Acting Foreign Minister Mottaki of the Taliban government to attend. This is a new starting point for China-Afghanistan cooperation and friendship. Sichuan can take advantage of its distance and*

*infrastructure to contribute to the Sino-Afghan friendship.*

### **Keywords**

*Taliban Government, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Extension, Sichuan Province*

## **1. The Taliban Government's Domestic and Foreign Policies**

On August 15, 2021, after a 20-year hiatus, the Taliban returned to Kabul and reclaimed the central reins of power. But the international community has not officially recognized the Taliban regime, expecting it to establish a moderate and inclusive government while cutting all ties with extremist groups. Because of Afghanistan's geographical location and its proximity to China, there is great potential for friendly development between the two countries. After the Taliban government came to power, it was quite willing to cooperate with China. If China wants to further cooperate with it, it must examine only the impact of its domestic policies on cooperation projects, but also the impact of its foreign policy on cooperation projects and the international image of both sides.

### *1.1 Domestic Policies and their Impacts after the Taliban Took Power*

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban captured the Afghan capital Kabul and overthrew the Ghani government. on September 8, 2021, Afghan Taliban supreme leader MullllahHiibattullllahAkhundzzada issued his first statement on the new government's policies after it was formed. The statement mentioned that Afghanistan's message to its neighbors, the region and the world is that its territory will not be used to jeopardize the security of any country. In addition, a range of matters such as the future governance of the country in Afghanistan will follow Shariah law and implement relevant procedures within the framework of Islam.

Security in Afghanistan is the main issue facing the Taliban government. From the new Taliban government's policy statement, "security" is the key word for the new government. According to the statement, the members of the interim government will work under the principles of Islam to protect the supreme interests of the country, secure its borders and ensure "lasting peace, prosperity and development" in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is willing to develop stable and healthy relations with neighboring countries and countries around the world on the basis of mutual respect, and will not allow any person or organization to use Afghan territory to threaten the security of other countries. The Afghan government will strive to protect the security of all diplomatic missions, humanitarian organizations and foreign investors (Bi, 2021).

With the formation of the Taliban government, the issue of domestic governance in Afghanistan has become a major issue. On the political front, there are other armed groups in Afghanistan that pose a threat to the Taliban's rule and governance. The Taliban has a diverse faction, a complex composition, a lack of experience in governance, and political differences within the leadership. After the Taliban occupied Kabul, the issue of power distribution once became one of the criteria for the outside world to

observe its longevity.

On the economic front, Afghanistan's war-torn economy is severely depressed. After the Afghan National Army took over national security from the NATO coalition in 2014, Afghanistan's economy has remained sluggish. The country's GDP growth rate was 1.4% in 2015, 2.3% in 2016, 2.7% in 2017, and 1.0% in 2018. Slow economic growth has led to a lack of job opportunities. Nearly 25% of Afghanistan's labor force is unemployed, and 20.5% of the labor force is underemployed. Unemployment rates are significantly higher for women than for men. Unemployment rates are higher for people aged 15 to 24 and 65 and older than for other age groups (Sadr, 2018). Afghans urgently need the Taliban government to develop the economy and improve the national income. The Taliban did not propose an economic development strategy or plan in the economic field before they took over Kabul. Afghanistan's dire economic situation has forced the Taliban to embrace a market economy that is at odds with their ideology. Cordesman said, "The Taliban must find some way to reconcile the modern economy and governance with its ideology" (Anthony, 2020). The extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan must also examine its government's economic development plans and be mutually beneficial and win-win in its ongoing engagement with the Taliban government.

The Taliban government has not yet been recognized by the international community and therefore lacks legitimacy. Despite the Taliban's previous statement that it "wants to maintain good relations with all parties in order to develop its economy and achieve national prosperity", no country has yet explicitly declared recognition of the Taliban regime since it announced the formation of an interim government. Therefore, in its dealings with the Taliban government, China attaches importance to the international community's perception of the regime and continues to use its influence to guide it in the direction of international recognition. For example, Taliban refusing to be a sanctuary for terrorists with regard to terrorism, refusing to support the East Iranian Movement etc. International legitimacy is vital to their attempts to build a viable state, a cohesive political community, and a functioning economy; their current international standing is anathema to them. The Taliban want China to shore up their international legitimacy and provide assistance for the task of national reconstruction in Afghanistan (Kaura, 2022).

The international community is generally concerned about the issue of women in Afghanistan. The Taliban has lost points on this issue because of their last experience in power. The international community has long urged the Taliban to improve the status of women in education, marriage and property rights. On December 3, 2021, Taliban supreme leader Mullllah Hiibattullllah Akhundzzada issued a decree on women's rights. The decree provides for women's autonomy in marriage and no coercion to marry; women have the same rights as men to inherit property (TOLO News, December 03, 2021).

### *1.2 Post-Taliban Foreign Policy and its Impact*

In late July 2021, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Taliban representatives in Tianjin for talks on the reconciliation and reconstruction process in Afghanistan. At that meeting, the Taliban pledged not to support Uighur separatists who could threaten stability in Xinjiang (Goulard, 2021). Regarding the sensitive issue of terrorism in China and the world, the Taliban has repeatedly reiterated its position that it would like to make a solemn promise to China, Pakistan and the world that it will not allow terrorists to use its territory to harm the interests of other countries and citizens of other countries. China still holds the following attitude towards this: listen to its words and observe its actions.

On March 24, 2022, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Afghanistan. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with Acting Deputy Prime Minister of Afghan Interim Government Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Kabul. Baradar stressed, Afghanistan is a state of national independence and is ready to develop friendly relations with other countries in the world. The Afghan Taliban is a responsible government, and would like to reiterate to China and the whole world that it will never allow any terrorists to operate in Afghanistan, and will never allow anyone or any institution to use the Afghan territory to take actions against other countries, still less allow any forces to engage in activities that undermine China. The Afghan side attaches importance to China's security concerns and will take concrete and strong measure to achieve security across Afghanistan and contribute to maintaining regional security. Afghanistan hopes that China will support the Afghan side in enhancing its security capacity. Wang Yi said, on the premise of respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty, China is ready to carry out mutually beneficial cooperation with Afghanistan in an orderly manner, so as to help Afghanistan turn its resource advantage into a development advantage. The cooperation will be based on the principles of giving priority to improving people's wellbeing, enhancing Afghanistan's capacity for self-generated development, and laying stress on substantial results rather than paying lip service. China appreciates and welcomes Afghanistan's active participation in Belt and Road cooperation, and is ready to make efforts to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, so as to replicate more successful experiences and make Afghanistan, which is located in the "Heart of Asia", a bridge for regional interconnectivity. China appreciates Afghanistan's clear declaration and solemn commitment that the country will not allow any external forces to use the Afghan territory to take actions against neighboring countries or harm the security of other countries. China hopes that Afghanistan will firmly and resolutely fulfill this commitment, which is necessary for Afghanistan to establish a positive image in the international arena and carry out normal international exchanges (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 24, 2022).

## **2. Possibility of Extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan**

### *2.1 Benefits of Extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan*

For China, stability in Afghanistan is also important for the development and success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a major segment of the BRI. The first Memorandum of Understanding on the BRI between Afghanistan and China was signed in 2016, and then several initiatives were agreed between the two countries. However, because of terrorism, few projects were actually conducted within the framework of the BRI. In addition, Afghanistan's climatic and geographic conditions also make the construction of routes difficult. Due to the lack of proper networks and pervasive insecurity, untapped Afghan mineral resources have hardly been exploited (Goulard, 2021). The Taliban has succeeded in bringing stability back to Afghanistan. The possibility of Chinese investment in Afghanistan in several areas has increased significantly.

In terms of infrastructure construction, the extension of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan has a certain degree of operability. Afghanistan has been through a long war, the domestic infrastructure damage is severe, coupled with the economic development lags behind, the construction of infrastructure is backward. As a major infrastructure construction country, China is rich in technology and resources. China has a large difference in climate between north and south, complex topography between east and west, and has more reference cases for the problems faced by Afghanistan's domestic infrastructure construction, with mature technology, and can undertake many of Afghanistan's domestic infrastructure construction. In addition, infrastructure construction is a project for the benefit of the people, and it is easy to gain the trust of the Afghan people. This lays the foundation for further cooperation between China and Afghanistan in the field of infrastructure.

The Belt and Road Initiative is predicted to bring industrialization and investment to Afghanistan. This country needs reliable and cost-efficient source of power. The country has potential in hydro-electric power, which requires the construction of dams and related facilities. This is an area where China can provide financial and technical expertise under investment projects. This is because China has good engineering and technical expertise and has successfully completed many infrastructure projects. Mining is another attractive sector for investment. Chinese companies have ventured as far as Africa to mine for minerals and energy. In Afghanistan, we have Gas Reserves in Sheberghan-North of Afghanistan, and also Copper Mine in Logar province. This is at the doorstep of China, which means that shipping will be faster and less costly. Mining is a capital intensive and high technology business, and I believe Chinese companies are well suited for this purpose. Afghanistan has already undertaken the building of several roads to improve connectivity. The 125 km Khaf-Herat rail road is one of them, while the North Rail Way project is another. These roads will enable Afghan businesspeople and investors to access the enormous consumer markets in Central Asia, thereby increasing Afghanistan's exports and reducing the costs of imports (Akhlaqi, 2021).

At the geopolitical level, Beijing sees the U.S.-NATO withdrawal as both an opportunity and a challenge. On one hand, China has always been uneasy about the presence of U.S. military bases so near to its west. The withdrawal also gives China the chance to exert its influence more freely in Central Asia. On the other hand, China is concerned not only about the regional security vacuum left in the wake of the international troops' departure, but also about the heightened pressures it may face in the Indo-Pacific arena, as a Washington freed of Afghanistan devotes its energies and resources more fully to areas to China's south and east (Crisis Group, August 26, 2021).

For China, Afghanistan presents strategic value due to its geographic location at the crossroads of South Asia and Central Asia. In addition, its vast mineral resources are untapped and present a valuable economic opportunity. According to United States Geological Survey, identified deposits are conservatively valued at \$1 trillion. However, Afghanistan's notorious security and corruption challenges have in the past deterred many investment opportunities. At the core of any potential investment will be the stabilization of Afghanistan's security situation, an effort that will require great cooperation. For instance, in 2008 China had signed a 30-year agreement with the Afghanistan government to access MesAynak, the world's second largest untapped copper deposit. The deal, which was worth over \$3 billion, was viewed with great interest until it stalled due to security concerns and attacks by the Taliban (Akhlaqi, 2021).

China has played a central role in supporting peace talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban by encouraging the latter to join the peace negotiations. Ensuring security in Afghanistan not only contributes to stability in the country, but it also allows China to be at ease regarding instability from Afghanistan impacting security and stability in its western region, specifically Xinjiang. That said, China has only made minimal contributions to directly support the security effort in Afghanistan, largely deferring to the United States and NATO. Since 2014, however, China has increased its security cooperation, providing military aid for counterterrorism efforts. Perhaps a greater effort to combat militancy in Afghanistan will open the doors for Chinese investments and access to the country's untapped resources (Akhlaqi, 2021).

### *2.2 The Risks of Extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan*

After the Taliban came to power, regional powers are eyeing how to react to the upheaval. In the 1990s, the Taliban government, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, was an international pariah, recognized only by three countries, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and kept at arm's length by others, due partly to activist campaigns decrying their often violent repression of women and girls in particular. Foreign capitals also regarded them warily for offering safe haven to al-Qaeda, the transnational jihadist group that had mounted deadly attacks including the bombings at the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya in 1998. The concern about al-Qaeda of course spiked after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States. Though worries about the

Taliban persist, the movement is not as isolated as it was in past. It has tried to cultivate better relations with other countries over the last few years. As it was regaining military strength on the ground, it was seeking to reassure Afghanistan's neighbours that it would govern responsibly. Still, regional powers are taken aback by the Taliban's dramatic advance, which has required many of them to recalibrate their approaches to protecting their interests in the country.

Chinese companies have been sitting on two major projects since 2008 (the MesAynak copper mine) and 2011 (the Amu Darya oil field), neither of which took off, in part because of an uncertain security environment. (Crisis Group, August 26, 2021) The Afghan delegation that recently visited China held talks with the officials of the Metallurgical Corp of China (MCC). All conditions have been facilitated for the resumption of extraction at the MesAynak copper mine, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) said on April 03, 2022. MesAynak is the largest copper mine in Afghanistan. Based on the agreement which was signed between the Afghan government and the MCC, China will extract 6.8 billion cubic meters of copper (Hakimi, 2022).

Infrastructure development is likely to be implemented successfully in Afghanistan. However, the BRI is much more than just a few railroads or ports; it is about facilitating trade and exchanges between China and the world. The Belt and Road Initiative includes many "soft" components from the Health Silk Road to the Digital Silk Road, and these initiatives rely on innovation. Participation in the BRI demands that the Taliban be more open to changes and conduct reforms that are in line with China's interests (Goulard, 2021).

Countries that are active in the BRI tend to replicate, with more or less success, a Chinese model based on special incentives offered to companies as well as specific reforms where the priority is given to education. One of the most important achievements made by China over the last 30 years is in regard to education. In 1990, the gross school enrollment rate in tertiary education was only 3 percent, but it rose to more than 53 percent in 2019, and China now tops the PISA ranking. China has also become a top destination for foreign students from developing countries, especially from Africa. To gain long-term benefits from the BRI, the Taliban will need to change their views on education and adopt a Chinese model where science is a priority. China will also want to see the Taliban change their stance on women (Goulard, 2021). In the face of international questions about the Taliban's female education policy, during the March 31, 2022, meeting of the Chinese, Afghan, and Pakistani foreign ministers, Acting Foreign Minister Mottaki stated that Afghanistan understands the international community's concerns about women's and children's rights, especially girls' education, and will actively and sequentially advance them. The Afghan Interim Administration has never banned girls from attending school and has reopened 60 percent of schools to date (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 31, 2022).

China also expects the Taliban to soften their tone toward ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan if they want to join the BRI. In the past, the Taliban were accused of ethnic leaning against minorities

such as Hazaras. But the continuation of this abuse will elevate the risk of terror attacks against the infrastructure facilities that are to be constructed by Chinese companies in Afghanistan. Segregation and harassment against Shias or Uzbeks would also threaten relations with neighboring countries like Iran or Uzbekistan and challenge the roll-out of regional multilateral projects financed and constructed by China (Goulard, 2021). The third Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan was hosted by China, with the Foreign Ministers of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attending. The participants "noted the importance to achieve national reconciliation in Afghanistan through dialogue and negotiation, and to establish a broad-based and inclusive political structure, adopt moderate and sound domestic and foreign policies, and grow friendly relations with all countries, especially its neighbors, and emphasized the necessity for all sides to strengthen dialogue and communication with Afghanistan for the above purposes," the statement reads (TOLO News, April 02, 2022).

The rule of law and the fight against corruption are other targets that the Taliban will need to address. Although large-scale investment projects will be agreed between governments and will involve Chinese state-owned companies, for Afghanistan to attract investment from smaller private Chinese companies, some consistent legal reforms will be required in accordance with Islamic law, but also, more importantly, with Chinese laws. Without the insurance that the Taliban will secure Chinese investment in Afghanistan, Beijing will be quite cautious about developing major projects in this country (Goulard, 2021).

### **3. Opportunities and Challenges in Sichuan**

After the full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, China and Afghanistan not only need to inherit good neighborly relations, but also China hopes to play a constructive role in the reconstruction of the Afghan nation. Facing the international environment that the United States has regarded China as a comprehensive strategic competitor, how China will participate in the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan is of great concern to the international community. The Chinese government has repeatedly stated that it will play an important role in the national reconstruction process in Afghanistan. According to Wang Yi, "China is ready to continue to provide assistance within its capacity for Afghanistan's development and revitalization, actively carry out cooperation in such fields as medical care, poverty alleviation, agriculture, disaster prevention and mitigation, and welcomes Afghanistan's participation in Belt and Road cooperation". The emphasis is much more on humanitarian aid and development assistance (Tiezzi, 2022).

On March 24, 2022, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Afghanistan. Wang Yi emphasized that China "respects the independent choices made by the Afghan people", "respects the religious beliefs and national customs of Afghanistan", and "never interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs". State

Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with Acting Deputy Prime Minister of Afghan Interim Government Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul, respectively. Wang Yi introduced China's "Three Respects" and "Three Nevers" on the Afghan issue. Wang Yi said, China and Afghanistan are friendly neighbors linked by mountains and rivers, with exchanges between the two countries dating back to more than a thousand years ago. China respects the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, respects the independent choices made by the Afghan people, and respects the religious beliefs and national customs of Afghanistan. China never interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs, never seeks self-interests or the so-called spheres of influence in Afghanistan. Wang Yi stressed, as Afghan friends often point out, China is the only major country that has never hurt Afghanistan. We are proud of this and are ready to carry forward the traditional friendship between the two peoples, develop normal and friendly neighboring relations with Afghanistan on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and help Afghanistan achieve true independence and self-generated development, thus taking the future of Afghanistan into its own hands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 24, 2022).

On March 31, 2022, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi chaired the Third Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Afghan Issue among the Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan and the First Meeting of "Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan Plus Afghanistan" Foreign Ministers' Dialogue in Tunxi, Anhui Province. After the meetings, Wang Yi held a press conference to introduce the important consensus and achievements of the meetings, and answered questions from reporters. Wang Yi said, we have noticed that since the establishment of the Afghan Interim Government, it has made a lot of efforts to stabilize the situation and exercise governance, with certain results having been achieved. During the dialogue and exchanges, the Afghan side introduced its determination to realize self-generated development, expressed its desire to gain more understanding and support from neighboring countries and the international community, and demonstrated a positive attitude toward conducting foreign exchanges. At the same time, we also noticed that the international community, including neighboring countries, still has many concerns and expectations for the Afghan Interim Government. It is hoped that the Afghan Interim Government will complete the role transformation at an early date, and make more progress in promoting national reconciliation, building a more inclusive government, and guaranteeing women's rights to employment and children's rights to education, among others. It's hoped that the Afghan Interim Government will adopt a firmer attitude in combating terrorism in particular, and produce more visible results (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 01, 2022).

On April 01, 2022, Wang Yi Introduces the Important Consensus and Achievements of the Series of Meetings on the Afghan Issue. Wang Yi said that the outcomes of the meetings are mainly reflected in two documents, namely the Joint Statement of the Third Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Afghan Issue among the Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan, and the Tunxi Initiative of Afghanistan's

Neighboring Countries on Supporting Afghanistan's Economic Reconstruction and Practical Cooperation. These two documents reflect the common political position of neighboring countries, and decide to provide material support for Afghanistan in key areas such as humanitarian assistance, interconnectivity, economy and trade, agricultural development, energy and power, and capacity building (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 01, 2022).

As a large economic and population province in southwest China, Sichuan is experienced in infrastructure construction and has a large number of construction companies with successful experience in "going global". Infrastructure is the general material condition for the survival and development of a country, and a perfect and stable infrastructure can provide a solid foundation and strong guarantee for the development of a country's economy. The Taliban government in Afghanistan is trying to rebuild a lot of infrastructure. Sichuan has rich experience and strength in infrastructure, and can make its own contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

For Afghanistan, Sichuan has both geographical advantages and its own resource endowment to meet the realistic needs of Afghanistan. With the return of Taliban to power, Afghanistan ushers in an era of comprehensive reconstruction. Afghanistan welcomes China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative. Sichuan and Afghanistan have also left a deep positive impression on each other in the course of their dealings. As Afghanistan enters a comprehensive era, there are many areas where we can work closely with Sichuan, such as infrastructure construction. Sichuan's past investment and construction in Afghanistan is a testament to Sichuan's strength. At a time when Afghanistan is promoting comprehensive reconstruction, Sichuan should continue to respond to national development initiatives and actively participate in the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan.

Sichuan is one of the major industrial centers of China. In addition to heavy industries such as coal, energy, iron and steel, the province has also established a light industrial sector comprising building materials, wood processing, food and silk processing. Chengdu and Mianyang are the production centers for textiles and electronics products. Deyang, Panzhihua, and Yibin are the production centers for machinery, metallurgical industries, and wine, respectively. Sichuan's wine production accounted for 21.9% of the country's total production in 2000. Great strides have been made in developing Sichuan into a modern hi-tech industrial base, by encouraging both domestic and foreign investments in electronics and information technology (such as software), machinery and metallurgy (including automobiles), hydropower, pharmaceutical, food and beverage industries. The auto industry is an important and key sector of the machinery industry in Sichuan. Most of the auto manufacturing companies are located in Chengdu, Mianyang, Nanchong, and Luzhou.

When Sichuan actively participates in the project of extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, it can study the content of Foreign Minister Wang Yi's speech in depth, grasp the development opportunities and strengthen the economic cooperation between Sichuan and Afghanistan.

Wang Yi said: by bringing together the measures, ideas and suggestions of neighboring countries to support Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction, the Tunxi Initiative is rich in content and will play an important role in promoting Afghanistan's peace, reconstruction, stability and development in the future. The initiative embodies five features: First, not playing geopolitical games, but focusing on practical cooperation. Second, not imposing one's will on others, but advocating equality and voluntariness. Third, not making high-profile empty promises, but pursuing tangible results. Fourth, not acting without coordination, but striving for regional connectivity. Fifth, not seeking isolation and antagonism, but advocating opens and inclusiveness.

#### 4. Conclusion

Afghanistan is a strategic hub connecting South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. After the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, the regional situation is turbulent. China-Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation is conducive to achieving stability in Afghanistan and promoting Afghanistan to play a pivotal role in regional connectivity. As a major economic province in southwest China, Sichuan has been deeply integrated into the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" and even the "Belt and Road" construction in recent years. Sichuan plays a key role as a bridge between Pakistan and Afghanistan in terms of economic trade. Sichuan can play a crucial role in many projects extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, which will bring good economic and social benefits.

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