



*Bucharest  
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**Distinguished Colleagues, Dear Friends,**

It is such a delight to be here with you all.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank Dr. Mubeen Adnan and Dr. Iqbal Akhtar for chairing this highly stimulating session as well as to all the previous speakers for their insightful remarks.

Since 2020, I've been working with the **Romanian Institute for Europe-Asia Studies (IRSEA)** as its Director of Programmes. However, I would like to stress that the points of view expressed here are entirely my own and do not necessarily represent or reflect the official position of IRSEA.

Now, in the light of today's panel discussion on **Regional and Global Security Environment**, I have chosen to try to decipher **China's perspectives on Afghanistan**. One may say that, in the light of **the sorrowful security evolutions in Eastern Europe and the World**, the security and economic environment of Afghanistan seems to have been placed – by media, at least – on a relatively marginal position. I believe that – as scholars and men of letters – **we ought to remember the Afghan people are still there and the economic and security perspectives of the country still need to be taken into account**, not only by its neighbours and Great Powers, but by the global academic community as well.

**I have tried to identify and possibly sketch several perspectives that China – as a „major country” and great economic power – might be having on Afghanistan.**

I've found out that, while showcasing a clear desire to improve Afghanistan's stability through economic ties, and possible inclusion in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC),

**China seems to be equally concerned with the spillover effect of what Beijing labels as the "Three Evils", i.e. terrorism, extremism and separatism. In the light of China's recent efforts in Afghanistan, the country's continuous presence in Kabul and Pakistan's support for Afghanistan to join CPEC, it is not impossible that - under particular prerequisites and in a longer run - Afghanistan might become part of China's BRI.**

Following the reopening of China's Embassy in Kabul in 2002 and the **strategic partnership between Afghanistan and China signed in 2012**, China has been ranked - according to various sources - between **the first and third largest investors in the country**. On the other hand, one must not neglect the **growing security concerns posed by Afghanistan when it comes to the Chinese investments** as well as the threats it might pose to **Beijing's control of Western China**. It might be thus expected that **Afghanistan will pose both an opportunity as well as a security challenge for China in the following years.**

Afghanistan's troubled security status quo in China's perception is also strongly reflected by the diplomatic language in use; while described as a **"friendly neighbour"**, references are often made in relation to **"Afghanistan situation"** or **"Afghanistan issue"**. Nevertheless, China's narrative of **"safe, stable, united and developing Afghanistan"** and - more recently, since 2014 - **"Afghan-owned and Afghan-led"** solution to the Afghan conundrum showcases a limited focus on the country's worsening condition, where China - at least on a narrative level - **seems to refuse to assume a more active role in mitigating the current political crisis**. On the other hand, on a humanitarian level, **China seems to plead internationally for emergency assistance**; one of the most illustrative examples in this case being **China's Ambassador to UN, Zhang Jun**.

Certainly, **China's diplomatic efforts have been coordinated with Pakistan** - perhaps the most affected country by the security situation in Afghanistan. Since December 2017, **China organised the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue in Beijing**. While currently **neither Pakistan, nor China recognise the Taliban forces as Government of Afghanistan**, one cannot deny the dimension and relevance of the coordinated dialogue between Pakistan, China and the Taliban forces. On the other hand, provided China's non-interference policy, as well as Afghanistan's reputation for being the *"graveyard of empires"* -

frequently expressed by the Chinese commentators - **it is less likely for a military commitment in Afghanistan to be made on China's behalf.**

The spillover risks in terms of domestic security might be addressed through the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) - of which Pakistan is a relatively recent member of**, seems to suggest Li Ziguo, Deputy Director of the China Institute of International Studies. In this regard, one may notice that the "Three Evils" mentioned above have been enshrined in the SCO charter and a permanent structure has been created in this regard, i.e. Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).

At the level of China's domestic think-tanks and analysts, **there seems to be a consensus over the country's continuous security challenges in the following years**, as it has been posited by Zhao Minghao, a Charhar Institute security researcher and Wang Shida, the deputy director of China Institute of Contemporary Relations. According to the Chinese analysts, Afghanistan seems to be unable - at least, in the medium run - to achieve political, economic and security independence.

Certainly, appeals to a stronger Chinese presence in Afghanistan have also been registered among the domestic analysts. Wen Yang, Deputy Director of Hong Kong China Power Research Centre pleaded for a Chinese leading influence in Afghanistan, which - according to the analyst - would rise the country's global influence. Niu Xinchun, CICIR Middle East Institute Director - which I had the pleasure to meet back in 2019 - **posited that China's understanding of Afghanistan is still limited, hence "time is the answer", hinting at a more reserved stance.**

Despite a relatively complex picture of China's Perspectives on Afghanistan, one may envisage **continued efforts to promote Islamabad-Beijing-Taleban talks**, likely accompanied by an increased regional scrutiny of Afghanistan's security situation through the regional mechanisms of SCO, of whom China and Pakistan are members of, while Afghanistan is an observer at the time being.

**Finally, allow me to thank you all for your time and patience and look forward to further meaningful interaction during the Q&A session.**