

The Role of Afghanistan in the Uighur Separatist Movement: Why the People's Republic of China should take over NATO after 2014

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Abstract

As with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in the end of 2014, there is no obvious replacement for the place of peace guarantor in the country and in the region. The most apparent successor is the People's Republic of China for a number of reasons. First, Afghan extremists are considered to be connected with the rebels from China's province Xinjiang. Not only they undermine internal stability in China, but they also engage in illegal drug trade and are a very important point in heroine trade route across Central Asia up to Central Europe. Although the Chinese law enforcers are addressing this issue, there is no clear success in the near future. That being said, in order to deter the flourishing illegal drug trade, the revenues from which are used to finance the uprisings, China needs to step up as a replacement of the U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan after 2014.

Keywords: Afghanistan, China, drug trade, separatism, Xinjiang.

Introduction

Even though at least a couple of years ago, the People's Republic of China did not take any active part in Afghanistan's internal life, currently its presence in the country has increased significantly. Firstly, as a rapidly developing state, China is in great need of industrial natural resources that Afghanistan has to offer – copper, iron mine, oil and natural gas. The most valuable resource that interests the People's Republic of China in Afghanistan is copper. The state has one of the biggest copper reserves in the world and approximately four years ago, the Chinese company 'China Metallurgical Group Cooperation' invested nearly \$3.5 bln into a project to exploit the Mes Aynak copper mine (O'Donnell, 2014). This was the largest foreign direct investment in the history of Afghanistan. Also, it is important to mention that these ambitious projects would not have been possible without China's soft policy strategy. In order to establish itself in Afghanistan, PRC has developed a whole plan of winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

The most powerful argument in favor of China's presence is its generous package. Unlike the Western countries, PRC brings in the money without any strings attached as it combines them with generous royalties and without any economic or political conditions. Moreover, the Chinese contracting companies working in Afghanistan, instead of hiring Chinese workers, prefer employing local labor force. This, in turn, is supposed to contribute to Afghanistan's employment rate and to strengthen China's position in Afghanistan.

In addition, China has also been involved in an irrigation initiative in Parwan province, the rebuilding of hospitals in Kabul and Kandahar, including the construction of Jumhuriyat Hospital in Kabul (Behbud, 2012).

Finally, People's Republic of China has security interests in Afghanistan. Its position in Afghanistan would allow China to emerge as an important actor in Central Asia. Through its influential position in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China would be able to protect its economic interests both in Afghanistan as well as elsewhere in the region. There are several reasons for China's active involvement, one of them being drug flow into China from Afghanistan that brings along the spread of radicalism into China's most rebellious province – Xinjiang. The so-called Wakhan corridor is a gateway for heroin from Afghanistan to mainland China through rebellious Xinjiang province (Figure 1). The separatist movement in Xinjiang has ethnic roots, since the main actors in this movement are Uighur Muslims. They demand secession from the People's Republic of China and the creation of an independent Uyghuristan or Eastern Turkistan (Van Wie Davis, 2008) on the basis of a relatively large part of China. The internal conflict is aggravated by the Muslim funding and training from abroad (Van Wie Davis, 2008). Moreover, it is suspected that neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan play a key role in destabilizing China's internal security (Perlez, 2012) by supporting local separatists.

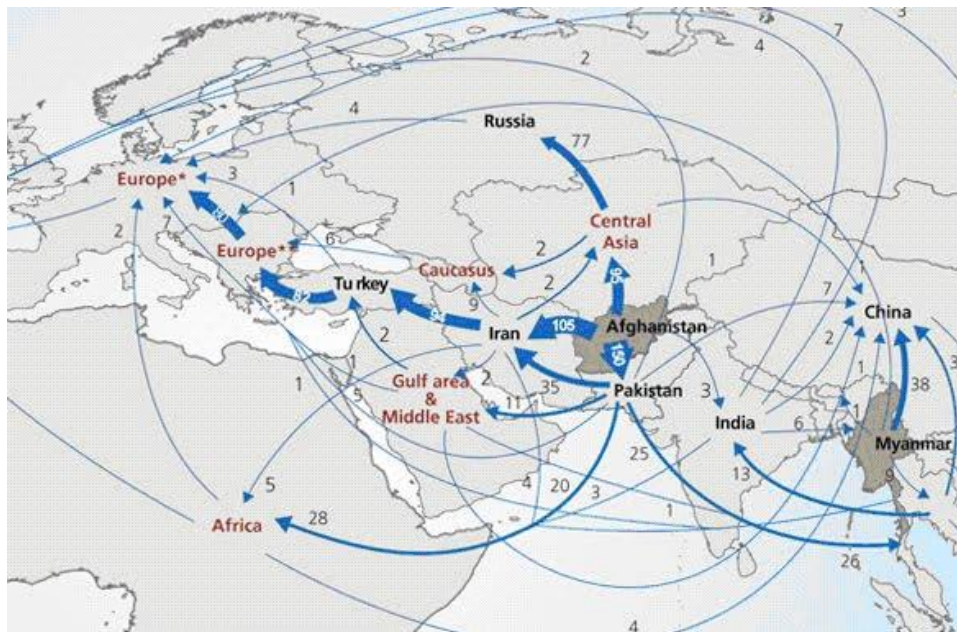
Figure 1



Source: <http://midfield.wordpress.com/>.

There are three major heroin routes in Asia: the Golden Crescent, the Golden Triangle, and the Northern Route. The starting point of both the Golden Crescent and the Northern Route is Afghanistan which along with Pakistan and Iran is the largest opiate and heroin producer in the world (Figure 2). Certainly, there have been certain attempts to fight and stop the opiate and heroin cultivation. This, however, turned out to be more difficult than anticipated, because growing opiates had become the main source of income among local Afghan farmers (Nguyen, 2012). “The Taliban have been funding their military capabilities through access to this thriving opium economy... and ... they have met with little opposition” (Nguyen, 2012). It is evident that the Taliban would not have been able to make profits out of heroin exports if the government was not corrupt and also “tapped into this revenue stream” (Nguyen, 2012). These factors have played their crucial role in NATO’s relative failure in limiting heroin production in Afghanistan. This is why the state needs a new peace guarantor that would contain the heroin exports going from Afghanistan to Central Asia, China, Russia and Europe. The People’s Republic of China would be the best candidate for this post because it has its own personal economic and security interests – as not only the Silk Road between these two countries has a very long history, but also because of China’s ambitious future. In case China’s project is successful, this could become a revival of this grand project. More so, this would mean more opportunities for Xinjiang province as historically it played a very important part in the Silk Road (Nylander, 2014). Unfortunately, the revival of the Silk Road would not only be beneficial for the consolidation of the state. Along with revitalization of the Silk Road, the “unwanted elements may take advantage of the new trade route... - such as rebel fighters” (Nylander, 2014). This is one of the reasons why People’s Republic has set its mind on improving Afghanistan’s internal affairs.

Figure 2



Source: [http:// cnn.com/](http://cnn.com/).

It is worth mentioning that People's Republic of China is a highly pragmatic state that stresses the importance of respecting the inner state of affairs in every state. At least this was the ground for not participating in Afghanistan's internal life. However, this disregard might also be connected with the state's history as Beijing renounced all the ties after the Soviet invasion as it regarded "the presence of Soviet troops as... a move by Moscow for its encirclement" (Sharma, 2003). Thus, Beijing refused cooperation with Afghanistan until a regime change.

The following article contains several reports and analyses by various scholars. For instance, the China Confronts Afghan Drugs: Law Enforcement Views of “The Golden Crescent” written by Dr. Murray Scot Tanner evaluates PRC’s strategy in combating the flow of drugs from Afghanistan to China and further. He finds that even though the government acknowledges the severity of the given issue, it fails to recognize its responsibility in creating “China a more attractive drug shipping route” (Tanner, 2011). More so, Tanner admits that overall counternarcotics intelligence is more than weak in China. Tanner pinpoints several reasons for that, the major, of them being police corruption, ethnic tensions and linguistic differences between the law enforcement and drug traffickers. Furthermore, despite very strong claims to the contrary, Tanner concludes that the link between drug trafficking and the support of terrorism is quite weak and lacks sufficient evidence.

Another analysis used in this article was written by Steven A. Zyck called *The Role of China in Afghanistan's Economic Development & Reconstruction*. This study reflects China's actual input into Afghanistan. The author finds that despite reassurances, China's economic aid into the country has been quite insignificant in comparison to other developing countries helped out by PRC. Nevertheless, Zyck states that Beijing invested into education of Afghani people, into the irrigation and hospitals. The author gives a detailed report on China's usage of country's natural

resources – particularly on Afghanistan's copper and oil in Northern Afghanistan. The author concludes that by supporting Afghanistan, PRC pursues its security and economic interests.

The Role of Afghanistan in the Uighur Separatist Movement

It is obvious that after the exit of US-led troops, Pakistan and Afghanistan not only will maintain their status of being international shelters for Islamist separatists but the inflow of rebels from China will also intensify. Moreover, the threat of the extremists moving from Afghanistan and Pakistan to China and further could also grow rapidly.

The fact that a number of Uighur terrorists coming from Xinjiang have been captured and imprisoned in Afghanistan clearly indicates that "China faces a real threat of terrorist acts against its interests at home and abroad" (Clarke, 2010). This is not only a serious hazard for China's internal security, but also a challenge for its international ambitions. If PRC is not able to secure itself internally, it is hardly capable to maintain an international image of a strong and powerful country. However, it should also be mentioned that China itself has played its share in creating the everlasting tension with Uighur separatists. In 2001, after the US intervention, PRC was faced with the encirclement and in order to avoid the "dividing and Westernizing" (Clarke, 2010), it has marginalized the Xinjiang province even harsher than before. In addition, in order to prevent the aforementioned "dividing and Westernizing", Beijing refused to "allow US forces to use Chinese territory for overflights in the war in Afghanistan" (Clarke, 2010). It is possible that by doing so, China has lost the possibility of having a guarantor of security which would keep the Uighur rebels restrained. Yet, PRC has chosen to neglect this opportunity and to pressure its Central Asian partners to do likewise. This way, the US would not be able to seize neither Central Asian nor Uighur natural resources (Clarke, 2010). The aftermath of this decision became evident already few years later after numerous terrorist attacks across the country conducted by separatists. They received their terrorist training in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Perlez, 2012). The East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is considered to be the most active and the most extremist separatist groups that is "dedicated to establishing a fundamentalist Islamic state stretching from Western China through Central Asia" (Joscelyn, 2008). The leader of this movement is believed to have direct connections with the Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden himself. "China claimed that Osama bin Laden and the Taliban in Afghanistan had provided the 'Eastern Turkestan' terrorist organizations with equipment and financial resources and trained their personnel, and that one particular organization, the "Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement" (ETIM) was a major component of the terrorist network headed by Osama bin Laden" (Human Rights Watch Organization, 2005). Thus, the ETIM is not merely a challenge for China's security but also a part of an international terrorist organization that poses a threat to the whole region. Therefore, "China hoped that efforts to fight against East Turkestan terrorist forces should become a part of the international efforts and should also win support and understanding" (Human Rights Watch Organization, 2005). Although Western involvement is necessary, this would also mean that China would have an opportunity to place a burden on foreign actors and to remain a free rider.

In any case, China's appeals have not been strong enough as the terrorist attacks are still being carried on. For instance, already this March, there was a terrorist attack on civilians in the city of Kunming. As a result, more than 30 people were killed and more than 130 injured (CBC News,

2014). The police has rather quickly solved the case and announced that Uighur separatists are to be blamed (CBC News, 2014). It is important to mention though that none of the Xinjiang terrorist organizations has taken responsibility for this. On the other hand, the eyewitnesses unanimously claim “that it was a terrorist attack carried out by Xinjiang separatist forces” (CBC News, 2014). In any case, the government should take this event very seriously as “it is the first time the Uighurs have been blamed for carrying out such a large-scale attack so far from their homeland” (CBC News, 2014). Even though the city of Kunming is more than 900 miles from Xinjiang (Figure 3), the terrorists travelled there in order to make their strife for independence heard and once again to challenge the regime. The terrorist act in a city that is located far from Xinjiang indicates that there had been even more serious preparation and organization than before which in turn could mean the involvement of much more experienced counterparts from outside PRC.

Figure 3



Source: <http://www.wpmap.org/>.

Yet, terrorism is not the only type of connection between Xinjiang and Afghanistan that worries China. The main concern is the strong and steady heroin flow from Afghanistan and also the revenues that come from drug export.

Already in 2001, the government officials established a link between “terrorism” and the “evil forces” of “ethnic separatism” and “religious extremism”. Thus, “the Golden Crescent and the Three Evil Forces are tightly bound up together, and they are threatening the stability of [our] country’s western border region” (Tanner, 2011). It is necessary to mention that these three factors have been among main incentives to create the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China was smart enough to use the same causes to involve Russia and Central Asian states as they are supposed to fight the same challenges.

Although it is impossible to overestimate the importance of regional cooperation, PRC also takes serious steps to wipe out the organized criminal element. Indeed, although China is still quite reluctant to admit that the threat of terrorism from Uighur separatists is acute, it does acknowledge the serious nature of heroin exports. One of the main reasons for making the war on Afghan heroin a top priority are the revenues that separatist groups receive from selling the drugs. Another powerful argument is how the money is spent. The analysts agree that “Xinjiang independence groups in particular rely upon drug trafficking for an important portion of its funds” (Tanner, 2011). Also, “these links between drug trafficking and terrorist groups in Central Asia constitute a powerful threat to China” (Tanner, 2011). This is the main reason why PRC should become involved in Afghanistan.

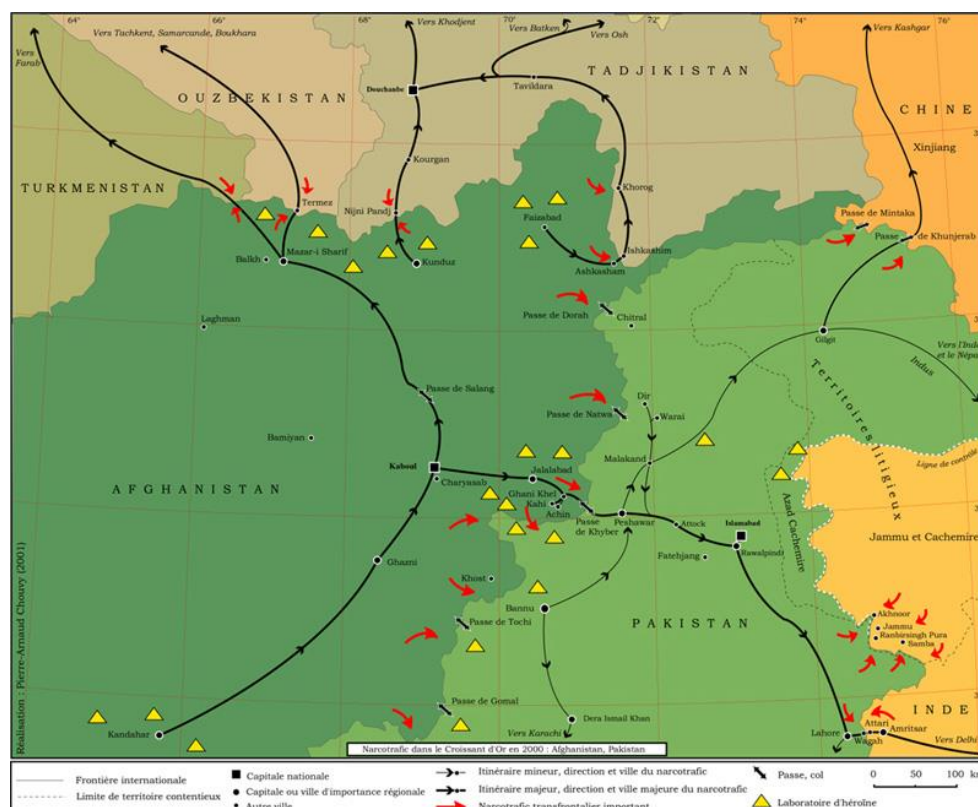
Naturally, the problem of drug export revenues has begun receiving the attention it deserves. All of this indicates that Xinjiang indeed plays a very important role in the Golden Crescent’s heroin route. The importance of the latter is backed by the fact that although the heroin smugglers have a number of other options of transporting drugs into China, they still prefer the aforementioned province. Regardless of all challenges such as weather conditions in the area that make the Kunjerab pass and Karakoram valley accessible (Figure 4) only half of the year and the “larger and more powerful law enforcement and domestic intelligence system” on China’s border, the drug traffickers still prefer the Xinjiang province to alternate routes (Tanner, 2011). This means that heroin export is just a part of complex relations between Afghanistan and Uighur separatists. The cohesion between drug export and terrorism between the aforementioned states is also demonstrated by the globalization of drug smuggling. “The scale of drugs infiltrated into China from the Golden Crescent, and methods used, have clearly gone up a level. At the same time there has been no decline in small-scale infiltration such as airline routes ... there has been an increase in the use of concealment within shipping containers, transport via open maritime shipping, and large volume smuggling, and the danger to our country has already increased” (Tanner, 2011). It is difficult to overemphasize the globalization of heroin exports to China. First, as it has already been mentioned, the drugs are clearing the borders by penetrating the country by all means of transportation. Second, there are assumptions that Central Asians and Africans participate in “smuggling drugs into and back out of China” (Tanner, 2011). Thus, a heroin export not only provides stable and quite substantial financial support but also is a weapon that undermines the social stability of China and the nearby countries over the long term (Tanner, 2011). The immigrants from Central-Asia and Africa are circulating through the region and undermine social and economic stability.

However, although it is highly likely that drugs coming from Afghanistan to China have an impact on the local Uighur separatists, there is little direct evidence to that. The analysts admit that all of the information about the drug smugglers to “accumulate funds in order to support their anti-government, split-the-country activities” (Tanner, 2011) is vague and is often quite wanting in general. This, on the other hand, does not diminish the significance of international cooperation; after the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, the criminal element would become a threat to the whole region.

NATO Withdrawal: US concerns and why China is the Right Choice for Replacement

The prospect of leaving Afghanistan without anyone to replace the US is an extremely critical issue on a regional and international scale. First, it would unleash all kinds of organized crime elements including the separatists that would support any unrest in the region both financially and by sharing experience. This, in turn, would bring an enormous instability in Central Asia. Also, the US exit from Afghanistan would give a free rein to the illicit drug exports. After the withdrawal of the US troops, the heroin trafficking would skyrocket (Hussain, 2011). Similarly, this would have a tremendous impact on the whole region and probably beyond. Afghanistan is still a major opiate producing state that dominates the global opiate market supplying Russia, China and Europe with heroin. Another important aspect is the presence of heroin labs scattered all over the state (Figure 4). After the withdrawal of the US forces there could be clashes over the labs. This is also potentially hazardous since the prospect of dominating could attract interested parties not only from Afghanistan but also from neighboring countries. If the US presence contained those conflicts, one way or another, after 2014, there would be no such policeman that would watch over and guarantee stability. Finally, the US exit would also threaten the economical stability of Afghanistan. Indeed, the latter directly depends on the „international military and donor spending“ (Hussain, 2011). It is undeniable that the country would suffer from economic breakdown which would inevitably lead to the collapse of the already fragile security situation.

Figure 4



Source: <http://www.recordedfuture.com/>.

All of the aforementioned events would devalue all of the US efforts and its massive financial support. This would have a negative effect on the US foreign policy by questioning whether it is capable of holding responsibility for its foreign missions. Also, this would cast a shadow on the aptitude of the US military of being able to bring peace and stability to any region not only Afghanistan.

The listed above arguments indicate that although the United States is ready to exit Afghanistan, it does not mean that the state is stable and does not require continuous international attention. However, it is yet unclear who should take over the US-led forces after 2014. The most obvious candidate is PRC due to its personal interests in stable and prosperous Afghanistan. But there are major concerns whether China should be trusted. First, both countries hardly see each other as allies and partners in other parts of the world and the trust issue between two superpowers is irrefutable. One of the major concerns is China's alliance with Russia and the risk of Afghanistan becoming a satellite state of a communist and anti-US power. It should be mentioned that there is a certain number of "remnants of the Cold War communist encroachment on Afghanistan" in President Karzai's cabinet (Konsky, 2013). Moreover, this would signify the loss of a zero-sum game to the opponent as the US influence will diminish inevitably, whereas China would definitely become more important not only in Afghanistan but also in Central Asia in general.

Although these arguments are quite convincing, they are not entirely irrefragable. First, the presence of communist-minded officials in the current President's office should make the cooperation between China and Afghanistan smoother than that between the USA and Afghanistan (Konsky, 2013). Second, although the relations between China and Russia are stable, the two countries are also competing for influence in Central Asia and China's presence would be a great counterbalance to Russia in the region (Konsky, 2013). And Central-Asia has too much potential to be shared with any partner.

Moreover, engaging China into Afghanistan could bring several gains that would benefit all the parties involved. First, this could stop China's inclination for free-riding and benefitting from the "efforts of the others, while exploiting the goodwill of... global powers" (Payne, 2013). The involvement into Afghanistan should force China to take actual responsibility for its military actions in Central Asia. Second, it would be wise to exploit the good relations between China and its neighbors. For instance, the state could appeal to Pakistan to stop turning a "blind eye to terrorist organizations" within the state (Konsky, 2013). In addition, China would also be able to use its authority among its Central Asian partners as well as India to cooperate on this urgent issue. This could easily be done within the framework of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Together with Russia and India, PRC is a member of the first one and a founder of the latter. Being interested in the stability of Afghanistan mainland, China is sure to work hard to see that the regional partners are also involved.

In addition, it is impossible to overestimate the economic losses in case China would remain non-involved. "China is realizing that its investments in Afghanistan will be at risk, its Central Asian trade threatened, and its relations with Pakistan strained" (Payne, 2013). Therefore, it is in its best interests to participate in stabilizing Afghanistan; otherwise, it will lose more than it will gain. Moreover, it is a matter of common knowledge that the state is "too attractive to ignore" (Konsky, 2013). The enormous natural resources are worth the involvement as "valuations of

Afghan mineral reserves estimate a figure of \$1 trillion. Add oil and natural gas to the collection of resources and the figure becomes much higher” (Konsky, 2013). China is in need of oil and Afghanistan, rich with natural resources, is an opportunity that would not be missed.

Finally, it is vital not to overlook the importance of stable Afghanistan for China in terms of its own rebellious province that is claimed to have strong ties with the state. Before 2014, the US-led forces were responsible for containing criminal activities coming from Afghanistan; after the withdrawal, China would be left alone face to face with “security risk along its western border” (Payne, 2013). In order to keep the region relatively safe from drug smuggling and avoid security challenges, PRC will be forced to be pro-active and prevent the unwanted damage. Even though rebuilding Afghanistan and guaranteeing peace and stability, not only in the state itself but also in the region, would bring enormous benefits, it also a great challenge which would require a careful and thorough strategy. This, however, would be the key to more secure Central Asia.

More so, Chinese presence in Afghanistan should not threaten U.S. also because officially Washington has fulfilled its duties in the country and therefore “it does not have a firm grasp on what it should do with Afghanistan” (Farley, 2014). That said, as the country “is not much use... to pressure Pakistan or Iran” (Farley, 2014), for Washington, it might be more trouble than it is worth. On the other hand, for PRC, the relationship with Afghanistan might become beneficial in every aspect.

China’s Strategy to Stabilize Afghanistan: Economic and Law Enforcement

Indeed, already now the relations between Afghanistan and mainland China are more than just good-neighborly. First, although China’s interests are not merely financial, the state is indeed committed to investing into Afghanistan’s economy (Konsky, 2013). Naturally, this would in turn increase the stability of the state. Thus, the relative prosperity in Afghanistan is supposed to bring comparative peace in China itself, especially in the aforementioned Uighur region. In order to secure itself from the unwanted confrontations in the Wakhan corridor, China is willing to spend large amounts of money. This way, in 2011, China promised to pay 75 million USD in five years (Zyck, 2012). Moreover, in addition to economic aid, Afghanistan enjoys China’s involvement in rebuilding hospitals in Kabul and Kandahar and irrigation initiatives in Parwan province (Zyck, 2012). The Chinese also promote their education by introducing Confucius Institutes at Kabul University and offer considerable scholarships for those Afghans who wish to study in China (Zyck, 2012). It is obvious that in this way, PRC is determined to kill two birds with one stone – in addition to stabilizing the region, it also promotes itself on the international level. Using soft power elements China ensures harsh and consistent politics within its own borders.

It is important to mention that although China has not become Afghanistan’s major trading partner (Zyck, 2012), it is greatly interested in the latter’s natural resources such as copper and oil. In 2008, the two countries signed a 30-year lease for \$3.4 billion with additional royalties to the Aynak copper deposit (Zyck, 2012). China was so eager to get this deal that it pledged to build additional schools and mosques in strategically important area (Zyck, 2012).

In addition, it is hard to overestimate the importance of oil resources in Northern Afghanistan which would be drilled by the Chinese company China National Petroleum Corporation for 25

years (Zyck, 2012). As in the copper deal, the Chinese have offered generous royalties; tax revenues and oil refinery which would be a great support for Afghanistan's economy (Zyck, 2012). The aforementioned contracts could also be regarded as an investment not only into its successful development, but also into supporting the stability in the region. It has already been mentioned that Beijing puts in a lot of funds into Afghanistan's development. For instance, China also participates in the construction of railways in the country. The 76-km route is supposed to link Mazar-i-Sharif to the extensive rail networks in Uzbekistan. This route will allow Afghan exporters to transport minerals and other goods into Europe. Besides, the CMGC is building a railroad to transport copper ore in Afghanistan from Logar to Kabul. Finally, it is important to mention the smoothly operating flights between Urumqi to Kabul. Further, it is vital to mention Afghanistan's natural oil and gas resources that are also of a great interest to the People's Republic of China. Afghanistan also signed a 25-year deal with the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) covering drilling and a planned refinery in the northern provinces of Faryab and Sar-e-Pul. The aforementioned deal is supposed to become the first substantial oil production in Afghanistan in the course of which the CNPC will extract 1.950 barrels per day, which will crucially help Afghanistan towards self-sustainability and economic independence. If successful, China's input into Afghanistan's economy will be unprecedented and beyond price as it will help the country to get on its feet.

Yet, keeping Afghanistan safe and consolidated is a challenge even for the People's Republic of China. For this reason, the state involves its international partners in order to secure the region. Thus, this year, together with Russia and India, China has held trilateral discussions in order to outline the blueprints for future strategies to keep Afghanistan "strong, united, stable, peaceful and prosperous" (Krishnan, India, China, Russia hold talks on Afghan issue, 2014). "As a close neighbor of Afghanistan, China is ready to work with countries in the region and the international community to support the peaceful reconstruction and reconciliation process in Afghanistan and jointly maintain peace, stability and development of Afghanistan and the whole region" (The Economic Times, 2014). China and India are ready to overcome their tensions in order to fight the heroin plague coming from Afghanistan.

It is important to mention that both China and Russia are active members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and this is not their first meeting regarding Afghanistan. Although Russia does not share a border with Afghanistan, every decision regarding those countries directly affects the state as Russia is one of the main victims of heroin exports. In addition, similarly to China, Russia is also interested in maintaining its status of the world policeman and its active cooperation certainly proves its determination. Also, the withdrawal of US forces by the end of this year is a clear opportunity for both Russia and China to enhance their image of warrantors of regional stability. Yet, it is important that along with merits, this status also brings certain responsibilities and challenges. Also, neither China nor Russia should neglect the NATO experience in Afghanistan, regardless whether it was successful or not.

Yet, besides Russia, Beijing has at least one more partner in the region whose participation in combating radicalism is not less crucial than China's – Pakistan. After the withdrawal of the US-led forces in 2014, the People's Republic of China will be the most likely candidate for the replacement. Naturally, although the state is more than capable of undertaking this ambitious but very challenging task, it will require comprehensive support from its partners, including Pakistan.

The involvement of the latter is crucial for China for two reasons. First, the state is known to be haven for Uighur separatists. They are believed to receive their training across the Pakistani border and conduct terrorist acts within Chinese borders. It has to be mentioned that the problem might not be as grave as the Chinese officials are portraying it. The US intelligence states that even though there are some Uighurs present in the country, their amount is not critical (Dalrymple, 2014). Second, cooperation with Pakistan would also signify the emergence of China in the new Great Game (Dalrymple, 2014). Moreover, the People's Republic of China has chosen Pakistan because the latter also has its interests in participating in Afghanistan's future. Firstly, although China is the most prominent voice urging Pakistan to tackle its extremist groups, it is not the only one, because both India and Afghanistan also accuse the state "of failing to act against militant camps on its soil" (Dean, 2011). In addition, what happens in Afghanistan will directly affect Pakistan's security. If Afghanistan "falls prey to extremist forces this will have a direct impact on Pakistan" (Gillani, 2014). Pakistan being a rather fragile state itself cannot afford to passively wait for Afghan extremists to come and destabilize its security. In case Pakistan fails to resist this challenge, the situation has the potential to challenge regional security in general.

However, PRC does not limit itself with generous financial support for Afghanistan. Thus, despite that "law enforcement analysts ... assert a significant link between terrorism and drug trafficking, sources... provide very little solid evidence that the two are connected" (Tanner, 2011). The government should consider even the slightest chance that the drug exports from Afghanistan have influence on terrorism in PRC. That said, it is important for the government to ensure that the war on drugs is waged on every front, including legislative. It is worth mentioning that drug abuse is a very sensitive topic for the Chinese government and therefore the information on the rise and the pattern of the Golden Crescent drug trafficking is very scarce or completely closed (Tanner, 2011). The only information regarding this topic is successful seizures of heroin smugglers, the number of people arrested for drug crimes, and successfully resolved cases. (Tanner, 2011). It is obvious that such kind of information could easily be altered or exaggerated and therefore it hardly could be considered as reliable. It is likely that with an attitude like that, PRC will achieve little or no real success; especially if it hopes to draw international cooperation.

Indeed, the Chinese police admits that its successes are still quite unsatisfactory due to various reasons such as language problems, reactivity and passivity of its officers. The officials themselves recognize several major drawbacks that delay the victory over heroin exports up to an indefinite period of time. First, the information that the police receives from its foreign colleagues is often "lagging behind", "very scarce" and "small in volume and weak in quality" (Tanner, 2011). In addition, "within Xinjiang, public security officials indicate that another weak point in their information gathering is a lack of... understanding of and control over street-level social activities. Specifically, some police believe they do not have an adequate knowledge of the presence and activities of foreign citizens and organizations within their territory" (Tanner, 2011). In short, the most essential factor in war on drugs – the police – is simultaneously the weakest link in China. As long as it remains on the same level, the state will hardly achieve any visible results in tackling the heroin smuggling.

However, it is obvious that such important and unstable matter as keeping the region secure requires more than merely economic infusions and political decisions. Therefore, PRC is ready to replace the United States after the latter withdraws its mission. Considering its personal interests in keeping Afghanistan secure, it is safe to assume that mainland China will do its best to confront the penetration of both drugs and potential terrorists into the country. Its determination has been tested multiple times. The government suspects that the terrorist attacks could not have happened without the assistance from the local branch of Al-Qaida (ITAR-TASS, 2013). It is obvious that this event calls for harsh and ruthless reaction in order to prevent the provocations of any kind including terrorist attacks.

However, it is possible that whenever China enters the anti-terrorist coalition and asserts itself in Afghanistan, it will confirm that the situation in Xinjiang is more serious than the usual tensions between ethnic minority and the government (ITAR-TASS, 2013). By doing so, China will give its Islamist separatists ground to assume that their activities indeed are intimidating. It is impossible to overestimate such opportunity as it will boost their confidence and motivate them into more actions. Thus, it is essential that China's government should consider this factor before entering Afghanistan. However, it has already been mentioned that the withdrawal of the US forces would definitely unleash different radicals, including those who participate in heroin and anti-government movements. Therefore, regardless of all possible implications, it is in China's interests to increase its presence in the region.

All in all, a volatile and fragile Afghanistan is a clear threat to the regional and global security. Its affiliation to China's separatist province Xinjiang is an example of menaces that may come from the state. Afghanistan, being a premier heroin exporter, plays a significant role in drug exports to China and further. In addition, the enormous revenues coming from drug selling are believed to support the separatist movement within the aforementioned Xinjiang province against China. The terrorist organization East Turkistan Islamic Movement is a major component of the terrorist network headed by Osama bin Laden. The terrorist acts carried out in China are evidently funded and supported by the Afghan counterparts.

These activities bring chaos not only to China's security, but destabilize the whole Central Asia. For this reason, PRC should step up after the NATO withdrawal in 2014. Despite all the tensions between the US and China, both sides have to overcome their distrust and cooperate towards more stable Afghanistan. PRC should take more responsibility in the state in order to improve the situation within its own borders. Ideally, a secure Afghanistan should not cooperate with Uighur separatists. Mainland China could exploit its regional influence in order to engage more international partners. This, however, does not diminish the significance of China's own efforts to stabilize Afghanistan.

That said, People's Republic of China is already heavily investing into Afghanistan's economy. The state spends a lot of money on development of copper and oil in the state and provides necessary infrastructure and hospitals. These ventures are supposed to be mutually beneficial as Afghanistan will be more economically stable and China would not only get profits from the country's natural resources, but also keep Afghanistan away from Xinjiang. In addition to economic support, China also fights with heroin coming from the country. It is important for the government to ensure that the war on drugs is waged on every front including legislative.

Unfortunately, the most essential factor in the war on drugs – the police – is simultaneously the weakest link in China. First, the information that the police receives from its foreign colleagues is often very scarce and small in volume and weak in quality. Second, some police believe they do not have an adequate knowledge of the presence and activities of foreign citizens and organizations within their territory.

However, if China is able to overcome its difficulties and challenges and step up instead of NATO, all of the hard work will pay off. This way, Afghanistan will become more stable and Xinjiang separatists will be left without its financial and experienced support.

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