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Investigating the Political, Economic and Geopolitical Role of Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor in China's Belt and Road Initiative

Mohammad Ekram Yawar¹

¹ Mohammad Ekram Yawar, PhD Candidate, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of International Relations, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey

Correspondence: Mohammad Ekram Yawar, PhD Candidate, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of International Relations, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey.

Tel: +905373804027. E-mail: ekramyawar93@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0003-3198-5212

Abstract

As a buffer country between Central Asia and South Asia, Afghanistan has effective transit advantages to advance the economic goals of its surrounding countries. Among these countries, due to its economic strength at the international level (the second economic power in the world), China is trading with South Asia, West Asia and Europe through the One Belt One Road plan, as well as neutralizing India as its regional rival it is now. Therefore, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, due to its land proximity and relative security compared to China's surrounding regions in its western part is considered a desirable solution for the implementation and establishment of the economic strategy of One Belt One Road. This article, by proposing the question of how the Wakhan Corridor plays a role in China's economic considerations, with an analytical-descriptive method, deals with the hypothesis that China, considering the security space that dominates Pakistan's Kashmir and the insecurity of other countries in Central Asia due to the movements of extremist groups, the choice of the Wakhan Corridor, despite being influenced by geographical factors and elements, especially its rough topography, in view of being close to the Great Near East (the world's energy center) and Europe, as well as international waters the long-term portfolio sets its own economic strategy.

Keywords: Wakhan Corridor, Economic Strategy, One Belt One Road, Afghanistan, China

1. Introduction

Afghanistan's geography has created a link between East and West countries due to its location as a transit point for commercial exchanges on the Silk Road, and during the last few years, gas and oil pipelines have been transferred from Central Asia through Afghanistan. This highlights the geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of Afghanistan.

However, because its proximity to the People's Republic of China, as the largest economic power in the world, Afghanistan has once again received the attention of this country in terms of timing for economic-commercial opportunities through land exchanges. It has been decided to use the geographical possibilities and potentials. Even the natural resources will rebuild its safer and more stable route to connect with the Great Near East, the Persian Gulf and even Europe.

Among this, the Wakhan Corridor as a strategic crossing forms the border between Afghanistan and China, which, due to its special topographical and climatic conditions, has formed a special situation to reduce internal conflicts in Afghanistan; it is part of safe areas from the perspective of influence and presence of extremist groups. And the Islamic foundation like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda is stratified, but it suffers from deprivation, underdevelopment and economic-political inequality compared to the central regions.

With this description, the Wakhan Corridor plays a significant role in the economic strategy of China, which is currently reviving the Silk Road under the new name of Belt and Road. Therefore, this article with analytical and descriptive method and using the researches of reputable scientific centers to examine the Wakhan¹ Corridor and China's interest in this strategic corridor in economic-security dimensions due to the supervision and control of competitors, regional as well as economic-commercial integration with others the surrounding spaces are based on the one-belt-one-way project.

And in the end, it is concluded that the Wakhan Corridor can provide business for China, especially with the development of transportation infrastructures in the land and rail sectors. The link with Afghanistan's Trans-Afghanistan railway and connection to Iran's railway also guarantees security capabilities for the revival of the power of the East, although some shortcomings can also be observed.

1.1 Problem Statement

The bottlenecks and limitations caused by the geographical environment are one of the most significant challenges of making and implementing economic policies, which play a very significant role in the decision-making of governments for economic-commercial relations between separate political units are bounded by borders, on the other hand, the behavior of players can be determined by geographic area, either national and transnational security or face crisis. At the same time, if the geographical situation and the coherence of communication networks are helpful, they create an appropriate support for increasing economic-commercial security.

This topic has a vital role for great economic powers like the People's Republic of China, which is reviving its regional and global power. Considering that approximately 60 percent of China's trade deals with Western and Near Eastern countries are through the Strait of Malacca, which are under direct control (China's international regional competitor). China has to create an alternative and safe route for its commercial-economic development from the land-rail route with its western areas.

With this description, the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan as the only transit passage and close to China to West Asia, the Persian Gulf, the Caspian (Caspian) Sea, and Europe is taken into consideration, and how to use the strategic resources. Its importance considering the situation, its geography and environmental-climatic features encourage China to use this corridor to implement its economic strategy, which is the One Belt One Road plan. Therefore, in this study, we are looking for an answer to this question, how do the Wakhan Corridors play a role in China's economic strategy considerations?

According to this question, a hypothesis is formed in this way that considering the security space prevailing in Pakistani Kashmir and the insecurity of southern Tajikistan due to the movements of extremist and Islamic fundamentalist groups, China will choose the Wakhan Corridor option. Grief is affected by special geographical factors and elements. Its rough topography in view of being close to the Great Near East (the energy center of

¹ Wakhan Corridor

the world) and Europe also considers international waters in its long-term planning. Compared to other surrounding countries, from the perspective of better and balanced control and supervision for the establishment and implementation of China's economic-commercial strategy in the form of a belt, it is evaluated as an important way.

2. Research method

This article is analytical and descriptive, using scientific, research and university articles, as well as the archive of internationally recognized publications and news reports, to analyze the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan from the perspective of the policies of the economy of the People's Republic of China is a case study.

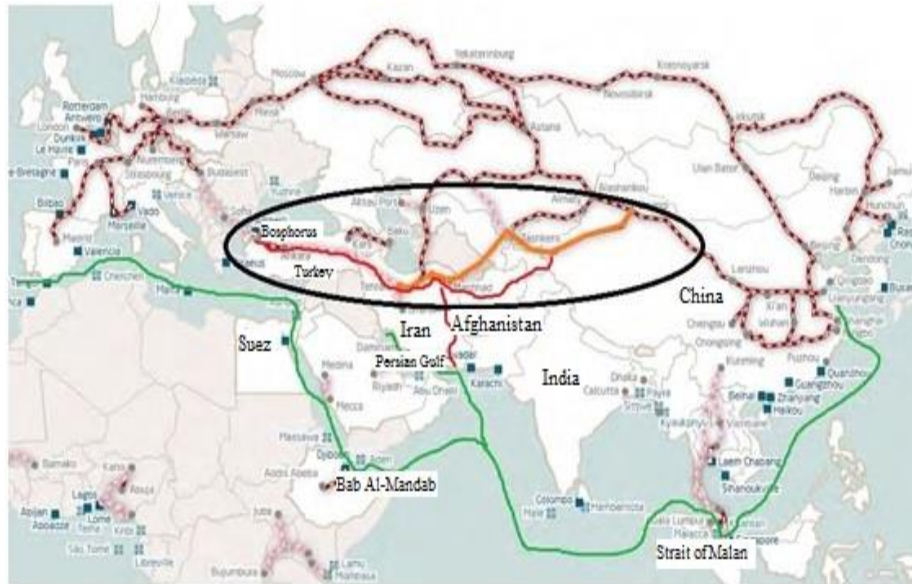
2.1 Research background

Comprehensive research and studies about China's economic-commercial activities, about the big one-belt-one-way project, easy access to energy sources, and a general discussion about the production and sales of factory products. The title of sub-sectors of China's economic growth and prosperity has been fulfilled. On the other hand, in the researches related to Afghanistan, focusing on religious radicalism and extreme fundamentalism, crisis and conflict between ethnic-tribal minorities is the research priority. In this article, we will focus specifically on the Wakhan Corridor, which has given the shape of a queue to Afghanistan, and considering that it is at the center of tension and conflict amongst India and Pakistan over Kashmir and the prevalence of extremism in Central Asia, also it has kept its relative stability it will be examined from the perspective of China's economic strategy.

2.2 Theoretical foundations

China's economic strategy in providing security and stability in the surrounding space, taking into account the union and various economic-cultural formations, is an effort to reduce conflicts and crises arising from the ideology of extremism. The rapid economic growth along with the increasing rate of the population and the distance from the centers of low-cost energy suppliers of the Near East and the roads of the Western world, as well as the existence of regional competitors, especially India, which are some of the factors there are shortages and crises in China's maritime transit-carriage principles (Green line in picture number one), they form China's economic strategy in order to use the spaces with the least amount of damage.

As it is in the form of a number, the implementation of the One Belt One Road project as the biggest economic project of the 20th century and a China that has made huge investments requires passing through the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan (Orange line in picture number one). These four Central Asian countries face an insecure environment due to ethnic-tribal conflicts over water, and the presence of Islamic extremist groups and underground terrorist networks, which can provide security in the form of a border conflict threatens China's economy, while the issue of China's Xinjiang or Uyghuristan, which is located in the identity connection with Central Asia, also increases the pressure and violence. Therefore, China can guarantee its economic benefits directly and only by passing through one country, namely Afghanistan, while preparing for the creation of a new security system (Red line in picture number one).



Picture 1: 20th Century One Belt One Road Project

3. Research findings

3.1 The location of the Wakhan corridor

Afghanistan is a landlocked country, a part of which, i.e. the Wakhan Corridor, (Picture number two), it has formed a long narrow border region that arose from the political necessity of the late 19th century, under the name of It was a barrier between Tsarist Russia, India and England. (Clifford, 3:1368). The Wakhan Corridor is known worldwide as it is located in the north-eastern Badakhshan of Afghanistan, which was formed in an agreement between Afghanistan and Britain to act as a barrier between the British Empire in India and the Russian Empire (Rafiq, 2020). Wakhan Corridor is considered an ancient trade route and an extraordinary strategic crossing (Munir, Shafiq, 2019).

During the Great Game period of the 19th century, the Wakhan Corridor, before being divided into several countries, as an independent region between the Russian and British empires and having an autonomous government that included the Panj River². In the year 1893, with the intensity of regional rivalries, the great regional powers divided this river and the families who lived as united communities for centuries were separated. For several decades, people along the river continued to cross the border freely until the Tajik Autonomous Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union (as part of the Soviet Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was formed in 1924 under the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and this gap made it permanent. After the World War Two, with the increase of Cold War tensions, it became more difficult to cross the border and people without a permit faced the risk of being shot or arrested. However, in the last few decades, Wakhan Corridor has experienced relative peace compared to other regions of Afghanistan (fao.org, 2003).

² Panj River



Picture 2: Wakhan Corridor

Wakhan is a region in the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan, which shares a 300-kilometer border with Pakistan in the south, more than 260 kilometers with Tajikistan and 74 kilometers with China in the north-east and west directions. Due to its special topography, the Wakhan Corridor is located between the mountains of Hindukush, Himalaya, Karakoram and Tianshan Mountains, and covers an area of 14,080 kilometers. This area is 220 kilometers long and its width is between 10 and 64 kilometers. The Wakhan Corridor has caused the expansion of the borders of Afghanistan and through this corridor, Afghanistan is connected to the country of China (Wakhjir Pass) and in this way it is connected to the world of East Asia. The Wakhan Corridor connects China to Afghanistan and Tajikistan to Pakistan.

This region is one of the sources of the Amu Darya River and Afghanistan's surface water due to being mountainous and having peaks above six thousand meters in height and lands covered with natural ice and snow. Over the years, this corridor has been considered as a national park, which is about 23% larger than Yellowstone (Compas, 2015) and tourists come to this corridor for a trip in Chashmandaz with the splendor of Wakhan, with local people who have an old way of life (Caravanistan.com) Wakhan has a population of over 12,000 people consisting of Wakhis and Kyrgyz who have been living there for centuries. And they accept Islam as a common religion and both groups speak in Wakhi language.

Wakhis are Shia Muslims and followers of the Ismaili group with a population of about 10,000 people and they live in the border areas with Tajikistan, China and Pakistan at altitudes of 2000 to 3000 meters. The Kyrgyz are also traditional Muslims who follow their groups and live in the eastern part of the Wakhan Corridor, which includes mountains and snow-covered lakes. The native people of Wakhan are of Iranian descent and unlike the majority of Sunni; they follow the Ismaili sect of Shia in Islam (Srebrnik, 2020).

Since then, the Wakhan Corridor has been considered the most important connection point of the Silk Road by the Europeans and Chinese to reach the plains of India and the maritime communication lines of the Indian Ocean through the coasts of the Arabian Sea. Marcopolo passed this route and the Portuguese traveled this route to reach China.

This corridor, which was formed in 1893 due to the Durand Line agreement between Afghanistan and India, followed the great game between Russia and England since 1838, the Chinese communist revolution in 1949, and the Soviet attack on Afghanistan for a decade. And even after the NATO attack on Afghanistan since 2001, this region is deprived of any kind of infrastructural development. Currently, there is only one rough road in the entire Wakhan Corridor that connects Sin Kiang with Wakhjir³ Pass. Wakhan Corridor has three routes.

³ Wakhjir Pass

1. The northern route: passing by the Panj and Pamir rivers in the north and at the end of the Esco river in China through Zorkol lake.
2. The southern route reaches China through the Wakhjir pass, but it is closed for more than half of the year due to snowfall.
3. It is a central route that connects both the northern and southern routes in Wakhan and leads to China through the Tegermanso⁴ mountain pass with an altitude of 4,827 meters.

According to experts, due to the geography of the Pamir mountains, creating the infrastructure of this system will be difficult and expensive. However, there are many examples of projects that have been completed in similar and even more difficult areas in terms of geography in the region. For example, in the rough and rugged mountains of Karakoram, it was built with the use of modern technologies. Therefore, geographical complexity cannot be used as an obstacle to create a connection through construction, taking into consideration the transportation systems (Parsa, 2017). If this corridor is built, it can be the least expensive trade route between China, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan compared to the existing options (Javed, 2018). The strategic value of the Wakhan Corridor has a direct impact on the economy of the three neighboring countries of China, Pakistan and Tajikistan, because these countries are politically connected to the Wakhan Corridor. Therefore, it is necessary to use this ancient commercial route for the economic and social development of the region.



Picture 3: Wakhan Corridor Route

The President of the United States, Donald Trump, has promised to reduce the US military presence in Afghanistan, and it is expected that about half of the US soldiers in this country will return home soon (Kelemen, 2020). Experts believe that in the event of the withdrawal of the United States of America and NATO, the power vacuums in Afghanistan will be filled with China's economic interests, and this will have an immediate and direct impact on the surrounding countries through the Wakhan Corridor. Such a scenario can improve China's geopolitical maneuver because the connection of Pakistan's Gwadar port with the Wakhan Corridor through the Karakoram Pass has a unique political-commercial value for China (Malik, 2014:27).

While China's security presence is increasing in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, a strategically sensitive region of Tajikistan, (Shih 2019) the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan has announced that it is building a military base in Badakhshan province. It is tense and China is waiting for the military base in full. It will provide Badakhshan and cover all material and technical costs including weapons and equipment. The agreement for the construction of this base was obtained in Beijing in December 2009, when a high-ranking delegation headed by the deputy Tareq Shah Bahrami made it a subject for review (Toktomushev, 2018).

⁴ Tegemmanuu

The establishment of a Chinese base in this place highlights not only the participation of the Chinese in the fight against terrorism, but also the long-term goal of Beijing to gain a permanent position and control over the regional economy and security, it will also include the construction of military facilities and investment infrastructure projects (Levi-Sanchez, 2018). On September 6, 2018, the ambassador of Afghanistan in Beijing announced in an interview with Reuters that China intends to train Afghan soldiers on Chinese soil, this is to fight with the Islamic State of Daesh and Al-Qaeda paramilitaries (Pandey, 2018).

Security is the main priority for the leaders of China (Szcudlik-Tatar, 2014). Therefore, China is worried about the security situation in Afghanistan and does not want Afghanistan to be a safe place for militants and founders of South Central Asia. It can threaten the stability in its western provinces (Chawla, 2020). In 2016, China created a four-way cooperation and coordination mechanism with Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan to share information and training to fight terrorism (Mahalingam, 2020). On the other hand, about a thousand Afghan officials and technical personnel are currently receiving training in China. China enrolls more students than Afghanistan and the Confucius Institute has been reopened in Kabul University (Xiaoqiang, 2014). With these interpretations, the connection of Wakhan Corridor with the Sarshar region of the Caspian (Caspian) Sea basin and the establishment of energy transmission links with China in the form of oil and gas pipelines also increase the geopolitical and geoeconomic value of Wakhan.

Meanwhile, China has relatively more control over the Wakhan Corridor because it can control it through the Wakhjir crossing leading to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan, and on the other hand, it can be used for its own trade alternately for China through the Arabian Sea through Afghanistan and Pakistan made. The Wakhan Corridor can create many benefits for Pakistan as a transit economy and lead to the creation of a large number of jobs, foreign exchange income, and most importantly, the improvement of infrastructure development in the identified areas. (Shafiq, 2019).



Picture 4: Significance of Wakhan Corridor

In addition to this, India, a united region near Afghanistan, is not satisfied with Kabul joining this plan, India is against the initiative of one belt-one road, because Kashmir under the control of Pakistan, through which the China-Pakistan border passes, is a disputed area between Delhi and Islamabad, and India has direct access to Afghanistan, It has blocked Afghanistan and Central Asia. At the moment, the Aksai region of China, which was handed over by Pakistan to China on March 25, 1963, is subject to the solution of the Kashmir issue. China's effort to open its border with Afghanistan through the Wakhjir pass and to build a tunnel under the Pamir Mountains to connect Afghanistan as a geo-economic opportunity for China and a maneuver to prevent threats

with the potential of India is taken into account. This provocative action causes India to see Afghanistan and Pakistan under China's control, while these two countries form India's strategic depth.

On the other hand, India is worried about the construction of the 5800-kilometer Silk Road by the Chinese in the region adjacent to Siachen⁵. India has a trade link with Afghanistan only through Pakistan; hence India's investment in Chabahar port is evaluated as a result of China's provocative approach. The closing of the border by China and Afghanistan in the peace process of the Wakhan region is a concern for India because it is not in line with the policies of the United States of America, which is considered a partner of India. Considering the political geography of Pakistan, including the religious relations of the people with Afghanistan and Iran, and the withdrawal of the United States of America from Afghanistan, the presence of the Chinese in the port of Gwadar, Pakistan, which is also called a kind of Indian siege, worrying about its geopolitical and geoeconomic future with its neighbors have done it and it is not coming to fill the power vacuum caused by the absence of America in the region.

The widespread activity of the Indian secret service⁶ in Afghanistan and the killing of at least 13 ISIS fighters with Indian citizenship during the United States bombing in the Tora Bora mountain cave complex in Nangarhar province are a sign of Indian activity. Not for the interests of Pakistan and China in the Wakhan Corridor and its surrounding areas. On the other hand, any kind of trade through this corridor will be beneficial for India's long-time rival Pakistan, and if the standard transit road is built in Wakhan, commercial activities in the region will increase, especially for Pakistan, Central Asia. And Afghanistan will be strengthened and prosperous and can take the shortest route. Provide business for Pakistan to reach Central Asia and China to reach Afghanistan.

Cooperation in the construction of the Trans-Himalayan Corridor and the joint use of mountain resources such as water reserves, energy and tourism are evaluated in this direction. Also, it seems that Pakistan takes more care of its borders and various crossings leading to Chitral⁷ and northern regions. Pakistan is strengthening its efforts to curb cross-border terrorism through border management and creating an economic interdependence with Afghanistan, so the economic interdependence between Pakistan and Afghanistan can lead to the end of the conflict. The economic development in Pakistan is due to the influence of Chinese capital, production capacity and knowledge of how to improve Pakistan's infrastructure and create a mechanism for economic growth (Mardell, 2020).

With these interpretations, Afghanistan can benefit from the Wakhan Corridor as an effective card in relation to Pakistan and India. Also, Afghanistan's strategic value is strengthened in regional organizations such as SACO⁸ and SAARC⁹. There is no doubt that Afghanistan shows interest in China's Belt and Road¹⁰ initiative and is taking steps to develop internal projects in the direction of connecting the region, such as the North-South corridors. This country will gain its political and economic importance by connecting the northern and eastern countries of South Asia with the southern and western countries of South Asia and become a regional pole. Of course, there are various challenges during the revival of the Wakhan corridor.

First of all, the unevenness of the land in the development of road infrastructure is very severe and it needs a huge investment.

Secondly, China is not very willing to open and build the Wakhan Corridor because of the issue of Uighurs and East Turkestan.

Third, according to its previous routine, India may be worried about the opposition to the economic corridor between Pakistan and China¹¹ (Picture number five).

⁵ Siachen

⁶ Indian Secret Service (ISS)

⁷ Chitral

⁸ SACO

⁹ SAARC

¹⁰ China's Belt and Road

¹¹ China Pakistan Economic Corridor(CPEC)

Because this obvious maneuver to open the Wakhan Corridor will further integrate Afghanistan with China and Pakistan.



Picture 5: China Pakistan Economic Corridor

During the opening of the Tajikistan-Pakistan-China Corridor, Pakistan and China are negotiating the possibility of establishing pipelines and rail connections and even an oil pipeline through the Wakhan Corridor. This region is very important for Afghanistan, China and Pakistan. The opening of this corridor will have new applications for regional and global players in Afghanistan, especially India (Munir, Shafiq, 1999:333); because Afghanistan is the final key for China to completely encircle India (Ze Kai, 2015).

Also, China is trying to promote its Silk Road, at first, the Wakhan Corridor in the small Pamir should be turned into an important crossing point for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It has created the development of China-Pakistan economic project, which aims to regional connection; mutual cooperation, economic growth and stability of the entire region of South and Central Asia have been taken into consideration (Changgang, Zahid Khan, 2019).

Gwadar Port in Pakistan marks the beginning of this corridor, and initially the Wakhan Corridor shows the entry point of Pakistan's economic corridor to China (Levi-Sanchez, 2018). With this description, although this region has been very peaceful in the past, but now some paramilitary groups are establishing their influence in the region and may take advantage of the dissatisfaction of the poor people. Especially the unstable border in Tajikistan next to the Wakhan Corridor may very soon turn it into a serious challenge for all Central Asian countries.

On the other hand, some insurgent groups such as Mujahid Tehreek Movement of Taliban, Jandale Pakistan and Islamic Movement of Turkestan¹² have used the Wakhan Corridor to carry out their attacks. Afghanistan works very poorly in terms of fighting terrorism, and the authorities are worried about the renewal of Taliban activity, but they cannot do anything about it without the help of the United States of America, China and other countries (Chan, 2018). China is trying to help Stabilization of the country and as a result of reducing the internal security risks caused by the continuation of the conflict there, it seeks to strengthen its economic relations with Afghanistan (Kelemen, 2019). China is worried about the future of Afghanistan and will do its best to reach a positive result. If the situation in Afghanistan becomes bad, China will suffer from this area (Tao, 2009).

Therefore, after opening a base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, China will build its second military site outside its country in Afghanistan, and about 500 soldiers will be stationed in the base to support their Afghan

¹² Islamic Movement of Turkmenistan (IMT)

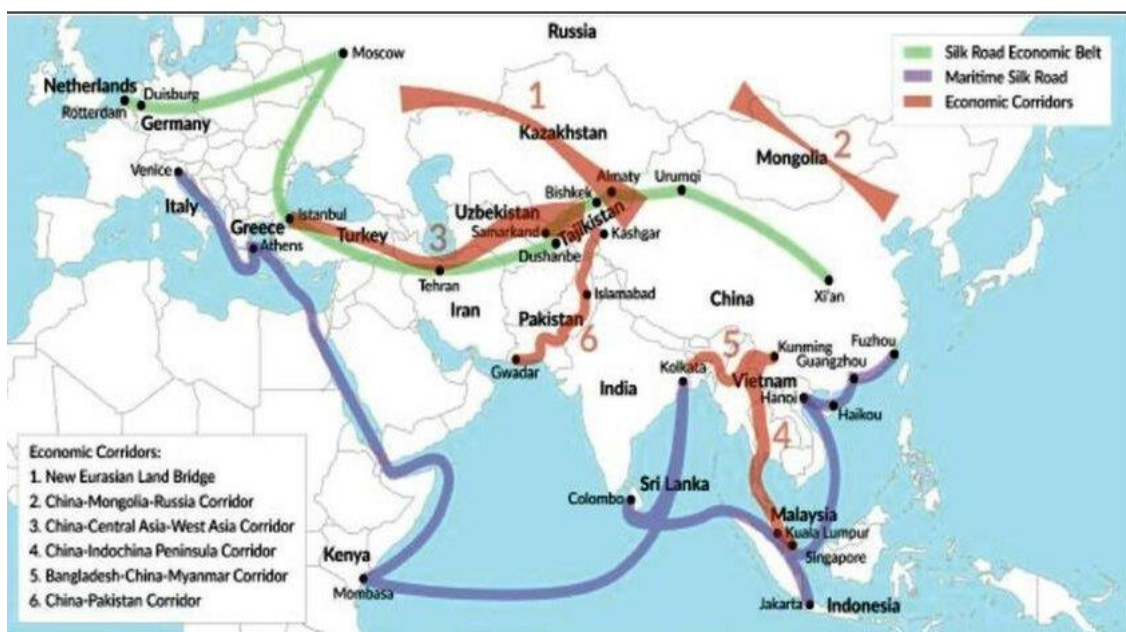
counterparts in the corridor. Wakhan in the northeast of Badakhshan province supports to carry out anti-terrorism training missions. Of course, in this report, which was denied by the Chinese government, it is stated that this project has been started in the place for a long time (Faemer, 2018).

In December 2019, new evidence has been observed about the training camps of the Islamic Party of Turkmenistan, which operate in the north of Afghanistan, which is a direct threat to China. Therefore, it is not surprising that China has a more diplomatic role in the war in Afghanistan and has open communication channels with the Taliban and the central government, as well as seeking mediation. China's increased involvement in Afghanistan may include a change in its security situation in Afghanistan as well, in the event that its economic strategy and efforts to promote peace, reconciliation, and forgetfulness are not allowed to simply sit back. be done in America.

Although China's security role is currently evolving, this includes security oversight of the Tajik border as well as efforts to assist Afghanistan in strengthening its counter-terrorism capabilities through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism that is China-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan. The main concern of the Chinese government is the separatist movement of the Taliban in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The movement of terrorist groups and the possibility of establishing contact with Taliban separatists in Xinjiang was enough for Beijing to keep the border closed for several decades. However, it seems that these concerns are disappearing due to China's extensive investments in Xinjiang region, where job opportunities and improvement of living standards have created more stability and peace.

4. Corridor of Wakhan on the route of New Silk Road

In September 2013, exactly six months after the election of the President of the Republic of China and one month after the election of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping traveled to Central Asia and gave a speech at Nazarbayev University. On the threshold of Kazakhstan for the first time of the "One Belt One Road"¹³ project - He declared a "way" for the unification of Eurasia along with the integration with the New Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road. This plan, which is known as China's long-term global geopolitical ambition, appeared as the cornerstone of political and economic cooperation to Eurasia, Africa and beyond (Picture number six).



Picture 6: Maritime Silk Road

¹³ One Belt One Road

Based on the plan of the President of the Republic of China, this project consists of two main parts.

(1) The Silk Road Economic Belt, (2) The Maritime Silk Road. The goal of the revival of the Silk Road is to create an integrated, coordinated economic region based on a win-win economic policy along the path of the ancient Silk Road countries. It has been covered, but it is not limited to it, and it is to expand to the countries of South East and South Asia, including Pakistan. The goal of the revitalization plan of this route is to increase the transit and transportation of goods between the countries located in this area. The One Belt One Road project requires an investment of five trillion dollars in infrastructure in 65 countries (Observer, 2017).

One belt-one road has four development corridors which includes Eurasia-China New Economic Corridor, China-West Asia Economic Corridor, China-India Economic Corridor, and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Menafn.com). According to the existing plan, the new Silk Road consists of three routes, the northern, central and southern routes, each of which has its own economic, transit, political and social importance. The area that is located in this area includes nearly 45 percent of the world's population (more than three billion people).

Since 2013, the Chinese government has signed agreements with twenty countries and dozens of international organizations in the field of development and creation.

- 1- The northern route section connects China to Russia, Europe and North Africa through Central Asian countries (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan).
- 2- The central route from Central Asia reaches Iran and the Persian Gulf, as well as Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea, through Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.
- 3- The southern route will start from China and will end in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Pakistan and the Indian Ocean.

The countries of this path are mostly members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which was established by the initiative of the Chinese government and can be effective in the events of this path. Based on the plan of the President of the Republic of China, the amount of 124 billion dollars will be invested for the construction of roads, railway lines, reconstruction and construction of ports in the countries located in the area of the new Silk Road. Based on the promise of the President of the Republic of China, nine billion dollars will be allocated as economic aid to developing countries and institutions located on the route of the new Silk Road. China's One Belt One Road along with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor aims to connect Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan to the Middle East, Africa and Europe through the necessary infrastructure and roads for strategic-economic goals. China is being tested (Jafari, 2020).

The Wakhan Corridor was one of the important gates of the ancient Silk Road, and before, the exports and imports of the East and West world took place through it, and played an effective role in Afghanistan's imports. The initiative of a belt-way provides an ideal opportunity for the Afghan government to experience its historical potential in cooperation with China and other countries in the region (Cowan, 2018:12). In this view, one of the most significant centers of commercial activities is Yiwu¹⁴ city in Zhejiang province of China. Although the Wakhan Corridor as the common border between China and Afghanistan is only a few kilometers long, this small port opens up to a wide area of roads and needs for the economic development of China. This new route, like the old silk road, will turn Afghanistan into a transit center for world trade, and Afghanistan's exports, including carpets and rugs, marble, saffron, and dry goods, will enter the world market without intermediaries. (Garland, 2016).

On the other hand, the trade routes built through the Wakhan Corridor, if they are connected to the China-Pakistan Corridor and the Karakoram Mountain will provide a much cheaper and easier route for Pakistan, while to Tajikistan Permission to access the ports of Pakistan in Karachi gives Gwadar. This will allow Pakistan to join the China-Eurasia Economic Corridor and as a result, change the economic outlook of the entire region (Farrukh, 2019). As it is obvious, these transit projects are important for Afghanistan and Pakistan as well for Central Asia. For Central Asia, transit through Afghanistan is a vital hub that connects dryland economies to an important world market. In particular, two networks can be analyzed at this time: one of Afghan businessmen who move

¹⁴ Yiwu

goods officially and unofficially within Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan, and the other is made up of Uzbek businessmen who belong to Tajik. Who has goods that are made in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia (Tirado, Marsden, 2020:135).

Undoubtedly, one of the main goals of Afghanistan's foreign policy is to reduce interstate conflicts by creating regional economic relationships for common development. By connecting the East-West Shining Hills through the Silk Road to the traditional North-South Pertkapoi Corridor, the entire region can realize the full potential of the Silk Road by transforming Afghanistan into a regional trade and transit hub. can be benefited by using the silk road of Afghanistan It has exports to the Far East and European countries, and by using the projects related to the Silk Road, Chinese and Afghan investors can ensure investment in both countries.

In this way, Afghanistan, by being in the heart of the Silk Road, will activate the economic channels of the region, and in this way, it can connect the interests of the countries of the region with the interests of Afghanistan and these countries for cooperation. With these interpretations, the expansion of the Belt and Road from China to Afghanistan can play a significant role in the economic development of this country. The cornerstone of this initiative is the development of infrastructure that strengthens the transit network. The memorandum of understanding signed between China and Afghanistan in 2016 shows a commitment to joint cooperation in order to promote cooperation in the One Belt One Road initiative (Safi, Alizada, 2018).

In this sense, the Chinese companies ZTE¹⁵ and Huawei have been operating in Afghanistan since the early 2000s. Since the beginning of 2017, both companies have been working on the introduction of the third generation of Afghanistan's mobile phone¹⁶ network, the provision of global¹⁷ mobile communication system equipment, and multiple code¹⁸ division access for the Afghanistan Telecommunication Company. In 2017, under the framework of the Belt Plan, new deals were signed to create an optical fiber network.

The Kabul Silk Road project is a promising potential avenue for cooperation between China and Afghanistan, although it has yet to materialize. By investing in the development and expansion of Afghanistan's optical fiber networks, China can provide significant support to Internet users there and in neighboring countries. The World Bank estimates that Afghanistan needs between \$6 billion and \$8 billion in international financial assistance to fund basic services in order to maintain any potential reduction in violence, thus benefiting all stakeholders, to help Afghanistan in foreign investment (World Bank, 2019). Of course, it is clear that in the absence of security in Afghanistan, the new silk project will never be completed; therefore, one of the basic requirements of the new Silk Road is the existence of security in Afghanistan.

5. Conclusion

According to the research findings, the Wakhan Corridor plays an important role in strengthening the trade links of the Republic of China with the international economy in the form of implementing infrastructure plans for the development of the network of communication routes. Taking a defensive position on the issue of security (especially the discussion of Islamic extremist groups in Tajikistan -Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan), as well as an effective investment, can strive towards its economic goals by giving cohesion and harmony to the northern provinces of Afghanistan (Picture number seven).

¹⁵ EEE

¹⁶ G3

¹⁷ Global

¹⁸ Multiple Code



Picture 7: Advantages of Wakhan Corridor

The Wakhan Corridor gives old advantages and new opportunities to China in the new big game, one belt-one road, which requires the geographical space of the Central Asian republics, which is under pressure due to instability and potential violence.

Through the Wakhan Corridor, China has direct access to Iran, the Persian Gulf, and finally to Europe, and it will succeed in implementing the One Belt One Road project, which is called the biggest economic project of the Chinese century. With these interpretations, the Wakhan Corridor can provide business for China, especially with the development of transportation infrastructures in the land and rail sections of this corridor and the link with the road across Afghanistan and connecting to Iran's railway, it also guarantees security for the revival of the power of the East (picture number eight), although some shortcomings can also be observed.



Picture 8: Revival of the power of east

In any case, turning this corridor into a safe path for economic-commercial exchanges will require a large investment and relative stability in Afghanistan. Of course, it is not far from the mind that with the expansion of

China's development plans in Badakhshan province, especially the Wakhan corridor, the activity of extremist groups will increase as an obstacle to the implementation of China's economic plans in the region.

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