

# China and the “AfPak” Issue

Michael D. Swaine

[I am deeply indebted to Tiffany Ng, Carnegie Junior Fellow, for her invaluable research assistance in the preparation of this article.]

Successfully managing the turmoil in Afghanistan and reducing the U.S.-led ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) military involvement in that country are arguably the most important foreign policy objectives of the Obama administration, given: a) the pivotal connection between Afghanistan and the larger ongoing war on terrorism; b) the relationship between events in that country and stability in Central and South Asia, two regions containing a combustible mix of great power involvement, nuclear weapons, energy resources, terrorism, and several weak and/or corrupt governments; and c) the strong desire of most Americans to end or greatly reduce U.S. involvement in Afghanistan in order to focus on a wide array of serious economic problems at home.

President Obama has presented a general strategy for addressing such issues that recognizes the close association between events in Afghanistan and events in neighboring Pakistan. As a sanctuary for Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda elements, a nuclear power with its own severe domestic problems (including growing terrorist attacks and sharp political divisions), and a major force in Afghan politics and security affairs, Pakistan’s stance toward its neighbor constitutes a critical factor in determining the success or failure of U.S. policies. Equally important, the future stability of Pakistan constitutes a major concern for Washington due to its ongoing, volatile relationship with India, another nuclear power.

The term “AfPak” conveys the intimate connection that exists between the two countries in addressing these challenges. And thus Obama’s AfPak strategy is not limited to attempts to stabilize the Afghan security environment through the introduction of 30,000 additional U.S. troops, a program to encourage Taliban fighters to put down their arms, and an accelerated attempt to strengthen and expand the Afghan army, the Afghan democratic process, and the Afghan social and economic infrastructure. It also includes enhanced efforts to assist Pakistan economically, and to strengthen that nation’s capacity and willingness to combat terrorist elements within its own borders. Achieving such goals constitutes a formidable task.<sup>1</sup>

For many casual observers, this AfPak challenge and the strategy devised to address it are generally not regarded as being closely connected

to China or subject to Chinese influence.<sup>2</sup> However, in truth, Beijing is a key player in this drama for a host of reasons, including a) its intimate and long-standing ties to (and potential influence upon) Pakistan; b) its ongoing geostrategic interests vis-à-vis the two most important local powers active in Central and South Asia (Russia and especially India); c) its deepening political and economic involvement in Central Asia; d) its growing concern over the link between Central and South Asian terrorism and Muslim insurgents and terrorists in Xinjiang and elsewhere within China; e) its bilateral relationship with the United States; and f) its energy and mineral interests in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in gauging the prospects for U.S. strategy toward the AfPak issue, it is important to understand the specific interests and motives, policies, actual and potential influence, and possible future orientation and behavior of the Chinese leadership with regard to each of the above six areas, as well as any possible lines of internal debate that exist among them. This essay offers such an analysis of these factors, based on major secondary sources and available authoritative, semi-authoritative, and non-authoritative Chinese sources, including official PRC statements, articles, media reports, and other commentaries. It concludes with some speculations on whether and how China's stance toward the AfPak issue might be modified to lend greater support to the Obama strategy.

## Chinese Interests and Motives: Pakistan First, All Else Follows

Beijing's approach to the AfPak issue derives to a great extent from its strategic interests regarding South Asia, and the Indo-Pakistani rivalry in particular. Over many decades, China has developed a very close political, military, and economic relationship with the Pakistani leadership (described by some Chinese and Western analysts as an "all-weather" and "adversity-tested" friendship),<sup>4</sup> largely in order to support Islamabad's role as a strategic counterweight to New Delhi. Specifically, a stable, independent, friendly, and regionally influential Pakistan prevents Indian domination of South Asia, weakens Indian influence in Central Asia, and obstructs any Indian desire to focus primarily on strategic rivalry with China. Moreover, from the Chinese (and Pakistani) perspective, a stable and friendly Afghanistan provides Pakistan with a degree of "strategic depth" against India's nuclear capabilities and conventional military superiority.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to serving such a fundamental geostrategic function, a cooperative Pakistan also contributes intelligence and policy support for the suppression of domestic Chinese Muslim terrorists and denies them safe havens in Afghanistan as well as infiltration routes via the Hindu Kush. Moreover, a radical Islamist-controlled Pakistan would almost certainly destroy China's privileged relationship with Islamabad and provide a huge stimulus for jihadi terrorist activities aimed at China.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Pakistan offers opportunities for important Chinese trade, investment, and energy supply routes, including an easy access to the Indian Ocean via the Gwadar port.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of all these considerations, Beijing does not want its policies toward both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the overall situation in either country, to significantly jeopardize or strain its long-standing privileged political-strategic relationship with Islamabad, to undermine the basic stability of the Pakistani state, to weaken Pakistan's overall national interests, or to create an unstable or hostile "rear area" in Afghanistan that could weaken Pakistan's position vis-à-vis India.<sup>8</sup> We should add that Beijing's incentive to avoid disruptions in its relationship with Pakistan have arguably increased in recent years as a result of a cooling of relations with Islamabad following the replacement of Musharraf by Zardari, tensions over the Red Mosque incident in 2007, and the apparently increasing presence of Chinese Uighur separatists on Pakistani territory.<sup>9</sup>

Given these factors, Beijing must carefully consider Pakistan's overall policies regarding both its own domestic political situation and Afghan state and society, as well as the complex interactions between the Pakistani and Afghan governments and terrorist elements in both countries. Most importantly, China does not wish to potentially irritate Pakistan by: a) taking direct action against Afghan insurgent groups that might enjoy ties with Islamabad or pose no direct threat to the Pakistani state and society, or b) attempting to compel Islamabad to take actions against terrorist groups within Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

A second set of strategic priorities motivating Beijing's policies toward the AfPak issue derive from its overall interests in Central and South Asia beyond Pakistan. Forming a complex and turbulent yet resource-rich band of nations bordering many ethnically diverse, sometimes restive, and relatively undeveloped provinces and autonomous areas within China's hinterland, these two regions present a host of critical challenges and opportunities for the Chinese leadership, thus requiring close attention. These include an array of increasingly troubling non-traditional security challenges (from terrorism and Tibetan or Uighur "separatism" to drug smuggling and other criminal activities); efforts to extract greater benefits from the growing trade, mineral resource, and energy potential of many nearby states; a need to maintain or increase geostrategic leverage vis-à-vis both the U.S. and Russia; and a general desire to avoid distracting disputes or tensions. As a result, China's leaders place a high premium on deepening friendship and cooperation with all capitals and economic entities throughout this area, from India to the "stans" (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). Such efforts are being undertaken both individually (through bilateral diplomatic and economic agreements and partnerships) and, in some cases through multilateral organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Clearly, Beijing does not want the AfPak issue and its own policies toward Afghanistan and Pakistan to threaten or complicate these larger relationships and undertakings in this increasingly important "back door" region of China.<sup>11</sup>

A third, more complicated, Chinese interest is closely related to the above two: the obvious desire of China's leaders to prevent the AfPak situation from exacerbating the threat posed by radical Islamist terrorists, domestic insurgents, and transnational criminals, primarily by facilitating or provoking connections between such entities operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan and various terrorists, insurgents, and criminals operating in Xinjiang. Indeed, Chinese observers fear that Washington's troop buildup

and heightened activities could eventually drive the Taliban into China and put Chinese economic interests in both Afghanistan and Pakistan at risk. At the same time, Beijing almost certainly does not want either country to fall under the control of radical Islamists. These concerns draw the attention of many Chinese commentators.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, although few Chinese openly recognize the fact, this situation obviously produces cross-cutting pressures on Beijing: China must balance between wanting to suppress clear terrorist threats, and conversely, guarding against the possibility that such actions might exacerbate the insurgency and provoke further attacks.

Although not as critically important as the Pakistan factor, Beijing's interests regarding the AfPak issue are also heavily influenced by its stance toward the United States. Chinese views and interests regarding the U.S. role in the AfPak situation constitute by far the largest component of unofficial public commentary and analysis appearing in Chinese media. And here again, the Chinese position is subject to conflicting objectives.

On the one hand, the Chinese leadership does not want the AfPak situation to become the basis or rationale for a long-term, sizeable U.S. political, economic, and military presence in China's backyard; nor does it wish to give the impression to others that it is directly or indirectly facilitating such an outcome or otherwise completely aligning itself with U.S. policies.

Many Chinese observers believe that a long-standing U.S. presence would cement Washington's "strategic encirclement" of China and weaken China's influence with regard to other Central Asian states while generally exacerbating regional unrest in a variety of ways. In addition, many Chinese fear that a close alignment with U.S. policies could incite greater terrorist actions against China or provoke further unrest among its domestic Muslim population by portraying Beijing as standing against the Muslim world. (China has become a target for groups well beyond ETIM and Baluchi nationalists ever since its involvement in the Red Mosque incident.) More broadly, as on other issues, many Chinese commentators simply resist being associated with U.S. policies because of a general opposition to Washington's arrogant and "hegemonic" proclivities and a desire to preserve or advance Beijing's image as a leader of developing countries against great power aggression.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, China does not want the United States (and the West) to fail in Afghanistan in ways that threaten its interests, nor does it want to be pulled into efforts to assist the U.S. militarily in a potential quagmire. The greatest consequence for China in the event of a U.S. failure is the radicalization of the region to the point that extremism becomes contagious among ethnic minorities in China. Thus, some Chinese observers argue that Obama's troop surge in Afghanistan might actually benefit Chinese efforts to suppress terrorist and separatist activity within Xinjiang, as well as drug smuggling into China.<sup>14</sup>

Again, for Beijing, the way to mitigate that outcome is to remain closely aligned with Pakistan. At the same time, Beijing certainly does not want to be seen by Washington, or the international community in general, as obstructing, complicating, or weakening U.S./Western efforts in Afghanistan. Indeed, to some extent, it wishes to be seen as supporting international attempts to stabilize the Afghan government in ways that increase U.S. incentives to reduce troop levels and limit long-term U.S. political influence, while protecting its other interests.<sup>15</sup> In addition, according to at least one Western observer, America's reengagement with Pakistan after 9/11 is viewed by Beijing as a positive development, since it supposedly reversed a trend toward isolation and radicalization in Pakistan resulting from Islamabad's close ties with the Afghan Taliban, the growing Islamicization of Pakistani politics, and the steady deterioration of Pakistan-Western relations since the mid-1990s.<sup>16</sup>

We should add that, although the fact is rarely (if ever) explicitly discussed in Chinese open sources, Beijing also undoubtedly sees some broader strategic value in Washington remaining mired in Afghanistan (and Iraq) for some time, believing that such a distracting situation will undermine U.S. incentives to treat a rising China as a strategic adversary.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, aside from the AfPak issue's importance in relation to Pakistan, the United States, Central Asia, and the larger Chinese struggle against radical Islamist terrorism, Beijing also has important, and growing, direct political and economic interests in Afghanistan. These include major ongoing and planned resource investments, infrastructure development, and reconstruction projects in such areas as communications, irrigation, and public hospitals, and strong diplomatic ties with the Afghan government. And Afghanistan has oil, natural gas, iron ore, and other economic resources of potential significant interest to China. Although not huge relative to China's overall economic needs, such commercial activities, resources, and reconstruction projects provide important secondary actual and potential benefits to China's developing economy, and reinforce Beijing's stake in a stable and friendly Afghan government. In addition, such visible and substantial contributions to Afghanistan's development arguably strengthen China's regional and global image as a helpful neighbor supportive of a significant international undertaking.<sup>18</sup>

## **Chinese Policies Toward the AfPak Issue: Much Verbal Support, and Limited, but Significant, Non-Combat Assistance**

The Chinese interests and motives detailed above translate into a limited yet significant set of policies. First and foremost, China enjoys close, long-standing ties with Pakistani political, military, and intelligence agencies, based on a strong and consistent commitment to provide both conventional and nuclear weapons and ballistic missile assistance and intelligence to Islamabad in its ongoing struggle with India, as well as a variety of mutual support in combating domestic terrorism, including an anti-terror consultative mechanism set up in 2003, an agreement signed in 2005, and joint anti-terror exercises. In addition, Beijing has provided economic benefits to Pakistan, in the form of

aid, trade (including a free-trade agreement), investments, and civilian technology and equipment transfers over many years. Beijing is also helping Pakistan develop several large-scale infrastructure projects, including a deep-sea port at the naval base at Gwadar in the province of Baluchistan on the Arabian Sea, highways, gold and copper mines, major electricity complexes and power plants, and numerous nuclear power projects.<sup>19</sup>

Many details of this highly cooperative strategic partnership remain undisclosed to the outside world, but provide the basis for an enduring relationship.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, China has been Pakistan's most reliable ally over the past 50 years, resulting in a unique level of trust and, most likely, influence with critical political, military, and intelligence elites in Islamabad.<sup>21</sup> As a result, Beijing has resisted placing pressure on Islamabad to strengthen its actions against domestic terrorists in the AfPak border areas or otherwise contribute to counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan. As long as Pakistan continues to hedge its bets and thus remain unwilling to undertake robust efforts against Afghan terrorists, it is unlikely that Beijing will attempt to induce it to do otherwise.

Regarding Afghanistan, Beijing has pursued policies that combine support for Afghanistan's stability, prosperity, and independence through strong official statements and contributions to international political and economic assistance and counterterrorism efforts, with a scrupulous avoidance of any apparent efforts to intrude in Afghan internal affairs or join the U.S.-led combat effort against Taliban and Al Qaeda elements.<sup>22</sup> Chinese humanitarian, infrastructure, and financial assistance has included over \$132 million in grant assistance as well as various types of related reconstruction assistance such as water conservancy, communications, irrigation, hospital and road projects (such as the expansion of the Karakoram Highway). Beijing has also begun significant efforts to develop minerals and energy resources in the country, committed personnel to assist in landmine clearing and police training, and established cooperation on anti-drug activities.<sup>23</sup>

China's most notable efforts include a \$3.5 billion project for the development of the Aynak copper mine in Logar Province and associated transport and electricity-generating facilities, making it the largest foreign direct investment in Afghanistan's history. Chinese companies are also bidding for an iron ore deposit west of Kabul and oil and gas deposits in northern Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, China has provided support for relevant UN resolutions, greater diplomatic contacts, and steady involvement in SCO efforts to address the Afghanistan situation (in particular terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime). It is also publicly positioning itself in support of broad U.S. objectives in Afghanistan. The Joint Statement between Obama and Hu Jintao of November 2009 declared that both countries "support the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight terrorism, maintain domestic stability and achieve sustainable economic and social development."<sup>25</sup>

In addition, Beijing is reportedly examining whether to open its border with Afghanistan—in the Wakhan Corridor—as an alternate logistics route for troops and supplies moving into Afghanistan. However, the corridor is problematic from both a geographic and an infrastructural standpoint. And some Chinese analysts believe that

any infrastructural improvements might ease the transit of Islamist fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan into Chinese territory.<sup>26</sup>

However, China has not sent combat troops to Afghanistan, provided or facilitated logistical support for the U.S.-led multinational military effort, or otherwise contributed directly to the forcible suppression of terrorists in the country. In rejecting such options, Chinese officials and scholars usually point to the difficulty of defeating the Taliban by military means, the danger that Chinese military actions might exacerbate terrorist and separatist activities in Xinjiang, overall resistance to any direct association with U.S. military interventions, and most importantly, China's general stance against deploying ground combat troops abroad. The last point is often stated by authoritative PRC sources.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, Beijing is possibly open to attempts to leverage the U.S. difficulties in Afghanistan and Pakistan to its advantage. For example, some observers believe that Beijing has probed for signs that Washington might be prepared to trade concessions regarding Taiwan for substantial assistance to U.S. military operations in South Asia.<sup>28</sup>

In short, Beijing has positioned itself as supportive of Afghanistan's long-term stability and prosperity though essentially civilian and limited political, economic, and diplomatic assistance. It has also been careful to remain on good terms with the Kabul authorities without offending the Pashtuns or their political leadership in the Taliban. More broadly, China's interests and policies toward Afghanistan generally accord with Islamabad's desire to improve relations with Kabul, to avoid being pressured unduly to attack those AfPak border-based terrorists that are not threatening the Pakistani government and society, and to prevent excessive U.S. pressure and incursions on Pakistani sovereignty. As indicated, Beijing and Islamabad have a common interest in maintaining the special, close (and to some extent closed) nature of their bilateral relationship, despite the apparent cooling that has taken place in their relations in recent months. Chinese policies toward Afghanistan do not threaten that interest. To some extent, China's efforts to improve coordination with India (and Russia) in addressing various Afghan problems might cause concerns in some Pakistani policy circles; but such concerns are probably not major.

Finally, Beijing's policies toward the AfPak issue are compatible with its larger policies toward Central Asia, which include substantial levels of political, economic, and security cooperation and arrangements, both bilaterally and via the SCO. The latter include joint efforts to combat drug trafficking, terrorism, and organized crime, and to maintain oil pipeline security. Moreover, since at least 2005, Beijing has arguably played a positive (or at least not damaging) role toward the AfPak issue by not encouraging or acquiescing to any efforts by the republics to openly oppose U.S. policies toward Afghanistan in the SCO. To the contrary, China has supported actions by the republics that show support for the Afghan government and general attempts to stabilize the country.<sup>29</sup>

## Implications for the United States

China's interests and policies toward the AfPak issue pose somewhat mixed implications for Washington. On the one hand, in the non-military realm, Beijing is undoubtedly contributing significantly to the economic and social welfare aspects of the U.S.-led effort to stabilize Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

China is also arguably contributing to some level of coordination among Central Asian states in support of the eventual goal of an independent, economically developing, and terrorist-free Afghanistan, which accords with U.S. interests to at least some extent, despite the conspiratorial views toward Washington's policies in Central Asia held by some Chinese commentators.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, both U.S. and Afghan officials are reportedly concerned about reports of corrupt Chinese practices in winning major bids on mineral ore projects.<sup>32</sup> Such concerns (fueled by a belief in some quarters that Chinese bids are inflated by "subsidies from a Chinese Government hungry for raw materials")<sup>33</sup> arguably ignite fears over excessive Chinese control of key Afghan industrial sectors. More importantly, they also reinforce existing public perceptions in Afghanistan and elsewhere that the Afghan political system is highly corrupt, thus possibly heightening support for the Taliban insurgency.

In addition, on a broader level, China's extensive and growing economic involvement in both Afghanistan and Pakistan lead to charges in some quarters that Beijing is "free-riding" by providing subsidized government and commercial assistance without taking on much if any of the security burden in the fight against the Taliban and other terrorist groups. Some observers also charge that China's indifference to good governance, lack of corruption, public accountability, and human rights in providing aid and striking commercial arrangements with both countries undercuts U.S. attempts to link such assistance to specific broader policy objectives.<sup>34</sup>

Many Chinese observers emphatically dismiss such charges and concerns, arguing instead that Chinese and U.S. interests converge in Afghanistan in particular, and often expressing strong criticism of Washington's excessive reliance on military instruments.<sup>35</sup> In fact, in the military realm, China is probably not contributing as much assistance to the counterterrorism effort in Afghanistan as Washington would prefer, especially given China's experience in UN-authorized peacekeeping operation efforts. Perhaps most importantly from the U.S. perspective, China is also not doing enough to persuade, pressure, or cajole Islamabad into attacking Afghan-oriented terrorist elements operating in or near the northwest tribal areas.<sup>36</sup>

## Areas of Chinese Debate and Consensus

Criticisms of Chinese policy toward the AfPak issue have contributed to debates among Chinese scholars and commentators regarding the level and type of involvement China

should pursue, and, most recently, the closely related issue of the general prospects for success of the Obama strategy. The core of this debate (which at least one Chinese observer has described as “heated”<sup>37</sup>) focuses on the issue of whether China should send troops to Afghanistan.

As with the North Korean nuclear issue (see *CLM* 30), it is virtually impossible to know the extent to which these public debates are actually reflected within senior decision-making circles of the Chinese government. However, the fact that they are allowed to occur suggests that: a) senior Chinese leaders are being pressured to lend greater support to the AfPak issue,<sup>38</sup> and b) Chinese interests are conflicting on this issue, and that the leadership is therefore willing to listen to a variety of arguments.

Most Chinese analysts agree that the AfPak issue is of great importance to China and that prolonged peace and stability in the region would serve vital Chinese interests, from the suppression of domestic insurgents and terrorists, to support for a strong and independent Pakistan, a likely U.S. withdrawal from the region, greater security for Chinese economic deals, and an overall improved geostrategic environment in Central Asia.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, most analysts believe that China can and should play an expanding role in developing such peace and stability, especially given its emerging status as a great power.

On one extreme are those few Chinese observers who argue that China must recognize that its growing powers bring growing responsibilities toward its unstable neighbors, and thus it must play a far more active role across the entire greater Middle East and South Asian region, acting as a stabilizer through the use of both hard and soft power.<sup>40</sup> At the very least, some of these observers believe, “it is extremely essential for China to send troops to Afghanistan.” The reasons presented for such an action include “protecting China’s economic interests, opening up China’s strategic frontier, projecting a positive international image,” and acquiring various bargaining chips in dealing with the United States and other Western powers.<sup>41</sup> However, the vast majority of the Chinese commentariat oppose any future deployment of Chinese combat units to Afghanistan, for reasons already outlined.<sup>42</sup>

A few Chinese observers offer a sort of compromise or “middle path” by arguing that China should consider sending peace-keeping forces under the UN flag, or police and/or civilian security units to Afghanistan to help the Kabul government protect key sites within the country, including infrastructure and reconstruction projects involving Chinese interests. But many of these analysts also argue that Beijing must obtain the approval of the Afghan government for any such Chinese deployments.<sup>43</sup>

But the majority of those Chinese analysts and observers (both official and unofficial) who favor a continuing role for Beijing urge an expansion of its existing economic development and humanitarian efforts in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, primarily under the aegis of the UN or other international or multilateral agencies, including the SCO.<sup>44</sup> A few of these observers argue that China should play a more active leadership role in such undertakings, in concert with the SCO, or as a host or

mediator of negotiations among political factions within Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> Others assert that China's limited role will and should likely remain limited in Afghanistan, unless "the U.S. treats China with full respect, deals with China as a partner rather than a potential adversary, and provides proper incentives to China" (!)<sup>46</sup>

Very few Chinese analysts debate alternative PRC courses of action vis-à-vis Pakistan, however. Most commentary is limited to general statements on the extent of Sino-Pakistani comity, general assertions of the importance of a stable Pakistan to "the regional balance" (read: balancing India) and regional stability and development, assessments of the domestic Pakistan situation, Islamabad's overall policies, and the U.S.-Pakistani and Indo-Pakistani relationships.<sup>47</sup> Few if any Chinese commentators even mention, much less assess, the type and level of influence that Beijing might currently exercise or develop toward Islamabad regarding the AfPak issue or any other issue. This apparent avoidance is probably due to several factors, including a sensitivity regarding any public discussion of the realpolitik geostrategic objectives Beijing pursues toward its longstanding friend; the possible adverse impact of such a discussion on China's cooperative relationship with India; and a likely official prohibition on any analysis that might address the full nature and extent of Beijing's military assistance to Pakistan, including both ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons technology. Moreover, most Chinese scholars and observers probably have little if any knowledge of China's security relationship with Pakistan.<sup>48</sup>

That said, a few Chinese analysts directly address the security implications for China of Pakistan's unstable domestic situation and propose more active PRC policies. However, such proposals invariably consist of strengthening "friendly cooperation" with Pakistan in the protection of the Sino-Pakistani border and/or the provision of greater levels of social-economic development assistance.<sup>49</sup> No Chinese writings reviewed for this essay urge Beijing to exert greater efforts to convince Islamabad to commit more resources to the fight against Pakistan-based Taliban or other terrorist-affiliated groups operating in Pakistan and/or Afghanistan, much less to send PLA troops to assist in that effort.

Finally, in addition to all the other factors discussed above, much of the caution and (in many cases) suspicion expressed by most Chinese observers toward the AfPak issue derive from a generally pessimistic assessment of the prospects for the Obama strategy, and in particular its military dimensions. Although a few observers offer positive evaluations of that strategy,<sup>50</sup> the vast majority believe that it is either doomed to failure or faces a highly problematic chance of success. Aside from broad criticisms of U.S. "hegemonic" behavior and an overall over-reliance on military instruments in U.S. foreign policy, the reasons given for such pessimism include the historical failure of foreign governments to establish viable and cooperative central Afghan governments; the relative lack of attention paid to civil reconstruction in Afghanistan; the intense U.S. domestic obstacles resulting from Obama's stated intention to begin removing U.S. troops from Afghanistan in July 2011; and the likely inability and/or unwillingness of the Pakistani government to provide critical support for the strategy.<sup>51</sup> The most optimistic stance among this majority viewpoint argues that Washington might manage to create a

temporary period of stability in Afghanistan that allows it to “step down with dignity,” perhaps as a result of a combination of military actions and negotiations with the Taliban.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusions

This analysis of Chinese interests, policies, and apparent debates with regard to the AfPak problem and the Obama strategy suggests a strong basis for the continuation of China’s existing cautious, limited stance toward this issue. As we have seen, the Chinese leadership’s basic caution—and many of its concerns—are heavily influenced by China’s longstanding strategic interests vis-à-vis Pakistan, along with its deeply rooted suspicion toward and overall nascent rivalry with the United States. On the other hand, Beijing’s limited yet arguably growing support for many U.S. and ISAF goals is also rooted in a sometimes cross-cutting set of Chinese interests in economic development, counterterrorism, the maintenance of amicable relations with Washington, and long-term stability in not only Afghanistan and Pakistan but also Central and South Asia as a whole.

Thus, the good news is that China’s involvement in the AfPak issue is, and will likely remain for some time, generally convergent with U.S. interests, given a basic continuity in China’s strategic outlook toward Washington. In addition, China’s current and likely future refusal to provide substantial military assistance is almost certainly not consequential to the success of the Obama strategy. Indeed, many argue that direct Chinese military involvement in Afghanistan or Pakistan would undermine U.S. objectives by provoking India and thereby worsening the Indo-Pakistani rivalry. In any event, although some observers continue to urge China to deploy forces to Afghanistan, the Chinese debate over this issue does not suggest that Chinese policies are able to change.

On a decidedly more negative note, the above assessment of China’s interests suggests that, given existing larger conditions, and absent a basic change in Islamabad’s calculus toward both India and Afghanistan, Beijing in all probability will not attempt to compel Islamabad to devote more resources and energies to the destruction of Afghanistan-oriented terrorist groups operating out of Pakistan and deny sanctuaries within Pakistan to such groups. Moreover, even if Pakistan were to shift its stance in this regard (e.g., in response to a major escalation in terrorist attacks on the Pakistani regime), it is by no means clear that Beijing would subsequently encourage the Pakistani leadership to exert more efforts against the Afghan Taliban, given its larger desire to keep Pakistan focused on India, both militarily and politically. It is more likely that the Chinese leadership would attempt to bolster a faltering Pakistani regime by providing more support to its military and intelligence services, while increasing economic and diplomatic assistance to Islamabad and strengthening the Sino-Pakistani border. In any event, it is also by no means clear that China enjoys sufficient influence within Pakistan to persuade Islamabad to do its bidding vis-à-vis Afghanistan, regardless of the larger circumstances. Moreover, the Chinese rarely resort to such high-pressure tactics. As a veteran former diplomat with extensive China experience told the author, the Chinese

leadership usually doesn't make demands for action; they more commonly demand that actions *not* be taken.

Finally, some analysts have argued—based in part on some of the Chinese commentary cited in this essay—that Beijing might deploy forces to Afghanistan (assuming the United States desires such a move) or perhaps even apply pressure on Islamabad in support of the Obama strategy, in return for some very significant trade-offs in U.S. policy involving, for example, a cessation of arms sales to Taiwan, support for Chinese behavior toward terrorists and separatists in Xinjiang, and other “core” issues. However, given both the hugely negative consequences for Washington (both domestically and internationally) and the uncertainty that the Chinese leadership would actually perform as promised, it is highly unlikely that the Obama administration would seriously contemplate making such trade-offs (even if Beijing were to offer them). Equally important, the same concerns over consequences and compliance would probably exist on the Chinese side as well, making it unlikely that Beijing would offer such a trade-off in the first place. In the final analysis, deep-rooted strategic interests, long-standing historical dispositions, and strong uncertainties will predominate in the Chinese calculus.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” United States Military Academy at West Point, West Point, New York, December 1, 2009; Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Administration’s Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” opening remarks before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington, DC, December 2, 2009; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, “Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy,” January 2010, available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135728.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> This is apparently the viewpoint of many ordinary Chinese citizens, at least with regard to the Afghanistan dimension of the problem. See “A Dangerous World Not Far from Us,” *Global Times* editorial, August 21, 2009, OSC (Open Source Center) CPP20090824722001. The editorial states: “The domestic [Chinese] press covers the violence and the Taliban with little concern for the security implications for China. Afghanistan probably receives the least attention from the Chinese public among all of the nation’s 14 neighboring countries, despite the fact that Afghanistan is in the worst security mess.”

<sup>3</sup> For secondary sources addressing these varied interests, see Walid Phares, “China’s strategic interests in AfPak Conflicts,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_phares\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_phares_statement.php); Myra MacDonald, “Analysis: India-China rivalry complicates Pakistan picture,” Reuters, December 10, 2009; Stephen Blank, “U.S. Interests in Central Asia and Their Challenges,” *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 15, Issue 3 (Summer 2007), pp. 312–334; Srikanth Kondapalli, “The Chinese Military Eyes South Asia,” in Andrew Scobell and Larry M. Wortzel, eds., *Shaping China’s Security Environment: The Role of the People’s Liberation Army* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006); Rajan Menon, “The New Great Game in Central Asia,” *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 187–204; John W. Garver, “China’s South Asian Interests and Policies,” remarks for a panel on “China’s Approaches to South Asia and the Former Soviet States” before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, July 22, 2005; Rollie Lal, *Central Asia and its Asian neighbors: Security and commerce at the crossroads* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006); Abraham M. Denmark, “The Impact of China’s Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at

[http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_statement.php).

<sup>4</sup> For a typical example of the gushing rhetoric employed by officials in both countries to describe the Sino-Pakistani relationship, see (from the Pakistan side): Asif Ali Zardari, “Sino-Pakistan relations higher than Himalayas,” *China Daily*, February 23, 2009: “That the Pakistan-China friendship is higher than the peaks of Himalayas is now a truism without exaggeration. I am certain that on the Chinese side a similar sentiment exists for Pakistan.” And, from the Chinese side, Luo Zheng, “Friendship Between China and Pakistan is Higher Than the Mountains and Deeper Than the Oceans—Special Interview With Luo Zhaohui, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan,” *Jiefangjun Bao* online, July 30, 2009, OSC CPP20090731088001.

<sup>5</sup> Few PRC Chinese analysts discuss publicly the critical strategic leverage that Pakistan provides to China vis-à-vis India, in large part because such an open recognition would strengthen Indian animosity toward Beijing (more on this point below). China’s official public stance emphasizes friendly relations with India and general support for stable and cooperative Indo-Pakistani ties. But many Chinese analysts emphasize the overall importance of Pakistan to Chinese interests in South and Central Asia and Beijing’s desire to see a stable balance of power among the major powers. For example, see an interview with Sun Shihai, deputy head of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at CASS and Fu Xiaoqiang, associate researcher of the Institute of China Contemporary International Relations, in Zhang Zhe, “Inquiring About China’s Relations With South Asia: What Will Terrorism Bring?” *Nanfang Zhoumo* online, December 31, 2008, OSC CPP20090102705007. Sun states: “Pakistan is very important to China and it is an important force to maintaining regional balance. A ‘turbulent and split Pakistan with backward social and economic development’ can only bring more difficulties to the stability and development of the region.” Also see Liu Yantang, “After the Eastward Shift of Focus of the US War on Terror,” *Liaowang*, no. 20 (May 18, 2009), pp. 60–61, OSC CPP20090522710002. For important secondary source analyses of China’s geostrategic interests vis-à-vis Pakistan, see Andrew Small, “Afghanistan-Pakistan: Bringing China (back) in,” posting on German Marshall Fund blog, October 23, 2009, available at <http://blog.gmfus.org/2009/10/23/afghanistan-pakistan-bringing-china-back-in/>; John W. Garver, “The Future of the Sino-Pakistani Entente Cordiale,” in Michael R. Chambers, ed., *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), pp. 385–448; Tariq Mahmud Ashraf, “Afghanistan in Chinese Strategy toward South and Central Asia,” *China Brief*, Vol. 8, No. 10 (May 13, 2008), available at [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4915&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=168&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4915&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=168&no_cache=1); Abraham M. Denmark, “The Impact of China’s Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_statement.php); and Lisa Curtis, “China’s Military and Security Relationship with Pakistan,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/tst052609a.cfm>.

<sup>6</sup> See Zhang Zhe, “Inquiring About China’s Relations With South Asia: What Will Terrorism Bring?” *Nanfang Zhoumo* online, December 31, 2008, OSC CPP20090102705007. Zhang cites several Chinese analysts as stating that “Once terrorist forces cause turbulences in South Asia, they very likely will append the ‘East Turkistan’ forces, thus posing a long-term threat to the stability in China’s frontier areas. In addition, the risks of Chinese enterprises in Pakistan and other countries hence will increase.” Also see Walid Phares, “China’s strategic interests in AfPak Conflicts,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_phares\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_phares_statement.php).

<sup>7</sup> Abraham M. Denmark, “The Impact of China’s Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_statement.php).

<sup>8</sup> India has increased its political, diplomatic, and economic presence in Afghanistan considerably in recent years, thus contributing to an ongoing rivalry with Pakistan within the country. For example, New Delhi has pledged to spend \$1.2 billion on infrastructure reconstruction (primarily in the areas of education, health, power, and telecommunications), making it the sixth largest bilateral donor and the largest regional donor. India also has provided food aid, workers, security personnel for Indian enterprises, and police; is

training Afghan police officers, diplomats, and civil servants; has an expanding trade relationship with Kabul (exceeding \$400 million); and has opened five consulates throughout the country. Some analysts believe Pakistan fears that its own influence in Afghanistan relative to India is declining. See “India: Afghanistan’s influential ally,” BBC News, October 8, 2009; “India Announces More Assistance for Afghanistan: Indian PM,” Xinhua, August 5, 2008, OSC CPP20080805968158; and Jayshree Bajoria, “India-Afghanistan Relations,” Council on Foreign Relations *Backgrounder*, July 22, 2009, available at [http://www.cfr.org/publication/17474/indiaafghanistan\\_relations.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/17474/indiaafghanistan_relations.html). At the same time, some Chinese emphasize the point that Pakistan retains considerable influence among the ethnic Pashtuns of Afghanistan, “who make up a majority of Afghans and from whom the Taliban draws its core support.” For example, see Robert Dreyfuss, “Can China Help on Afghanistan?” *Nation*, posting on Dreyfuss Report blog, November 23, 2009, available at [http://www.thenation.com/blogs/dreyfuss/499869/can\\_china\\_help\\_on\\_afghanistan](http://www.thenation.com/blogs/dreyfuss/499869/can_china_help_on_afghanistan).

<sup>9</sup> “Having it both ways,” *Economist*, November 5, 2009; Andrew Small, “China’s Af-Pak Moment,” German Marshall Fund Policy Brief, May 20, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> In general, many Chinese and foreign observers believe that the Pakistani government will continue to hedge against a U.S. failure in Afghanistan, and retain important political leverage vis-à-vis India, by maintaining its long-standing, Pashtun-based ties to Afghan Taliban and other terrorist-associated elements in that country. For example, see the remarks of Ye Hailin of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Ye stated that it is “ultimately impossible for Pakistan to accept the US point of view and see the Taliban rather than India as its sworn enemy.” These remarks were made on May 10, 2009 on *Defense Review Week* on CCTV-7, cited in OSC analysis CPP20090522530001.

<sup>11</sup> “Chinese President Wraps up ‘Fruitful’ Central Asia Tour,” Xinhua, December 15, 2009, OSC CPP20091215968049; Zhao Huasheng, “PRC Central Asia Diplomacy’s Theory and Practice,” *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, July 13, 2007, OSC CPP20070727455002; “Beijing Works To Expand Ties, Energy Investments in Central Asia,” OSC analysis, December 10, 2009, OSC CPF20091210317001; Zhao Huasheng, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Afghanistan Issue,” *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, July 13, 2009, pp. 36–41, 52, OSC CPP20090813671001; Zhang Xiaodong, “How Could China Break Through the Geopolitical ‘Encirclement?’” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, May 20, 2008, OSC CPP20080723508003; Yan Wei, “Establishing Regional Rapport,” *Beijing Review* online, September 11–17, 2008, OSC CPP20080924716003. Regarding India, as Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu stated in January 2008: “As two large developing countries and important neighbors, China and India’s improvement and development of relations and their strengthening of cooperation in various fields not only conform to each other’s interests but also benefit peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.” See Hao Yalin and Sun Xia, “China Has Always Supported Improvement of Indian-Pakistani Relations,” Xinhua Domestic Service, January 22, 2008, OSC CPP20080122074001. For secondary sources, see Rajan Menon, “The New Great Game in Central Asia,” *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 187–204; Thrassy N. Marketos, “China’s Energy Needs and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Post 9/11 Period,” Defense Analyses Institute, *Defensor Pacis*, August 17, 2008, available at [http://www.rieas.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=724&catid=25&Itemid=72](http://www.rieas.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=724&catid=25&Itemid=72); Stephen J. Blank, “China’s Laboratory,” *Journal of International Security Affairs*, no. 17 (Fall 2009); and Srikanth Kondapalli, “The Chinese Military Eyes South Asia,” in Andrew Scobell and Larry M. Wortzel, eds., *Shaping China’s Security Environment: The Role of the People’s Liberation Army* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Jiang Sujing, “Chinese police can bring order to wild Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 24, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2009-12/493967.html>; “A Dangerous World Not Far from Us,” *Global Times* editorial, August 21, 2009, OSC CPP20090824722001; Zhao Huasheng, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Afghanistan Issue,” *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, July 13, 2009, pp. 36–41, 52, OSC CPP20090813671001; Wang Zaidong, “Historical Change Shows That Systematic Adjustment Is Urgent—Review of and Thoughts on the 2008 International Situation,” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, January 20, 2009, OSC CPP20090513702014; Wu Shuhu, “US Troop Surge Can Hardly Completely Control the Situation in Afghanistan,” *Dangdai Shijie*, May 5, 2009, OSC CPP20090610671006; Ma Chao, “Building a Golden Crescent To Fight Terror,” *China Daily*, October 22, 2009, OSC CPP20091022968076; Sun Zhuangzhi, “China Cannot Stand Aloof in Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, October 21, 2009, OSC CPP20091104710012. Sun’s view is typical of many Chinese observers: “Since Afghanistan became at one time the assembly point for terrorists, including separatist elements from

China's Xinjiang, the chaos there has meant that China has no choice but to tighten its guard in the border regions. . . . Beginning in 2005, the number of drug smuggling routes from Afghanistan to China via Pakistan and central Asia has increased year on year. Hence, we can only have limited opening up regarding Afghanistan, and we must also continually strengthen our guard." For secondary Western sources regarding such Chinese concerns, see Andrew Small, "Afghanistan-Pakistan: Bringing China (back) in," posting on German Marshall Fund blog, October 23, 2009, available at <http://blog.gmfus.org/2009/10/23/afghanistan-pakistan-bringing-china-back-in/>; Abraham M. Denmark, "The Impact of China's Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States," testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_state\\_ment.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_state_ment.php); Stephen J. Blank, "China's Laboratory," *Journal of International Security Affairs*, no. 17 (Fall 2009); Jacob Townsend, "China and Afghan Opiates: Assessing the Risk," Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, *Silk Road Paper* (June 2005), available at [http://www.isdp.eu/files/publications/srp/05/jt05chinaand\\_0.pdf](http://www.isdp.eu/files/publications/srp/05/jt05chinaand_0.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Jiang Sujing, "Chinese police can bring order to wild Afghanistan," *Global Times*, December 24, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2009-12/493967.html>. Jiang states: "For China, the consequences of siding with the US could range from being dragged into messy US affairs in Central Asia, to falling into an abyss where China would be seen as standing against the whole of the Muslim world. At the same time, China would become the scapegoat of the US. The Chinese government will not be taken in by the bluffing of Western strategists. Also see Wu Shuhu, "US Troop Surge Can Hardly Completely Control the Situation in Afghanistan," *Dangdai Shijie*, May 5, 2009, OSC CPP20090610671006; Zhang Zhe, "Inquiring About China's Relations With South Asia: What Will Terrorism Bring?" *Nanfang Zhoumo* online, December 31, 2008, OSC CPP20090102705007; Wang Zaidong, "Historical Change Shows That Systematic Adjustment Is Urgent—Review of and Thoughts on the 2008 International Situation," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, January 20, 2009, OSC CPP20090513702014; "US Scheming For 'Great Central Asia' Strategy," *People's Daily* online, August 3, 2006, OSC CPP20060803701005; and Liu Yantang, "After the Eastward Shift of Focus of the US War on Terror," *Liaowang*, no. 20 (May 18, 2009), pp. 60–61, OSC CPP20090522710002. Liu cites Ye Hailin, deputy director of the political section of the Asia-Pacific Studies Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, who concludes that the Obama strategy toward the AfPak issue will "cause great chaos in Pakistan . . . In the view of the great majority of Pakistani people and political parties, there is no connection between the military crackdown in the northwest border provinces and the war on terror." For a particularly extreme, anti-U.S. version of this argument that views American involvement in Central Asia as part of a larger "war" on China, see Dai Xu, "The Threat of War Is Not Far From China," *Huanqiu Shibao* online, August 20, 2009, OSC CPP20090821710002. For less vitriolic versions of this view, see Li Xiguang, "China Should Have Its Own Agenda for Afghanistan," *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 24, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710003 and Chen Xiangyang, "Draw Up New 'Greater Periphery' Strategy As Soon As Possible," *Liaowang*, no. 29 (July 17, 2006), pp. 64, OSC CPP20060720710009. However, an apparent minority of Chinese analysts believe that the U.S. stance toward the AfPak issue is focused almost entirely on combating the Taliban and terrorists and that the United States does not intend to stay in Afghanistan for a long time, given the huge costs involved and Washington's severe domestic problems. See OSC Report: *PRC Experts Say Pakistan May Pose Problems for US Afghanistan Strategy*, CPP20090522530001, May 22, 2009. Western secondary sources on this point include: Rollie Lal, *Central Asia and its Asian neighbors: security and commerce at the crossroads* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006); Abraham M. Denmark, "The Impact of China's Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States," testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_phares\\_statem ent.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_phares_statem ent.php); and Rajan Menon, "The New Great Game in Central Asia," *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 187–204. For a particularly alarmist take on China's stance toward the United States in Central Asia, see Stephen Blank, "U.S. Interests in Central Asia and Their Challenges," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 15, Issue 3 (Summer 2007), pp. 312–334.

<sup>14</sup> Chen Weihua, Li Xiaokun, and Ai Yang, "US Troop Plan Set To Impact China," *China Daily*, December 3, 2009, OSC CPP20091203968059. This source canvasses several Chinese analysts of the Afghanistan situation, presenting both positive and negative views regarding the impact of the U.S. troop surge on China.

<sup>15</sup> See Jiang Sujing, “Chinese police can bring order to wild Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 24, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2009-12/493967.html>; and “A Dangerous World Not Far from Us,” *Global Times* editorial, August 21, 2009, OSC CPP20090824722001. This editorial states: “A stable Afghanistan is of crucial interest to China. China should and can play a big role in helping this neighboring country get back on its feet. The Chinese public should also be more aware of the suffering of the Afghan people.” For a somewhat similar assessment, see Zhao Huasheng, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Afghanistan Issue,” *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, July 13, 2009, pp. 36–41, 52, OSC CPP20090813671001. For a secondary source discussion of this Chinese viewpoint, see Thomas Adams and Arnav Manchanda, “The dragon in the Hindu Kush: China’s interests in Afghanistan,” *Globe and Mail*, April 20, 2009; and Abraham M. Denmark, “The Impact of China’s Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_statement.php). Denmark describes a significant aspect of the ambivalence of the Chinese position toward U.S. involvement in the AfPak issue quite succinctly: “Chinese strategists are uncomfortable with a large U.S. military presence along China’s border, and some analysts have expressed concern that U.S. bases in the region supporting operations in Afghanistan are part of a plot to perpetuate U.S. domination of the region. At the same time, however, the U.S. presence in Afghanistan prevents Al Qaeda from focusing on China and helps suppress Islamist groups along China’s periphery.” Also see “Having it both ways,” *Economist*, November 5, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See John W. Garver, “China’s South Asian Interests and Policies,” remarks for a panel on “China’s Approaches to South Asia and the Former Soviet States” before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, July 22, 2005. Garver adds: “U.S. engagement with Pakistan also made development of India-US strategic partnership more difficult, and diffused Indian anger over China’s own strong military and nuclear links to Pakistan.” Although certainly plausible, this perspective is not confirmed by any of the Chinese commentary examined for this article.

<sup>17</sup> However, many Chinese sources certainly argue, in general terms, that Washington’s focus on the war on terrorism has provided Beijing with strategic “breathing space” of sorts. For a recent example, see Tan Furong, “New US ‘War on Terror’ Chancy for China,” *Global Times* online, January 10, 2010, OSC CPP20100114722001.

<sup>18</sup> Gao Zhikai, “Chinese hand can steady an unstable Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009. Gao states: “It is not difficult to conclude that China, which shares a common border with both Afghanistan and Pakistan and enjoys close and strategic relations with Pakistan, is one of the few countries, if not the only one, which can substantively help to make a major difference in the Afghan status quo.” The details of such economic activities are provided below.

<sup>19</sup> Jamal Afridi, “China-Pakistan Relations,” Council on Foreign Relations *Backgrounder*, August 20, 2009. Afridi writes: “With roughly ten thousand Chinese workers engaged in 120 projects in Pakistan, total Chinese investment—which includes heavy engineering, power generation, mining, and telecommunications—was valued at \$4 billion in 2007 and is expected to rise to \$15 billion by 2010.” Also see Jiang Wei, “China, Pakistan To Cut Tariffs,” *China Daily*, June 29, 2007, OSC CPP20070629968015; Zhu Liyi and Lei Min, “China-Pakistan Free Trade in Services Agreement,” Xinhua Asia-Pacific Service, February 23, 2009, OSC CPP20090223172013; Rao Bo, Li Jingchen, “Pakistani President Says Prospect of Economic Cooperation With China Beyond Imagination,” Xinhua, February 16, 2009, OSC CPP20090216968238; “Chinese Navy To Attend Joint Military Exercise in Pakistan,” Xinhua, February 19, 2009, OSC CPP20090219968225. For other secondary sources on China’s military and economic relationship with Pakistan, see Lisa Curtis, “China’s Military and Security Relationship with Pakistan,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/tst052609a.cfm>; Abraham M. Denmark, “The Impact of China’s Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_statement.php); Andrew Small, “China’s Af-Pak Moment,” German Marshall Fund Policy Brief, May 20, 2009; John W. Garver, “China’s South Asian Interests and Policies,” remarks for a panel on “China’s Approaches to South Asia and the Former Soviet States” before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, July 22, 2005; Thomas Adams and Arnav Manchanda, “The dragon in the Hindu Kush: China’s interests in Afghanistan,” *Globe and Mail*, April 20, 2009; John Fox and Daniel Korski, “Can

China save Afghanistan?” European Council on Foreign Relations, September 29, 2008, available at [http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/can\\_china\\_save\\_afghanistan/](http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/can_china_save_afghanistan/). Although some outside analysts assert that the Gwadar port project is intended to provide the PLA with an intelligence, logistical, and power projection platform into the Indian Ocean and beyond, there is little, if any, hard evidence for such an assertion. The project is more likely designed to facilitate the transmission of oil and gas supplies from the Persian Gulf across land (including Afghanistan) to China’s interior provinces, and to provide an ocean port of shipment for materials produced by Chinese entities. The port could be connected with the huge Aynak copper mine project in Afghanistan, for example (see below).

<sup>20</sup> In particular, both Beijing and Islamabad conceal many aspects of their military and intelligence relationship, and deny outright any collaboration in the development of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capability. See “Pakistan Rejects US Report on China’s Help on Nuclear Plan,” *Global Times* online, November 17, 2009, OSC CPP20091117722009. Such denials are dismissed by U.S. officials and many outside analysts, however.

<sup>21</sup> Luo Zheng, “Friendship Between China and Pakistan is Higher Than the Mountains and Deeper Than the Oceans—Special Interview With Luo Zhaohui, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan,” *Jiefangjun Bao* online, July 30, 2009, OSC CPP20090731088001; Hao Yalin and Sun Xia, “China Has Always Supported Improvement of Indian-Pakistani Relations,” Xinhua Domestic Service, January 22, 2008, OSC CPP20080122074001; Shirley Kan, “U.S.-China Counterterrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Services, September 11, 2008; Andrew Small, “China’s Af-Pak Moment,” German Marshall Fund Policy Brief, May 20, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> China’s Deputy Foreign Minister Wu Dawei stated in March 2009: “The Chinese side strongly supports the endeavor to combat terrorism in all manifestations. At the same time, we maintain that counterterrorism efforts should be made to address both the symptoms and the root causes, and particularly to avoid civilian casualties. Efforts should be made to eliminate the hotbed of terrorism through peaceful development.” See “China Pledges To Continue Supporting Afghanistan,” Xinhua, June 12, 2008, OSC CPP20080612968323. For an unofficial Chinese statement of this limited PRC approach to Afghanistan, see Wu Shuhu, “US Troop Surge Can Hardly Completely Control the Situation in Afghanistan,” *Dangdai Shijie*, May 5, 2009, OSC CPP20090610671006. Wu states: “The road to peace in Afghanistan is still very long. In these circumstances, China must continue to practice a peaceful foreign policy of acting independently and keeping the initiative in its own hands and of good neighborliness and friendship, must not interfere in Afghan internal affairs, and still less get embroiled in the war there; it must however adopt corresponding countermeasures and be strictly on guard.”

<sup>23</sup> Gao Zhikai, “Chinese hand can steady an unstable Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009; Sun Zhuangzhi, “China Cannot Stand Aloof in Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, October 21, 2009, OSC CPP20091104710012; “Afghanistan To Boost Economic, Security Ties With China: Afghan Fm,” Xinhua, June 10, 2009, OSC CPP20090610968242; “China Pledges 75 Million Dollars in Aid for Afghanistan,” Xinhua, March 31, 2009, OSC CPP20090331968259; “China Calls on Int’l Community To Help Afghanistan Maintain Stability,” Xinhua, March 31, 2009, OSC CPP20090331968176; “China Offers Fresh 11-Mln-USD Aid To Afghanistan,” Xinhua, December 30, 2008, OSC CPP20081230968154; “Full Text of Chinese FM’s Remarks at London Conference on Afghanistan,” Xinhua, January 28, 2010, OSC CPP20100128968278.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Farmer, “China pumping millions into Afghanistan,” *Daily Telegraph*, November 22, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6630574/China-pumping-millions-into-Afghanistan.html>. Farmer writes: “Afghanistan recorded government revenues of just \$800 million last year and the World Bank has concluded that mining revenues are the best hope of building a recurring income stream for a war-torn economy blighted by corruption and weak government.” Also see Jeremy Page, “Spoils of war go East as Kabul looks for highest bidder,” *Times*, November 19, 2009; “Afghanistan: China-Afghan Trade to Boost,” *Plus News Pakistan*, November 19, 2009; Abraham M. Denmark, “The Impact of China’s Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_state\\_ment.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_state_ment.php); John Fox and Daniel Korski, “Can China save Afghanistan?” European Council on Foreign Relations, September 29, 2008, available at [http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/can\\_china\\_save\\_afghanistan/](http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/can_china_save_afghanistan/); Nicklas Norling, “The Emerging China-Afghanistan Relationship,” Central Asia-Caucasus Institute *Analyst*, May 14, 2008, available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4858>. Many Chinese believe that

“by exploiting Afghanistan’s mineral reserves, China can provide thousands of poverty-stricken Afghans with jobs, thus generating tax revenues to help stabilize an already volatile Kabul government.” Once up and running, the Aynak copper mine could also provide revenues equal to 40 percent of the Afghan budget. See Li Hongmei, “Who Is Gambling on Afghanistan?” *Renmin Ribao* online, October 15, 2009, OSC CPP20091016787006.

<sup>25</sup> See White House Office of the Press Secretary, “U.S.-China Joint Statement,” Beijing, China, November 17, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>; Zhang Haizhou, “US Envoy Says China Can Help Afghans,” *China Daily*, December 10, 2009, OSC CPP20091210055009; “China calls for more international assistance for Afghanistan,” Xinhua, January 6, 2010, OSC CPP20100106364004; “China Calls on Int’l Community To Help Afghanistan Maintain Stability,” Xinhua, March 31, 2009, OSC CPP20090331968176; “Chinese Envoy Calls for Continued Int’l Aid To Afghanistan,” Xinhua, September 23, 2007, OSC CPP20070923968101.

<sup>26</sup> Peng Kuang and Zhang Haizhou, “Clearing the Way for Peace,” *China Daily*, November 10, 2009; Russell Hsiao, Glen E. Howard, “China Builds Closer Ties to Afghanistan through Wakhan Corridor,” *China Brief*, vol. 10, no.1 (January 7, 2010), available at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=35879&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=8aeb0ffe75](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35879&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=8aeb0ffe75).

<sup>27</sup> In March 2009, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said: “Except for peacekeeping operations with UN Security Council mandates, China will not send a single soldier abroad.” Li Xiaokun, “Nation won’t send soldiers to Afghanistan: Official,” *China Daily*, March 25, 2009. A more detailed official reply was provided in November 2008. In reply to a reporter’s question on the issue of China sending troops to join the International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] in Afghanistan, spokesman Qin Gang said: “China’s position on the issue of Afghanistan remains unchanged. Except for the United Nations’ [UN] peacekeeping operations approved by the UN Security Council, China has never sent and deployed any troop abroad. Therefore, the so-called issue of China sending troops to join the ISAF in Afghanistan is nonexistent.” See “Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Says the So-Called Issue of China Sending Troops To Join the ISAF in Afghanistan Is Nonexistent,” Xinhua Domestic Service, November 17, 2008, OSC CPP20081117163008. Also see Li Xiguang, “China Should Have Its Own Agenda for Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 24, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710003; Chen Weihua, Li Xiaokun, and Ai Yang, “US Troop Plan Set To Impact China,” *China Daily*, December 3, 2009, OSC CPP20091203968059; Yu Wanli, “National Reconstruction Is the Only Way Which Can Lead to a Solution to the Afghanistan Issue,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 28, 2009, OSC CPP20100112710008; Li Daguang, “Sending Troops to Afghanistan Will Cause Trouble for China,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 8, 2009, OSC CPP20091217710004. Li adds that sending Chinese troops to Afghanistan could also “trigger a new round of ‘China threat’ clamor,” arouse the suspicions of neighboring countries, and result in unnecessary military casualties. For a secondary source on this issue, see Anthony Kuhn, “China Becomes A Player In Afghanistan’s Future,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, October 21, 2009, available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113967842>.

<sup>28</sup> Although we have found no official source that confirms any Chinese attempt to engage in such a trade-off, several unofficial Chinese sources clearly do so. For example, see Wang Mingye, “There Is No Harm in Using Afghanistan for a Strategic Exchange,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, January 5, 2010, OSC CPP20100112710009. Wang baldly states that “the United States should make concessions over issues like Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet in exchange for China’s help over Afghanistan.” Also see Gao Zhikai, “Chinese hand can steady an unstable Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009. In discussing what the United States needs to do to extract more significant support from China in Afghanistan, Gao writes: “the US should . . . demonstrate sufficient sensitivity to questions which China considers bear upon its own core interests, including the Taiwan situation.” For a hint at a possible link between China’s resistance to sending troops to Afghanistan and U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, see *Oriental Horizon* [Dong Fang Shi Kong] news commentary program on CCTV-13, January 9, 2010, OSC CPP20100110072001. This source cites CCTV contributing commentator Ma Xiaolin as stating that the United States and the United Kingdom want to “pass the hot potato that is Afghanistan to China. . . . For China, this is unrealistic . . . The Afghan war is led by the United States and the United Kingdom. Whatever happens to the war, the United States and the United Kingdom should try to solve it themselves, especially given the fact that the United States is ignoring the Chinese Government’s opposition and continuing to sell weapons to Taiwan, harming China’s core interests.”

<sup>29</sup> For recent Chinese summaries of China's involvement with Central Asia, see Hu Jintao, "Join hands to cope with the international financial crisis, together build a harmonious and beautiful future," speech at the 9th meeting of the Council of the Heads of State of member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Yekaterinburg, Russia, June 16, 2009, OSC CPP20090616072006; Hai Yang and Liu Yang, "Role of SCO highlighted at conference on Afghanistan," Xinhua, March 29, 2009. For secondary sources, see Hak Yin Li and Zhengxu Wang, "Assessing China's Influence in Central Asia: A dominant regional power?" University of Nottingham China Policy Institute, Briefing Series, no. 53 (July 2009), available at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/documents/briefings/briefing-53-central-asia.pdf>; Ablat Khodzhaev, "The Central Asian Policy of the People's Republic of China," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2009), pp. 9–28; Thrassy N. Marketos, "China's Energy Needs and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Post 9/11 Period," Defense Analyses Institute, *Defensor Pacis*, August 17, 2008, available at

[http://www.rieas.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=724&catid=25&Itemid=72](http://www.rieas.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=724&catid=25&Itemid=72); and Gaël Raballand and Agnès Andréy, "Why Should Trade between Central Asia and China Continue to Expand?" *Asia Europe Journal*, 5:2 (June 2007): pp. 235–52.

<sup>30</sup> For a similar assessment, see Nirav Patel and David Capezza, "From Washington to Kabul to Beijing: Assessing Prospects for U.S.-China-Afghanistan Cooperation," *Small Wars Journal*, April 1, 2009, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/206-patel.pdf>. The authors write: "While it may be argued that China is exploiting Coalition efforts to secure the region for its own economic benefit, it must be recognized that Chinese foreign investment in Afghanistan's infrastructure has the potential to further support Coalition efforts and in fact bring stability to the region . . . Combining Chinese long term investments with the current international aid for stabilization and reconstruction efforts provides for a comprehensive short term and long term economic and stabilization strategy."

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, "US Scheming For 'Great Central Asia' Strategy," *People's Daily* online, August 3, 2006, OSC CPP20060803701005; and the assessment of China's role within the SCO in assisting Afghanistan in Zhao Huasheng, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Afghanistan Issue," *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, July 13, 2009, pp. 36–41, 52, OSC CPP20090813671001. Zhao states: "China holds the view that external forces each going their own way in accordance with their own interests can only intensify splits in Afghanistan, and advocates that the SCO play a more active role in the Afghan issue. The SCO has already set up a liaison group on the Afghan issue, and it will take more practical steps in the future to give impetus to the country's political stability and economic development."

<sup>32</sup> Joshua Partlow, "Afghan minister accused of taking bribe," *Washington Post*, November 18, 2009. This story states that, according to an unnamed U.S. official familiar with military intelligence reports, the Afghan minister of mines (Mohammad Ibrahim Adel) accepted a roughly \$30 million bribe in late 2007 to award the Aynak copper mine project to a Chinese mining firm. Adel has repeatedly denied the charge and asserted that the Chinese bid—including plans to build a railroad and a 400-megawatt power plant, and to make an \$808 million bonus payment to the Afghan government—far exceeded that of other firms. However, according to another news story, "a new FBI-style major crimes unit, set up with British and US police involvement, is reported to have gathered enough evidence to issue arrest warrants against Mr Adel and another cabinet minister Sediq Chakari, the minister of hajj and Islamic affairs." See Ben Farmer, "China pumping millions into Afghanistan," *Daily Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world/news/asia/afghanistan/6630574/China-pumping-millions-into-Afghanistan.html>, November 22, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Jeremy Page, "Spoils of war go East as Kabul looks for highest bidder," *Times*, November 19, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Abraham M. Denmark, "The Impact of China's Economic and Security Interests in Continental Asia on the United States," testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written\\_testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrts/09\\_05\\_20\\_demark\\_statement.php](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_05_20_wrts/09_05_20_demark_statement.php).

<sup>35</sup> See in particular Li Hongmei, "Who Is Gambling on Afghanistan?" *Renmin Ribao* online, October 15, 2009, OSC CPP20091016787006. Li writes: "By exploiting Afghanistan's mineral reserves, China can . . . help stabilize an already volatile Kabul government. This also echoed America's global strategy—creating a relatively stable Afghanistan which will cease to be a haven for extremists." Also see Robert D. Kaplan, "Beijing's Afghan Gamble," *New York Times*, October 7, 2009. Kaplan agrees that U.S. and Chinese interests largely converge in Afghanistan. However, he also argues that "while America is sacrificing its blood and treasure, the Chinese will reap the benefits. . . . if America defeats Al Qaeda and the irreconcilable elements of the Taliban, China's geopolitical position will be enhanced." This is another

version of the “free-riding” argument. And the *Economist* adds: “for all China’s sneering at America’s military efforts in Afghanistan, China offers no alternative.” Moreover, agreeing with Kaplan, the author states: “In Afghanistan China grumbles but lets America guard its economic interests. There’s little unusual in that: rising powers have always hitched a ride on the back of declining ones.” “Having it both ways,” *Economist*, November 5, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> This sentiment is found among analysts in the U.S. government (and especially the Pentagon), and reflected in Western commentary. For a recent example of the latter, see Myra MacDonald, “Analysis: India-China rivalry complicates Pakistan picture,” Reuters, December 10, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Yin Jiwu, “Afghanistan Is Not China’s Battlefield,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 18, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710001.

<sup>38</sup> Peng Kuang and Zhang Haizhou, “Clearing the Way for Peace,” *China Daily*, November 10, 2009. The authors write: “as the war gets increasingly complex for the US and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, communities from across the globe have called for more involvement from China.” Also see Li Xiguang, “China Should Have Its Own Agenda for Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 24, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710003.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Liu Xiao, “China Can Make Arrangements for the Future by Sending Troops to Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 8, 2009, OSC CPP20091217710003; Li Daguang, “China should not get sucked into Afghan quagmire,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009; Zhang Xiaodong, “How Could China Break Through the Geopolitical ‘Encirclement?’” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, May 20, 2008, OSC CPP20080723508003. Zhang states: “The greater Middle East has always been a place where the powers maneuver among various states, and strengthening China’s ability and means to participate in the region’s affairs will not only help regional balance and stability but also help to establish China’s image as a responsible power.” Ma Chao, “Building a Golden Crescent To Fight Terror,” *China Daily*, October 22, 2009, OSC CPP20091022968076; Sun Zhuangzhi, “China Cannot Stand Aloof in Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, October 21, 2009, OSC CPP20091104710012; Jiang Sujing, “Chinese police can bring order to wild Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 24, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2009-12/493967.html>; “A Dangerous World Not Far from Us,” *Global Times* editorial, August 21, 2009, OSC CPP20090824722001; “US Scheming For ‘Great Central Asia’ Strategy,” *People’s Daily* online, August 3, 2006, OSC CPP20060803701005; Gao Zhikai, “Chinese hand can steady an unstable Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009; Wang Lian, “On Talibanization of Pakistan’s Tribal Areas,” *Guoji Zhengzhi Yanjiu*, April 10, 2009, pp. 112–135, OSC CPP20091001671003; and Zhang Zhe, “Inquiring About China’s Relations With South Asia: What Will Terrorism Bring?” *Nanfang Zhoumo* online, December 31, 2008, OSC CPP20090102705007.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, “China Should Act as Regional Stabilizer,” *Global Times* editorial, October 20, 2009, OSC CPP20091020722002. However, the editorial states that China is currently ill-prepared to take on such an activist role, and thus calls for “a public debate on China’s strategy regarding surrounding areas and how it can better help stabilize neighboring countries.”

<sup>41</sup> For the clearest proponent of this view, see Liu Xiao, “China Can Make Arrangements for the Future by Sending Troops to Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 8, 2009, OSC CPP20091217710003. Liu argues that such troops should consist primarily of “non-combat units and a small number of protective combat forces.” Also see Yin Jiwu, “Afghanistan Is Not China’s Battlefield,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 18, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710001.

<sup>42</sup> For those sources that address (and reject) the possibility of a future deployment of PLA forces, see Li Daguang, “China should not get sucked into Afghan quagmire,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009, and the Chinese version of the same article, with somewhat stronger rhetoric: Li Daguang, “Sending Troops to Afghanistan Will Cause Trouble for China,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 8, 2009, OSC CPP20091217710004; Russell Hsiao and Glen E. Howard, “China Builds Closer Ties to Afghanistan through Wakhan Corridor,” *China Brief*, vol. 10, issue 1 (January 7, 2010). Geoff Dyer, “Obama to press China on Afghanistan,” *Financial Times*, November 12, 2009; Wu Shuhu, “US Troop Surge Can Hardly Completely Control the Situation in Afghanistan,” *Dangdai Shijie*, May 5, 2009, OSC CPP20090610671006; Yu Wanli, “National Reconstruction Is the Only Way Which Can Lead to a Solution to the Afghanistan Issue,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 28, 2009, OSC CPP20100112710008; and Yin Jiwu, “Afghanistan Is Not China’s Battlefield,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 18, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710001. Yin supports his opposition to sending Chinese troops with the contrarian view that China’s core interests are not engaged in Afghanistan.

<sup>43</sup> See Chen Weihua, Li Xiaokun, and Ai Yang, “US Troop Plan Set To Impact China,” *China Daily*, December 3, 2009, OSC CPP20091203968059; and Jiang Sujing, “Chinese police can bring order to wild Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 24, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2009-12/493967.html>. Jiang writes: “This is the best timing [*sic*] for China to exert international responsibility and improve its national image. Sending police to Afghanistan both improves China’s reputation as a reliable global power and makes a substantive contribution to the peace of the surrounding areas. Sending forces in this way will be dangerous, to be sure, and even full of strategic risks for a country. However, a rising power must be prepared to take risks, and have the ability to do so.” For a similar summary of these three points of view on the deployment of Chinese forces to Afghanistan, see C. Raja Mohan, “Great Game: How China Can Help Afghanistan,” *Indian Express* online, January 2, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Li Xiguang, “China Should Have Its Own Agenda for Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 24, 2009, OSC CPP20100106710003; Sun Zhuangzhi, “China Cannot Stand Aloof in Afghanistan,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, October 21, 2009, OSC CPP20091104710012; Gao Zhikai, “Chinese hand can steady an unstable Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009. Gao writes: “China not only has vast resources at its disposal but also has the advantage of proximity and effective delivery capabilities directly into Afghanistan.” Also see “China calls for more international assistance for Afghanistan,” *Xinhua*, January 6, 2010, OSC CPP20100106364004; “China Calls on Int’l Community To Help Afghanistan Maintain Stability,” *Xinhua*, March 31, 2009, OSC CPP20090331968176; Rong Ying, “The Afghanistan Issue and Western China’s Regional Security,” *Dangdai Yatai*, January 20, 2009, OSC CPP20090505671007; and “Chinese Envoy Calls for Continued Int’l Aid To Afghanistan,” *Xinhua*, September 23, 2007, OSC CPP20070923968101; “China To Provide 30-Mln-Yuan Worth Humanitarian Relief Materials To Pakistan: Official,” *Xinhua*, May 26, 2009, OSC CPP20090526968201; and Zhang Haizhou, “US Envoy Says China Can Help Afghans,” *China Daily*, December 10, 2009, OSC CPP20091210055009. This source states: “Jiang Yu, the ministry’s spokeswoman, said China, as a friendly neighbor of Afghanistan and Pakistan, has offered help ‘within its might’ to help both countries achieve ‘peace, stability, development, and progress.’ ‘We wish to work with the international community to further promote efforts to achieve above goals,’ she told *China Daily*.”

<sup>45</sup> For example, see Sun Zhuangzhi, “China May Get Involved in Afghanistan Through SCO,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, January 7, 2010, OSC CPP20100115710004; and Zhao Huasheng, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Afghanistan Issue,” *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, July 13, 2009, pp. 36–41, 52, OSC CPP20090813671001.

<sup>46</sup> Gao Zhikai, “Chinese hand can steady an unstable Afghanistan,” *Global Times*, December 8, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, several of the sources cited above regarding China’s interests in Pakistan, especially Zhang Zhe, “Inquiring About China’s Relations With South Asia: What Will Terrorism Bring?” *Nanfang Zhoumo* online, December 31, 2008, OSC CPP20090102705007; Liu Yantang, “After the Eastward Shift of Focus of the US War on Terror,” *Liaowang*, no. 20 (May 18, 2009), pp. 60–61, OSC CPP20090522710002; Wang Zaidong, “Historical Change Shows That Systematic Adjustment Is Urgent: Review of and Thoughts on the 2008 International Situation,” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, January 20, 2009, OSC CPP20090513702014; OSC Report: *PRC Experts Say Pakistan May Pose Problems for US Afghanistan Strategy*, CPP20090522530001, May 22, 2009; Hao Yalin and Sun Xia, “China Has Always Supported Improvement of Indian-Pakistani Relations,” *Xinhua Domestic Service*, January 22, 2008, OSC CPP20080122074001. Also see “JFJB Article on US Decision To Send More Troops to Afghanistan,” *Jiefangjun Bao* online, December 16, 2009, OSC CPP20091216710001; Yang Ziyang, “New Afghan Strategy Looks Wonderful,” *Renmin Ribao* (overseas edition) online, December 5, 2009, OSC CPP20091205706022.

<sup>48</sup> The avoidance of public Chinese discussions of PRC policy toward Pakistan might also reflect a basic uncertainty over how to address the crisis in that country after the replacement of the widely admired Musharraf military-led regime with the decidedly less admired civilian Zardari regime. See Andrew Small, “China’s Af-Pak Moment,” German Marshall Fund Policy Brief, May 20, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Wang Lian, “On Talibanization of Pakistan’s Tribal Areas,” *Guoji Zhengzhi Yanjiu*, April 10, 2009, pp. 112–135, OSC CPP20091001671003. Wan focuses on the two-fold threat to China presented by the Talibanization of Pakistan’s tribal areas: terrorist attacks on Chinese living and working in Pakistan; and the spread of radical elements into nearby Xinjiang.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, an article by Ni Lexiong, professor at the Department of Politics of the Shanghai University of Politics and Law, in “Summary: PRC Scholar: Obama Is Wise In Decision On Afghanistan Reinforcements,” *Nanfang Dushi Bao* online, December 9, 2009, OSC CPP20091209706001; Li Li,

---

*Defense Review Week* on CCTV-8, May 10, 2009, cited in OSC CPP20090522530001; and Jin Canrong, *Today's Focus* on CCTV-8, April 1, 2009, cited in OSC CPP20090522530001.

<sup>51</sup> “JFJB Article on US Decision To Send More Troops to Afghanistan,” *Jiefangjun Bao* online, December 16, 2009, OSC CPP20091216710001; Zhu Naijuan, “Date of Return is Indefinite: Hope of a US Victory in Afghanistan Has Become Increasingly Flimsy,” *21 Shiji Jingji Baodao* (21st Century Economic Report), December 7, 2009, OSC CPP20091208666002; Yang Ziyang, “New Afghan Strategy Looks Wonderful,” *Renmin Ribao* (overseas edition) online, December 5, 2009, OSC CPP20091205706022 (the author argues that the United States “will eventually pull out of Afghanistan in shame.”); Zhao Huasheng, “Results of the United States’ New Afghanistan Strategy Are Uncertain,” *Dongfang Zaobao* online, December 3, 2009, OSC CPP20091203073027; Yang Qingchuan, “Will Obama be Able To Get Out of the Afghanistan ‘Mess’ As He Wished?” Xinhua Domestic Service, December 2, 2009, OSC CPP20091202441001; and Yang Qingchuan, “New Policy, Old Problem,” Xinhua Domestic Service, December 2, 2009, OSC CPP20091202062004; Li Shaoxian, *Today's Focus* on CCTV-8, April 24–25, 2009, cited in OSC CPP20090522530001; Ye Hailin, *Defense Review Week* on CCTV-8, January 7 and May 10–11, 2009, cited in OSC CPP20090522530001; and Hong Lin, *Today's Focus* on CCTV-8, April 25, May 7, 11, 2009, cited in OSC CPP20090522530001.

<sup>52</sup> See Zhao Huasheng, “Results of the United States’ New Afghanistan Strategy Are Uncertain,” *Dongfang Zaobao* online, December 3, 2009, OSC CPP20091203073027.