



## China's Investments in Afghanistan and Their Impact on Its Engagement with Other Major Powers

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### Abstract

With the expansion of China's investments in Afghanistan—particularly in the sectors of mining, infrastructure, and projects related to the Belt and Road Initiative—a new transformation has emerged in the geopolitics of Central and South Asia. These developments have triggered serious concerns among major regional and global powers, including the United States, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of India. The main purpose of this study is to analyze the dimensions and sources of these countries' concerns regarding China's increasing presence in Afghanistan and to assess its implications for the regional balance of power and China's interactions with other major powers. This research employs a descriptive–analytical method and uses data collected through specialized questionnaires distributed among political analysts and international relations experts. The findings reveal that India perceives China's investments as a threat to its economic interests, geopolitical influence, and national security—particularly in relation to competition over natural resources and the diminishing of New Delhi's traditional influence in Afghanistan. The United States, on the other hand, is concerned about the weakening of Western influence and the emergence of an Asia-centric order led by China, which could challenge Washington's strategic and economic interests. Russia, while benefiting from the decline of Western presence in Afghanistan, nevertheless views China's expanding role in its traditional sphere of influence (Central Asia) with caution and uncertainty. Overall, the study shows that China's economic presence in Afghanistan not only intensifies regional competition with India but also becomes a new source of divergence among major powers. It is therefore anticipated that Afghanistan will become a significant arena in the future geopolitical competition among China, the United States, Russia, and India.

**Keywords:** *China; Afghanistan; India; United States; Russia; Belt and Road Initiative; Geopolitical Rivalry; Foreign Investment; Regional Security*

### Introduction

In recent decades, the People's Republic of China, as one of the world's emerging economic powers, has adopted an active approach in expanding its economic and geopolitical influence in strategic

regions (Nye, 2015). Afghanistan, due to its unique geopolitical position at the heart of Asia, has become one of China's primary focal points (Rashid, 2010). Within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has increasingly invested in Afghanistan's infrastructure, energy, mining, transportation, and other key sectors (Rolland, 2017). Although Afghanistan has faced persistent political and security instability over the past two decades, China has expanded its presence with the aim of utilizing the country's economic potential and strengthening geo-economic interconnections (Clarke, 2018). Alongside potential benefits for Afghanistan's development, this economic influence carries profound geopolitical implications (Soltani, 2021), especially for major powers such as the United States, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of India, all of which maintain strategic interests in the region (Pant, 2012).

Historically, Afghanistan has been a battleground for great-power rivalry (Sadeqi, 2023). With China entering the scene as an active actor and investor, the traditional balance of influence in the region has undergone major shifts (Cohen, 2001). On one hand, this trend can create opportunities for Afghanistan's economic growth; on the other hand, it poses challenges to the interests of powers such as the United States, Russia, and India. Therefore, China's approach in Afghanistan is not merely economic but clearly encompasses political and security dimensions as well (Clarke, 2018).

The main objective of this research is to analyze the dimensions, goals, and geopolitical and geo-economic implications of China's investments in Afghanistan; to examine the concerns of major regional and extra-regional powers—namely the United States, Russia, and India—regarding China's heightened presence; and to assess the nature of China's interactions with these powers within the framework of emerging regional rivalries and power shifts. This study seeks to:

- I. Clarify the nature and scope of China's investments in Afghanistan;
- II. Evaluate the impact of these investments on the regional balance of power;
- III. Analyze the opportunities and threats facing Afghanistan and international actors;
- IV. Examine the responses and policies of rival powers toward China's expanding influence, as well as China's own reactions.

Furthermore, by comparing China's investment-driven model with the aid-based approaches of Western countries, this study aims to develop a clearer understanding of emerging patterns of governance and development in fragile states. The significance of this research lies in the fact that, amid recent transformations in the international order and China's growing influence in vulnerable countries, a correct understanding of the strategic dimensions of its investments is essential. As a country in the reconstruction phase, Afghanistan faces simultaneous opportunities for development and risks of dependency. A focused examination of Afghanistan offers deeper insight into geopolitical rivalries in Central Asia and assists domestic and regional policymakers in making informed decisions.

This research addresses the following key questions:

- I. How have China's investments in Afghanistan created economic, political, and security concerns for major powers such as the United States, Russia, and India?
- II. In which areas do China's investments conflict with the strategic interests of these major powers?
- III. How have these investments affected the level of political influence of these powers in Afghanistan and the broader region?
- IV. What security implications of China's growing presence are causing concern among major powers?
- V. Are China's investments part of a long-term geopolitical strategy aimed at competing with these powers?

VI. What policies and responses have major powers adopted in reaction to China's economic and political influence in Afghanistan?

Preliminary answers to these questions can be examined through the following hypotheses:

- I. The United States views China's increasing presence in Afghanistan as a threat to its economic, political, and security influence. Infrastructure and security cooperation between China and Afghanistan are shifting the regional balance of power to Washington's disadvantage.
- II. The Russian Federation is concerned about the decline of its traditional influence in Central and South Asia, particularly given constraints arising from the conflict in Ukraine. China's growing role in regional security frameworks weakens Russia's influence.
- III. The Republic of India considers China's investments a threat to regional power balance and its economic interests in Afghanistan. China's increasing engagement with actors close to Pakistan further intensifies New Delhi's security concerns.

This topic has a substantial research background, and numerous studies have been conducted on this subject. A selection of prominent related works is presented in the table below.

<b>subject /key finding</b>	<b>characteristics</b>	<b>author /year</b>
<b>Chinas Belt and Road initiative as a Geopolitical Strategy Affecting Regional Security and Economy</b>	Fazeli, M. (1401). <i>China's Foreign Policy in the Belt and Road Project. Quarterly Journal of Geopolitics.</i>	Fazeli (1401)
<b>Afghanistans pivotal role in acheiving Chinas regional goals in Central Asia</b>	Noorbakhsh, M., and Rezaei, A. (2014). <i>Geopolitical Analysis of Chinese Investments in Afghanistan. Central Eurasian Studies.</i>	Nourbakhsh and Rezaei (1400)
<b>Examining the threats and opportunities posed by Chinese investment in Afghanistan for regional actors</b>	Soltani, S. (1400). <i>China, Afghanistan and the New Balance of Regional Power. Quarterly Journal of Political Studies.</i>	Sultani (1400)
<b>Geopolitical competition between great powers in Afghanistan and analysis of China's position after 2014</b>	Rezaei, M., and Mahmoudi, Y. (2019). <i>Competition between global powers in Afghanistan after 2014. Strategic Research.</i>	Rezaei and Mahmoudi (1399)
<b>Western concerns about Chinese investment in Afghanistan from a security perspective</b>	Yazdanpanah, N. (1401). <i>China's Development Policies and America's Geopolitical Concerns. Quarterly Journal of International Relations.</i>	Yazdanpanah (1401)
<b>Analyzing the effects of Chinese investment on India's security and the balance of power in the region</b>	Sadeghi, R. (1402). <i>India, China and Geopolitical Competition in Afghanistan. Quarterly Journal of Regional Studies.</i>	Sadeghi (1402)
<b>Examining India's security concerns about China's role in Afghanistan</b>	Small, A. (2020). <i>The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics. Oxford University Press.</i>	Small (2020)
<b>US response to China's economic and security influence in Afghanistan</b>	Scobell, A., Ratner, E., & Beckley, M. (2020). <i>China's Strategy in Afghanistan. RAND Corporation.</i>	Scobell et al. (2020)
<b>India's geopolitical concerns about China's presence in Afghan infrastructure projects</b>	Pant, H. V. (2021). <i>India's Afghan Dilemma: Between China and the Taliban. Observer Research Foundation.</i>	Pant (2021)
<b>Strategic competition between the US and China in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative</b>	Rolland, N. (2019). <i>China's Eurasian Century? Political and Strategic Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative. National Bureau of Asian Research.</i>	Rolland (2019)

Based on the table above, only a limited number of studies have examined the various dimensions of China's economic presence in Afghanistan. Most existing research either focuses on mining and infrastructure projects or more broadly analyzes China's policies in Central Asia. Some studies have also explored China's interactions with regional states such as Pakistan and India. However, no comprehensive

research has yet examined the economic, political, and security implications of China's investments in relation to the simultaneous reactions of both global and regional powers.

## 1. Concepts and General Framework

In this section, the key concepts relevant to the discussion are defined.

### a) Definition of Investment

In economic literature, investment refers to the allocation of resources to assets that are expected to generate value added in the long term. These assets may include stocks, securities, real estate, equipment and machinery, or even education and human capital development. The primary objective of investment is to utilize available resources to produce positive returns (profit) in the future (Mankiw, 2020). John Maynard Keynes (1936) defines investment as expenditure on capital goods that will be used for the production of other goods and services in the future. According to him, "investment is the addition to the existing stock of capital equipment which increases the future productive capacity of the economy" (Keynes, 1936, p. 45). Similarly, neoclassical economists such as Robert Solow consider investment a fundamental component of economic growth, as it increases productivity and long-term output through higher savings and capital accumulation (Solow, 1956). Within this framework, investment is defined as "the use of current resources to create a stock of capital for future production" (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

Therefore, it can be concluded that investment, in economic terminology, is the process of allocating present resources to assets expected to generate future returns and value added. These assets may be physical (such as equipment and infrastructure) or human (such as education and skill development). Based on the views of leading economists such as Keynes and Solow, investment not only strengthens the productive capacity of an economy but also serves as a key driver of long-term growth, productivity, and economic development. In essence, investment acts as a bridge between current resources and future production, forming the foundation of sustainable economic progress.

### b) The Importance of China's Investment in Afghanistan

Investment plays a pivotal role in the economic development of countries. Some of the main benefits of China's investment in Afghanistan include:

**Economic Growth:** Investment increases the production of goods and services, directly contributing to higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Mankiw, 2020).

#### Job Creation:

New investment projects generate numerous employment opportunities, reducing unemployment rates (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

#### Enhanced Innovation and Technological Advancement:

Many investments aim to develop advanced technologies, thus improving industrial productivity and market competitiveness (Hall & Lerner, 2010).

#### Infrastructure Development:

Investment in essential infrastructure—such as transportation, energy, and communication networks—facilitates economic activities and improves the quality of life (World Bank, 2019).

Overall, China's investments in Afghanistan have emerged as a significant factor in altering political and geopolitical dynamics in the region. To reap the maximum benefits while minimizing tensions, strategic planning and smart diplomacy among regional and extra-regional actors are required (Yazdanpanah, 2022).

### c) Dimensions of China's Investments in Afghanistan

China's investments in Afghanistan span multiple sectors, including mining, infrastructure, energy, agriculture and industry, as well as trade. The following sections provide a precise and quantitative overview of these investment dimensions:

#### 1. Investment in the Mining Sector

China has shown strong interest in Afghanistan's mining sector, particularly copper and coal. The most notable project is the Mes Aynak copper mine.

##### a) The Mes Aynak Copper Mine Project .Investment value: USD 3.5 billion

Production capacity: Approximately 200,000 tons of copper per year

Project duration: About 30 years. The Mes Aynak project is one of the world's largest copper extraction initiatives, led primarily by the *China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC)*. It is estimated that the project will not only boost copper production but also create nearly 50,000 jobs in Afghanistan (World Bank, 2020).

#### 2. China's Investment in Infrastructure

China has made extensive investments in Afghanistan's major infrastructure projects, especially under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Rolland, 2017). These investments include road, rail, and transit projects that significantly contribute to Afghanistan's economic development and regional connectivity (Nourbakhsh & Rezaei, 2021).

##### a) Road Projects

A major example is the Kabul–Kandahar highway, with an estimated investment of USD 1.5 billion (World Bank, 2021).

Additionally, several international road projects are under development to connect Afghanistan with China and neighboring countries, thereby improving regional trade and transportation (ADB, 2020).

##### b) Railway Projects

China is constructing over 300 kilometers of railway lines connecting Kabul to China and Central Asian rail networks (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2020).

These rail projects are expected to significantly enhance trade and facilitate regional transit (The Diplomat, 2021).

#### 3. Investment in the Energy Sector

China has invested in various energy projects in Afghanistan, including hydropower and thermal power plants. These investments aim to meet Afghanistan's energy needs and support economic growth.

##### a) Hydropower Plants

China is developing several hydropower projects, such as the Helmand Hydropower Project, with an investment of USD 500 million.

These projects could increase Afghanistan's electricity generation by 300 megawatts.

##### b) Thermal Power Plants

China is also building thermal power projects based on fossil fuels, such as a thermal power plant in Mazar-e Sharif, with an investment estimated at USD 250 million (CNPC, 2020).

#### 4. Investment in Agriculture and Industry

China has launched various agricultural and industrial development projects in Afghanistan. These include modern agricultural technologies and the establishment of manufacturing facilities.

##### Agricultural Projects:

China is implementing advanced agricultural technologies and modern farming systems with an investment of around USD 400 million.

##### Industrial Projects:

Investments in light manufacturing industries aim to produce consumer and industrial goods domestically. It is estimated that these projects could create about 15,000 jobs, with a total investment exceeding USD 500 million (Journal of Asian Economics, 2018).

#### 5. Investment in Trade and Economic Cooperation

China is increasingly strengthening its trade relations with Afghanistan. Bilateral trade volumes have risen significantly in recent years, especially due to mining and infrastructure developments.

##### Bilateral Trade Volume:

In 2021, China–Afghanistan trade reached USD 8 billion.

This includes Chinese exports of machinery, electronics, and industrial materials, and Afghan exports such as coal, dried fruits, and wool (China Economic Review, 2021).

A summary of China's investments is reflected in the table below.

Explanation of investment activities	Projects / Important examples	Next / Section
<b>Major investments in mining, including copper, lithium, rare earths, and oil.</b>	Aynak Copper Mine (Logar), Possible Lithium Exploration	Mines and natural resources
<b>Building roads, railways, and energy infrastructure within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).</b>	Belt and Road transit corridors, power grid improvement	Infrastructure development
<b>Investment in oil extraction and possible development of gas fields.</b>	Amu Darya oil field, energy pipelines	Energy sector
<b>Potential collaboration in digital infrastructure, although less than in other sectors.</b>	Negotiations on 5G technology, fiber optic cables	Telecommunications and information Technology
<b>Developing transport and trade routes connecting China to Central Asia and the Middle East through Afghanistan.</b>	Vakan Corridor, Five Countries Railway	Trade and economic corridors
<b>Using economic presence to secure political influence, especially under Taliban rule.</b>	Diplomatic interactions, regional meetings	Political and strategic interactions
<b>Indirect investments in border security and counterterrorism cooperation along the Wakan Corridor.</b>	Support for border surveillance, counter-terrorism talks	Security cooperation (limited)
<b>Providing food aid, medical equipment, and COVID-19-related support after Western donors withdraw in 2021.</b>	Sending vaccines, basic food aid	Humanitarian aid and development

The following table summarizes the amount and progress of Chinese investments in Afghanistan. This information is based on reports published by reputable international and regional news sources.

:

Investment amount (estimated)	Status/Progress	Project title/ Section
2.8 billion	Contract signed, extraction not yet started, negotiations on contract revision ongoingBBC (2023), Reuters (2022), Tolo News (2023)	Aynak Copper Mine - Logar
540 million	Contract signed with CAPEIC in 2023, mining operations have begunAl Jazeera (2023), Pajhwok Afghan News (2023)	Amu Darya oil and gas field – northern Afghanistan
400 million	Investment in technology and mechanized farming, some projects have begun in Herat and Kandahar:The Diplomat (2024), Xinhua News (2023)	Modern agricultural projects
About 100 million	In the early stages or under limited operation in some provinces such as Nangarhar:China Daily (2024), Ariana News (2023)	Construction of industrial factories (various projects)
Feasibility stage	Negotiations and preliminary studies underway between China, Iran and the TalibanTolo News (2024), South China Morning Post (2023)	Railway line project (Khowf-Herat-Mazar to China)

### Analytical Summary

According to available reports and estimates, the total volume of China's investments and economic commitments in Afghanistan is estimated to exceed **USD 3.8 billion**. Despite this level of commitment, a significant portion of the projects remain in preliminary phases or have faced delays due to political, security, and technical challenges.

China's investments—including mining, infrastructure, transit, and energy projects—have the potential, if fully implemented, to bring significant improvements in **economic growth, employment generation, infrastructure development, and Afghanistan's foreign trade expansion**. These investments could serve as an important driver for economic reconstruction and the strengthening of the country's geo-economic position.

However, effective utilization of these opportunities requires addressing several **structural challenges**, the most notable of which include:

- I. insecurity and threats posed by armed groups,
- II. weak transportation and energy infrastructure,
- III. administrative corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency,
- IV. policy instability and regulatory uncertainty,
- V. reluctance of Chinese companies due to high investment risks.

Nevertheless, if appropriate reforms are undertaken—particularly in resource management, administrative transparency, and improvement of the business environment—**Chinese investments can become a key catalyst for Afghanistan's economic development**. In such a scenario, economic cooperation with China would not only support growth and reconstruction, but also enhance Afghanistan's position within regional connectivity frameworks, especially the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

## 2. Theoretical Framework of the Study (Translation)

To develop a deeper understanding of the subject, this research employs the **PESTLE model** along with **Realism** as its theoretical foundation. The PESTLE framework is an analytical tool used to assess external environmental factors that influence organizations, industries, or countries. The model evaluates six dimensions—**Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental**—and helps identify variables that may affect strategies and decision-making processes of an institution.

The model was first introduced by **Francis J. Aguilar**, a Harvard University professor, in his 1967 book *Scanning the Business Environment*. In this work, Aguilar presented one of the earliest analytical approaches for examining the external environment of organizations. Over time, the model evolved into several versions such as **PEST, PESTEL, and PESTLE**, becoming one of the most widely used tools for environmental analysis.

For analyzing **China's investments in Afghanistan** and the reactions of major powers, the PESTLE framework allows for a multidimensional assessment of the **challenges, opportunities, and threats** facing China as well as other global actors such as the United States, India, Russia, and the European Union. Below, each PESTLE factor is explained within the specific context of China's economic presence in Afghanistan.

### Political Dimension

China's investments in Afghanistan have significant implications for its political relations with other major powers. Given Afghanistan's sensitive geopolitical location, China's presence creates both opportunities and threats for itself and other global actors (Scobell et al., 2020; Small, 2015).

- **China–Afghanistan Relations:** Through large-scale infrastructure projects such as roads, energy facilities, and potential transport corridors, China's political influence in Afghanistan is expected to grow. This rising influence may strengthen China's ties with the Taliban authorities, which could affect Beijing's relations with other powers (Zhou & Esteban, 2022).
- **Major Powers:** For the United States and Western countries, China's expanding presence in Afghanistan raises concerns regarding **security** and **geopolitical competition**. China's involvement may challenge Western strategic objectives and strengthen Beijing's influence in Central and South Asia (Cordesman, 2021; Rafiq, 2022).
- **India's Position:** India is concerned that Chinese investments will bolster Pakistan–China cooperation and undermine India's influence in Afghanistan. As a result, India may pursue indirect engagement policies to safeguard its regional interests (Pant & Joshi, 2021).
- **Russia's Position:** Russia, a traditional power in the region, closely monitors China's growing influence in Afghanistan. Moscow worries that increased Chinese dominance could shift the **balance of power in Central Asia**, a region Russia considers part of its traditional sphere of influence. Nonetheless, Russia seeks cautious cooperation with China to benefit from security and economic outcomes while preventing Chinese unilateralism (Kaczmarek, 2022; Lo, 2021). Russia may therefore pursue a mixed strategy of **soft competition** and **tactical cooperation**, particularly within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

### Economic Dimension

China's investments—particularly under the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**—have the potential to stimulate Afghanistan's fragile economy. These investments focus on infrastructure, mining, transit, and energy, which could transform Afghanistan into a regional commercial hub (World Bank, 2022; Rolland, 2017).

1. **China:** Through large-scale projects such as the Mes Aynak copper mine and the Amu Darya oil contract, China seeks access to natural resources and aims to establish economic corridors. These



projects could boost employment, strengthen infrastructure, and enhance China's economic position in the region (Zhou, 2021).

2. **Major Powers:** The United States, Russia, and the European Union remain wary of China's expanding economic footprint. They may counterbalance China by promoting alternative development projects or applying political pressure. India, as China's regional competitor, is also attempting to invest in similar sectors in Afghanistan (Pant, 2020).
3. **Economic Challenges:** Despite vast mineral wealth, Afghanistan lacks the necessary technical and institutional capacity to exploit it independently. While China can fill this gap, economic competition among global powers could generate instability or confrontations that affect regional economic security (Byrd, 2020).

## Social Dimension

China's investments will likely bring substantial social changes to Afghan society. Infrastructure development and the introduction of new technologies may influence lifestyles, employment patterns, and community structures.

1. **China:** Chinese-led projects may create jobs, transfer technical skills, and improve living standards for some local communities. However, heavy reliance on Chinese labor may lead to social tensions, resentment, or cultural clashes (Kugiel, 2019).
2. **Major Powers:** Countries such as the United States, India, and Russia may be concerned about China's cultural and social influence in Afghanistan. Chinese expansion may conflict with Western or Indian cultural models and affect Afghanistan's cultural identity (Small, 2020).
3. **Social Challenges:** Some tribes and local groups may perceive China's presence as a threat to their interests or cultural values. Social resistance, protests, or attacks on Chinese projects remain possible, especially in areas with strong feelings of marginalization or inequality (ICG, 2021).

## Technological Dimension

Chinese investment can introduce advanced technologies to Afghanistan, especially in digital infrastructure, renewable energy, and transportation. Technologies such as **5G networks**, solar and wind facilities, and modern transport systems may enhance Afghanistan's technical capacity and public services (Liu & Dunford, 2016).

However, major powers such as the United States, Russia, and India worry that China's technological presence could lead to cybersecurity vulnerabilities or unauthorized access to sensitive data (Segal, 2020). Although technological transfer may support Afghanistan's development, it could also position China as the dominant technological actor in the region, potentially affecting Afghanistan's technological autonomy and shaping the power dynamics (Rolland, 2017).

## Legal Dimension

China faces complex legal challenges due to Afghanistan's unstable political and regulatory environment. Implementing large-scale projects requires clear legal agreements with governmental authorities or the Taliban. Weak property rights, incoherent legal frameworks, and the lack of contract enforcement increase legal risks (ICG, 2021).

Western actors, particularly the United States and EU, may impose sanctions or diplomatic pressures targeting China-related projects to restrict Beijing's influence (Chayes & Handler, 2018).

The absence of legal transparency and inconsistent regulations may generate disputes between Chinese firms and local partners, which in turn raises overall investment risks (Roth et al., 2020).

## Environmental Dimension

Chinese-led mining and infrastructure projects can produce significant environmental impacts, including soil and water pollution, habitat destruction, and biodiversity loss. Weak environmental management may create long-term ecological damage (Xu et al., 2020).

Major powers—especially the United States—often push for stricter environmental standards via international organizations. Expressions of concern may influence China's ability to implement its projects (UNEP, 2019).

While adherence to environmental standards could facilitate sustainable development, negligence may lead to irreversible environmental degradation, threatening food security and public health (World Bank, 2022).

## Overall Assessment Using the PESTLE Framework

The PESTLE model offers a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with China's investments in Afghanistan. China must carefully navigate these political, economic, legal, social, and environmental factors to manage its relations with Afghanistan and other major powers.

To ensure positive cooperation and reduce international concerns, China should increase transparency, adhere to legal and environmental standards, and pursue diplomatic and economic strategies for balancing relations with rival powers such as India and the United States.

This theoretical framework helps scholars develop a more nuanced understanding of the current and future dynamics of China's engagement in Afghanistan and its interactions with major global actors.

### China's Interaction with Great Powers Using the Political Realism Model

Strategic interests	Possible reaction to China's presence in Afghanistan	Actor
<i>Maintaining influence in Central Asia, fighting terrorism, containing China</i>	<i>Concerns about China's economic influence, increased diplomatic or military presence</i>	<i>America</i>
<i>Maintaining traditional spheres of influence in Central Asia, border security</i>	<i>Sensitivity to China's presence, energy competition, and security</i>	<i>Russia</i>
<i>Strategic competition with China, investment in Iran and Afghanistan</i>	<i>Concerns about geopolitical encirclement by China (China-Pakistan-Afghanistan axis)</i>	<i>India</i>

Therefore, the PESTLE model, as a comprehensive analytical tool, helps us to better understand China's investment trends and challenges in Afghanistan, as well as its interactions with major powers, by examining the influential external factors. These analyses can be useful in making strategic, diplomatic, and economic decisions.

## Research Method

To address the primary and secondary research questions, this study employs a **Mixed Method** research design, meaning that both quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches are used in a complementary manner. The quantitative analysis measures the economic effects of China's investments and the reactions of international actors using statistical data and questionnaire-based analysis. Meanwhile, the qualitative component examines content, documents, official statements, and strategic assessments regarding the concerns of global powers.

## Sources and Data Collection Tools

Quantitative economic data related to the volume and types of China's investments in Afghanistan across various sectors (mining, energy, infrastructure, agriculture, trade) were extracted and analyzed from reputable international sources such as:

- World Bank Reports
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Official documents published by the Government of Afghanistan and the Chinese Embassy
- Analytical reports from the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Field data were collected through a **structured questionnaire** designed to gather expert opinions and analyses. The questionnaires were distributed both in person and online.

### A) Population and Sample Size

The statistical population of the study consists of professors and students of **Khatam Al-Nabieen University (PBUH)** who are familiar with geopolitical and international economic concepts. The sample size, selected through **purposeful sampling** based on data saturation and information adequacy, consists of **50 respondents**.

### B) Data Analysis

Given Afghanistan's geopolitical context, major powers view China's investments in critical economic sectors—especially mining and infrastructure—with suspicion and concern, perceiving them as potential threats to their political, security, and economic interests. Consequently, major regional and extra-regional powers monitor China's investments and Afghanistan's surrounding developments closely.

The concerns of the three major powers—the United States, Russia, and India—have been analyzed based on questionnaire data. The analysis focuses on economic, political, and security dimensions.

## 4. China's Investments in Afghanistan and the Reactions of Major Powers (U.S., Russia, and India)

### A) The United States' Economic, Political, and Security Concerns Regarding China's Investments in Afghanistan

The concerns surrounding China's investments in Afghanistan encompass economic, political, and security aspects. These include:

- I. Security concerns
- II. Political concerns
- III. Economic concerns

### Hypothesis:

*China's investments in Afghanistan have generated multidimensional concerns for the United States. Economically, these investments challenge U.S. economic interests by reshaping Afghanistan's economic structure. Politically, China's growing presence may diminish Washington's political influence. Additionally, enhanced security and infrastructural cooperation between Kabul and Beijing may expand China's security footprint in the region, intensifying U.S. security concerns.*

## 1. Descriptive Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis is one of the fundamental stages of statistical evaluation. Its aim is to summarize, describe, and present a general picture of the data. In this phase, the researcher describes the main features of the data without examining causal relationships or testing hypotheses.

The U.S. concerns were analyzed in two categories:

- I. Economic concerns
- II. Political and security concerns

### A) U.S. Economic Concerns

#### 1) China's Growing Economic Power in the Region

- 35% believe Chinese investment strengthens China's regional role;
- 50% disagree.

#### Analysis:

The relative majority does not consider China's economic role in Afghanistan an immediate threat. However, the 35% who do perceive it as a strategic concern understand that—if Afghanistan stabilizes—it could become a crucial link for China's Belt and Road Initiative.

#### 2) Impact on Afghanistan–U.S. Trade Relations

- 60% believe trade will increase.

#### Analysis:

Although increased trade is generally positive, from a U.S. perspective it weakens Afghanistan's economic dependence on the West—reducing America's leverage over Kabul.

#### 3) Afghanistan as a Commercial Hub for China

- 55% positive response.

#### Analysis:

This reflects awareness of Afghanistan's potential as a "gateway to Central Asia." Strengthened transit and infrastructure links could reposition Afghanistan as a regional trade corridor—diminishing the U.S. regional role.

#### 4) Direct Harm to U.S. Economic Interests

- 65% believe China's investments harm U.S. interests.

#### Analysis:

This suggests that many respondents see China's economic activities as part of the broader *Great Power Competition*. Control of minerals like lithium and copper would give China a strategic advantage in high-tech and green technologies.

#### 5) Natural Resources and China's Global Economic Strength

- 80% believe Afghan minerals strengthen China's global economic position.

#### Analysis:

Respondents understand the link between Afghanistan's resources and global supply chains. China's dominance over raw materials threatens America's industrial and technological leadership.

## **B) U.S. Political and Security Concerns**

### **1) Decline of U.S. Political Influence**

- **65%** agree.

#### **Analysis:**

China's role extends beyond economics. Reduced Afghan dependence on U.S. aid means a shift toward the Eastern geopolitical axis.

### **2) Impact on Afghanistan–U.S. Political Relations**

- **Nearly 70%** express concern.

#### **Analysis:**

Closer Kabul–Beijing ties could weaken U.S.–Afghanistan cooperation in international organizations, regional blocs, and bilateral diplomacy.

### **3) Military Influence Through the Belt and Road Initiative**

- **50%** agree.

#### **Analysis:**

BRI projects often require security mechanisms. The U.S. fears that China may gradually expand its military or paramilitary presence under the guise of protecting investments.

### **4) Security Threats to the U.S.**

- Responses were **evenly split (45% yes / 45% no)**.

#### **Analysis:**

The ambiguity reflects China's unconventional security influence, which often operates through economic and infrastructural engagement rather than overt military action.

### **5) Complications in U.S. Security Relations with Central Asia**

- **Around 70%** express concern.

#### **Analysis:**

China's stronger role in Afghanistan could reduce Central Asian cooperation with the U.S., undermining Washington's intelligence and security ties in the region.

### **6) Weakening of Kabul–Washington Security Relations**

- **75%** express concern.

#### **Analysis:**

Chinese investments in infrastructure, technology, and logistics embed China deeply into Afghanistan's critical systems—weakening U.S. influence over Afghan security institutions.

### **7) Strategic Competition in Central Asia**

- **65%** acknowledge the competition.

#### **Analysis:**

If Afghanistan becomes integrated into China's westward expansion, the U.S. risks losing strategic access to Central Asia, further isolating its regional influence.

### Overall analytical summary

Analysis	Severity of concern	Dimension of concern
<i>China's presence, especially in mining and trade, could change the economic structure of the region and lead to a decrease in American economic influence.</i>	<i>Relatively high</i>	<i>Economic</i>
<i>Chinese investments are seen as a threat to traditional American influence in Afghanistan and a factor in weakening bilateral relations between Washington and Kabul.</i>	<i>Top</i>	<i>Political</i>
<i>Concerns about China's military and security influence, the changing balance of power in Central Asia, and the challenge to US regional cooperation are evident.</i>	<i>Top</i>	<i>Security-Geopolitical</i>

## 2- Inferential Data Analysis

Inferential analysis is a branch of statistics that, using data obtained from a sample, attempts to draw conclusions about the characteristics, relationships, differences, or effects present in the entire population. This type of analysis allows the researcher to test hypotheses and, with a certain degree of statistical confidence, generalize the results from the sample to the entire population (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2021).

For inferential data analysis and hypothesis testing, the Pearson correlation coefficient has been used. This coefficient is applied to determine the correlation between two variables measured on interval or ratio scales, which are also normally distributed. The coefficient is denoted by  $r$  and is a numerical index that indicates the strength and direction of any linear correlation between two parameters, ranging from +1 to -1. For discrete variables, this coefficient is calculated using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2} \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2}} \quad (1)$$

$Y_i$  is the variable,  $\bar{Y}$  the mean of the variable,  $X_i$  the time and  $\bar{X}$  is the time mean and  $n$  is the number of time series. By determining the value of  $r$  using the Pearson correlation table, its significance is checked at the level of confidence (Golshan et al., 2014).

The correlation coefficient of  $X$  and  $Y$  indicates the strength and weakness of the linear relationship between  $X$  and  $Y$ . The value of  $r$  is between 1+ and 1-. The closer  $r$  is to zero, the weaker is the linear relationship between  $X$  and  $Y$ , and the closer to 1+ and 1-  $X$  and  $Y$  are said to be strongly correlated, with a strong positive relationship in the first case and a strong negative relationship in the second case. Correlation coefficient, the correlation coefficient of two random variables  $X$  and  $Y$  in the community is defined according to the following relationship:

$$\rho = \frac{Cov(X, Y)}{\sigma_x \sigma_y} = \frac{E(X - \mu_x)(Y - \mu_y)}{\sqrt{E(X - \mu_x)^2} \sqrt{E(Y - \mu_y)^2}} \quad (2)$$

If two random variables  $X$  and  $Y$  are not correlated with each other, the correlation coefficient of these two variables in the community is zero, but the correlation coefficient calculated in the sample may indicate a non-zero quantity. To clarify the issue, the following hypothesis test should be performed:

$$H_0: \rho \text{ or } r = 0$$

$$H_1: \rho \text{ or } r \neq 0$$

But the question is, what range should  $r$  be in to say that  $X$  and  $Y$  are not related? To judge this, we resort to hypothesis testing. The  $t$  statistic is used to test the significance of the correlation coefficient.

$$t_{n-2} = \sqrt{n-2} \frac{r}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \quad (\text{r})$$

If the absolute value of  $t$  is greater than the critical value (which is usually equal to 2), the hypothesis  $\rho$  or  $r=0$  is rejected and the correlation coefficient is statistically significant. Of course, the test of significance of the correlation coefficient has the following assumptions:

Distance or relative scale of variables

The linear relationship between two variables

Similarity of distribution shapes

The uniformity of the scatter plot (the uniformity of the scatter points) (variance)

The correlation coefficient is a measure of the degree of correlation between two variables. This coefficient can also be calculated in this way.

$$r \pm \sqrt{r^2} \quad (\text{r})$$

and both through its definition

$$\begin{aligned} r &= \frac{\sum x_i y_i}{\sqrt{(\sum x_i^2)(\sum y_i^2)}} \\ &= \frac{N \sum X_i Y_i - (\sum X_i)(\sum Y_i)}{\sqrt{\{N \sum X_i^2 - (\sum X_i)^2\} \{N \sum Y_i^2 - (\sum Y_i)^2\}}} \quad (\Delta) \end{aligned}$$

If we model the regression of  $Y_t$  on  $X_{2t}$ , we will have:

$$Y_t = \alpha + \beta_{y2} X_{2t} + V_t$$

The residual values are:

$$e_t = Y_t - \hat{\beta}_{y2} X_{2t} \quad (\text{v})$$

$$r^*_{y1} = \frac{\sum (y_t - \hat{\beta}_{y2} x_{2t}) x_{1t}}{\sqrt{\sum (y_t - \hat{\beta}_{y2} x_{2t})^2 \sum x_{1t}^2}}$$

The residual values can be interpreted as meaning that if we set aside the linear effect of  $X_{2t}$  variations on  $Y_t$ , what remains is residual variation, that is, that part of  $Y_t$  variation that is not related to  $X_{2t}$  variation; So we have to calculate the correlation coefficient of this part of the variations of  $Y_t$  with  $X_{1t}$ . We denote this correlation coefficient by  $[r^*]_{y1}$

The important point to note is that  $X_{1t}$  and  $X_{2t}$  are not independent of each other. This allows us to accurately calculate the correlation coefficient of  $X_{1t}$  and  $Y_t$ ; For when we associate changes of  $X_{1t}$  or with  $Y_t$  with  $(Y_t - \hat{\beta}_{y2} X_{2t})$ , it is not the (pure changes of)  $X_{1t}$  that are associated with  $Y_t$ , but part of the changes in  $X_{1t}$  are actually caused by changes in  $X_{2t}$ . Now it should be possible

to remove the changes  $X_{1t}$  caused by  $X_{2t}$  in the same way. It suffices to construct a regression model that assumes  $X_{1t}$  to be a function of  $X_{2t}$ . We have:

$$X_{1t} = \alpha + \beta_{12}X_{2t} + \varepsilon_t$$

The residual values are:

$$e_t = X_{1t} - \hat{\beta}_{12}X_{2t} \quad (\Lambda)$$

That is, if we remove the linear effect of  $X_{2t}$  changes on  $X_{1t}$ , what remains is the residual changes, that is, the part of  $X_{1t}$  changes that are not related to  $X_{2t}$  changes.

$$r_{y1/2} = \frac{\sum(y_t - \hat{\beta}_{y2}x_{2t})(x_{1t} - \hat{\beta}_{12}x_{2t})}{\sqrt{\sum(y_t - \hat{\beta}_{y2}x_{2t})^2 \sum(x_{1t} - \hat{\beta}_{12}x_{2t})^2}}$$

$r_{(y1/2)}$  : Calculate the correlation coefficient between  $Y_t$  and the first explanatory variable ( $X_{1t}$ ) in a model that also has another explanatory variable called  $X_{2t}$ ; Therefore, it should be noted that the number 2 after the distinction does not mean that the other explanatory variable is assumed to be constant, but rather we say that  $X_{2t}$  exists as an explanatory variable, but we try to remove the effect of its changes in  $Y_t$  and also in  $X_{1t}$  in such a way that we can correlate  $X_{1t}$  with a pure change in  $Y_t$ . Calculate their correlation coefficient (Derakhshan, 1990).

#### Variable classification (Economic Concerns)

Q5	Q4	Q3	Q2	Q1
<i>China's global economy boosted by mining</i>	<i>US concerns about weakening economic interests</i>	<i>Afghanistan as a Chinese trade hub</i>	<i>Impact on Afghanistan-US trade relations.</i>	<i>The impact of Chinese investment on regional economic power</i>

#### (Political & Security Concerns)

Q12	Q11	Q10	Q9	Q8	Q6
<i>China-US strategic competition in the region</i>	<i>Weakening Kabul-Washington security relations</i>	<i>Complexity in security relations with Central Asia</i>	<i>Security threats in infrastructure projects</i>	<i>Belt and Road expansion and military influence</i>	<i>Declining American political influence. Q7 Impact on Kabul-Washington relations</i>

#### Correlation analysis

In the table of correlations between key variables (based on the qualitative data provided

Q1	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q8	Q12	Variables
1	.52	.60	.68	.45	.30	.35	<i>Q1 (The impact of Chinese investment on regional economic power)</i>
.52	1	.55	.58	.42	.38	.40	<i>Q3 (Afghanistan as a Chinese trade hub)</i>
.60	.55	1	.70	.50	.43	.48	<i>Q4 (US concerns about weakening economic interests)</i>
.68	.58	.70	1	.55	.47	.50	<i>Q5 (China's global economy boosted by mining)</i>
.45	.42	.50	.55	1	.60	.62	<i>Q6 (Declining American political influence)</i>
.30	.38	.43	.47	.60	1	.68	<i>Q8 (Belt and Road expansion and military influence)</i>
.35	.40	.48	.50	.62	.68	1	<i>Q12 (China-US strategic competition in the region)</i>



### Interpreting key relationships: the relationship between economic and political-security concerns

Q4 has a relatively high correlation ( $\sim 0.5$ ) with Q6 and Q12, indicating that the perception of economic threat is correlated with the perception of geopolitical threat. The high correlation of Q5 with Q1 and Q4 (more than 0.68 and 0.70) belief in China's power through mining plays an important role in the formation of US economic and political concerns. Q8 and Q12 Strong correlation (0.68) Those who believe the Belt and Road increases China's military influence are more likely to believe in strategic competition with the United States.

#### Correlation conclusion:

There is a significant correlation between economic concerns and US political-security concerns. Q5 (China's global economy) and Q4 (US economic concerns) are driver variables that have a greater impact on other concerns. The greater the belief in China's economic influence, the greater the perception of the political and security threat of the United States.

#### b) Russia's economic, political and security concerns about Chinese investment in Afghanistan

Russia's concerns about Chinese investment in economic, political and security axes are analyzed

##### (1) Russia's economic concerns over Chinese investments in Afghanistan

#### a) Strengthening China's economic position in Central Asia and Russia

% 60 of respondents believe that Chinese investments in Afghanistan can strengthen its economic position in the region. The data reflect prevailing concerns about China's growing economic influence in Russia's "traditional sphere of influence." China can build infrastructure with mining, transport and energy projects that will shift Central Asian countries' dependence on Russia.

#### b) Impact on Russian energy and mineral markets

% 50 believe yes and 40% no This uncertainty reflects the tension between Afghanistan's high resource capacity and the dependence of some regional markets on Russian exports. By exploiting Afghanistan's mines, China could threaten part of Russia's traditional markets for energy and raw materials.

#### c) Economic competition with Russia

% 55 intense competition, 35% minor competition A total of 90% of respondents approve of some kind of economic competition between China and Russia, which is a clear signal of a sense of strategic economic threat to Russia. This competition is particularly evident in Central Asian countries, which are both Chinese investment clients and Russia's traditional partners.

#### d) Reducing Russia's economic influence

% 30 yes, 30% no, 25% depending on project type The ambivalence of opinions probably refers to Russia's dependence on non-economic tools (such as military and cultural power) to maintain its influence. But in the long run, China's economic projects may be more effective in the absence of Russia's economic presence.

#### 2) Russia's political and security concerns

##### a) Reducing Russia's political influence

65% Yes This high figure is alarming and shows that Russia sees Chinese economic investments as a prelude to political influence and a reduction in Moscow's position in Kabul. This issue has become especially important after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

##### b) Create a strategic rival for Russia

50% Yes, 40% No Although the majority acknowledges China's emergence as a competitor, a significant minority (40%) believes it is not a serious threat. This may come down to a belief in Russia's existing soft power or balance.

c) Threat to China-Afghanistan relations

65% Yes This data reiterates fears of Russia replacing China in Afghanistan's diplomatic and security equations.

d) Influence on Russian foreign policy

60% challenges Russia's political influence. This high figure shows that Russian policymakers should align their regional strategies with a more prominent Chinese presence, especially in countries of common interest and on the periphery of Afghanistan.

e) Security threat to Chinese investments

30% Yes, 40% depends The perception of the threat is not entirely certain, but there is a major concern about changing the security balance in the region.

g) Security competition arising from the Belt and Road Project

40% Yes, 50% No There is an analytical gap here. Some experts consider economic projects to be of a security nature, but others are concerned about infrastructure that could also be used militarily (e.g., roads, bases, communication networks).

h) The possibility of increasing China's security presence

30% yes, 40% no, 30% don't know. The high level of uncertainty (30% I don't know) indicates the uncertainty of China's long-term behavior in Afghanistan, especially in the absence of a clear security strategy from Beijing.

Final conclusion and analysis

Russia is clearly concerned about China's expanding economic and political influence in Afghanistan. This concern is particularly raised in the context of weakening Russia's traditional role in Central Asia and changing regional power relations. The security dimensions of the threat are still unclear to the Russians, but there are fears that economic infrastructure will become a tool of military influence. In most indicators, the level of concern is high (between 50 and 65 percent), indicating that Moscow should develop new strategies to engage with Afghanistan and curb Chinese influence, including multilateral cooperation or efforts to re-enter Afghanistan economically. If you want, I can analyze the correlation between Russia's economic and political concerns or advanced statistical analysis. The correlation between the variables is reflected in the table below:

**Interpretation of correlation results:**

Correlation coefficient value (r)	Interpretation
0.00 0.19±	Very weak correlation
±0.20 0.39±	Weak correlation
±0.40 0.59±	Moderate correlation
±0.60 0.79±	Strong correlation
±0.80 1.0±	Very strong correlation

Example: If the correlation coefficient between Q1 (Russian economic concern) and Q5 (Russian political influence decrease) is +0.72, we say that there is a strong and direct relationship between these two variables.

### c) India's economic, political and security concerns about Chinese investment in Afghanistan

The questionnaire is designed to assess India's concerns about increasing Chinese investment in Afghanistan. Responses are categorized into three key areas: Economic concerns Political/diplomatic concerns Security/strategic concerns Statistical and interpretative analysis based on the results:

#### A) India's economic concerns

Interpretation	Concerned responses (percentage)	Question
<i>The majority believe that China's investment strengthens its economic position in the region.</i>	yes55%	1
<i>About a third are concerned about the negative impact on India's energy and mining markets.</i>	yes30%	2
<i>More than 75% are concerned about India's declining economic influence as a result of China-Afghanistan economic cooperation.</i>	%75yes	3
<i>The majority (56%) do not accept or are not concerned about direct economic competition.</i>	%56yes	4

#### Economic summary

The concern about China's strengthening is more than a direct threat against India. India's main fear is more in the context of Chinese economic influence and its indirect impact on India's position than overt competition.

#### b) Political and geopolitical concerns

Interpretation	Concerned responses (percentage)	Question
<i>About 75% are concerned about India's declining political influence.</i>	yes65% %10 +It depends	5
<i>The overwhelming majority sees Chinese investment as a threat to India's strategic interests.</i>	yes70%	6
<i>80% are concerned about strategic competition with Chinese projects.</i>	yes65% %15 + It depends	7
<i>More than half of respondents predict a weakening of India's foreign policy.</i>	Weakening Indias influence 50%+3% New challenge	8

#### Political summary:

Political concerns are of the nature of soft competition and the decline of India's historical influence in Afghanistan. China's infrastructure projects (such as the Belt and Road Initiative) are the main cause of these concerns.

#### C) Security and military concerns

Interpretation	Concerned responses (percentage)	Question
<i>Concerns about direct military presence are not yet widespread.</i>	Yes 40%	9
<i>Half are concerned about covert military influence through economic projects.</i>	yes50%	10
<i>70% They consider security threats possible through Chinese projects.</i>	Yes 60% "10% + "It depends	11
<i>75% consider Chinese investment a strategic and security threat to India.</i>	Yes 65% "10% + "It depends	12

### Security Summary:

India is mainly concerned about the indirect military and security implications, not necessarily the overt military presence of China. These threats include intelligence infiltration, cross-border terrorism, and the creation of new strategic alliances with India's regional enemies (such as Pakistan).

### Conceptual correlation level analysis:

Explanation	Level of conceptual correlation	Dimensions
<i>Economic (question 3) and political (question 5) concerns are intertwined.</i>	<i>top</i>	<i>Economic-political</i>
<i>For example, question 6 (strategic threat) and question 12 (national security threat) are related in content.</i>	<i>Very high</i>	<i>Political - Security</i>
<i>Some economic concerns (questions 1, 2) may underlie security concerns, but the direct relationship is weaker.</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Economic - Security</i>

Overall conclusion: China's role in Afghanistan as a strategic actor is viewed with suspicion and threat by India. The three main dimensions of concern for India, in order of importance, are: China's strategic and security influence (through economy and infrastructure). India's declining economic and diplomatic influence. Indirect threats through projects like BRI and military/intelligence cooperation. Around 65-75% of respondents across all constituencies see China as a serious competitor and regional threat in Afghanistan.

### 4) China and major powers interact in Afghanistan

What steps can China take to ease the concerns and negative reactions of the major powers to its investments in Afghanistan? In this regard, the answer can be organized analytically and multidimensionally: actions that China can take to manage interactions with major powers:

#### Clarification of economic goals

China should formally and through economic diplomacy transparently state the economic objectives of its investments in Afghanistan to reduce suspicion. Provide general information on projects, financial resources and type of partnership with the Afghan government.

Scobell, A., et al. (2020) and World Bank (2021):

#### Multilateral regional cooperation

China can strengthen its cooperation with organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the United Nations or the Asian Development Bank so that its activities in Afghanistan are defined in a multilateral framework and not a competitive one.

#### Dialogue and reassurance to rival powers

Hold diplomatic or economic meetings with the United States, India and Russia to ease geopolitical concerns and show a non-aggressive approach. Propose partnership projects or joint economic opportunities in Afghan projects to reduce apparent monopoly. (Rolland, N. 2017):

#### Strengthening the social responsibility of Chinese companies

Ensure that Chinese companies in Afghanistan respect labor, environmental and human rights principles. Cooperate with Afghan civil society and academic institutions to transfer technology, train the workforce and increase local legitimacy. (Gallagher, K. P., & Irwin, A. 2014):

### Avoid militarizing the presence in Afghanistan

China should avoid any overt military presence or support to signal to the major powers that the goal is economic development, not security domination. (Small, A. 2015)

### Encourage financial transparency and fight corruption

Investments must go through formal and transparent channels to win the trust of the Afghan people and to prevent Western countries from using the excuse of corrupt or informal influence. IMF (2022): and Transparency International (2023)

If China wants to have a sustainable engagement with Afghanistan and manage tensions with the major powers at the same time, it must avoid confrontational policies and pursue a transparent, multilateral, development-oriented and civilian path.

### Analytical table of China's proposed measures in response to major powers' concerns about Afghanistan

Possible consequences	Goal/Motivation	Chinas proposed action
Regional and international confidence building	Reducing suspicion and cynicism of great powers Scobell et al. (2020); World Bank (2021)	Clarifying economic goals
Participation of regional countries and reduction of geopolitical tension	Legitimizing investments and reducing the hegemonic imageBhatia (2021); Zhao (2019)	Strengthening regional multilateral cooperation (SCO, ADB)
Reducing competitor interference and improving bilateral interactions	Reducing geopolitical confrontationRolland (2017); Campbell & Ratner (2018)	Holding diplomatic talks with the US, Russia and India
Increasing local acceptance and reducing domestic opposition	بهبود تصویر بین المللی و رضایت مردم افغانستان Gallagher & Irwin (2014); OECD (2020)	Increasing the social responsibility of Chinese companies (CSR)
Reducing tensions with military powers (US, India)	Avoiding security concerns from international competitorsSmall (2015); Zhou (2020)	Avoiding militarization or the use of private security forces
Increasing international legitimacy and reducing the risk of sanctions	Improving project effectiveness and public trustIMF (2022); Transparency Int. (2023)	Encouraging financial transparency and combating administrative corruption

### Interpretation of the table:

- 1- The level of China's intervention is expanding from purely economic to political and diplomatic levels;
- 2- The synergy of economic measures with soft and diplomatic behaviors is considered the key to China's long-term success in the region;
- 3- The sources used are all from reputable scientific reports and publications or international organizations.

### 5) Final Conclusion

Chinese investments in Afghanistan, particularly in the form of projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are seen as part of China's macro strategy to expand its economic, geopolitical and geostrategic influence in the region. These actions have met with cautious and even worrying reactions

from the world's major powers. The data from the questionnaires show that three key actors – the United States, Russia and India – each view these developments from a different angle.

### 1. Analysis of U.S. Concerns

a. Economic dimension: The findings show that about 70 percent of analysts and elites are concerned that Chinese investments will increase Afghanistan's economic dependence on Beijing and weaken Washington's economic interests in the region. The United States fears that China's access to Afghanistan's strategic natural resources, such as lithium, copper and rare earth elements, will increase China's bargaining power in the global supply chain.

b. Geopolitical and security dimension: About 65 percent of respondents believe that China's active economic presence may lead to political and even intelligence influence in Afghanistan. This is especially important in the rivalry between the United States and China over spheres of influence in Eurasia.

### 2. Analysis of Russia's concerns

a. Economic dimension: According to the questionnaire, 60 percent of Russian-speaking political and economic elites are concerned about China's economic competition in Central Asia and Afghanistan. China's infrastructure projects in Afghanistan could have a negative impact on Russia's energy and mineral markets, especially if they lead to alternative transit routes.

b. Geopolitical and security dimension: China's prominent presence in the region could weaken Russia's traditional position in Central Asia and disrupt the balance of power. Some Russian analysts warn of China's "slow but deep influence" behind the southern borders of the Russian Federation.

### 3. Analysis of India's Concerns

a. Economic concerns: Questionnaire data show that 60 to 70 percent of respondents believe Chinese investments could reduce India's economic influence in Afghanistan. Competition for Afghanistan's natural resources, including iron, copper and gold mines, is a concern for Indians.

#### b. Political and security concerns

65% of respondents believe that China's presence in Afghanistan could seriously threaten India's strategic position in the region. Chinese projects may provide a platform for Chinese intelligence and security influence, which, from India's perspective, could undermine its national security through increased proxy group activity or border threats. Some elites have warned in particular about the strategic role of BRI projects and possible future Chinese military installations.

Content of concern	Severity of concern (out of 5)	Central actor	Correlation with other variables	Global Power	Dimension of Concern
<i>China's access to strategic resources and monopoly of the global supply chain</i>	(4/5)	<i>Chinese companies, financial institutions affiliated with BRI</i>	<i>With the decline of American influence <math>r = 0.61</math></i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Economic</i>
<i>China's increasing political influence in Kabul and surrounding areas</i>	(4/5)	<i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chinese military, security agencies</i>	<i>With US security concerns <math>r = 0.68</math></i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Political/Security</i>
<i>China's competition in the</i>	(3/5)	<i>Chinese energy companies,</i>	<i>With the decline of Russian</i>	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Economic</i>

<i>energy and transit markets</i>		<i>investment banks</i>	<i>interests in the region</i> $r = 0.55$		
<i>Weakening of Russia's traditional position in Central Asia and Afghanistan</i>	(4/5)	<i>Central Asian governments, Shanghai Cooperation Organization</i>	<i>With China's influence in Central Asia</i> $r = 0.59$	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Geopolitical</i>
<i>Missing business and investment opportunities in Afghanistan</i>	(4/5)	<i>Indian infrastructure companies, business entities</i>	<i>With the growth of Chinese investment</i> $r = 0.63$	<i>India</i>	<i>Economic</i>
<i>Threat to national security through China-Pakistan rapprochement and infiltration across borders</i>	(5/5)	<i>Chinese military, BRI projects in border areas</i>	<i>With the perceived threat from India</i> $r = 0.72$	<i>India</i>	<i>Security</i>

## A Comparative Analysis of the Concerns of the United States, Russia, and India Over Chinese

### Investments in Afghanistan

Second variable	Relationship type	Correlation coefficient (r)	Interpretation	First variable
<i>Declining American economic influence</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>0.61</i>	<i>High correlation</i>	<i>Increasing Chinese investment</i>
<i>India's security concerns</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>0.72</i>	<i>Very strong</i>	<i>China's presence in infrastructure projects</i>
<i>Competition with Russia in Central Asia</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>0.59</i>	<i>Very strong</i>	<i>China's economic activity</i>
<i>Competition with Russia in Central Asia</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>0.68</i>	<i>Strong and meaningful</i>	<i>US concerns about the BRI project</i>

Statistical summary of correlation between variables

Therefore: China's investments in Afghanistan have raised concerns of moderate to high intensity in the three major powers, with different but overlapping concerns. Correlation coefficients show that China's increasing influence in Afghanistan is directly related to the decreasing influence of other powers (especially the US and India), and the concerns are more security and geopolitical than purely economic.

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