

Research article

Diplomacy and Cooperation Between China and Afghanistan in Maintaining Security and Stability

Wiwiek Rukmi Dwi Astuti, Raden Maisa Yudono, and Garcia Krisnando Nathanael

UPN Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia

ORCID

Wiwiek Rukmi Dwi Astuti: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2562-6216>

Abstract.

This study examines the diplomacy and cooperation between China and Afghanistan in maintaining security and stability. The two countries seek to improve diplomatic relations as a strategy to fulfill their national interests. The authors employed a qualitative method using secondary data from books, journals, and online news. It was found that with the establishment of security and stability, China can achieve China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) plan. On the other hand, Afghanistan needs investment in enhancing the country's development.

Keywords: China, Afghanistan, international cooperation, diplomacy

Corresponding Author: Wiwiek
 Rukmi Dwi Astuti; email:
wiwiek.rukmi@upnvj.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Diplomatic relations between China and Afghanistan have been carried out since 1955. In 2013, the strategic cooperation between China and Afghanistan was further deepened with continuous progress in various fields [1]. China supported the reconstruction process and assists in Afghanistan. The two sides have deepened bilateral relations, international and regional issues of mutual interest.

In 2017, China was involved in maintaining peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan and establishing trilateral cooperation, between China, Afghanistan and Pakistan committed to cooperation under the Belt and Road, the three countries affirmed their willingness to strengthen cooperation in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and fight terrorism. [2]

During the pandemic, China has pledged 200 million yuan worth of aid to Afghanistan including food supplies and a COVID-19 vaccine [3]. This assistance was to maintain good communication between the Taliban government, in contrast to the United States which still did not fully acknowledge the Taliban government.


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Afghanistan has been highlighted by the international community for having a humanitarian crisis that escalated even before the Taliban seized control. The return of the Taliban made foreign governments do not believe in its existence especially to respect the rights of women and minorities [4]. This caused many foreign countries to feel threatened by the existence of the Taliban group.

Many countries have been shocked by the news of the Taliban group taking control of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, China was no exception. The Taliban first emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan and want Afghanistan to return to law, security, and justice on Islamic grounds [5].

In 2014, leaders from the Taliban visited China and Beijing accepted the group's position as a stakeholder in domestic politics in Afghanistan. After the Taliban continued to strive for victories on the battlefield in 2020, Beijing realized that the group was back in power and not easy to defeat.

This phenomenon is interesting to study to find out how diplomacy and international cooperation are carried out by China and Afghanistan. In addition, the national interests of each country are certainly a certain reason for forming this relationship. This study aims to determine the national interests of each country and how diplomacy and cooperation can achieve security stability to meet these national interests.

1.1. Diplomacy

Diplomacy is considered present as long as civilization still exists where there is a structured communication system between two or more parties. Historically, the origins of diplomacy lie in the human community's first decision to reach an understanding with their surroundings about the boundaries of hunting areas and the boundaries of identities that are formed through the way they interact with one another. The beginnings of diplomatic exchanges allowed them to establish some ground rules for representation, communication, and conflict management, but they did not result in the establishment of permanent institutions.

In International Relations, the development of diplomatic practice around the world has been marked by different perceptions. Different regions of the world have different perceptions about the role of their diplomats in the government system such as the goals, methods used, responsibilities, influence, and power which are far from universal. Their relative importance to international affairs has dwindled and expanded throughout history. Therefore, diplomatic practice is historically and geographically located.

According to K.J Holsti (1967), diplomacy in International Relations is an instrument of foreign policy along with propaganda, economic rewards, and punishments, threats, or use of force to destroy or punish. This is also explained by Morgenthau (1967) who stated that diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument was not given much attention. If diplomacy can be used properly it will provide significant gains in power and morale multiplier. Good diplomacy will increase more instruments of power so that countries can achieve what they want more easily and can pursue foreign policy goals peacefully so that they can give an idea of what needs to be done.

According to Brown and Ainley, diplomacy refers to influencing efforts by relying on negotiations . Meanwhile, according to Bjola, the definition of diplomacy is essentially about managing and maintaining international order. Bjola explained diplomacy at the micro and macro levels, which is at the micro-level diplomacy means diplomats build friendly relations while at the macro level diplomacy contributes through the core functions of representation, communication, and negotiation to produce and distribute public goods globally such as security, development, sustainable environment and others. other. Diplomacy is no longer only filled by representatives of foreign services such as diplomats but also by representatives of other ministries, multinational companies, organizations, civil society, and even influential individuals who do not represent certain countries, organizations, or companies. Not only that, diplomacy is not only involved in external issues but is increasingly involved in issues that are currently mostly handled at the domestic level, such as the economy, environment, health, and migration .

Traditionally, diplomacy is involved in communication to achieve certain goals such as the protection of the state against external intervention, namely in the field of security. In the twentieth century, diplomatic communication has evolved to address many issues such as economic welfare, development, environmental protection, health, and migration control. According to a book from the Oxford Handbooks in Politics and International Relations, there have been changes in the world of diplomacy, such as :

1. In the rapidly growing number and type of actors, from government to national private sector companies, multinational corporations (MNCs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and regional and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs);
2. The rapidly growing and broad scope of various public policy sectors and government activities that can go beyond foreign policy;
3. The level of diplomatic involvement and activity takes place from local through domestic or national, bilateral, regional, and global;
4. In the apparatus of foreign relations and diplomacy;

5. In the manner, types, and techniques of diplomacy.

1.2. Bilateral Cooperation

The concept of international cooperation, in particular, has been used in the international relations literature which has debated how cooperation emerges and persists in an anarchic international system. Linguistically, cooperation refers to the practice of people or entities working together with a chosen collective agreement rather than working separately in competition. Meanwhile, according to K.J Holsti the definitions of international cooperation are :

1. Having a view of two or more interests, values, or goals so that they can produce something
2. Having the view of a country that the policies decided by other countries can help the country in achieving its interests
3. Having an agreement between two or more countries in exploiting equality or conflict of interest
4. Have official rules or not regarding future transactions carried out in carrying out the agreement
5. Conduct transactions between countries in compliance with their agreements

According to Robert Keohane in Grieco cooperation is when actors adjust their behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others through a policy coordination process. Cooperation is usually opposed to competition or conflict which implies goal-seeking behavior.

In conducting relations with foreign countries, countries, and organizations cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally. At the organizational level such as the United Nations, member countries have worked together to reach joint decisions and carry out cooperation at the regional or other group levels, this is called multilateral cooperation. As for bilateral, it involves countries dealing directly with each other to provide benefits, and facilitate cooperation between the two parties.

In the era of globalization, bilateral cooperation includes prioritizing economic fields such as promoting trade to carry out investment activities, cultural exchanges, education, tourism, and so on. Activities carried out in bilateral cooperation are following the rubric of bilateral diplomacy. Bilateral cooperation is certainly carried out by every

country because basically, countries need other countries to achieve their national interests which cannot be fulfilled.

2. Method

This study uses qualitative research methods by exploring the phenomenon of diplomacy and bilateral cooperation by China and Afghanistan. In addition, researchers also apply descriptive-analytic to the research process with an inductive nature, prioritizing meaning, and making interpretations [6]. The data used is secondary data from books, journals, and online news.

2.1. Diplomacy between China and Afghanistan to Achieve Security

The withdrawal of the United States military in Afghanistan made China ready to establish relations with Afghanistan under the leadership of the Taliban group. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that China does not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs but that the country is trying to avoid escalating the conflict and normalizing relations by conducting negotiations. Wang called on the Taliban to take responsibility for the interests of the country and people in Afghanistan [2].

Afghanistan's economy is in free fall. Indigence threatens the country since all foreign aid are practically suspended because of the Taliban's violent takeover. That is also include the extensive international sanctions from all over the world.

China is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan, spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that Beijing welcomes the Taliban's statement about wanting to maintain good relations with China, including cooperation in the field of reconstruction and development in Afghanistan [7].

According to China, stability from Afghanistan is also key to the success of major belt and road projects in South and Central Asia, which include special economic zones as well as energy and transportation infrastructure. In carrying out cooperation, China considers economic and security interests in its decisions. In the security field, Afghanistan's security is an important factor for China's stability and security, China has concerns about the spread of Islamic extremism to the Uyghur minority and is concerned about the possible impact of the group on separatist activities [8].

Furthermore, China also has an economic interest in Afghanistan where Afghanistan has copper, coal, gold, and other natural resources which are still untapped [9]. Not

only that, both parties have an important role in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has made investments such as the Mes Aynak copper mine project and the Amu Darya Basin Oil project, this certainly helps Afghanistan's development progress. This opportunity has prompted China to continue investing through state-owned and private enterprises. [8]

To be able to achieve these interests, China needs to carry out diplomacy with Afghanistan. This strategy is the right policy because diplomacy can help to produce, manage and distribute public goods. The definition of diplomacy can be done by fulfilling three main features. First, diplomacy at the most basic level of communication. More precisely, it is about distinctive and institutionalized forms of communication. There are a large number of rules and norms that are socialized by diplomats and these rules and norms have governed the communication between diplomats or representatives of their countries. The second is the process of double acknowledgment to make individuals as actors in diplomatic relations. This process concerns the ambassador representing the country because the state is still recognized as an entity on the diplomatic stage. Lastly, diplomacy is about producing, managing, and distributing public goods that are essential for the well-being of a community.

To support the idea of diplomacy, China can also be supported based on international cooperation by fulfilling five motives for reaching an agreement, such as (1) maintaining the national interest; (2) keeping the peace; (3) improving economic welfare; (4) having the view of a country that the policies decided by other countries can help the country in achieving its interests; (5) having an agreement between two or more countries in exploiting equality or conflict of interest .

The state of Afghanistan is an important discussion for China where the security situation in Afghanistan will hinder China's ability to invest in it. China hopes for the Taliban to honor its commitment to an open and inclusive Islamic government [10]. To further its security goals of denying Taliban support to anti-Chinese militants, the Chinese government will rely mostly on Pakistan, Russia, and the chances of Chinese economic and diplomatic ties with the Taliban regime [11].

3. Conclusion

China welcomes Afghanistan's efforts, through the Taliban, to establish cooperative relations. After experiencing internal conflict in the country, Afghanistan seeks to restore conditions. On the other hand, China also supports security stability efforts to support China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In achieving the interests of China and Afghanistan,

the two countries need to reach an agreement that can be reached through diplomacy. This strategy can be pursued if they can have views and goals to produce mutual benefits. In addition, rules are also needed to bind both parties in meeting the requirements that have been set.

International cooperation and diplomacy carried out by China and Afghanistan have the potential to achieve their respective interests. This can be seen from the motives they seek, such as maintaining peace and increasing economic prosperity. However, both parties need to ensure that the cooperation process that will be carried out can be mutually beneficial and run according to the approved agreement.

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