



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on September 15, 2023

China First to Appoint Ambassador to Afghanistan Since Taliban Takeover

Beijing continues to move forward with its diplomacy warfare, building bridges with pariah states that have been ostracized by the Washington-led global establishment.

In a surprising move, China on Wednesday became the first nation to officially appoint a new ambassador to Afghanistan since the Taliban took power there. The Chinese envoy was given credentials during a ceremony in Kabul.

A foreign ministry spokesman for the Taliban told [Reuters](#) that the new Chinese ambassador, Zhao Xing, was the first to be named by a country since August 2021, when the Taliban took over. There are other foreign envoys in Kabul who hold the ambassador title, but they were appointed before the Taliban returned to power.



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Since August 2021, some countries and foreign entities, such as Pakistan and the European Union, have sent senior diplomats on diplomatic missions to Afghanistan using the title “chargé d’affaires,” which does not require the presentation of diplomatic credentials to the government of the host nation.

The office of Taliban spokesman Bilal Karimi published photos of the Wednesday ceremony held at Afghanistan’s presidential palace. At the event, Zhao was received by top officials, such as acting Prime Minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund and acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

“The Honorable Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate thanked the leadership of China for the appointment of Mr Zhao Sheng [Xing] as ambassador and expressed hope that this appointment would elevate the diplomatic relations between the two countries to a higher level and the beginning of a new chapter,” Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid [said](#) in a statement.

Zhao said China does not want to interfere in Afghanistan’s affairs and maintained that Beijing is not intending for the Middle Eastern country “to become its area of influence.”

The Chinese ambassador called China “a good neighbor of Afghanistan” that “fully respects Afghanistan’s independence, territorial integrity and independence in decision-making.”

Despite the controversial nature of doing business in Afghanistan since the accession of the Taliban, known for its fundamentalist Islamic policies and suppression of Western values, China and other foreign interests *are* doing business there, making use of the country’s vast mineral deposits.

As [The New American](#) previously reported, the Taliban claims to have signed contracts worth \$6.5 billion to let Chinese, British, Iranian, and Turkish companies conduct mining operations in Afghanistan.



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For instance, gold mines in Takhar province will be worked by the China-Afghanistan Company and have attracted a \$310 million investment. Meanwhile, British companies GBM and AD Resources have partnered with Afghanistan's Shamsh corporation to pour \$572 million into an iron mine in Ghoryan, which will also be under the purview of the Turkish company Epcol, which also has an investment in a lead mine in Ghor province.

Chinese investment has proven to be crucial to Afghanistan, which lacks access to funding from sources such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) due to accusations that the Taliban is a terrorist organization and a violator of human rights.

The Taliban has signed deals with Beijing allowing China to build factories in Afghanistan, extract Afghan oil, and even put surveillance systems in place to facilitate the Taliban's efforts to control the populace.

Moreover, Afghanistan is eager to participate in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure development strategy through which China funds projects in poorer nations.

The Taliban sustained itself for years on the lucrative heroin trade. Although it ostensibly put an end to the practice, banning poppy farming last year, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that the Taliban is merely moving to another product: methamphetamine.

As Lynne O'Donnell, writing at [ForeignPolicy.com](#) notes:

The UNODC agrees, with an assessment released on Sunday describing the illegal manufacture of meth in Afghanistan as a "growing threat" that is "changing illicit drug markets traditionally focused on the trafficking of opiates from Afghanistan." Chemical precursors have become the main ingredient, the report said, derived from legally available sources like cold medicine or bulk industrial ephedrine that are smuggled into Afghanistan year-round. One kilogram of pure meth can be produced from less than 2 kilos of industrial ephedrine, compared to 200 kilos of ephedra plant that have to be harvested and prepared by human beings who like to get paid.

The Taliban have been moving into meth for some years, building markets by including it in shipments of heroin. Australian media has reported huge seizures of Afghan meth, sent through the mail from Pakistan to motorcycle gangs that dominate the trade. Compared to heroin, a little goes longer, and the UNODC report shows the Taliban are trading it to every corner of the world.

Once more, the Chinese demonstrate both a willingness to work with anyone who can help them along their path to geopolitical ascendance (regardless of ideology) and a knack for striking favorable foreign deals that bring more money — and influence — back home to Beijing.



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