

# CHINA, PAK., AFGHANISTAN AGREE TO BOOST THREE-WAY TIES

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Wang Yi, centre, hosting a meeting with Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Amir Khan Muttaqi in Anhui province.APZhou Mu

China on Thursday said it would deepen three-way cooperation with Afghanistan and Pakistan as the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in eastern China.

“Under the current circumstances, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan should restart the trilateral cooperation mechanism and advance cooperation in the three areas of politics, development and security based on the principles of mutual respect, equal-footed consultation and mutual benefit,” Foreign Minister Wang Yi said following talks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Acting Foreign Minister of Taliban government Amir Khan Muttaqi.

China on Wednesday and Thursday hosted the third summit of Foreign Ministers from Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries, including China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, part of a new dialogue mechanism championed by Beijing and Islamabad. India has not been invited to the three meetings.

In a letter to the summit, hosted in eastern Anhui province, China’s President Xi Jinping pledged to back Afghanistan’s development, saying China was “committed to supporting its pursuit of peace, stability and development” with the country coming “to a critical point of transition from chaos to order.”

The Ministers of China, Afghanistan and Pakistan met separately on the sidelines of the conference, and underlined their close ties. Shortly before the Taliban’s return to power in August last year, China and Pakistan decided to align their Afghanistan strategies and follow a joint approach. Both countries have since sought closer relations with the Taliban government.

Mr. Wang said the three sides should “jointly advance Belt and Road cooperation and extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, and help Afghanistan participate in regional connectivity.”

The Foreign Ministers of the seven neighbouring countries, in a joint statement, issued a thinly-veiled criticism of the United States, saying they “urged countries mainly responsible for the current predicament in Afghanistan to earnestly fulfil commitments on the economic recovery and future development of Afghanistan.” They also expressed “deep concern” over the worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Agreeing to hold their fourth summit next year in Tashkent, they also launched a new mechanism for regular consultations among their special representatives for Afghanistan and the setting up of working groups for political and diplomatic issues, economic and humanitarian matters, and security.

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