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China emerges as key strategic player in Afghanistan

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As the NATO-led international coalition forces are preparing to withdraw, China is quietly preparing to play a key strategic role in the future of Afghanistan.

According to a report by Reuters, Beijing could focus on mining and mineral deals in Afghanistan and a conference on Afghanistan will be hosted by China in August.

The conference “Heart of Asia” is expected to be attended by regional leaders including Pakistan and India.

A Western diplomat quoted by Reuters said, China has already held discreet trilateral talks with Afghanistan and other countries.

In the meantime, China has also expressed tendency towards the Afghan peace process. “They were focused on economics, not reconciliation or peace. But recently they have expressed their willingness to get more involved in the peace process,” an Afghan high peace council member said.

China has so far committed around \$250 million to the reconstruction of Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and had limited security support to Afghanistan which was only focused on counter-narcotics training.

China has a \$700 million agreement to drill for oil in the Amu Darya Basin and a \$3 billion deal to develop the Aynak copper mining project.