



Afghanistan Policy Page

A one-page brief from the [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) on a major issue concerning U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

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Key Challenges for 2010

Reconciliation Process

- President Karzai is seeking a political peace settlement with the insurgency, arguing that military means alone will not achieve the objectives of bringing stability and peace to Afghanistan or defeat of terrorism.
- The arguments in favor of reconciliation state that there are thousands of insurgents who are not ideologically oriented, who are not part of al Qaeda or other terrorist networks, and who are not against America. They maintain that many insurgents, both foot soldiers and leadership, are war-weary and potentially open to negotiations with the government.
- Whilst the United States has stated that it supports the efforts of the Afghan government to open the door to insurgents who cut their ties to al Qaeda, abandon violence, and accept the Afghan constitution, it will continue to press forward efforts to break insurgents' momentum militarily in order to create greater incentives for them to lay down arms.

Measuring Progress, Timeframes and Transition of Responsibility

- Despite US and Afghan leaders acknowledging progress - in education, in health care and economic development – key benchmarks, performance indicators and measures of success have not been agreed upon by the two nations and their other international partners.
- A key factor that will affect the ongoing US political commitment to Afghanistan will be whether it is possible to determine that satisfactory levels of progress are made over the next twelve months.
- Most commentators observe that any process towards sustainable development and stability will necessarily be a long term (10 years +) timeframe.
- President Obama has made a commitment that detention facilities will be transferred to the Afghan authorities as a key step in the transition of responsibility for security within the country. General McChrystal has stated that he anticipates momentum of military operations shifting to the Afghan forces and security responsibilities transitioning to Afghans accordingly.

Key Events in Kabul

National Consultative Peace Jirga on 2 June, 2010

- President Karzai has been hosting a Peace Jirga (grand assembly of Afghans) on June 2.
- The Jirga has been attended by 1500 local representatives from all parts of the country.
- The key outcome of winning broad support for a plan to invite the Taliban to peace talks would be a first step toward negotiating an end to the conflict in Afghanistan.

International Kabul Conference on 20 July, 2010

- Dr. Ashraf Ghani, Chairman of the Institute of State Effectiveness and Afghan Minister of Finance 2002-2004, is leading the preparations for the Conference.
- The Afghanistan [Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board](#) (JCMB) will meet on 8 June and 6 July as part of the preparation process.
- Secretary of State Hilary Clinton will lead the US delegation.
- The conference will be a follow up to talks in London in January where the international community and donor nations renewed their pledge towards supporting Afghanistan.
- The expected outcomes are first, renewing the compact between Afghanistan and the international community, and second, the international community standing behind the Afghan government and its people.

Parliamentary Elections on 18 Sept, 2010

- Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) postponed elections originally scheduled for 22 May this year until September, saying it needed about \$50m from international donors to meet a shortfall in the estimated budget of \$120m.
- The US and other international partners also pressed to delay the election amid security concerns, logistical obstacles and the need to improve electoral procedures.
- A successfully-run election that is seen as fair and representative of the will of the Afghan people will be a key yardstick for the legitimacy and functionality of Afghanistan's new constitution and political system.
- The UN has been holding tens of millions of dollars set aside for Afghan elections in an account, with the release of the money being dependent on reforms taking place.
- Senior figures have emphasized the importance for the international community to prevent a repeat of the 2009 presidential election that was mired by accusations of fraud, dysfunction, and lack of due process, warning that a flawed parliamentary election could result in a political and security crisis.
- Afghan Members of Parliament have grown increasingly confident and active throughout 2010, challenging a number of presidential decrees; a development that has been welcomed by analysts as moving the country towards greater transparency and accountability.

Kandahar and the South

- Senior coalition officials say the goal of an ongoing security and political process in Kandahar led by U.S., NATO and Afghan forces is to shore up a local government that nominally controls the city and to break the grip of warlords and influence peddlers, who, it is widely believed, have opened the door to insurgents.
- The U.S. military believes the tribal power structures in Kandahar are out of balance, with marginalized tribes then turning to insurgents for protection and help against the dominant tribes.
- A challenge is that the insurgency is not universally opposed. An [opinion survey](#) of Kandahar Province funded by the U.S. Army has revealed that 94 percent of respondents support negotiating with the insurgents over military confrontation and 85 percent regard the insurgents as "our Afghan brothers".
- The success or failure of the combined military and political efforts in Kandahar throughout 2010 will be a key indicator of progress for the international coalition's counter-insurgency strategy.

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