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Afghanistan

Over the past year, considerable planning has taken place in anticipation of the end of the current UN-mandated and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. A series of international conferences have focused on managing not only the security dimensions of this transition process, but also its potential economic and institutional implications. The International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn in December 2011 reaffirmed the timetable for the handover of security responsibilities from ISAF to Afghan forces by the end of 2014. In May 2012 the NATO summit in Chicago reconfirmed international security and economic commitments with a pledge for an annual aid

package of \$4.1 billion to pay for Afghanistan's security forces after 2014.¹ At the July 2012 conference in Tokyo, the international community pledged \$16 billion in civilian aid for the economic development of Afghanistan over the next four years.

Amid a busy diplomatic calendar, important milestones in the security transition process were achieved in Afghanistan. The transition reached a national scope, as Afghan forces started to assume responsibility for a second and third tranche of provinces. According to official estimates, by the end of 2012 the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were responsible for overseeing the security of approximately 75 percent of the Afghan population and all thirty-four provincial capitals. Kabul has also signed strategic partnership agreements with numerous ISAF members, including the United States, that outline security cooperation beyond the current international combat mission.

These agreements, pledges, and security milestones have brought into sharper relief the scale of change under way for Afghanistan, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the wider transition process. The presidential election scheduled for 2014, risk of an economic recession, and capacity gaps in Afghan forces loom over emerging plans for a new era in Afghanistan. Despite these uncertainties, the Afghan government, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and other international supporters remain committed to pursuing the three main facets of the transition process—political, security, and economic—in advance of the 2014 deadline.



Map No. 4497.1 UNITED NATIONS
December 2012

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

Background

After the fall of the Taliban regime in December 2001, a group of prominent Afghans and world leaders met under UN auspices in Bonn, Germany. The resulting plan, known as the Bonn Agreement, outlined a series of benchmarks for the development of a new Afghan state and established a transitional authority led by Hamid Karzai, who was elected Afghanistan's president in 2004 and reelected to the post in 2009.

To provide security in Kabul and the surrounding areas, the Security Council authorized ISAF under Resolution 1386 in December 2001. In 2003, NATO assumed command of ISAF, which had previously rotated among participating troop contributors on an ad hoc basis. In 2004–2005, ISAF gradually expanded beyond Kabul, taking command of existing provincial reconstruction teams in the northern and western regions. The same year, following the integration of nearly 12,000 US troops under NATO command, ISAF replaced US-led coalition forces under the 2011 Operation Enduring Freedom as the main combat force on the ground.

In March 2002, the UN Security Council under Resolution 1401 established UNAMA to support the Bonn Agreement. In response to the expressed need for further international cooperation after the end of the Bonn Process, the Afghan government and its international partners signed the Afghanistan Compact in January 2006, committing themselves to high-level benchmarks in the areas of security, governance, reconstruction, and counter-narcotics. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), co-chaired by UNAMA and the Afghan government, was established to oversee implementation of the compact.

In November 2010, NATO members convened in Lisbon to agree on the broad contours of the drawdown of ISAF. The Lisbon Declaration called for a process of “transition” to full Afghan security and leadership to begin in July 2011 and to be completed by the end of 2014, concurrent with the end of NATO's military mission in Afghanistan.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

• Authorization Date	20 December 2001 (UNSC Res. 1386)
• Start Date	December 2001
• Force Commander	General John R. Allen (United States)
• Budget	NATO common funding equals approximately 600 million euros per year.
• Troop-Contributing Nations	49
• Strength as of 30 September 2012	Troops: 102,011

UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

• Authorization and Start Date	28 March 2002 (UNSC Res. 1401)
• SRSG	Ján Kubiš (Slovakia)
• Budget	\$241.5 million (1 January 2012–31 December 2012)
• Strength as of 31 October 2012	Military Experts on Mission: 13 Police: 3 International Civilian Staff: 387 National Civilian Staff: 1,614 UN Volunteers: 68

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UNAMA Mandate Changes

Since the end of the Bonn Process in September 2005, UNAMA's mandate has evolved to include among other tasks the facilitation of political processes for peace and reconciliation, cooperation with ISAF, and coordination among donors and the government.

Following a comprehensive review of mandated activities, conducted at the request of the Afghan government, the UN Security Council reauthorized UNAMA until March 2013 under Resolution 2041. The Security Council affirmed the mission's principal activities in recent years, including civilian coordination efforts, regional cooperation, and overseeing the work of all UN agencies, funds, and programs. The resolution also reinforced

the leadership role of the Afghan government, which welcomed continued UN support, even if questions remain about the future role and posture of the UN as the Afghan government assumes greater authority over national affairs.

In April 2012 the UN announced that UNAMA would reduce its operating costs by \$45 million, approximately 19 percent of its annual budget, during the coming fiscal year. Under new mission leadership by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, the mission plans to close nine provincial offices, reduce national and international staffing, and reorganize several offices. UNAMA plans to conduct more of its political and coordination activities at the provincial level from its regional offices. The office closures are part of a wider reconfiguration to strengthen UNAMA's capacity to implement its mandate and ensure that the mission is able to do more with a smaller budget.

Key Developments

Political Transition

In early 2012, following months of speculation, the Taliban announced a willingness to open a political office in Qatar to host preliminary talks with the United States. This announcement was regarded as an important step toward a political settlement, as the proposed office would give US and Afghan negotiators a platform to contact Taliban representatives.

After months of discussions, however, the Taliban suspended all preliminary talks with the United States in March 2012, citing a lack of good faith on the US side. Although divisions in Washington contributed to the stalled talks, the suspension also reflected the Taliban leadership's need to manage considerable discord among key commanders and supporters over the prospects of talks with the United States in the lead-up to the fighting season. Repeated efforts to revive the talks have failed to deliver a breakthrough.

With the Qatar process at a standstill, informal discussions between Taliban and Afghan

government interlocutors sustained speculation about a potential peace process. However, while various meetings in Dubai, Kyoto, and Paris created headlines, the discussions did little more than confirm the distant prospect of a formal peace process. The Taliban continue to refuse to engage with the Karzai administration.

The UN Security Council committee continues to oversee a sanctions list of designated Taliban members and supporters. A useful by-product of the committee's work is that it has helped sustain conversations among member states and Taliban interlocutors about a potential peace process. The list, established under Resolution 1988, is separate from the sanctions regime imposed on al-Qaeda and its associates. In December, the Security Council renewed the Taliban sanctions committee but eased restrictions to allow blacklisted Taliban figures to travel outside Afghanistan to attend peace talks.

Electoral Processes

As the 2014 presidential election looms on the horizon, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) proposed a major overhaul to move to a mixed electoral system with the hopes of reducing the likelihood of fraudulent votes, which marred the 2009 and 2010 elections. These long overdue changes push for political parties to have a larger role in parliamentary elections and institute mechanisms for election monitoring and the handling of complaints. In the newly proposed draft, the amended Election Complaints Commission (ECC) will introduce a stronger authorization to investigate corruption and impose penalties.

President Karzai briefly suggested an openness to hold the planned presidential election a year early to capitalize on the remaining ISAF presence and reduce the pressure on the Afghan government during the transition. The proposal reignited long-standing concerns that, despite assurances to the contrary, President Karzai would seek a third term in office, violating constitutional term limits.

Following considerable domestic and international backlash, he later backtracked from the idea, affirming that the elections would be held as scheduled on 5 April 2014.

Discussions are still under way about the kind of electoral assistance that UNAMA could provide. The technical complexity of the electoral process, particularly in far-flung and insecure areas, where logistical capabilities are limited, has prolonged talks. However, lingering sensitivities from the 2009 presidential election—in which the international community, including UNAMA, were perceived as playing a decisive role—have heightened concerns about the UN’s engagement in the next election.

Security Transition

At the NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012, ISAF-contributing states agreed on a timetable for security transition. The transition plan affirmed expectations that NATO-led combat missions would be complete and that the ANSF would assume the lead role in national security operations in mid-2013 before taking full security responsibility by the end of 2014.

As of September 2012, 112,579 ISAF troops were stationed in Afghanistan, including 74,400 US troops, a decrease of roughly 15,000 troops from the previous year.² While the number of international troops has been steadily decreasing, Afghan Ministry of Defense forces reached 194,000 active troops in March 2012, an increase of approximately 30,000 soldiers from the previous year. During the same period, Afghan Ministry of Interior forces numbered 149,000 individuals, up from 122,000 a year earlier.³ The Chicago Summit’s Declaration on Afghanistan envisages a future total ANSF size after 2014 of 228,500, with an estimated annual budget of \$4.1 billion, which will be reviewed regularly against the developing security environment.⁴

The five-phase transfer of security responsibilities began in March 2011, covering the most stable provinces. After the handover of districts in Helmand province, the third phase was launched in May 2012, placing an

EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan)

• Authorization Date	30 May 2007 (EU Council Joint Action 2007/369/CFSP)
• Start Date	15 June 2007
• Head of Mission	Karl Åke Roghe (Sweden)
• Budget	\$80.2 million (1 October 2011–30 September 2012)
• Strength as of 30 September 2012	International Staff: 343 National Staff: 200

EU Special Representative for Afghanistan

• Authorization Date	10 December 2001 (EU Council Joint Action 2001/875/CFSP)
• EUSR	Vygaudas Usackas (Lithuania)
• Budget	\$8.3 million (1 October 2011–30 September 2012)
• Strength as of 30 September 2012	International Staff: 9 National Staff: 5

estimated 75 percent of the Afghan population under ANSF responsibility. The Afghan government announced the fourth phase of the security transition at the end of 2012, which will see Afghan forces assuming control of twelve provinces. A fifth phase is expected to be announced in late 2013. ISAF will shift its responsibilities from a combative role to a training, advisory, and supporting position for ANSF.

Alongside the transition process, Afghanistan has signed various partnership agreements with foreign supporters to formalize cooperation beyond 2014. Following more than a year of negotiations, the strategic partnership agreement with the United States formally designated Afghanistan as a “major NATO ally” and promised future security cooperation. However, more difficult issues related to military bases and the status of US forces will be dealt with in a separate agreement expected in 2013.



Italian Army Brig. Gen. Luciano Portalano (right), Regional Command-West commander, hands over security responsibility of Chaghcharan, Ghor province, west of Kabul, Afghanistan, to the Afghan National Security Forces during a ceremony with Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, head of the Transition Commission, on 4 January 2012. The process of taking over security from a more than 130,000-strong NATO-led ISAF force by Afghan troops will be completed by the end of 2014 when Afghanistan will take over full leadership of its own security duties from the United States and NATO forces.

Beyond a series of international agreements, the security handover has taken a less orderly and less predictable form, though it has generally adhered to planned timelines. Diplomatic crises, public demands, and popular unrest have also prompted the United States to make concessions to accelerate the transfer of authority to the Afghan government. For instance, following protests over US soldiers burning copies of the Quran, the United States agreed to hand over control of prison facilities at Bagram Airbase within six months. The unexpected concession was completed, albeit with some modifications—Afghan guards began to operate cellblocks at the facility in September 2012, but the US soldiers retained the right to screen and interrogate new prisoners.

A surge of attacks by Afghan security forces against allied troops has interrupted training exercises essential to the handover process. In the first nine months of 2012, Afghan security forces were responsible for the

death of over fifty allied troops, accounting for 14 percent of coalition casualties in 2012.⁵ These “green-on-blue” attacks have left coalition forces increasingly suspicious of their Afghan counterparts and prompted US officials to suspend joint operations and some training exercises in September until better vetting processes can be implemented. The attacks not only underscore the absence of trust but likely also reflect the growing opposition toward the decade-long presence of coalition forces in the country.

The EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) is mandated to develop and support effective policing mechanisms. In August 2012, Karl Åke Roghe of Sweden assumed the role of head of mission. During the year, EUPOL focused on developing the rule of law. The mission supported the Afghan Border Police in Kabul by developing training plans and infrastructure, and providing advice to senior leaders. EUPOL also trained Afghan police units, and opened a Crime Management College, while beginning construction on a new Police Staff College.

Persistent Armed Conflict

The security handover has progressed amid sustained violence across the country. According to a recent UNAMA report, in the first six months of 2012, conflict-related violence resulted in 3,099 civilian casualties—a 15 percent decrease compared with the same period in 2011. However, targeted killings by Taliban forces and antigovernment elements have increased by 53 percent this year. General insecurity continues to limit civilian participation in public life, including students’ attendance at schools.⁶

Several dramatic attacks have undermined public perceptions of security. In April, the Haqqani network orchestrated a series of brazen attacks across Kabul and three eastern provinces, aimed at demonstrating the movement’s continued political relevance. Subsequent attacks in and around Kabul and on US and NATO bases have confirmed the capacity of insurgent forces to penetrate even the most secure areas.

India-Pakistan

Since 1949 the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), the second-oldest UN peacekeeping mission, has monitored the cease-fire line separating the Pakistani- and Indian-controlled areas of Jammu-Kashmir, a disputed territory over which three armed conflicts have been waged since 1947. UNMOGIP monitors the line of control and is mandated to engage in patrols, inspections, and investigations of alleged violations of the cease-fire. The mission may also perform other field tasks in the area when permitted by both countries. In June 2012, Major-General Young-Bum Choi of South Korea was appointed the new head of UNMOGIP.

The current line of control was established in 1972. Since then India has maintained that UNMOGIP has no operational role to play in Jammu-Kashmir. For this reason it restricts the activities of UN observers on the Indian side of the line of control and limits its support for UNMOGIP, though it has allowed the mission to operate out of its summer office in Indian-controlled Srinagar. Pakistan believes that the mandate still applies and has continued to file complaints with UNMOGIP regarding perceived violations of the line of control.

Tensions in Jammu-Kashmir rose again in 2012, after a lull throughout most

UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)	
• Authorization Date	21 April 1948 (UNSC Res. 47)
• Start Date	1 January 1949
• Chief Military Observer	Major-General Young-Bum Choi (Republic of Korea)
• Budget	\$21.0 million (1 January 2012– 31 December 2013)
• Strength as of 31 October 2012	Military Observers: 39 International Civilian Staff: 25 National Civilian Staff: 48

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of 2011. In June 2012 a mysterious fire at a Sufi mosque set off confrontations between Indian police and protesters. In July a Kashmiri was killed by Indian armed forces in a disputed incident, leading to a strike, multiple protests, and arrests of separatist leaders. In August protesters set fire to an Indian police vehicle and assaulted three officers. UNMOGIP headquarters has continued to be a symbol for protesters seeking UN intervention in the dispute. In August a sit-in took place outside the mission's office.

Despite such incidents, India-Pakistan relations have improved over the past two years. Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari

met Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi in April 2012, the first such trip in seven years.

The stalemate over Jammu-Kashmir, however, will likely persist. The death in April of 138 Pakistani soldiers in an avalanche on the region's disputed Siachen glacier reinforced the continued risks in this deadlocked territorial dispute in which thousands from both sides have perished. It appears that UNMOGIP will continue to play a limited observational role as it waits for elusive diplomatic progress to be made.

The persistent armed conflict continues to impact the ability of the UN to operate across the country. Security concerns make widespread travel, especially in rural areas, a prohibitive risk. Overall, recorded security incidents against UN staff have decreased compared to 2011. This is due to a combination of factors including stronger efforts of Afghan and international forces against insurgents and their resources. The future viability of this downward trend is thus in question given the continued drawdown of international security forces.

Economic Transition

The potential economic consequences of the transition process have started to come into sharper relief in recent months. Decreases in international assistance will have meaningful impacts on Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP). A World Bank report estimates that, under a favorable scenario, the projected decrease in GDP growth could create a 25 percent financing gap by fiscal year 2021–2022.⁷

Amid this difficult economic outlook, international donors convened in Tokyo on 8 July 2012 to pledge funds to support Afghanistan

through the transition process. Concerns of donor fatigue were eased after international donors pledged \$16 billion for the economic development of Afghanistan through 2015 and further assistance at or near levels offered in the past decade.⁸ In exchange for commitments from the Afghan government to improve anti-corruption measures and the rule of law, international donors promised to adhere to principles of aid effectiveness, including directing more aid through the Afghan government.

The agreement reflects larger concerns about the oversight of international aid. In mid-2012 reports surfaced that \$2.2 million was misappropriated from the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOFTA), established in 2002 and managed by the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Donors have been reluctant to deliver funds to the program until they receive assurances that appropriate changes have been made. In response, UNDP has strengthened oversight mechanisms of the fund.

Conclusion

Over the past year, a number of important milestones have been achieved in Afghanistan. However, the upcoming presidential election in 2014, the country's dependence on international aid, the recent increase in "green-on-blue" attacks, and the volatile security situation cast uncertainty on the success of the transition.

UNAMA remains a key supporter of the Afghan government. With the transition process recasting the relationship between the Afghan government and the international community, the future role and posture of the UN is expected to evolve at the request of the Afghan government and in response to the needs of the Afghan people. Persistent insecurity, contentious domestic politics, and difficult regional politics will challenge UNAMA's ability to achieve its present and future mandate.

Notes

1. White House, "Fact Sheet: Chicago Summit—Sufficient and Sustainable ANSF," Washington, D.C., 21 May 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/21/fact-sheet-chicago-summit-sufficient-and-sustainable-ansf>. The commitments made at the Chicago Summit are distinct from the pledges made at the Tokyo conference, which are contingent upon the achievement of a number of commitments by the government of Afghanistan, particularly related to governance.

2. In September 2012 the US military withdrew the last of the 33,000 "surge troops" that the Obama administration deployed in 2010.

3. Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 22 August 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Programs/foreign%20policy/afghanistan%20index/index20120822.pdf>.

4. NATO, "Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan," 21 May 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm.

5. Sajjan Gohel, "Afghanistan: Green-on-Blue Attacks Show There's No Easy Way Out," 18 September 2012, http://articles.cnn.com/2012-09-18/opinion/opinion_opinion-afghanistan-green-on-blue_1_insider-attacks-afghan-security-afghan-forces.

6. UNAMA, "Conflict Continues to Take a Devastating Toll on Civilians Despite Decrease in Civilian Casualties During First Six Months of 2012," 8 August 2012, http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Wcw_aee-rcM%3d&tabid=12254&language=en-US.

7. World Bank and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, "Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014—Executive Summary," Washington, D.C., November 2004, p. 2.

8. Jane Perlez, "\$16 Billion in Civilian Aid Pledged to Afghanistan, with Conditions," *New York Times*, 8 July 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/world/asia/afghanistan-is-pledged-16-billion-for-civilian-needs.html>.