CURRENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 launched more than a decade of international efforts to rebuild the country and re-establish political order. This effort, while achieving some major successes, remains incomplete. It is frustrated from the outside by a resilient insurgency and undermined from within by government structures criticized as corrupt and often predatory. The international presence now is declining significantly, opening a “transition decade” marked by Afghans taking greater responsibility for their own security and economic development.

USIP’S WORK

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has worked to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan since 2002, and in 2008 opened an office in Kabul to manage an expanding program of conflict-resolution and peacebuilding activities. USIP’s research suggests that a major cause of instability and conflict in Afghanistan has been the failure of state institutions to respect and promote the rule of law and to act accountably and effectively. USIP seeks to inform U.S., Afghan and international policies and programs, support the capacity of the state to govern effectively and legitimately, and strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and civil servants in conflict resolution and public advocacy for better governance and accountability. USIP’s recent work includes:

Countering Violent Extremism through Non-Violent Civic Mobilization: Many Afghans lack knowledge of peaceful methods to struggle for constitutional rights and against endemic corruption. Violent extremist groups fill this gap with appeals to youth to commit violence and crime that they often cast as religious jihad for justice. In response to this problem, which is most acute along the Pakistani border, a USIP project focuses on that border zone to teach more than 300 youth the theory and techniques of non-violent civic mobilization. Reframing the struggle for basic rights in terms other than the militant narrative offers communities positive and peaceful outlets for their activism and grievances.

Partnership with Afghan Universities: To strengthen the capacity and skills of civil society organizations and higher-education institutions, USIP has developed with the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education, a non-government university in Kabul, a pilot training program for students, civic activists and Afghan government officials. The goal is to institutionalize a degree program and a curriculum for peacebuilding that focuses on principles for preventing, managing, and resolving conflict without violence. The curriculum can then be used by other universities around the country.

Land Conflict Resolution and Registration Pilot Project: USIP’s research has identified disputes over land ownership as a major source of conflict. The Institute partners with Arazi, the government’s newly independent land authority, to work with local communities on documenting disputes that have been resolved through traditional methods. The goals are to prevent future conflicts arising from settled disputes, to support Arazi’s capacity to document land issues around the country and to help develop legislation for the formal registration and deeding of land.
USIP PUBLICATIONS

USIP’s work in the field informs policymakers, practitioners and scholars in the international community. Institute staff and experts publish in-depth reports, as well as short, timely policy briefs, that distill expert research, lessons learned and problem-solving solutions to advance peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

**Special Report:** Political Parties in Afghanistan (March 2015)

**Special Report:** Afghanistan’s Mining Oligarchy (January 2015)

**PeaceBrief:** Protecting Women’s Rights in Afghanistan… And Making it Last (January 2015)

**Peace Works:** Violence, the Taliban, and Afghanistan’s 2014 Elections (January 2015)

**Special Report:** Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement (January 2015)

**PeaceBrief:** How to Spur Afghan Reforms: The Limits and Benefits of Incentives (November 2014)

**PeaceBrief:** Afghanistan’s Looming Fiscal Crisis: What Can Be Done? (August 2014)

USIP EVENTS

USIP frequently hosts events, bringing together thought leaders, scholars, experts, policymakers and elected officials. USIP convened nearly 40 on- and off-the-record panel discussions, roundtables and conferences in 2014. Recent events include:

**Senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and Tom Cotton (R-AR) on the Future of US-Afghan Relations:** USIP hosted Senator Carl Levin and Senator Tom Cotton in October 2014 and February 2015, respectively, to provide their views on the future of U.S.-Afghan relations amidst the rapidly changing political and security landscape in Afghanistan. Both senators cited the major achievements that have been made in Afghanistan since 2001, and expressed strong backing for continued U.S. support to Afghanistan.

**The Asia Foundation’s 2014 Survey of the Afghan People:** USIP hosted The Asia Foundation for a public presentation of the findings of their 2014 Survey of the Afghan People. Conducted across the country’s 34 provinces, The Asia Foundation’s series of annual surveys in Afghanistan provides an unmatched barometer of Afghan public opinion over time. Since 2004, 65,558 respondents nationwide have been interviewed as part of the survey; taken together they serve as a resource for policymakers in government, the international community and the broader Afghan public.

**Afghanistan Reconnected: Regional Economic Security Beyond 2014:** In October 2014, USIP co-hosted, with the EastWest Institute, a discussion on the tremendous potential for economic growth and stability in Central Asia. Distinguished leaders and experts discussed how Afghanistan could transition from an aid-dependent economy to one reconnected to the region, with significant prospects for investment and growth via strengthened and productive relationships with its neighbors.