



Image from:

[Afghanistan in Philip's Encyclopedia](#)

Summary Article: **Karzai, Hamid**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Afghan politician, president from 2001. A Pashtun from southern Afghanistan, he helped organize Pashtun resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and the Islamic extremist Taliban in the 1990s. He won the country's first-ever democratic presidential elections, in October 2004, with 55% of votes cast. He has survived a series of assassination attempts and was re-elected president in August 2009, although there were allegations of ballot-rigging. A run-off poll against his rival, Abdullah Abdullah, was scheduled for November 2009, but Abdullah withdrew, as he believed the election would not be fair and transparent. Karzai's government faced continuing and strong guerrilla resistance from the Taliban, which led to a large-scale US-led international military presence in the country.

Born near Kandahar, the son of the head of one of southern Afghanistan's most powerful Pashtun clans, he studied politics at Simla University, India. He became active in politics in the early 1980s, organizing, from Pakistan, opposition to the Soviet forces that had invaded Afghanistan. He returned home in 1992 and served briefly as deputy foreign minister in the mujaheddin government of Burhanuddin Rabbani. At first supportive of the Taliban when they emerged in 1994, he refused to serve as their government's UN ambassador and left the country in 1996. He returned in 2001, co-ordinating Pashtun resistance which, with US military support, overthrew the Taliban regime. During that campaign, he was injured in a 'friendly fire' attack by US missiles. In December 2001 he was named chair of the interim administration and was named president in June 2002.

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