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Security Pact Ensures America's Presence in Afghanistan

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Malou Innocent

President Obama's arrival in Afghanistan and signing of the strategic partnership agreement with President Karzai supposedly represents yet another corner turned in our nearly eleven year (and counting) war. The commander-in-chief's arrival in secrecy, under darkness, and without live coverage of the signing is reminiscent of [Bush the Younger's](#) many trips to war-torn Iraq and displays just how bad security is in Afghanistan. Indeed, despite the administration's talk about drawing-down, the [strategic partnership agreement](#) signed today in Kabul extends Washington's military and financial support to the [endemically corrupt Karzai regime](#) well beyond 2014.

The Taliban's most powerful narrative is that foreigners are occupying Afghanistan and supporting its [corrupt centralized government](#). That is more than mere propaganda. It is reality. [Transparency International was correct](#) -- save for North Korea and Somalia, Afghanistan is the most corrupt country in the world. The Karzai cartel and its band of thugs and warlords are the embodiment of social injustice. The nation-building mission in Afghanistan is a failure not of democracy promotion, but the result of bringing injustice and crony capitalism to a desperate and war-ravaged people.

As America climbs out of [the worst financial crisis in a generation](#), the American people pour tens of billions a year into a poverty-stricken [narco-state](#) -- [according to the late-Richard Holbrooke](#) -- while [the Karzais and their cronies build mansions in Dubai](#). The American people's hard-earned tax dollars are funding [Afghanistan's "1 percent."](#) As I said last week about the agreement, it is nation building by another name. The American people have come to realize that the nation-building mission in Afghanistan is a needless waste of blood and treasure and unnecessary for our vital security interests. U.S. officials should recognize this and expedite our withdrawal, rather than continue to tread water in a desperate attempt to stave off disaster.

A senior administration official today [warned](#) of repeating the mistake of allowing the Taliban to reemerge in Afghanistan. In the process, however, the United States is repeating a mistake that [experts contend helped to contribute to the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: unwavering economic support and political cover to the Muslim world's most corrupt and illegitimate regimes](#). Some will argue that America has a moral obligation to prevent the reemergence of reprehensible groups like the Taliban. But America never made a substantive policy shift toward or against the Taliban's misogynistic, oppressive and militant Islamic regime when it controlled Afghanistan in the 1990s. Thus, the present moral outrage against the group can be interpreted as opportunistic. Sadly, Washington's current embrace of the kleptocratic Karzai regime not only contradicts the basic moral principles that America purports to impose on the rest of the world, but also does little to advance our security, drives foreigners to commit terrorist acts, and is detrimental to our long-term goal of advancing our country's most cherished values.

[*Cross-posted from Cato@Liberty.*](#)