

US and Afghanistan sign security deal

By [Paul Blower](#)

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photo credit: U.S Embassy Kabal Afghanistan

A preliminary agreement has been signed between the US and Afghanistan on a bilateral security deal. This pact will determine how many US troops will remain in the country after Nato forces leave at the end of next year. It appears that President Hamid Karzai has also secured a compromise from the US who will now not carry out military strikes without first consulting his government.

However, dispute still remains about whether to grant legal immunity for US soldiers who remain in Afghanistan after 2014, something Mr Karzai opposes. This matter will be examined first by a council of Elders and then by parliament, to be resolved next month.

The issue of legal jurisdiction is significant. The Iraqi government's concern over the same question led the US to an outright withdrawal of troops in Iraq, and once again US officials maintain that the possibility of a 'zero option' – of keeping no troops on the ground after 2014 – remains open. Foreign voices in Afghanistan are rife with pessimism right now, but locals want to fight back against this fear of the unknown, post-2014, state. The battle for Afghanistan's future is therefore currently one of great frustration for President Karzai.

The trade-off he faces between ensuring a return to total Afghan sovereignty and maintaining the support of the world's biggest military power, is impossible. After too many years of disruption and destruction created by foreign powers, it often appears the president could not bear the thought of agreeing to extend the impunity of a foreign military force past a foreseeable deadline. He continues to be the 'one

day adversary, one day enemy' president.

Whilst this attitude may simply be indicative of a president coming towards the end of his office, the instability Afghanistan faces is highly destructive. Though many would not agree with his comments that Nato intervention has created 'no gains' for his country, it is necessary to appreciate how much more Afghanistan has to accomplish before it finds peace.

Unnamed US officials expect the CIA to 'maintain a large presence, as part of a plan by the Obama administration to rely on a combination of spies and Special Operations forces to protect US interests in the two long-term war zones (Afghanistan and Iraq)'.

Whilst the US delegation claims to hold the Afghan people as its highest priority, disgruntlement abides in Afghans with the position their country has been left in and the lack of planning for the future. The question of sovereignty is still key. As the relationship of the two countries hangs in the balance, nothing is certain.



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