

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-laurenti/can-usafghan-pact-paint-taliban-into-an-islamist-corner.html?ref=foreign-affairs>

Can U.S.-Afghan Pact Paint Taliban Into an Islamist Corner?

Follow Jeffrey

4/23/2012

After going through 23 drafts, the United States and Afghanistan have at last [inked](#) a framework strategic partnership agreement to govern their collaboration past the promised 2014 withdrawal of foreign forces. Presidents Barack Obama and Hamid Karzai will sign the accord by the time of the NATO summit next month in Chicago, in hopes it will draw concrete commitments from other allies as well.

On the face of it, the pact seems to be pretty thin gruel. The United States promises financial support to the Afghan republic for at least 10 years, but cannot commit to specific funding levels because it cannot count on its Congress to honor them. Afghanistan may keep the door open to a modest U.S. security presence, but the two countries will not iron out the details before next year.

Yet for all its vagueness, the agreement telegraphs to Afghanistan and its neighbors a U.S. determination to provide essential support for the government as long as it takes to prevent the country's takeover by the Taliban, assuming there is no all-Afghan peace agreement. The recent resolution in Karzai's favor of the two core issues that had held up this week's accord -- giving Afghanistan control over special forces' night raids and detainees -- has strengthened Kabul's nationalist credentials. Indeed, the Taliban's furious critique of the pact revealed the ideological corner into which it has painted them.

The Taliban purport to see five objectives behind the American accord with Kabul, and none of them deals with Afghan national honor and sovereignty. The pact supposedly aims to aborting a "true Islamic government," insinuating "secularism and liberalism" into Afghan society (shades of Rick Santorum!), building up an Afghan army "hostile to Islam," and threatening "Islamic countries in the region" -- presumably a reference to Iran. (The Marxian fifth count in the Taliban indictment, that the pact would somehow secure Western access to Caspian Sea oil fields, is risible given the alternative routes where there is no insurgency.)

The real fear for the Taliban is that the Afghan National Army can prove just capable enough to deny their fighters the victory that Taliban leaders have promised would instantly be theirs after the foreign forces leave. Moreover, once the alien Western troops are gone, the insurgency loses one of its principal rallying cries for recruitment of foot soldiers.

While the [report](#) that NATO issued Monday on the growing capabilities of Afghan national security forces may be a bit sunnier than some analysts believe is warranted, it does underscore that they would not be the pushover that the Taliban have long imagined. If the insurgents cannot score a knockout blow quickly, they risk more rapid demoralization than the anti-Soviet mujaheddin experienced after their much-ballyhooed first offensive against the hated Najibullah regime following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

And while people might doubt the virtue of today's Afghan officials, they are certainly and ostentatiously Muslims. In contrast to the officials of Najibullah's regime, they are not atheistic communists against whom continued jihad and sacrifice are justified.

The accord with Washington promises precisely the long-term assistance to Kabul that Moscow suspended after just three years. Relying on your allies to win a civil war is always a risky proposition, of course, so both Afghan sides have good reason to explore ways to forge peace rather than intensify the bloodshed. The Taliban, though, with little international support as it is, have more at risk from continuing a war.

So too do Afghanistan's neighbors. Pakistan fears blowback emboldening its own domestic Taliban insurgents if their Afghan kin should reconquer Kabul -- perhaps as much as it does a government in Kabul unabashedly aligned with Indian security interests; a peace accord can minimize both dangers. Iran is the most antagonistic to a lingering American military presence next door, but a peace agreement would be more likely to phase that out than continued civil war.

The U.S.-Afghan pact, then, provides an opening for renewed efforts at peace-making -- and the insurance to most Afghans against takeover by a determined and fanatical minority.