

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



April 25, 2019

How to Ensure Peace and Unity in Afghanistan

Afghanistan as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country needs to maintain peace and unity. Weak unity and continued conflicts in Afghanistan are the outcome of being divided across, ethnic tribes and various religious beliefs and geo-political lines. As a result, the nation's unity is being woefully threatened by ethno-centricism, sentiments and religious fanaticism. Recently, religious radicalism has exploded in the different parts of the country, especially in the south, causing more harm and hatred among the overall Afghans.

Following are some tips on how we may maintain unity and peace in Afghanistan:

Loving each other

This is the heart of peace and can help us to ensure oneness in a multi-cultural nation like Afghanistan. Afghans of every race, gender, language and religion should love and respect each other as one big family. We must learn to love our fellow countrymen. If we're challenged by a problem, we must round ourselves on a negotiating table and not to dwell in finger-pointing and wicked sentiments. If we love and admire ourselves as Afghans, peace and unity will forever thrive in our beloved homeland.

Putting aside Sentiments

Sentiment is one of the major issues that are threatening the cause of unity and harmony in Afghanistan. The wars of words, ethnic and linguistic hostilities have usually been used by Afghans all over the country. We must stop making sweeping generalization on other ethnic groups, and begin to stand by our emotions toward each other, if we really aim peace and unity must reign in Afghanistan.

Strengthening the Sense of Friendship

This is very important not only in maintaining unity in our country, but in upholding peace and prosperity among Afghans. Afghan citizens must consider each other as one. Our parents at home and our teachers in school must teach the children about the importance of equality between all people. They must bring up the children in a way that they think they belong to one big family.

Respecting other religions and beliefs

Religion is a good thing, but its practice. We shall treat it as an issue only between us and our God on whom we believe. Its practice should be within the confines of your mosques or worship places; our home and our family. We must learn to leave our religion at our homes and not try to carry it along and enforce it in our public square by force.

Developing and implementing programs aiming at Peace and Unity

Such programs shall be developed and implemented in order to reconstruct and reconcile the Afghan nation. They shall foster national unity amongst Afghan youths. As a result, to maintain peace and unity in Afghanistan, we must develop and utilize such schemes and keep them up and running.

Massive Literacy Initiatives

In order to maintain peace and unity in the country, we must take massive literacy initiatives. Afghan Government must step-in to enlighten the general public, especially the ignorant and illiterate population which forms more than 90 percent of the society about unity and peaceful co-existence among the citizenry, with the central theme of equality and social cohesion. This can be relayed through mass media so as to reach the massive population of the country, especially the rural areas of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a place where many outstanding world scholars like Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi have been born. Mawlana is regarded as one of the greatest spiritual masters and poetical intellects of the world who calls all human beings to tolerance and solidarity. This orientation enables us to reach a national consensus in peace talks. As Afghans, we must uphold Maulana's dream of unity in diversity and stay strong, peaceful, and united despite the bitter challenges that are facing us today.



Peace Talks and the Common Afghans

By: Yasin Nadiri

The U.S. representative for peace in the Afghan region (Khalil Zad) visited Kabul and Islamabad some days ago, this happens as the United States of America takes a step for another round of talks with the Taliban this month in Qatar.

Referring to the Peace talks between the Taliban, and the Afghan government, Khalil Zad says; that if the Leadership in Afghanistan focus on the "Intra-Afghan Peace Dialogue", and make the talks inclusive, the international community will do the best they can for the sustainability of peaceful and stable Afghanistan. He further added that Inclusive talks is the only way that the Afghans can reach to a consensus, for the future of sustainable peace in the region.

Talking to the military and civilian leadership in Pakistan, Khalil Zad appreciated Pakistan's efforts for the "Afghan Peace Talks", also he indicated that Pakistan should soften its policy more towards Afghanistan, which is directly proportional to better relations with Washington.

One might think, that in a juncture of time when Peace talks is at a very important stage, why would the US indicate Pakistan of more soft policy towards Afghanistan, there are some assumptions which might help in understanding the US position.

The United States is clearly aware of the weaknesses that Afghan government is moving forward with, keeping those in mind, United states want better relations of Afghanistan with the neighboring countries, which is one of the strategies to make Afghanistan a more stable country, through good ties with all its neighbors.

According to some analysts, Taliban sees Pakistan as a more credible force in the region than anyone else, which is why it is important that Afghan government should establish better relations with its neighboring country if it wants better relations with the Taliban, but it cannot be deemed as an established fact.

The first round of peace talks started this year in Moscow on

February, in which all the prominent Afghan leaders were present, except the representatives of the Afghan government. The chief negotiator in the peace talks from the Taliban side was Abbas Stanikzai, who is one of the key Taliban leaders.

On the other hand, currently, many Afghan provinces are under attack by the Taliban, which is comprised of Badghiz, Ghazni, and Sancharak district of Sar e Pul, in the attack multiple Afghan security personnel's have lost their lives, which reminds me that the people of Afghanistan has been dreaming of a permanent peace in the Afghan region from decades.

Talking to few Afghan youths about the peace talks in Kabul three days ago, some of them mentioned that they are tired of the ongoing war in Afghanistan, Zabe, who didn't share his details said that, "I don't know, if I'll be back in the evening when I start my day by going to the university". He said "there are thousands of Afghan youth like me, who are tired of war and wants peace at any cost", Zabe Says "he wants to live in an Afghanistan, where he can be assured that he will safely return home in the evening to his mother and sisters".

The Afghan youth think, that war is not only ruining the Afghan economy and restricting their movement in the city, but also creating huge mental pressure for young people like them, who are playing different roles in the society.

Moreover, there are Afghan women, who are whining about the "Afghan Women Rights", and their living conditions after the peace talks, the Afghan women activists demand that they should be given proper representation in the ongoing peace talks. They say that the US peace envoy has assured that they will be given role to play in the ongoing peace talks, but that is yet to be executed in practical form.

During all the happenings events of Peace talks, there are more sections of the society which the Afghan government, United States and Taliban should consider before taking any decision for the future of Afghanistan, otherwise peace might not look like peace after the peace talk ends.

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Is Winter Coming to the EU?

By: Mark Leonard

A popular narrative holds that the European Parliament elections in May will be "Act Three" in the populist drama that began in 2016 with the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum and US President Donald Trump's election. We are told to expect a grand showdown between the forces of "open" and "closed" societies, in which the future of the European Union is at stake. It all sounds very plausible. It also happens to be completely wrong.

Brexit and Trump's election led many political analysts to conclude that European voters, too, would abandon mainstream parties for new identity-based tribes. Yet, in America, the political and regional divides are so entrenched as to affect where one works, who one marries, and how one views the world. And in the UK, similar rifts have long been emerging between north and south, young and old, urban and rural, and graduate and non-graduate.

European politics is more fluid. A recent European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)/YouGov poll of almost 50,000 voters across 14 EU member states suggests that the best model for understanding Europe in 2019 is not the United States or the UK, but Westeros, the main setting of the HBO series Game of Thrones. Far from dividing into stable tribes, the European political landscape is an unpredictable battleground of constantly shifting alliances; its defining feature is radical volatility.

European politics is not moving from the mainstream to the fringe so much as it is spiraling off in all directions - from left to right, anti-system to pro-establishment, and so forth. So uncertain are the electoral options this May that half of survey respondents say they will not be voting at all. Another 15% have yet to make up their minds, and among the 35% who do intend to vote, 70% are swing voters. In raw numbers, roughly 100 million votes are up for grabs in May.

Unlike the 2016 US presidential election and the Brexit referendum, this will not be merely a vote on migration. Overall, most Europeans do not see immigration as a leading concern for their country. Issues of equal or greater importance include the economy and the threats of nationalism, Islamic radicalism, climate change, and Russian belligerence.

Pundits are simply wrong, therefore, to frame the election as a battle between pro-European globalists and Euroskeptical nationalists - though that does describe the second round of France's 2017 presidential election, when Emmanuel Macron soundly defeated Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front (now called the National Rally). The ECFR/YouGov poll indicates that a large majority of Europeans feel no need to choose between their European and respective national identities. In fact, even nationalist parties have realized that these identities are bound up together, which is why they have stopped advocating an exit from the euro or the EU.

The real issue on most Europeans' minds is their relationship to the "system": almost three-quarters of EU citizens believe that the political system is broken, either at the national level,

the EU level, or both. How individual voters frame this issue is key to understanding how they will vote.

In the taxonomy of Game of Thrones, these voters can be divided into four main groups. The first is the Starks, who believe that the system still works, and that meaningful change happens through political expression and voting. The House of Stark makes up 24% of the EU electorate, and has its stronghold in the north (namely Germany, Denmark, and Sweden). The second group comprises "The Sparrows," who think politics is broken both at the EU level and within member states. Among this group's more radical cohorts are protest movements such as the gilets jaunes (yellow vests), who, like the revolutionaries in Game of Thrones, want to cleanse the system of its corruption and start over. The Sparrows comprise 38% of the electorate, and are particularly common in France, Greece, and Italy.

The third group is the "Unswayed," who in Game of Thrones follow Daenerys Targaryen, the mother of dragons, after being emancipated from slavery. The EU's Unswayed include voters who reject narrow nationalism and seek purpose in internationalism and transnational projects. They think their respective national systems are the problem, and that the solution lies in Brussels. The Unswayed make up 24% of the electorate, and are well represented in Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Spain.

The final group is the "Wildings" who "live beyond the wall." These nationalist Euroskeptics may command a lot of attention in the press, but they make up just 14% of the electorate. They tend to have a strong presence in Denmark, Austria, and Italy.

The fundamental choice for all of these groups is not really between "open Europe" and "closed nation-states." Rather, the question is whether and in what contexts the status quo still works. If there is one major similarity among the US, the UK, and the EU, it is that political parties now focus more on mobilizing their base than on trying to broaden it by persuading voters to come over to their side. Hence, in the European Parliament election, many political parties will focus on the 149 million people who are unsure whether they will vote at all.

But that won't be enough. To rout the populist and nationalist parties, Europe's mainstream candidates will need to bring some of the Sparrows and Wildings back into the system, and over to their side. And to do that, they must position themselves as credible agents of change.

At the end of the day, these contests will be won or lost under highly localized conditions; what works for mainstream candidates in some locales will not work for those in others. The battles to win will be in countries where Euroskeptics are in power, such as Hungary and Italy, and in those where pro-Europeans have suffered a political backlash, such as France. The game has only just begun.

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