

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



March 24, 2019

## We Must Learn Citizen Centered Governance from the NZ Prime Minister

By: Afghan Vice President Sarwar Danesh

Nowadays, everyone talks about citizen centered state and call for citizens' rights and tolerance. However, if we would like to know how these issues can be put in practice, one shall learn from the initiatives taken by Jacinda Ardern The Prime Minister of New Zealand in terms of the terrorist attack on NZ Muslims; it is of important to keep in mind that these initiatives have been taken against a terrorist attack against the Muslim minority group in NZ.

The response of the NZ Prime Minister to show empathy with New Zealand Muslims, wearing a scarf, broadcasting live Azan from the media and appearing among the families of the Muslim victims and many other decisions she made on this issue, were not only a symbolic gesture, but were full of emotion, humanitarian feeling, and empathy and sympathy she showed with a religious minority group. The initiatives taken by the NZ Prime Minister are the symbol of the thought of citizen centered governance and ensuring justice in the society. It is the symbol of responsive government and the duties any government has against the people regardless of their religious, race, linguistic and cultural differences. In such a context, the governments do not act taking sides and the Prime Minister showed that how should a nation show its solidarity and national unity at the time of chaos and how a government shall defend its citizens against discrimination, especially in terms of protecting the rights of the minority groups.

What she did as a political leader for her citizens, can be regarded as a role model for all political leaders and governments of the world and we only through such approaches both can root out terrorism and put in practice human rights and citizens' rights values. Indeed, such approaches help us to prevent prejudice, discrimination and hatred among the different walks of the society and ensure a sustainable peace and security.

We face the same challenges in Afghanistan; terrorism, prejudice, lack of tolerance. As a result, we need ethics of tolerance and moderation more than any other thing.

I in the first days of the new solar year, both as a citizen and a government authority sincerely appreciate the high courage and humanist thought of the Prime Minister of NZ and NZ citizens and would like to congratulate them for having such a great culture and humanistic behavior. I would like to call on all the world leaders to learn from the NZ Prime Minister in a chaotic situation of the world that hatred and fundamentalism threatens most parts of the world. I also pray for the martyrs of the attacks on the two mosques in the Christchurch, New Zealand that 50 innocent Muslims lost their lives and especially pray for my brave countryman, Haji Mohammad Dawod, who clashed off the terrorist and sacrificed himself at the age of 71, to prevent more deaths.

Wish a world free of fundamentalism, prejudice and violence

## Tug-of-war at Negotiating Table Will Not Lead to Peace

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Following the two weeks of negotiations between the Taliban and U.S. delegations behind the closed door in Qatari capital of Doha, Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib leveled criticism at U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad.

There seems a disagreement between Kabul and Washington on the agenda for peace. Kabul government calls on the Taliban to participate in the presidential election, but Washington is likely to back the Taliban's demand for establishing an interim government. Washington believes that presidential election will not lead to peace and prosperity in Afghanistan unless a peace accord is signed with the Taliban. But for President Ghani, presidential election seems to be a priority. Addressing a gathering in Balkh Province on the first day of Afghan New Year, Ghani said that he would not accept an agreement which would not lead to a sustainable peace. He also said that Afghanistan's post-Taliban achievements should not be comprised at the table.

The differences continue between Ghani's and Trump's administrations and the gap has grown wider as Khalilzad did not travel to Kabul to brief Ghani's administration on the backdoor peace talks in Qatar. Therefore, Ghani's NSA Mohib lashed out at Khalilzad. "The reason he is delegitimizing the Afghan government and weakening it, and at the same time elevating the Taliban, can only have one approach," Hamdullah Mohib said, "It's definitely not for peace."

It seems that Khalilzad reduced the two weeks of talks on a twitter post without detailing as he said, "Peace requires agreement on four issues: counter-terrorism assurances, troop withdrawal, intra-Afghan dialogue, and a comprehensive ceasefire" adding that the U.S and Taliban negotiators made a draft agreement on the first two.

But in response to Mohib's claim that Khalilzad harbors political ambitions and keeping Kabul government in dark, U.S. officials said Khalilzad had called President Ghani to brief him after the negotiations in Qatar adding that he had no political ambitions. Both U.S. and Taliban negotiating teams had said that headway had been made in the recent talks in Qatar adding that they had reached a draft agreement on two issues: troop withdrawal and preventing Afghan territory from being used against any countries. In the next round of talks, the two sides will discuss ceasefire and intra-Afghan dialogue and haggle over the ins and outs of the draft agreement. For instance, the U.S. seeks a gradual

troop withdrawal to be completed in 2024, but the Taliban urge for the pullout completion from six month to one year. Meanwhile, the Taliban have turned down Washington's demand for retaining its military bases in Afghanistan to foil any potential threat against the U.S.

Afghan officials also urge the U.S. to facilitate intra-Afghan talks saying the agreement would carry no value without the Kabul's approval. Although the Taliban have denied sitting around the table with Afghan government calling it "not legitimate", Afghan officials have hoped that the government will send its delegation to Qatar in the next round of talks.

The Taliban have so far refused to meet with the Afghan government, which in turn has been suspicious of the talks.

However, the Taliban negotiated with Afghan political leaders in Moscow in February. The second round of talks between the Taliban and Afghan political figures will be held in April 14. Negotiations with political parties without Kabul's official representatives is disapproved by Afghan government. But local outlets have cited Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) as saying that HPC had been officially invited to the intra-Afghan dialogue in Doha.

Kabul's suspicion of the talks is understandable. Afghan government, which has paid heavy sacrifices in the fight against the Taliban and other terrorist networks, should not be kept out of the loop in the peace parley.

Now Trump has to facilitate an intra-Afghan dialogue. It is believed that if the U.S. delegations persuade the Taliban to hold face-to-face talks with Afghan government, the suspicion between Kabul and Washington will be reduced.

Khalilzad's recent meeting with Russian Presidential Special Representative Zamir Kabulov, Chinese Special Envoy Deng Xijun, and EU Special Envoy Roland Kobia to discuss Afghanistan's peace process suggest that Washington is seeking to include regional and global stakeholders in the talks. It is evident that engaging global stakeholders in the talks will catalyze the process.

National and international consensus is required to achieve sustainable peace in Afghanistan. It is hoped that an inclusive team will be created in the coming Consultative Loya Jirga so that Afghan representatives could negotiate with the Taliban directly.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan and freelance writer based in Kabul. He can be reached at zia\_hujjat@yahoo.com

## The Ambition Europe Needs

By: Dominique Moisi

French President Emmanuel Macron recently launched his platform for the upcoming European Parliament elections. Official reactions to his approach - outlined in a commentary published simultaneously in every European Union country - were mostly positive, with even the Euroskeptic prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán and Liviu Dragnea of Romania, endorsing his agenda (for tactical reasons). But, in the chorus of approval, one notable voice was missing: Germany.

Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (known as AKK) - the Christian Democratic Union's new leader and Angela Merkel's likely successor as Germany's chancellor - believes that Macron's vision is overly ambitious and insufficiently pragmatic. Her response to his platform implicitly challenged France's commitment to a more centralized Europe.

First, she advocated for the EU to have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council - a privilege that, in Europe, only France and the United Kingdom currently enjoy. Second, she emphasized the need to "abolish anachronisms," including by having the European Parliament meet only in Brussels, rather than continuing to hold monthly sessions in Strasbourg.

But, if any anachronism is doing harm to Europe, it is Germany's commitment to the status quo. Beyond some ideas for what France could sacrifice for Europe, AKK's proposals brought nothing new to the table - certainly no ideas about what Germany could offer in return. As a German friend who played an important political role in his country in the 1990s put it to me: "There are too many ideas on the French side, and too few on the German one."

Whatever marriage of reason might have existed between France and Germany previously, it has given way to estrangement. This is a clash not just of personalities or even political imperatives, but of nostalgias: France craves the grandeur of the Charles de Gaulle era, while Germany recalls fondly the comfortable stability of the Bonn Republic.

In September 1989 - just before the fall of the Berlin Wall, when European communism had already begun to unravel - I attended a conference in Frankfurt, where I told an audience of German bankers that, within a few years, Europe, and Germany, would be reunited. Their disapproval was palpable. Even if reunification were possible - not likely, in their eyes, since the Soviet Union would never agree - why would anyone want to take risks with history, changing a policy that was working so well, at least for West Germany?

While Germany laments its loss of comfortable stability,

France finds its nostalgia for grandeur being fulfilled. France cannot recapture its former glory alone. But, as a leader of the EU, it can. The key is for Europe to remain ambitious - an imperative that Germany's obsession with the status quo continues to impede.

The question, of course, is which country is backing an approach that better serves Europe as a whole. The answer is unambiguous: France.

At a time when the United States is embracing isolationism, Europe can no longer count on its most important international partner. Meanwhile, (re)emerging players, especially China and Russia, are working hard to build up their power and influence.

In her response to Macron, AKK seems to recognize the challenges this implies. She asks, for example, "do we want our future to be determined by the strategic decisions of China or the United States, or do we want to play an active role in shaping the rules of future global coexistence?"

What AKK fails to recognize is that an ambitious Europe has a much better chance of competing in this environment than a stagnant one. In this sense, Germany, once the star pupil in the European class, is acting like its laziest and most stubborn member.

For nearly 30 years, Europeans have been seeking a new narrative, one that is less about resisting the negative than about embodying the positive. Europe's leaders sought it in integration. By the time the EU succeeded the European Economic Community in 1993, the goal of Europe had become to create Europeans, united by values, interests, and even to some extent, identity.

The Erasmus Programme, created in 1987, was supposed to advance this goal. At a dinner I attended in the mid-1990s, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was enthusiastic about the plan. He believed that exchanges by young people - the sharing of ideas and cultures, along with pizza and beer - would create a generation of Europeans. They would create European families, with European children. War among them would be inconceivable.

Nearly three decades later, Europe may not be back to square one, but it is certainly regressing. Whereas the Europe of the 1950s was desperate to ensure peace and freedom, underpinned by liberal democratic systems and values, the Europe of 2019 is electing nationalist and populist parties that are actively undermining that effort. This is not a status quo anyone should be defending.

Dominique Moisi is Senior Counselor at the Institut Montaigne in Paris.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.