

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



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## Afghan Peace Process: A New Chance For The Neighbors

One may think that the biggest obstacle to Afghanistan development is poverty, but the strategic danger to Afghanistan's expected prosperity is the disintegration of its ethnic groups. And any major conflict is a disaster to the country, region and beyond. But as the Afghan government struggles with the various challenges that faces it, it has been emphasized that, its future can either be a shining example for the region or a cautionary tale of what happens when great potential is sabotaged by poor governance, lack of leadership and pervasive corruption. And success of the Afghan government depends on the peace process.

Thus, after about two decades of conflict with the Taliban and other terrorist groups, negotiations are in the early stages for quadrilateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, China, and the Taliban, and other peace initiatives, such international support for an Afghan-led peace process is a significant achievement.

Talks have already been held in Islamabad, Kabul, Doha. As the peace process takes shape, a cautiously optimistic approach must acknowledge six factors fundamental to any conflict's resolution. As a result, Afghan Peace Process needs to have these factors to be successful and put an end to the longstanding conflict in the country.

### Renouncing Violent Solutions

An armed conflict becomes protracted when there is no decisive military solution. All parties in an asymmetrical conflict, such as one in Afghanistan, must accept that one side cannot eliminate the other side by military options. At the root of any armed conflict is a political issue. Hence the solution must be a political dialogue.

Of course, this does not mean a forceful response to the insurgency is not necessary in Afghanistan. Security measures must be taken and military pressures is useful when it offers a political way out, with a clear process of addressing the underlying grievances. It requires the brave and politically costly step of bringing the extreme armed wing of the insurgent groups to the negotiating table.

### Inclusivity

Identifying the moderate elements among the insurgent groups and negotiating with them is not enough. Unless those perpetrating the violence are brought to the negotiating table, peace will not be realized. They must be shown that there are political means to their aims without resorting to violence. And the Afghan government shall never show weakness to the insurgent groups during the peace process and peace talks.

### Win-Win

The Afghan conflict cannot end with a "win-lose" solution. As a result, the peace process must acknowledge the narrative of the opposition and work toward an agreement that does not demand abject surrender. Therefore, it is important for the Afghan government to begin talks, earn trust, and only then set terms that are deemed nonnegotiable. A successful peace agreement will not be a zero-sum settlement. All sides must be shown to come out as winners.

### Leadership

There is a need for political leadership. When it comes to the peace process, the Afghan government must speak with one voice. It's executive and legislative and military and intelligence arms must be united at the policy level and act as one in the field. Disagreements and concerns within the government must be internally discussed and resolved. To the insurgents, it must always appear as a single, united front. Unfortunately, leadership is one of the key weaknesses of the peace process in Afghanistan. The Afghan government does not speak one voice and they lack a long term national vision for the peace process in the country.

### Let The Process Run Its Course

Peace must be perceived as a process. A clear track to peace must be outlined, and all parties must be kept busy. When there is a systemic process to peace, it allows greater management of problems that arise. Once the peace process is ongoing, it is necessary to prevent installment in the process. And it calls for cooperation and synergy among all the government arms and also the overall support of the Afghan citizens.

### Regional And Global Consensus

Fortunately, the international community and regional powers are actively involved in the latest Afghan peace-building initiative. Engagement of all players is crucial. The role of a third party can be significant in bringing impartiality, a greater degree of patience, and balance to the negotiating table.

It is clear cut that, neighbors, regional and global powers have contributed to the various cycles of war for nearly four decades in Afghanistan. Now, this is their chance to contribute to building a lasting Afghan peace.

## A Strategy for Liberals

By Dominique Moisi

Has populism won? It would be easy to conclude that it has, especially in light of what is happening in the heart of Europe. Italy, one of the earliest supporters of European integration, is now led by a populist coalition with a 61% approval rating, while France's President Emmanuel Macron, once considered to be populism's antidote, has watched his popularity fall to 29% - the lowest since he took office in 2017.

And yet, the battle between the "party of reason" and the "party of emotion" - progressives versus populists - is far from over. Populism can still be defeated, but only if its opponents concede the obvious: they need a new strategy.

Five themes should guide any strategic overhaul. The first is accountability. So-called elites who care about the preservation of democracy and the rule of law must come to grips with the anger, fear, and despair that have plagued voters since the financial crisis of 2008-2009. It has been a decade since the onset of the Great Recession, and yet its causes have not been properly addressed.

Too many political, financial, and business leaders give the impression that the only thing that matters for an economy is aggregate growth. But in a globalized and transparent world, the widening gap between rich and poor matters more. Inequality, especially when paired with corruption, is devastating for the status quo.

That is why justice - the second theme of a new political strategy - is so critical. Without economic justice, electorates will always blame their woes on the party in power. It was precisely this reasoning that led to the election of President Donald Trump in the United States.

The third theme is unity. Simply put, progressives must offer a viable alternative to the divisiveness of populism. In the late 1990s, Madeleine Albright, then the US Secretary of State, called on governments in Europe to support an "alliance of democracies" that would reinforce Western values after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many countries answered the US then; we need a similar pledge of unity today.

Unfortunately, we also need new global leadership. With the US in retreat, Italy backsliding, and Britain lost in the fog

of Brexit, alliance-building responsibilities will fall to other players. One option is the G7's so-called club of four - France, Germany, Canada, and Japan. If the spread of authoritarianism and illiberalism is to be slowed, these liberal democracies must assume the mantle of renewing Albright's vision. Fourth, democracies must speak with more clarity. For example, how might the club of four defend and promote liberal values? Issues like migration are universal, but political vagueness and technocratic jargon too often cloud public debate. If liberalism is ever to out-organize populism, voters must be able to comprehend what liberals are offering.

Finally, anti-populist forces need courage. Without it, no amount of accountability, justice, unity, or clarity will shift the populist tide. For example, Macron should be praised for his willingness to oppose the hateful politics espoused by Italy's Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini or Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. But true courage for Macron would be adopting policies that match his rhetoric. Migration, which is shaping up to be the defining issue of next May's European elections, would be the obvious place to start.

Who could have predicted that 75 years after the collapse of fascism in Italy that we would now have a leader in Rome acting like Mussolini? Or that in Germany - and particularly in the country's formerly communist east - "pogrom" sentiment against foreigners would return? Or that in Sweden, the far right would be gaining support while disparaging Jews?

The British historian A.J.P. Taylor had a cynical view of people's ability to learn from their mistakes. "History cannot teach us anything for it contains everything, with one exception," he once wrote - "one should not invade Russia at the end of the summer." And yet, humanity seems forever drawn to the cold.

Today's liberal leaders can prove Taylor wrong. Populism can still be beaten back. But to win in the current political climate, democratic forces will need to clothe themselves in a new narrative.

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## Afghan Government Rejects The Proposals to Privatize War

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Erik Prince, the founder of US Blackwater security company, has lobbied over the past few weeks about his proposal to privatize the war in Afghanistan. He emphasized that his forces are able to change the situation in the country within six months. As quoted by media, he said: "Well I would say six months after the program is fully ramped up, you have a very different situation on the ground, I will commit to that," said Prince. As quoted from a spokesman for Prince's latest private security from Frontier Services Group told Task & Purpose, as saying that "anyone who says that the current effort in Afghanistan is working is deluded". "The US taxpayer is spending \$62bn per year, our soldiers are dying and the Afghan army is losing 3% of its man-power every month due to death, injury or desertion. Something needs to change," the spokesperson said as quoted by Task & Purpose. Initially, he had surfaced his idea last year when US President Donald Trump was reviewing his strategy but raised ethical and security concerns among the US military officials as well as key lawmakers in Congress and members of Trump's national security team.

Pushing his proposal, he believed to put an end to the 17-year-old war which has already claimed the lives of more than 2,400 Americans and costed more than one trillion Dollar; the US has been bombing the country at a rate that is unprecedented since the US military started publishing data on its aerial campaigns in 2009. In addition, he seems interested to be involved in mineral projects in Afghanistan. In a multimedia presentation, he lists one of his goals as: "Develop and produce key rare earth minerals to restore US high-tech manufacturing supply chain." During his visits here in Afghanistan, he has also met with Afghan mining officials, meetings he has described as exploratory.

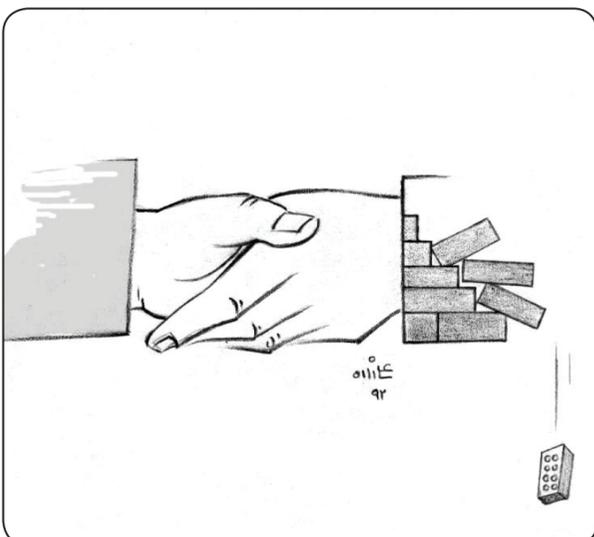
To know more about Prince, he is an American businessman and a former US Navy SEAL best known for providing security services to the US government. He founded the Blackwater in 1997 after buying 6,000 acres of the Great Dismal Swamp of North Carolina and set up a school for special operations. His company is one the largest security companies having diverse experience of working in different countries; between the years 1997 to 2010, Blackwater was awarded \$2 billion in US government security contracts, more than \$1.6 billion of which were unclassified federal contracts and an unknown amount of classified work. However, his company gained notoriety during the Iraq war. The company was blamed for killing 14 Iraqi civilians and wounded 20 more in a September 2007 incident in Baghdad. Three Blackwater guards were convicted in October 2014 of 14 manslaughter charges, and another of murder, in a US court. In response to the proposal, Neither the Afghan government

nor the local politicians have shown their willingness to privatize the war in Afghanistan. "In no manner does the government of Afghanistan condone this destructive and divisive debate," a statement from the Afghan Office of the National Security Council (NSC) said on Thursday. The statement said the Afghan government and people would never "allow the counter-terrorism fight to become a private, for-profit business." It further said that the addition of "new foreign and unaccountable elements" would undermine the right to self-determination of the Afghan people.

The statement also referred to Afghan security and defense forces which "have the primary responsibility and authority for safeguarding [...] our national sovereignty, and the independence and territorial integrity of our beloved country and people." The war on terrorism is led - and will continue to be led - by Afghan national security and defence forces with support from our international allies. Under no circumstances will the Afghan government and people allow the counterterrorism fight to become a private, for-profit business. In no manner does the government of Afghanistan ignore this destructive and divisive argument. As a sovereign nation, we will consider all legal options against those who try to privatize war on our land.

Some local analysts are also not in the favour of deal with Blackwater company; they believe such a move would lead to the collapse of the Afghan government and the revival of Afghanistan as a terrorist haven, citing the aftermath of the military's withdrawal from Iraq and the subsequent rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The protection of our Islamic values, our national way of life, and our citizens are this government's most sacred responsibility. This cannot and will not be outsourced to private business. We should not allow our struggle to be cheapened by the prospect of profits. The government of Afghanistan should remain steadfast in its commitment to leading the fight against terrorism. Accordingly, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis also had rebuffed the idea, saying: "When Americans put their nation's credibility on the line, privatizing it is probably not a wise idea." However, according to some sources, US president Donald Trump has shown some interest in the proposal to privatize war in Afghanistan due to its economical dimension and being too much prolonged but the Trump's advisers seems worried about his unhappiness about the Afghanistan conflict would cause him to seriously consider proposals like Prince's or abruptly order a complete US withdrawal, as reflected in foreign media. On Tuesday, US-based Human Rights Watch warned against US efforts to outsource the war arguing that the move could endanger civilian lives.

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