

# Don't Stop Now

Why Germany must help lead the way in Afghanistan



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**G**ermany and Afghanistan have enjoyed a unique relationship. During the 19th and 20th centuries, when many countries were facing the threat of imperialism, our two countries enjoyed cordial ties. Following on from the 1926 Treaty of Friendship, during the 1960s and 1970s a variety of educational, cultural, and technical exchanges took place. Many Afghans studied in Germany, while German lecturers taught at Afghan universities. As a result, there is an established legacy of Afghan-German relations. Every Afghan, even those barely familiar with Europe, its peoples and geography, knows

Germany, perhaps the country most trusted by Afghans.

Long before hosting the major Bonn Conference of 2001, which re-established a unified Afghan government, Germany was at the forefront of helping Afghans come together to find a peaceful solution. However, while Berlin's contributions over the past 18 years have further consolidated the bonds of affinity and friendship between our countries, the peace process with the Taliban combined with a shifting geopolitical environment, pose questions for Germany's future engagement with Kabul.

From a political point of view, Germany's political engagement has been important in stabilizing Afghanistan and to the country's peace process. Germany's membership in the UN Security Council presents a unique opportunity for Afghanistan therefore, and we would urge Berlin to maximize its influence and to make its voice heard, from New York to Geneva and Kabul. However challenging our friends in Berlin may find the administration in Washington, I assure you that the challenges facing the Afghan people are even greater. We count on Berlin's support therefore in persuading the United States to revive the peace talks with the Taliban, and to make the talks more inclusive. For the peace process to succeed, the negotiating team must be nationally representative,

including both the government and civil society. Germany must also work with the major powers, regional countries, and our neighbours to create the necessary conditions for peace in Afghanistan. This effort should also include facilitating intra-Afghan dialogue and talks to advance a comprehensive settlement.

In security terms, Germany remains the second largest contributor of military support to Afghanistan, not only as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission, but also through the German Police Project Team (GPPT), a bilateral capacity-building initiative. Following the attack in September 2019 on Kabul's Green Village, a heavily secured compound housing several NGOs and other international entities, Germany unfortunately suspended this much-valued training programme. However, it is now more than ever that the Afghan people and their institutions need support, and we very much hope that Berlin will reconsider and continue its assistance to the Afghan police force.

Economically, Germany has proven to be among the most innovative economies in the world driving growth at home and abroad. Given the unstable security environment, it is unsurprising that potential foreign investors are hesitant to inject

much-needed resources into Afghanistan's troubled economy. However, economic and political engagement must go hand in hand: Afghanistan is rich in resources, both human and natural. In recent years, the country has been bleeding, with young and old seeking to start anew in neighbouring countries or, for those able to afford it, in Europe. As soon as the security environment allows, Germany should seek to kick-start the Afghan economy with targeted investments, not least to stop the country's brain drain.

To conclude, it is clear to me that we are moving towards a multi-polar world order. As a leading power in Europe and a country respected around the world, Germany can and must play an active role in forging an order firmly anchored in cooperation, shared objectives for the good of all, non-interference, and equal participation and contribution of all in world prosperity.

Power does not lie in the use of military force or in imposing one particular view on the rest of the world. True power lies in recognition, collaboration and partnership in a world in which all nations live free, and in just societies where people have the right to determine their own destiny. Germany has the means to be among the few leading the way. ✖

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*The only path to peace in Afghanistan is to invite all parts of society to jointly lay out the steps for a common future. Sharing 100 years of friendship, Afghanistan and Germany will walk this path together. With a strong and loyal partner by its side, Afghanistan can strive for a stable, secure and prosperous future.*