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## **Interview for Kurdish Iraqi “GULAN” Political Magazine (Mr. Farhad Mohamad Hassan)**

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***The stage of nation building: is one of the sensitive stages that each nation passes through in its self-building stage. According to your opinion what are the properties of this sensitive stage?***

First, nation-building is a continuous process, not an event. It is a process of change. Although being difficult to define, nation-building can be seen as the process of transformation of ethnic and other identities into one nation. Some of the characteristics of the transformation from an ethnic identity to a nation include sharing a common territory, historical experiences and memories, race, language, religion, culture, and economy.

The interrelationship of these and other factors leads to another important dimension of the nation-building process – politicization of an ethnic group, which needs a state to protect and develop its common interests and inspirations. It has been said that a group willing to create its own national state is already a nation. Political processes of nation-building are very complex ones. As we know some nations are stateless, some have states and struggle to unite a “title nation” with other nations and ethnic groups under a common roof.

There is also a debate about a nation-state and a civic state. In brief, there are no pure ethnic or civic states – all states are a mixture of civic and ethnic components. Is there a “Canadian nation” or is Canada composed of different “nations”? Are ethno-cultural or civic elements of Canada more important? Nowadays, a modern state does not require the 100 percent ethnic, linguistic and cultural homogeneity to function. Political Scientists often quote more than 160-year old phrase of Piedmont leader Massimo d’Azeglio: “*We have made Italy, we now have to make Italians.*” Today, still two-thirds of Italians speak their regional dialects, and only 80 percent speak standardized Italian. Therefore, nation-building is the constant process of the transformation of main actors and the interplay of various factors without a pre-set timeline.

***In the history of nation building or nation rescuing, the leaders who play an important role during that stage is always considered as a symbol of that nation. What are the effects of having a national leadership?***

Part of the answer lies in this question. The impact of having or lacking a national leadership is crucial for nation-building, especially when an ethnic group is politically “mature.” National leaders articulate national interest, develop strategy and tactics to achieve national goals. They also take responsibilities for the success or failure of their actions. Only a few can argue that nation building is possible without a common vision expressed by national leadership. On the other hand, national leaders are not the only actors in the nation-building process.

***French revolution is one of the products of intellectuals of renaissance age. That means intellectuals produce ideas, and the national leaders turns those ideas into action. So according to your opinion, what is the duty of intellectuals during the nation building stage?***

Please keep in mind that intellectuals themselves can be national leaders. They can both generate and implement their ideas then. If one separates intellectuals from national leaders, one needs to remember Niccolò Machiavelli's "the retinue makes the king". These people are very important; their ideas are often projected into the future and leaders are not always ready to accept and implement them. Often, these ideas are alive for hundreds of years. I compare intellectuals to soldiers that load artillery ammunition, and national leaders to artillery officers who personally direct the fire. Ideally, it would be nice to have both at the right time and place.

However, often intellectuals do not serve their nation due to various factors. In this case, the job of national leaders is to find and mobilize intellectuals to be part of the nation-building process. Almost every nation or ethnic group has a reservoir of knowledge and intellectual resources – unfortunately, often not used by its leaders. In addition, no one can force them do something for their ethnic group or nation. Their support should come from their hearts, without reward.

In addition, nowadays "classical intellectuals" play a less important role compared to that from hundreds years ago; their remnants can be found primarily in the academic world. Advances in technology, intelligence, free movement of people and rapid share of ideas in the global village have brought quasi-intellectuals (strategic planners, analysts, political technologists, advisers, etc.) to the nation-building process. Again, it would be a task for leaders to find, recruit, and effectively use these experienced professionals to achieve national goals.

***Spiritual leader or father foundations succeed in nation building. And they become the identity of their nation. For example, once you mention Mahatma Ghandi, it means you mean India, Charles de Gaulle means France and George Washington means America. What are the reasons that these nations praise their leaders?***

In my opinion, they had strategic vision, values and principles that the majority of their fellow citizens shared and supported. No wonder they are "fathers" of their nations because they could unite divided, fragile nations under the common goals of a strong and independent state. At the same time, all of them put a human being at the center, and were against violence as a political fight tool. Ghandi once said that "*truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of the truth.*" These national leaders had tremendous public support that helped them end political chaos and violence. They were masters of politics as "the Art of the Possible", and they were Patriots – Great Sons of their nations whose ideas are still alive today.

**Today, building democracy means the completion of nation building, it means that national leaders should contain the property of democracy too. So do you think if building democracy also requires a good leader?**

As I have mentioned, nation-building does not have a pre-set timeframe, it is a continuous process. The same applies to democracy. I recall Sir W. Churchill's famous dictum: "*Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.*" National leaders should be continuous students of democracy, if their nation has chosen it as a form of government. Leaders come and go, but principles of democratic development are stable – they are the rules of the game – leader popularity does not matter today – there will be new

leaders tomorrow. Ideally, leaders should express the will of the majority and respect the rights of minority. In a democratic society the people select their own leaders. What is important is that “new” and “old” leaders as well as ordinary citizens follow the same rules of the game.

In day-to-day life, for example, in Western democracies it does not matter who you are – President, Prime-Minister or janitor – everyone has the same rights and freedoms, everyone pays a parking fee, regularly submit tax returns, sends children to the same school and drinks the same water, etc. Institutions of civic society, such as free media, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and interest groups play a key role in a democratic society. The role of the leader would be to develop conditions to guarantee democratic principles. For example, in Ukraine in 2005, right after the Orange Revolution, President Victor Yushenko had more than 70 percent support, in 2009 his support dropped to 3%. Nevertheless, Ukraine remains strongly committed to democratic principles. As the traditional French proclamation goes, “*the King is dead. Long live the King!*” The answer is twofold – democracy needs a good leader, and a good leader needs democracy.

***6- We are as being intellectuals and journalists, how should we deal with these kinds of leaders, in which we need them in the stages of building nation and democracy? How can we cooperate with them in order to lead the democracy and nation building processes succeed?***

Personal values, high professional standards, and commitment to democratic changes should be core principles for any professional – a journalist, a professor or an actor. As I have said before, the rules of the game should be the same for everybody. To a certain extent, a commitment to democracy does not require commitment to its leaders, who are just human beings. These intellectuals are professionals, they are representatives of civil society and should protect the rights, freedoms and institutions of democracy as the system, but they should not cherish leaders or find special ways to cooperate with them, no matter how popular they happen to be. In this case, leaders will find ways to cooperate with professionals, not vice versa. Leaders are servants to their people who support them. Intellectuals should focus on the actions of leaders, judge them according to democratic principles, and make their assessments open to the public; they also offer alternate solutions to problems. Namely, they should do their job without worrying much about leaders – if society is ready. Again, this is only possible if leaders are committed to the development of democracy and civil society. If the system is not democratic or the leader does not possess high moral standards or does not act democratically, intellectuals should do their best to change the system and the leader. Then, methods of their communication with leaders will be different compared to those of a democratic system – from peaceful protests and pressure politics to the establishment of independent media, from active petition campaigns to open public debates over current issues, etc.

**Can we say that intellectuals are the completion to their leader’s task in building democracy and nation building process? Moreover, how far the success of this process is impossible without the effort of intellectuals?**

Along with free media and other institutions of civil society, intellectuals are the chain dogs of democracy. It would be naive for an ethnic group or a nation to wait and see how others do their homework. Leaders, intellectuals and other professionals in all spheres of life are equally responsible for the results of these processes. As the saying goes, “*One person is not a warrior on the field.*” Nation-building and democracy-building are continuous processes, the battles for them never ends.