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# Khan's Dog Whistle Campaign Reaches the Wrong Ears

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At about 11pm last night I was running a bath expecting a relaxing half an hour before going to bed when I received a Twitter notification. Minutes before that I'd quote-tweeted a post that came through my timeline from someone I follow. I used a simple caption: "Go Girl!" The post was about a brave Swedish woman who, on her own, stood up to the fascists in Sweden. Immediately after that - and out of the blue - I received a Tweet that I was "trying to get integrity off back of strength shown by this woman". Her reasoning for saying that was that I support Zac Goldsmith.

Khan's dog whistle has clearly reached her ears.

A number of Khan supporters attacked me for defending Zac quoting his alleged "racism" as the reason, although she went further. Turned out that it was relevant for the debate that I was "white", apparently I am not black or Asian so don't know what racism is or isn't. Although, my dear girl, my father is actually ethnically Asian. . You might not be able to tell that by looking at my face but you can by looking at my surname, and yes, my Dad has a brown face (so, am I now allowed to have an opinion?).

The reason these attacks have been happening is purely because Sadiq's dog-whistling campaign implying that Zac is anti-Muslim has truly started bringing results. And not just in the polls.

I don't agree with all of Conservative campaign tactics, and have said so on numerous occasions. Cameron overstepped the mark at PMQ and didn't even do his homework before throwing accusation which was embarrassing. Some other senior Conservative interventions were also unhelpful, and Khan shouldn't have got the stick for meeting Gani because he couldn't help it as he was his local imam (something I previously didn't know). I firmly support Zac but I was genuinely trying to be fair in my criticism. I can't blindly reject all the accusations, or blindly accept them.

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I don't think Zac wanted that level of attacks on Sadiq, but he was unable to stop them. With only 7% of London budget in hands of the Mayor, he would entirely depend on Government on finance. He wouldn't have wanted to fall out with the Government and the Government-supporting newspapers, like the Mail, which has added fuel to the fire by using the picture of the 7/7 bus to illustrate Zac's article last weekend. In my view, the paper has to apologise, first and foremost, to the victims of 7/7 and also to Zac for undermining his perfectly logical and polite argument and to Sadiq because for far right that sort of picture is like a red cloth to the bull. And yet nobody cared that it was the paper with the only goal to sell papers who did it, the only person who got the stick was Zac - because it was convenient to blame him. It's the election, you know!

The reason why I got involved in Zac's campaign - and not the General Election or any other campaigns - is because I can vouch for the integrity of the man. I interviewed him twice, and I watched him from afar and he has always impressed me by being a lifelong environmentalist (not just during the election), by his fight to bring the recall of MPs (which Khan didn't support) and by standing up to the establishment whether it's the government or big corporations.

Politics aside, I was neutral in my personal attitude to Sadiq, until he posted that tweet that was not only below the belt but utterly, utterly divisive and aimed directly at Zac: "Hey @ZacGoldsmith", he said "There's no need to keep pointing at me & shouting 'he's a Muslim'. I put it on my own leaflets." That was a clear cut provocation. He knew Zac would not be able not to react to that. Even if Zac loses on Thursday, Khan cannot delete it from his own conscience that his words had very clear and very loud implications (a dog whistle!).

It was only after that outrageous attack that Zac has unleashed his own wrath at Khan. Anyone who'd want to defend themselves would. Khan also deliberately said that Zac's campaign would turn Muslims away from politics when the questions have never ever been about Muslims, but about Sadiq and to Sadiq because of Sadiq's own dodgy acquaintances. Sadiq used his religion as a shield and a sword, urging people to vote for a "Muslim Mayor" and yet screaming "islamophobia" when he faced legitimate questions. Rightly or wrongly, any politician in the UK would have faced the same scrutiny, white or not, that's how politics works in this country. People do get attacked for their past. Sadiq himself attacked Zac for his background on numerous occasions.

Zac has always supported anti-hate campaigners, like, for example, Nic Careem, and has had a very good relationship with the mosques in his constituency, and Zac's own sister is a Muslim, his nephews are Pakistani! Zac could have relied upon getting some votes there. Khan knew that Zac has been respected in Muslim communities, so Khan did everything to undermine his support there by claiming that Zac was anti-Muslim. Even "Tell Mama", an organization devoted specifically to measuring anti-Muslim attacks, had to step in to vouch for Zac.

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Tell Mama said: "Zac is someone who has spent many years working with faith communities and with Muslim communities. Indeed, he was instrumental in working with the Kingston mosque in tackling the far right who had targeted the mosque and his involvement brought all communities together against far right extremists targeting the local Muslim community. To suggest that Zac Goldsmith is Islamophobic is to suggest that Sadiq Khan may be susceptible to being sympathetic to people with extreme views."

But Khan's message - with the help of Owen Jones & Co who just want to strengthen Corbyn with this election - has spread too far.

Books should be written about Sadiq Khan's election strategy. He's used every rule in Lynton Crosby's book, including the infamous "dead cat" trick to make us talk about race and religion because it is to his advantage instead of us discussing his fairytale policies that don't add up and diverting attention from the fact that Khan was the one who nominated Corbyn.

Khan wanted us to talk about the religion and race pushing Londoners "to prove their tolerance" by voting for him, and that's why he needed to mar his opponent as much as possible. That was his bet, and his manipulative bet was correct. Everyone likes an underdog. The trouble is that at this election "the underdog" Khan has manipulated public opinion so cynically that it sickens me. I am not justifying some of the Conservative party tactics at all but he was on par with them if not more because it was so underhand and done with an innocent face. He did it to harvest Muslim votes and guilt-trip others into voting for him and make Zac untouchable for the greens as a second preference vote. The cynicism of it is mind-blowing.

It was not the first time that Khan used his religion like that. Two Labour MPs back in June - long before Zac was elected as his opponent - went as far as publishing an open letter to Khan, that's how disgusted they were by his [shameless exploit of 7/7](#). Sadiq Khan's former brother-in-law said Sadiq was "cold and calculative".

Regardless of the outcome, even if Khan wins on Thursday he wouldn't win the argument. He wanted it to be about the race and religion because he saw the winning points there, that's where the swing votes would come, so he exploited it. I am afraid it will always stay with Mr Khan that he and his allies tried to ruin their political opponent by linking him to Trump and implying he is a racist when they know that he is not. Just as it will stay with Cameron and some people on the Conservative campaign, including the Mail, that, perhaps with the best intentions in mind, they seriously overstepped the mark with their attacks on Khan.

Khan's dog-whistling had an effect: he got #nastyzac trending and Zac - a genuinely lovely man with all of his lovely policies that nobody seem to give a damn about - is being called a racist. Sadiq's campaign went as far as linking Zac's name to Trump, a truly racist and vile politician. Is this the sort of victory Khan wants? Wouldn't it taste sour? Does he want Zac's children now to be worried about being bullied & called racist? Should Zac's supporters stop posting their pictures campaigning for Zac and posts in his support out of fear of being abused on social media?

I think even Sadiq Khan himself wouldn't have wished for that. His dog-whistling and labelling Zac anti-Muslim was just meant to damage Zac temporarily and harvest Muslim votes plus guilt-trip other Londoners into supporting him. It was all about the election. He'd have probably also not expected that the aftermath of his ruthless and divisive, yes, divisive, fight for power would be the abuse of everyone who supports his opponent, shut down legitimate questions, and ultimately bad for the debate and for the democracy.

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**Catherine Prichard**

Hi Marina - thank you. I have been running around in frustration for weeks saying everything you have written. I have tried commenting on online articles, but often my comments have been moderated off. Finally, today, The Telegraph has shown my view: 'What would Zac's campaign look like if Sadiq was not a Muslim'. I am a socialist, and have been ashamed at the manner in which the 'moral high ground' Left has jumped on the bandwagon - stirring up the divisiveness that they blame others for. I am sorry to say it, but if Sadiq Khan truly cared for others - and our city - he would not have wilfully encouraged this outcome. Good luck to you, and Zac.

Unlike · Reply · 2 · 4 May 2016 17:58



**Marina Kim** · City University London

Thank you so much for such a lovely comment, Catherine. Exactly right, and I completely agree, if Sadiq truly cared for others he wouldn't have used "Muslim" as a way of self-defence because of all the subsequent implications for the society. The only person who Sadiq Khan truly cares for is himself.

Like · Reply · 4 May 2016 19:31



**Philip Duval** · The University of Manchester

Labour are THE party of racial politics. Speaking as a former political education officer for them, I can tell you they are stuffed to the gills with people who will play whatever card it takes to get elected. I despise them and feel dirty that I was ever involved.

<http://afreeleftblog.blogspot.co.uk/.../sadiq-khan...>

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**Marina Kim** · City University London

Sadiq Khan has done more damage to interracial relations than anyone else in this campaign.

I am saying that not because I support Zac. I am convinced of that. I wouldn't put my name to something I don't believe in. Sadiq played the race card, and he was divisive. I hope my article illustrates that point in more ways than one.

Will read your blog, thank you.

Like · Reply · 6 May 2016 10:46