**Cooperation for the common good**

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In some recent articles, I have written about the importance of cooperation rather than confrontation in order to reach results in politics and other fields. I have used the World Economic Forum (WEF) with its annual meeting of top participants in Davos, Switzerland, as a special example for how leaders and others can exchange ideas, even when they don’t have the same persuasions, or precisely therefore. To listen and learn from others is what we must do in order to rethink and re-evaluate our own positions and stands. Sometimes it is difficult to admit that what we believe must be renewed and modernised to be relevant, but that is often what we must do to succeed.

I believe that the liberal Western social-democratic political thinking, which created highly successful economic systems in Europe and beyond, must change and not only rest on past laurels. The mostly-capitalist private sector can only succeed if the state is also strong and fair, if there is redistribution of wealth, and if the social services and security systems are strong. Capitalism becomes cold and ugly if left freewheeling on its own; it only becomes good for people if regulated by the people and the state. The WEF founding chairman Professor Klaus Schwab has this year underlined that the private sector must become more responsible, also to continue to succeed in its own money-making efforts. Unless the private sector is responsible and realises that pollution and exploitation of the environment—and the people—must be curbed and regulated, there is no sustainability. Klaus Schwab doesn’t only want regulations from outside; he also wants the private sector to play a proactive and positive role itself in its own interest and in the development of people’s lives. Schwab calls it ‘stakeholder capitalism’. It is indeed based on cooperation, not only competition; it is based on an understanding of the common good; it is a furtherance of the social-democratic model.

[PML-N's Mushahid Ullah Khan passes away](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/senator-mushahid-ullah-khan-passes-away)

This is the first type of cooperation then, within and between the productive sectors, and the private sector and the state. Although Professor Schwab appeals to the private sector, nationally and internationally, to become more responsible, it remains a fact, I believe, that the state must still be in the driver’s seat as for regulations and sharing of profit. The last decades of ruthlessness in the private sector, especially by the huge multinationals, shows that there is still a long way to go for the private sector to work for the common good, protect the environment and support sustainable development. Sometimes, the private sector companies have not yet realised that it is in their own long-term interest to listen to Professor Schwab’s advice, read his new ‘Stakeholder Capitalism’ book, and save both their soul and make money. In addition, the state, the political parties and the myriad of civil society and other organisations, which make up the democracies in the world, must also be quick on the ball now and renew and modernise their organisations.

[Libya marks tenth anniversary of 2011 revolution](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/libya-marks-tenth-anniversary-of-2011-revolution)

There is a decline in membership in political parties, even in countries like Sweden, one of the most participatory democracies in the world. Hence, something must be done to make it more fashionable, pleasant and meaningful to be members and active in political parties in future, and certainly not let populist organisations or fringes-parties, especially on the right, take the lead. Political parties must be made more attractive for young people; hold meetings and be online together, discuss politics, but also less serious issues. It is a problem for political parties if they are only attractive for bookish and academic young people; they must also be made attractive for more ordinary people, including people in vocational and manual jobs, not only those who can say all the right theoretical things. As a matter of fact, until now, the populist and right-wing groups have sometimes become more attractive for ordinary youth, simply because they are less brainy and formal. We must realise that political parties should comprise all types of people.

[US to pay more than $200m to WHO by end of month](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/us-to-pay-more-than-dollar-200m-to-who-by-end-of-month)

I believe that in recent decades, socialist groups have been too academic, almost like university seminars, where it is important to win arguments and be clever, rather than be all inclusive and analyse and discuss issues that appeal to the majority of people. True, the world we live in is complicated and politicians need knowledge to understand difficult issues. However, politicians do not need to become experts and not all details; they must remain generalists and democracies must not become meritocracies where the educated rule. It is the values, ideals, ideology, wishes and dreams that are the foundations, even common sense. In our time, we have enough experts to help us, but it is the politicians’ duty to control and ask questions to the experts rather than let them take even more power than they already have.

This article is about participation and cooperation for development. Let me conclude this section by underlining that the political parties and authorities generally, should work actively together to increase people’s participation in political parties, civil society organisations, and other groups that can make the democracy more participatory. We must encourage participation also of those we disagree with. (For further learning, I recommend works done by ‘Varieties of Democracy’ (V-Dem), an international collaborative centre at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.)

[Saudi Arabia offers to mediate in Ethiopia dam dispute](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/saudi-arabia-offers-to-mediate-in-ethiopia-dam-dispute)

I shall end my article today by drawing attention to the importance of international cooperation and solidarity with needy people everywhere. That is simply a logical continuation of working for local, national and regional cooperation, and of regulating and improving the economic and political systems in a world. We need more stakeholder capitalism, and we need more participatory democracy. We must work together to share more fairly, and we must accept high moral and ethical standards, not only for some groups and classes, but for all. If we want to improve the world we live in, that means that we must work to reduce inequality and help the poorest towards a fairer share of the common pie.

After WWII, much has been done towards greater equality within and between countries, yes, often thanks to social-democratic and socialist ideologies. Gender issues have been high on the agenda, and many results have been achieved; in our time, environmental and climate issues top the list. Also, the possibilities for better lives in developing countries have improved in the post-colonial era, but much more must be done, and better ways of cooperation must be found.

[FMs of Pakistan, Egypt agree to further strengthen trade, economic ties](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/fms-of-pakistan-egypt-agree-to-further-strengthen-trade-economic-ties)

Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1989-91), there was a window of opportunity for disarmament and transfer of funds from the military to development. Alas, that didn’t happen, and the West is mostly responsible for lack of progress. Peace is fundamental for development everywhere. In my article next week, I will draw attention to some of those key issues; we cannot discuss cooperation for development, as the theme of my article is today, unless we discuss international relations and peace. We must realise the shortcomings, put the issues at the top on the agenda, and seek solutions much more actively than we have done in recent decades.