**When the world is no longer the same**

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We live in a time when many things are uncertain and change happens unexpectedly and in ways we don’t want. In the past, things improved and became better, we thought, in more or less straight and linear lines. In the last five years, even ten or twenty years, it hasn’t always been like that, from the SARS pandemic in 2002, the financial crises from 2008, and the Corona pandemic from early 2020 till date. Health specialists, including those at the World Health Organisation (WHO), had warned against the pandemic, but few listened; it was cheaper just to hope for the best. In the future, new and possibly more dangerous pandemics are bound to occur, but still, preparedness is not given high priority.

The world has seen economic growth in the last decades, indeed in China and the West, and also in the Global South. But development has been quite uncontrolled and erratic, making some individuals and multinationals unbelievably rich and most poor people poorer. Overall, the global capitalist system has failed, indeed so because the political economists and politicians have not put in place regulations to curtail transnational companies, rich countries, and ruthless individuals.

[AMAN-23 Exercise to pave way for more peaceful, secure region: PM](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/aman-23-exercise-to-pave-way-for-more-peaceful-secure-region-pm)

This has been unethical and risky for all. In the future, better systems must be found. But perhaps that will only happen when those at the top realise that the current unequal and competitive system has too many shortcomings, mainly benefitting the select few, being a disaster for the last, the least, and the lowest. There are some decent-thinking people in the private sector who have begun airing views, writing books and articles about this, saying that less competitiveness and inequality will be more productive even for those at the top, and certainly for those lower down.

You may say this analysis is not quite new. True, it isn’t, but it has now gone too far. We have placed patches on some of the worst wounds, for example, development aid from rich to poor countries since the 1950s when many former colonies gained independence. The UN has recommended that 0.7 percent of rich countries’ GDP should be allocated to development aid, but just a few countries reach that target, although even if they did it would rather just be a token. A New International Economic Order (NIEO) was talked about by the United Nations and progressive countries in the 1970s, but it was shelved before it was introduced, and resisted by the rich countries. Hopefully, there will be new initiatives to increase and restructure development aid in the future, but it is hardly on today’s agenda. However, a positive sign came at the COP27 summit in Egypt in November last year when a resolution was passed to compensate poor countries for loss and damage caused by climate-induced disasters. Let us see how bold the plans and real transfers will be when they are formulated this year.

[Everything's nothing but play for Imran Khan, says Sharjeel Memon](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/everything-s-nothing-but-play-for-imran-khan-says-sharjeel-memon)

In the future, the private sector must play a much more prominent role in development aid and transfers from rich to poor countries, including the introduction of taxes on companies taking out profit from poor countries. Governments, the UN and multilateral organisations must do more and better work. An example of a private initiative is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Yet, there is a basic democratic problem with private development aid, in spite of good intentions, because the donors make all the decisions and choose projects and areas alone. Well, donor governments are often not much better.

The most serious reason for saying that ‘the world is no longer the same’ is that superpowers and big countries don’t cooperate. That goes for trade, technology, and certainly military issues. Russia’s conflict with Ukraine went to outright annexation of Crimea in 2014, where Russia has its major military bases on the Black Sea; earlier, the land was on lease from Ukraine. The West placed sanctions on Russia and relations with the West deteriorated. A full war between Russia and Ukraine broke out with the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. Four provinces in the east of Ukraine have been annexed by Russia, approved by its national assembly, the ‘Duma’, although against international law.

[By-polls: Nomination papers of 74 candidates accepted from KP](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/by-polls-nomination-papers-of-74-candidates-accepted-from-kp)

If NATO, USA, EU, and Russia, had done their work politically, economically and diplomatically since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, none of this would have happened, well, maybe except for Russia annexing Crimea due to NATO countries having crept closer to Russia and its sphere of interest, against agreements when the Soviet Union ended.

It was Russia that started the terrible war in Ukraine, but the West is also responsible for provocations, and it must have expected some form of armed conflict. When it happened, though, the West should immediately have called for a ceasefire and peace talks. Instead, the West has kept supplying Ukraine with more and more weapons, hoping they will win the war and downsize Russia drastically from its earlier empire status. However, it is only a matter of time before everyone sees that it is not just a war between Russia and Ukraine, but between Russia and the West. NATO underlines that it is not a part of it, but most of the 30 member countries and other partners, help Ukraine in a united effort. The parties have unrealistic red lines for peace talks and ending the war – which should never have started or stopped at the outset.

[NA session summoned on Wednesday as President refuses to approve ordinance](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/na-session-summoned-on-wednesday-as-president-refuses-to-approve-ordinance)

Caused mainly by the war in Ukraine and Russian oil and gas supplies to Europe having ended, energy prices have increased tremendously in Europe, with further effects on other prices in all countries around the world. Many people fall below the poverty line. In Europe, governments provide subsidies to help households and companies, which alleviates some of the negative consequences. In poorer countries, including Pakistan, the price increases have serious effects on many people. We can safely say that ‘the world is no longer the same’, and it will take a long time for things to improve.

Once the war in Ukraine is over, perhaps earliest by the end of 2023 – if not escalated and spread – Russia and the West must begin to cooperate again, in trade, politics and other fields. They must do what was neglected since the fall of the Soviet Union, and Russia must be assisted to develop democratic institutions. Assistance to rebuild Ukraine must also be provided. The current polarisation between and within many countries must be overcome, including the USA and China. The West’s enormous rearmament must be changed for economic, political and social development.

[FM Bilawal inaugurates Digital Power of Attorney](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/fm-bilawal-inaugurates-digital-power-of-attorney)

Finally, there are many issues about ‘the world not being the same’ which I have not discussed in this article, indeed many armed conflicts and wars, including the Kashmir and Palestinian situations. Also, climate change and environmental issues need to be addressed more seriously in all countries, with concrete measures urgently. On a positive note, the Internet and other modern communication and other technology have great potential for the good. Let us hope that young people will engage not only on social media but become more active politically, in parties, organisations and companies. In some countries, young people spend up to six or eight hours daily on new devices. What a resource that is if diverted to activities in politics, education, health and more. Instead of less political engagement, there is a need for more.