**Alternative thinking**

[**Atle Hetland**](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/atle-hetland)

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First, alternative thinking has nothing to do with alternative news, alternative facts, and such modern concepts. Alternative thinking means to be imaginative and look for new ways to understand and solve both old and new problems. To do so, we need to be open-minded and flexible, turn every stone, as we say, done in new and unorthodox ways. If we are too clever, formal and correct about issues, we find little or nothing new. But if we go beyond conventions and approved methods, then we can find new things, create new wisdom and alternative understanding. Then we could say: why didn’t we see and think of it before? What were the interests and forces keeping us back? Maybe we ourselves preferred just to continue in the old ways, follow old and comfortable roads, even if we knew that alternative thinking would have brought us ahead and given prosperity to all?

When I last week wrote about ‘Gordian knots’, an old Greek term used for problems that seem unsolvable until somebody takes drastic and unorthodox measures and cuts the knot, or indeed, that somebody manages to untie and open the knot. From there, new ways can be found, and alternative thinking can flourish.

[Balochistan govt to distribute food package to deserving people, says Zia Lango](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2023/balochistan-govt-to-distribute-food-package-to-deserving-people-says-zia-lango)

We need alternative thinking in many fields in our time, and I shall in this article mention just a few. In spite of all the information, knowledge, research data and deep-ploughing studies that we have at our fingertips today, we still seem to be stuck in old ways and old thinking, yes, even when alternatives are just at the tip of the nose.

We live in a time with terrible conflicts between countries, groups and classes, indeed a war in the middle of Europe, the continent that otherwise considers itself the most civilised, being able to reason and discuss issues and find fair solutions acceptable to all. Indeed, there is very limited alternative thinking and debate about peace and conflict resolution. Peace organizations and movements are less visible and active than before, certainly less than during the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

We seem to have let the military-minded men, and nowadays also some women, lead the debates and make the decisions, often repeating views and statements so that almost everybody believes them after some time. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg is a master at this; alas, history will not be kind to him and the alliance. In many ways, the statements are often false news and alternative facts, like mirages that the sailors saw at evening hours. But the sailors knew that mirages were unreal; we who listen to the warmongers today, we let them get away with their unreal stories.

[Pakistani President heaps praise on Biznet’s aim to train 1,000 women as game developers](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2023/pakistani-president-heaps-praise-on-biznet-s-aim-to-train-1-000-women-as-game-developers)

If somebody questions the West’s massive weapon, equipment and ammunition assistance to Ukraine, they are accused of running Russia’s errand; and if somebody should mention pacifism, even using religious reasons for justifying it, they will be entirely out of today’s good society. True, it may be late to apply ‘soft approaches’ in Ukraine, but at the same time, we know that the war will eventually have to end with negotiations unless we want the world to move towards Armageddon. This week, on Friday 24 February, it is a year since the sad Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Furthermore, we should realize that the military industry and the military branches of most countries, indeed the 30 countries in the enormous NATO defence alliance, seem to live in their own world, understanding issues their own way. Sometimes, those organizations that are meant to protect people and make us more secure, lead to the opposite, directly or indirectly. I wonder if the Israel-Palestine conflict would not have been solved long ago if it were not for America and the West wanting Israel as a base in the Middle East. Perhaps several of the exiting and lasting conflicts have hidden agendas of similar types. If we consider issues critically and apply alternative thinking, we would be able to see and understand more of reality.

[AJK PM directs authorities to use all available resources to serve masses during Ramazan](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2023/ajk-pm-directs-authorities-to-use-all-available-resources-to-serve-masses-during-ramazan)

But alternative thinking is not only applicable to conflicts and wars. It is important in many other broad and specific fields in any country and society, such as economic issues, the social sectors, health, education, and so on. All these fields are political fields, building on values and moral foundations, in the same ways as defence and military issues are – and they are all intertwined, like building blocks. If we believe that conflicts can best be solved through debate and at the conference table, that means that we must invest in peace education in schools, adult education and public debate; we must strive at building societies with high equality between all people, not just give freedom to those at the top, those who have more riches than they need, including the cruellest weapons that the world has invented, owning the biggest holiday yachts and the most luxurious hunting palaces. We know that we must place these issues high on the agenda in public debates so that people can rally around them and create societies that are good for all – even those who today exploit the poor. Alas, alternative thinking, which is actually built on simple common sense, is discouraged. If we just applied a tiny bit of it, the war in Ukraine, between Russia and the West and Russia, would never have started. It is a sin to kill and destroy what God has created and what people have built. We must turn around and do God’s will.

[FM Bilawal departs for Dubai](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2023/fm-bilawal-departs-for-dubai)

The lack of equality within and between countries, today growing, is not discussed seriously. Yet, we know that it is possible to create much greater equality between groups and classes, giving everybody access to basic needs, such as health, education, housing, and so on, yes, including encouraging all to be involved in politics and shaping their own societies. The inequality between the Global North and the Global South is entirely unacceptable, all the way from the colonial era till this very time. Greater equality would lead to more prosperous and peaceful societies. It doesn’t matter if we call it alternative thinking, or just common sense, and even if we cannot always see immediate changes, we will know that our values and priorities are right.

We must prioritize how we spend money much better in the future. I believe that defence budgets should go down, certainly not at the extreme opposite as is the case with NATO countries’ increasing budgets. But there are many other areas where we can get much more out of the money that we already have, and we don’t always need economic growth either, although in poorer countries that is needed. In fields like education and health, we should evaluate how money is spent to reach out better. We always argue for more money for education, but I have begun questioning how necessary it is. Do we really need all those fancy diplomas and degrees when we rather need practical skills? I believe we have reached a level that is unsustainable. In the West, they have also begun questioning the cost of health services in shrinking and older populations. Thus, it is not only as regards peace and war, and equal economic development we need alternative thinking. It is also needed in education and the social sectors – and everywhere, to increase people’s participation since it is the people, indeed the youth, that must find new and better ways ahead.