**New year, new resolutions**

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A new year is always a harbinger of fresh resolutions, bringing renewed hopes for the days ahead. International relations continue to suffer under the weight of humanitarian crises.

Global terrorism is on the rise, and human rights and civil liberties are being marginalized – if not outright crushed – through no fault of the masses at large. Economic crises have only added fuel to the fire. Pakistan is no exception when it comes to issues like terrorism, national security, economic instability, and the erosion of civil liberties. As we bid farewell to the passing year, let us welcome the new year with a strong and purposeful resolution.

The new year’s resolution should centre on restoring peace, prosperity, and civil liberties worldwide to address the rapidly expanding humanitarian crises. Much hope rests on the incoming US administration, with Donald J Trump set to take the oath for his second term as president of the United States on January 20. He is expected to prioritise global peace, having already indicated his intent to end conflicts in various regions. Known for his aggressive posture and straightforward, pragmatic approach, Trump’s stated resolve to restore peace in the Middle East, Europe, and other troubled areas is a promising sign.

The Palestinian issue, above all, demands his immediate attention, as it remains a monumental humanitarian crisis compounded by the ongoing Syrian conflict. Millions are suffering, and urgent action is needed to alleviate their plight. The role of the UN in peacekeeping must also be strengthened to ensure stability in the region.

Ukraine, another flashpoint disrupting global peace efforts, should be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy rather than through a zero-sum approach of defeat and victory. This issue has the potential to escalate into a full-fledged nuclear conflict, with catastrophic consequences. Prioritising diplomacy and constructive engagement must be at the forefront of the new US administration’s agenda, and the appointment of Richard Grenell as a special envoy for crisis resolution is a step in the right direction. Resolving this conflict amicably could make the world a safer, more stable place.

Turning to the South China Sea dispute, let us give peace a chance by addressing this long-standing conflict. Confidence in the One China policy must be restored by the US and its Nato allies to pave the way for global harmony. Currently, the US is locked in a trade war with China, using Taiwan as a geopolitical lever despite its status as an integral part of China. This confrontational approach must give way to policies of collaboration and cooperation, which promise greater economic benefits for all.

China’s contribution to the global supply chain is vital, offering affordable goods and services. The ongoing chips war should be replaced by a collective war against poverty, aimed at uplifting the world’s poorest populations. Such a shift should be the New Year’s resolution for the wealthy and advanced nations of the world.

Terrorism, in all its forms, stands as a grave threat to humanity. Whether domestic or international, terrorism must be curtailed and eradicated. Countries like Pakistan have been severely affected by terrorist activities, particularly by groups such as the TTP, which disrupt economic activities and tear apart the social fabric of society. National security demands renewed efforts and a resolute commitment to eliminating terrorism from Pakistan’s soil. The international community must also play a role in curbing the funding and training of terrorist organisations, as this menace knows no borders and affects nations indiscriminately. Collective global action against terrorism will ensure a safer and more harmonious world for generations to come.

While the Covid-19 pandemic no longer dominates global discourse, climate change has emerged as an even greater threat to humanity. The urgency of addressing this issue cannot be overstated. The annual Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) highlight the need for climate finance, yet challenges persist.

Vulnerable countries require the financial support of wealthier nations to mitigate the damage caused by climate disasters. The new year calls for a firm commitment to tackle climate change and prioritise environmental sustainability. Global cooperation is essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, investing in renewable energy sources, and developing climate-resilient infrastructure in vulnerable regions.

Poverty remains a curse that demands decisive action. Poverty alleviation programmes must be strengthened, particularly in the least developed countries, where populations suffer from disease, malnutrition, and the devastating effects of natural disasters. The responsibility lies with the wealthier nations to support these efforts through robust initiatives.

Although poverty may never be entirely eradicated, focused and sustained efforts can significantly alleviate the suffering of millions. This should remain a key area of concern for advanced economies and the UN. Innovative approaches such as microfinance programmes, vocational training, and community-based development initiatives can also empower individuals to break the cycle of poverty and improve their quality of life.

The world has taken a turn for the worse in recent years, particularly concerning human rights and civil liberties. As economic crises deepen due to various factors, including rising terrorism in countries like Pakistan, human rights records continue to deteriorate. Civil liberties are being curtailed, and conservative forces worldwide are gaining ground, undermining liberal values and democratic freedoms. Narrow-minded neoconservatives increasingly view liberal ideologies and political freedoms as threats. A renewed commitment by liberals worldwide is necessary to break these metaphorical chains and restore the fundamental freedoms that all humans deserve. International organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, must intensify their advocacy for oppressed communities and push for legal frameworks to safeguard human rights globally.

Economic liberalism should be promoted for the welfare of people across the globe. Countries like Pakistan, constrained by stringent International Monetary Fund (IMF) programmes, often lack the freedom to make independent economic decisions. Donor-imposed reforms frequently stifle economic growth and exacerbate poverty. It is time for less developed nations to form alliances focused on progressive economic agendas. However, the question remains: who will take the lead?

The time has come to prioritise liberal economic policies that promote GDP growth and address poverty and inequality. Fostering regional trade agreements and enhancing connectivity through infrastructure development can also open up new avenues for economic growth and prosperity in less-developed regions.

Lastly, there is an urgent need for a collective resolution at both national and international levels to make the world a peaceful and harmonious place. Ensuring human rights and civil liberties must be a top priority for the coming year. The eradication of terrorism in all its forms, coupled with actionable solutions to climate change and poverty, should take centre stage.

Prosperity and peace for all humanity can only be achieved through policies of collaboration, cooperation, and mutual respect. The international community must pledge to work together in addressing these pressing challenges, setting aside differences for the greater good. This year, let us resolve to pursue these goals with unwavering determination, knowing that the future of our world depends on the actions we take today.

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