**Alternative thinking for a better world**

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Cooperation rather than confrontation remains important, as I have discussed in a few recent articles, giving reference to the good work of the World Economic Forum (WEF), led by its founding chairman Professor Klaus Schwab since 1972. I believe in cooperation in the private sector, what Schwab calls ‘corporate capitalism’, and in social democratic politics, but I would also include liberal conservatives and socialists. Nowadays, even ‘wing’ parties have realised that if they want to have a direct role in implementation of politics, they have to cooperate and compromise, not only vote for what they are for, and against what they are against.

I believe in cooperation in research and analysis, in NGO work, and between the private sector and government. I believe in cooperation between engineers and artists, people in the humanities and mathematics, and so on. As a matter of fact, if we want to solve known and unknown problems that we face today and in the future, we need to talk to people we usually don’t talk to. If we think that technologists and traditional politicians will find solutions, we are certainly wrong; the canvas must be expanded.

[Lionel Messi remains on top of La Liga scoring charts](https://nation.com.pk/26-Feb-2021/lionel-messi-remains-on-top-of-la-liga-scoring-charts)

Mohsin Hamid, one of the world’s most original writers and thinkers, a Pakistani and world citizen, has shown the importance of discussing contemporary unsolved issues, such as migration, with economic and other refugees and other migrants, in an entirely new light. He has said that in future, in one or two hundred years, people may look back at us in our time in a similar way that we look back at those who defended slavery till the second half of the 19th century, in USA, and apartheid in South Africa as recently as towards the end of the 20th century.

Mohsin Hamid argues that if we really believe in equality, we can not only include some fields of it, and leave out others, such as people’s opportunities to travel geographically. He says, we are all immigrants, if not in space than in time, since the world around us changes all the time, often as profoundly as that experienced if we travel from a rural town to the city within our own country, or if we cross borders and continents. A large city anywhere in the world resembles any other large city. Even if we live in the same house all our life, everything outside has changed, if not physically then in spirit.

[BKU warns of rally outside Indian Parliament with four million tractors](https://nation.com.pk/26-Feb-2021/bku-warns-of-rally-outside-indian-parliament-with-four-million-tractors)

Hence, we’d all better get around to work together, at least talk to each other, to grasp the world we live in, see and appreciate each other, realise that in the end, we are all migrants, and we are more like each other than different, even if we don’t think so at first glance. The thinking of fiction writers and other artists can help us on this journey. Maybe they are more concrete and less dreamy and unclear philosophers than we think? It is about time that traditional politicians realise that they will only be able to guide us on the way ahead if they cooperate with others who are alike and entirely different. The world has been and will always be changing, now probably faster than ever, and we must be all-inclusive, also to remain optimistic.

Looking back at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1989-91) and the end of the about 45 years of the Cold War between the West and the East Block, one of the most significant changes in geopolitics in last century, there are important things to discuss and learn from. I shall just draw attention to some aspects, and I am concerned about cooperation rather than confrontation. Hence I criticise that soon after the end of the long Cold War Era, we fell back into confrontation. We lost an opportunity, or maybe it was deliberate.

[China declares ‘complete victory’ over absolute poverty](https://nation.com.pk/26-Feb-2021/china-declares-complete-victory-over-absolute-poverty)

The end of the Cold War should be celebrated, and some aspects of the Soviet Union cherished. Also, the even more significant historical geopolitical change some decades earlier should be celebrated, namely the end of colonialism following some hundred years of the West’s direct control of most of the world; it is more than a scar on the West’s conscience and moral leadership.

In neither case, there was much democracy and cooperation, not in the colonies and not in the Soviet Union. However, the communist ideology had an ambition to create a better world for the working class and poor people. Colonialism was about exploitation and less about development in spite of it taking place at a time when there was democratic development in the ruling countries. That concept was, however, not meant to include the colonies; colonialism was underpinned by racial and other superiority ideology in culture, religion, technology, politics, and in other ways. Even the Christian religion and missionary activities were part of it all. On top of it, the colonial powers left the colonies and other territories in bad shape to take over and rule their own countries.

[Ravi City project to make numerous economic opportunities for people: PM Imran](https://nation.com.pk/26-Feb-2021/ravi-city-project-to-make-numerous-economic-opportunities-for-people-pm-imran)

Today, the West talks about democracy and human rights as essential in its moral leadership in the world. Those standards we can agree on, whether we are Westerners, Northerners, Easterners or Southerners, or a mix of it all. Democracy becomes a concept without borders. Unfortunately, the West propagates values and politics as theirs to be sold to the rest of the world, neglecting the history I mentioned, and also forgetting that women have only had the right to vote in the West for just about a hundred years. Minority groups, immigrants and refugees must be better integrated.

Many worry about the future of democracy in the West and the rest of the world. I am more optimistic and I believe that we will only go for more democracy, more cooperation, more equality, and more common sense. The new communication technologies will help us on the way, but it can also sometimes be used negatively. I hope that young people, and old people, will soon concretise the new and expanded democratic systems and cooperation that we need. Klaus Schwab and Mohsin Hamid have pointed at some essential issues. But it is ‘we the people’ who must analyse, formulate and hammer out the path ahead.

[Pakistan remains on FATF 'grey list' till June](https://nation.com.pk/25-Feb-2021/pakistan-remains-on-fatf-grey-list-till-june)

I hope we will never again see massive mistakes such as those after the dissolution of the Soviet Union when the West did not help in creation of democracy in Russia and the CIS countries. Today, those who suffer from the mistakes of confrontation rather the cooperation are first and foremost Russia, but also the West. It has delayed good development on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and the West spends tremendous amounts of money on the military and rearmament, mainly through NATO, rather than democratic and inclusive development. NATO’s budget is ten times that of Russia’s military budget. NATO should have been dissolved or changed when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved after the end of the Soviet Union. Alas, the West did not support the former colonies the way it should have after their independence. Many times, it was token support through development aid, which often benefited the West as much as the young independent states.

Yet, we still have time to turn around and change, do what is right and necessary. But we must not slumber much longer; we must listen to all good voices and alternative thinkers—then in the next decades we will be on the right track to a land and a world that is more like what God wants us to live in.

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