**Parties and politics change**

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

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Politics, parties, ideologies, values, ways and practices change. Earlier, a few parties could rule a country. After elections, one of them would have more than fifty percent of the votes and seats in parliament and they could decide most things without listening much to others. In some countries, notably in developing countries and the Eastern European countries during the Soviet Era, there was usually only one political party, or at least, only one party that stood a chance to win in national elections. Today, most developing countries have multi-party systems, but it can be difficult to vote out the party in power. In Russia and China, the ruling party always wins elections, but who the winning candidates are, may show something about the voters’ opinions; if small opposition parties gain clear support, but without any chance to take over, that is also noticed by the rulers and the people.

China is a unique example of a country with tremendous prosperity over recent decades, and thus also challenging the Western development and political model. The country’s economic development would most likely have been less impressive if the Western model had been followed. On the other hand, development is not only about economic development. That issue is also a recurrent topic in the West, and is likely to be more central in other countries, too, in future.

[Belgium slightly relaxes coronavirus measures](https://nation.com.pk/02-Oct-2021/belgium-slightly-relaxes-coronavirus-measures)

Cuba has followed a communist development model with success in several fields, indeed in health and education. At the same time, Western individual freedoms were not encouraged, even directly oppressed. The Western freedoms in capitalist countries are also not always good for all; economic development has often taken place at the expense of the interests of the poor working class people and others. In USA, the world’s richest country and the largest economy, still ahead of China as long as it lasts, poverty and social inequality are major problems, including race related inequality; gender inequality is less today than before.

Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in the world, tried an alternative, socialist development model from the 1960s till the mid-late 1980s, but it was not well-defined and planned, and was not successful, especially not for economic development. However, at the same time the country succeeded in many fields regarding social equality, which the capitalist West had never done when the British ruled the protectorate.

[TTP militants desiring to shun militancy be given chance to join mainstream: Fawad](https://nation.com.pk/02-Oct-2021/ttp-militants-desiring-to-shun-militancy-be-given-chance-to-join-mainstream-fawad)

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I had several research stays in Tanzania, and it was evident that every person felt valuable, and it was impressive to learn that universal primary school had been introduced ahead of many wealthier countries, and that literacy and other youth and adult education campaigns took place all over the country. The quality of services was often low, but the intentions were high. Tanzania had to shelve its ‘experiment’ and succumb to Western capitalist development, with growing inequalities. I wonder: Would life have been better for ordinary people under the socialist ideals of the first president, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, than today’s system? And in Cuba, was its system better than what they are getting today when they too succumb to Western ways? Perhaps those two cases could have succeeded if the West, the leaders of the world, had supported their alternative models, not fighting them with propaganda? China seems to succeed irrespective of the West’s disapproval and the US’ trade sanctions.

[Daniel Sturridge to continue his football career in Australia's Perth Glory](https://nation.com.pk/02-Oct-2021/daniel-sturridge-to-continue-his-football-career-in-australia-s-perth-glory)

In Muslim countries, and to some extent in Catholic Christian South America, religion plays a major role in politics—as Christianity did in the West earlier, but less today, at least not overtly. In my home country Norway, there was a state church until 2012 and at least fifty percent of cabinet members had to be members of the state church. Today, the head of state must belong to the Christian Lutheran faith.

In most Western countries, a clear majority of the people consider themselves to be Christian; in Norway, over three-quarters are members of the former state church. Since I write about changes in politics and political parties in this article, let me underline that religion is not an everyday issue in the West. Some parties, especially on the right-wing, argue that Muslim and other immigrants must adopt the culture of their new homeland, placing less emphasis on what they would see as old-fashioned religious practices. In Muslim countries themselves, I believe it is important that more centrist practices are adopted; this would also be important for people’s support of the Muslim faith in future, as well as more openness to other faiths.

[Keeping women safe – Swvl introduces 'women only' rides from Lahore to Islamabad and vice versa](https://nation.com.pk/01-Oct-2021/keeping-women-safe-swvl-introduces-women-only-rides-from-lahore-to-islamabad-and-vice-versa)

Politics is often about values, built on religious and moral values. However, the values are not necessarily about faith, but about moral aspects. Thus, Muslims, Christians and others would be able to agree on most moral issues and the foundations of politics. Well, if we all talk about issues with open minds, not having concluded about ‘the others’ beforehand. Besides, when we disagree, or, when things are very important to others, we must also respect such differences.

It is important that politicians talk both with those they agree with, and those they disagree with; during dialogue, differences may shrink and greater understanding for each other can emerge. I have written about this earlier, and I would like to repeat it today, inter alia, because it is an important aspect of politics today. In recent elections in Europe, and in Canada, it has become clear that political parties must cooperate and enter into coalitions in order to rule.

I mentioned at the beginning of my article today that it was earlier common in the West that one party, either the social democrats or the conservatives, would have comfortable majorities in elections at the parliament. Today, that is rare, and I would say that the democracies have become better for it; multi-party cabinets belong to multi-party states in the West. China’s model and situation is different and I am not discussing that here. Yet, it should be mentioned that the West sees that model as challenging. Obviously so, when it earlier also saw the Soviet Union as challenging, even little Cuba, and Tanzania, at least a tiny bit, especially if other non-aligned, socialist-oriented countries would have followed suit.

[35,000 subsidized apartments to be built in Lahore: Punjab CM](https://nation.com.pk/01-Oct-2021/35-000-subsidized-apartments-to-be-built-in-lahore-punjab-cm)

Let me end my article with a few remarks about the exciting multi-party political coalition government discussions and negotiations after the recent elections in several European countries, most recently in Germany last Sunday, and Iceland, too. In Norway, the winning side under social democratic leadership kept talking with other parties after the elections two weeks ago. In Germany and Norway, the largest parties, the social democrats only have a quarter or so of the votes. Good is that, because they have to include policies of others, indeed the environmentalists, the socialists, and also the liberals who emphasise technological advances and modernisation of the private sector. There is a leadership role for the social democrats, but their parties must change with the time. Values and moral foundations are important, especially among the socialists and the greens, but also the social democrats. In the end, though, politics is about power and results, and some principles. I believe that discussions between parties must be open—as they must be when talking about religious and moral issues too. In the end, we all want what is best, not only for ourselves, but for everyone. Isn’t it?