

Is there logic behind the illogical?

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In today's article I shall ponder upon some national and international issues that I not only find wrong, but illogical and senseless. There are many such issues, even expressed and defended by otherwise sensible people. Yes, we are all illogical in certain fields and from time to time. We believe and do things because of conventions, customs and traditions without having reflected enough on the issues, or simply because we flow with the tide. And sometimes that is alright; it may give stability and a sense of belonging. But if the illogical becomes senseless and harmless then we are all responsible for taking new paths, and we may find that solutions that we thought were impossible, do indeed exist.

Having been brought up in the Christian humanist tradition in Norway, and having lived in many other countries, including Muslim countries, I have grounded and broad views and opinions. I have become more open-minded and tolerant over the years, and more understanding to people's different views and values. But I have also realized, both in my home country and abroad, that we are often illogical and irrational.

Being a pacifist, I find it illogical that so many believe war and military power can solve conflicts. I don't understand what justification America, NATO and other countries have for a thirteen year occupation of Afghanistan. Equally, I don't understand why war was used against Iraq. I don't understand why civil war is an option for disagreeing groups in Syria. And it is past and present governments that mainly must take the responsibility for the tragedy, not people who feel oppression.

In Pakistan, I don't believe the current military operations in North Waziristan are right at all. I think it is illogical. The humanitarian crisis, soon with half a million IDPs, is tremendous. And who will then believe in dialog with the Taliban now or later? I am saddened by the actions, especially since they have been approved by a civilian government. If military rulers did it, that was perhaps to be expected.

Logically, there would always be many alternatives and ways forward that would be better. People everywhere are able to be logical, even those who hold extreme opinions, and those in power, who command the military. But then all must be willing to sit together, develop trust and discuss issues honestly and sincerely. Rulers must be open to the grudges and the plight of the others, and all must be willing to take and give. I believe they would soon discover that their goals are not so entirely different. But even if there are differences, middle ways can be found so that no one loses face.

In Pakistan, with strong religious people, there should be better opportunities than in many other countries to find peaceful solutions, yes, if the true spirit of the religion is listened to. And that also goes for the other countries that I mentioned, where there are wars and conflicts. But we must be logical, not illogical.

No, I don't know how to do it, not even draw the roadmap. It is only those who have a direct stake in it who can do that. But I know when I see that something is wrong, and that I see now.

Often, it can be difficult to know who it is that should be blamed for conflicts, but past and present rulers always have more responsibility than the ruled. To identify what wrong that has been done, is part of assessing the situation, and when seeking solutions, the people in the area where there is or can be conflict must always be in the lead, with the local, regional and national leaders. This is just common sense.

In the tribal areas there has been done much wrong to the people since 1893 when the Brits illogically and autocratically drew the 2,640 kilometers border line between Pakistan and Afghanistan, known as the Durand

Line. Today, we must see the situation from the angles of all the people who live in the left-behind tribal areas. It is not their fault that they have been victims of illogical leaders – from the time the Brits divided and ruled the land of the Pashtun people, well, they just divided it.

Now, then, when I have begun, touching upon foreign policy issues, let me continue with that. And foreign policies and international relations are the most illogical of all political fields, and that isn't unique to Pakistan alone. The way the superpowers and great powers maneuver and force other countries into obedience is illogical. Worst of all is the way we all let them get away with it, and speak as if there was logic behind it.

It is often as laughable as H. C. Andersen's tale "The Emperor's New Clothes". Everyone praised the great design and outfit the emperor was said to wear, since that was what they had been told to say, otherwise they would not be worthy of their positions in society. But then, finally, a child spilt the beans, crying out, "but he isn't wearing anything at all".

Are the never-ending neighbourly problems between Pakistan and India also not illogical? Maybe the military is much to blame for it, trying to enhance its role and importance? And what about Kashmir, can also not that conflict be solved in any logical way? Are there not myriads of ways to seek solutions that are acceptable for the Kashmiri people, on both sides of the current border? And why are we still so preoccupied with international borders in our time and age? Could not joint, or multiple, jurisdiction be a way of administering lands?

Today, the way America, the only real superpower behaves is absolutely illogical, isn't it – as long as its purse allows it? For example, America's many opinions about the crisis in Crimea, and telling Russia what it should or shouldn't do, and how the European Union should behave. It is the opposite of helping finding solutions.

And then, after a lot of TV and newspaper propaganda, we are all brainwashed and we begin to believe that Russia is wrong and the West is right, because the Western media dominate the world. It isn't logical and the concern is not that of the people of Crimea. Again, it has to do with geopolitics and leftovers from the old cold war, similarly to the way that Afghanistan is still part of geopolitics. The never-ending Israel-Palestine conflict should be mentioned: it is illogical and it is a cold and calculated superpower game. But we keep discussing it, seemingly thinking there are serious attempts to solve it. Alas, not much different from the talks around the tailors who made the emperor's new clothes.

Since I am a Westerner, let me make it clear that I too believe the NATO military alliance is again one of these illogical organizations, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. But we seem to take it seriously, and we debate its many illogical actions as if they were otherwise. I am not proud of a countryman of mine, Jens Stoltenberg, Norway's former PM, taking over the post of NATO secretary general in the autumn. Couldn't he have done something more sensible? Well, if he isn't entirely in the pocket of America and the conservatives of the big powers in Europe, perhaps he can do something logical? After all, when he was chairman of the Norwegian labour party's youth wing in the 1980s, he did say (as was expected of him then) that he saw it an ultimate aim that Norway pulled out of NATO, and perhaps he even had hoped for NATO be dissolved. But now he has become 'logical'!

It is sad that we human beings, and especially power-politicians, seem to become more illogical by age. Logic and rational thinking is not what we specialize in as we, however, learn new things. On top of it, we tell the young, who are still more rationale and open-minded, who question outdated ways, and seek alternatives, that they are dreamers and that they neither know nor understand *realpolitik*. There is indeed little logic behind the illogical, and if there is some, at least some doubt, it is well hidden. Yet, since I believe we all want a better world, at home and abroad, we have to become more logical, rational and practical.

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