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China will continue to be ‘biggest engine’ of world economic growth

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday China has full confidence to achieve this year’s economic growth target and will continue to play its role as the biggest engine of world economic growth.

Xi made the remarks as he met with heads of major international economic organizations in Beijing, CGTN reported.

Noting the world nowadays has entered a new period of turbulence and change, once again at a critical crossroads, Xi said China is ready to work with major international economic organizations to practice multilateralism, promote international cooperation, support the development of countries in the global South, promote an equal and orderly multi-polar world, economic globalization that benefits all and builds a just world of common development.

The leaders of the New Development Bank, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund all spoke highly of China’s economic development achievements. They were also optimistic about China’s development prospects and thanked China for its long-term support for the work of international economic organizations.

Noting unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, the leaders of major international economic organizations said they are willing to work closely with China, adhere to multilateralism, uphold free trade and economic globalization, make greater contributions to the common development and prosperity of the world, and create a shared future for mankind.

Xi said economies of all countries face their own difficulties. All countries should work together to build an open world economy, be innovation-driven, seize important opportunities such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence and low-carbon technologies, create new sources of economic growth and support cross-border flows of knowledge, technology and human resources, Xi added.

Xi said after more than 40 years of sustained and rapid development, China’s economy has entered a stage of high-quality development and contributed about 30 percent to world economic growth.

Noting China’s development is open and inclusive, Xi said China will continue to open wider to the outside world, actively align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, build a market-oriented, law-based and world-class business environment, and build a new system of open economy at a higher level, so as to provide more new opportunities and share more development dividends with other countries.

The Chinese president welcomed international economic organizations to continue to actively participate in China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and promote the modernization of all countries in the world with peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity.

Xi also said China hopes the United States will work with China to push bilateral relations toward a steady, healthy and sustainable direction.

Tariff wars, trade wars and sci-tech wars go against the trend of history and the laws of economics, and there will be no winners, Xi said, adding that China is willing to maintain dialogue, expand cooperation and manage differences with the U. S. government.

Education: The Key to Unlocking Pakistan’s Economic Potential

Imagine walking into a classroom in rural Pakistan, where the walls are bare, and the only light comes from a single flickering bulb. This scene paints a vivid picture of the challenges facing Pakistan’s education system. Education is the cornerstone of any nation’s development, and in Pakistan, the relationship between education and economic growth is particularly significant.

Despite various reforms and initiatives over the years, significant challenges persist in the education sector, directly impacting the country’s economic prosperity.

Currently, the literacy rate in Pakistan stands at 62.8 percent, with stark contrasts between urban and rural areas. In bustling cities, about 77.3 percent of people can read and write, while in the countryside, only 54 percent can. This urban-rural divide highlights the need for targeted reforms and calls for immediate action to ensure that no child is left behind. Gender disparities are also glaring, with men generally more literate than women across all provinces. This uneven access to education emphasizes a pressing need for interventions that address these disparities head-on.

The economic benefits of education are like a ripple effect. Education enhances human capital, leading to higher productivity and innovation. It also bridges the gap between poverty and prosperity by providing individuals with better job opportunities and higher incomes. Moreover, educated individuals are more likely to engage in civic activities and contribute to social stability. Despite these clear benefits, Pakistan faces several

challenges in maximizing the potential of its education sector. The quality of education remains a major concern. The Pakistan Economic Survey underscores the need for improving the quality of education through better teacher training, updated curricula, and enhanced learning environments. Additionally, the education system must align more closely with market demands to ensure that graduates possess relevant skills.

Public investment in education is another critical issue. Pakistan currently spends about 2.5 percent of its GDP on education, which is lower than many other developing countries. To improve educational outcomes, increased investment is needed to enhance infrastructure, hire qualified teachers, and provide necessary learning materials. However, there are significant opportunities for improvement. The government’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which focuses on quality education, provides a framework for addressing these challenges. Various initiatives, such as establishing new schools, digitizing educational institutions, and promoting distance learning, are steps in the right direction.

To unlock the full potential of education for economic growth, Pakistan needs to implement strategic initiatives focused on both access and quality. Enhancing teacher training programs to improve the quality of education is crucial. Increased public investment in education is imperative. Allocating more resources to the education sector and increasing the education budget to at least 4 percent of GDP, as recommended by various

international organizations, can significantly improve educational outcomes. Improving infrastructure to ensure that all schools have basic facilities such as electricity, clean drinking water, and sanitation is particularly important in rural areas where infrastructure is often lacking. Leveraging technology to enhance learning by digitizing educational content, promoting online learning platforms, and providing students with access to digital devices can also play a crucial role.

Furthermore, encouraging universities to collaborate with industries can ensure that the education provided is relevant to market needs. This can be achieved through internships, research collaborations, and industry-sponsored projects. By aligning educational outcomes with market demands, graduates will be better equipped for the workforce, reducing unemployment and driving economic growth.

Education and the economy are deeply intertwined in Pakistan. While significant challenges remain, numerous opportunities exist for improvement. By investing in education and implementing strategic initiatives, Pakistan can harness the full potential of its human capital, driving economic growth and social development. The path forward requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and civil society, to ensure that every child in Pakistan has access to quality education and the opportunity to contribute to the country’s economic prosperity. Every child in Pakistan deserves the chance to succeed. If we delay, we risk missing the opportunity to shape Pakistan’s future. The potential benefits for Pakistan’s future are immense, and the time to act is now.

Writer is student of Business Economics at the University of Punjab, Lahore.

Religious Education is Paving the Path to Peace in Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq

Religious education plays a crucial role in promoting peace and harmony in societies around the world. In Pakistan where religious diversity is prevalent but sometimes leads to tensions. Religious education has the potential to unite hearts and minds paving the path to peace. The religious education in Pakistan is contributing to peace building efforts and promoting interfaith harmony. Pakistan is a country known for its rich religious diversity with the majority of the population as Muslim.

A land of rich religious heritage is also significant minority communities, including Christian, Hindu, Sikh and others. This diversity enriching the tapestry of the nation, has also been a source of hope and peace in different religions. Religious education has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting tolerance and understanding of peace among different religious groups in Pakistan. Religious education in Pakistan takes place in a variety of settings including schools, colleges, universities and religious institutions.

One of the impactful role of religious education in Pakistan is the promotion of values such as compassion, empathy and respect for others. Religious teachers in madrassas equipping students with the tools needed to foster mutual respect and understanding of their own religion. In different religious institutions education have a positive impact on attitudes towards people from different religious backgrounds. Moreover, some researches on religious education found that students who received religious education were likely to exhibit tolerance and acceptance towards individuals of other faiths.

First and foremost, comprehensive religious education can serve as a counter-narrative to extremist ideologies that exploit narrow interpretations of faith. By equipping students with knowledge about different religions and encouraging interfaith dialogue, such educational initiatives can dismantle prejudices that fuel hatred.

Schools that incorporate teachings from multiple faiths can foster empathy and respect among students from different backgrounds. When young individuals learn to appreciate the values inherent in other traditions, they are

less likely to engage in or support violent actions motivated by sectarian differences.

Moreover, investment in religious education aligns with broader educational reforms aimed at improving critical thinking skills among youth. A curriculum that encourages inquiry and debate fosters not only intellectual development but also emotional intelligence qualities essential for peaceful coexistence. In this light, policymakers must prioritize comprehensive religious education within national curricula to cultivate a generation capable of navigating complex social dynamics without resorting to violence.

Comprehensive religious education promotes critical thinking and dialogue, allowing students to explore the tenets of various religions beyond mere surface-level knowledge. Such an approach encourages empathy and tolerance, countering extremist ideologies that often stem from ignorance or misinformation. For example, when students learn about the fundamental values shared across religions such as compassion, justice, and community they are more likely to engage in positive conversations rather than disruptive rhetoric. As a religious country prioritizing comprehensive religious education is imperative for Pakistan’s journey toward lasting peace. Cultivation an environment of understanding and respect through informed discourse on spirituality, we can mitigate conflict and foster unity in diversity an essential step toward a peaceful future.

Religious educational initiatives can empower youth to challenge extremist ideologies that often exploit religious sentiments for violent ends. Equipping students with critical thinking skills alongside robust knowledge of their own faith as well as others, they are less likely to fall prey to radical narratives. This approach not only strengthens individual character but also fosters community resilience against divisive forces.

Emphasizing understanding over division will not only enhance social cohesion but also build a foundation where future generations can thrive in an environment marked by respect and unity amidst diversity. The time has come for Pakistani policymakers to recognize the transformative potential of such an educational framework in creating a more pleasant society.

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Anti-Assad Militias Turn Their Guns on Israel

The USA, in recent history, has committed grave strategic blunders and, interestingly, managed to make others pay for these mistakes while cleverly insulating itself from the consequences. In the wars against Iraq and Libya, the USA, often with its allies coerced into joining under false pretexes, fabricated reasons, and manufactured evidence of weapons of mass destruction, invaded Iraq. This invasion destroyed the country, killed hundreds of thousands of people, and reduced what was once one of the richest and fastest-developing nations in the Middle East to rubble.

Not satisfied with the devastation in Iraq, the USA turned its attention to Libya, orchestrating the overthrow and eventual killing of Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi had kept Libya’s society, composed of many warring and independent tribes, united and stable. Under his leadership, Libya prospered, and its people enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. Moreover, the country provided employment to thousands of workers from other nations to support its rapid development. The removal of Gaddafi plunged Libya into chaos, destabilizing the region and unleashing a wave of violence and tribal conflicts that persist to this day.

While the USA and its allies in Europe and the Middle East were gleefully celebrating the success of Anti Assad Militias their own creation, they perhaps did not anticipate that the leaders of the militias, after conquering Syria, would announce their next target: the liberation of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), avenging the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza

and elsewhere, and pledging not to rest until Israel is reduced to a position where it has no ability to impose its hegemony in the region.

These statements are likely giving sleepless nights to Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. They must also be deeply concerning to Israeli leadership and to leaders in the USA, who likely never imagined that the very forces they helped raise—with their sweat, blood, and hard-earned money—to insulate Israel from the Syrian threat under Assad, would turn their guns with lightning speed toward Israel. This turn of events is the very outcome the USA and its allies sought to avoid when they intervened to remove Assad, who was supported by Russia and Iran.

While building the anti-Assad militias, the USA and its allies, in their haste, empowered various groups with money and weapons, overlooking their deeply entrenched and divergent ideologies and objectives. The militias were led by figures with different goals: Riad al-Asaad and Salim Idris of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) advocated for a secular, democratic Syria; Abu Mohammad al-Julani of Jabhat al-Nusra, aligned with al-Qaeda, aimed to establish an Islamic state; Zahran Alloush of Jaish al-Islam sought a Sunni Islamic government; and Hassan Aboud of Ahrar al-Sham pursued an Islamic state under Sharia law. Leaders like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of ISIS aimed for a global caliphate.

Although their common goal was to overthrow Bashar al-Assad’s Alawite-dominated regime, their ideological divides—ranging from secular democracy to hard-line Islamism—led to fragmentation and competition, complicating their ability to present a united front.

The anti-Assad militias, after conquering Syria, have redirected their focus toward attacking Israel to avenge Palestinian casualties in Gaza and “liberate” Jerusalem (Al-Quds). This would, like Afghanistan, Iraq and Lybia, would create a significant security and geopolitical crisis. Israel would face an unprecedented threat from a coalition of Islamist forces operating close to its borders, particularly in the Golan Heights. Such attacks would likely escalate into a broader regional conflict, potentially drawing in actors like Hezbollah from Lebanon and Iran, further destabilizing the region. For Israel, this would necessitate a robust military response, including preemptive strikes and heightened defense measures, leading to a protracted and destructive confrontation.

For the United States, the scenario would highlight the blowback of supporting anti-Assad factions during the Syrian Civil War. Having indirectly empowered groups now attacking its closest ally, U. S. credibility and regional strategy would come under severe scrutiny. The U. S. would face pressure to provide military and diplomatic support to Israel, entangling itself further in Middle Eastern

conflicts. This could strain relations with Arab allies, many of whom might face domestic unrest as public sentiment in their countries sympathizes with actions against Israel, challenging their governments’ ties with the U. S. and Israel.

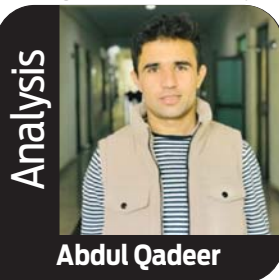
Regionally, the conflict could destabilize Arab states that have normalized relations with Israel, such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, putting agreements like the Abraham Accords at risk. Iran, already an opponent of Israel, might exploit the situation to bolster its influence by aligning with militias or intensifying its rhetoric of resistance. The ensuing instability could disrupt global oil supplies, escalate terrorist recruitment worldwide, and embolden extremist movements. Ultimately, this scenario would deepen divisions between pro- and anti-Western factions, jeopardizing regional and global peace.

The history of mankind, which we meticulously document for various purposes, serves as a tool for learning and avoiding the strategic, tactical, and ideological errors that have led to the destruction of societies and civilizations. Yet, our own recent history suggests that even nations at the apex of civilization fail to learn from their past mistakes. Despite the lessons of history, these uncalculated blunders continue to wreak havoc on societies and communities worldwide, leaving a trail of chaos and suffering that may persist for generations to come.

Writer is Press Secretary to the President(Rtd), Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC. Currently he is living in Macomb, Detroit, Michigan



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashfaq Al-Ausaf)



Analysis

Abdul Qadeer