

PARA STRUCTURE

Religious extremism as a challenge to economic development

Outline

ARGUMENTS

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Religious extremism, having been invoked, is affecting the economic development to a large extent. Due to it, countries can not take more benefits from their resources and talented people. However, it can not be an obstacle if a few prudent steps are taken to curtail it.

REFINE THESIS

2. How religious extremism is affecting the economic development

OVERALL OK

3. How religious extremism increases

- A) Wrong definition of religion increases religious extremism
- B) Terrorist organisations use religion
- C) Several political parties use religion

4. How religious extremism affects economic development

- a) Tourists do not come to states
- b) religious extremism contributes too much to closing the businesses
- c) industrial productivity of a state is affected on account of religious extremism
- d) religious extremism affects the FDI
- e) Religious extremism affects the trade ties between two states
- f) Potential of talented economists are not used
- g) women are discouraged by extremists to get even primary education
- h) religious extremism opposes modern skills
- i) youngsters join militant groups
- j) young people damage the property of the country

5. Way forwards to curtail religious extremism

- a) universities must play their role in curbing religious extremism
- b) Clerics must try to end forced conversions
- c) Religious scholars must stop their followers to cause chaos
- d) clerics must encourage their followers to do business with the people of other religions

6. Conclusion

Essay

In this time and age, each one wants to have power. And he thinks that by having power over others, he can achieve his goals. In this regard, a few religious scholars, in order to be hegemonic in the world, use religion. Though they somehow succeed in achieving their worldly goals by increasing religious extremism, yet economic development in the world is affected by and large. Where the question of increasing religious extremism is concerned, it is increased when the wrong definition of religion is given. Besides, it is used by terrorist organisations and political parties. And religion extremism, after increasing, starts affecting the economic growth. For example, tourists do not visit those countries where religious extremism is seen. Moreover, it creates problems in running the business due to which industrial productivity is hampered and FDI does not come. It also stops countries from doing trade with each other. What is more, governments avoid using the potential of talented economists. When it comes to Women, they are deprived of primary education. Besides, modern skills are discouraged. Consequently, youth joins terrorist outfits and commits terrorist attacks. Though growing religious extremism is affecting economic development, yet it can be hindered by encouraging university students to respect other religions, ending enforced conversions, stopping people from causing chaos and encouraging business with other religions. In a nutshell, religious extremism, having been invoked, is affecting the economic development to a large extent. Due to it, countries can not take more benefits from their resources and talented people. However, it can not be an obstacle if a few prudent steps are taken to curtail it.

Religious extremism, after being invoked, starts causing problems in economic development to a great extent. For example, it hampers the tourist industry of a country. Besides, businesses are forced to close when religious extremists turn violent. As a result, industrial growth of that country is harmed and FDI is reduced to minimum. It also deprives countries to take economic benefits from each other's resources. Moreover, talented economists are not used for economic development. Neither is women's potential. And modern skills are not learned either. Consequently, youngsters become part of militant groups; and they commit terrorist attacks. In short, religious extremism is a huge obstacle in the economic development.

There are several reasons for increasing religious extremism, the chief among them is wrong definition of religion. Young people are asked to cause havoc if they really want to serve their religion. Thus, they perform deeds, which are against any religion of the world. For example, back in 2017, Mashal Khan, a Muslim student of Pakistan was killed by a mob.

When people were asked about that incident, they replied that he had deserved that treatment for going against religion, truth lies elsewhere though (Mossarat Qadeem, “Beyond the violence”, January 2020). Given all that, wrong definition of religion is, without any doubt, responsible for increasing religious extremism.

When it comes to the terrorist organisations of the world, they use religion to ensure their interests. In fact, religion is the easiest tool to attract the youngsters. Hence, in this time and age, militant outfits, which claim to be religious ones, are stronger ones, because they, for most of the times, succeed in achieving their nefarious goals in the world just by provoking people on the name of religion. For example, strong militant group Shahs is working in Israel. Moreover, Al-Qaeda is being operated from Afghanistan and IS-K has stronghold in Syria (J Fox, “Religion and identity politics”, July 2019). In short, most dangerous terrorist organisations of the world are attaining their desired goals by using religion to a great extent.

Not only do militant groups of the world exert religion, but also several political parties use it. They understand this phenomenon that they can ensure their political interests by using religious card, because people are usually sensitive about religion. Though politicians succeed in attaining their goals by popular speeches and slogans, yet religious extremism is increased, which results in worsening the relations among the states. For example, BJP’s leader Modi, by using religion, became the prime minister of the country for second time. Consequently, relations between India and Pakistan were deteriorated. Thus, politicians are invoking religious extremism for ensuring their own meagre interests.

As a result, economic development is affected, because tourists do not come to such states. They do not feel free in these countries. Hence, it is seen where tourists do not come, the GDP of that country is badly affected. As per the world travel and tourism council 2021, the total contribution of travel and tourism in Pakistan dropped to 4.4 per cent as compare to 5.7 per cent in 2019. In a nutshell, it can be said with full confidence that religious extremism is hitting the economies of the states out and out.

Not only religious extremism affects the tour industry of a state, but also it contributes too much to closing the businesses. Businessmen, like many other people, are afraid of organisations that are famous for using religion for their own political gains. It is seen whenever they are on the roads, businesses are closed until they go back. This status quo undoubtedly affects the economy of that state beyond repair. For example, back in 2021, when TLP was forcing government to send French envoy back to his country, businesses

were closed for 7 straight days in Lahore. In this way, religious extremism creates issues in running the businesses of the country due to which its economy suffers.

Furthermore, industrial productivity of a state is affected on account of religious extremism. The reason is that due to closing the businesses, the demand of products gets low in the market. Throughout the history of nations, countries, where elements of religious extremism are not observed, their industrial productivity is always on rise. However, on the other hand, countries, where religious extremism is at peak, there are issues for the industries. For instance, over the last 27 years, Pakistan's industrial productivity has increased by 12 per cent. Nonetheless, in China, it has increased by 512 per cent in the same time period. Given all that, religious extremism is indeed an obstacle in enhancing the industrial productivity of a state.

Like harming the industrial productivity, religious extremism also affects the foreign direct investment (FDI). Foreign investors do not invest in countries where religious extremism is seen. They feel if religious extremism is invoked, then there is no doubt that people will turn violent on projects initiated by them. For example, in 2005, the FDI net inflow was 3.66 per cent of GDP in Pakistan, but, after 10 years in 2015, it decreased to 0.36 per cent of country's GDP (Muhammad Zakaria, "effect of terrorism on economic growth in Pakistan", July 2019). In a nutshell, the FDI does not come to these countries, which have the elements of religious extremism.

Religious extremism also affects the trade ties between the states. They avoid doing trade with each other, even though, by having trade ties, they can make their economies better. Whenever countries try to do trade, religious scholars make people go against the government of the countries. Thus, they import those commodities from other countries, which are produced in their bordering states. For example, Pakistan and India, despite being neighbouring countries, do not trade with one another. And Pakistan imports several things, which are grown in India, from UAE by investing too much. In short, religious extremism contributes a lot in not normalizing the trade ties between the two states.

Besides, potential of talented economists is not used owing to religious extremism. Despite being masters of their field, they are not given a fair chance to provide their services in the betterment of the economy of the country. Unfortunately, the governments are threatened by a few extremist organisations. They think if the economists, whom these outfits consider against religion, are not removed from their jobs, their governments can be collapsed like

house of cards. Thus, several politicians, in order to remain in office, avoid working with such economists. For example, a few years ago, Atif Mian, who is a macro economist, was replaced with another person, because government of that time could not have sustained the pressure of extremist groups of Pakistan. In this way, governments can not take benefits of their best economists.

When it comes to the women, they are discouraged by extremists to get even primary education. In fact, the latter, in its attempt to keep the former under the four walls of the house carries out attacks on its schools. When females are not educated, then they can not participate in the economy of the country in latter and spirit. As a consequence, economy of that state can not be run well. In Pakistan, due to religious extremism, the participation of the women in the country's work force is currently hovering around 25 per cent, due to which it is lagging behind many countries in terms of economic development. In short, extremist organisations are responsible for less participation of women in the workforce of the country.

Furthermore, religious extremism opposes modern skills. And young people are asked to only follow religion, since this can only help them in this world and hereafter. By their false propaganda, religious extremists let people believe that scientific inventions are a conspiracy against their religion. And they must keep distance from them, let alone learning them. As a result, such people can not contribute in steering the economy of their countries towards betterment. For example, during Ottoman rule, when Europe was learning new things, Muslim societies, due to extremist elements, did not have printing press for 3 centuries (Farah Adeed, "Individual rights and Islam", October 2022). Given all that, reluctance to acquire the knowledge about new things affects the economic development to a great extent.

Instead of learning new things, youngsters join militant groups due to which economic development of the countries is affected. Regrettably, they are told by religious scholars that they can serve their religion in a better way by joining terrorist organisations and causing chaos against other religions. As a result, young people, in order to earn God's blessing, become the part of outlawed outfits of the world. Not too long ago, in 2018, a young female doctor became the part of Daish, which is a terrorist group. In short, due to religious extremism, youngsters join terrorist organisations, instead of participating in economic development of the country.

And after that, these young people damage the property of the country. Resultantly, government has to invest in repairing the damage caused by them. When regime uses its

resources in rebuilding the lost infrastructure, then country's investment-to-GDP ratio immensely decreases, which is against the economic development. For instance, on account of religious extremism, Pakistan's investment-to-GDP ratio has nosedived from 22.5 percent in 2006-07 13.4 per cent in 2010. Given all that, the participation of youngsters in terrorist groups creates many an issue for the country's economic growth.

Since young people are joining terrorist organisations and causing chaos, thus, universities must play their positive role in curbing religious extremism. They must inculcate the feelings among students to respect other religions. In this regard, universities of the world must follow the examples of those varsities that tried to get rid of the menacing trend of religious extremism. They must consider the prototype of Allama Iqbal Open University, (AIOU) which, in collaboration with Higher Education Commission of Pakistan conducted a three-day conference on interfaith relations: challenges and prospects October this year in Islamabad. There, Dean of Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies Prof Mohiuddin Hashmi said, "All the religions of the world basically convey the message of humanity and peace". In short, like AIOU, other universities in the world, must take steps that can help reduce religion extremism in the world.

Besides, clerics, at their part, must try to end forced conversions. The fact is that it is one of the biggest reasons to provoke religious extremism. Therefore, scholars from all religions must teach their followers that there is no religion of the world that supports forced conversions. "Let there shall be no compulsion in religion;" (Al-Qur'an, 2: 256). "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion;" (Al-Qur'an, 109: 6). Given all that, in order to curb religious extremism, religious scholars must play their positive role in curbing forced conversions.

Not only should religious scholars discourage forced conversions, but also they must stop their followers to cause chaos. The reason is that their followers obey them whatever they say. Hence, they must preach to spread peace in the world, which is, beyond any doubt, is the basic teachings of all religions of the world. "If anyone slew a person, unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole people, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people;" (Al-Qur'an, 5: 32). In short, while considering the basic teachings of religion, clerics must convey the message of respecting the life and dignity of others.

Furthermore, these clerics must encourage their followers to do business with other religions. In doing so, people will get nearer to one another, and chances of religious extremism will be reduced to minimum. For this to happen, they must use the examples of religious personalities, who, in the past, did business, despite belonging to different religions. In fact, Holy prophet PBUH, despite prophet of Islam, used to do business with Jews in the state of Madina. Thus, in order to decrease religious extremism, all the clerics must encourage their followers to have trade ties with the people belonging to other religions.

To conclude, religious extremism is invoked when a few religious and political parties of the world use religion for achieving their own meager interests. And having been provoked, it hampers the economic development of the world, because, due to it, businessmen have to close their businesses. As a result, the industrial productivity is affected by and large across the globe. What is more, religious extremism affects the FDI and trade ties between the two states. And, due to it, potential of macroeconomists is not used. Neither are young people encouraged to learn modern skills. Thus, they join militant groups and damage the state. As far as curbing the religious extremism is concerned, it can be curtailed if religious scholars play their role by asking their followers to respect other religions and do business with people belonging to other religions, because "Humanity is the religion of all".