

## Dealing with THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CHALLENGE



*Crisis can be a time of opportunity. How can this crisis spur us to create economies and policies which enable the developing countries to thrive and the developed to become sustainable?*

**Hameed Haroon** Pakistan, Publisher and CEO, DAWN Media Group

The first confusion is that the phrases 'economic challenges ahead' and 'financial recession today' are frequently used interchangeably. Pakistan is receiving stipends. I am not sure how productive that will be, it is already destabilising policy decisions. But it is a mystery to me how recession works in such dualistic ways and solutions are offered in dualistic ways. We are told that the solution to the financial recession, particularly in the West, is cheap credit. But the solution for nations which are less fortunate is to belt up and pull back expenditure. I am sure Keynes would not accept this schizophrenic analysis.

I believe less and less in economics as a humanising factor because economics cannot offer the solutions we are looking for. Economics must follow some practical course of humanisation from a dehumanised form. In the kind of crises we face, some degree of literacy, respect for gender equality and basic health are more important than redistributive comparisons. How do you create a sustaining structure for two different resource bases? A mountain valley in Pakistan cannot possibly hope to have enough resources redistributed in its favour to be able to humanise the existence of the people there. We service solutions often without defining the problem.

Three things face Pakistan now, all of them much more important than the international recession or the challenges ahead in economic terms because the social, the human challenges, the challenges of justice, of living in some kind of harmony with one's neighbours are more important.

I am not putting my nose down at economics. But after the New Class of economists of the 19th century and after Karl Marx and Lenin, we do not need a new deliverer in the economic sense. We need more humanisation.

There are the internally displaced people. I know all about how Pakistan helped create its own problems, how it ignored certain trends social and religious and fascistical developments on its neighbours' flanks and in the north of Pakistan. But at least what we had was the possibility of solution left to a sense of timing. The whole world bore down upon us. We were asked to move immediately against the Taliban. Today we are going to have 2 million displaced persons and who is going to pay for the cost of rehabilitation? The answer is apart from the US and a couple of other countries, not too many. And then what happens? You have two million displaced people in a country like Pakistan and the kinds of social repercussions, the kinds of anarchy or creative chaos that would emanate from that would challenge the ability of many a decision maker or political figure, and certainly Pakistan's inept group of policy thinkers in this area.

I then take you to the problem of Kashmir. I give you two contrasts. Pakistan believed that economism is the answer. In Azar, Jammu and Kashmir the thin strip of valleys that was left as a concession to supposed representative government tried to spread the benefits through a contractor class. They decided to try and create overcrowded valleys and send out labour from migration. What happened? There is a massive earthquake. None of

the buildings that have been created under any standards whatsoever, and the next generation of Azad, Jammu and Kashmir lay under the stones and under the rubble and little children called out for many hours along the Neelam and Jeram valleys while India and Pakistan stood by stonily, either solving their own problems or indulging in a display of combative forensics about the whole matter. So where did that get us?

On the other hand, the so-called creation of 'Nehruvian Indian statehood' kind of citizen in the valley created a situation where the best of Kashmir's generation lies buried and dead, young people in Shaheed Mazars, their epitaphs speaking to you of the consequence of trying to follow philosophies which don't yield humanisation.

So you can see that neither the economics first nor did the creation of political statehood by artificial means give an example and it tells you about the difficulties that we are confronting. So I need to put this before you, the problem of conflicting ideologies, dehumanisation and economic growth prior to some kind of social justice.

### **Hameed Haroon**

Hameed Haroon is CEO of DAWN Media Group, Pakistan's leading media conglomerate, and served as former president of the All Pakistan Newspaper Society. He has played a major role in the promotion of culture, music and arts, and the conservation of archaeological heritage. In 2004, he was awarded the Sitara-e-Imtiaz, Pakistan's highest civil award in recognition for his contribution to promote art and culture and in 2006, the President of Italy conferred on him the Italian Order of Merit as one of the "most outstanding public personalities in Pakistan".