

Book Review
Human Security in Pakistan

(Hafiz A. Pasha, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Pakistan, 2023)

Reviewed by: *Dr. Asma Akbar*

Human Security in Pakistan is a comprehensive writing that quantifies human security and establishes an index for the evaluation and measurement of human security in Pakistan. It includes 87 indicators that set the pace for rigorous evaluation beyond the scope of the human development index. The subject matter of this study is very significant in the current context of Pakistan's security challenges. The debate on security has rapidly moved from traditional security to non-traditional security. The differentiation between traditional and non-traditional security has been differently presented by different scholars but the gist of this difference lies in the fact that security is no longer about state security focusing on securing borders through military means. Non-traditional security, rather, focuses on the different and multiple dimensions other than the military sector.

It considers actors other than the state and levels other than the national level. For instance, it takes into account the individual as an important referent of security and considers regional and local levels of security. Human security sharply takes its place in the non-traditional explanations of security because it considers the individual as the primary and ultimate referent of security that is often challenged by the state. The report on human security in Pakistan consists of four parts and 17 chapters. The first part includes four chapters. It conceptualizes human security and establishes conceptual contours of human security. It briefly talks about the national security policy of Pakistan 2022 and introduces the human security index for Pakistan. The concept of human security has two approaches: the narrow and broader. The author in this writing takes a broader approach to establishing the index.

The broader approach focuses on three components: freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity. However, it adds a contextual dimension by including the component of governance for establishing the human security index of Pakistan. The second part presents the indexes along the four components mentioned above. The part includes four chapters that comprehensively deal with the methodology, indicators along all four components, estimation of a collective human security index, and comparative analysis with the selected countries. Part three stresses all the policies, laws, and reforms to achieve human security. Two key findings are the gist of this part, First, the human security index shows a

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peak point in the year 2015-16 from 2001-02 to 2022-2023. However, even in the year 2015-16, in comparison to other countries, it shows a low value on the human security index. Second, it makes a comparison between the dimensions of policy priorities highlighted in NSP 2022-26 and the dimensions that have been highlighted in the HSI. Furthermore, currently, the human security index of Pakistan compared to other selected countries is going well. This part also includes all strategies on multiple dimensions of human security. Part IV highlights the regional disparities and introduces the divisional level to the regional analysis. The effort to establish a human security index for Pakistan is appreciable.

However, it misses the following aspects that also affect the findings of the research. First, the conceptualization of human security, though formulated on a broader scale misses the latest innovation and context. For instance, according to the latest report of UNDP on human security, in the age of the Anthropocene, it is essential to consider the fourth component of human security focusing on the importance of solidarity along with freedom from fear, want, and indignity. The report highlights that in the present age, human beings are the active agents of change and are responsible for environmental degradation.

Therefore, it is important to focus on solidarity amongst people to ensure human security. The methodology section seems very brief compared to the scope of the study. Specifically, certain choices have not been highlighted clearly. For instance, why specific selected countries have been chosen to compare with Pakistan is not delineated. Further, it quantifies the measurement of human security and misses the qualitative assessment. The section dealing with laws, policies, and reforms also leaves many unanswered questions. For instance, the section does not bring in a discussion of the NSP 2022-26 or any relevant laws and reforms. On the other hand, the title suggests that one can have a read on these dimensions. This section presents the biggest challenges that Pakistan faces and compares them to the policy priorities of the government of Pakistan which I found problematic. For instance, the author identifies a huge gap between the priorities set in the policy paper and his research findings. However, it seems not the case the way it has been presented by the author.

The NSP 2022-2026 mainly focuses on economic development, even in comparison to territorial and human security which is obvious not only from its central policy framework but also from the sections that have been dedicated to the respective dimensions in the policy paper. Likewise, this report highlights the external financial vulnerability as the biggest challenge for Pakistan. This challenge has repeatedly and emphatically been highlighted as a shift from a geopolitical to a geo-economic approach or foreign policy dimension. The chapters of NSP 2022-2026 are as follows: national solidarity, Securing the economic future, defence and

territorial sovereignty, internal security, foreign policy in the changing world, and human security. The prominent themes that have been highlighted through different chapters emphasize the economy, defence, territorial and internal security, foreign policy, and human security dimensions. For instance, as it is the case with territorial security that takes the second most important dimension both in the report we are discussing and the policy paper. Besides, the policy priorities that have been claimed in the report take a marginal place in the last section titled Human Security in the policy paper where health, poverty, food, shelter, etc. have been emphasised. However, the divisional analysis that moves beyond the provincial analysis is a very smart move. It is right that provincial analysis does not highlight the intra-provincial disparity.

However, it should further be expanded into the district-level analysis because the emphasis of human security is on staying close to grassroots communities. Human security in Pakistan is a much-needed and rightly made attempt to progress the discourse in the non-traditional dimension of security, human security. The credit goes to the writer for producing this interesting and important manuscript at present. “Human Security in Pakistan” by Hafiz A. Pasha is a must-read document for not only policy experts and academia but also the general public since it profiles the common-man concerns comprehensively and objectively.