

## **From Traditional Security to Human Security Approach: An Analysis of National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan (2018-2023)**

*Sidra Shabbir*

### **Abstract**

Security studies have always been cohered around rationalist approaches and realist theories. However, after the end of COLD WAR and spread of globalization the borders among states became blurred, threat perception from military attacks somewhat eroded. In 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced the term human security which challenged the monopoly of realism over security studies and debunked the idea that state was the only referent of security and regarded human beings as prior referent of security. The idea of human security was like a “buzz” in academia and policy circles. However, until the last decade, the security policy of Pakistan was still state and military oriented due to historical and geopolitical factors. This tendency towards traditional threats resulted in a scenario where Pakistan was confronted with traditional threats like extremism, terrorism, sectarianism and militancy. These issues were so overwhelming in nature that they started triggering existential threat to the sovereignty of state. These challenges brought all stakeholders on table and Pakistan’s first ever internal security policy was adopted in 2014 and the timeframe adopted for this policy was ended in 2018. The security landscape of country was changed now and demanded a new policy document so in 2018, National Internal Security Policy (NISP II) was formulated and unanimously adopted. This study aims at analyzing how NISP II has shifted towards the idea of human security to ensure sustainable peace in the society. For this end, this paper firstly develops a conceptual framework to understand the notion of human security. Secondly, it gives an account of security landscape of Pakistan, next this

study will analyze how NISP II has addressed human security needs of Pakistani society and would be concluded with some of the pitfalls in the policy as far as human security parameters are concerned.

**Keywords:** Human Security, Internal Security of Pakistan, NISP II,

**Evolution of the Concept of Human Security:**

The study of security has long been overwhelmed by positivist methodologies and rationalist approaches. Until the end of COLD WAR the notion of traditional security studies has been considered identical with the realist theoretical paradigms. This idea of traditional security was linked to academic ascendancy of realism and was based on three elements: firstly, it emphasized military threats and focused on the need to counter them; secondly, it was state centric and finally it was characterized by status quo<sup>1</sup>. Krause and William have argued that this hegemonic discipline defined study of security as a “cumulative collection of objective knowledge” and the centrality which is given to a state as the only subject of security excludes security issues other than traditional military threats<sup>2</sup>. In 1994, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced a new version of security by including the agenda for “human security” in Human Development Report which posed a challenge to traditional notion of security. It proposed an alternate paradigm for security and suggested a thorough approach to address the issues related to conflict, environment, economy and health.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ken Booth, "Security and Emancipation." *Review of International Studies*, (1991): 317.

<sup>2</sup>Keith Krause and Michael C. William, "From Strategy to Security: Foundations of Critical Security Studies," In *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, by Keith Krause and Michael C. William, (London: UCL press) 1997, 42.

The advocates of human security maintain that sources and actors of threats are diverse, complex and multi-dimensional; and there might be a range of possible responses to these threats by variety of actors and these responses are not meant to secure the state but human beings. They recognized “non-military threats to security along with non-military responses to both military and non-military threats”<sup>3</sup>. The underlying principle of human security as mentioned by Stephen James is based on certain arguments: firstly, physical and psychological security of human beings is not only threatened by an armed attack of one state upon another, internal sources of insecurity are as significant as external ones and need to be addressed. Secondly, these sources of insecurity can be based on objectivity or subjectivity or a blend of these two. Objective aspects of security include environmental security, physical integrity and health issues, while subjective aspects include financial stability, psychological and emotional health and overall quality of life. Thirdly, insecurities are not static but dynamic and correlated. National security paradigm considers state as a provider and enhancer of security to its subjects by defending its border but state sometimes becomes a major threat to the security of its people for instance due to corrupt administration, inefficient policies and poor governance. Finally states have limited capacity to provide security to its citizens despite having best of its intentions as the world is facing a pandemic, where every state is trying to protect the lives

---

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Camilleri, " Security: Old Dilemmas and New Challenges in the Post-Cold War Environment," *Geo Journal*(1994): 139.

of its citizens on one hand and to get them out of financial crisis on the other<sup>4</sup>.

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

In the post-cold war era, the concept of security had undergone in a period of “conceptual turmoil” and it was observed “uneven patterns of change due to increasing globalization, interdependence and changes in international system<sup>5</sup>. The emergence of the concept of “human security” was an outcome of these changes which had played an important role in broadening and deepening the idea of security. UNDP fostered the meaning of this term as; “freedom from fear and want” however in the literature this “buzz” term has faced as much contestation as Owen ended up giving “twenty-one different interpretations” of the concept of human security, where “the whole is far less than the sum of its parts”<sup>6</sup>. One of the most comprehensive definitions is given by Sabina Alkire, who stated the underlying purpose of human security is to “safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment”<sup>7</sup>. In order to simplify the complex phenomenon of human security the following questions are needed to be answered: whose security is to be ensured? What are the threats of

---

<sup>4</sup>Stephen James, "The Key Drivers of Human Security Discourse and the Challenge to Realism," *Cornell International Affairs Review*(2011): 28.

<sup>5</sup>Gary King and Christopher J.L. Murry, "Rethining Human Security," *Political Science Quarterly, Volume11* (2001): 585.

<sup>6</sup>Taylor Owen, "Human Security – Conflict, Critique and Consensus: Colloquium Remarks and a Proposal for a Threshold-Based Definition," *Security Dialogue* (2004) :374.

<sup>7</sup>Sabina Alkire, *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security*, (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, CRISE) 2003, 2.

security? And what means are needed to be adopted for this end? These questions will later be used as framework of analysis in the paper.

Whose security is to be ensured? The proponents of human security designate human beings as a “referent of security” without abrogating security of state as it can protect its citizens in return. Hence, the community, different groups, institutions and state would be considered as a referent of security only when the security is being “trickled down” to human beings.<sup>8</sup> It is human-centered approach where individual is elevated as an ultimate actor with all his capabilities and vulnerabilities; his security is the ultimate objective to which rest of actors and instruments are peripheral and subordinated.

What are the possible threats to human security? Human security is considered as a distinctive approach, because it elevates human dignity and wellbeing, another feature that makes it more exclusive is that it identifies host of threats which are beyond violence. This approach recognizes structural and agency-based sources of insecurity. These threats to security are dynamic and inter-dependent. Tadjbakhsh has divided these threats in four broad categories; socio-economic threats that refer to insecurity regarding income, employment and provision of public services like education, health care and housing<sup>9</sup>. This dimension of threat is related to “freedom from want”. Personal security threats include threats from state in the form of physical torture, war with another state, cross- border terrorism. It also includes street fights, domestic violence, violence against labor, children, or even on one’s own self in the form of drug abuse and suicide. Personal security threats are commonly associated with

---

<sup>8</sup>Tadjbakhsh, *Human Security*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Tadjbakhsh, *Human Security*, 14.

“freedom from fear” as per the definition provided by UNDP. Political threats come from violations of human and civil rights, conflicts, corruption from political leaders or civil servants, poor institutional setting, unavailability of justice etc. Freedom from such sources of insecurity is associated to “freedom from fear”. Finally, environmental threats which include threats to environment as well as an impact of this environmental degradation on human beings and how this process is mounting their vulnerability on pollution, natural disasters and man-made disasters etc. Meanwhile in 1994 Human Development Report was presented, which synthesized various elements of human security as mentioned above into seven different components: food, health, economic, environmental, personal, political and community security.

What means are to be adopted to provide humans security? As far as means of providing security are concerned, human security approach maintains that there is a need for adopting long-term extensive policy instead of going for temporary military solution. This comprehensive strategy ensures human development, protects their rights, strengthens public policy and promotes state- building efforts in a way that local factors which trigger insecurities are discouraged. This approach also fosters those different forms of threat and types of violence are extremely interrelated and deeply interdependent. These are interconnected in global context also, where national borders have been blurred and sovereignty has been lost hence, these threats cannot be addressed in singularity.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has identified following characteristics of this inter-disciplinary concept; firstly, it is “people-centered approach” places human beings at the center of analysis

and examines broad range of threats to their security as well as measures to overcome those threats. Secondly, it is a “multi-sectoral understanding of security” that means it is concerned with different dimensions of human security for instance, food, economic, environment, political, personal and community security. Moreover, it also suggests that these threats as well as responses to counter these threats are inter-connected. That means it underlines the need of more “comprehensive approach” for securitization. In addition to this, human security also stresses the need to follow “context-specific solution” to the problem due to the fact that insecurities vary in different situations and contextualized solutions are more reliable. Finally, in addressing threats and insecurities, this approach is “prevention oriented” and it focuses on protection and empowerment as essential components to accomplish the goal of human security<sup>10</sup>.

### **Human Security and Internal Security Landscape in Pakistan**

Throughout the history, Pakistan’s security policy remained overwhelmingly skewed towards countering traditional security threats emanating from external borders. However, the last two decades proved vulnerability of Pakistan in domain of internal security threats and most eminent of those is terrorism. The effects of War on Terror in Afghanistan gradually seeped into the borders of Pakistan and poisoned the length and breadth of the country. According to Pakistan’s armed forces spokesman, Major General Babar Iftikhar, the Pakistan has faced the loss of 83,000

---

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, *Human Security in Theory and Practice*, HSU-OCHA, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/HSU/Publications%20and%20Products/Human%20Security%20Tools/Human%20Security%20in%20Theory%20and%20Practice%20English.pdf>, New York: September 10, 2009,14.

lives in war on terror. He further disclosed the economic loss of the country was almost US\$126 billion<sup>11</sup>. In 2001, Pakistan decided to join a war against terrorism in Afghanistan and extended its unwavering support to US led coalition that exacerbated the problem. According to The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ), US had launched at least 430 drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004. Syed writes that in war on terror “Pakistan has faced more casualties as compared to all NATO countries combined”<sup>12</sup>. The ripples of this coalition between Pakistan and US were also stemmed in the form of an umbrella of a terrorist organization, like TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan). TTP launched terrorist attacks and tarnished the internal security landscape of Pakistan. Another battle-hardened organization such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) is also strengthening in Afghanistan, near western border of Pakistan and had the potential to have its spillover in Pakistan. Along with terrorism the menace of religious extremism also deteriorated internal security of Pakistan. The country has always been a victim of religious, sectarian, ethnic and linguistic conflicts which never let peace to deepen its roots in Pakistan.

According to National Centre for Environmental Information (NCEI), during the course of two decades Pakistan has experienced over 12 major earthquakes caused the loss of around 90,000 lives and immeasurable economic and infrastructural damage. In 2010 the country had borne deadliest floods which inflicted unprecedented loss of human lives,

---

<sup>11</sup> Sana Jamal, “83,000 Lives Lost in Pakistan’s War on Terrorism,” Gulf News, January 12, 2021, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/83000-lives-lost-in-pakistans-war-on-terrorism-1.76428064#>.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Syed, "Need for a Paradigm Shift in Security: Adopting Human Security in Pakistan," *IPRI Journal*: (2014) 91.



economy, infrastructure and standing crops. Robert Looney analyzes the direct as well as indirect costs of floods and identifies how different factors of human security are interlinked for instance floods becoming a source of internal displacement of people, spread of diseases, shattered infrastructure and destroyed agricultural and industrial output which turns out to be disastrous for economy causing unemployment and inflation. On the other hand, Pakistan is also one of those countries which is facing acute water scarcity causing drought that is harming the agricultural economy and causing massive problems<sup>13</sup>.

One of the most pressing problems that Pakistan is facing since its inception is the economic instability in all its forms for instance, unprecedented joblessness, record inflation rate, energy crisis, dwindling foreign reserves, currency devaluation, low investment and huge domestic and external debts. These economic woes are interrelated in such a way that one issue is affecting the other. This economic crunch is also haunting other human security threats like dilapidated health and educational sector, energy crisis etc. Economic problems are often associated to administrative pitfalls, political instability and corruption which are also considered as threats to human security.

One of the most pertinent human security threats which are faced not only by Pakistan but also the entire world is the recent pandemic. COVID- 19 has badly affected every aspect of human security whether, mental or physical, personal or collective causing death, disease, hunger, unemployment, poverty, inflation, reduced growth rates, increasing fear,

---

<sup>13</sup>Robert Looney, "Economic Impact of Floods in Pakistan," *Contemporary South Asia Vol. 20 Issue 2*, (2012):230.

pain and trauma. UN secretary general Antonio Guterres says that this pandemic is a human crisis that is “fast becoming Human Rights Crisis”. Along with this pandemic, Pakistan has also faced another dilemma last year in the shape of locust’s attack on crops that is an ultimate threat to food security.

The above was only a bird’s eye view of the threats Pakistan is confronted with. These threats are not only unprecedented in nature but also underline the need to reprioritize our security concerns. It is high time to reorient the concept of security, to overhaul policy goals, to adopt a holistic and integrative approach for securitization.

### **Analysis of NISP II on the Parameters of Human Security**

The National Internal Security Policy (NISP) is considered as a major breakthrough in the pursuit for national security. It is a distinctive security document because of two reasons; firstly, it is the first comprehensive document that addresses security threats from multiple sources, actors and dimensions. For the first time in the history any security policy document was formulated to protect Pakistan and its people from critical security threats. Secondly, it is the joint venture of multiple stake holders from government, civil society and academia otherwise these matters were of classified nature. The first National Internal Security Policy was announced in 2014 that was valid till 2018. In addition to this, there were some loopholes in NISP I, for instance it lacked any plan regarding regulation of Madrassas and mosques, comprehensive educational and curriculum reforms, security of cyber space, tourism reforms and nationwide cultural action plan etc. Hence, in 2018, second National

Internal Security Policy was adopted that reinforced the issues incorporated in previous policy along with addressing new subjects.

The next part of the paper pertains to the analysis of the National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023) on the parameters identified by human security paradigm and how national security policy of Pakistan has shifted towards the idea of human security. For this end the questions posed by Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy; “security of whom, security from what and security by what means” would be used as a framework for analysis as they have mentioned that a shift from state-centered approach to human-centered approach provides new answers to these questions.

### **Security of whom?**

The preamble of NISP II establishes that “safety and security of citizens of Pakistan is government’s top priority”. NISP II further explained that “security of Pakistan and its people” is main concern of this policy. It is evident that security of human being is the driving force of NISP II. Nonetheless, it also emphasized the need of strengthening state and its institutions because they are providers of human security. Where NISP 1 was relying on human security paradigm on a limited extent, NISP II is broader in nature and talks more of security of people of Pakistan from physical as well as psychological dimensions. For instance, NISP II has “reoriented” the security apparatus towards “human-centered” approach to better serve people of Pakistan by protecting their lives, properties and rights.

### **Security from what?**

It is observed that while identifying threats to security, policy circles have always been inclined towards over-simplifying or reducing the complexity of the prevailing issues to limited determinants. In academia this practice is commonly known as “reductionism” as it turns a blind eye on embedded complications in a matter and presents an over-simplified picture of a society. However, this policy is based on two principles while defining and countering threats; anti-reductionism and non-essentialism. This policy acknowledges that social reality is rather complex phenomenon which cannot be analyzed by sticking to one or two factors. Everything is overlapping and interconnected in a way that any particular change in a single factor may have spillover effects on many. This policy adopted a framework that is appreciative towards intersections and correlation among various factors of security. NISP II has enlisted an array of threats from a range of sources which needed to be addressed.

This policy has designated “terrorism” as one of the most pressing challenges to Pakistan’s security because it has long been used as an instrument to pursue variety of interests under the disguise of a particular religion, sect or ethnicity. This threat is transnational in its nature and effects; and according to this policy document is driven by a number of factors. Extremism and intolerance are the breeding ground for terrorism and conflicts. Despite the fact that during first phase of NISP, incidents of terrorism are under control. However violent extremism is a potential threat to our security as it is a mindset and seen only when it brings some lethal result. Among more sophisticated threats, this policy document has enlisted “cybercrimes” as it can hinder smooth functioning of government

and provision of basic facilities to people. In addition to this it can provide platform to disseminate terrorist or extremist ideologies. Recently, ISIS used social media sites to spread their toxic ideas and recruit people<sup>14</sup>. Pakistan has always been a victim of “organized crimes” especially the law-and-order situation in Karachi was deteriorated due to such practices. It involves drug trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, land grabbing and money laundering. The money generated from such sources is reportedly used in terror financing. These threats are multi facet and complex to analyze and NISP II has mentioned drivers of these security threats which are responsible for emergence of security challenges.

The major chunk of our population, our youth, is deprived of quality education, decent jobs and good social status that is a major reason of their frustration and helplessness that leads them to indulge in activities like organized crimes, extremism, terrorism and conflicts. Sometimes these people are exploited due to their social, religious, sectarian, ethnic, regional or gender identity. As Pakistani society is characterized by lack of cohesion and harmony so, some groups who disseminate these exclusionary identity discourses brainstorm our youth and use them for their own interest. This policy also acknowledges provincial and regional disparity in Pakistan and how these inequalities become a cause of conflict as deprived and weakly governed areas have tendency to become breeding ground for trans-national, national and local terrorist organization<sup>15</sup>. This policy also admits in case of Pakistan that drivers of violence are rooted in socio-political fabric of our society for instance people have grievances

---

<sup>14</sup> Majid Alfifi, “Measuring the Impact of ISIS Social Media Strategy,” MIS2, 2018, Marina Del Rey, CA, USA, [https://snap.stanford.edu/mis2/files/MIS2\\_paper\\_23.pdf](https://snap.stanford.edu/mis2/files/MIS2_paper_23.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> NISP II, page 25.

over injustice, corruption, discrimination, lack of accountability and political exclusion that comes a hurdle in sustaining peaceful, pluralistic and diverse society.

### **Security by what means?**

Ensuring rule of law, social justice, political stability and cohesion in the society were some of the key strategic goals common in NISP II and Pakistan Vision 2025. In order to achieve these targets a comprehensive strategy was adopted. NISP II has therefore categorized entire strategy into 6Rs; Reorient Reconcile, Re-imagine, Recognize, Redistribute, and Regional Approach. These 6Rs are known as Pillars of National Internal Security Policy.

### **Human Security and Limitation of NISP II**

If the threat perception of NISP II is weighed on the scale of human security, it becomes evident that a wide range of threats have been addressed. As far as Human Development Report (1994) is concerned there are some areas hardly touched upon.

### **Challenges to Security NISP II vs. Human Security**

<b>NISP II</b>	<b>Human Security Approach</b>
Terrorism	Economic insecurity
Extremism	Food insecurity
Cyber Crimes	Health insecurity
Organized Crimes	Environmental insecurity
Sub-national Variation	Personal insecurity
	Community insecurity
	Political insecurity

The highlighted dimensions of insecurities are partially or totally neglected in NISP II.

Firstly, this policy has not considered Environmental Security as an area of priority as Pakistan is environmentally vulnerable and one of the most climate affected countries in the world. The country has witnessed deadliest floods in the history and does not have resources to manage and relocate flood affected population in the times of crisis. Pakistan's economy depends on agricultural sector and these floods have damaged the crops and decreased soil fertility. Due to environmental issues, there has been observed inter-provincial friction due to water unavailability, food shortage, developmental failure, diseases, migration and conflicts. Hence, apart from its direct effects, environmental insecurity may trigger food, health, personal and community insecurity as well. NISP II has not discussed these dimensions to human security.

Secondly, National Nutrition Survey (2018) revealed that 36.9 percent of the population of Pakistanis a victim of food insecurity. According to World Food Program (WFP), Pakistan is one of those countries that produces surplus food but still is food insecure country due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of storage facilities, insufficient food transport and socio-political instability. Food insecurity is a reason of physical and mental issues and may prompt other insecurities as well for instance; deprived people may indulge themselves in organized crimes but in NISP II this component of security is viewed only from limited perspectives.

Thirdly, health security is not given enough weightage and one of the consequences and evidence of this act in recent in the form of questionable performance of government and policy makers in this time of pandemic. In

addition to this Pakistan is one of those two countries (the other country is Afghanistan) in the world which could never stop transmission of polio and more tragic part of the story is that the health workers involved in polio immunization are not secure. So, internal security policy circles of Pakistan need to work on these areas as well. Fourthly, those dimensions of economic security are discussed in the policy which are related to personal or community security but economic insecurity as an independent threat is not discussed especially alarming financial indicators are not given due importance for instance huge debt, negative growth rate, high inflation rate, least exports, huge imports, energy crisis, unemployment, how economic issues are interplaying with other factors and becoming huge security concerns. Development and security are two sides of same coin and both accelerate each other so security of Pakistan can only be ensured if it would be economically stable.

Finally, another aspect of personal security, child labor is also missing in the policy. Security of children whether girls or boys are at stake as they are physically, mentally and sexually tortured. Around 11 million children from age 4 to 14 are employed as labors in factories of Pakistan<sup>16</sup>. Reports from NGO Sahil reveal that almost 3832 cases of child abuse were reported in Pakistan in 2018, 2846 in 2019 and 1489 in first half of 2020 respectively. These alarming statistics are enough to stress how grave the situation was but no direct measure was suggested in the policy to address this issue.

---

<sup>16</sup> Syed Asim Ahmed Bukhari, "Child Labour in Pakistan," *The Express Tribune*, October 22, 2019.



## **Conclusion**

After the end of the Cold War the world was hoping for global peace. Nevertheless, this long-awaited expectation is yet to be turned in to reality. Although threats from international borders have undeniably decreased but internal security threats have increased significantly. Pakistan has also faced such threats in the form of violent extremism, terrorism, target killing, floods, energy crisis, droughts and diseases etc. Since its inception the internal security concerns of Pakistan are strongly connected to its external security policy particularly in the case of India and Afghanistan. There was no legislation or policy regarding internal security challenges until 2014.

However, the new internal security policy has comprehensively addressed these security concerns. National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023) is one of the initial and undoubtedly a major step towards adopting human security approach as a goal. This paper has analyzed NISP II under the conceptual framework of human security developed by Tadjbakhsh by answering three basic questions security of whom, security from what and by what means. It is a commendable effort by policy circles and this transition towards human security has brought positive outcomes in the form of reduced terrorist attacks in Pakistan during its first phase. This policy is pro-active rather than re-active and works on two main principles simultaneously; protection and empowerment, where protection entails top-down approach and empowerment employs bottom-up approach. These two principles are mutually reinforcing and involved in framing NISP II. The six R(s) in the policy (Reorient, Re-imagine, Reconcile, Redistribute, Recognize and Regional Approach) have addressed issues like

terrorism, extremism, organized crimes, cybercrimes and sub-national variation. However, there are some areas for instance, economic stability, environmental security, health and food securities which need immediate attentions from policy circles to make such policies more robust and comprehensive. While effectiveness of this policy is highly dependent on the way it would be implemented that is beyond the scope of this paper.

*Sidra Shabbir* is a research scholar at the Center of International Peace and Stability (CIPS) National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Islamabad. She can be reached at [sshabbir.pcs19cips@student.nudt.edu.pk](mailto:sshabbir.pcs19cips@student.nudt.edu.pk)