

From Traditional Security to Human-Centered Security: Reframing National Policy

Priorities

Sayyeda Aqsa Sajjad

Research Associate, NUST Institute of Policy Studies, NUST Islamabad

Abstract

Since inception Pakistan has been mired with internal as well as external challenges residing in state, economic and human security with a varied frequency. Over the years our development indices have declined instead of improving. Other than political polarisation and restive inner front the country faces a multitude of human security issues. Hence our National security Policy 2022-2026 (NSP 2022) aptly calls for shifting our focus to human security and geo-economics. It aims at enhancing Pakistan's socioeconomic metrics. Its implementation is likely help alleviate people's sufferings. 'Empowering the disempowered' as it says make Pakistan prosperous and strong. The major problem areas are; population growth at the rate of 2.4 percent over last two decades, intra-country migration in search of better opportunities have resulted into speedy urbanization of major cities of Pakistan.COVID-19 which severely affected the political and economic stability of the country worsening health security; climate vulnerability with over 140 extreme weather events in the country over past two decades have adversely impacted our agro-based economy accompanied by consequent challenges to food security and price hike in times of receding purchasing power of the people compounded further by illegal practices like hoarding and smuggling etc. Lack of water management is causing water stress as our per capita water availability is decreasing rapidly and stands at 908 cm in 2021. The paper aims to analyse the socio-economic disparities in Pakistan, especially pertaining to the human security in the back drop of the policy guidelines given in NSP 2022, and suggest appropriate measures accruing from the conclusion of this study.

Key Words

Human security, Socioeconomic indicators, Political Polarization, National Security Policy of Pakistan

Introduction

The unmanageable rise in the population of Pakistan and rapidly declining economic indicators of the state have forced the stakeholders to reconsider the thinking patterns and shift the notion of policies from traditional security paradigm to non-traditional security. Disparity in the economy, high inflation rate, deteriorating health conditions coupled with inconsistent and unrealistic state policies, lack of good governance, poverty and inequality, mismanagement of water resources and recurring natural disasters due to the changing climatic patterns have brought the state at the verge of economic insecurity entwined with human insecurity in its multiple domains.

The worsening import driven market of the state is facing balance of payment difficulties which necessitates import-substitution strategy to strengthen domestic market. Pakistan's agro-based economy is underperforming due to imprudent agricultural policies, predated processes procedures and mismanagement of water resources resulting in floods, droughts, salination and water logging issues. All told, Pakistan is an adverse victim of climate change. The socio-economic predicament of the state is compounded by the erratic policies and lack of a strategic vision for enduring socio-economic developmental objectives. The National security Policy 2022-2026 (NSP 2022) recognizes the need to shift the focus from geo-strategy to geo-economics highlighting the challenges being faced by Pakistan and devising policy options in the domain of human security. The NSP intends to enhance socioeconomic metrics of Pakistan through its implementation to address the problems of Pakistan to help alleviate people's sufferings.

The paper aims to analyse the socio-economic disparities in Pakistan, especially associated with the human security in the back drop of the policy guidelines given in National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022- 2026, and suggest recommendations and way forward

accruing from the conclusion of this study. Primary and secondary data is used and analyzed to carry out the research.

Importance of Human Security as a Concept

Human security is protecting and providing freedom to the people within a country. State protects them from threats and empower them to take charge of their lives to handle them according to their own free will abiding the institutional policies and laws. It implies a top-down approach of rule of law under a democratic system of government enabling people as actors and participants. Human security is not an alternate to state security rather it complements the state security. State is responsible to ensure human security which at times not only fails to provide human security to its citizens but also becomes a source of threat to them. States cannot be secure if do not tackle the matters of concern including an established democratic system, good governance and rule of law.

Post-Cold War world witnessed a series of conflicts engulfing the lives of millions in inter-state and intra-state conflicts, ethnic cleansing, genocide, failed states, lawlessness and religious extremism and terrorism. The global media outreach with technological advancement helped in spreading the word shunning the states to put a blind eye to the human atrocities and sufferings around the world. It helped states in taking initiatives to develop policies for the safety and security of human lives and decreasing human sufferings around the world in general and for their own people within their states in particular.

Human Security Challenges in Pakistan

Pakistan, since its establishment has been suffering from external and internal challenges ranging from migration of Indian Muslims to newly independent state; unresolved water dispute with upper riparian neighboring state till date; three full-fledged armed conflicts

with India in 1965, 1971 and 1999; hosting the influx of Afghan refugees in 1979 and again in 2001 in the wake of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and later US' Operation Enduring Freedom; instable political system and lack of good governance; corrupt and deceitful elites; poverty and inequality; declining health conditions; climate change; and crippling economy of the state to tackle the issues. For decades, the focus of statesmen in Pakistan has been traditional issues and border security on hard eastern and western fronts of the state. The National Security policy of Pakistan published in 2022 recognizes the need of delivering human security to the citizens of the state offering policy guidelines for the solution of multiple problems in Pakistan including:

1. Political Polarisation and Lack of Good Governance
2. Economic Instability
3. Poverty and Inequality
4. Health Issues
5. Climate Change

The issues related to human security in Pakistan are the real challenge to the stability and prosperity of the state which can be analyzed below:

Political Polarisation and Lack of Good Governance

Pakistan is passing through the difficult time of history. Political polarisation is at peak. The widening gap between people and political elite of the state has developed mistrust between them leading to socio-political division of the state. The rapidly changing governments and their policies, swift deviation from their manifestos and incapability to handle the declining economy of the state has left adverse impact on the state. Fragile state institutions, poor governance, inappropriate system of accountability and top to bottom corrupt practices have

compromised the rule of law dividing it into two segments; one for the elites and the other for the ordinary citizen of the state.

The political divide, populism and polarisation engaged the leaders in delivering hate speeches, using bizarre language, promoting propaganda for the political rivals, accusation and passing derogatory remarks about state institutions has left the country into distress forgetting the state interests. Lust for power has harmed the national values, identity and integrity and has developed a culture of intolerance, autocracy and uncompromising behavior of political elites and parties. Social media platforms are further intensifying the situation by spreading misinformation and disinformation and making the facts dubious for a common man to believe in.¹

Besides political polarisation, the state lacks the potential in good governance. Poor system of governing has incorporated corruption in the institutions in the form of bribery, extortion, nepotism and fraud. Such practices reduce the work efficiency affecting the economic growth by increasing the investment cost.² Besides, lack of political stability, poor governance and ineffective accountability system develop a sense of social and economic insecurity which leads to distress, social unrest, intolerance and extremism further contributing to the challenges of the state.³

¹ Tasneem Shafiq, "Political Polarisation in Pakistan: A zero-sum Situation," *Pakistan Observer*, 2023, <https://pakobserver.net/political-polarisation-in-pakistan-a-zero-sum-situation-by-tasneem-shafiq/>.

² Zafar H. Ismail and Sehar Rizvi, "Some issues of Governance in Pakistan," 2000, <https://www.spdc.org.pk/assets/upload/CP-39.pdf>.

³ Farida Faisal and A.R. Jafri, "Corruption as a Source of Failure of Good Governance and Management in Pakistan: Proposed Remedial Measures," *JPUHS* 30, no.1, (2017), http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/HistoryPStudies/PDF_Files/4_V-30-No1-Jun17.pdf.

Economic Instability

The declining economy of Pakistan is going through a low growth rate, unprecedented inflation, unemployment, balance of payment issues and debt crisis. Foreign exchange reserves are falling rapidly and currently stand at \$4.3 billion lowest since 2014.⁴ This is mainly due to the failure of addressing the structural problems timely challenging the social stability of Pakistan. High foreign debt of the country by international financial institutions like International Monetary Fund (IMF) is the real matter of concern.⁵

Nevertheless, the prevailing conditions are distressing for the economy of the country with a low-income base and high expenditure trends. The current expenditure of Pakistan accounts for 17.1 percent of the total expenditure of the country whereas the developmental expenditure is declining substantially. Within the current expenditure, defense expenditure has also significantly decreased currently standing at 1.9 percent in 2022-23 as compared to 4.7 percent in the 1990s.⁶

While the debt, growing at around 14 percent per year on average as compared to the GDP growth of only 3 percent per year on average, is leading to an unsustainable debt burden. In the fiscal year 2022–23, the debt servicing obligations of Rs. 5.2 trillion exceed the entire federal government revenue. Besides, there is a disconnect between the economy and taxation. Narrow tax base and weak tax administration is contributing in a budget deficit on average of 7.0 percent of GDP causing a rapid increase in the public debt. Among 55 percent registered

⁴ Hina Anwar, “Reality Check: Economic Crisis in Pakistan”, *Paradigm Shift*, January 20, 2023, <https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/current-economic-crisis-in-pakistan/>.

⁵ Sajjad Qayyum, “Where Is Pakistan's Economic Crisis Headed?,” *Worldview*, January 25, 2023, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/where-pakistans-economic-crisis-headed>.

⁶ Aqsa Sajjad, “Strategies for Economic Revitalization,” *Stratheia*, January 30, 2024, https://stratheia.com/strategies-for-economic-revitalization/?amp=1&fbclid=IwAR2FO2_LylAJGErGdWk5oFpFOgh2SY6fNA7i2iKAojd1VoIq334zcJ5SqLM.

corporations with SECP, merely 45 percent are complying the taxes and 80 percent of the total income generated through tax resources originate from only 10 commodities.⁷

Yet other challenges being faced by Pakistan encompass the devaluation of its currency, external and public debt and hike in the interest rate at a substantial cost. Starting from \$145 million in 1959-60, Pakistan's external debt and liabilities have surged to \$128,091 million till 2023. The unprecedented and persistent double-digit inflation in Pakistan is reaching approximately at 30 percent Moreover, Pakistan owes 122.3 percent interest of its net federal revenue depicting that 22.3 percent of the debt Pakistan remunerates is more than the total federal revenue it generates. High interest rate, on the other hand, gives hike to the inflation in the country resulting in abject poverty driving the society towards unrest, intolerance and extremism.⁸

Poverty and Inequality

There are many factors which contribute in the existence and increase of poverty but lack of good governance and mismanagement of the resources is the underlying factor in this regard. Eliminating poverty in its all forms is listed at the top of UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Significant section of the population of Pakistan is living below the poverty line though Pakistan has been contributing a lot in ending it. Unemployment, rapidly increasing population of the country, inflation, mismanagement of the available resources, lack of good governance, low literacy rate, and changing weather patterns as a result of climate change are the major causes of poverty in Pakistan. The ratio of poverty has fallen since 1998-99 from 61.6 percent to 21.5 percent in 2018-19 in the country. The rural and urban number varies from

⁷ Sajjad, "Strategies for Economic Revitalization".

⁸ Sajjad, "Strategies for Economic Revitalization".

47.4 percent to 10.7 percent in urban areas and from 67.5 percent to 27.6 percent in rural areas during the same time period.

Consistent Series of Poverty Rate from 1998-99 to 2018-19			
Years	Poverty Rate	Years	Poverty Rate
1998	61.6 %	2009	40.8 %
1999	63.2 %	2010	37.5 %
2000	64.9 %	2011	36.4 %
2001	66.5 %	2012	33.0 %
2002	61.9 %	2013	29.7 %
2003	57.3 %	2014	27.0 %
2004	52.7 %	2015	24.3 %
2005	54.3 %	2016	23.4 %
2006	50.9 %	2017	22.4 %
2007	47.6 %	2018	21.5 %
2008	44.2 %		

Source: PIDE Report 2021

Over-population is another vital element contributing into the poverty. The state is unable to deliver basic necessities of life to the increasing population of the country.⁹ Pakistan is facing food insecurity at a large scale of 43 percent, 18 percent people of which are facing acute food shortage. In terms of food security, 96 percent of arable land in Pakistan does not have full spectrum of organic matter. Pakistan is an agricultural country and in recent times, the contribution of agriculture in the GDP has come down to 19 percent from 24 percent and it's likely to keep going down because of the unwise land use, unsustainable population growth, lack of scientific development and real estate encroaching into agrarian areas. Four main crops

⁹ Asif Rasheed, "Over Population," *Pakistan Today*, June 2, 2021, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/06/02/over-population-2/>

that Pakistan grows, use 80 percent of its water and only account for 4 to 5 percent of the GDP.¹⁰

Furthermore, gender inequality is also causing increase in poverty. Gender discrimination as a normal practice of the society leaves less opportunities for females as compared to male segment. The women constitute 49.4 percent of Pakistan's population. This translates into 109.32 million females against 115.88 million males. According to 2019 statistics, in the population segment of 15 years and above, Pakistan's adult literacy rate is 58 percent. On comparative basis, 46.49 percent Pakistani women are literate, whereas men literacy figures stand at 69.29 percent.¹¹ The literacy rate of the youth, in the age bracket of 15-24 years, is 73 percent, out of which 65 percent are females and 80 percent are the males.¹² According to 2018 statistics the enrolment rate at primary school level was 68 percent; 62 percent females and 74 percent males.¹³

Moreover, the females share 22 percent of total jobs in the country, however in overall labour force the females stood at 23.4 percent in 2021.¹⁴ Women hold 20.2 percent seats in parliament. Their share in managerial, senior and middle management positions is 4.9 percent and 4.2 percent respectively only, which is very low to males.¹⁵

Unplanned and rapid urbanisation is another cause of state poverty adding into economic instability. Pakistan is characterised with highest urbanisation rate in South Asia over the period of past few decades. United Nations Population Division estimates that

¹⁰ Aisha Khan, "Speech at Margalla Dialogue Islamabad," 2022.

¹¹ Aaron O'Neill, "Literacy rate in Pakistan 2019," *Statista*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/572781/literacy-rate-in-pakistan/>.

¹² "Population, male (% ages 15-24) with at least some secondary education (Pakistan)," *World Bank*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.MA.ZS?locations=PK>.

¹³ "Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2018-19," *Pakistan Bureau of Statistics*, June 2020, https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pslm/publications/pslm2018-19/pslm_report_2018-19_national_provincial.pdf.

¹⁴ "Pakistan," *UN Women*, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/pakistan>.

¹⁵ "Pakistan," *UN Women*.

approximately 50 percent of the population of Pakistan is likely to live in the cities by 2025. Nevertheless, this scenario varies from developed to developing countries particularly when the urbanization is not planned and effectively supervised. The consequences are adverse in such case when it comes to create and provide employment opportunities, housing facility, healthcare and economic growth forcing the people to live in urban slums and get engaged in criminal activities instead of being productive element of the society out of despair.¹⁶

Health Issues

Poor health conditions and inaccessible basic health services is a major challenge to human security of Pakistan. Transparency International surveys consider health care sector of Pakistan as the most challenging sector of the country.¹⁷

According to WHO, Pakistan is ranked at 124 out of 169 countries in healthcare depicting that 73.37 percent of the world is ahead of Pakistan in healthcare.¹⁸ Pakistan is unable to spend significantly on healthcare and for the improvement of the life spans. In the past decade, it had spent merely 0.5 percent to 0.8 percent of its GDP on healthcare, much lower to the set standard of 6 percent by the WHO for low-income countries. In 2023, the total spending on healthcare sector remained 0.4 percent of its GDP.¹⁹ Limited resources and skewed expenditures have also resulted in insufficient nutrient focus. As a result, Pakistan has consistently fared the worst among peers, with highest share of population undernourished.

¹⁶ Muhammad Jahanzaib, "Rising Problems of Urban Development in Pakistan," *Graana.com*, July 29, 2022, <https://www.graana.com/blog/rising-problems-of-urban-development-in-pakistan/>.

¹⁷ Aiman Usman, "Major Challenges Faced by Health Sector in Pakistan," *MARHAM*, August 6, 2022, <https://www.marham.pk/healthblog/major-challenges-faced-by-health-sector-in-pakistan/>.

¹⁸ Zainab Muzaffar, "The Healthcare System," *The Nation*, July 22, 2023, <https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Jul-2023/the-healthcare-system>.

¹⁹ Alexander Muacevic and John R Adler, "Healthcare in Pakistan: Navigating Challenges and Building a Brighter Future," *Cureus*, June 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10332330/>.

This affects the growing young population that can contribute to the productivity of economy, wasting our human resources and effecting quality of life.

Climate Change

Climate change is major area of concern for Pakistan impacting the water scarcity issue, growing number of natural disasters and rapidly changing weather patterns. Climate science is not based on populism but based on evidence, thinking and research, how to plot the trajectory is largely dependent upon how to internalize learning, how to maximize impact and how to incentivize knowledge for innovation.

The planet is standing at a crossroads and Pakistan is caught in the middle of it in many ways being the adverse victim of Climate Change. Water scarcity, recurring natural disasters and energy crisis is hard hitting the state economy and infrastructure. Water resources are shrinking fast due to the rapid increase in the population and mismanaged water resources. The intake of water has not reduced in Pakistan but per capita water availability has gone down from 5000 cubic meters to 960 cubic meters and it is decreasing very fast. 80 percent of the water that is used, being derived from snow and glacier melt in the upper Indus Basin catchments and that is going to get drastically impacted by climate change. Projections are that the mass and volume will reduce up to 30 to 50 percent by 2050. The per capita availability of ground water has also declined. Water resources are depleting rapidly and of the 68 billion metric cubic meters available, 60 billion cubic meters have been abstracted that leaves Pakistan with hardly any ground water to use.²⁰

Nonetheless, energy and climate are interlinked to impact the economy. Energy, for Pakistan, has been a weakest point due to its heavy reliance on fossil fuels. Every time the oil

²⁰ Aisha Khan, "Speech at Margalla Dialogue Islamabad," 2022.

price goes up, Pakistan faces balance of payments issue and imports jump up. The crisis is mainly because of debts, subsidies, unequal distribution and theft coupled with inefficient power generation methods, lack of modern technology to produce power, mishandling of plants to avoid breakdowns and high demand vs low supply. Almost \$18 billion is the import bill of Pakistan on just oil. Pakistan needs to switch to renewable energy resources. According to the World bank study, if Pakistan utilizes a fraction of its land towards solar energy production, it will meet almost 50 percent of its energy requirements which can be a good starting point for the production of renewable energy. 50 percent of the energy requirements will drop almost \$10 billion on Pakistan's import bill, thereby, releasing so much pressure on the external account.²¹

Recommendations and Way Forward

The socio-economic sectors of Pakistan need a special focus for the sustainable development of citizens, which has largely been neglected in the past. The following recommendations can help to improve the socio-economic conditions:

- Pakistan needs a transformational change starting from a change in the political system by looking at the political process because everything is linked with politics, political polarisation and lack of good governance in Pakistan. Political reforms, judicial reorientation and balanced bureaucratic practices can benefit the public contributing to achieve the human security objective.
- Exports and manufacturing potential of Pakistan fell from 16 percent to 10 percent in past 25 years. With the current development rate, the economic condition of Pakistan can further deteriorate and GDP can fall by 9 percent. Immediate economic reforms

²¹ Khan, "Speech at Margalla Dialogue Islamabad".

through national consensus are a must to put Pakistan's economy on a path of fast tracked development with special focus on the human security.

- Pakistan must draw more foreign exchange by increasing exports and facilitating industrialists and small-scale investors through tax relaxations and business friendly environment. Remittances by own expatriates be protected. Better incentives can help enhance these. A revised taxation policy is need of the hour where standard sales tax should be reduced from 17 percent to bring most of the businesses in the tax net.
- Pakistan, due to its huge population should stand out as a high-income country. It has immensely creative and intelligent youth; the invaluable human capital. The future lies in innovation, technology, science and the ability to transform. The 63 percent youth bulge of Pakistan needs to be equipped with education and vocational training to be more useful at home and abroad.
- Education sector needs to be focused. Half of the school going children of Pakistan do not reach eighth class, and drop out of the schools. Based on school enrolment data, if ratio of education in Pakistan continues to decline at the current rate going, it will eventually attain the level of education in 2047 that India reached in 2011 and Bangladesh in 2016.
- Pakistan will have to develop a coping capacity to deal with healthcare issues by introducing innovative manufacturing methods of medical instruments and devices.
- Climate mitigation and adaptation call for a special attention as many other problems including water scarcity and natural disasters are associated with it. Floods have been regular occurrence including 2010's devastating flood and again in 2022. The floods in 2022, due to the changing climatic patterns costed \$40 billion loss to Pakistan.
- National integrity and internal cohesion are multipliers for the human and national security of the state. National integration, keeping the nation united is a continuous

process that requires a hectic and thorough efforts of the governments on priority basis. This can be achieved by addressing the social problems also identified in the NSP 2022 like economic vulnerability, food insecurity and also inculcating the national pride to connect the nation. Collectively, the nation can fight the challenges Pakistan is facing today, devolution of power to grass root level and provincial autonomy coupled with shared responsibility by the stakeholders can be key to economic development of Pakistan.

Conclusion

Pakistan, with its 70 million labour force and 63 percent youth bulge needs to set its course to economic development. The illustrated problems of Pakistan like economic decline, balance of payment issues, falling trade and manufacturing, human insecurity and climatic problems demand thorough reforms in all sectors. The internal and external challenges being faced by Pakistan require consistent and visionary policies, effective strategies, internal cohesion and integrity, implementation of law and transparent accountability measures for a real transformation. What Pakistan wants to be, will have to start today. Unless Pakistan decides that it wants to shift from a lower middle-income country to a future that offers security, stability and prosperity, it will have to do a lot of things differently, despite difficulties.