

BOOK REVIEW

*Dr. Moonis Ahmar**

Ehsan Mehmood Khan, *Human Security in Pakistan*
(Islamabad: Narratives, 2013), pp. 361. Price in Pakistan,
Rs.1,100/=

Human Security is an innovative and a non-traditional concept which emphasizes on dealing with issues which augment underdevelopment, illiteracy and social backwardness. The post-cold war era transformed the very notion of security and broadened its scope by inducting the human aspect of security. Pakistan, as a developing country is exposed to multiple threats of security. Most of these threats emanate from economic underdevelopment, marginalization of the weaker sections of society particularly women and minorities. It is in this perspective that a book with a comprehensive research on *Human Security in Pakistan* has been published by an Islamabad based security analyst Ehsan Mehmood Khan.

The book is divided into four chapters covering in detail the major themes of the concept of human security; the human security framework for Pakistan; the human security profile of Pakistan and the implementation of the concept and policy recommendation pertaining to human security. The book also contains Annexes dealing with the efforts for human security by the UN; details of journalists killed in Pakistan during the period 1994-2003; provincial makeup of Pakistan along with a comprehensive bibliography and index. The foreword of the book is written by Dr. Thomas A, Marks, Head of Department War and Conflict Studies, the College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University, Washington DC and Preface by Prof. Mijahid Kamran, Vice-Chancellor, University of the Punjab. The author was a fellow at the National Defense University Washington DC where he did the bulk of his research on the theme of his book.

Since the book under review is the first major research study on Human Security in the context of Pakistan, four major questions may be raised: Why human security in Pakistan is neglected by those who are at the helm of affairs? What are the critical issues which deepen the plight of vulnerable groups of Pakistani society? How corruption and nepotism is a source of human insecurity? How state can provide basic security to its citizens in the backdrop of militancy, radicalization and terrorism.

While the author has responded to most of the questions mentioned above he laments that “the predicament with human security is that it involves a greater number of affected parties but received the lowest level of attention. States certainly have the right to secure but not at the cost of people living within its frontiers or in other states. People too have certain frontiers in the form of human rights, needs and aspirations.” Unfortunately, most of the post-colonial states failed to fulfill the expectations of their people and undermined the basic needs of their citizens. Narrow interpretation of security and understanding it only in terms of military security and security of the ruling elites generated crisis at the societal level. Lately, there has been some realization in the developing world about the need to rethink the concepts of security and power and to broaden their scope while including other segments affecting the lives of majority of people.

While tracing the concept of human security, the author rightly argues that, “the Copenhagen School of Security Studies has made a noteworthy contribution in the securitization discipline including human security.” The UN also played its role in further broadening the scope of security as was also done by Dr. Mahbubul Haq under whose name the Human Development Center was established in Islamabad.

Another significant contribution of the book is a discussion on the Islamic Construct of Human Security but it would have been better had the author also examined why the overwhelming majority of Muslim countries have failed to

empower their own people and focus on human development. The fact that social and economic backwardness, lack of good governance and terrorism pose fundamental challenge to many Muslim countries needs to be looked into the perspective of human security. As pointed out by the author, “Islamic social order provides for a complete construct of the human security as it is widely understood in today’s political, social and economic world order” (p. 40). However, the question is why human security is not a priority as far as most of the regimes in the Muslim world are concerned?

The author has responded to the causes of human security predicament in Pakistan when he holds that, “coming to the human security image of Pakistan as a state and society, it is even more appalling. A state, where the rule of law is a missing commodity, and justice, both social and judicial, is the right of the might in general. Economy is surviving on foreign assistance in form of loans and grants. Economic progress has virtually halted if seen in terms of population growth.” (p.55). It is yet to be seen how serious is the present government in terms of human development, eradicating corruption, dealing with the menace of poverty, establishing the rule of law and empowering the vulnerable segments of society.

While going through the contents of book under review, three observations could be made. First, the author has worked hard in compiling facts and data pertaining to the issue of human security or insecurity in Pakistan. The elaboration of Chapter three by examining the issues of political security, economic security, personal security, community security, women security, children security, health security, environmental security and education security is commendable. Second, while the author has made concerted effort in his book to examine the concept of human security while providing relevant facts and data he has not been able to suggest a methodology as to how the issues which compound human plight and insecurity in Pakistan can be dealt with. Hence the book looks more descriptive rather than analytical or perceptive in nature. Third, the author has not mentioned the source(s) of the language map of Pakistan (p.123) table 3.6

on Comparative data of violence against women, 2008-2011 (p. 140). Likewise, most of the tables mentioned in the book lack relevant sources.

On the whole the book is a valuable account of Human Security in Pakistan and can be a source of enormous help and assistance to readers and researchers in the field of security studies. It can also serve as a text book on the subject of Human Security because it discusses in detail the concept of human security while focusing on Pakistan. The book is well documented with a rich bibliography, adequate references and notes.

** Meritorious Professor of International Relations, University of Karachi, Dean Faculty of Arts and Director, Program on Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution.*