



## Cross-Border Terrorism and Pakistan's National Security Strategy

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### ABSTRACT

The cross-border terrorism has been one of the most crucial security issues facing Pakistan in the modern regional security status quo. The continuing nature of a transnational militant network, insecurity in the neighboring Afghanistan, porous border areas and the changing nature of asymmetric war has had a dramatic impact on Pakistan national security agendas and overall policymaking. In this study, cross border terrorism and its effect to the national security strategy of Pakistan is analyzed through the rigor of the nature of modern terrorist threats, institutional responses, and changing counterterrorism measures. Based on the qualitative approach to the research, the study uses secondary data gathered based on the literature, government policy reports, security reports, and international documents designed to assess security. Two theories based on Realism and Securitization Theory are used as the guiding tool of the research to explain the processes in the way states understand and act under external security threats. The analysis suggests that the concept of cross-border terrorism has played a major role in defining the military ideology in Pakistan, the systems of intelligence coordination, the policy of managing the borders and the sphere of diplomacy. The paper also finds that although military operations and improved security measures have helped in removing terrorist capabilities, a lasting way of ensuring security is a multidimensional strategy that involves regional cooperation, technological modernization, socio-economic development, good governance, and counter-radicalization efforts. The discussion shows that border security and intelligence-driven activities have been critical elements in the counterterrorism process in Pakistan, but the stability in the long-term possibility will be on basis of mitigating the structural and political conditions that enable extremism and transnational militancy. It ends that Pakistan needs to come up with a national security policy that will be able to strike a balance between conventional security solutions and sweeter human security solutions to effectively respond to the growing cross border risks. This study offers an insight into the intersection of terrorism and strategic policymaking, which is why it will contribute to other discussions about national security, stability, and counter terrorism in South Asia.

## **Introduction**

Since the end of the cold war, there has been a radical change in the contemporary international security environment. The classic military threats have been coupled with non-traditional security challenges in terms of terrorism, cyber warfare, transnational organized crime, and violent extremism. Terrorism is one of such challenges but it is one of the most challenging and persistent to tackle due to its potential of disrupting the political stability, economic growth, social integration and the so-called national sovereignty of states across the world (Hoffman, 2006). Transnational militant groups have also entered a new phase of the security causes since they have allowed terrorist groups to move beyond their national boundaries, use technology to benefit and create wide-ranging logistical and ideological support systems.

The issue of cross-border terrorism underscores a distinct and important aspect of modern day terrorism since it is characterized by the transference of militants, resources, finances, weapons and operational support across the borders (Byman, 2005). With cross-border terrorism, states face extra complications as compared to domestic terrorism since the terrorist groups usually act outside the territory of the jurisdiction of the national governments. This forces the states to come up with holistic approaches to security that include military readiness, intelligence integration, border control, diplomatic initiatives and legal framework to combat emerging threats (Cronin, 2009).

Pakistan is strategically located geopolitically within South Asia, Central Asia, China and Middle East. This geographical place has provided significant economic and strategic opportunities as well as a positional threat whereby the country is exposed to a variety of insecurities. Pakistan has been on the center-stage of global and regional counterterrorism actions since the events of September 11, 2001, where it has been affected by a high level of security pressure due to militant violence, insurgencies, transnational extremist networks (Fair, 2014). Terrorist activities in the country have led to significant loss of human, economic and institutional capacities which is why counterterrorism and national security are two important priorities in the policies of the country.

Withdrawing the international forces in Afghanistan in the year 2021 further complicated the security environment. The renewal of militant groups in the area and governance issues as well as political instability have created new challenges as to border security, as well as cross border terrorist activities (Tellis, 2022). Security analysts believe that the situation in Afghanistan is still affecting the security situation in Pakistan by providing them with the opportunity to coordinate militia groups, recruit and operate across borders (International Crisis Group, 2023). These trends have strengthened the value of efficient border control, inter-agency cooperation and local collaboration in the national security system of Pakistan.

The Pakistan has responded to these challenges with various counterterrorism strategies such as military, intelligence restructuring, fencing of borders, legislative efforts and diplomatic activities. Although the above measures have helped curb the terrorist abilities and enhance state dominance in a few regions, the concept of cross-border terrorism still remains a key menace in the regime of state security. Furthermore, modern terrorist groups turn more and more to digital technologies, coded communications, and transnational funding arrangements and states have to constantly shift their approaches to security (Conway, 2020).

Although, terrorism and counterterrorism in Pakistan have been widely researched, comparatively little academic focus has been put on exploring the greater correlation between cross-border terrorism and the development of the national security policy in Pakistan. Majority of the literature that is available concentrates on either the operational aspects of terrorism or particular

counterterrorism programs rather than engaging in in-depth analysis of how transnational threats of terrorism impact strategy and institutionalization. Therefore, a deep analysis of the impact of cross-border terrorism on the security priorities, policy reactions, and strategic planning in Pakistan is still necessary.

### **Problem Statement**

Although the country has undergone tremendous military campaigns, intelligence reforms coupled with counter-terrorism efforts in the last two decades, cross-border terrorism remains one of the greatest threats to the national security of Pakistan. The endurance of transnational militant groups, instability in the region, and the adapting terrorist methods have brought sophisticated security challenges which cannot be handled by the traditional use of military solutions. Besides making significant milestones when it comes to breakdown of terrorist infrastructure and enhancement of security agencies, cross border terrorism remains a significant factor that influences political stability, economic growth and safety of the region. As such, the issue of how cross-border terrorism has shaped the strategy of national security in Pakistan and whether the national security measures in place are effective in countering contemporary terror threats need to be reviewed.

### **Research Objectives**

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the nature and evolving dimensions of cross-border terrorism affecting Pakistan.
2. To analyze the impact of cross-border terrorism on Pakistan's national security strategy and security policymaking.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of Pakistan's counterterrorism measures and identify policy options for strengthening national security.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the major dimensions and characteristics of cross-border terrorism affecting Pakistan?
- How has cross-border terrorism influenced Pakistan's national security strategy and security policymaking?
- To what extent have Pakistan's counterterrorism measures effectively addressed emerging cross-border terrorist threats?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- Cross-border terrorism has also a great impact in shaping Pakistan national security strategy and security policymaking.
- Good border management, intelligence coordination and regional cooperation play good roles in curbing cross border terrorist threats, and enhancing national security.

In an attempt to meet these goals, the paper will then continue with the literature review of pertinent knowledge about terrorism, national security as well as regional security dynamics. The research then finds out some excessive gaps in the current literature and a theoretical framework of the study is formed using the Realism and Securitization Theory. The methodology section indicates the research design and analytical approach, information on the findings will then be

examined and the implications of the findings given regarding the use of the findings within the strategy of national security in Pakistan. Lastly, the paper concludes by providing the policy recommendations and suggestions on further research.

## **Literature Review**

The practice of national security and terrorism analysis has gained momentum in modern security studies owing to the rise of cross-national militant structures, and the escalation of contemporary security challenges. The aspect of cross-border terrorism poses distinct challenges to states since it crosses national borders and involves circulation of militants, resources and cash and ideological reinforcements across national borders. Cross-border terrorism has come to be an issue of critical concern in shaping the national security plans and regional politics in areas where geopolitical conflicts and political instabilities are prominent (Hoffman, 2006). Pakistan has been particularly susceptible to the effects of transnational terrorism, owing to its strategic geographical location, and its historical role in the evolution of regional security. This has prompted the scholarship to start studying the correlation that exists between terrorism, national security, border management, and regional stability in the South Asian context.

This review of the literature critically analyzes the theoretical and empirical works of cross-border terrorism, national security studies, as well as the security environment in Pakistan. The literature review presents key areas of scholarly controversy, reviews of existing research, and the gaps in the literature to support the current research.

### **The National Security and Terrorism Theoretical perspectives.**

Terrorism and national security have been analysed in different theoretical concepts. One of the most acting viewpoints in the research of international relations and security studies is realism. Realist scholars believe that states exist in the anarchic international system in which survival and security are the main goals of state behavior (Waltz, 1979). States or non-state actors pose security threats which result in governments enhancing military power, enhancing their intelligence systems, and enacting strategic policies that aim at sustaining sovereignty and territorial integrity (Mearsheimer, 2001).

According to realist thought, terrorism is an immediate threat to the state power since terrorist groups have the potential to destabilize politics and jeopardize national interests. This in turn causes states to react by providing military measures, coordination of intelligence and security reforms. The policies of Pakistan counterterrorism, such as border security programs and military activities against militant groups are based on numerous assumptions related to the realist theory (National Security Division, 2022).

The other theory of understanding security threat is the Securitization Theory. The theory suggests that the problems of security are constructed socially by means of political discourse and institutional practices, and developed by the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Waever, and de Wild 1998). Political actors, according to this view, make issues into security concerns by framing them as threats to their very existence that call upon extraordinary policy action. The process of securitization of terrorism has become more widespread around the world and allows governments to legitimize the use of more extensive surveillance, emergency laws, military operations and greater use of security budgets (Stritzel, 2014).

Terrorism today is a key element of national security in Pakistan. One of the most serious threats to national stability and development is listed in the National Security Policy of Pakistan (20222026), which explicitly defines terrorism and violent extremism as such threats (National Security

Division, 2022). This shows securitization of terrorism and the policy responses to the threats are influenced by perceptions.

Another valuable point of view is the Human Security Theory, which insists on focusing on the safety of individuals but does not regard the safety of states as the only priority. Human security theorists believe that military actions alone are not enough in the context of terrorism since ideology and causes of these terrorist groups are related to poverty, lack of jobs, political marginalization, social inequities, etc (Newman, 2016). Therefore, counterterrorist policies need to be more socio-economic and governance reform (sustainable).

### **Development of Cross-Border Terrorism.**

Cross-border terrorism has taken a new dimension in the last four decades. The Afghanistan conflict which begins in 1979 by the Soviet coming into Afghanistan and the resulting strife helped the rise of transnational militant networks which were to grow to South Asia and beyond (Rashid, 2010). In this time, many militant groups formed far-reaching operational, financial and ideological networks that spanned borders.

The September 11, 2001 events in the world changed the security landscape and further aggravated the fight on terrorism. Pakistan turned into a frontline state in the world war on terrorism and an escalating coordinated violence, rebellion, extremist activities (Abbas, 2015). As the counterterrorism efforts stepped up, transnationally based terrorist groups evolved by decriminalizing them and increasing their transnational networks.

Cronin (2009) contends that the modern terrorist groups have a huge bias compared to the previous groups hence they tend to depend on the decentralized modes of operations. These networks are less rigid and strong as they can withstand the loss of leaders and adjust to new security situations. These capabilities have been enhanced even further by technology that has helped the terrorist groups to organize their operations into encrypted communication systems, social media, and computer technologies (Conway, 2020).

The events in Afghanistan provide new reasons to worry about the transnational terrorism. During the post-event observations of the recent state of affairs in the region, after the international forces left in 2021, numerous security analysts had noticed that the security uncertainties and concerns had increased with such an outcome (International Crisis Group, 2023). These events have solidified the need to have border security and regional cooperation in the national security system of Pakistan.

### **Terrorism among Pakistan and other countries across the border.**

This has been one of the most complicated international politics security situations in the modern day in Pakistan. The nation is affected by various security issues among them terrorism, insurgency, sectarian violence and competition in geopolitics. There is consensus among scholars that cross-border terrorism has played a huge role in the security priority and decision-making processes in Pakistan (Fair, 2014).

The Afghans have had a number of studies that point out the Afghanistan-Pakistan border as one of the areas of concern. Geographical features of the border, such as mountainous nature and past trends in cross-border movement have posed difficulties in matters of effective management of security (Johnson & Cooke, 2021). Such circumstances have often been used by militant organizations to recruit, train, fund and plan their operations.

Studies have shown that terrorist groups acting on the area have wide transnational networks consisting of ideological support networks, monetary streams, and logistical networks (Giustozzi, 2019). These connections make counterterrorism work more complex as militant groups will tend to act irrespective of various jurisdictions and take advantage of instability in the areas.

As pointed out by Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS, 2025), in the last ten years, the terrorist attacks remain a major concern, despite the fact that there have been security-enhancing conditions within the country. The continued existence of cross-border threats have strengthened the importance of coordinated security solutions that are military-based, intelligence, diplomatic, and socio-economic in nature.

### **Counterterrorism Responses and Strategy of National Security.**

The strategies of national security have been changing significantly in line with the dynamic of terrorism. The traditional methods of security were mainly concerned with the territorial integrity, which was also maintained against external military threats. But the modern security systems are appreciating the importance of non-state actors and transnational threats at a faster rate (Buzan and Hansen, 2009).

This shift is reflected in the National Security Policy (2022) of Pakistan as the logic of security expanded to include not only the view of economic security and human security but also cyber security as well as the stability of the region because the focus on the national security issue has extended past the traditional military concerns (National Security Division, 2022). The policy focuses on a whole-of-government approach to security and the need to pursue coordination of the military, intelligence, diplomatic, and civilian institutions.

The use of military operations has been the main focus in counterterrorism in Pakistan. Research shows that the main security operations highly affected the infrastructure of terrorist groups and minimized the capability of militants to operate in various areas (Warraich, 2021). These missions helped in reestablishing state power and enhancing the situation of security.

Nevertheless, it is becoming popular among scholars to believe that military measures cannot bring positive sustainable security results. Khan (2021) indicates that educating reforms, community involvement, and socio-economic development are crucial when it comes to managing the background causes that lead to radicalization and extremism. Likewise, Newman (2016) focuses on the argument to apply human security ideas into counterterrorist policies.

### **Border coordination and Intelligence coordination.**

Border management has turned into one of the essential aspects of the modern counterterrorism approaches. Close border security is vital in stopping the intrusion of terrorism and disruption of logistical channels as well as enhancing the capacity of states to control the territorial borders (Johnson & Cooke, 2021).

Some of the border security measures implemented by Pakistan are fencing, surveillance systems, biometry verification systems, and increasing the number of security personnel. Studies indicate that these actions have led to the minimization of illegal crossings, as well as, enhanced capacity to monitor their borders (National Security Division, 2022).

The intelligence coordination is another important element of effectiveness in counterterrorism. To fight terrorist activities, surveillance of extremist groups and sharing of information is critical in preventing the attacks through the involvement of covert networks which organizational terror groups mostly use to guard their operations (Cronin, 2009). According to a number of studies,

intelligence-driven operations are more efficient in comparison with reactive how military actions should be approached since they allow the security agencies to detect possible threats prior to the attacks (Abbas, 2015).

Intelligence operations have also been revolutionized in technological changes. Digital surveillance systems, data analytics systems, cyber intelligence systems or artificial intelligence systems are all gradually becoming more popular among modern security agencies as a method to track the activities of extremists and pinpoint new threats (Conway, 2020).

### **Major Scholarly Debates**

There are a number of significant arguments in the literature of terrorism and national security. A significant debate is associated with efficiency of solutions in the military. According to some scholars, military activities are irreplaceable and cannot be used to destroy the terrorist groups and their network of activities (Cronin, 2009). Others argue that terrorism will not be eradicated by military action since this does not consider socio-economic and political aspects that lead to radicalization (Newman, 2016).

Another controversy revolves around the relative significance of domestic and external factors of terrorism. Whilst other researchers find regional instability and cross-border networks the leading factor behind insecurity (Tellis, 2022), other studies note domestic governance issues, economic inequities, and social discontents (Khan, 2021).

The other controversy is the achievement of a balance between security and civil liberties. Heightened vigilance and anti-terrorism policy can lead to an increase in security results; but the opponents are of the view that the excess securitization can destroy democratic governance and citizens liberties to an extreme level (Stritzel, 2014).

These discussions demonstrate how a security problem like terrorism is complicated and how it is justified that analytical frameworks that are multidimensional (in their capacity to tackle various aspects of security), are mandatory.

### **Research Gap**

An in-depth study of the available literature indicates that scholars have shown a lot of interest in the topic of terrorism, counterterrorism, politics of security, and security in Pakistan. Scholars have conducted thorough investigation on the reasons behind terrorism, how terrorism and militant groups develop, the result of terrors on political stability, and the success of military efforts in countering extremist elements (Abbas, 2015; Fair, 2014; Cronin, 2009). In a similar manner, many works have focused on the strategic importance of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area, the impact of instability in the region to support militant threats and the overall impact of terrorism on the security of South Asia (Giustozzi, 2019; Tellis, 2022).

Although the contributions have been made, there are still a number of key gaps that exist in the current body of knowledge. First, a great deal of the literature is centered on either terrorism as a phenomenon of security or individual counterterrorism operations but does not discuss the overall connection between cross-border terrorism and the national security approach of Pakistan. The current literature focuses too much on the operational dimensions of terrorism such as militant operation, military reaction and national security events with very little consideration on the impact made on cross-border threats on long and strategic planning, institutional change and adjustments and national security agenda decisions.

Second, much of the existing research was prior to significant geopolitical changes in the area especially the pulling out of international troops in Afghanistan in 2021. The evolving security context has transformed the regional power relations, trends of militancy, and border security issues. Therefore, the prevailing research might have failed to capture the security realities of the current circumstances that face Pakistan or strategic adaptations enhanced by recent changes in national security policies (International Crisis Group, 2023).

Third, past research frequently analyzes military actions, intelligence reforms, border management programs, and diplomacies individually as the field of study. Though these researches also offer insights, they seldom give a combined analysis of the combined roles of these elements in the national security strategy in Pakistan. Become cross-border terrorism is a multidimensional issue with political, military, economic and technological factors, a more comprehensive approach to the analysis is required which would include the interdependence of these factors.

Fourth, despite the overall importance of cyber security, digital communication technologies, and transnational financing networks, seen in recent studies of security, very little information has been examined regarding the impact of these new aspects on the Pakistan counterterrorism system. Modern terrorist groups are becoming more and more active in the digital sphere recruiting, distributing propaganda, and coordinating operations, as well as engaging in financial transactions (Conway, 2020). but little has been said in the current literature about the effects of such developments within the context of national security strategy of Pakistan.

Fifth, more literature follows either a traditional security view on the military force, or a human security view based on socio-economic elements. In comparison, a relatively small number of works combine various theoretical methods related to describing the way states perceive, construct and react to cross-border terrorist threats. Such a theoretical division does not allow researchers to create a comprehensive picture of the correlation between terrorism and national security.

In addition, very little academic focus has been given onto the effectiveness of the current National Security Policy (2022-2026) of Pakistan in combating the changing cross-border terrorist threats. Although the policy documents focus on a wide approach to security, an academic assessment of the consistency of the policies with the emerging challenges in security as well as regional dynamics is lacking.

Against these constraints, the current study aims at filling the abovementioned gaps through an in-depth discussion of how the concept cross-border terrorism intersects with national security strategy of Pakistan. This is in contrast to earlier studies, which dwell on a limited number of facets of cross-border terrorism such as military operations or acts of terrorism and instead dwells on analyzing how cross-border terrorism affects key policy areas such as strategic policymaking, institutional adjustments, coordination of intelligence, border control, and regional diplomacy within a broader analytical framework. The analysis also takes into consideration the Realism as well as the Securitization Theory in order to offer a multidimensional approach to the explaining the state response to transnational terrorist threats.

The research fills these gaps and the ways in which the existing literature is filled through it are three crucial. First, it offers a newer evaluation of the security environment in Pakistan in the regional context of the post 2021 environment. Second, it provides a combined account of the various elements of the national security approach that is influenced by cross-border terrorism. Third, it adds to the theoretical discussion as it integrates classical views on security with the modern aspects of the threat construction and security governance. Therefore, the paper contributes

to academic knowledge on terrorism, national security and regional stability as well as provides policy implications to meet future security challenges.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The conceptual frameworks of a research topic give it theoretical framework to know and explain the relationships between variables involved in the study. In security studies, theories assist in clarifying the manner in which states view threats, policies and how they react to issues, which impact national security. The Realism Theory is used as the main theory in this study since it analyzes the linkage between cross-border terrorism and the national security approach of Pakistan. Realism specifically applies here since it emphasizes on state survivability, national interests, sovereignty and security in an anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979).

The theory offers a practical prism on which to interpret the policies of the Pakistani security, military reaction, border management tools and counterterrorism strategies that were applied in reaction to cross-border terror threats. Using Realism, the paper elaborates on the role of these external security issues to national security choice making and national strategy formulation.

## **Realism Theory**

One of the most powerful and ever-important theories in international theories and security studies is realism. Realism dates back to classical realists like Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes who focused on the power, survival and self-interest in political matters. The theory was further enhanced by modern realist thinkers, such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, who believed that states existed in the anarchic international system by arguing that no central government existed to ensure security (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Realism promotes that the main goal of any state is to survive. The states do not have the freedom to seek outside protection and therefore they have to boost their own capacity and policies that will reinforce national security. Here the notion of security threats, be it of states or non-state actors demand strategic responses in terms of saving face of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political stability (Mearsheimer, 2001).

According to realists, the states engage in the process of assessing their security environment and react to the perceived threats by military readiness, the establishment of alliances, the collection of intelligence as well as strategic policymaking. As a result, the principle of national security has emerged as the main issue of state actions in international relations.

## **Basic Realism Assumptions.**

In this study, there are some assumptions of realism that are particularly pertinent:

### **State-Centric Approach**

The state is considered the most significant player of international relations in realism. States have the obligation of providing security to its citizens and to defend territorial borders and safeguard national interests. That is why such threats as terrorism are mostly evaluated with respect to the effects on the state security.

### **The International System Will Be anarchical.**

International system does not have a centre of happiness that can bring about security and order. Consequently, the states have adopted a self-help condition where they have to use their local resources and potentials to face challenges in security (Waltz, 1979).

### **National Interest and Survival.**

According to realists, survival is the major goal of any state. Policies are made by governments to defend sovereignty, political stability and the integrity of the territory. The security threats thus dealt with based on their consequences to national interests.

### **Power and Security**

Strategic preparedness, military capability as well as intellectual capacity have been regarded as very important tools of guaranteeing security. The potential danger to states will encourage them to advance such capabilities to prevent hostile forces and become more resilient.

### **Realism Implications on Cross-Border Terrorism.**

Pakistan can be viewed with a proper approach through realism, in the context of its reaction to the cross-border terrorism. The implications of terrorist groups spreading internationally are the challenge to the state power, internal stability, and the sovereignty of the territories. According to a realist, this type of threats must be addressed with decisive security measures since they have a direct impact on the state security and survival.

The national security strategy of Pakistan has a lot of assumptions related to realism. Its investment in military strength, coordination of the intelligence, border security and counterterrorism operations have made the country spend huge resources in enhancing operations to fight terrorism. These actions show a concern to safeguard national interests and maintain sovereignty within the changing terrorist threats (National Security Division, 2022).

The realist responses to external security threats can be understood through the construction of border fencing of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the fact that the number of security personnel has been increased and the surveillance system has been expanded. Likewise, military responses to militant groups express the intent of the state to get rid of threats that threaten national stability and integrity (Fair, 2014).

The focus of strategic preparedness and intelligence coordination displayed by Pakistan can also be explained by realism. Given that terrorist groups tend to work in transnational networks, intelligence collection, and sharing of information have become imperative in the identification of threats and precluding attacks. The reinforcement of the intelligence agencies is thus in line with the realist assumptions on the relevance of power and security.

### **Applicability of Realism to the Security Environment in Pakistan.**

The security environment in Pakistan is also marked by unstable situations in the region, geopolitics, and transnational security threats. These conditions are close in determining the value of survival and self-help as far as international politics is concerned as seen by realists. Continued cross-border terrorism has steered Pakistan to focus on national security by relying on military readiness, modernization of its intelligence, and controlling the border.

In addition, the National Security Policy of Pakistan (2022)2026) exemplifies realist issues of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and resilience of the state. The policy underlines the necessity of powerful security apparatus that is able to react to the conventional and non-traditional threats (National Security Division, 2022).

Thus, realism is a complete and comprehensive theoretical framework of explaining how cross-border terrorism is formed in the national security strategy of Pakistan and the effect they have on strategic decision-making processes.

## **Material and Methods**

This research study uses a qualitative research design to study the consequences of cross-border terrorism to the national security strategy of Pakistan. The use of qualitative research is especially suited to explore more intricate political, security and strategic phenomena as it can help to develop a deeper insight into the policy processes, institutional reactions to those processes, and an adaptation to the new security dynamics. In comparison to quantitative methods that consider statistical connections to rely on, qualitative research allows researchers to examine meanings and understandings, as well as the contextual elements that have been related to the matter of national security (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The research utilizes a descriptive and analytical study approach. What lies in the descriptive component is the nature, characteristics and evolution of cross-border terrorism in the context of Pakistan whereas what lies in the analytical component is the effects of such threats on the national security strategy, policymaking, and institutional responses. This would be appropriate since the study aims at finding out the bigger picture of terrorism and not just quantify its occurrence.

## **Results and Discussion**

This part provides the results and commentary of the thematic analysis of the university literature, official government policies, reports on international security and security databases. The results are presented in lines with the research objectives and research questions. Through the analysis, it is apparent that terrorism across borders is a significant security challenge facing Pakistan and the issue has continued to affect the policymaking on national security, border control, intelligence affairs, military deployment, and diplomats in the region.

Based on the analysis, there were five key themes:

- Trend of Cross-Border Terrorism.
- National Security Strategy of Pakistan affected.
- Strategic Adaptation and Border Security.
- Counterterrorism Effectiveness and Intelligence Coordination.
- Holistic Security Strategies and Cooperation in the Region.

These results bring valuable information into the changing relationship between terrorism and national security in the contemporary security context in Pakistan.

### **Changes and development of cross-border terrorism.**

The discussion shows that cross-border terrorism has taken a new form in the last 20 years. Previous terrorist groups were mainly dependent on the centralized type of command and their localized bases of operations. Contemporary militant groups, however, are using more often decentralized organizational patterns that integrate flexibility and greater endurance in operations (Cronin, 2009).

The results indicate that technological innovation has contributed immensely to changing the way terrorists do their activities. Encrypted communication methods, social media platforms, online propaganda, and transnational funding mechanisms are becoming a dominant method that militant groups use to coordinate their activities and find recruits (Conway, 2020). These technological advances have broadened the activities of the terrorist organizations and have complicated the anti-terrorism operations.

Moreover, a fragile situation in the region is known to keep cross-border terrorism alive. Security evaluations show that the progress of affairs in the circumstances of Afghanistan has tremendously impacted militant operations in the overall scope of South Asia (International Crisis Group, 2023). Instability in political matters and insecurity issues in other countries in the region offer a chance to the extremist groups to restructure and increase their activities.

**Table 1: Major Characteristics of Contemporary Cross-Border Terrorism**

Characteristics	Security Implications
Decentralized structures	Greater operational flexibility
Cross-border mobility	Increased infiltration risks
Digital communication	Enhanced coordination capabilities
International financing	Sustained operational support
Ideological recruitment	Expanded extremist influence

The results suggest that cross-border terrorism is evolving to be as sophisticated and dynamic in nature, and security responses need to be responsive to them.

### **Impact on Pakistan’s National Security Strategy**

The second key discovery reveals that the cross-border terrorism is now a key force that determines the national security approach in Pakistan. The existing security policy documents have always outlined terrorism as one of the greatest threats in terms of sovereignty, political stability, economic development, and social cohesion (National Security Division, 2022).

Based on the analysis, it is evident that terrorism has impacted a number of aspects of the Pakistani security system that includes military planning, reforms of the intelligence system, border management policies, diplomatic efforts, and laws. The National Security Policy (2022) shows that the way of such a limited understanding of military security as the one based on the concept of national security has changed to include such components as economic security, human security and technological resilience.

**Table 2: Impact of Cross-Border Terrorism on National Security Strategy**

Security Dimension	Strategic Response
Military Security	Counterterrorism operations
Border Security	Border fencing and surveillance
Intelligence	Institutional integration and coordination
Diplomacy	Regional engagement and cooperation
Legal Framework	Counterterrorism legislation
Cyber Security	Digital monitoring and cyber defenses

### **Cyber Security, Digital surveillance and online protection.**

The revelations go a long way in confirming the thesis of the view that terrorism has emerged as a key factor in the shaping of the strategic policy in Pakistan. This also corroborates Hypothesis 1, which argued that the National security strategy and policymaking of Pakistan are impacted greatly by cross-border terrorism.

### **Border security and strategic adaptation.**

The third significant result is a growing significance of border security in the national security of Pakistan. It is because the Afghanistan-Pakistan border was one of the most strategically sensitive

regions since its geographical area is complex and its historical course of movement and militant infiltration risks were typically high (Johnson & Cooke, 2021).

In a bid to resolve these issues, some comprehensive border management programs have been rolled out in Pakistan, which seeks to room up territories, as well as decreasing security gaps. Such measures consist of border fencing, surveillance systems, biometric authentication systems and more extensive use of security officers.

**Table 3: Border Security Measures and Strategic Objectives**

<b>Border Security Measure</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>
Border fencing	Prevent illegal crossings
Surveillance technologies	Detect infiltration attempts
Biometric verification	Strengthen identity management
Military deployment	Enhance deterrence and response
Border monitoring systems	Improve situational awareness

The results indicate that the initiatives have helped minimize illegal border crossing and empower the control of a state over sensitive border area. Yet, the discussion also states that the management of the border is the area that cannot eradicate terrorism solely as militant groups still use the instability of the region along with the transnational networks.

#### **Effectiveness of Intelligence Coordination and Counterterrorism.**

The results demonstrate the essence of intelligence coordination as an important aspect of modern counterterrorism. Terrorist groupings start functioning in their covert and decentralized frameworks which implies that gathering of intelligence and information sharing is critical in the identification of dangers and attacks prevention (Abbas, 2015).

As the analysis reveals, Pakistan has spent a lot of money on modernizing intelligence, co-operation among agencies and thread sharing. Increased levels of intelligence have enhanced the capacity of the security institutions to observe extremist activities, disruption of terrorist networks, as well as carrying preventive operations.

**Table 4: Role of Intelligence Coordination in Counterterrorism**

<b>Intelligence Function</b>	<b>Strategic Benefit</b>
Threat identification	Prevention of attacks
Information sharing	Enhanced institutional coordination
Digital monitoring	Detection of extremist activities
Risk assessment	Improved preparedness
Strategic analysis	Informed policymaking

The results suggest that intelligence-based operations tend to be more successful than pure reactive ones since they allow security services to prevent threats, which cause attacks in advance. These results confirm Hypothesis 2 where good coordination of intelligence plays a beneficial role in mitigating transnational terrorism and enhancing internal security of a nation.

#### **Strategic Security and Cooperation in the region.**

The third important observation is that military actions will not be effective enough to provide long-term security. Although security actions have been effective to undermine terrorist groups and

destroy militant networks, they have failed to fully stem out the root causes that promote extremism and radicalization (Newman, 2016).

The assessment has identified that sustainable security must be a holistic approach incorporating military, political, economic, educational, social responses. Some of the studies underscore that lack of employment, issues of governance, social marginalization, and political fluctuation can provide opportunities to recruit extremists (Khan, 2021).

**Table 5: Components of a Comprehensive Security Framework**

<b>Security Component</b>	<b>Strategic Contribution</b>
Military Security	Immediate threat reduction
Intelligence Security	Prevention and disruption
Economic Development	Reduction of structural grievances
Education	Counter-radicalization
Community Engagement	Social resilience
Regional Cooperation	Collective security enhancement

## **Discussion**

The results are in high support of the assumptions of the Realism Theory which gives an argument that the states are security-driven by survival in reaction to external sources (Waltz, 1979). The attempts of Pakistan to consolidate military forces, enhance border controls, update activities in intelligence services, and increase the level of strategic preparedness indicate the expectations of realists on how states should behave when they find themselves in an environment of insecurity.

The findings also indicate that cross-border terrorism has evolved to cease being a law-enforcement to a multifaceted national security problem with several aspects of governance and policymaking. This observation aligns with the past studies that highlight strategic consequences that transnational terrorism poses on the state security (Fair, 2014; Tellis, 2022).

Furthermore, this is a limitation of military-only methods of counterterrorism as it is pointed out in the study. As though security operations continue to be necessary in disrupting terrorist operations, long term sustainability of security entails wider interventions of socio-economic susceptibilities, governance issues, and radicalization of the ideologies. These suggestions echo the present-day security research studies that support multifaceted approaches toward the national security (Newman, 2016).

On the whole, the discussion shows that cross-border terrorism still has an ultimate effect on the national strategy of national security in Pakistan and that it is a significant driver of the formation of policy, adaption of institutional behavior and engagement with the security of the region.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The problem of cross-border terrorism continues to be one of the biggest security problems facing Pakistan in the new regional security context. The paper investigated the correlation between cross-border terrorism and national security agenda of Pakistan by examining the changing circle of terrorist threats, responsiveness of the state actions, and adjustable institution. The study, in a qualitative review of the available academic literature, government policy reports, and reports of international security, investigated how terrorism affects national security-making policy and strategic plans.

The results show that transnational terrorism has become a multi-faceted border phenomenon with decentralized organizational arrangements, transnational movement, digital communication systems, recruiting of ideas and international funding systems. These advances have greatly augmented the scope of terrorist groups and made it hard to counter-terrorism, as customarily done before. This has resulted in security institutions in Pakistan being forced to evolve with the dynamics of threats.

The paper also illustrates that cross border terrorism has emerged to be a key shaper of the national security strategy in Pakistan. Terrorist threats have affected the military preparations, reforms in intelligence, measures to manage borders, legislation, and even the diplomatic interactions. This change is reflected in the National Security Policy of Pakistan (20222026), which includes an understanding of terrorism as a multidimensional problem, which not only impacts the security of the state but also economic stability, social unity, and national growth.

The other noteworthy piece of information is the fact that border security and intelligence coordination are becoming increasingly significant in the counterterrorism system of Pakistan. Border management programs such as fencing, biometric systems, surveillance systems as well as increased the use of security personnel to tighten controls by the state on vulnerable border points. Likewise, there is the intelligence-led operations and inter- agency coordination which have enabled the security institutions to detect and prevent terrorist activities and attacks even before they have to happen.

Nonetheless, the paper also points to the shortcomings of the approaches based solely on military reactions. Although security operations have greatly undermined the terrorist structures and minimized militant operational strength, it has failed to completely eradicate structural and ideological pillars which contributes to militancy. Sustainable security thus needs a more comprehensive strategy ensuring it balances military capacities with socio-economic growth, changes to educational system, good governance and regional integration.

Theoretically, the results are consistent with the assumptions of the Realism Theory, according to which, a crucial goal of the policymaking is state survival, sovereignty, and security. The checking and upgrading of military strength, intelligence, and border protection mechanisms in Pakistan are the manifestations of realist expectations about the reactions of the states to the external threats. It can thus be concluded that the cross-border terrorism still holds a critical position in the national security strategy of Pakistan and will be a critical question in the area of national security in the foreseeable future.

## **Policy Recommendations**

In accordance with the results of the study, the following policy proposals can be made:

### **Enhancing the Border Management Systems.**

Pakistan must keep improving on border security with new technologies of surveillance and biometric checks and combined border management processes. Having constant patrols in areas near the borders will minimize the chances of terrorist entry and the possibility of foreigners entering illegally.

### **Enhancing Intelligence Coordination**

More emphasis should be placed on coordination of operations within the intelligence agencies to enhance information sharing, threat analysis, and effectiveness of operations. Development of

cohesive intelligence platforms will enhance early warnings and enable personnel to respond in a timely manner to new dangers.

### **Expanding Technological Capabilities**

Considering that terrorist groups are becoming increasingly dependent on digital technologies, Pakistan needs to invest in the cyber security infrastructure, artificial intelligence-driven surveillance measure, and digital intelligence and counter-propaganda tools to deal with the perceived threat amid the cyberspace.

### **Promoting Regional Cooperation**

Unilateral cross-border actions alone are insufficient to deal with cross-border terrorism. In order to enhance the sharing of intelligence, joint counterterrorism effort and integrated border management, Pakistan needs to boost the level of diplomatic interaction and security co-operation between countries as well as within the region.

### **Response to the Root Causes of Extremism.**

Social-economic and developmental steps that will help reduce the factors contributing to the facilitation of radicalization should be reflected in counterterrorist strategies. Long term resilience and stability can be achieved through investment in education, job creation, community building, and integrating into the mainstream society.

### **Strengthening Counter-Radicalization Programs**

The governmental bodies ought to increase counter-radicalization programs through enhancement of the moderate religious speech, community-outreach programs, and reinforcement campaigns intended to combat the propaganda of extremist movements and exclusion by militias.

### **Improving Institutional Capacity**

Security institutions should be given continuous training, modernization and allocating of resources to enable them to stand at par with the changes in terrorist threats. The reforms within institutions should be put in terms of being adaptable, coordinated, and technologically innovative.

### **Implementing Human Security in the National Security Policy.**

The future security policy must strike the right mix between human security and conventional military policy. Poverty, inequality, political marginalization, and governance problems are some of the issues that need to be addressed to supplement traditional counterterrorism and help in ensuring long-term peace and stability.

### **Weaknesses of the Research.**

The study has various limitations, despite its contributions.

To begin with, the study is based entirely on secondary data retrieved in academic literature, policy documents and security reports. Lack of primary information, like interviews with the policymakers, security experts or the intelligence officials, restricts the possibility of capturing the firsthand views on the security decision-making.

Second, this research embraces qualitative research design and there was no quantitative statistical analysis. The research can be carried out in the future using mixed-method research methods to

present more detailed empirical findings on the correlation between terrorism and national security outcomes.

Third, due to the dynamism of terrorism and the dynamics of security in the region, some of the findings might need periodical revision as some events were revealed. The situation of South Asian security remains to change, especially concerning the changes in Afghanistan and geopolitical rivalry among the participants.

Fourth, the paper gives more attention to the Pakistani national security policy, and lacks a comparative analysis with other nations that have dealt with the same cross-border terrorism issues. Comparative research would help in offering more information on best practices and alternative policy strategies.

Lastly, although the research looks into key aspects of terrorism and national security, it fails to address all areas of new security threats, including artificially intelligent-driven terrorism, cryptocurrency financing, and hybrid warfare. The areas offer some significant research opportunities in the future.

### **Future Research Directions**

Further research is necessary to assess the effects of new technologies on the strategies of counterterrorist activities and response to terrorist attacks, especially the aspects of artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, and online radicalization. The analysis of national security approaches in South Asia and conducting comparative analysis with the approaches in other countries can also be of great value in regards to counterterrorism in the region. Moreover, studies including primary data of policy makers, security players and regional scholars might contribute to improved knowledge on the practical issues related to the fight against cross border terrorism.

To sum up, the cross-border terrorism issue can be dealt with through a flexible and multi-dimensional approach to national security, which involves military readiness, effectiveness of intelligence, border control, innovative technologies, socio-economic growth, and regional integration. This integrated method will play a crucial role in ensuring long-term security, stability, and resiliency of Pakistan in a more complex security environment.

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