



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

Assessing the Implications of TTP Regional Alliances on the Internal Security of Pakistan

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Abstract

Cooperation with regional terror groups, mainly Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), has assisted the recent re-emergence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). This study examines the impact of collaboration between AQ, ISKP, and TTP on Pakistan's internal security. Drawing on primary and secondary data, the paper argues that TTP, in cooperation with AQ, receives financial and logistical support, thereby enhancing its strength and capability to sustain operations over an extended period. Similarly, cooperation with ISKP connects TTP to a global network of terror, where multiple sources of funding, practical training, and supply channels from across borders strengthen TTP's capabilities. This cooperation increases the magnitude and scope of terrorist networks, internationalizing home terrorism and making counter-terrorism strategies challenging for Pakistan. It also enhances coordination among several terrorist factions, enabling multiple threats simultaneously and reviving militancy even in pacified regions of Pakistan. This study highlights the need to develop an adaptive counterterrorism strategy to address both domestic insurgencies by local terrorist groups and their transnational partners. This study makes a valuable contribution to the scholarship on the trajectory of cooperation between terrorist networks and their implications for Pakistan's internal security.

Keywords: Terrorist alliances, TTP, AQ, ISKP, security, Pakistan

Introduction

After the Taliban regained control in Afghanistan in August 2021, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has made a worrying comeback, significantly affecting Pakistan's internal security. Between 2022 and 2023, the group intensified its attacks, reflecting its enhanced capabilities and increasing influence. The Afghan Taliban's decision to shelter TTP militants has given the group a boost, enabling them to regroup and launch cross-border strikes from Afghan soil. This partnership highlights the ongoing ties between the Afghan Taliban and TTP, which have played a crucial role in the group's resurgence.

Within the volatile geopolitical context of South Asia, cooperation between terrorist actors is characterized by factors that extend beyond territorial, ideological, and tactical goals. The revival of TTP is not only the re-emergence of a militant organization but also the regrouping of a wider regional outfit that pursues jihad (Sayed & Hamming, 2023). The changing collaboration of



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

transnational terrorist organizations, especially TTP's partnership with Al-Qaeda (AQ) and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), is indicative of a strategic reordering of the militant landscape. This resurgence of TTP is put down to several factors, including the sanctuary and logistical assistance offered by regional terror networks (Gul, 2024). This has further given TTP a stronger position with a spike in militant violence all over Pakistan, particularly in conflict-prone areas (Khan & Ahmad, 2025). The organization's strategy is focused on urban contexts, where the potential impact is maximized (Tahir & Jadoon, 2025). Simultaneously, cross-border sanctuaries and ideological connections have transnationalized the threat and complicated Pakistan's internal security.

Terrorist alliances also dramatically increase the strength and deadliness of the violent non-state actors. Horowitz & Potter (2014) argued that terrorist groups enter a strategic network structure characterized by a core-periphery network, in which less powerful peripheral organizations pair with more powerful core organizations to enhance the means and resources of their attacks. Byman (2003) explained that terrorist networks unite to expand their geographic reach and association, acquire local expertise, access new methods of operation, and increase their legitimacy. Asal et al. (2016) emphasize that this kind of alliance exists at rhetorical, material, and operational levels and is typically based on rational choice dynamics, in which both sides estimate the mutual benefits. A case in point is the alliance between the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which was established to overcome restrictions within its own country and acquire training.

According to Brian J. Phillips (2014), alliances are crucial in authoritarian or high-risk settings, where collaborative networks are protective and operationally resilient. For example, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) avoided creating autonomous networks within Indian urban hubs by forging alliances with existing organizations, effectively reducing resource requirements while simultaneously increasing the scale of its operations (Tankel, 2009). Similarly, TTP's relationship with AQ and ISKP is not only driven by ideological consistency but also by strategic necessities that revolve around survival, operational sustainability, and territorial interests.

Although ideological similarities have always existed between TTP and transnational jihadist networks, its evolving cooperation with AQ and ISKP has become more strategic in nature. Such cooperation has significantly enhanced TTP's operational capabilities, ideological legitimacy, and geographic reach, extending beyond the border regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Tribal Districts (TDs) to larger cities. This has created a complex and multi-layered threat situation in Pakistan, where militant cooperation at both the national and territorial levels undermine state authority, increases regional instability, and challenges approaches to counterterrorism. Against this backdrop, the primary focus of this paper is to assess the impact of TTP's regional alliances with AQ and ISKP on Pakistan's internal security.

Bacon (2018) argues that the alliances formed by terrorist groups represent strategic relationships through which terrorist groups collaborate to enhance their survivability, legitimacy, and operational capabilities. They are usually formed based on shared ideologies, common enemies, or out of expediency. Moghadam (2017) claimed that terrorist groups pursue four types of



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

cooperation and take different forms in terms of depth, duration, and ideology. The highest level of alliance is a merger, where groups are united on long-term, ideologically based commitments in their ideological, operational, and logistical realms. Strategic alliances also indicate a close relationship based on the commonality of ideological directions; they differ from mergers, though, as the cooperating groups maintain separate command and control systems. Tactical alliances are usually grounded on shared interests instead of ideological compatibility, and thus more malleable yet less lasting and durable. Moreover, finally, there is the weakest and most constrained form of cooperation, transactional cooperation, where fully autonomous groups are only involved in short-term, interest-based exchange, and nothing more. An example is the formal merger of Egyptian Islamic Jihad with AQ in 2001, where there was complete organizational integration. On the contrary, the cooperation between AQ and its affiliates, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), represents a strategic collaboration in which the same ideological interests are pursued. Nevertheless, functional autonomy is practiced (Moghadam, 2017).

Various structural and relational variables, including the size of the group, religious motivation, and trust, shape the alliance between terrorist groups. According to Asal et al. (2016) and Phillips (2014, 2019), larger groups become more attractive due to their excess resources, which enable them to contribute and support alliances more effectively. Religious motivation is also significant, because terrorist coalitions tend to be supported by shared theologically based systems. Rapoport (1983) emphasizes that religiously based groups possess their own worldviews and moral justifications, and therefore, they are more likely to cooperate with organizations of the same kind. This can be seen in the example of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and AQ alliance, where the leader Droukhal openly referred to religious legitimacy as the primary factor of cooperation (Bacon, 2014). Another requirement for making alliances stable is trust. Parkhe (1998) emphasizes that trust, defined as confidence in a partner's trustworthiness, promotes ideological matching and cooperation in the long term.

Furthermore, terrorist organizations often form alliances when they perceive a common threat. Ely Karmon (2005) notes that coalitions of terrorist organizations frequently emerge when groups face similar threats, whether internal or external, and particularly from the international system, including world powers and international institutions. This is manifested in the fact that Bin Laden constantly urges Sunni militant organizations to join AQ in fighting the so-called Crusader-Zionist alliance (Bacon, 2014). According to Crenshaw (1987), terrorist alliances also play an instrumental role in meeting organizational requirements, such as manpower, logistics, and training. Andreas Daehli (2013) presents the example of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Special Operations Group (PFLP-SOG), which offered shelter, training, and operational assistance to affiliated groups.

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan – Resurgence and Fortification

The TTP is a coalition of different militants that came into existence in 2007 in the tribal lands of Pakistan after the state had acted militarily against the Lal Masjid in Islamabad, where numerous local militants had advanced mobilization against the state (Abbas, 2014). It was under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

that the outfit became most influential in South and North Waziristan and waged constant insurgency against the Pakistani state and the security apparatus. The local networks and ideology helped the group to fill the gaps in the governance of the TDs and establish themselves in the area (Akhtar & Ahmad, 2023). Pakistan, in turn, initiated a series of military operations (including Rah-e-Nijat in 2009 in South Waziristan and Zarb-e-Azb in 2014 in North Waziristan), which greatly hit TTP's territorial control and logistics (Rana & Din, 2014). Coupled with the death of some major leaders like Baitullah and Hakimullah Mehsud through U.S. drone attacks, these operations created a phase of division and organizational chaos. TTP also lost its centralized command structure due to factionalism, including the breakaway of Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and an increase in behind-the-scenes rivalries over the organization of a TTP successor (Akhtar & Ahmad, 2023).

The rebirth of TTP after 2020 has been substantial due to the combination of circumstances that led to mass re-consolidation, as well as to a certain extent, external factors. The new geopolitical alignment in Afghanistan was welcomed by the organization, particularly the emergence of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from the country, which provided transnational and cross-border safe zones and considerable freedom of operation (Herbert & Idris, 2024). TTP splinter groups began to reunite under the leadership of Noor Wali Mehsud, who changed the strategic direction to not only rebuild their strength but also to minimize civilian deaths, aiming to regain the trust of the population. Cross-border support and a porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan enabled the group, which regained safe havens in Afghanistan, to initiate new attacks on KP and TDs (Khan & Ahmad, 2025).

The revival of the group highlights the resilience of the Jihadist movements, which often undergo a strategic shift following decline, rather than permanent collapse. Along with the regional factors, its rise is also supported by the fact that the group has close ties with its Jihadist-related counterparts, such as AQ and ISKP. Such collaborations have enhanced its operational ability, given its ideological legitimacy, and facilitated access to logistics and financial resources, thus making the TTP a more sustainable and formidable element in the new South Asian militancy paradigm.

Current scholarships overlook TTP, AQ, and ISKP in isolation, failing to capture the strategic-level web of collaboration that binds them together. Such a siloed perspective overlooks how growing coalitions are fostering a force multiplier, one that changes the internal security environment in Pakistan. The limited literature focuses on transnational connections to increase the reach, resilience, and lethality of TTP. Therefore, this paper assesses the impacts of TTP's alliances with AQ and ISKP on Pakistan's internal security.

TTP Relationship with AQ and ISKP

TTP and AQ share a relationship based on their Jihadist mindset and history of cross-border operational collaboration (Syed, 2024). With the invasion of the U.S. in Afghanistan in 2001, AQ operatives retreated to the tribal regions of Pakistan, associating even closer with the Pakistani militant groups (Riedel, 2012). AQ played a prominent role in establishing the TTP in 2007, providing it with strategic advice, training, and logistical support, particularly in the North and South Waziristan regions (Sayed & Hamming, 2023). These two have also



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

conducted joint tactical operations and mass training exchanges (Roggio, 2025). AQ is presently offering IED training and media assistance to TTP cadres (Gul, 2024). This is attributed to the fact that the IEA returned to power in 2021, providing both groups with a relatively free environment in which to operate in Afghanistan (Yousaf, 2025).

TTP-AQ logistically depends on shared safe havens, money pipelines, and kinship smuggling routes along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border (Gul, 2024). The global network of AQ works to make assets and propaganda more broadly accessible to TTP; in turn, TTP grants AQ greater operational depth and access to territorial space (Khan, 2025). While interests can sometimes diverge between global jihad and Pakistan-focal militant resistance, AQ-TTP is in deep and operational collaboration (Pakistan Today, 2025). The close connections between AQ and the TTP further intensified when the Pakistani military was engaged in operation campaigns. The AQ high-profile leaders were in tribal regions where TTP offered them safe havens. Foreign Islamist terrorist organizations, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and the Islamic Jihad Group (IJU), were also sheltered by TTP in the regions they controlled. The TTP also conspired with many Punjabi Islamist terrorist organizations. TTP has never been a full-fledged organization.

The collaboration between TTP and the AQ is not a new phenomenon. After 9/11, the two terrorist groups combined their force and became united against their shared enemy, which was Pakistan, the Karzai government, the Ashraf Ghani government, and NATO forces (Bukhari & Khattak, 2024). TTP helped AQ perpetrate a lot of high-level attacks on the US forces in Afghanistan. AQ, in collusion with TTP, executed a suicide bombing by carrying out the deadliest attack on the CIA forward operating base Chapman in Khost in 2009. In this case, a triple agent of the CIA blew himself up, killing several CIA operatives (Anwar, 2023). TTP has aligned more closely with AQ, allowing them to expand their reach in the region and beyond. Kunar is the base of many terrorist groups, such as TTP, and transnational terrorist groups use training centers to hone their guerrilla warfare techniques (Fair & Watson, 2015). Apart from AQ, TTP logically cooperates with ISKP.

After the fall of Mosul to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and the proclamation of the Islamic Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the region experienced the surfacing of ISKP in 2014. Several Islamist terrorist groups and other terrorist leaders who had formerly collaborated with AQ linked up with ISKP. Other TTP militants also joined ISKP. In fact, three Islamist Pakistani-origin terrorist groups, namely Tehreek-e-Khilafat Pakistan, Jundullah, and TTP (Shahidullah Faction), had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi (Zahid, 2017). ISKP also recruited jihadi leaders of regional Islamist militant groups who operated in the bordering areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, who defected similarly. Operating in Afghanistan and formerly AQ-affiliated, IMU also became part of the IS camp and swore allegiance to Baghdadi (Sharipzhan, 2015). Further, the Chechen and Uighur Islamists also came together with the ISIS (Flood, 2015).

One of the strongest TTP groups was its Orakzai chapter, which later joined ISKP under the directives of Hafiz Said Khan, an affiliate of the TTP influenced by Salafist ideologues Shaykh Maqbul Orakzai and Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, who were in the Orakzai region and on the Afghan border. When it



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

fell to ISKP, almost all the other TTP groups had lost their foothold in Bajaur, Mohmand, South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Kurram, and most of Khyber. The Salafists in the TTP ranks have and continue to have far more influence (Zahid, 2023). One of the groups centered in the south-eastern provinces (Kunar, Paktika, Paktia, Logar, Khost, and Nangarhar) was led by Shaikh Aslam Farooqi, who was once a member of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) (Zahid, 2019). He had managed to develop a liaison with IEA. The other group was led by Mauvia Uzbeki, an Uzbek militant (and former IMU member) operating in the northern regions of Afghanistan (Jamestown Foundation, 2018).

ISKP also develops and maintains connections with local jihadi terrorist groups like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) in Balochistan under Yousaf Mansour Khurasani. Mansoor has established working connections with the ISKP to target the Shia-Hazara community in the provincial capital of Quetta and beyond (Zahid, 2023). Such collaboration reveals the ISKP's intentions to blend or penetrate indigenous Pakistani jihadist terrorist organizations and establish working relations and alliances on an ad hoc basis. The LeJ case shows that the group does not adhere to the ISKP Salafi ideology, but it shares a vicious anti-Shia hostility with ISKP. Antagonism against the Sufi and Shia branches of Islam also unites ISKP and LeJ, which influences collaboration and deepening relations. ISKP has been able to carry out several major terrorist attacks in Balochistan province, killing hundreds of individuals. The bloodiest and most mass casualty attack happened in July 2018 when an election rally was held in Mastung, which resulted in the death of more than 149 people, and over 300 more were injured (BBC, 2018).

Several ISKP cells had been dismantled in the Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, and Sialkot districts (Zahid, 2019). On May 15, 2019, the group Amaq media released a statement that announced the formation of the Islamic State Pakistan Province (ISPP) alongside claiming two terrorist attacks in the Pakistani province of Balochistan (Gul, 2019). Dawood Mehsud was appointed as the emir of ISPP, having previously served as a commander in the TTP. The reorganization of ISIS in South Asia can have profound effects in the region (Zahid, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The paper utilizes two theories to explain the puzzle at hand.

Firstly, rational choice theory posits that terrorist organizations are rational actors, factoring in cost-benefit analysis to maximize their strategic objectives. Therefore, it is also a strategic policy of TTP to join forces with AQ and ISKP to seek assistance in operations, refuge, and ideological justifications. However, at the same time, it represents a potential risk of ideological differences or power politics. Terrorist organizations are rational actors in the sense that they seek alliances to maximize their strategic interests (Bacon, 2018). From this perspective, the relationships that TTP had with AQ and ISKP are viewed as cost-benefit choices aimed at furthering the aims of territorial control, operational capacity, and survival.

Secondly, the theory of ideological similarity suggests that terrorist group alliances are more likely and sustainable when based on shared worldviews and doctrinal alignments. Overlapping religious frames explain the long-term TTP partnerships with other terrorist groups. According to Asal et al. (2016),



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

ideological similarity enhances the process of alliance formation, particularly in the jihadi context, where similar religious discourses or anti-Western or anti-state ideologies prevail. These theories provide insight into how TTP strategically manipulates the alliance, where necessary, and ideologically, where desirable.

Methodology

The research utilizes qualitative methods and semi-structured individual interviews as the primary data collection methods, which is substantiated by the observation method. Both methods rely on gathering and analyzing non-numerical data to gain insight, form an opinion, and draw on experience to learn more about an issue or formulate new research ideas (Bhandari, 2020). The researcher employed a non-probability sampling method (snowballing and convenience sampling technique) and carried out semi-structured interviews with 29 respondents, including academic professionals, media persons (journalists), members of law enforcement agencies, local elders (North Waziristan and South Waziristan), and a think tank. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed and interpreted it thematically, meaning identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns and themes within the data. The data was categorized, coded, and key themes were identified for analysis and to support a cogent argument. Additionally, through the analysis of secondary sources and interview-based responses, the researcher identified key themes that outline the impacts of TTP's alliances with AQ and ISKP on Pakistan's internal security.

Findings and Analysis

Implications of TTP and AQ Nexus

The ideological alliance of TTP and AQ worsens anti-state sentiments and erodes the legitimacy of the governing structure of Pakistan.

TTP, an ideological partner with AQ, takes advantage of resistance to the government to install Sharia law as the right alternative. They engage the people by exploiting their grievances and seek to reclaim Islamic states designed under Sharia teachings (Interview data)

The respondent claimed that by portraying Sharia law as the sole foundation of a just political order, TTP appeals to pre-existing grievances and those disillusioned with state institutions, thereby legitimizing its mission and agenda. Such a portrayal is not intended to facilitate mobilization and recruitment, which could lead to the state losing its legitimacy. The ideological compatibility between the TTP and AQ serves as a strategic means of destabilizing the Pakistani governance system. In the same vein, Allan et al. (2020) state that alliances increase the resilience and the capability of terrorist groups to disrupt state authority, thus nurturing anti-state sentiments. This kind of ideological positioning, consequently, has direct bearing on the security of Pakistan at the domestic front, given that it creates a framework that normalizes extremist forms of governance and systematically challenges the authority of the state.

TTP has become a lethal terror group in Pakistan with the ideological support of AQ (Interview data)

Interviewer observes that AQ ideological mentorship played a defining role in transforming the TTP into a more coherent and violent terrorist organization in Pakistan that was formerly just a loose network of militants. In



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

addition to providing an ideological backbone, this directive also offered a transnational jihadism narrative to TTP, enhancing its goals beyond the local insurgency and aligning with global extremist agendas. Similarly, Bacon (2018) emphasized that alliances enhance operational and logistical capabilities, thereby increasing lethality. This integration made TTP more legitimate in the eyes of like-minded communities, enabled it to recruit and disseminate propaganda, and empowered it to have greater operational determination. Therefore, this ideological underpinning strengthened the group's ability to defy the state, making it a more long-standing and resilient security threat. The combination of AQ and TTP skills leads to even more sophisticated and lethal attacks, thus adding further frequency and severity of terrorism in Pakistan.

The operational convergence with AQ further boosts the capability of the TTP, resulting in more advanced and lethal attacks against the Pakistani security forces and civilians (Interview data)

Interviewers note that the convergence of operational expertise between TTP and AQ also contributes to TTP's capability to carry out high-impact militant operations. Using the experience of AQ in planning, training, and implementing complex attacks, TTPs enhance their strategies and coordination and apply more lethal ways of operation not only against Pakistani security forces but also against the civil population. Similarly, Horowitz & Potter (2014) argued that networks of alliances between terrorist organizations enable the proximity and exchange of resources, intelligence, and knowledge of how to conduct operations, thereby increasing their ability to conduct more advanced and lethal operations. Such operational synergy not only escalates the extent and level of attacks but also compromises the state's ability to foresee and counter the associated threats. This type of cooperation also represents a dire threat to the national security of Pakistan, as it further increases the deadliness and randomness of terrorist mayhem and undermines the confidence of the people in the abilities of the state to protect them.

By collaborating with the AQ, TTP acquires expertise in the manufacture of bombs as well as security strategies to increase the level of operations and effectiveness during the attacks (Interview data)

Respondent also states that AQ's vast operational experience serves as a force multiplier in the militant operations of TTP. With this collaboration, TTP can access specialized training in bomb-making, advanced weapon handling, and counter-surveillance measures, which significantly enhance its capabilities in planning and executing accurate and enduring attacks. As Chuang et al. (2019) demonstrate, collaborative groups often undergo a series of attacks, which enhances their durability. Such an exchange of technical skills, besides enhancing the operational efficiency of TTP, also enhances its ability to evade detection and sustain its violent campaigns. It substantially affects the internal security situation in Pakistan because, with this sort of increased capacity, the group executes more regular, lethal, and increasingly advanced attacks that overburden the security forces, disrupting the safety of people and leading to an atmosphere of doubt and insecurity.

AQ assistance helps TTP to endure a long-term insurgency, which makes it hard to eradicate militancy in states.

In alliance with AQ, TTP not only gets access to much-needed resources, but it also becomes more resilient and sustainable as an insurgent group



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

operating against the Pakistani state (Interview data)

Phillips (2014) demonstrates that terrorist organizations with collaborative relationships have a significantly higher chance of survival over time, as they receive substantial resources and organizational support that helps sustain the organization for an extended period. The respondent notes the relevance of TTP and its affiliation with AQ, which is more than just ideological compatibility. It offers means of obtaining necessary material resources, such as currency, logistical support, sanctuaries, and recruiting bases. This alliance increases its endurance and durability, thus allowing TTP to undertake a prolonged campaign against the Pakistani state. The effects it has on the internal security of Pakistan are dire as it continues to fuel insecurity, overstretch the security apparatus over prolonged periods, and destabilize the efforts of the state to bring lasting peace in war-torn areas.

The presence of AQ's international logistical network enhances access of TTP to sophisticated weapons and IEDs, thus raising the threat of domestic insurgencies.

AQ allows TTP to get access to weapons, illicit supply routes, and explosives through its global network. This coalition augments the TTP's capacities with advanced weaponry and IEDs, making it more effective in insurgency endeavors in Pakistan (Interview data)

One of the respondents points out that TTP has access to a large transnational supply chain to obtain armaments and explosives because of its alliance with AQ. TTPs use AQ networks all over the globe to access weapons caches, utilize illegal means of transport, and use reputable supply channels. Relatedly, as Bacon (2018) asserted, through its international network, AQ has provided its affiliates, including AQAP, with weapons, bomb manufacturing know-how, and training, enabling them to intensify insurgent violence into increasingly sophisticated attacks. This access increases the capability of the TTP arsenal by providing it with advanced firearms, high-quality explosives, and IEDs, which increases the deadliness and precision of its activities. The impacts on the internal security of Pakistan are high, considering that the inflow of sophisticated weaponry enhances the rate, magnitude, and effects of militant assaults. It compromises the performance of state security interventions and enhances the danger to both the citizenry and the security agencies.

Implications of TTP and ISKP Nexus

Joint attacks on the Pakistani military by TTP and ISKP represent a more uniform insurgent threat in an effort that overwhelms security elements on various fronts.

TTP has collaborative ties with any terrorist organizations (ISKP) that have a common agenda of attacking the Pakistani military (Interview data)

Another respondent stated that cooperation between TTP and ISKP is a matter of practical concerns, not of ideological conformity. Focusing on a standard set of targets, i.e., attacking the Pakistani military, the TTP has taken a more flexible approach to building alliances, allowing it to share resources, intelligence, and coordinate attacks despite ideological differences. Elli Karmon (2005) argued that terrorist organizations collaborate when they perceive a common enemy and form coalitions. This symbiotic partnership enhances the reach and tactical efficiency of TTP, generating synergy that renders militant



Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

efforts more effective and long-term. These partnerships directly undermine Pakistan's internal security by increasing threat vectors, saturating the capability of countering terrorist organizations, and leading toward an increasingly networked militant environment that becomes more difficult to disrupt by the state.

ISKP propaganda network assists TTP to radicalize and recruit online, especially the youth.

The partnership with the powerful propaganda machine of ISKP allows TTP to use its media and recruiting capabilities to their full potential (Interview data)

One other respondent noted that the alliance of TTP with ISKP gives it access to a well-developed system of propaganda that reaches an audience well beyond the borders of Pakistan. ISKP's sophisticated propaganda resources, well-established online presence, and extensive social media coverage enable TTP to spread its message, demonstrating ideological legitimacy and attracting prospective recruits and sympathizers worldwide. According to Milton (2016), in alliances, organizations with effective propaganda mechanisms offer partners access to their media networks, and through their access, recruitment and outreach operations are enhanced. This increased outreach not only enhances recruitment capability but also increases the capacity of TTP to radicalize individuals without geographical limitations. The implications for the internal security of Pakistan are severe, with fresh recruits, both internal and external, boosting the workforce of TTP, propagating radicalization and extremist beliefs, and maintaining the forward force of the group, increasing the complexity of deradicalization and counterterrorism procedures and efforts of Pakistan.

Access by TTP to ISKP-associated global networks adds transnational sources of funding and operational depth, transforming internal militancy into a regionally connected threat.

Other terrorist groups and networks across the world have links with ISKP. With the alignment to ISKP, TTP acquires some global terrorist links, financial revenue, as well as resources, which helps them spread their reach not only in Pakistan but also internationally (Interview data)

Some respondents claimed that the affiliation of TTP with ISKP provides access to an extensive global network of terrorist organizations, sources of funding, and logistical capabilities. With its established international ties, TTP obtains financial provision, access to operation-based resources, and develops partnerships with other militant groups in the region. According to Phillips (2014), terrorist organizations that collaborate with other groups have more potential to survive longer than those that operate independently because alliances secure key resources, safe havens, and strategic advantages needed to sustain insurgent wars over the long term. The transnational connection not only boosts the TTP's power and activity scope but also increases its ability to persist in long-lasting insurgent conflict in and outside Pakistan. This has a severe impact on Pakistan's domestic security in several ways. Expanded access allows militant action to be more coordinated and well-financed, complicating counterterrorism efforts, and it puts the security issues faced by Pakistan within the larger context of a global jihadist movement, which is much more difficult to counter.



Conclusion

The recent resurgence of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and close partnership with Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have redefined the domestic security outlook in Pakistan. Such alliances have strengthened the operational capabilities of TTP, provided it with improved access to financial resources, and renewed its recruitment capabilities within the common ideological framework. The traditional association between TTP and AQ remains a significant factor in operations. However, links with ISKP represent a shift in patterns of alliances that marks a shift in the levels of threat to Pakistan's counterterrorism operations.

Furthermore, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)'s presence has further complicated the internal security situation, aggravating the security threats for Pakistan in the Pak-Afghan borderlands. Although ISKP mainly competes with the Afghan Taliban for power, the group's operations have spread into Pakistan, particularly in areas like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their terrorist activities have worsened the security situation, with ISKP and TTP sometimes joining forces in coordinated attacks. This situation illustrates the fluid nature of militant alliances in the region. The Afghan Taliban's reluctance to take on ISKP directly—due to its own internal struggles and ideological differences—has enabled both TTP and ISKP to take advantage of the security chasms, creating a long-term threat to Pakistan's stability and also to the region.

The coordination between these groups has increased the challenges in terms of escalating insecurity by enabling transnational militancy and fostering tactical cooperation among militant actors, as well as pushing the agenda of extremist discourses. That translates into a threat environment that is even more complex and less vulnerable to traditional state responses. Integration of the local insurgent goals with the global jihadi agendas conveniently escalates the scale and frequency of terrorist operations in Pakistan. This requires the security agencies to eliminate not only the imminent threats but also the ideologies behind them that fuel such alliances.

It requires a multi-layered and multi-dimensional policy response to this challenge. Pakistan needs to combine more effective intelligence sharing, specialized counter-financing efforts, and regionally based counterterrorism action plans with an effective counter-ideology offensive to undermine the appeal of extremist narratives. Unless a long-term, adaptive, and combined effort is mounted, the TTP partnership with the AQ and ISKP will continue the cycles of insurgency, destabilize the governance of the potentially vulnerable regions in the country, and continue to plague the security situation throughout the country.

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Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

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Vol. 3 No. 9 (September) (2025)

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