

Assessing Pakistan's National Security Framework: A SWOT Analysis of NISP 2014, 2018, and NSP 2022

Minahil Khurshid and Rubina Waseem *

Abstract

This paper critically assesses the evolution of Pakistan's national and internal security policies through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014, NISP 2018, and NSP 2022. Using SWOT as a strategic evaluation tool, the study examines the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of these policies. The first comprehensive internal security framework, NISP 2014 focused on intelligence cooperation and counter-terrorism. However, its effectiveness was limited due to weak institutional implementation. NISP 2018 broadened the scope of de-radicalisation, socioeconomic reforms and civil society engagement but its success was undermined by a lack of federal-provincial coordination. The NSP 2022 marked a paradigm shift by incorporating both the human and economic security in addition to the traditional defence issues. Despite this broader approach limitation in resources and policy continuity hindered its effectiveness. The analysis shows that all of the policies were introduced with some good innovations, but the same weaknesses were prevalent in all, and they included bureaucratic inertia, the political polarization, and the financial constraints. There are opportunities, though, in advancing geo-economic integration, building cyber resilience and using civil society. The results show that the security architecture of Pakistan requires stronger implementation capacity, sustained inter-governmental cooperation, and a balanced approach between the traditional and human security issues.

Keywords: National Security Policy, Counter-terrorism, Pakistan, National Security Policy (NSP), National Internal Security Policy (NISP), Internal Security, SWOT, Geo economics, Civil Society.

*Minahil Khurshid is a MS Scholar at the Center for International Peace & Stability (CIPS), National University of Science & Technology (NUST) Islamabad. She can be reached at manaahilkhurshed16@gmail.com.

Rubina Waseem has earned her PhD in Strategic and Nuclear Studies. She is an Associate Professor at the Centre for International Peace & Stability (CIPS), National University of Science & Technology (NUST) Islamabad. She can be reached at rubiwaseem@ymail.com & rubina.waseem@cips.nust.edu.pk.

Introduction

National security refers to the protection of a nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity and the ideals of a nation against external and internal threats. National security is a broad concept that deals not only with terrorism but also with financial instability, environmental hazards, war, and social unrest. Arnold Wolfers characterized national security not only as an absence of physical threats, but also as the assurance that such threats will not emerge. This perspective highlights the complex and multidimensional nature of national security, which includes both its objective and subjective nature. These debates are not abstract in Pakistan.

The security situation in the country has been greatly affected by terrorism, violent extremism, socioeconomic inequality and changing regional dynamics¹. The post-9/11 period and the emergence of violent extremism within Pakistan forced the state to reconsider its priorities to such an extent that it had to introduce formal national and internal security structures capable of addressing both the immediate terrorist threats and the long-term causes of instability.

In this context, there are three policy frameworks that Pakistan has implemented in the past decade, namely the NISP framework 2014, the NISP 2018, and the NSP 2022-2026. Each of them is a distinct step in changing security policy of the state. The NISP 2014, the first comprehensive internal security document in Pakistan, focused on counter-terrorism, madrassa control, and intelligence coordination and had difficulty with implementation. The NISP 2018 changed the emphasis to preventive policies like socio economic reforms, de-radicalisation, and greater involvement of civil society but was even undermined even by provincial opposition. Finally, the NSP 2022-2026 introduced a citizen-centric vision that places economic security at the core of overall national stability.

To evaluate these policies, this paper uses SWOT analysis as a strategic framework for analyzing these policies. The SWOT analysis that was traditionally applied to business and organisational studies is increasingly being applied within the social sciences to evaluate the processes and effectiveness of policy formulation. Based on this framework, the research addresses the following research questions: How

¹ Usama Farooq and Muhammad Khan, "Beyond Ideology: The Complex Determinants of Terrorism in Contemporary Pakistan," *Journal of Security & Development Studies* 4, no. 1 (2024): 52–54.

effective have the internal and national security policies in Pakistan been in response to the changing security challenges in the country?

This analysis has shown that although all the policies introduced important initiatives, they shared common weaknesses that limited effective implementation, including bureaucratic inertia, lack of funding, and absence of policy continuity. At the same time, there are still prospects of upholding geoeconomics diplomacy, improving the involvement of civil society, and enhancing cyber resilience. This paper has relevance both to academia and policy formulation because it will analyze the three policies within a logical analytical framework, thereby providing insights into the evolution of Pakistan's security doctrine while highlighting areas where reforms are required.

In recent years, the concept of national security has been evolved significantly. What was formerly the primary concern of national security as the need to protect the borders and the armed forces has now taken an additional dimension as the need to protect the identity, culture and borders of a nation.² This wider approach is an indication of an increasing acceptance of the significance of integrated approaches that assess not just the military challenges, but also the political, social, environmental and economic aspects that are critical for state stability.

In this regard, the NSP of Pakistan is also crucial, as it outlines the strategic actions and plans designed to guarantee internal stability and promote the welfare of its people. These policies aim to address important challenges like militancy, religious extremism and other internal challenges that weaken the effective functioning of the state. Assessing the effects of the NISP and NSP, this study aims to increase the understanding of the connections between the policies in the sphere of national security and the stability of states in a particular environment of a developing country with multifaceted security threats.

This study adopts a qualitative method to assess the effectiveness of Pakistan's national and internal security policies. SWOT analysis is used as a primary tool to examine strategic objectives, limitations in the implementation of the policies and their effectiveness. The research uses both primary and secondary data. The secondary data includes academic articles, journal papers, policy documents, and reports. In contrast,

² Sharon L. Caudle, "National Security Strategies: Security From What, for Whom, and by What Means," *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management* 6, no. 1 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.2202/1547-7355.1526>.

primary data was collected through interviews with policy practitioners, academic scholars, and security analysts to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in implementing these policies and assessing their effectiveness. Respondents for the interview were selected based on their experience in the relevant field, and snowball sampling was utilized. Interviews were held with experts to get insights regarding the problems and institutional constraints faced during policy implementation.

Theoretical Framework

The SWOT analysis is used as the main analytical tool in this study. SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool that has long been used to assess the internal factors i.e., Strengths and Weaknesses and external factors i.e., Opportunities and Threats that influence the success of organization programs and policies³ while it has typically been used in business and management contexts, recent research has shown that it may be utilized across disciplines. In this study, the method is adopted within social sciences to critically evaluate Pakistan's internal and national security policies.

This research paper examines three key policy frameworks: the NISP 2014, NISP 2018-2023, and the NSP 2022-2026 Each policy is analyzed using the following dimensions:

- **Strengths:** Include internal elements or innovations that boost policy effectiveness.
- **Weaknesses:** Structural or institutional flaws such as bureaucratic inertia, political division, or budget constraints.
- **Opportunities:** External characteristics in the domestic, regional, or global environment that may have been used to increase influence.
- **Threats:** External risks such as terrorism, hybrid warfare, or polarization that jeopardize policy objectives.

An analysis of official policy documents, government reports, and academic research papers is carried out. Triangulating these sources provides descriptive accuracy and critical depth. The systematic SWOT gives an opportunity to compare the policies overtime and see how the strategy of Pakistan has changed over time as

³ Li-Chen Cheng, Kuanchin Chen, Ming-Chu Lee, and Kua-Mai Li, "User-Defined SWOT Analysis – A Change Mining Perspective on User-Generated Content," *Information Processing & Management* 58, no. 5 (2021): 102613, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2021.102613>.

counter-terrorism (2014) has transformed to preventive and rehabilitative (2018) and finally to the geo-economic and human security vision (2022).⁴

Applying a SWOT framework in this manner offers three major advantages. First it offers a rigorous methodology for determining not only what worked but also where gaps remained. Second it provides a comparative framework to track continuities and changes in Pakistan's evolving security doctrine. Third, it offers policy-relevant insights by combining academic research with practical recommendations for governance and stability.

SWOT Analysis of the NISP 2014

Strengths	Weaknesses
First Comprehensive internal security policy addressing terrorism beyond military solutions.	Poor implementation due to bureaucratic inertia and lack of resources.
Emphasis on counter-terrorism and intelligence reforms through NACTA.	Weak inter-agency coordination and unclear federal provincial roles.
Integrated approach combining hard (military) and soft (madrassa reform and counter terrorism) measures.	Absence of monitoring and evaluation measures.
Inclusion of new dimensions: terror financing, border management, madrassa regulation, and intelligence fusion cell.	Limited stakeholder engagement (civil society, media, and academia).
Opportunities	Threats
Foundation for future policies ((National Action Plan) NAP 2015, NISP 2018, NSP 2022).	Rise of new extremist groups (TTP splinters, ISIS, Al-Qaeda).
Institutional reform via NACTA as a focal point for intelligence coordination.	Regional instability after Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan.
Addressing root causes of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy.	Exploitation of sectarian and sociopolitical divides by militant factors.
Potential for capacity building and	Use of cyber propaganda and digital

⁴ National Security Division, *National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022–2026: Public Summary* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2022), 3–4, <https://nsd.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/NSP%20summary.pdf>.

modernization of law enforcement.

radicalization.

Narrative Analysis

NISP 2014 marked Pakistan's first comprehensive attempt to establish an internal security framework.⁵ It acknowledged that terrorism was not merely an external narrative, but an existential internal security threat to the state's stability. The policy introduced institutional changes, most notably the formation of the National Counter-terrorism Authority (NACTA), and broadened the scope of security to encompass madrassa reforms, border management, intelligence sharing, and terror financing.⁶ Its multifaceted approach, which combined counter-terrorism efforts with legislative reforms and societal resilience-meant that the ad-hoc, reactive policy prevalent since the 9/11 attacks was coming to an end.

However, NISP 2014's implementation lagged behind its ambition. Bureaucratic inertia hindered NACTA from becoming fully operational;⁷ inter-agency coordination remained poor, and no effective monitoring procedures were devised. Furthermore, the absence of civil society, academia and the media implementation reduced overall societal support.

Despite these weaknesses, NISP 2014 paved the way for future policies influencing the National Action Plan (2015), NISP 2018, and eventually the NSP 2022, by identifying socioeconomic drivers of extremism, the policy offered opportunity for preventive initiatives, however, these were not fully implemented. At the same time, external threats including the resurgence of TTP, the emergence of ISIS, and cross-border militancy undermined its effectiveness.⁸ These organizations took advantage of state failures, sectarian conflicts, and social media propaganda to push their agenda.

⁵ Raza Rumi, *Charting Pakistan's Internal Security Policy* (May 2015), https://www.academia.edu/15261108/Charting_Pakistan_s_Internal_Security_Policy.

⁶ Muhammad Makki and Syed Ali Akash, "From Counter-Terrorism to Counter Violent Extremism: An Analysis of Pakistan's Internal Security Policies," *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research* 2, no. 1 (2020), <https://pjtr.nacta.gov.pk/index.php/journals/article/view/101>.

⁷ Savail Meekal Hussain and Mehreen Zahra-Malik, "Political Instability and Its Implications for an Effective National Counterterrorism Policy in Pakistan," in *Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge*, ed. Moeed Yusuf (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 83–102.

⁸ Muhammad Abbas Hassan and Asadullah Khan, "Life Cycle of Terrorism: Case Study of Pakistan," *Defence and Security Journal* 4 (December 2019): 78–87, <https://dscsc.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2019.pdf>.

SWOT Analysis of NISP 2018-2023

Strengths	Weaknesses
Focus on de radicalization, rehabilitation, and counter extremism programs.	Lack of coordination with provinces and weak federal-provincial synchronization.
Structured implementation with inter-agency coordination and capacity building.	Bureaucratic inefficiency, and institutional overlaps, especially within NACTA.
Counter narratives through media, academia, and religious scholars.	Uneven resource allocation and fragmented enforcement.
Use of digital platforms to combat online radicalization.	Weak provincial ownership due to late policy adoption.
Opportunities	Threats
Engagement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in peace building and grass root initiatives.	Deep rooted sociopolitical polarization and sectarian divides.
Promotion of inclusive narratives, interfaith harmony, and coexistence.	Exploitation of ethnic grievances by extremist groups.
Strengthening oversight, transparency, and trust through civil society.	Political instability and weak democratic institutions undermining security consensus.

Narrative Analysis

The NISP 2018-2023 was an attempt to transition to a preventive and holistic framework instead of a reactive and counter-terrorism-driven alternative to its predecessor. It redefined security by incorporating community response, socioeconomic development and civil society involvement in the internal security agenda. The policy focused on balancing the use of coercion with softer approaches, based on the understanding that radicalization could not be countered through force alone.

Among the strengths of the policy was the focus on de-radicalization initiatives and rehabilitation, which includes vocational training to psychological counselling to reforming madrassas and counter-narrative campaigns. The Sabawoon and Mashal programs proved that community reintegration is achievable; local community efforts combined with cooperation among academia, media, and religious scholars, produced

a more inclusive counter-extremism approach.⁹ In addition, NISP 2018 offered a systematic approach to the establishment of strengthening inter-agency cooperation, increasing the capacity and the use of online instruments that can be used to interfere with online extremist propaganda.

Despite these innovations, the policy suffered from major weaknesses that inhibited its effectiveness. Above all, it was plagued by a lack of alignment between the federal government and the provinces.¹⁰ Due to lack of political consensus, multiple mandates, and bureaucracy, there were unequal enforcement measures, and allocation of resources. Local ownership was undermined by provincial resistance, which was fueled by the perception that the policy had been rushed through in the final days of the federal government's term without meaningful consultation.¹¹ Consequently, there continued to be intelligence gaps, underdeveloped role of NACTA and inconsistent counter-terrorism activities.

However, the policy offered a lot of opportunities, especially through allowing CSOs to be active in peace building and counter-extremist activities. In order to advance diversity and tolerance, CSOs were involved in interfaith dialogues, grassroots rehabilitation, and awareness campaign.¹²

At the same time NISP 2018-2023 had to deal with external challenges which severely undermined its success. Extremist created instabilities by using distinctions of sociopolitical polarization, ethnic and sectarian differences to disrupt communities. The political instability, poor democratic institutions and mistrust among the marginalized groups specifically Pashtuns and Baloch, and the state, undermined the possible prospects of having a unified security system.¹³ Fault lines were heightened by the use of sectarian accounts by militant groups and thus the internal security environment was weakened and disputed.

⁹ Zahid Yaseen and Muhammad Muzaffar, "Extremism in Pakistan: Issues and Challenges," *Journal of Politics and International Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 31–42, <https://jpis.pu.edu.pk/45/article/view/30>.

¹⁰ Ahmad Ali and Musarrat Amin, "Pakistan's National Internal Security Policies from 2014 to 2022: Gaps, Challenges, and Prospects," *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no. 4 (December 2023): 56–63, <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v2i4.69>.

¹¹ Ihsan Ghani, "Pakistan's Response to Extremism and Terrorism," *ISSRA Papers* 11, no. 1 (June 2019): 1–19, <https://issrapapers.ndu.edu.pk/index.php/site/article/view/60>.

¹² Mohammad Makki, "Policy Perspectives on Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan" (Policy Paper, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, August 2021), <https://sdpi.org/assets/lib/uploads/Pakistan-Resilient-Development-Network-oct-2021-1.pdf>.

¹³ Waqas Ur Rehman, "Political Polarization in Pakistan: Challenges and Way Forward," *International Journal of Human and Society* 3, no. 3 (September 2023): 521–26, <https://ijhs.com.pk/index.php/IJHS/article/view/791/565>.

SWOT Analysis of NSP 2022-2026

Strengths	Weaknesses
Shift to people-centric, Geo-economic framework.	Overambitious scope with limited funding.
Inclusion of human and economic security in national agenda.	Governance instability and lack of political continuity.
Focus on trade, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and regional connectivity.	Resource drain from failing State-Owned Enterprise (SOEs) (PIA, Steel Mills, Railways).
Recognition of unemployment and poverty as security risks.	Weak policy attention to environmental and health security.
Opportunities	Threats
Strategic geography for regional trade and connectivity.	Persistent regional tensions (India, Afghanistan).
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, and energy corridors are enhancing economic integration.	Hybrid warfare tactics, cyber threats, and disinformation campaigns.
Potential normalization of trade with India; cultural diplomacy (Kartarpur corridor).	Socioeconomic inequalities are exploited by extremist and external actors.
North-South and East-West corridors position Pakistan as a transit hub.	Erosion of public trust and polarization due to digital manipulation.

Narrative Analysis

The NSP 2022-2026 marks a paradigm shift in the security thinking of Pakistan, shifting from military oriented models to people-oriented geoeconomics. It was a contrast to the earlier policies of focusing on human security, environmental sustainability as well as economic stability as the key points of national security. This wider vision realized that it was not only the outside factors that were causing instability in Pakistan but also the poverty, unemployment, and weakness of the society. The NSP also attached great importance to regional trade, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and

connectivity initiatives such as CPEC by connecting economic development to the national security objectives.¹⁴

The strength of this policy is in the fact that the security is reframed in a comprehensive manner. It is understood that economic insecurity could be a source of extremism and internal unrest, and so the focus on development and defense were the same. It focuses on creation of employment, growth of trade, and connectivity of the region as a move to reposition Pakistan from a geopolitical entity into a geoeconomics hub that could take advantage of its strategic location and economic potential.

Despite these innovations, NSP 2022-2026 also revealed significant weaknesses. The policy's broad ambitious goals frequently collided with Pakistan's limited financial resources and governance constraints. While it recognized non-traditional concerns such as climate change and health insecurity, these areas received less attention than its geo-economic focus. Furthermore, continuous governance instability as seen by insufficient civilian tenures, inconsistent decisions, and institutional inefficiencies, posed challenges to continuity. State-owned corporations that drain resources, such as PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills, have further hampered human development funding, having collectively recorded PKR 143 billion (USD 920 million) in losses during 2020–2021.¹⁵ Furthermore, the policy's view of remittances as an economic strength ignored the long-term effects of brain drain which weakened innovation and institutional capacity.

At the same time, the NSP provided greater opportunities to reshape Pakistan's regional and global role. Prioritizing trade integration and connectivity, the policy envisioned Pakistan as a transit and energy hub that would profit from initiatives like CPEC and TAPI pipeline. These efforts promised not just economic stability, but also increased diplomatic leverage. The possible normalization of trade with India, highlighted by Kartarpur Corridor proved the ability to translate cultural and economic diplomacy into confidence building measures. These prospects could bring Pakistan back to the position of a regional bridge rather than a security boundary.

NSP 2022-2026 was, in fact, the most progressive and most holistic endeavor to transform the security strategy of Pakistan. Its focus on geoeconomics and people-

¹⁴ Muhammad Jahanzaib and Zahid Shahab Ahmed, "The China Factor in Pakistan's Geo-Economic Tilt," *International Studies* 61, no. 2 (2024): 145–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208817241298339>.

¹⁵ Government of Pakistan, *Pakistan Economic Survey 2020–2021* (Islamabad: Finance Division, 2021), https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_2021.html.

centered security is a further extension of the policy agenda; however, a lack of resources, ongoing governance problems, and regional instability continue to inhibit the transformative capacity of the policy. Although the approach focused on strategic strength of Pakistan and its development needs, its eventual success relied on the ability to defeat structural weaknesses and address the rapidly evolving external risks of the twenty first century.

National Internal Security Policy (2014-2018)

Pakistan's national internal security policy, introduced in 2014, is a comprehensive framework designed to address various internal security issues. The policy draws attention to several key themes that demonstrate how the government approaches national security in its formulation and implementation.

▪ ***Counter Terrorism and Counter Extremism***

Pakistan has long struggled with terrorism and extremism, which has significantly weakened its internal security and stability. Since the 9/11 incident, an ongoing wave of sectarian violence and anti-state terrorism has been observed in Pakistan, which is orchestrated by the domestic terrorist network comprising of Jihadi and extremist organizations.¹⁶ Terrorist violence has been intensified and diversified, with militant organizations also targeting the Pakistani government and its citizens.¹⁷ Paul Wilkinson argues that no universally accepted counterterrorism policy exists because every conflict involving terrorism possesses unique characteristics, illustrating that counterterrorism is as complex and multifaceted as the phenomenon of terrorism itself.¹⁸ In response to this, the government introduced NISP in 2014 to take a comprehensive approach to combat this threat. The NISP was created in reaction to Pakistan's escalating terrorist threat, which had grown to be a significant obstacle for the government.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

The policy sought to give the nation a clear road map for dealing with terrorism's many facets in a comprehensive manner. Following 9/11, Pakistan joined

¹⁶ Saima Butt and Afira Wattoo, "Socio-Political and Economic Challenges of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan after 9/11: A Study of Lahore," *Political Horizons* 3, no. 1 (2025): 30–42.

¹⁷ Naeem Ahmed, "Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Its Implications for Domestic, Regional and International Security," *HAL Open Science* (2014), <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00937552/>.

¹⁸ Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203087336>.

international efforts to combat terrorism and continued to play a crucial role as a frontline state. The nation's involvement in the War on Terror was unavoidable because of a number of considerations, including supply routes, geography, and intelligence sharing. According to the Global Terrorism Index in 2011, Pakistan was ranked second among the countries most effected by asymmetric violence and extremism.¹⁹ To combat these threats, Pakistan has implemented a number of changes to the pre-existing legislative frameworks addressing terrorism since the 9/11 attacks, including the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 1997, it also employed three different counterinsurgency strategies to reduce violence: military assaults supported by a thorough National Action Plan (NAP), autonomous military operations, and peace agreements with terrorists.¹⁹ Since eliminating the root causes and expressions of insecurity is of the utmost importance, NISP concentrates on counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism. The NISP eliminates terrorist networks and effectively promotes a peaceful atmosphere through law enforcement, intelligence, and community involvement. Establishing efficient counter-terrorism systems and enabling the NACTA as a coordinating body is one of the main pillars of NISP 2014. The strategy emphasizes focused operations against extremist strongholds, modernizing law enforcement, and intelligence sharing across agencies. In order to reintegrate those who have been impacted by extremist beliefs into society, the framework also advocates for de-radicalization initiatives. These actions are complemented by legal amendments that enable the prompt and efficient prosecution of crimes pertaining to terrorism.

▪ ***Strengthening Law Enforcement and Intelligence***

Investigating terrorist incidents and interrogating suspected terrorists requires a specialized set of skills for law enforcement officials. Specialized forces, an offensive counter-terrorist body, and a defensive anti-terrorist body are meant to combat terrorism. Indeed, numerous nations have established specialized police teams with operational expertise for counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism operations.²⁰ Therefore, in order to counter the increasing internal threats, Pakistan's NISP 2014 acknowledged the urgent necessity to fortify the nation's intelligence and law enforcement organizations. Thus,

¹⁹ Faiz Ur Rehman, Muhammad Nasir, and Muhammad Shahbaz, "What have we learned? Assessing the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies in Pakistan." *Economic Modelling* 64 (2017): 487-495. <https://doi.org/10.16/j.econmod.2017.02.028>

²⁰ Farhan Zahid, "Establishing a Counter Terrorism Force." *PIPS Research Journal* (2015): 83:90. <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FZahid-CTF.Pdf>.

the police serve as the foundation for counter-terrorism operations that are focused on achieving results. For successful counter-terrorism operations, the police make use of their local expertise and relationships with the community. The public's initial interaction with law enforcement and the state's internal security apparatus typically occurs through the police. Therefore, both parties lose if there is a lack of mutual trust in a relationship. ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} The primary objective of this effort was to modernize the police force, provide them with cutting-edge technology and training, and close the intelligence gaps between military and civilian organizations.

Established in 2009, the NACTA appeared to be a positive step toward integrating and coordinating the national counter-terrorism effort between the police and military.²¹ NACTA, can have a significant impact on the overall national security arrangement by shifting accountability for national security procedures from the military to the non-military personnel government at the appropriate time.²² However, anti-terrorism legislation has not provided law enforcement and civil law organizations with the authority to manage cases efficiently.

Despite having substantially higher goals, NISP 2014 ran across several obstacles. Political unrest, bureaucratic roadblocks, and inadequate funding have prevented police units from becoming more capable. Additionally, the intelligence-sharing exercise initially advanced slowly due to unclear jurisdictions and authorities among many agencies. However, constant reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and focus have ensured these programs achieve the intended effectiveness, bolstering internal security measures.

▪ ***Socioeconomic Development and Community Engagement***

The National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014 focused on addressing the root causes of insecurity through socioeconomic development—recognizing that poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of economic opportunity create the conditions in which violence flourishes. The policy emphasizes that socioeconomic inequalities can undermine national security by fostering social instability and widespread dissatisfaction. Framed through the Copenhagen School of security studies, human security is inextricably tied

²¹Hassan Abbas, *Stabilizing Pakistan Through Police Reform* (Washington, DC: Asia Society, 2012) https://asiasociety.org/files/pdf/as_pakistan_police_exec_sum.pdf

²² Waseem Ullah, Sajad Rasool, and Asif Salim. "Perils and Prospects of National Internal Security Policy and National Action Plan," *Gomal University Journal of Research* 32, no. 1 (2016). <https://gujr.com.pk/index.php/GUJR/article/view/1129>.

to state security; thus, mitigating disparities in economic, health, and educational capacities is key to maintaining internal stability and reducing security threats in Pakistan.²³ Additionally, the policy recognizes that poverty in Pakistan is a structural problem that sustains inequality, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, rather than merely being a result of a lack of resources.

Along with socioeconomic growth, community engagement was recognized as a crucial element of NISP 2014's approach to improving internal security. To advance a narrative of tolerance, peace, and coexistence, the policy called for aggressive cooperation with media outlets, religious experts, and civil society organizations. The policy also advocates for a participatory approach to development that empowers local communities to recognize and address their security and developmental needs to ensure the success of community-based security programs. By being an active contributor to the establishment of peace and stability rather than a passive recipient of aid, the citizen strengthens and fortifies communities and lessens their susceptibility to extremist influences. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Additionally, local administrations must put community-based security plans into action, utilizing their proximity on the ground to address local issues and build confidence between the public and state institutions. The goal of NISP 2014 was to create community-driven and sustainable strategies to combat insecurity by empowering local communities and encouraging inclusive involvement.

▪ ***Border Management and Security***

According to the NISP 2014, national border security is a crucial component of Pakistan's internal security system. The policy emphasizes the need for a thorough border management system to protect the state's territorial integrity in light of the history of cross-border terrorism, illegal arms smuggling, and drug trafficking. To prevent the illegal flow of weapons, drugs, and terrorists, border controls must be strengthened, according to NISP 2014. To destabilize Pakistan, the hostile elements are employing hybrid warfare strategies that take advantage of the country's porous borders.

²³ Muhammad Tariq Niaz, "Socio-Economic Disparities and National Security of Pakistan." *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 11, no. 1 (2022): 99-113. <https://jcs.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/2015>

Only by strengthening physical barriers and incorporating cutting-edge monitoring technologies can these dangers be reduced and Pakistan's sovereignty be protected.²⁴

As it emphasizes avoiding cross-border infiltration into Pakistan through increased cooperation with neighboring nations for collaborative security measures, the NISP 2014 places Pakistan in a particularly challenging situation given its strategic border location sharing borders with Afghanistan and India. It recommends installing intelligence fusion cells across military and civilian organizations to further strengthen border security measures.²⁴ These cells would provide real-time situational awareness of on-the-ground developments, enabling prompt action to neutralize potential security breaches.

In an increasingly interconnected world, successful border management may need cooperation with neighboring nations rather than relying solely on internal safeguards. To limit the illicit flow of terrorists, weapons, and drugs, NISP 2014 strongly recommends the establishment of bilateral joint border security programs and intelligence-sharing frameworks with Afghanistan and Iran, among other regional equivalents.

▪ ***Institutional Reforms and Governance***

NISP 2014 was aimed at modernizing the security apparatus of Pakistan by undertaking a total institutional reform in accordance with the evolving security environment in Pakistan. The policy was to overhaul the current laws and lay down the proper structures to enhance the working capacity of security agencies by understanding that the available institutions and laws were unable to address the multifaceted threats of terrorism and extremism. By aligning national security legislation with contemporary issues, NISP sought to create a cohesive and robust internal security framework to guarantee the stability of the country.

However, there is an inescapable connection between Pakistan's internal security environment and the tools the state has used to manage it, such as counter intelligence operations. Despite the critical need for reforms within the civil society and police organization both central and provincial governments have refrained from

²⁴ Ayaz Ahmed Khan, "A Strategic Vision of Pakistan's Internal Security Dynamics," *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 58, no. 2 (2019): 121-136, <https://doi.org/10.46568/jssh.v58i2.15>

implementing these necessary changes.²⁵ These institutions' limited capacity is one factor contributing to their ongoing inability to provide security. However, it is closely linked to Pakistan's patronage politics' path dependency, which has impeded attempts to modernize and fortify these crucial institutions.

The fundamental idea behind these reforms was to increase accountability and transparency in security operations in order to restore public confidence. To guarantee transparency in security operations and adherence to democratic principles, the NISP 2014 established robust oversight mechanisms for intelligence and law enforcement agencies. In order to ensure smooth implementation, the policy also emphasized the goal of federally coordinated cooperation between federal, provincial, and local governments. It was believed that strong coordination among these levels of governance was essential to effectively address security issues and maintain a cohesive national response.

National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023)

Pakistan's second NISP 2018-2023 builds on the foundation laid by NISP 2014 to address the internal security challenges more effectively. In order to ensure long-term stability, it offers a balanced and well-rounded strategy for addressing new threats, bolstering institutional capacity, and striking a balance between hard and soft security measures. The policy highlights several key themes that encompasses both conventional and emerging dimensions of security.

▪ ***Comprehensive and Inclusive National Security***

Pakistan's NISP 2018–2023 adopts a holistic security paradigm, departing from the traditional military-centric strategy. Pakistan's security strategy has consistently been heavily biased toward preventing conventional security threats that emanate from outside its borders. However, over the last two decades, Pakistan has shown itself vulnerable to internal security threats, with terrorism being the most significant of these.²⁶ The paradigm recognizes the role of economic stability, social welfare, political inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability among other factors of national security that transcend military power.

²⁵ C. Christine Fair, "Pakistan's Internal Security Environment," SSRN Scholarly Paper 2475461 (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, July 23, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2475461>.

²⁶ Sidra Shabbir, "From Traditional Security to Human Security Approach: An Analysis of National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan (2018-2023)," *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research* 3, no. 1 (2021). <https://pjtr.nacta.gov.pk/index.php/journals/article/view/86>

This is meant to address the multifaceted issues that Pakistan is currently experiencing, so that the states are able to accommodate the changing threats. By treating human security and economic development as critical pillars, the policy recognizes that true security includes freedom from hunger, indignity, and poverty. Likewise, environmental sustainability is also acknowledged as an important component, given Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change and its rippling effect on livelihoods and resources. One of the key elements of this overall framework is human security that aims at ensuring the rights of the citizens and providing them with opportunities in the economic, medical, and training spheres. According to NISP 2018, if socioeconomic inequality is not addressed, it can act as a catalyst for social unrest, radicalization, and extremism. Thus, the goal of the policy is to create a society that is more equal and inclusive in order to lessen its susceptibility to both internal and external threats.

▪ ***Strengthening Counter Terrorism and Addressing Extremism***

Given the constant threat posed by terrorism to national security, Pakistan's NISP 2018–2022 supports the bolstering of intelligence-based operations in their efforts to neutralize potential threats and dismantle terrorist networks. This strategy heavily relies on military and civilian intelligence services to conduct targeted operations to disrupt the operational and financial networks of terrorist organizations. However, the division of duties among several organizations, such as the military, provincial Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs), and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), complicates Pakistan's counter-terrorism framework. Even though these organizations are governed by a number of laws, including the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (2016), the Anti-Money Laundering Act (2010), and the Anti-Terrorism Act (1997), coordinated action against terrorism is frequently hampered by the absence of a single command structure.²⁷ The framework for counter-terrorism in NISP 2018, which supervise the coordination of national efforts by the various security and intelligence agencies, places a strong emphasis on strengthening the role of NACTA. The NISP can more effectively address the ideological underpinnings of extremism by promoting

²⁷Taimur Khattak and Rana Jimshaid Asghar, "Strategic Counter Measures to Terrorism and Extremism in Pakistan and Insights from Home Land Security: A Need for the Enactment of Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Department," *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no.1 (2024): 61-74. <https://www.articles.define.pk/article.php?jid=2464&id=393541>.

tolerance, critical thinking, and inclusive education, which ultimately strengthens society. Traditionally, Pakistan has operated mainly in a reactive mode regarding terrorism, extremism, and immediate security issues, characterized by a lack of policy coherence, no long-term planning, and a failure to own these policies. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** The NISP 2018 aims to break this reactive trend through greater stakeholder integration, enhanced accountability, and a more proactive, strategic approach to security issues.

▪ ***Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Reforms***

Pakistan's NISP 2018-2023 emphasizes the dire need to modernize law enforcement agencies as a part of the broader strategy to enhance the internal security of the state. The policy advocates for the importance of equipping law enforcement agencies with cutting-edge technology, infrastructure, and advanced training to enhance their effectiveness. However, the implementation of these reforms faces challenges that are rooted in the state military-civil divide where the civilian-led initiatives are often sidelined by the military dominance in policy making and security. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Alongside law enforcement modernization, NISP 2018 also underscores the importance of reforms in the state's criminal justice system to ensure the fair and swift prosecution of terrorism-related cases. To recognize the high-risk nature of such cases the policy further advocates for the protection of prosecutors, witnesses and legal professionals, including judges who are frequently targeted in high-profile terrorism trials. By promoting transparency, strengthening judicial reforms and advancing public trust in the state's capacity to administer justice, NISP 2018-2023 strives to create a more robust and resilient internal security framework capable of addressing both the short and long-term threats to national security.

▪ ***Cyber Security and Technological Advancements***

In an era, where digital technology is fundamental to critical governance and infrastructure, Pakistan's NISP 2018 identifies cyber security as an important component of national security. Acknowledging the vulnerabilities posed by cyber threats, the policy promotes the creation of a comprehensive national cybersecurity policy to protect essential systems, prevent cyberattacks and reduce the risks associated with an increasingly interconnected digital landscape.

In order to deal with these issues, NISP 2018 calls for the creation of a universal National Cybersecurity Policy to protect critical infrastructure and counter cyber threats. The lack of a unified institutional structure in the country, which includes agencies such as the Pakistan Computer Emergency Response Team (PakCERT) and the FIA Cyber Crime Wing, however, does not support concerted actions. Although the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 provides a legal framework to counter cybercrime, it lacks a comprehensive strategic vision. National Cybersecurity Policy 2021 will address these gaps by encouraging indigenization, elevating the partnership between the government and corporate entities, and creating a resilient cyber ecosystem.²⁸ Nevertheless, implementation is a serious issue, and the concerted actions of institutions and stakeholders should ensure the security of the digital future of Pakistan.

Regardless of the gains achieved in the policy, several challenges were still poorly applied as the National Cybersecurity Policy 2021. Lack of skilled cybersecurity specialists is a major issue, as it is now harder to manage and respond to more sophisticated cyberthreats because of the lack of qualified specialists in Pakistan. The country badly requires a national workforce development strategy to train and retain cybersecurity professionals. Moreover, the coordination between the public and the private sector is yet to be optimal. Despite the significant role of the private sector in the construction and maintenance of digital infrastructure, most organizations do not possess highly developed cybersecurity systems capable of withstanding new, more sophisticated cyber threats.

To adequately resolve these issues, the primary concern of Pakistan needs to be the closer cooperation among governmental organizations, the commercial sector, and foreign stakeholders that will result in a unified and holistic strategy of cybersecurity resilience. In order to enhance response, more information sharing and the establishment of cyber defense groupings are necessary. Moreover, the reduction of vulnerabilities will also be significantly supported by the improvement of cybersecurity awareness and education across the board. Pakistan can create a strong digital infrastructure that safeguards vital systems and promotes confidence in its expanding digital economy by making investments in these areas.

²⁸ Sara Ahmad, "Cyber Security Threat and Pakistan's Preparedness: An Analysis Of National Cyber Security Policy 2021," *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research* 5, no. 1 (2022): 25-40, <https://doi.org/10.37605/pjhssr.v5i1.381>.

▪ ***Socio Economic Development and Community Resilience***

Understanding that poverty, inequality, and insufficient access to education are often the primary factors contributing to insecurity, the NISP 2018-2022, in Pakistan, is heavily focused on addressing these factors by targeting them via specific socioeconomic policies. The policy aims at ensuring that the society becomes more stable and prosperous through economic growth, improved education, and reduced income inequality, thereby reducing the root causes of social unrest and extremism. Although these factors have largely been analyzed in isolation, examining the demography of violence and extremism in Pakistan demonstrates that the situation goes awry, presenting a complexly weaved nexus of socio-economic inducements.²⁹ The increasing ethnic diversity, the dominant role of religious interests in the inner political situation of the country, makes the problem even more complicated.

In addition to socioeconomic development, NISP 2018 emphasizes the value of community involvement in fostering resistance to extremism. It is believed that collaboration with media outlets, religious leaders, and civil society organizations is essential to advancing social harmony, tolerance, and the fight against extremist ideologies. NISP hopes to strengthen local communities and ensure their active involvement in the process of national development through these collaborations.

National Security Policy (2022-2026)

The NSP 2022-2026 of Pakistan focuses on comprehensive and human centric approach to security balancing both the traditional and non-traditional security approaches. The policy highlights several key themes.

▪ ***Economic Security as the Core of National Security***

Pakistan's NSP 2022-2026 identifies economic stability and growth, as the cornerstone, demonstrating the understanding that all aspects of national security are supported by a strong and resilient economy. Through a focus on sustainable growth, the policy aims to address internal vulnerabilities and the nation's ability to effectively respond to both the traditional and non-traditional security challenges. The nation realized that its

²⁹Muhammad Makki and Syed Ali Akash, "Poverty, Regional Inequality, and the Role of Governance: Tracing Geographies of Violent Extremism in Pakistan," *GeoJournal* 88, no.3 (2023): 2635-50, <https://links.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10708-022-10766-6>.

economy needed to be strengthened in order to compete with its adversaries. The State thus announced a shift from Geo-strategic to Geo-economic thinking, to protect its national interests. The significance of strategic interests is undeniable, and their realization requires a solid economic foundation.³⁰ Therefore, it is believed that the best way to protect the nation's integrity is to shift from Geo-strategic to Geo-economic thinking. The key focus of this policy is on strengthening investment, trade and regional connectivity with initiatives like China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are playing a transformative role in integrating the state into international market.³¹ The policy seeks to strengthen economic resilience and reduce vulnerabilities by focusing on infrastructure development and trade diversification.

NSP 2022-2026 emphasizes the need to make exports more robust and support domestic industries because of the necessity to become less dependent on foreign aid. It focuses on building an independent economy that tries to reduce the level of externalities, attain financial stability in the long term, and enhance sustainable growth. These measures are consequent, as the policy balances the economic power with national security agendas, where economic potential helps deliver to wider state policies.

▪ ***Internal Security and Social Cohesion***

The NSP 2022-2026 has given significant focus on domestic security and social integration as key pillars of national stability. It is an effort to make the society safer and more robust by combating terrorism, extremism, and sectarian violence through enhancing legal systems and law enforcers. Moreover, the policy recognizes that the governance system must be effective in order to ensure the security. An inefficient, sluggish and non-responsive Criminal Justice System (CJS), in this case presents a big threat to governance as well as national security. Enhancing the ease, openness, and effectiveness of the CJS is thus essential to the delivery of justice, preservation of confidence among the populace, and strengthening the stability of the state in general.³² This vulnerability exacerbates stability issues in the security domain by impacting not

³⁰ Samiya Ashraf, Ghulam Mustafa, and Ghazanfar Ali, "Pakistan's National Security Policy: An Analysis," *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (2023): 177-176. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2023\(4-III\)16](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2023(4-III)16).

³¹ Sumita Kumar, "The China– Pakistan Strategic Relationship: Trade, Investment, Energy and Infrastructure," *Strategic Analysis* 31, no. 5 (2007): 757-790. <https://doi.org/10.1080/097001607701662278>.

³² Ali Asghar, "Criminal Justice System of Pakistan," *ISSRA Papers* 15, no. 1 (2023): 1-12.

only the conventional facets of state sovereignty but also the internal human and social territories.

Given that effective governance and good law enforcement are two closely related concepts, the capability of the state to offer effective governance would consequently be threatened by the weak CJS. NSP 2022 is a citizen-centric policy that recognizes these challenges in order to guarantee the safety, security, dignity, and prosperity of its citizens. In the process of addressing the root causes of insecurity, including poverty, inequality and marginalization, the policy puts a high emphasis on tolerance, social cohesion, and ideological counter-narratives in addressing extremism. The policy points out that to address the issue of marginalization, poverty, and inequality, there is a need to strengthen the linkages between socioeconomic conditions and insecurity. These root causes are a breeding ground of violence and extremism.

▪ ***Traditional Security and Defense***

The NSP 2022 emphasizes the imperative of maintaining a formidable defensive posture to safeguard the territorial integrity of the country and prevent external aggression. The policy recommends dual approach to manage the emerging security issues in the region such as the provision of nuclear deterrence and the traditional military capacity. The main element of this strategy is Pakistan's policy of nuclear deterrence, which deters both the nuclear and conventional capabilities of India. The policy focuses on affordable defense practices, relying on nuclear deterrence to reduce dependence on large conventional armies that could otherwise strain the nation's economy. The NSP unites the traditional and nuclear military capabilities in an integrated structure to counter such evolving threats so as to have a flexible and adaptive defense alignment to both traditional and non-traditional security threats. The NSP advocates bolstering border security and developing counter-measures against unconventional conflict in order to fight new forms of warfare, such as hybrid warfare. These actions involve dealing with the asymmetric threats to the stability of the state, reinforcing borders, and installing advanced surveillance systems. By integrating traditional security systems with modern approaches, Pakistan is also striving to strengthen its security structure within a geopolitical environment that is increasingly getting volatile.

▪ ***Human and Climate Security***

The NSP 2022 stresses the critical link between human development and national security by highlighting the significance of addressing education and health care, food and water security. By ensuring access to these essential resources, the policy aims to promote social stability, reduce vulnerabilities, and create a foundation for sustainable national development. Human security is defined as “everyone’s right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair,” from having equal opportunity to exercise all their rights and develop their human potential. Human security aims to protect people’s lives, livelihoods, and dignity in the face of present and future dangers. The fundamental goal of the human security approach is to eradicate fear, desire, and dangers.³³ By highlighting the triangular relationship between development, human rights, and peace and security, human security can draw attention to the crucial connections between these factors and make sure that strategies for reducing poverty are focused on the underlying causes and corrective measures required to stop the continuation of extreme poverty, violence, and other forms of fragility.

Likewise, one of the biggest risks to Pakistan’s national security is water scarcity, which further threatens social cohesion, economic stability, and food production. Tensions over resource distribution both within and outside the nation have been made worse due to declining water supplies, brought on by population growth, inadequate management, and climate change. While the issues with the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) add geopolitical pressure, disputes over the Indus River System strains relations between provinces. The NSP 2022 highlights the urgent need for effective water management, climate adaptation, and regional cooperation to mitigate these threats.

In the light of growing threats posed by climate change NSP of Pakistan identifies that environmental degradation is one of the significant challenges to Pakistan’s security. Pakistan remains highly vulnerable to rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and extreme weather events that disrupt agriculture, deplete water supplies, and endanger public health.³⁴ These climate-related issues put a strain on defense and

³³ Iram Khalid, “Food Security: Understanding Pakistan’s National Security Concern,” *Journal of Political Studies*, Special Issue (2018): 121–32.

³⁴ Zahid Hussain, Syed Aleem Gillani, and Muhammad Umer Hayat, “Climate Change and National Security Challenges to Pakistan: An Analysis,” *Journal of Social Sciences Review* 4, no. 4 (2024): 61–67,

governance capabilities in addition to endangering livelihoods. As a result, conflicts over resources and social unrest become increasingly likely. According to the NSP, this necessitates incorporating climate adaptation techniques into sustainable resource management as part of the plan of national security.

▪ *Regional and Global Partnerships*

Pakistan's NSP emphasizes on the significance of regional cooperation as a key component for security and economic growth. The policy draws attention on strengthening ties with neighbouring countries particularly with India and Afghanistan to address common challenges and promote peace and stability in South Asia. The NSP strives to transform the region into a hub of connectedness and wealth through the focus on friendly ties and economic collaboration. The nation is committed to regional stability and development as evidenced by its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO enhances the ability of Pakistan to address cross-border problems, such as terrorism and drug trafficking, because of the platform it provides that facilitates infrastructure building, commerce, and counterterrorism. Pakistan's position as a regional center for trade and energy is further reinforced by initiatives like the CPEC, which promotes economic connectivity with Central Asia and beyond.³⁵ In keeping with NSP 2022's goal of fostering peaceful relations to achieve long-term regional stability, the SCO also offers diplomatic opportunities to resolve long-standing issues.

Beyond regional cooperation the national security policy emphasizes on global collaborations to tackle transnational challenges like climate change, organized crime and cyber security. In addition to regional cooperation, the NSP emphasizes the necessity of broader international collaboration to address transnational challenges like organized crime, cybersecurity, and climate change. Pakistan has an interest in advancing its ability to react to new threats but at the same time plays its role in securing the world and promoting sustainable development, through the strengthening of alliances with its allies and participation in internationally accepted programs.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388669143_Climate_Change_and_National_Security_Challenges_to_Pakistan_An_Analysis.

³⁵ Rubina Ali, Irfan Ali, and Shaukat Ullah, "SCO as a Passage to Regional Security: Future Developments and Opportunities for Pakistan," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 3, no. 1 (2019): 19–29, <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/3.1.3>.

Comparative Analysis of the Policies

Comparative evaluation of NISP 2014, NISP 2018 and the NSP 2022 shows that there has been a consistent transformation in Pakistan security doctrine.

The NISP 2014 was essentially a reactive document that reacted to the increased terrorism and violent extremism. It marked the initial systematic effort to institutionalize counter-terrorism through NACTA, intelligence reforms and madrassa control. Nevertheless, the policy continued to be primarily based on coercive action and did not enjoy mass ownership by society or provincial authority.

NISP 2018 was a paradigm shift towards rehabilitation and prevention. It expanded the security scope to encompass de-radicalization, socioeconomic development and community participation. Programs such as Sabawoon and Mashal reflected innovative reintegration models and the policy clearly recognized the importance of civil society in the process of peace-building. Nevertheless, unequal and inconsistent implementation was caused by political fragmentation, bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of provincial coordination.

However, the most decisive shift came with the NSP 2022-2026, which reformulated security through the prism of people-centric and geoeconomics consideration. It focused on human and economic security alongside traditional issues, recognizing that social injustice, poverty, and unemployment were just as destabilizing as outside threats. The policy identified trade, FDI, and regional connectivity projects including the CPEC to be significant towards long-term resilience. However, political instability, scarcity of resources and unresolved regional conflicts hampered its ambitious scope.

Insights from Expert Interviews

The SWOT analysis provided the structural framework of Pakistan's internal and national security policies. Expert interviews provide a more in-depth explanation of why these gaps exist. Across all interviews it was acknowledged that Pakistan has made progress in developing formal policy frameworks; nonetheless a consensus develops that the real crisis lies in the implementation. As one respondent remarked that Pakistan has never had a problem with policy formulation our crisis lies in execution.³⁶ Weak

³⁶ Assistant Research Associate, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), online interview by author, Islamabad, April 2025.

institutions, such as underfunded NACTA were constantly blamed for keeping otherwise well-crafted policies remained aspirational.

A second theme focused on the failure of blanket methods. Respondents noted that “one-size-fits-all” strategies ignores Pakistan’s ethnic, provincial, and cultural diversity, resulting in poor grassroots ownership.³⁷ They stressed the need for localized, context-sensitive solutions, particularly after the 18th Amendment³⁸ provided provinces greater autonomy. Without this adaptation policies risk becoming irrelevant or being met with outright rejection. The presence of institutional trust and political will was also emphasized by the experts. Civil and military organizations often work in silos, which causes fragmentation and inefficiency. A number of respondents cautioned against undermining the trust of the people by arguing that institutional performances should focus more on autonomy, transparency, and planning in the long term.

Lastly, they recommended broadening the security paradigm beyond military intervention and use of coercion. They cautioned that suppressing dissent in the interest of security is an ongoing source of new complaints. Community engagement, inclusive governance, and education, instead, were deemed to be important in alleviating radicalization and resilience building. Although the emphasis of the NSP 2022 on human and economic security was a welcome change, experts cautioned that without adaptive measures, defined goals, and continuous review, the ambitious agenda risks existing on paper only.

The insights can supplement and complement the SWOT results, showing that while security structures in Pakistan are highly robust on paper, performance will remain low until localized ownership, adaptability, and institutional trust are achieved.

Conclusion

This study critically examined the changing internal and national security frameworks - NISP 2014, NISP 2018-2023, and NSP 2022-2026 through SWOT analysis supported by expert interviews. The results indicate the presence of a consistent pattern: although these policies are important steps to formalizing the security agenda of Pakistan, their revolutionary capabilities have been continuously undermined by the flaws in their implementation. Good policy goals and ambitious strategy have failed to achieve long-

³⁷ Official from the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), interview by author, Islamabad, March 2025.

³⁸ Assistant Professor, Centre for International Peace and Stability, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), in-person interview by author, Islamabad, May 2025.

term outcomes, largely due to governance issues embedded in structure, institutional inertia and political fragmentation.

A major challenge in Pakistan lies in effective policy implementation. Recurring weaknesses such as bureaucratic inertia, overlapping institutional mandates, and poor inter agency collaboration have slowed effective implementation. Centralized forms have disrupted provincial ownership and disregarding specific realities while ignoring grassroot realities. In the same way, although rhetorically human security has been recognized, policy priorities have remained focused on coercive and military strategies, which restricts such policies in their long-term preventive potential.

The other theme is a poor relationship between society and the state. Limited engagement with communities, civil society organizations, and local actors have contributed to the mistrust of the population and allowed extremist narratives to fill the gap. In the absence of participatory approaches, national security practices can be seen as top-down measures as opposed to joint national undertakings. The disconnection between the state and society has increased the failure of implementation and undermined local-level resilience.

The results of the analysis also show that the institutional reform is impeded by political unwillingness and policy discontinuity. The constant promises of improvement of NACTA and other implementing agencies have been unsuccessful because of the political changes, varying goals, and inability to fund them.

The security policies in Pakistan show that there is a major change in the counter-terrorism framework to a wider, people-focused vision of security. Nevertheless, the transformative potential of these policies is yet to be achieved to its fullest potential unless the underlying issues as per implementation, decentralization, and institutional capacity are dealt with. Durable peace cannot be achieved through sound policy frameworks alone, it needs political commitment, coordination across sectors, and integration of human security as part of national security policies.