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**Transnational Terrorism and State Responses: A Comparative
Study in Pakistan**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze the transnational terrorism and state responses: a comparative study in Pakistan.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Pakistan's battle against transnational terrorism is shaped by various external and internal factors, notably the spillover of extremist networks from neighboring regions, porous borders, and long-standing socio-political tensions. In response, the state has employed a mix of military operations, counterterrorism legislation, and intelligence-sharing initiatives, supplemented by attempts at social and economic reforms. Comparative analyses show that while Pakistan's strategy has disrupted numerous terror networks, persistent challenges include inconsistent implementation of policies, limited regional cooperation, and the need for a more comprehensive approach that addresses both security and underlying socioeconomic grievances.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Realist theory, liberal institutionalism & constructivism may be used to anchor future studies on transnational terrorism and state responses: a comparative study in Pakistan. States should adopt a holistic approach to counterterrorism that integrates military, diplomatic, and economic strategies. Policymakers must develop balanced frameworks that incorporate military actions alongside diplomatic engagement, development aid, and conflict resolution initiatives.

Keywords: *Transnational Terrorism, State Responses*

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INTRODUCTION

State responses to transnational terrorism and security threats from developed economies often include military interventions and diplomatic efforts. Military responses typically involve direct engagement with terrorist groups or support for allied nations in conflict zones. For instance, the United States has been involved in military operations in the Middle East, including airstrikes and ground troop deployments to combat groups such as ISIS. According to a 2021 report by the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. spent approximately \$2 trillion on operations related to the War on Terror since 2001, which illustrates the significant military commitment involved in addressing global security challenges (Chester, 2021). Additionally, diplomatic responses may include imposing economic sanctions, negotiating peace agreements, or participating in international organizations like the United Nations to foster global cooperation. In 2020, the UK imposed sanctions on individuals associated with the Assad regime in Syria, reflecting a diplomatic approach to address human rights abuses in the region (Miller, 2020). Both military and diplomatic strategies are vital in maintaining national and global security.

Australia's involvement in the global fight against terrorism includes both military operations and diplomatic initiatives aimed at countering violent extremism. In 2020, Australia deployed 400 troops to the Middle East as part of Operation Okra, contributing to the international effort to combat ISIS and stabilize the region (McFarlane, 2020). Similarly, Japan has adopted a more cautious military stance but has participated in international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions under the framework of the United Nations. In 2019, Japan contributed to UN peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, demonstrating its reliance on diplomatic engagement in international conflicts (Tanaka, 2020). Diplomatic measures, such as Australia's active role in the UN and G7 discussions on global terrorism, complement its military contributions, furthering international cooperation on security issues.

Canada has been active in peacekeeping missions and military interventions, particularly in Afghanistan. The Canadian Armed Forces, as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), deployed over 2,000 troops to Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014 to stabilize the region and combat the Taliban (Gerry, 2018). On the diplomatic front, Canada has consistently advocated for multilateralism, utilizing its membership in the United Nations and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to address international disputes and promote peace. Canada's diplomatic approach often involves mediating peace talks in conflict zones, such as its involvement in facilitating negotiations between the Colombian government and FARC rebels in the early 2000s (Garcia, 2019). Through these combined military and diplomatic efforts, Canada seeks to promote global peace and stability, aligning its national security with international cooperation.

In developing economies, state responses to international threats and security concerns are often limited by resources, which influences the choice of military or diplomatic strategies. Military responses in these nations might include reliance on regional allies or international peacekeeping forces rather than independent military interventions due to constraints on defense spending and technological capabilities. For instance, Nigeria's military response to the Boko Haram insurgency has involved both direct military action and the cooperation of international forces, including those from the United Nations and the African Union. The Nigerian government's expenditure on

defense in 2021 was approximately \$2.6 billion, reflecting the substantial cost of managing internal and external security threats (Abdu, 2021). Diplomatic responses from developing nations often focus on seeking aid, forming strategic alliances, or leveraging international organizations to address conflict, as evidenced by the Sudanese government's engagement with the African Union to manage regional instability and peace processes (Ahmed, 2019).

Pakistan, for example, has faced cross-border terrorism threats and insurgencies, and its military responses have been closely tied to its strategic alliances with neighboring countries and international powers. The Pakistani military has engaged in several operations against the Taliban and other militant groups in the tribal areas, including Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which began in 2014 and resulted in the displacement of over 1 million people (Rizvi, 2017). On the diplomatic front, Pakistan has actively sought international support through the UN and regional forums, pushing for global recognition of the threats posed by terrorism and seeking military and economic aid from allies such as the United States and China. Furthermore, Pakistan's efforts to secure peace with India, including engaging in multiple rounds of diplomatic talks, reflect the country's reliance on diplomacy to address security concerns. These combined military and diplomatic strategies highlight the critical need for external support in managing regional security issues in developing nations.

Kenya has faced significant security challenges due to terrorism from Al-Shabaab and has relied heavily on both military and diplomatic strategies. The Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) have been actively involved in military operations in Somalia under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), with Kenya contributing 3,000 troops since 2012 to help combat Al-Shabaab (Juma, 2020). At the same time, Kenya has used diplomatic efforts to engage with the international community, receiving support from the United States and the European Union for counterterrorism and development programs. In 2020, Kenya also worked closely with regional powers such as Ethiopia and Uganda to stabilize the Horn of Africa through trilateral diplomatic discussions and peace initiatives (Kamau, 2021). The dual military-diplomatic approach emphasizes the importance of international partnerships in addressing security challenges in developing nations.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, state responses to international and domestic security threats often blend military and diplomatic strategies. Military responses, such as peacekeeping operations and counterterrorism efforts, are commonly coordinated with regional and international organizations due to resource limitations. For example, the African Union's peacekeeping mission in Somalia, AMISOM, has been instrumental in assisting the Somali government in combating Al-Shabaab insurgents since 2007. The mission has cost over \$1.5 billion annually, and despite its achievements, the African Union continues to rely on financial and logistical support from developed countries, including the EU and the United States (Eze, 2020). Diplomatic measures include negotiations for ceasefires, international pressure to address human rights violations, and engagement with global institutions to resolve conflicts. In 2017, South Sudan's government, with the support of the UN and other international actors, signed a peace agreement with rebel factions in an attempt to end a prolonged civil war, marking a significant diplomatic effort in the region (Obi, 2017).

In Mali, the military has been involved in combating Islamist insurgents, particularly through the Operation Barkhane initiative led by France and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In 2019, France committed 4,500 troops to combat jihadist groups in the Sahel region, reflecting a heavy reliance on foreign military support for counterterrorism efforts (Pottier, 2020). Diplomatically, Mali and other Sahelian states have worked with international organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to resolve internal conflicts and seek peace agreements. For instance, Mali signed a peace agreement in 2015 with Tuareg rebel groups, under the auspices of the UN and the Algerian government, aiming to end the ongoing civil conflict (Toure, 2019). Despite military challenges, diplomatic efforts remain essential in seeking long-term stability and peace in these volatile regions.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced prolonged instability and conflict, with various armed groups operating within its borders. The DRC's military forces, along with MONUSCO, the United Nations peacekeeping mission, have been engaged in operations to stabilize eastern regions, such as the Kivu provinces, where numerous militia groups are active. Despite these military efforts, diplomatic strategies have played a crucial role, as demonstrated by the DRC's participation in peace talks mediated by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in 2013, which sought to bring an end to conflicts in the region (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2018). Furthermore, the DRC government has worked with regional organizations like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union to foster diplomatic dialogue and peacebuilding efforts in the aftermath of armed conflicts. These ongoing military and diplomatic responses underscore the complexity of addressing both internal and external security threats in the region.

Transnational terrorism refers to acts of terrorism that transcend national borders, involving non-state actors that operate across multiple countries, often targeting civilians, government institutions, or international organizations. Such terrorism is not only confined to a single state but is coordinated internationally with the aim of advancing ideological, religious, or political objectives. The key distinguishing factor of transnational terrorism is its global reach and the ability of terror groups to exploit international networks for recruitment, funding, and training (Sandler, 2019). Four prominent examples of transnational terrorism include the Islamic State (ISIS), Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and the Taliban. These organizations have engaged in cross-border attacks, making them global security threats, and have prompted various state responses, including military and diplomatic efforts to combat their activities. States often employ military responses, such as direct military action or support for international coalitions, while diplomatic efforts typically focus on intelligence sharing, sanctions, and cooperation with regional partners to curb terrorism (Miller, 2020).

State responses to transnational terrorism include both military operations and diplomatic initiatives. In response to ISIS, the United States led military airstrikes and provided support for local forces in Iraq and Syria, reflecting the use of direct military intervention (Chester, 2021). Similarly, the African Union and individual states like Nigeria have engaged in military operations against Boko Haram, while diplomatic measures have included seeking support from global organizations such as the UN and NATO (Juma, 2020). Al-Qaeda's attacks, such as 9/11, resulted in a global military campaign led by the U.S., combined with diplomatic measures such as intelligence sharing and international counterterrorism agreements. The Taliban's insurgency in

Afghanistan has prompted diplomatic talks alongside military interventions, particularly by NATO forces and neighboring countries, to address the broader security implications in the region (Miller, 2020). These state responses illustrate the dual necessity of both military action and diplomatic strategies to address the global nature of transnational terrorism.

Problem Statement

Transnational terrorism has become one of the most pressing global security concerns, with non-state actors increasingly operating across national borders, posing complex challenges to states' sovereignty and international stability. The rise of transnational terrorist organizations, such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram, has led to a surge in violent attacks that disrupt regional and global peace. While state responses to such terrorism vary, they generally encompass military interventions, diplomatic efforts, and the strengthening of intelligence-sharing frameworks. However, the effectiveness of these responses remains debated, with critics arguing that military actions alone fail to address the root causes of terrorism, such as political instability, social injustice, and ideological extremism (Sandler, 2019). Furthermore, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of how different countries, particularly developed, developing, and sub-Saharan economies, have formulated strategies to combat transnational terrorism, with varying levels of success and challenges. Recent studies suggest that while military interventions can provide short-term security, long-term solutions require collaborative diplomatic efforts, regional cooperation, and addressing underlying grievances that fuel terrorism (Chester, 2021; Juma, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Realist Theory

The Realist Theory, primarily associated with scholars like Hans Morgenthau (1948), posits that states act primarily in their national interest, seeking power and security in an anarchic international system. Realism emphasizes the importance of military strength and security alliances to protect state interests against external threats. In the context of "Transnational Terrorism and State Responses," this theory is relevant as it explains how states, particularly developed ones, often prioritize military interventions and strategic alliances in response to terrorism. Realism underscores the importance of state sovereignty and self-preservation, which justifies military actions and counterterrorism strategies. According to recent analyses, realist approaches have guided U.S. military responses to global terrorism (Chester, 2021), highlighting its utility in a comparative study of state responses.

Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal Institutionalism, articulated by scholars like Robert Keohane (1984), emphasizes the role of international institutions, cooperation, and diplomacy in fostering peace and stability. It argues that states can achieve mutual benefits through international cooperation, even in the face of transnational threats like terrorism. This theory is significant for understanding how states utilize international frameworks, such as the United Nations or regional organizations, to respond to terrorism. In a comparative study, it helps explain why some states, particularly developing ones, rely more on diplomacy, multilateral peacebuilding, and economic cooperation in tackling

terrorism. Research shows that states like Kenya have used regional diplomatic channels effectively to address the threat of Al-Shabaab (Juma, 2020).

Constructivism

Constructivism, championed by scholars like Alexander Wendt (1999), asserts that state behavior is shaped by ideational factors, such as beliefs, identities, and norms, rather than just material interests. This theory is crucial for understanding how states frame the issue of terrorism and their responses. Constructivism highlights how states' perceptions of terrorism—shaped by cultural, historical, and social contexts—determine their military and diplomatic responses. For example, the response of Western nations to ISIS is not just a reaction to physical threats but also to the ideological battle surrounding political Islam (Sandler, 2019). This theory offers insights into how narratives of terrorism influence state policies and actions.

Empirical Review

Sandler (2019) explored the global impact of transnational terrorism and the responses of states, particularly the U.S., UK, and Saudi Arabia. Using a comparative analysis of national security policies, Sandler analyzed data from government publications, policy reports, and international security organizations. The study's findings highlighted that the United States predominantly used military interventions as a primary counterterrorism tool, focusing on direct strikes against terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. In contrast, the UK employed a combination of military operations and diplomatic initiatives, with an emphasis on intelligence-sharing and international cooperation. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, relied heavily on regional diplomatic engagements and economic sanctions to curb terrorism. Sandler recommended that states balance their military actions with stronger diplomatic and economic measures, emphasizing the need for multilateral cooperation. This study was significant in showing the varied state responses across different political and cultural contexts and emphasized the importance of a coordinated global effort in addressing transnational terrorism. Further research suggested that while military operations could weaken terrorist networks, diplomatic solutions and development aid were essential for addressing the root causes of extremism.

Juma (2020) examined Kenya's military participation in AMISOM and its diplomatic role in the fight against Al-Shabaab. The study employed a qualitative case study methodology, analyzing military reports, policy documents, and interviews with key figures involved in Kenya's counterterrorism efforts. Juma found that Kenya's military response in Somalia had limited success in reducing terrorist activities, as Al-Shabaab continued to carry out attacks, particularly in border regions. However, Kenya's diplomatic engagement with the African Union and neighboring countries led to more sustainable security outcomes, with increased regional cooperation. The study showed that Kenya's dual approach of combining military efforts with diplomatic strategies provided some stability in the Horn of Africa. Juma recommended that African nations continue to prioritize regional cooperation and invest in intelligence-sharing mechanisms to counter cross-border terrorism effectively. The study also called for more robust international support for African peacekeeping missions, particularly in areas facing continuous terrorist threats. Kenya's experience underscored the need for a comprehensive approach that combined military, diplomatic, and development strategies to tackle transnational terrorism in the region.

Chester (2021) analyzed the effectiveness of U.S. counterterrorism strategies in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, focusing on the political and financial costs. Chester employed a quantitative research design, using financial data, military expenditure reports, and data on terrorist activity before and after U.S. interventions. The findings indicated that while U.S. military interventions weakened terrorist groups in the short term, they often led to destabilization and a resurgence of extremist organizations in the long term. Chester also found that military actions, such as airstrikes and drone warfare, were effective in targeting key terrorist leaders but often failed to eliminate the underlying support networks. Diplomatically, the U.S. had limited success in forming lasting coalitions, with regional powers such as Iran and Turkey opposing U.S. efforts. Chester recommended shifting focus toward multilateral diplomatic approaches, involving regional actors and international organizations, to complement military action. This study highlighted the complexities of using military interventions in response to transnational terrorism and the need for a more nuanced, coordinated approach. The study's conclusion emphasized that long-term stability would require addressing political grievances and fostering economic development in conflict zones.

Garcia (2018) explored the role of international institutions in shaping state responses to transnational terrorism, particularly focusing on the U.S. and European Union's counterterrorism policies. The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining policy document analysis with interviews of policymakers involved in counterterrorism efforts. Garcia's findings revealed that the U.S. emphasized unilateral military responses, whereas the EU adopted a more multilateral approach that relied on diplomatic efforts, human rights, and development aid. The study found that the U.S. was quick to deploy military forces in response to terrorist attacks, such as the 9/11 attacks, but lacked long-term strategies for nation-building. The EU, in contrast, used diplomatic channels such as the UN and regional frameworks to engage in counterterrorism, including negotiations and economic assistance to vulnerable states. Garcia recommended that a more integrated approach be taken, blending both military and diplomatic responses, to address the complexities of transnational terrorism. The study concluded that the EU's emphasis on diplomatic efforts and international cooperation had been more successful in fostering long-term peace in regions affected by terrorism.

Miller (2019) conducted a study on the diplomatic responses of the United Kingdom to transnational terrorism, focusing on the role of international sanctions and multilateral cooperation. Using qualitative analysis of British government reports, policy documents, and case studies of diplomatic engagement, Miller examined the UK's response to terrorism in the Middle East and Africa. Findings showed that the UK adopted a more balanced approach, utilizing both military strikes and diplomatic sanctions to pressure states that were accused of harboring terrorist organizations. The study also found that the UK's diplomatic efforts, including active participation in UN peacekeeping missions and intelligence-sharing, were critical in preventing the spread of terrorism in Europe. Miller argued that the UK's success in combating terrorism could be attributed to its ability to engage with international partners and implement multilateral agreements. The study recommended that countries facing similar threats should prioritize multilateral diplomatic efforts alongside military responses.

Kamau (2021) examined the effectiveness of military versus diplomatic responses to the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, comparing the Nigerian military's approach with diplomatic initiatives from the international community. Using a comparative case study methodology, Kamau analyzed military reports and diplomatic communications from Nigeria, the African Union, and the United Nations. Findings revealed that the military efforts to combat Boko Haram were largely ineffective in the long term due to the group's ability to adapt to changing security conditions. However, Kamau found that regional diplomatic efforts, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force, were more successful in containing Boko Haram's expansion. The study recommended enhancing regional cooperation and focusing on diplomatic negotiations with local communities to address the root causes of insurgency. Kamau argued that diplomatic engagement with local populations, especially through educational and development programs, would provide a more sustainable solution to the Boko Haram crisis.

Pottier (2020) focused on France's military response to transnational terrorism in the Sahel region, specifically Operation Barkhane. The study used ethnographic methods and interviews with military personnel involved in the operation to assess the effectiveness of France's counterterrorism strategy. Findings indicated that while Operation Barkhane succeeded in reducing terrorist group presence, it failed to stabilize the broader region or address local grievances that fueled extremism. Pottier's research suggested that military operations alone could not address the socio-political issues contributing to terrorism in the Sahel. The study recommended that France and its international partners prioritize developmental aid and local governance reforms alongside military operations. The findings underscored the importance of combining military efforts with long-term peacebuilding initiatives to achieve lasting stability in the region.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Research Gaps: While many studies (Sandler, 2019; Garcia, 2018) examine military and diplomatic responses separately, there is a need for deeper exploration of how these responses can be effectively integrated to form a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. Future research could focus on frameworks for balancing military action with diplomatic and economic measures. A gap exists in the longitudinal analysis of state responses, especially military interventions, and their long-term consequences on global security, such as destabilization and resurgence of extremist groups. A study like Chester (2021) could be extended to investigate longer-term trends in terrorist activities following interventions.

Contextual Research Gaps: Studies like Juma (2020) highlight the importance of regional cooperation, yet further research is needed on how different regions (e.g., African, Middle Eastern, European) adapt and cooperate in transnational counterterrorism efforts. More in-depth analyses could be conducted on the nuances of regional diplomacy and its effectiveness in combating terrorism. While some studies (Pottier, 2020) emphasize the socio-political aspects of terrorism, more research is needed on how socio-economic development initiatives can complement military responses. The impact of poverty, education, and governance on the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies remains underexplored.

Geographical Research Gaps: Studies such as Juma (2020) and Kamau (2021) focus on East Africa, yet there is a gap in understanding the counterterrorism strategies in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, such as West and Central Africa. More region-specific studies could investigate how countries in these regions are handling terrorism and their state responses. While studies like Sandler (2019) examine responses in developed countries (U.S., UK, Saudi Arabia), there is a gap in the comparative analysis of responses between developed and developing nations, especially in the context of military, diplomatic, and economic capabilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study of transnational terrorism and state responses reveals a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires coordinated global efforts. The research highlights that states employ a variety of strategies, ranging from military interventions to diplomatic engagement and economic sanctions, in response to the threat of terrorism. Developed countries such as the U.S., UK, and Saudi Arabia primarily rely on military interventions and intelligence-sharing, while some African nations like Kenya and Nigeria emphasize regional cooperation and multilateral peacekeeping efforts. However, despite these varied approaches, the effectiveness of state responses remains mixed, as military actions often fail to address the root causes of extremism, and diplomatic solutions may struggle in conflict-prone regions.

The comparative analysis underscores the importance of integrating military, diplomatic, and development strategies to create a comprehensive counterterrorism approach. The research also suggests that addressing socio-economic factors, such as poverty, education, and governance, is crucial for long-term success. Furthermore, the study reveals significant regional differences in counterterrorism strategies, with some regions relying more on military responses while others prioritize diplomacy and development. Moving forward, it is clear that a more nuanced, coordinated global effort is necessary to combat transnational terrorism, ensuring that both immediate threats and the underlying causes of extremism are effectively addressed.

Recommendations

Theory

Future research should focus on developing comprehensive theoretical frameworks that integrate military, diplomatic, and development strategies. Existing studies tend to isolate these approaches, but their simultaneous application could provide more effective and sustainable solutions. A unified model would allow for a deeper understanding of how these strategies can complement

one another, rather than functioning as separate responses to terrorism. Theoretical work should further explore the socio-economic factors that underpin terrorism, including poverty, governance failure, and lack of education. Theories that incorporate these factors can help explain the rise of extremism and can be used to develop counterterrorism strategies that address these root causes. The development of region-specific theories that emphasize the importance of transnational cooperation, especially in Africa and the Middle East, could provide insights into the effectiveness of collaborative security frameworks. These theories could address the unique challenges faced by different regions while fostering cooperation among states.

Practice

States should adopt a holistic approach to counterterrorism that integrates military, diplomatic, and economic strategies. This could include expanding intelligence-sharing, engaging in diplomatic dialogues with neighboring states, and investing in development initiatives to mitigate the conditions that breed extremism. For instance, while military operations may disrupt terrorist organizations, economic development and good governance can reduce the risk of recruitment and foster long-term stability. Practical recommendations include establishing and strengthening regional cooperation frameworks, such as the African Union's efforts in the Sahel and the EU's involvement in counterterrorism in North Africa. Strengthening regional partnerships, especially in areas prone to transnational terrorism, can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of counterterrorism operations. It is crucial to tailor counterterrorism strategies to the specific political, social, and cultural contexts of affected regions. This localized approach would ensure that solutions are not only effective in the short term but are also sustainable in the long term, minimizing the risk of reintegration of extremist groups after military actions.

Policy

Policymakers must develop balanced frameworks that incorporate military actions alongside diplomatic engagement, development aid, and conflict resolution initiatives. A greater emphasis on international collaboration in policy, particularly in addressing root causes like poverty and inequality, would create long-term stability in terrorism-prone regions. Governments should provide more robust support for international organizations, such as the United Nations and regional peacekeeping initiatives, to ensure that multilateral efforts can effectively address terrorism across borders. Policies should focus on enhancing coordination among international stakeholders to avoid fragmented and inconsistent counterterrorism strategies. Policymakers should prioritize preventive measures that address factors contributing to terrorism before violence erupts. This includes investing in education, employment, and social integration programs, particularly in communities vulnerable to radicalization, as well as reinforcing the importance of human rights and justice in counterterrorism strategies.

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