

PAKISTAN'S OWN WAR ON TERROR: WHAT THE PAKISTANI PUBLIC THINKS

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In April 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the Pakistani Taliban was a “mortal threat” to the world.¹ By that time, militants associated with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, or the “Pakistani Taliban”) were closing in on the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, having already seized much of the Pashtun belt. Clinton’s apprehensions were not unfounded. Many, if not most, of the Islamist terrorist conspiracies disrupted or executed in Europe have had footprints in Pakistan’s tribal belt. The specter of the Taliban rampaging through the capital conjured corresponding fears that Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal—or elements thereof—would fall into the hands of Islamist militants, even though those fears were surely misplaced.

Concerns across the international community over Pakistan’s commitment and ability to repel the militants and restore the writ of law have been motivated by Pakistan’s lackluster track record. Past operations to combat domestic militants have been furtive, with varying degrees of dedication, and even greater variation in efficacy. Worse, many ended in defeat, sealed through peace deals that were cast in terms favorable to the militants. This is true even though as many as 1,100 security forces have perished in these battles and another 2,800 injured as of June 2009.²

While the army’s commitment to battling this internal threat has been suspect in international capitals—much less its nonexistent efforts to eliminate the Afghan Taliban from its territory and to curb Islamist militants operating in India from its territory—the Pakistani public has not supported its government’s participation in the U.S.-led war on terror. Worse yet, until the spring of 2009, Pakistan’s citizens have been hesitant to embrace their own war on terror despite the persistent encroachment of the Pakistani Taliban, with their micro-emirates of Shariah and the expansion of suicide bombing against Pakistani targets (police, paramilitary, military and government officials).

While the shortcomings of the security forces have been frequently com-

mented upon, Pakistan's public commitment to eliminating these militants has largely remained beyond the purview of scholarly commentary. Yet, contrary to popular belief, public sentiment does constrain military as well as political options in Pakistan, as evidenced by the eventual resignation of President Pervez Musharraf amidst calls for impeachment. This is evermore true with the return of civilian governance, however inept it may be.

Pakistani public attitudes are critical to Pakistan's ability and political will to stay involved in military operations against the militants. This essay explores the Pakistani public's attitudes about the militants targeting their own state and the state's efforts to contend with these threats.³ To do so, this essay employs several data sets collected since the events of 9/11, including urban data collected in the summer of 2007 in a study commissioned by the author under the auspices of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in collaboration with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA).⁴ It also draws from the urban data collected by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, as well as several years of data collected by the International Republican Institute (IRI), which was fielded among a robust, nationally representative sample.⁵ IRI's most recent publicly released poll was fielded in July-August 2009. Finally, this essay employs nationwide data from May 2009 collected by PIPA in collaboration with the author.⁶

This essay is organized as follows: first, the paper provides a brief overview of militant groups operating in and from Pakistan and the interconnections that exist among them. This is critical to understanding where the TTP exists within the landscape of Pakistan's myriad militant groups. Next it exposits, according to different data, how Pakistanis perceive the threat posed by Islamist militant groups operating in and from their country. It then examines Pakistanis' beliefs about their government's approach to handling militancy, including military means, negotiating with militants and allying itself with the United States. Where appropriate, it will provide analyses of how these issues are viewed differently by respondents across Pakistan's four provinces. The essay concludes with some reflections on the policy implications of its principle findings.

PAKISTAN'S MILITANT LANDSCAPE⁷

Numerous militant groups have operated from and within Pakistan for decades. Some of these have traditionally focused upon Kashmir, including the Deobandi groups of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Harkat-ul-Ansar/Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUA/HUM), Ahl-e-Hadith organizations such as Punjab-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jamaat-e-Islami associated groups such as Hizbul Mujahideen and Al Badr. While these groups are often referred to as "Kashmiri groups," this is a misnomer as they have few ethnic Kashmiris among their ranks and most of these

groups do not operate exclusively in Kashmir. These so-called Kashmiri groups are widely viewed as assets of the state, raised and supported by the Pakistani security establishment to carry out Pakistan's interests in India. Other Pakistan-based groups have traditionally focused upon sectarian targets such as the Deobandi anti-Shia groups, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). Many of these Deobandi groups share overlapping membership with each other and with the religious party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI).⁸

In addition, from the 1970s through September 2001, Pakistan also supported numerous Pashtun militias to secure its interests in Afghanistan, the most notorious of which was the Afghan Taliban. While Pakistan has been nominally allied to the United States in its effort to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan continues to host apex Afghan Taliban leadership who, along with Al Qaeda, enjoy sanctuary in the Pashtun territories of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)⁹ and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) as well as key cities throughout Pakistan.¹⁰

Since 2004 Pakistan has witnessed the emergence of a cluster of militant groups whose activists describe themselves as "Pakistani Taliban" and who, since then, have successfully established an archipelago of micro-emirates of Shariah within large swathes of the Pashtun belt inclusive of the FATA and the NWFP. While various Pakistani Taliban commanders have operated in specific agencies (e.g., Baitullah Mehsud, Maulvi Nazir, Mullah Fazlullah, Maulvi Faqir, et al.), in late 2007 many of these commanders coalesced under the banner of the "Pakistani Taliban," under the purported leadership of Baitullah Mehsud based in South Waziristan in the FATA. Despite this, there was no evidence that the TTP acted as a coherent entity under the firm command and control of Mehsud. (Baitullah Mehsud was killed in a U.S. drone strike in August 2009. Hakimullah Mehsud has taken over the leadership of the TTP and has perpetrated numerous attacks against Pakistani security forces since the end of September 2009.) The rise of this collective of Islamist militants operating against the state with the goal of establishing local spheres of Shariah in their areas of influence seems to have coincided with, or was precipitated by, the Pakistani military operations in the FATA as well as U.S. strikes in the FATA by unmanned aerial vehicles (e.g., predator and reaper drones).¹¹

While this "Talibanization" of the Pashtun belt began in North and South Waziristan in 2004, it quickly spread to areas that had previously been peaceful, such as in the Mohmand, Orakzai and Kurram agencies. Pakistani Taliban militants have also emerged in the frontier areas of Bannu, Tank, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, Swat and Buner.¹² Since the summer of 2007, Pakistan has battled the Pakistani militants associated with the Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Shariah-

Muhammadi (TNSM), which seized the Swat Valley in late October 2007.¹³ TNSM is one of the groups nominally allied to Mehsud's TTP.

While Pakistan continues to see some groups as assets (e.g., the so-called Kashmiri groups and the Afghan Taliban), the state has launched, with varying degrees of commitment and success, a low intensity conflict against several components of the TTP using the paramilitary Frontier Corps and elements of the regular army. The armed forces have suffered numerous defeats and have ratified these defeats on the ground with several problematic peace deals with militants—all of which have been on favorable terms to the militants and all of which have been broken even as the ink was drying.¹⁴

While the capabilities of the army have no doubt shaped its lack of will, another important factor is that the Pakistani public has not—until very recently—embraced these military engagements. Without popular support, Pakistan's military leadership cannot engage effectively, at least in part because the Pakistani army is sensitive to its standing among Pakistanis and to the impact of these unpopular operations on the morale of the institution of the army. In an effort to understand and contextualize the political constraints of these operations, the rest of this essay examines Pakistani public opinion toward these anti-state militant groups and state efforts to undermine them.

PAKISTANI PERCEPTIONS OF AND SUPPORT FOR ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY¹⁵

There are few data sources regarding the Pakistani public's attitudes about militancy and the groups that engage in violence that span several years, and there are none that predate the events of 9/11. One important source of such information is the Pew Foundation, which has been surveying Pakistan since early 2002 as part of the Global Attitudes Survey. For several years, Pew has asked the following question in Pakistan and several other countries to measure support for suicide terrorism and other attacks against civilians to defend Islam:

Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

When Pew first fielded this question to a largely urban sample in 2002, 33 percent believed that such attacks were often or sometimes justified. In March 2004, this number actually increased to 41 percent. In 2005, this figure declined

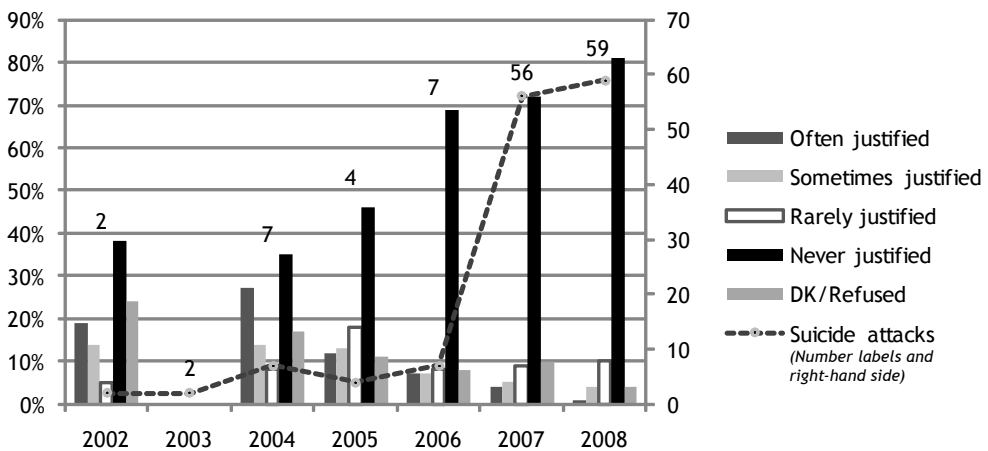
to 25 percent and to 14 percent in 2006. By 2007, only 9 percent believed that such attacks were often or sometimes justified. Support declined even further by 2008. At the same time, the percentage that believed it was rarely or never justified climbed from 43 percent in 2002 to 91 percent in 2008 (see Figure 1). This sharp decline in support for suicide attacks and the sharp increase in the opposition to such attacks is likely due to the fact that since 2006 in particular, Pakistan has witnessed numerous suicide attacks itself, as shown in Figure 1.

The IRI has also fielded surveys in Pakistan at regular intervals between June 2007 and March 2009. In the IRI's nationally representative sample (which includes a majority of rural respondents), a solid but fluctuating majority agreed that religious extremism is a serious problem (see Figure 2). IRI also asked if respondents agree or disagree as to whether "The Taliban and Al Qaeda Operating in Pakistan is a Serious Problem." In most intervals, the majority of respondents viewed both the Taliban and Al Qaeda as a threat (see Figure 3) with the notable exceptions of IRI's polls in June and October 2008.

These results track with the most recent polling by PIPA from May 2009. PIPA

The sharp decline in support for suicide attacks is likely due to the fact that since 2006, Pakistan has witnessed numerous suicide attacks itself.

Figure 1: Pakistani Support for Suicide Bombings and Annual Numbers of Suicide Attacks in Pakistan

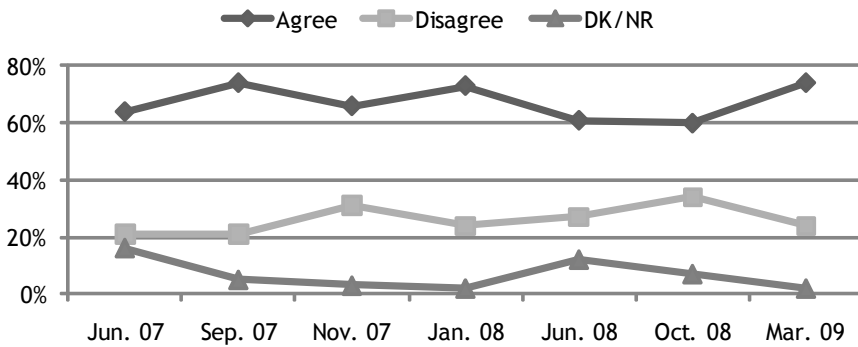


Source: Survey results for all years are available in Pew Research Center, Pew Global Attitudes Survey Project, "Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe," 17 September 2008, 64. Data on annual suicide attacks taken from South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Fidayeen (Suicide Squad) Attacks in Pakistan," updated 2 March 2009. Available at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/Fidayeenattack.htm>. Note that different sources of counts vary.

asked of a nationally representative sample whether the “activities of the Taliban and religious militants in FATA and settled areas of Pakistan”¹⁶ pose a “critical threat,” an “important but not critical threat” or are “not a threat” at all over the next ten years. Solid majorities identified them as a critical threat (81 percent) or an important but not critical threat (14 percent). This was an enormous increase over the PIPA/USIP survey in 2007 when only a third thought they posed a critical threat and about one in four an important threat. Similarly, in May 2009, a solid majority (67 percent) believed that the activities of militant groups in Pakistan as a whole posed a “critical threat” and another 18 percent indicated that they were an “important threat.”¹⁷

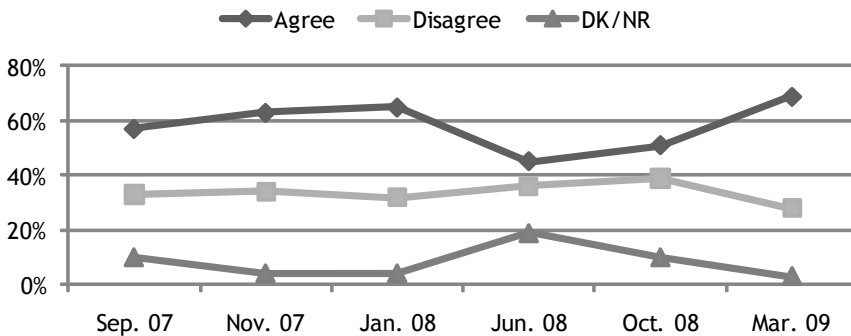
The author, working with PIPA, examined how these key threat perceptions varied across Pakistan’s four main provinces according to the May 2009 data.¹⁸

Figure 2: Agree or disagree? Religious extremism is a serious problem in Pakistan



Source: IRI Index, “Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion,” 7-30 March 2009, www.iri.org.

Figure 3: Agree or disagree? The Taliban and Al Qaeda operating in Pakistan are a serious threat



Source: IRI Index, “Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion,” 7-30 March 2009, www.iri.org.

There are large differences between the provinces selected for discussion here and in the next section. The smallest variations reported here are in the 20-point range; most are in the 30- to 50-point range. The variations in each question offered are at the $p < .001$ level of significance. The paper seeks to discuss and interpret only these very robust inter-provincial differences.¹⁹ Differences in sample means based upon whether the respondents lived in rural or urban areas were also examined; however, few notable differences were found.²⁰

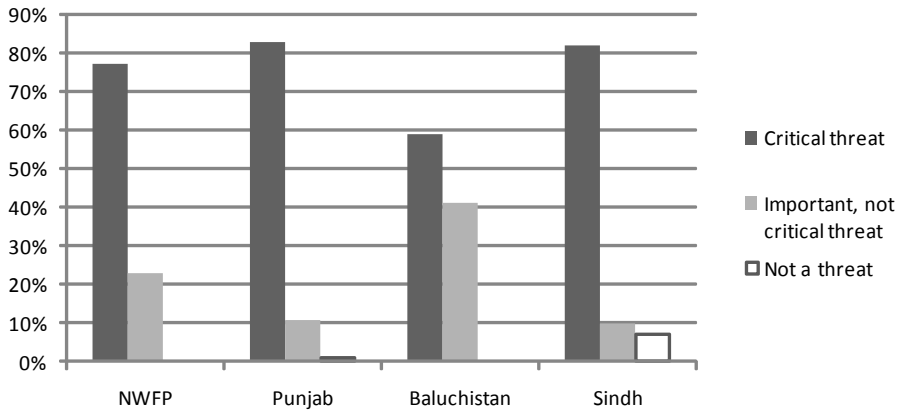
With few exceptions, such as the suicide attack against Benazir Bhutto in Karachi upon her return to Pakistan, the NWFP and Punjab have experienced the brunt of the violence perpetrated by the Pakistani Taliban and allied militant groups (including foreign militants). These provinces, especially the NWFP, are also closest to the epicenter of the state's campaigns against the militants. In contrast, both Sindh and Baluchistan have experienced other kinds of violence in the past, but they have been relatively spared the predations of the Pakistani Taliban. Perhaps for these reasons, considerable differences in threat perception are manifest across the provinces. This is true for Baluchistan, even though the Afghan Taliban have long used Baluchistan's territory as a sanctuary, without making Baluchistan itself a focus of operations.

When the PIPA team asked respondents whether the "activities of the Taliban and Religious militants in FATA and settled areas of Pakistan" pose a "critical threat," an "important but not critical threat" or were "not a threat" over the next ten years, respondents in the Punjab, Sindh and NWFP overwhelmingly believed they were a "critical threat." Respondents in Baluchistan were less likely to hold this view. When one adds those who indicated that these groups are an "important but not critical threat," however, solid majorities across *all* provinces perceive groups to pose some kind of threat (see Figure 4). When respondents were asked to evaluate whether the "activities of religious militant groups in Pakistan as a whole" posed a "critical threat," an "important but not critical threat" or "no a threat at all," survey participants responded similarly to the above question, with respondents in NWFP and Punjab demonstrating a substantially stronger threat perception than those in Baluchistan and Sindh.²¹

These data collectively suggest that Pakistanis are not insouciant about the threat that militants pose to Pakistan. In fact, in recent years, popular threat perceptions of these groups seem to have hardened. Given the different experiences with these groups across the four provinces, there are significant differences

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Figure 4: Provinces—Threat Posed by Activities of Islamist Militants and Local Taliban in FATA and Settled Areas



Source: C. Christine Fair, “Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View From the Provinces,” 24 July 2009. Available at www.worldpublicopinion.org.

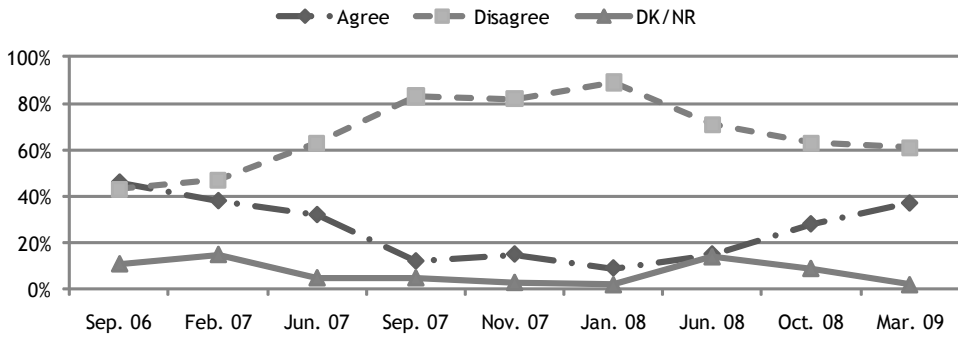
across the country in this threat perception, as expected. As the next section shows, however, Pakistanis remain deeply hesitant about the best course of action. Despite the serious and deepening degradation of security for Pakistan’s citizens, they remain at best ambivalent about armed responses against the militants ravaging the country.

PAKISTANI SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT’S HANDLING OF PAKISTAN’S INSURGENCY

Several data sets provide insights into Pakistani popular beliefs about the state’s handling of the internal security crisis. IRI has collected data systematically on this issue between September 2007 and July 2009. Since the fall of 2006, IRI has asked a nationally representative sample of respondents whether they think that “Pakistan should cooperate with the United States on its war against terror?” When IRI asked this question in September 2006, Pakistani respondents were divided with somewhat more respondents supporting cooperation (46 percent) than those who opposed it (43 percent). Resistance steadily increased until January 2008, however, when it peaked at 89 percent and support bottomed out at 9 percent. Since then, as Pakistan increasingly became a target of domestic terrorism, popular opposition has declined and support has increased. Nonetheless in the March 2009 IRI survey, a majority (61 percent) still disapprove of cooperation with Washington compared to 37 percent that support it (see Figure 5). In IRI’s most recent survey dated July 2009, 80 percent of respondents disagreed with Pakistan’s cooperation with Washington in its war on terror.²²

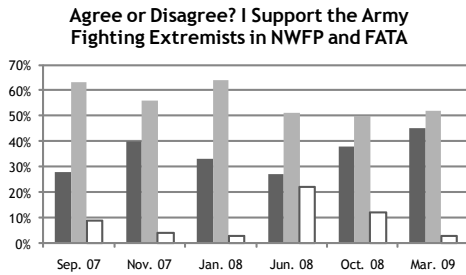
IRI’s data on popular views of the Pakistani government’s handling of mili-

Figure 5: Do you think that Pakistan should cooperate with the United States on its war against terror?

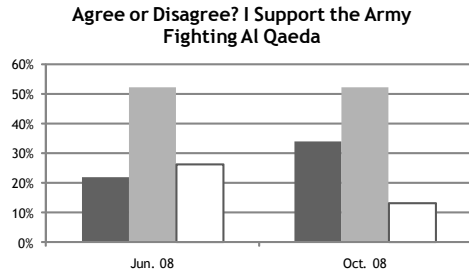


Source: IRI Index, "Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 7-30 March 2009, www.iri.org.

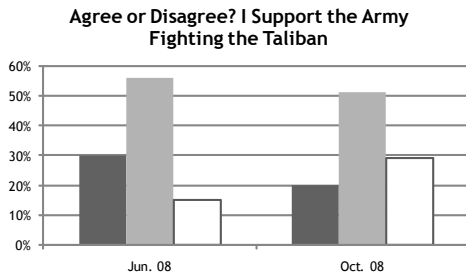
Figure 6: Pakistani Views Toward Various Military Approaches Toward Different Militant Groups



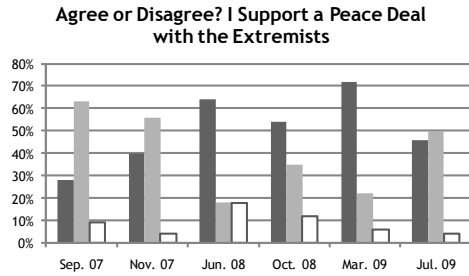
Source: IRI Index, "Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 15 July-7 August 2009, www.iri.org.



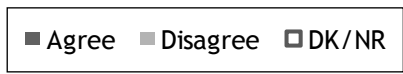
Source: IRI Index, "Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 15-30 October 2009, www.iri.org.



Source: IRI Index, "Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 15-30 October 2009, www.iri.org.



Source: IRI Index, "Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 15 July-7 August 2009, www.iri.org.



tants within Pakistan remains mixed. As the data summarized in Figure 6 suggest, Pakistanis have until recently been divided about their army's operations against militants in the NWFP and FATA, staunchly opposed to fighting Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban and continue to be extremely supportive of the infamous and ignominious peace deals that have been inked with domestic militants since 2004.²³ Polling since early 2009 indicates important changes. Following the failed peace deal with militants who had seized Swat and the overreaching of the Taliban into Buner, the public turned dramatically against peace deals and increasingly supported their military's fight against the extremists. This trend actually strengthened in the July 2009 poll, fielded after sustained military operations to oust the militants from Swat.

Such sustained support was curious given that *every* peace deal had been broken by the militants and none had secured any modicum of lasting peace. One explanation

for this generally sustained support for peace deals, developed over numerous trips to Pakistan, is that Pakistanis *outside* of FATA and NWFP have been willing to concede to such erosion of state sovereignty provided that doing so affords Pakistanis, particularly in the Punjab, protection from suicide bombing and other acts of terrorism. Implicit in this assumption is the belief that the militants will not seek to expand their sphere of influence east of the Indus river. Rooted in Pakistan's colonial history, this remains an important geographical point of reference for many Pakistanis in the settled areas as it is widely seen as demarcating the border between the "uncivilized, unsettled world" of the Pashtuns and that of the settled heartland of Pakistan, the

Pakistanis outside of FATA and NWFP have been willing to concede to such erosion of state sovereignty as long as doing so affords them protection from terrorism.

Punjab. In this sense, the Taliban's push into Buner likely convinced Pakistanis that the Pakistani Taliban will not remain confined to the Pashtun belt, which raised the cost of successively failed peace deals while rendering the public more receptive to military action. It should be noted however that even in the most recent poll, fewer than one in two support military action.

While Pakistanis have been wary of military action in the FATA and elsewhere, USIP/PIPA data from 2007 revealed that Pakistanis do support political reform for the FATA.²⁴ When asked whether they supported leaving the colonial-era and draconian Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) unchanged, modifying it "slowly over time such that the people there should have the same rights and responsibilities as all other Pakistanis," or abolishing it such that "the people there should have

the same rights and responsibilities as all other Pakistanis,” only a slim minority (8 percent) favored leaving the FCR intact.²⁵ The largest percentage, 46 percent, favored modification, and more than one in four favored abolishing it altogether.

While there may have been ambivalence about the government's policy of military action, appeasement of the militants and political reform seemed quite palatable to much of the public. Unfortunately, while Pakistan's political leaders have episodically made public proclamations about political reform, they have not actually initiated any such reforms of the FCR in the FATA.

The data above show that, at least up until March 2009, Pakistanis were deeply ambivalent about the best way to contend with those groups which Pakistanis nearly universally see as a threat, with respondents preferring political reform of the militant-affected areas and peace deals over military action.

Despite these enduring trends, recent polling data from May 2009 suggest that some important shifts seem to have occurred. The IRI poll of March 2009 was fielded as the most recent peace deal was being negotiated between the TNSM militants and the government in the settled area of Swat. At that time, many Pakistanis were hopeful that the deal would in fact bring peace as evidenced by the IRI data.²⁶ By April 2009, the president and the parliament accepted the deal with the militants. By May 2009, however, the militants had continued their march into Buner, another settled district in closer proximity to Islamabad. This signaled that the militants would not confine themselves to the historical areas of chaos west of the Indus River.

In the meantime, video footage of a young woman being beaten in public by the Pakistani Taliban surfaced amidst some controversy and speculation about its authenticity. The video was shocking because the girl was beaten in public by “men with full beards” who were handling her while her *kameez* had risen up above her *salwar*. All of these elements are considered “indecent” in Pakistan even though some Pakistanis argued that Shariah does permit such beatings in private.²⁷

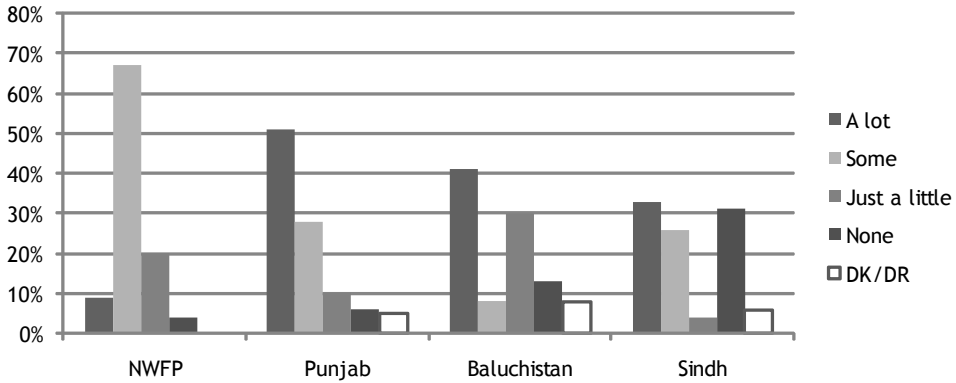
The conjoined developments of the militants' push beyond the Indus and the disturbing video of the girl's disgraceful beating jolted Pakistanis—particularly in the traditionally liberal Punjab—out of their complacency regarding the goals of the militants. Indeed, according to PIPA's May 2009 nationally representative data analyzed by the author across the four provinces, respondents in the Punjab, as well as NWFP, were much more likely than those in Baluchistan or Sindh to believe that the Pakistani Taliban sought to control all of Pakistan rather than merely the Pashtun belt.²⁸

In the wake of these events, the army moved swiftly to displace the militants from Buner and Swat. In doing so, they also displaced millions of civilians; between these operations and those in Bajaur and other parts of the FATA, more

than three million civilians have been displaced.²⁹ At the same time, the military launched a major campaign to mobilize support. Data from PIPA’s May 2009 poll indicated that a remarkable shift in opinion had occurred toward the militants, peace deals and military operations. This optimism should be subject to important caveats. Notably, PIPA did not use the same questions as used by IRI even though both organizations used the same polling firm in Pakistan. Thus these questions, while similar, cannot be strictly compared. Second, there is no way of confirming that changes in public opinion were in fact caused by these events although it is highly likely given the degree of public outrage precipitated by the fall of Buner.

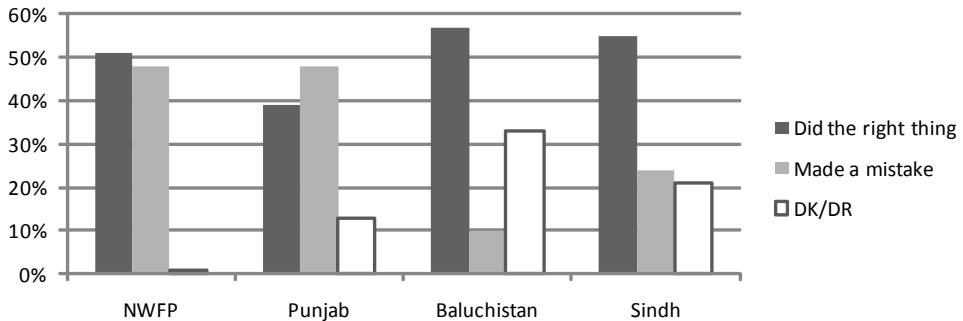
In the backdrop of Buner’s fall, the PIPA team asked respondents how much confidence they have “in the way that the military is dealing with the Pakistan

Figure 7: Provinces—How much confidence do you have in the way that the military is handling the Pakistani Taliban?



Source: C. Christine Fair, “Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View From the Provinces,” 24 July 2009. Available at www.worldpublicopinion.org.

Figure 8: Provinces—Do you think the government “did the right thing” or “made a mistake” in forging the peace deal in Swat?



Source: C. Christine Fair, “Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View From the Provinces,” 24 July 2009. Available at www.worldpublicopinion.org.

Taliban.” A plurality, 40 percent, said that they had “a lot” of confidence, and another 32 percent indicated that they had “some” confidence. Nearly one in four indicated that they had “just a little” or none.³⁰

PIPA also asked respondents whether or not the government “did the right thing” when it forged the peace deal with the militants in Swat or whether it “made a mistake.” Whereas IRI found that 80 percent of respondents supported the deal in Swat in March 2009, PIPA found that 45 percent supported the government and 40 percent thought it had made a mistake. Fifteen percent either declined to answer or did not have an opinion.³¹ Moreover, whereas IRI found that 74 percent of respondents believed that the deal would bring peace, in May 2009 PIPA found that a majority, 69 percent, did not believe that the “Pakistani Taliban” would fulfill their commitment.³²

Just as there were significant inter-provincial differences regarding threat perceptions, across the provinces there were also different views about the state’s efforts. When asked how confident respondents were in how the “government is dealing with the situation in Malakand area in and around Swat,” residents of the NWFP were most likely not to have “a lot” of confidence. NWFP has experienced sustained if brutal and devastating army operations which have demolished vast swathes of residential areas and displaced millions of persons fleeing the army-led and militant-led violence. These realities notwithstanding, a solid majority of respondents in the NWFP evinced some degree of confidence. Respondents in Baluchistan, Sindh and Punjab were most likely to indicate “a lot” of confidence. Residents in Sindh and Baluchistan were divided, however, with as many indicating that they have “just a little” or “no” confidence in the government’s handling, as seen in the data in Figure 7.

Respondents were also asked whether the agreement between the government and the Pakistani Taliban was “the right thing” to do or whether the government “[made] a mistake.” As shown in Figure 8, respondents in Baluchistan and Sindh were the most supportive of the deal and least likely to view it as a mistake. Recall that Baluchistan and Sindh have seen virtually no Pakistani Taliban-related violence. The Punjab had the lowest percentage believing that the deal was the right thing to do. Opinion was divided in the NWFP, with nearly equal numbers believing it was the right thing to do or a mistake. The NWFP’s divided response may be understandable, given that residents there have been battered by the military as well as the Taliban.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The PIPA May 2009 survey data indicated that an important change had occurred in Pakistani public attitudes toward the Pakistani Taliban and mili-


tary action against them. IRI's more recent polling from the summer of 2009 suggest a public that is increasingly disinclined toward peace deals and more supportive of military efforts against the militants. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether these attitudes will persist as the army launches new offensives into South Waziristan and as the militants redouble their efforts to terrorize the public throughout the NWFP and Punjab. The persistent crisis of Pakistan's internally displaced persons may also affect public opinion toward military action, especially as winter sets in.

As of August 2009, residents have been returning to Buner and Swat; however, many remain dubious about security and have refused to return, an issue that is even more true for those who fled Bajaur. Wealthy landlords from Swat whose land was seized by the Pakistani Taliban and redistributed to the needy remain unwilling to return. Worse, this has created a class of beneficiaries who are beholden to the Pakistani Taliban for giving them land seized from the landlords.³³ Many Pakistanis interviewed by the author in April of 2009 are concerned about the influx of Pashtuns in part because of some degree of racism against Pashtuns (especially among Punjabis) and in part because some Pakistanis believe that Pashtuns have religious and social practices that do not conform to those of Pakistanis elsewhere, especially in the more liberal Punjab.³⁴

Moreover, while this shift in attitudes toward appeasing the militants through peace deals is important, its modest magnitude should be kept in mind. Pakistanis have not completely rejected peace deals; rather, they have simply become more ambivalent about them in opposition to overwhelming support as evidenced in earlier polls. Similarly, Pakistanis have not warmed entirely toward military action against the militants; instead, they have become more ambivalent compared to previous staunch opposition evidenced in earlier polls.³⁵

Finally, as the discussion of interprovincial differences suggests, while many U.S. analysts focus upon Pakistan and overall Pakistani opinion, analysts should note that there are in fact many Pakistani publics with varying opinions. Clearly there is a wide divergence in public views about these issues—variations which appear related to different provincial experiences of proximity to war, inefficacy of state institutions, violence and intimidation. This is in addition to other demographic, socioeconomic and social differences that exist across populations in the four provinces.

As the United States tries to craft its information policies toward Pakistan's polity to garner support for its war on terrorism, and as the Pakistani government communicates with its citizenry about the same, it would be wise for the U.S. and Pakistani governments to better understand how people across Pakistan variously understand the problems facing their nation, and how they evaluate the

state's efforts to contend with its unstable environment. Without sustained public demands for action, the army's ability to sustain its operations will remain in doubt. 

NOTES

¹ Editorial, "A mortal threat from Pakistan," *Boston Globe*, 26 April 2009.

² Briefing by Pakistani army personnel at the National Defense University in June 2009.

³ Note that the Pakistani army does not practice a population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine; rather they practice low-intensity (conventional) conflict (LIC). For this reason, this essay does not use COIN to discourage any confusion between what the Pakistanis are doing (LIC) and what the international community wants them to do (COIN). See C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, "Pakistan's Operations against Militants," *Survival* (forthcoming December 2009). Pakistani views of militant groups operating in India and Afghanistan have been explored elsewhere by the author; see, for example, C. Christine Fair, Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay, "Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US," (Washington, D.C.: PIPA/USIP, 7 January 2008).

⁴ The author, working under the auspices of USIP, in collaboration with research staff from PIPA, developed a comprehensive questionnaire to probe Pakistani public opinion on a wide array of domestic and foreign policy concerns. These questions pertain to their attitudes to numerous militant groups operating in Pakistan, including Al Qaeda, the Taliban, various *askari tanzeems* engaged over Kashmir, sectarian militant groups and ethnic militant movements such as the insurgency in Baluchistan and previous conflicts in Sindh. Questions to ascertain views about policy issues covered the government's handling of the crisis in FATA and at the Red Mosque, among other public policies. The instrument also queried respondents' opinions about several kinds of militant targets (e.g. Indian police, women and children of armed forces personnel, civilian targets such as parliament and national assemblies). The survey was conducted from 12 to 18 September, just before President Pervez Musharraf declared a six-week state of emergency and before the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The sample included 907 Pakistani urban adults, selected using multi-stage probability sampling, who were interviewed at home in nineteen cities across all of Pakistan's provinces. The margin of error is +/- 3.3 percent. The bulk of this essay derives from analyses of these data. See C. Christine Fair, et al., "Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US."

⁵ For information on the Pew Global Attitudes Project, see <http://pewglobal.org>. For more information about the work done by IRI on Pakistani public opinions, see <http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan.asp>.

⁶ This poll was carried out by SEDCO (Socio-Economic Development Consultants, Islamabad, Pakistan). All interviewing was conducted in Urdu. A total of 1,000 face-to-face interviews were conducted across sixty-four primary sampling units in rural areas and thirty-six in urban areas. In order to properly capture opinion in Baluchistan (a multi-ethnic, sparsely populated province), it was oversampled, using fifteen primary sampling units; results were then weighted back to reflect true proportions among provinces. Interviews were conducted between 17 and 28 May 2009. Sampling error for a sample of this size is approximately +/-3.2 percentage points. See Clay Ramsay, Steven Kull, Stephen Weber, Evan Lewis, "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan and the US," (Washington, D.C.: PIPA, 2009).

⁷ This section draws from C. Christine Fair, "Who Are Pakistan's Militants and Their Families?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 1 (January 2008), 49-65; and C. Christine Fair, "Militant recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al-Qa'ida and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 6 (November/December 2004), 489-504.

⁸ C. Christine Fair, "Pakistan's Relations with Central Asia: Is Past Prologue?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 2008), 201-227; Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection* (London: C. Hurst, 2004); Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al-Qa'ida and Other Organizations."

⁹ FATA is comprised of seven agencies (or administrative units). These agencies, from north to south, are Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram and North and South Waziristan. In addition, FATA also includes several so-called "frontier regions" adjacent to the settled districts of

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Peshawar, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu and Tank. FATA is a relatively small area (27,000 square kilometers) and shares a 600-kilometer border with Afghanistan. According to Pakistan's most recent census of 1998, FATA's population is 3.1 million; however, unofficial estimates surpass 7 million. See Barnett R. Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate," USIP Special Report, October 2006.

¹⁰ See inter alia, Senator Carl Levin, "Opening Statement of Senator Carl Levin, Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on Afghanistan and Pakistan," 26 February 2009; Ian Katz, "Gates Says Militant Sanctuaries Pose Biggest Afghanistan Threat," *Bloomberg News*, 1 March 2009; Barnett R. Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs*, 86, no. 1 (January/February 2007). See comments made by National Intelligence Director John Negroponte cited in "Al-Qaeda 'rebuilding' in Pakistan," *BBC News Online*, 12 January 2007; and K. Alan Kronstadt, *U.S.-Pakistan Relations* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2008).

¹¹ While drone strikes were at first infrequent, they have become more routine. Between August 2008 and April 2009, there were at least 30 drone strikes which may have killed as many as 300 people. While the political leadership complains about this, it is widely believed that the targeting of militants in FATA is done with the tacit knowledge and input from the Pakistani army, public displays of outrage notwithstanding. "Many killed in 'US drone Attack,'" *BBC News*, 1 April 2009; Tom Coghlan, Zahid Hussain and Jeremy Page, "Secrecy and denial as Pakistan lets CIA use airbase to strike militants," *Times*, 17 February 2009.

¹² It should be noted that some of these so-called Pakistani Taliban are criminal elements (e.g. Mangal Bagh in Khyber) operating under the guise of Pakistani Taliban to garner both some sense of legitimacy but also to enjoy impunity in their criminal enterprises.

¹³ Christine Fair, "Pakistan Loses Swat to Local Taliban," *Terrorism Focus* 4, no. 37 (14 November 2007).

¹⁴ This commitment is undermined by inadequate competence in conducting operations and by the fact that several Deobandi groups, including the JeM, are allies of the TTP and the state has been disinclined to eliminate the JeM. Fair and Jones, "Pakistan's Operations against Militants."

¹⁵ This section does not address Pakistani views of India-oriented groups as this has been covered extensively in Fair, Ramsay and Kull, "Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the U.S."

¹⁶ This expression, "settled areas," derives from the colonial management of British India. The British promulgated a separate legal structure for the Pashtun belt along the Durand Line, which was the de facto border negotiated by British foreign secretary, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, with agents of the Afghan Amir Abdul Rahman Khan in 1893. When Pakistan became independent, it retained this separate legal status with the constitution of Pakistan covering the settled areas of the four provinces while retaining the Frontier Crimes Regulation over the tribal areas of FATA.

¹⁷ Clay Ramsay et al., "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan, and the U.S." (Washington D.C.: WorldPublicOpinion.org, 1 July 2009), 4.

¹⁸ Pakistan has four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and NWFP. In addition there are several territories that have distinct constitutional statuses that are not associated with any of the four provinces. These include: the FATA, the Northern Areas and Azad Kashmir.

¹⁹ Even so, given the sample size, there are limits to how fine disaggregation can be due to Pakistan's population distribution. For example, Baluchistan is the largest province in geographical size, but it is home to only 5 percent of the country's population, according to the most recent census in 1998. Moreover, Baluchistan is ethnically diverse, including Baluch, Pashtuns and Punjabis with Baluch and Pashtuns concentrated in different parts of the province. While the survey over-sampled Baluchistan, it is still possible that the Baluchistan sample does not perfectly reflect ethnic distributions within the province. Thus tabulations for Baluchistan in particular must be viewed with these caveats in mind. (Similar concerns pertain to Sindh but to a lesser degree.)

²⁰ C. Christine Fair, "Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View from the Provinces," (Washington D.C.: WorldPublicOpinion.org, 24 July 2009), 2.

²¹ Fair, "Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View from the Provinces."

²² International Republican Institute, "IRI Index: Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 15 July–7 August 2009. Available at <http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan.asp>.

²³ The Pakistani army forged its first peace deal with militant leader Nek Mohammad of South Waziristan. This accord, the Shakai Agreement, came in the aftermath of Pakistani operations in

Kalosha in March 2004. For a discussion of the ignominious terms of the deal, which ratified the army's defeat, see Iqbal Khattak, "I did Not Surrender to the Military, Sayd Nek Mohammad," *Friday Times*, 30 April–6 May 2004.

²⁴ For information about the PIPA-USIP data, see Fair, Kull and Ramsay, "Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US." This has also been born out by surveys conducted in FATA itself by CAMP, a Pakistani NGO working in FATA and the NWFP. See Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, *Understanding FATA: Attitudes Toward Governance, Religion and Society in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas* (Peshawar, Pakistan: Community Appraisal and Motivation Program, 2008).

²⁵ The FCR, as noted in footnote 16, is a colonial-era legal provision that governs FATA and incorporates the principle of collective responsibility. For this and other reasons, Pakistan's own high court at Peshawar has declared the FCR to be unconstitutional. Under the FCR, the rights and responsibilities of the Pakistani constitution are denied to residents of FATA. Instead, each agency is governed by a political agent (PA), which has magisterial powers. The PA traditionally governs with tribal elders (*maliks*) in conjunction with tribal consultation bodies or *jirgas*. Decisions of the PA executed through the *jirgas* are binding and not subject to appeal in any appellate court of Pakistan. Over the decades since independence, however, many of these *maliks* have become paid agents of the state rather than traditional tribal elders. (In recent years, many *maliks* have been killed by militants forcing them to flee.) The president of Pakistan governs FATA directly through the governor of the NWFP, acting through the political agents. While FATA has no provincial representation, it has senators and members of the national assembly elected through direct elections conducted on a non-party basis. For more discussion of this dispensation, see C. Christine Fair and Peter Chalk, *Fortifying Pakistan: The Role of U.S. Internal Security* (Washington D.C.: USIP, 2006).

²⁶ During field work in February 2009, the author did find many who were dubious about the terms of the peace deal and its impact even if it did bring about a cessation of violence.

²⁷ Author discussions with Pakistanis from NWFP, Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan in April 2007.

²⁸ Fair, "Islamist Militancy in Pakistan."

²⁹ See the website of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, "Pakistan: Displacement ongoing in a number of regions," n.d., <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/pakistan>. Accessed August 2, 2009.

³⁰ WorldPublicOpinion.Org, "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan and the U.S., Questionnaire," (Washington D.C.: PIPA, 1 July 2009); Ramsay et al., "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan, and the U.S."

³¹ See "IRI Index: Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 7-30 March 2009 (Washington D.C.: IRI, 2009) and WorldPublicOpinion.Org, "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan and the U.S., Questionnaire."

³² See "IRI Index: Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," 7-30 March 2009 and WorldPublicOpinion.Org, "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan and the U.S., Questionnaire."

³³ Jane Perlez and Zubai Shah, "Landowners Still in Exile From Unstable Pakistan Area," *New York Times*, 27 July 2009.

³⁴ The author is aware that these are sensitive judgments; however, the author has been visiting Pakistan since 1991, during which many Pashtun refugees were still in Pakistan fleeing the violence in Afghanistan. At that time the author was living in Lahore and travelled throughout the country. The author repeatedly witnessed ethnic bias against Pashtuns.

³⁵ See Ramsay et al., "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan and the US."