

Pakistani Attitudes towards Militancy in and beyond Pakistan¹

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Background to the Problem³

Prior to General Pervez Musharraf's acceptance of the US-given ultimatum to join the US-led global war on terrorism in September 2001, Pakistan's militant landscape could be meaningfully segregated by the group's sectarian orientation, its theatre of operation, and its ethnic constitution. For example, there were militant groups (*askari tanzeems*) that traditionally focused upon Kashmir, including the Deobandi groups of Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harkat-ul-Ansar/Harkat-ul-Mujahideen; Ahl-e-Hadith organisations such as Punjab-based Lashkar-e-Taiba; as well as groups operating under the influence of the Jamaat-e-Islami such as al-Badr and Hizbul Mujahideen, which tend to be comprised of Kashmiris. Other *askari tanzeems* (as Pakistanis often refer to the myriad militant groups operating in their country) have been traditionally sectarian in nature and include the anti-Shi'a Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan.⁴ Both are under the sway of the Deobandi organisation Jamiat-e-Ulema Islami (JUI) and

1. This essay was written in February 2007 and is based upon a recent poll fielded collaboratively by the author with Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay of PIPA. This survey was funded by the United States Institute of Peace. This work was undertaken while the author was with the USIP. She is now with the RAND Corporation. As such, the information cut-off for this essay is February 2007. Several surveys have been fielded subsequent to the USIP-backed effort and the findings presented here, fortunately, are stable. This essay represents her personal views and not those of USIP or RAND.
2. The author thanks Clay Ramsay and Steven Kull of PIPA for being superb collaborators.
3. This section draws from Fair, C. Christine (2008). "Who Are Pakistan's Militants and Their Families?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming) and Fair, C. Christine (2004). "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al-Qa'ida and Other Organizations", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27(6) (November/December).
4. Many of these groups have been proscribed numerous times only to re-emerge. Many now operate under new names. This essay uses the names which are likely to be most familiar to readers.

are funded by wealthy Arab individuals and organisations. Notably, many of these Deobandi *tanzeems* have overlapping membership and they also have strong connections to the JUI.⁵ In the past, Shi'a sectarian groups were also lethally active. These groups targeted Sunni Muslims and obtained funding from Iran, although these groups have largely disappeared.⁶

Since late 2001 and 2002, many of Pakistan's militant groups—particularly those of Deobandi background—have splintered and/or have reoriented in terms of targets and tactics. Many of the Deobandi groups are tightly allied to the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, and are increasingly aiming their resources at the Pakistani state even though some elements within these same groups continue to enjoy various levels of formal and informal state support. While their targets have included President Musharraf, they have also included other high-value military and civilian leaders. Al-Qaeda leaders continue to operate and plan attacks from the tribal areas, including Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Ubaidah al-Masri, and Abu al-Yazid. Recent attacks and plots—such as the successful July 2005 attack in London, transatlantic plot foiled in 2006, and plot to attack the US and German targets in 2007—have connections back to Pakistan's Pashtun belt. Since 2006, militants have launched sanguinary suicide attacks against Pakistan's national security establishment, including the Frontier Corps, intelligence services, and the army. While the actual numbers of suicide attacks dramatically increased in 2007, the aforementioned innovation in targeting seems to have occurred in 2006 in response to the US attacks on sites in Bajaur.⁷

5. Zahab, Mariam Abou and Olivier Roy (2004). *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection*. London: C. Hurst; Fair, C. Christine (2004). "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al-Qa'ida and Other Organizations", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27: 489–504 (November/December).

6. Since the onset of sanguinary sectarian violence in Iraq and Iran's 2006 victory in Lebanon, it has been suspected that Iran may once again be involved in inciting anti-Sunni violence in Pakistan. Indeed throughout 2007, Pakistan has seen a sharp increase in sectarian violence compared to 2006 or previous years. However, the overwhelming preponderance of those attacks has been perpetrated by anti-Shi'a militias. Thus, the allegations of Iran's involvement are not supported empirically at this point.

7. For example, on 5 November 2007, a suicide attacker assaulted army recruits doing exercises in north-west Pakistan, killing at least 41 soldiers and wounding dozens. This attack was reportedly in retaliation for the US strike on a purported *madrasa* on 30 October 2007 which killed 82 persons. See Constable, Pamela and Kamran Khan (2006). "Suicide Bombing Kills 41 Troops at Pakistani Army Base: Attack Called Reprisal for Strike on School", *Washington Post*, 9 November, at <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/08/AR2006110800397.html>

In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed the development of a militancy whose activists describe themselves as "Pakistani Taliban" (Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan or TTP). The rise of this movement seems to have coincided with or was precipitated by the Pakistani military operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). While the Pakistan army undertook military operations in the northern tribal agencies in 2002 in support of the US operations in Afghanistan, those early operations were successfully executed without significant repercussions. However, Pakistan's operations in Waziristan, which commenced in the south in the spring of 2004 and which focused upon foreign elements, were conducted with varying degrees of success and many failures.

Since 2001, Pakistan has lost at least 1400 troops (including the army, paramilitary forces such as the Frontier Corps, and police).⁸ Since 2004, the army has suffered several defeats, witnessed several bouts of humiliating surrenders to the Taliban, and has ratified several defeats through various formal deals with Taliban elements in North and South Waziristan. Episodic US strikes (as in Bajaur since January 2006 and intensifying throughout 2008) coupled with these Pakistani military inadequacies have fostered a widespread Islamist insurgency along the Afghan border with self-styled local Taliban establishing parallel systems of governance under purported Sharia rule. Since 2004, Pakistan has also witnessed the resurgence of al-Qaeda and concomitant "Pakistanisation" of al-Qaeda.

While the Talibanisation of the tribal areas was initially limited to North and South Waziristan, the phenomenon next spread to Bajaur. Most recently, the Pakistani Taliban have emerged in areas that had previously been peaceful, such as Mohmand agency, Orakzai, and Kurram. They have also emerged in the frontier areas of Bannu, Tank, Kohat, Lakki Marwar, Dera Ismil Khan, and Swat. Throughout the summer of 2007, the Frontier Corps (along with the Frontier Constabulary) battled the Pakistani militants associated with the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, who seized the Swat Valley

8. While US officials routinely acknowledge Pakistan's losses, it is difficult to assess the accuracy of these figures. Throughout 2008, Pakistan's operations in Bajaur in particular have accounted for mounting casualties for the armed forces. Thus, this number may be a significant undercounting of actual losses.

in late October.⁹ The valley was finally wrested from the militants when elements from the 11th Corps entered the fray. Pakistan's armed forces remain engaged in Swat.¹⁰ The reach of these groups also extends to Islamabad, as attested to by Taliban supporters who were ensconced in the Lal Masjid until the Pakistani security forces launched Operation Silence in July 2007 to oust them.¹¹ As many of the students in the associated *madaris* (pl. *madrasa*) were from Swat and Chitral, the backlash from this operation was witnessed in those areas and indeed the Swat crisis may have been precipitated by Operation Silence.

Some analysts fear that this insurgency, while politically framed in Islamist terms, has become a more generalised Pashtun insurgency mobilising supporters based upon local Pashtun grievances in various localities; threat perceptions of the Pakistani state; the international presence in Afghanistan; and apprehensions about the legitimacy of the Afghan and Pakistan governments under US-allied Presidents Karzai and Musharraf. Given that the Pakistan army lacks the counter-insurgency skills needed to combat the threat there and the Frontier Corps is under-equipped, poorly trained, and deeply compromised, the prospects for halting this movement are slim. Worse yet, the Pakistani polity has not embraced Pakistan's counterterrorism and counter-insurgency (COIN) efforts. Without political support, Pakistan's leadership will be unable to wage COIN effectively.

Because Pakistani public attitudes towards these efforts are critical to Pakistan's ability and political will to stay involved in COIN operations, this chapter explores several important clusters of Pakistani public attitudes, including their support for and threat perceptions of

9. Fair, Christine (2007). "Pakistan Loses Swat to Local Taliban", *Terrorism Focus* 4(37).

10. There is very little scholarly literature on this phenomenon, with most coverage taking place in the popular press or security publications. See, *inter alia*, Yusufzai, Rahimullah (2007). "The Emergence of the Pakistani Taliban", *Jane's Information Group*, 11 December, at <www8.janes.com>. See also Fair, C. Christine. "Pakistan Loses Swat to Local Taliban", n.8; Abbas, Hassan (2007). "Is the NWFP Slipping out of Pakistan's Control?" *Terrorism Monitor* 5(22); Abbas, Hassan (2007). "Increasing Talibanisation in Pakistan's Seven Tribal Agencies", *Terrorism Monitor* 5(18); Bakhtiar, Idrees (2007). "Between the Lines", *The Herald*, July; Khan, Ghafar Ali (2007). "The Lost Frontier", *The Herald*, July; Tohid, Owais (2004). "The New Frontier", *Newsline*, April; Tohid, Owais (2004). "The Warrior Tribes", *Newsline*, April; Hussain, Zahid (2004). "Al-Qaeda's New Face", *Newsline*, August.

11. Hussain, Zahid (2007). "The Battle for the Soul of Pakistan", *Newsline*, July, at <www.newsline.com.pk/NewsJul2007/cover1july2007.htm>

a variety of militant groups operating in and from Pakistan; support for the Pakistan government's handling of various crises and public policies related to militancy; beliefs about the government's ties to militant groups; and perceived benefits from the various groups. To do so, it employs 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).¹² After briefly describing the USIP data employed here, the remainder of the chapter first explores data that broadly address the degree to which Pakistanis have supported various forms of violence and the degree to which they perceive a wide array of militant groups as threats to Pakistani security.

The USIP-PIPA Dataset

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 19 cities across

12. For a presentation of the basic findings, see Fair, C. Christine Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay (2008). *Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US*. Washington DC: PIPA/USIP 7 January.

all of Pakistan's provinces. The margin of error is ± 3.3 per cent.¹³ The bulk of this chapter derives from analyses of these data.

Pakistani Threat Perceptions of and Support for Militant Activities

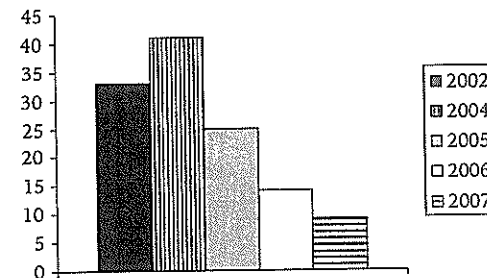
Unfortunately, there are relatively few robust data sources that provide insights into Pakistani public attitudes about militancy and the groups that engage in violence. One important source of such information is the Pew Foundation, which has been surveying Pakistan since early 2002 as a part of the Global Attitudes Survey. For several years, Pew has asked the below-given 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 national sample in 2002, one-third of the sample (33 per cent) believed that such attacks were often or sometimes justified.¹⁴ In March 2004, this number actually increased to 41 per cent.¹⁵ In 2005, this figure declined to 25 per cent¹⁶ and to 14 per cent in 2006.¹⁷ By 2007, only 9 per cent believed that such attacks were always or sometimes justified¹⁸ (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1

Pakistani Support for Suicide Bombings: Per cent Who Say "Always or Sometimes Justified"



The USIP/PIPA team asked a question similar to that used by Pew and obtained similar results. When the USIP/PIPA team posed the below question, 15 per cent indicated that such attacks are often or sometimes justified. Some two-thirds (66 per cent) said they were rarely or never justified. (20 per cent did not answer.)

Some people think that bombing and other types of attacks intentionally aimed at civilians are sometimes justified while others think that this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that such attacks are often justified, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

Note that while the question is similar, the USIP/PIPA question does not specifically mention suicide bombings. This—along with different sample structures and temporal affects—may explain the difference between the USIP/PIPA and Pew results.

While such questions have a general usefulness, previous survey work by the author and PIPA in Iran found that it is most useful to query respondents about particular groups of actors and targets rather than general and broad statements about violence. The USIP/PIPA team asked respondents about a series of militant groups operating in and from Pakistan, and whether these groups posed a threat to Pakistan. The survey team provided respondents with a list of groups in Pakistan that conduct various activities. For each one, the respondent indicated whether she or he sees "these activities as a threat or not to the vital interests of Pakistan in the next ten years". Respondents were asked about the "Activities of Sindhi nationalists in Pakistan"; "Activities of Mohajir nationalists in Pakistan"; "Activities of Baluch nationalists in Pakistan"; "Activities of Islamist militants and

13. Ibid.

14. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2002). "2002 Global Attitudes Survey, Final Topline", 4 December, at <pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/165topline.pdf>

15. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004). "Nine Nation Survey (March 2004), Final Top Line", 16 March, at <pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/206topline.pdf>

16. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2005). "Pew Global Attitudes Project, Spring 2005, 17-Nation Survey", 14 July, at <pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/248topline.pdf>

17. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2007). "Pew Global Attitudes Project: Spring 2007 Survey. Survey of 47 Publics. Final 2007 Trends Topline", 24 July, at <pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/257topline-trend.pdf>

18. Ibid.

local Taliban in FATA and settled areas"; "Activities of al-Qaeda"; and "Activities of *askari tanzeems* in Pakistan".

As the data in Table 6.1 demonstrate, Pakistanis do distinguish across these different groups with ethnic nationalists (Sindhi, Mohajir, and Baluch) registering far less concern than do Islamist militants (e.g., local Taliban, al-Qaeda and the *askari tanzeems*). In fact, a plurality finds the Islamist militants to pose critical threats to the state's vital interests, and solid majorities believe that they are either a critical or important threat. This certainly suggests that many urban Pakistanis are not insouciant about these groups or even supportive as is sometimes suggested in the media. While this is certainly encouraging, there are important minorities (14–18 per cent) who do not find these groups to be a threat at all.

Table 6.1

Pakistani Threat Perceptions of a Range of Militant Groups (in per cent)

Group	Yes, Critical Threat	Yes, an Important, but not a Critical Threat	Not a Threat	Refused/ Don't Know
Activities of Sindhi nationalists in Pakistan	18	28	41	13
Activities of Mohajir nationalists in Pakistan	22	33	32	13
Activities of Baluch nationalists in Pakistan	17	26	41	17
Activities of Islamist militants and local Taliban in FATA and settled areas	34	26	18	22
Activities of al-Qaeda	41	21	14	24
Activities of <i>askari tanzeems</i> in Pakistan	38	23	17	22

As noted above, many Pakistanis do believe that *askari tanzeems* do present critical threats to Pakistan's vital interests. However, as the below-given data indicate, many Pakistanis also believe that they advance the security of Kashmiris in Indian-administered Kashmir. Thus while they may threaten Pakistan, clearly they are seen to have some value when operating outside of Pakistan and in Kashmir. To probe further the kind of legitimacy that these groups' actions enjoy

among Pakistanis in the context of Kashmir, we put forth the following question to respondents:

In the context of the conflict in occupied Kashmir, for each of the following types of people, please tell me if you think that attacks against them are often justified, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

We included in the list Indian policemen, Indian intelligence agents, Indian military and paramilitary troops, Indian government officials, women and children of the military, and women and children more generally. As the data in Table 6.2 indicate, nearly one in five believed that attacks against Indian policemen, intelligence agencies, and police and paramilitary troops are often justified. When one includes the "sometimes justified" categories, support for such targets is as high as 40 per cent. Support for attacks against Indian government officials was somewhat lower with only one in four believing they were often or sometimes justified. Overwhelmingly, Pakistanis rejected wives and children as legitimate targets—even those associated with the military.

Table 6.2

Pakistani Support for Militant Targets (in the Context of Kashmir) (in per cent)

Target	Often Justified	Sometimes Justified	Rarely Justified	Never Justified	Refused/ Don't Know
Indian policemen	18	20	14	35	13
Indian intelligence agents	19	17	16	34	14
Indian military and paramilitary troops	19	20	15	33	13
Indian government officials	11	14	19	41	16
Wives and children of the military	1	2	8	75	15
Women and children	1	1	7	76	15

While the above set of questions focused upon the context of Kashmir, we also asked more general questions about the legitimacy of targets, including "government institutions (like the national Parliament in Delhi and state assemblies)"; "Attacks conducted against Indian targets like subways, stock exchanges, and tourist sites"; "Attacks in India on families of Indian military personnel"; "Attacks in Pakistan on Shi'a"; and "Attacks in Pakistan on Ahmediyya".

Among the “Indian” targets, levels of support are somewhat consistent—albeit lower—than the Kashmir-specific targets. Support for attacks against government institutions, civilian infrastructure, and attacks on Indian military personnel within India are deemed “sometimes justified” by 15 per cent, 12 per cent, and 13 per cent of respondents respectively. Support for harming Pakistani targets (Shi’a, and Ahmediyya, which have been subject to decades of vilification in Pakistan) is much lower at 5 and 6 per cent. Pakistani respondents appear to differentiate among these targets with substantially more support when groups target persons and institutions in India. This support also seems to increase when the violence is in the context of the Kashmir dispute.

Table 6.3
Pakistani Support for Militant Targets (in per cent)

Target	Sometimes Justified	Never Justified	Refused/ Don't Know
Attacks conducted against government institutions (like the national Parliament in Delhi and state assemblies)	15	64	21
Attacks conducted against Indian targets like subways, stock exchanges, and tourist sites	12	68	20
Attacks in India on families of Indian military personnel	13	67	19
Attacks in Pakistan on Shi'a	5	78	17
Attacks in Pakistan on Ahmediyya	6	75	19

It is widely believed outside of Pakistan that some of the *askari tanzeems* do target civilians even if their preferred target is military, police or intelligence. We asked Pakistani respondents to consider whether Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizbul Mujahideen, and Lashkar-e-Taiba deliberately target civilians. Majorities simply refused to answer the question or claimed to have no opinion. However, across the three *tanzeems*, only 6 per cent said that the group in question “has intentionally targeted citizens”. Given the preponderance of media accounts about such attacks on civilians, this low number is rather surprising. Recall LeT’s famed attack on wives and children at

Kaluchak in May 2002, which was widely reported with LeT explicitly claiming that attack in its own publications.

The team also asked a number of questions about the Taliban. As is well known, one of Washington’s concerns about Pakistan is the sanctuary that the Taliban forces enjoy in Pakistan. As the Taliban were the clients of the Pakistani state for several years and given that the reversal encountered some resistance, the team wanted to explore Pakistani beliefs about the Taliban and its activities.

The team first queried respondent beliefs about Taliban activities by asking them to think about “attacks by the Taliban against NATO [western] troops in Afghanistan” and indicate whether they “approve of them, disapprove of them, or have mixed feelings about them? Do you feel that way somewhat or strongly?” Thirty per cent strongly or somewhat approved. Only 15 per cent disapproved and another 18 per cent had “mixed feelings”. (The remaining 37 per cent were refusals or “do not know” responses.)

Next they were asked about “Attacks by the Taliban against Afghan troops and police in Afghanistan”. Only 5 per cent strongly approved and another 13 per cent approved somewhat. In contrast, 29 per cent disapproved somewhat or strongly while 14 per cent had “mixed feelings”. (The remaining 38 per cent did not provide an affirmative response.)

These responses suggest that Pakistanis are far more likely to condone Taliban activities when they target western forces and much more apprehensive to do so when the victims are Afghan forces.

Pakistani Support for the Government’s Handling of Militancy

With respect to Pakistan’s domestic security, the data in Table 6.1 demonstrate that many Pakistanis do perceive these groups to imperil Pakistan. However, there is considerable discord among Pakistanis about the way in which the government has handled issues germane to these groups. To probe support for the government’s various public policies, the survey team asked respondents to indicate whether they “approve strongly, approve somewhat, disapprove somewhat, or disapprove strongly of the way Pakistan’s government is handling the

following issues". The team probed beliefs about the situations in Indian-administered Kashmir, FATA, and the Lal Masjid.

As the data in Table 6.4 demonstrate, with respect to the government's handling of Indian-administered Kashmir, solid majorities approve of the government's approach and nearly one in three approve strongly. With respect to FATA, there is considerable ambivalence with 48 per cent either approving strongly or somewhat and 34 per cent disapproving somewhat or strongly. Support for the government's handling of the Lal Masjid is even lower, with 31 per cent lending some degree of support while a majority disapproves.

Table 6.4
Pakistani Support for Government Policies (in per cent)

Policy	Approve Strongly	Approve Somewhat	Disapprove Some	Disapprove Strongly	Refused/ Don't Know
The situation in Indian-admin Kashmir	32	36	13	9	9
The situation in the FATA	14	34	22	12	18
Religious extremism such as the Lal Masjid	12	19	27	29	13

The international community has become acutely concerned about developments in FATA both because of the import for the international efforts to rehabilitate Afghanistan, and because major terror conspiracies in Europe and the United States have important linkages to militant groups ensconced in FATA. As noted above, the data suggest considerable ambivalence about Pakistan's approach in FATA. To obtain a more granular understanding of public preferences for FATA, we offered respondents three statements about FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and asked which "comes closer to your view?" The statements are given below:

Statement A: Pakistan's government should exert control over FATA, even if it means using military force to do so.

Statement B: The government should not try to exert control over FATA but should try to keep the peace through negotiating deals with local Taliban.

Statement C: The government should withdraw its forces from FATA and leave the people alone.

The plurality (46 per cent) believed that "B" (keep peace through negotiating) best represented their view. Nearly one in four believed that "A" (military force if needed to control FATA) best accorded with their preference. A small minority (12 per cent) identified "C" (withdraw forces and leave the people alone). Only 18 per cent declined to provide an answer. This seems to suggest that the least objectionable aspect of Pakistan's approach to FATA has been negotiating deals brokered with the militants.

Pakistanis are somewhat more accepting of Pakistani military action when the target is al-Qaeda. Respondents were asked whether or not they favour or oppose the Pakistani army entering FATA to pursue and capture al-Qaeda fighters. While 44 per cent said they favoured the policy, 36 per cent said that they oppose it.

Similar results were obtained when asked about hot pursuit of Taliban insurgents who have crossed over from Afghanistan. Nearly half (48 per cent) favoured allowing the Pakistan army to pursue and capture Taliban insurgents who have crossed into Pakistan. However, more than one in three (34 per cent) opposed it.

Pakistanis were also not enthusiastic about the prospects of capturing Osama bin Laden. Participants were asked "Suppose the Pakistani government learned that Osama bin Laden was in FATA and found his exact location. Do you think then that the government should or should not attempt to capture him?" While nearly one in four (24 per cent) believed that they should capture him, a plurality (30 per cent) opposed this. (The rest did not provide an answer.)

Such ambivalence may be due in part to the fact that few Pakistanis believe that Osama bin Laden is in Pakistan (2 per cent). In contrast, 18 per cent believe that he is in Afghanistan. (Most respondents simply opted not to provide an answer and 8 per cent even volunteered that he is in the United States.)

As expected, there is near universal opposition (80 per cent) to allowing the Americans or other foreign troops to enter Pakistan to pursue and capture al-Qaeda, and similar levels of opposition (77 per cent) for those troops to engage in hot pursuit of Taliban figures crossing into Pakistan from Afghanistan.

While the military component of the policy may be unpopular, another survey item found that Pakistanis do support political reform for FATA. 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 per cent) favoured leaving the FCR intact. The largest percentage (46 per cent) favoured modification and more than one in four favoured abolishing it altogether. Thus while there may be ambivalence about the government's policy of military action, appeasement of the militants and political reform seems quite palatable. Unfortunately, while Islamabad has episodically embraced policies of appeasement of the militants it is loath to consider political reforms.

Beliefs of the Government's Involvement in Militant Activities

Many in the South Asian region and beyond believe that Pakistan's intelligence agencies have long supported—and continue to support—a large number of militant groups operating in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indian-administered Kashmir, and elsewhere in India. Given Pakistanis' threat perception and the ultimate objective of the USIP/PIPA study to determine whether or not Pakistanis view the war on terror as their own, the team probed respondent beliefs about the relationship between these groups and various Pakistani agencies.

With respect to *askari tanzeems* (such as Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizbol Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba), we asked respondents to identify from a list of options that which "best describes the relationship, if any, between these groups and the Pakistani army and intelligence agencies". While 51 per cent refused or claimed to not know, one in four believed that "There is no relationship at all". Fourteen per cent believed that "There are some contacts". Five per cent selected "Some elements within the army and intelligence agencies provide support such as money, training, advice and weapons" and another 5 per cent identified "The army and intelligence services as a whole work closely with these groups". Taken together, among those who volunteered an

answer, respondents are ambivalent, with as many believing there are no connections (25 per cent) as there are those who believe there is some kind of government involvement (24 per cent).

Regarding the Taliban, we asked respondents whether they think that "the Pakistan government is seriously trying to stop the Taliban from operating in Afghanistan, or is it allowing the Taliban to operate in Afghanistan?" While a plurality of respondents (36 per cent refused to answer or did not know), one in three respondents believed that the government is "seriously trying to stop the Taliban from operating in Afghanistan." Only 7 per cent believed it was "allowing" or "helping" the Taliban operate in Afghanistan. (The remaining sample offered "depends" (12 per cent) and "neither" (13 per cent).) Clearly, most Pakistanis who answered the question believe that their government is seeking to retard the Taliban, a view which does not accord with views in the United States, Afghanistan or NATO-contributing countries.

We next queried participants about government support for groups operating in Indian-administered Kashmir (or Occupied Kashmir as Pakistanis refer to the area). We asked respondents whether they "think the Pakistani government does or does not give weapons and money to some militant groups that fight in the Indian-controlled region of Occupied Kashmir". The largest group (47 per cent) were in the refused/don't know category. However, the next-largest group (40 per cent) believed that it "Does not give weapons and money." Only 13 per cent believed that the government "Does give weapons and money." This view too is discordant with popular beliefs about these issues outside of Pakistan.

Perceived Benefits Derived from Militant Activities and Groups

Individuals may support specific groups or at least decline to view their activities as a threat if such persons perceive that the group or its actions confer benefits to that person, her or her community or to the state of Pakistan. Similarly, persons who believe that such groups and their actions impose harm may be less likely to support them and to identify them as threats.

To explore different kinds of perceived benefits, we asked respondents several questions about groups, their actions and their impacts.

As noted above, while many Pakistanis see *askari tanzeems* as a threat, fewer identified these groups other than the Taliban or al-Qaeda. The team asked respondents to consider "Pakistani militant groups [*askari tanzeem*] that operate in Occupied Kashmir" and to indicate whether they "think that, on balance, they help Pakistan's security, hurt Pakistan's security, or have no effect either way on Pakistan's security". While the largest group declined to provide an answer (39 per cent), nearly one in five believed that they "Help Pakistan's security", which was somewhat higher than the percentage who believed that they "Hurt Pakistan's security" (17 per cent). Somewhat more than one in four believed that they "Have no effect either way."

We also asked respondents whether "these groups help the security of people in Occupied Kashmir, hurt it, or have no effect either way". Again, a high percentage (37 per cent) declined to provide an answer. However, the largest group (39 per cent) believed that they "Help Kashmiris' security." In contrast, only 9 per cent believed that they "Hurt Kashmiris' security."

Finally, the team asked respondents to think about "groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat-ul Dawa, Hizbul Mujahideen, and Jaish-e-Mohammad among other *tanzeems*, do you think they provide social and community services, or are these not part of their activities?" While more than one in three refused to answer, the largest group (42 per cent) did not believe that they offered such services. Nonetheless, nearly one in four did believe they offered social and community services.

For the 23 per cent of the sample who did think these militant groups offered such services, the team asked them to "mention a few services you are aware of". (Multiple responses were permitted.) As the data in Table 6.5 suggest, respondents identified *madaris* and other schools along with medical care, humanitarian assistance, and financial help with marriages and burials as forms of assistance.

Table 6.5
Services Believed to be Provided by Pakistani Militant Groups

<i>Service</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
<i>Deeni Madrasas</i>	22
Schools that are not <i>deeni madrasas</i>	15
Medical care or services	16
Humanitarian assistance during floods, earthquakes, famine	19
Financial help with marriage and burials	11
Refused/Don't know	29

Conclusions and Implications

While these data offer many encouraging insights about the degree to which a majority of Pakistanis view most militant groups as a decisive threat, there are important minorities who do not feel threatened by them and consistent minorities who justify a wide array of militant activities. Pakistanis are more likely to justify specific attacks in the contexts of Kashmir and India, and attacks in Afghanistan targeting Western forces. The Pakistani polity, however, is ambivalent about the government's military policies towards the Taliban and towards such events as the Lal Masjid. At the same time, policies of negotiating with the militants in the FATA and political reform are popular while policies of military confrontation are less so. Military confrontation of foreign elements (e.g., al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives in Pakistan who come across from Afghanistan) is more popular although important and sizeable minorities still oppose such operations against these foreign, infiltrating targets. The US and other foreign military operations are deeply opposed even when the targets are foreign and seeking refuge in Pakistan from Afghanistan. The US officials who have discussed such unilateral action should be cautioned by these results as such commentary has been inflammatory. As noted, US unilateral action in Bajaur galvanised a wider militancy beyond FATA and likely precipitated the induction of suicide strikes against Pakistani troops in FATA in 2006. Taken together, these results do not suggest that Pakistanis have embraced the war on terrorism as their own even though majorities view various militant groups as posing a threat to Pakistan's own vital interests.

Indeed, when respondents were queried about the US-Pakistan relationship that has developed after 9/11, few believe the relationship has “mostly benefited Pakistan” (6 per cent). The largest group (44 per cent) believed that it has “mostly benefited the United States”. (Twelve per cent thought both states equally benefited and another 11 per cent thought neither benefited. More than one in four declined to answer.) Other questions revealed that most Pakistanis are deeply dubious of the United States and its actions. Some 73 per cent believed that spreading Christianity was “definitely” or “probably” a goal of the United States, and 78 per cent believed that maintaining control of the resources of the Middle East was “definitely” or “probably” a US goal. Another 86 per cent believed that weakening and dividing the Muslim world was “definitely” or “probably” a US goal. In fact, many Pakistanis (likely with great justification) may believe that they are a victim of terrorism because of the US-Pakistan military alliance rather than a *sui generis* blow-back from Pakistan’s past policies.

The policy puzzle that emerges from this effort is how the international community and indeed anti-militant elements within the Pakistani government can support the large majorities of Pakistanis who feel threatened by the various militant groups while at the same time mobilising them to embrace the war on terrorism as a conflict for Pakistan’s own survival as a modern and moderate Muslim state.

Unfortunately, for many years, Musharraf repeatedly explained in public and in private that Pakistan has sacrificed much—including the lives of many hundreds of armed services and police personal—for the US global war on terrorism. The US officials—in public and private—thanked him for his sacrifices. This was unfortunate. As early as 2001, the US officials should have consistently encouraged the Pakistani leadership publicly and privately to embrace the notion that Pakistan is waging its own war on terrorism to secure the future Pakistan that is desired by most Pakistanis. Instead, the United States bolstered the belief among the Pakistani leadership and the polity that indeed President Musharraf was waging a war on behalf of Washington and President Bush. This perception that President Musharraf was doing the bidding of President Bush was unpopular among Pakistanis and gave rise to humorous monikers for the two leaders such as “Busharraf”.

It was not until late 2005 and early 2006 that Musharraf began expounding the notion that Pakistan is waging a war for its own sovereignty and its own standing as a moderate Muslim nation. Presumably, these statements were too late and unpersuasive. How could Musharraf reverse narratives and convince Pakistanis that the nation was fighting for its national survival, not his own personal survival? By 2005, Musharraf’s own standing had been vitiated by his personal desire to remain on as President and Chief of Army Staff despite the increasing criticism of the extra-constitutionality of his dual-hats coming from an ever-broadening base of critics.

Under the current political conditions, Musharraf is ever more unlikely to be able or willing to mobilise Pakistanis in their own war on terrorism when, according to a mid-January Gallup Poll, nearly half of Pakistanis surveyed believed that government agencies or government-linked politicians killed Benazir Bhutto. Only 17 per cent believed that Bhutto was killed by the Taliban or al-Qaeda.¹⁹ With the near-certitude of massive electoral irregularities, elections do not offer encouragement that a credible leader will emerge who can galvanise public support for a state effort to crack down on militancy in the country.

Finally, while there are extreme crises of civilian leadership in Pakistan and pervasive ambivalence about the influence of militant groups in Pakistan, the largest obstacle to a Pakistan committed to the war on terrorism is the view of the strategic elite. At this juncture, there is no robust evidence that the state has made a strategic decision to abandon the use of militants for domestic and foreign policy objectives. Reporting in June and July of 2007 does suggest that there is—at long last—a difference of opinion among these elites with growing numbers of persons who believe that these proxies pose more harm than good. Moreover, it is widely believed that the Pakistan army is confronting a serious morale problem having waged military operations against its own citizens as well as foreign elements with numerous setbacks for years. The challenge remains how to galvanise those sceptics of the militants’ long-term utility, sideline those committed proponents of proxy elements, and mobilise the important

19. Associated Press (2008). “Pakistanis Suspect Officials Tied to Bhutto Death: Nearly Half Blamed Either Government Agencies or Rival Politicians”, 13 January, at <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22635311/>>

majority of Pakistanis against these groups. Without successfully managing these three feats, the future of Pakistan and the region augurs greater instability with ever more important security threats beyond the borders of South Asia.