

Why Support Islamist Militancy?

Evidence From Pakistan

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Abstract

Islamist militancy in Pakistan has long stood at the top of the international security agenda, yet there is almost no systematic evidence about why individual Pakistanis support Islamist militant organizations. We address this problem by using data from a nationally representative survey of urban Pakistanis to assess the correlates of support for specific militant organizations. Our analysis refutes four influential conventional wisdoms about why Pakistanis supports Islamic militancy. First, there is no clear relationship between poverty and support for militancy. If anything, support for militant organizations is actually increasing in both subjective economic well-being and community economic performance. Second, personal religiosity and support for sharia law are poor predictors of support for Islamist militant organizations. Third, support for political goals espoused by legal Islamist parties is at best a weak indicator of support for militant organizations. Fourth, those who support core democratic principles or have faith in Pakistan's democratic process are not less supportive of militancy. Taken together, these results suggest that commonly prescribed solutions to Islamist militancy—economic development, democratization, and the like—may be irrelevant at best and might even be counterproductive.

Introduction

While Pakistan has used Islamist militants to pursue its regional interests since its inception in 1947, Islamist militancy in Pakistan has become a key international security concern in the last ten years.¹ In December 2001, the attack on the Indian parliament by militants allegedly based in Pakistan (Jaish-e-Mohammad) nearly sparked a war between India and Pakistan. The perceived threat has intensified further in recent years as the Pakistani Taliban have established parallel administrative bodies along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, executed suicide attacks against Pakistani government targets, and even seized a mosque in Pakistan's capital (the Red Mosque). Concerns about Pakistan's stability are exacerbated by its nuclear status, dysfunctional civil-military relationship, a demonstrated propensity for risk seeking behavior and ever-expanding connections between local groups and trans-national Islamist terrorist organizations.²

Summarizing the myriad security problems—including Islamist militancy and nuclear proliferation—posed by Pakistan, during her first appearance before the U.S. Congress as the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton argued Pakistan “poses a mortal threat to the security and safety of our country and the world.”³ Similar sentiments were echoed during recent deliberations on aid to Pakistan in the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. Subcommittee chairman Howard L. Berman opened the hearings by noting that “The United States has an enormous stake in the security and stability of that country. We can't allow al Qaeda or any other terrorist group that threatens our national security to operate with impunity in the tribal regions of

¹ Pakistan precipitated the first Indo-Pakistan war (1947-48) a few weeks after independence by launching tribal lashkar (militia) from Waziristan in an effort to wrest Kashmir from India. Pakistan has supported various insurgent cells in Kashmir from 1947 to the present. With the security provided by its covert nuclearization, Pakistan expanded its “jihad” to the rest of India in the late 1980s. After overt nuclearization in 1998, Pakistan became even more aggressive about supporting asymmetric actions within India. See *inter alia* Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, Jamison Jo Medby, *Limited Conflicts Under the Nuclear Umbrella—Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001); Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947-2004* (New York: Routledge, 2007); S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

² “U.S.-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability And The Future Of U.S. Policy.” Hearing of the Middle East And South Asia Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. January 16, 2008.

³ U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary R. Clinton, Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Committee, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration,” April 22, 2009.

Pakistan. Nor can we permit the Pakistani state – and its nuclear arsenal – to be taken over by the Taliban.”⁴

Outside of a substantial investment in security assistance, U.S. and Western policies towards Pakistan over the last ten years have been geared towards encouraging economic and social development as explicit means of diminishing the terrorism threat and turning back Islamization. Legislation currently before the U.S. House of Representatives calls for the U.S. to “...strengthen Pakistan’s public education system, increase literacy, expand opportunities for vocational training, and help create an appropriate national curriculum for all schools in Pakistan.”⁵ In on this bill, U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke argued that Washington should “target the economic and social roots of extremism in western Pakistan with more economic aid.”⁶ Washington also played a pivotal role in a recent donors’ conference in Tokyo where nearly 30 countries and international organizations pledged some \$5 billion in development aid explicitly intended to “enable Pakistan to fight off Islamic extremism.”⁷

These policy prescriptions rest on four powerful conventional wisdoms. The first is that poverty is a root cause of support for militancy, or at least that poorer and less educated individuals are more prone to militants’ appeals.⁸ The second is that personal religiosity and support for sharia law are strongly correlated with support for Islamist

⁴ See Chairman Berman’s opening statement at hearing, “From Strategy to Implementation: The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Relationship,” May 5, 2009.

⁵ 111th Congress, U.S. House of Representatives, H.R. 1886 (a.k.a. “Pakistan Enduring Assistance and Cooperation Enhancement Act of 2009,” April 2009.

⁶ Statement by Richard C. Holbrooke, Special Representative For Afghanistan And Pakistan, Department Of State. Testimony before the United States House of Representatives, Committee On Foreign Relations, May 5, 2009.

⁷ “Donors pledge \$5bn for Pakistan,” *BBC News*, April 17, 2009. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8003557.stm. See also U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, “U.S. Pledges \$1 Billion for Pakistan at Tokyo Donors’ Conference Aid to support broader U.S. commitment to the Pakistani people,” 17 April 2009. Available at <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/April/20090417123036xjsnommis5.550784e-02.html>.

⁸ These arguments are reflected in both Pakistani and Western discourse. On the Pakistani side see “Marshall Plan-style aid drive needed for Pakistan: Zardari,” *The Daily Times* (Islamabad), April 17, 2009. On the Western side, see the 9-11 Commission’s claim that “Pakistan’s endemic poverty, widespread corruption, and often ineffective government create opportunities for Islamist recruitment. Poor education is a particular concern.” National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9-11 Commission Report* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2004), 367. A more nuanced argument is that Pakistan’s derelict public schools and poverty compel Pakistani families to send their children to the madaris, which provide recruits for Pakistan’s jihadi groups. Jessica Stern, “Pakistan’s Jihad Culture,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2000. For an alternative view, see Tariq Rahman, *Madrassas: Religion, Poverty and the Potential for Violence in Pakistan*, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Winter 2005, available at <http://www.ipripak.org/journal/winter2005/madrassas.shtml>.

militancy.⁹ The third is that support for political goals espoused by legal Islamist parties predicts support for militant organizations.¹⁰ The fourth is that those who support democracy—either in terms of supporting democratic processes like voting or in terms of valuing core democratic principles—oppose Islamism and militancy.

None of these conventional wisdoms rest on a firm evidentiary basis, yet they dominate in varying degrees popular media accounts of Pakistan's political woes, debates in the U.S. Congress, and policies adopted to help stabilize Pakistan since 2001.¹¹ Given the manifest importance of Islamist militancy in Pakistan and the vast resources being directed against it, this state of affairs is deeply disheartening. While there has been some systematic survey research on variation over time in how Pakistanis feel about militancy generally, none has been done on sub-national variation in those trends or on how Pakistanis feel about specific militant organizations.¹² These lacunas leave analysts with little evidence as to why Pakistanis support specific militant organizations and thus little evidentiary basis for arguments about how to reduce that support.

Unfortunately, there are strong reasons to think these conventional wisdoms may be mistaken. Before the February 2008 elections, for example, they drove concerns that Islamist political parties would triumph in open democratic elections.¹³ Indeed, the conventional wisdoms were so powerful that they overwhelmed two key facts. First,

⁹ Author interactions with British, Canadian, Dutch, Indian, and U.S. intelligence officials, policy makers, and politicians. For an analysis of the discourse relating Islamism and terrorism, see Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2007): 394–426. For a nuanced analysis of the relationship between political Islam and militancy, see Yahya Sadowski, "Political Islam: Asking the Wrong Questions?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 9 (2006): 215–40.

¹⁰ This belief in turn drives concerns about the potential role of Islamist parties in expanding militancy.

¹¹ The United States Agency for International Development's \$750 million FATA development plan was predicated on the hypothesis that insurgency and terrorism in the Federally Administered Tribal (FATA) areas of Pakistan are driven by poverty, lack of education and unemployment. See "USAID/Pakistan Interim Strategic Plan May 2003–September 2006," May, 2003. Available at http://www.usaid.gov/pk/mission/downloads/USAID_Pakistan_Interim_Strategic_Plan.pdf. The plan explicitly argues that "...economic growth means more jobs, which can accelerate economic recovery and thwart those who would recruit the unemployed for terrorism..."

¹² Both the Pew Research Center and the International Republican Institute (IRI) conduct surveys that ask general questions about militancy such as "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: the Taliban and Al Qaeda operating in Pakistan is a serious problem?" Neither organization analyzes their data to identify sources of sub-national variation, nor do they appear to collect data on the economic, social, and ideational variables required for such an analysis. See IRI Pakistan Index, January 19–29, 2008, available at <http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan.asp>.

¹³ For a nuanced summary of such concerns see International Crisis Group, *Elections, Democracy and Stability in Pakistan* (Brussels, Islamabad: The Crisis Group, July 2007).

Islamists have never done well in Pakistani elections.¹⁴ Second, the Islamists' record governing the two provinces they won in 2002—the Northwest Frontier Provinces (NWFP) and Baluchistan—was every bit as corrupt and inept as that of the left-of-center parties they replaced. As a more evidence-based analysis might have predicted, the Islamists were routed in the February 2008 elections.

The widespread failure to anticipate the 2008 election results dramatically illustrates that the current Western consensus about the politics of Islamist militancy is decisively unhelpful. Worse yet, public discourse decrying Pakistan's Islamist parties, with its strong anti-Islamist motivations, likely alienated many Pakistanis who view militant groups as a critical threat to their nation and would thus naturally support many core Western priorities.¹⁵ Facile reductions of the militant-Islamism nexus also led to a misdiagnosis of the problem. Just as support for Islamist parties may not imply support for militant groups, support for secular parties or routing of Islamist parties at the ballot box need not correlate with negative perceptions of Islamist militants and support for western action to eliminate them.

As a first step in building a solid empirical basis for policy towards Islamist militancy in Pakistan we use data from a national survey of urban Pakistanis to test the four conventional wisdoms. Our analysis breaks new ground by identifying the correlates of support for specific groups. Doing so allows us to develop a more nuanced understanding of the politics of Islamist militancy than was possible with earlier surveys that asked extremely general questions.¹⁶ Asking Pakistanis about specific militant organizations reveals little support for any of the conventional wisdoms; neither religion,

¹⁴ The Islamist parties barely broke double digits of the popular vote in the 2002 elections when they faced exceptionally favorable circumstances. International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, Asia Report N°49 (Brussels, Islamabad: Crisis Group, March 2003). See also Rafiq Dossani and Henry S Rowen, "Introduction" in Rafiq Dossani and Henry S Rowen (Ed), *Prospects for Peace in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 13).

¹⁵ See IRI, "IRI Releases Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion, March 7-30, 2009," May 11, 2009, available at <http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan.asp>.

¹⁶ Since 2002, the Pew Global Attitudes Survey has repeatedly asked whether respondents in Muslim countries felt suicide bombing could be justified "... in order to defend Islam from its enemies." Recent research shows that views about suicide attacks depend heavily on the identities of the attackers and attacked. It is not obvious how responses to general questions like Pew's suicide bombing question should be interpreted given that the strategic context of such attacks matters so much. C. Christine Fair and Stephen Shellman, "Determinants of Popular Support for Iran's Nuclear Program: Insights from a Nationally Representative Survey," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2008), pp. 538-558. Program on International Policy Attitudes, Poll of the Iranian Public (January 2007), available at www.pipa.org.

nor poverty, nor support for Islamist politics predict support across groups. Moreover, those who support core democratic values are not less supportive across the range of militant groups.

These findings suggest the alternative theory that urban Pakistanis are relatively sophisticated consumers of militancy who support small militant organizations when two conditions obtain: (1) those organizations are using violence in support of political goals the individual cares about; and (2) violence makes sense as a way to achieve those goals given the respondent's understanding of the strategic environment. Because small militant organizations such as the Pakistani Taliban or even al-Qa'ida have no real chance of taking over the state, we should not expect support to be determined by big-picture issues such as the role of Islamic law in Pakistani governance, much less by al-Qa'ida's purported goal of re-establishing the Caliphate.

This alternative theory returns politics to a central role in explaining support for militancy and treats those who support militancy as the cognitive equals of militant leaders and the governments opposing them. This is not to say that peoples' political choices can be separated from their religious views and economic interests.¹⁷ Rather, we argue that the influence of those factors is tempered by perceptions of the strategic environment in which groups operate.¹⁸

Importantly, this theory can account for two key findings. First, support for militants attacking Indian forces in Kashmir is not increasing in concern with India's treatment of Kashmiri Muslims. An individual who believes such attacks will not free Kashmir from Indian rule may reasonably expect militant activity to lead to greater repression and suffering for Kashmiri Muslims and therefore withhold support from militants fighting in Kashmir. Second, after controlling for relevant political concerns support for the Taliban is decreasing in respondents' beliefs that American forces in Afghanistan pose a threat to Pakistan. This finding suggests that would-be supporters of militant organizations consider the potential backlash against Pakistan created by Taliban attacks on American forces.

¹⁷ We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pushing us to clarify this point and have relied on their excellent framing of the argument.

¹⁸ In ongoing work we employ a nationally-representative survey that uses embedded experiments to study the extent to which strategically-relevant information impacts support for different groups and whether these effects depends on personal religiosity or economic circumstances.

Beyond the specifics of Pakistan, studying the sources of variation in support for specific militant groups complements previous work on the characteristics of militants and the factors influencing rates of terrorism within countries.¹⁹ Rather than focus on the militants themselves, we provide evidence about what drives support among non-participants.²⁰ This approach has academic and practical advantages. From an academic perspective, the obvious sensitivities of the topic mean that attitudinal measures are the best evidence we can gather about the willingness of non-participating Pakistanis to tolerate militant activity and contribute money or recruits to these organizations. From a policy perspective, the fact that militant organizations cannot engage in meaningful levels of violence without some measure of popular support means that understanding how to erode such support is a first-order concern.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 1 reviews some critically important but poorly understood differences between militant organizations operating in and around Pakistan. Section 2 discusses the four conventional wisdoms in greater detail and discusses a number of testable hypotheses implied by each. Section 3 describes our data in more detail and discusses the limitations inherent in our urban sample. Section 4 reports our results. Section 5 concludes with a discussion of the policy implications of our research.

1 All Militants Are Not The Same

¹⁹ For evidence that poverty and terrorism do not drive individuals to become terrorists, see Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: The Economic Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). For the argument that because terrorist organizations screen their operatives, Krueger's findings can be consistent with a positive relationship between poverty and the overall production of terror, see Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "The Quality of Terror," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2005), 515-530.

²⁰ This distinction is important. While there is a robust literature on the characteristics of militants, there are very few studies of the determinants of support for militancy. Three notable exceptions include M. Najeeb Shafiq and Abdulkader H. Sinno, "Education, Income and Support for Suicide Bombings: Evidence from Six Muslim Countries," SSRN Working Paper, July 2008; Ethan Beuno de Mesquita, "Correlates of Public Support for Terrorism in the Muslim World," USIP Working Paper, May 2007; and C. Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd, "Research Note: Who Supports Terrorism? Insights from Fourteen Muslim Countries," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (January/February 2006), pp. 51-74. There have been no robust studies of the supply of terrorism in Pakistan and no comprehensive data collection on the attributes of Pakistani militants. Existing studies of the attributes of Pakistani militants are purely anecdotal.

Analysts tend to describe militancy in Pakistan as a homogenous phenomenon or they tend to focus upon a particular group or cell presumed responsible for a particular attack. Popular accounts generally fail to note the differences across Pakistan's militant groups, typically casting them all as al-Qa'ida affiliates. Since understanding the variation in support across groups requires first understanding the potentially salient differences between them, this section describes key differences between the three groups of greatest concern to Western analysts: al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and the diverse "askari tanzeems" (militant groups) who claim to mostly focus on the Kashmir issue but are also involved in sectarian violence.²¹

Al-Qa'ida

The most important transnational group operating in Pakistan is al-Qa'ida. In the broadest terms, Pakistanis see the "al-Qa'ida" threat very differently than the average well-informed Westerner. Many Pakistanis are dubious that "al-Qa'ida" exists and that Osama Bin Laden is its leader. Even fewer believe that al-Qa'ida and Bin Laden were behind the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Among those Pakistanis who even tentatively concede that al-Qa'ida may exist, most view al-Qa'ida operatives as "foreign" and Arab in particular.²² Pakistani government agencies (e.g. the military) further muddy the waters by including Central Asian militants such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in their definitions of al-Qa'ida.

In 2004, there was a spate of arrests of so-called "Pakistani al-Qa'ida," which began to alter beliefs among Pakistanis about al-Qa'ida and its composition.²³ Since the onset of dedicated suicide attacks throughout Pakistan's tribal areas and increasingly in important cities, and since the high-profile takeover of the Lal Masjid (a.k.a "Red

²¹ This section draws from author fieldwork from in Pakistan from 2002 to 2009. See C. Christine Fair, "Who are Pakistan's Militants and Their Families?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2008), pp. 49-65. See also Muhammad Amir Ranan (trans. Saba Ansari) *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2004). For an excellent synthesis of the sprawling Pakistani literature on the varied militant groups based in and from the country, see Nicholas Howenstein, "The Jihadi Terrain in Pakistan: An Introduction to the Sunni Jihadi Groups in Pakistan and Kashmir," Pakistan Studies Research Unit, Bradford University, February 2008. Available at <http://spaces.brad.ac.uk:8080/download/attachments/748/resrep1.pdf>.

²² Author fieldwork in Pakistan since 2002 and most recently training six teams of survey enumerators from across the country for a national sample of Pakistanis in April 2009.

²³ See Zahid Hussain, "Al-Qaeda's New Face," *Newsline* (Karachi), August 2004.

Mosque”), more Pakistanis are coming to believe that al-Qa’ida could be real and that it—along with its allied groups—poses a genuine threat to Pakistan itself.²⁴ Despite these changes, a 2007 poll showed that only two percent of Pakistanis said al-Qa’ida was responsible for the 9/11 attacks while 27 percent blamed the United States and seven percent blamed Israel. The remaining 63 percent either refused to answer or said they did not know who was responsible.²⁵ Statements by Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz that the United States, India and Afghanistan are behind the lawlessness and terrorism in Pakistan are a salient reminder that many Pakistanis do not blame Islamist militants for the violence killing so many on Pakistani soil.²⁶

The Taliban

The two most prominent regional groups operating in Pakistan are the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.²⁷ Despite some evidence of professionalization among the Taliban and their long-standing alliance with the trans-national al-Qa’ida, the Afghan Taliban’s expressed goals are distinctly local. They remain focused on ousting international military forces from Afghanistan and overturning the Western-leaning Afghan government. The Pakistani Taliban, who rose to prominence in 2004, are focused on the Pashtun areas of Pakistan.²⁸ Their immediate goal is to oust the Pakistani military from the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). To do so they have attacked the Pakistani military in the tribal areas and adjacent regions. Since 2006 a number of suicide attacks against government targets—military, paramilitary and police forces, and civilian leadership—have been tied to Pakistani Taliban operating from the FATA. The most

²⁴ See editorial, "Mingora attack," *The Post* (Islamabad), March 3, 2007.

²⁵ Steven Kull, et. al. *Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al-Qa’ida* (Washington D.C.: PIPA, April 2007). Available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf.

²⁶ Hamid’s subsequent clarifications suggest he meant to say those countries “are believed to be behind” the attacks. “US concerned over Hamid’s remarks,” *The Daily Times* (Lahore), March 3, 2008.

²⁷ Some analysts view the Taliban as a Pashtun nationalist movement and so do not agree with the distinction Pakistanis tend to make between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “No Sign Until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2008), 41-77.

²⁸ Hassan Abbas, “A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan” *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 1, No 2, (January 2008), pp. 1-4. Rahimullah Yusufzai, “The Impact of Pashtun Tribal Differences on the Pakistani Taliban,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (February 7, 2008). C. Christine Fair, “U.S.-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability, and the Future of U.S. Policy,” Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, January 16, 2008.

prominent of these was the December 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The “askari tanzeems”

There are also a number of Pakistani militants groups that have more limited goals. Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbol Mujahadeen have traditionally focused on the Kashmir issue. The anti-Shia groups of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan have remained focused on domestic sectarian targets. These groups argue that Shi’a are apostates and seek to establish Pakistan as a Sunni state preferential to the Deoband interpretative tradition. During the period our survey was in the field, Pakistanis tended to group the so-called Kashmir-oriented groups under the general label of “askari tanzeems” (militant groups). The askari tanzeems are, or at least were, viewed by Pakistanis as being distinct from al-Qa’ida and the Taliban.

These distinctions seems less clear to many outside observers who note that: (1) both sectarian and Kashmir-oriented groups have occasionally operated in Afghanistan; and (2) the militant infrastructure (i.e. training camps) of regionally and domestically focused groups has been used by operatives conducting transnational attacks. Every terrorist conspiracy disrupted in the United Kingdom, for example, has had links to Pakistan, as did the summer 2007 plot that was disrupted in Germany.²⁹

There are two complicating factor in studying support for the askari tanzeems. The first is that they do not all adhere to the same interpretative traditions within Sunni Islam. This will introduce noise into studies of the relationship between religiosity and support as a respondent following the Deobandi tradition is unlikely to feel kindly towards Lashkar-e-Taiba which is associated with the Ahl-e-Hadith school and is overtly hostile to those who adhere to the Deobandi tradition.³⁰

²⁹ Mark Landler, “German Police Arrest 3 in Terrorist Plot,” *New York Times*, September 6, 2007. *Pakistan arrests ‘led to UK moves’* 2007. CNN.com, August 11, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/08/11/terror.plot.pakistan/index.html>. *Bomb trail goes cold on Pakistani ties*, 2007. BBC News Online 2006, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4761659.stm. Paul Reynolds. 2007. *Bomber video ‘points to al-Qaeda’*. BBC News Online 2005, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4208250.stm.

³⁰ This relationship is further complicated by the fact that the theological divisions between Pakistani militant organizations do not match their patterns of operational cooperation. C. Christine Fair, “Militant

The second complicating factor is that there has been substantial change over time in the goals and actions of the askari tanzeems. Prior to Pakistan's reorienting towards the U.S. war on terrorism and the subsequent re-alignment of various groups' objectives, it was possible to make sound operational distinctions between groups. Before 2002 Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and Hizbul Mujahideen operated in Indian-administered Kashmir and India while the sectarian groups focused on killing Shi'a in Pakistan.

Since 2002 (if not earlier) these lines have become less distinct. There has been an important, if poorly understood, shift in the Kashmiri-oriented groups' aims and objectives.³¹ While Lashkar-e-Taiba has not targeted the Pakistani state, many believe it has shifted its focus from Kashmir to Afghanistan.³² Many other Deobandi groups have shifted to anti-Pakistan rhetoric and their stated goals now include undermining the government, army and other organs of the state. A similar evolution has occurred among sectarian groups which have begun to support the Pakistan Taliban's efforts to establish a Deobandi-influenced parallel system of government in portions of the FATA.

Because the state has always characterized many of the once Kashmir-focused groups as "freedom fighters," it is unlikely that this analysis was affected by the broad reorientation of these groups. Even today we suspect most Pakistanis view Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and certainly Hizbul-Mujahideen as remaining Kashmir focused. Similarly, most Pakistanis likely still see Lashkar-a-Jhangvi and Sipha-e-Sahaba as primarily anti-Shi'a even though they have been involved in conducting suicide attacks in FATA and have operated in Afghanistan.

2 Four Things Commentators and Experts Say About Pakistan

recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al-Qa'ida and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (November/December 2004).

³¹ Peter Chalk and C. Christine Fair, "[The Re-Oriented of Kashmiri Extremism](#): A Threat to Regional and International Security," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 3, Issue 22 (November 17, 2005). C. Christine Fair, "Antecedents and Implications of the November 2008 Lashkar-e-Taiba Attack Upon Mumbai," testimony presented before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection on March 11, 2009.

³² During recent fieldwork in Afghanistan, Fair learned of a small but important Lashkar-e-Taiba presence in Kunar and Nuristan, two Afghan provinces bordering Pakistan.

Most discussions of the politics of militancy in Pakistan rest on a series of four widely-accepted views about who supports militancy and why. The first is that poverty is a root cause of support for militancy, or at least that poorer and less educated individuals are more prone to militants' appeals. This is a view that is held within and without Pakistan.³³ The second is that personal religiosity and support for sharia law are strongly correlated with support for Islamist militancy. The third is that support for political goals espoused by legal Islamist parties predicts support for militant organizations. The fourth is that those who support democracy—either in terms of supporting democratic processes like voting or in terms of valuing core democratic principles—oppose Islamism and militancy. This section examines each in more detail and derives testable hypotheses from them.

“Poverty and Religiosity Predict Militancy”

Popular media and even analytical discourse tends to describe support for militant groups as derivative of a person's poverty, personal religiosity, and other presumed proxies for “fanaticism.” This perspective naturally leads to the view that some proportion of Pakistanis simply support militancy outright. If Pakistanis support Kashmiri groups, then they are thought to be more likely to support other Islamist militant groups such as al-Qa'ida, the Taliban or even sectarian groups. This viewpoint further manifests itself in claims that all of Pakistan's militant groups must be tied to al Qaeda.³⁴

The view that general socio-religious factors predict support for militancy can be broken down into two posited linkages: (1) poverty increases support for Islamist

³³ See lengthy set of quotations to this effect in Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malecková, “Seeking the Roots of Terrorism,” *The Chronicle Review*, June 6, 2003, vol. 49, no. 39. For a recent statement by former President and Chief of Army Staff, Pervez Musharraf, see Chris Kenrick, “Poverty, illiteracy cause terrorism – Musharraf,” *Palo Alto Online*, January 7, 2009, available at http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/show_story.php?id=10802.

³⁴ We believe this view is driven in part by the conflation of shared networks with shared supporters. Analysts mistakenly take the fact that Jaish-e-Mohammad has operational ties to al-Qa'ida, as evidence that the two groups also share networks of supporters. This need not be the case and our data suggest it is not, at least among passive supporters. For an example of such see U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, [Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection](#), “The Mumbai Attacks: A Wake-up Call for American's Private Sector,” March 11, 2009. Witness' statements showed a remarkable lack of clarity about the LeT and its ties to other groups, its tactics, and its goals.

extremism; and (2) religiosity increases support for Islamist extremism. The poverty-militancy linkage clearly animated the April 2009 donors' conference in Tokyo that netted nearly \$6 billion in aid for Pakistan, primarily directed at reducing poverty and increasing growth.³⁵ The poverty-militancy linkage also animates the U.S. government's ambitious FATA development plan and other activities in Pakistan.³⁶

The religiosity-militancy linkage is seldom expressed so clearly, for obvious political reasons, but it drives public policy discussions about madrassah reform and education reform generally as enshrined in the 9/11 Commission Report and in U.S. government efforts to help Pakistan reform its educational system.³⁷ The more nuanced hypothesis that these factors work in tandem was raised during a May 2009 hearing of the U.S. House of Representative Foreign Affairs Committee when several members asserted that madrassah attendance and militant recruitment was related to poverty and the lack of available options for the poor.³⁸

Taken together, these beliefs suggest a number of testable hypotheses. First, we should find a discernible "taste for militancy" among supporters of Pakistani militant groups. That is, if these hypotheses are true, support for one group should correlated with support for others because it is underlying factors like poverty and religiosity that drive support.

³⁵ Speaking at the successful donors' conference in Tokyo, a Pakistani press release emphasized that "Poverty alleviation is fundamental to contain and reverse extremism. Alternatives have to be offered to the youth from disadvantaged parts of the population to wean them away from the appeal of extremism." Stuart Biggs and Takashi Hirokawa, "Pakistan Gets \$5.28 Billion for Economy, Security (Update2)," *Bloomberg News*, April 17, 2009.

³⁶ Programs for Pakistan inextricably link poverty alleviation with diminishing the ability of militant groups to cultivate support or recruits. See, for example: *Congressional Budget Justification- Fiscal Year 2009 International Affairs (Function 150)*, "South and Central Asia Regional Overview," available at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2009/101468.pdf>; and Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *FY 2009 Supplemental Justification*, "South and Central Asia," Fiscal Year 2009, available at http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbjs2009/cbjs2009_50.pdf.

³⁷ This view is reflected in the *9-11 Commission Report* which recommends that "...the United States should support Pakistan's government in its struggle against extremists with a comprehensive effort that extends from military aid to support for better education..." *The 9-11 Commission Report* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2004), 369.

³⁸ See Hearing of the U.S. of Representative, Committee on Foreign Affairs, "[From Strategy to Implementation: The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Relationship](#)." Note in particular the comments of Representative Burton among others on madaris. Representative Ellison, the only Muslim in the U.S. House, differed with his colleagues on this issue.

- *H1*: Support for militant groups should be highly correlated across groups whose perceived missions and goals differ.³⁹

Second, the influence of poverty and religion on support for militancy should be positive such that greater poverty, or greater religiosity, lead to greater support. Moreover, the impact of these variables should be similar across groups.

- *H2a*: Support for militant organizations should be increasing in poverty.

- *H2b*: Support for militant organizations should be increasing in religiosity.

“Islamism and Militancy”

Since 2002 considerable attention has been focused upon Islamist parties in Pakistan. Prior to the February 2008 elections, many U.S. policy makers and analysts believed that if these parties prevailed at the ballot box, militants would enjoy a more permissive operational environment. This view rested on the idea that supporters of Islamism and Sharia are less likely to view Islamist militant groups as threats and may be more inclined to find their operations justifiable.⁴⁰ A common corollary is that Muslims who are less supportive of Islamism and Sharia will be more likely to reject militancy and even embrace aggressive efforts to diminish the operational space of militants.

An alternative view suggests that individuals who express a preference for greater Shari’a and Islamization do so because they believe themselves to be pious Muslims, some subset of whom will reject militancy because it violates notions of justice or other aspects of Shari’a. More broadly, the association of between Islamist militancy and violence, vigilantism, and theft suggests that a preference for greater Islamization may very well imply less support for militant organizations.

³⁹ We use “perceived missions and goals” because Pakistanis’ perceptions of these goals and missions likely differ from the actual goals and missions in the post-2002 period.

⁴⁰ The Islamist political party coalition—the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal or MMA—was consistently criticized for supporting the Taliban and accommodating the Pashtun Islamist insurgency riling the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan. See, for example, Magnus Norell, “The Taliban and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA),” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2007), p.61-82. For a more nuanced view see Joshua T. White, *Pakistan’s Islamist Frontier*, (Washington D.C.: Center on Faith and International Affairs, 2008).

There is limited evidence to adjudicate between these divergent possibilities. Fair and Shepherd's study of support for suicide attacks in fourteen countries find that those who support a greater role for religious parties in politics were more inclined to find suicide attacks and other acts of violence against civilians to be justifiable.⁴¹ Quintan Wiktorowicz's study of Al Muhajirun recruits found the opposite relationship, those who were pious were far less vulnerable to Al Muhajirun's message.⁴² Despite the evidence presented in Wiktorowicz's work, the prevailing view is that a support for Islamism and Sharia correlates with support for militancy, leading to the following hypotheses.

- *H3*: Support for militant organizations should be positively correlated with support for "Talibanization", a larger role for Shari'a law, and the importance respondents place on religion as a source of governing principles for society.

"Islamism, Terrorism Versus Democracy"

Policy makers and analysts of Pakistan often assume that democracy exists in opposition to Islamism and militancy.⁴³ There are two aspects to this assumption: (1) those who lack faith in democratic institutions are more likely to support militancy; and (2) those who feel core democratic values are important are less likely to support militancy.⁴⁴ This leads to two hypotheses.

- *H4a*: Support for militancy should be decreasing in respondents' beliefs about the degree to which Pakistan should be or is governed by democratic principles.

- *H4b*: Support for militancy should be decreasing in extent to which respondents' value representative government and other core democratic protections.

⁴¹ C. Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd, "Research Note: Who Supports Terrorism? Insights from Fourteen Muslim Countries," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol.29, No. 2 (January/February 2006).

⁴² Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

⁴³ Author interactions with several staff members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate between January 2007 and May 2009.

⁴⁴ Due to the way in which "secularization" is translated into Urdu ("ladiniyat), this tends to connote a social state devoid of religion. There are few proponents for such a worldview in Pakistan. Thus many Pakistanis reject the notion of secularization.

Sophisticated Consumers of Militancy

Bringing politics back to the center of explanations for why individuals support militant organizations suggests individuals will support militant organizations when two conditions obtain: (1) those organizations are using violence in support of political goals the individual cares deeply about; and (2) violence makes sense as a way to achieve those goals given the strategic situation. This perspective does not ignore religion or poverty, both should clearly influence the political goals individuals care about. Instead, we argue the influence of those factors is strongly tempered by perceptions of the strategic environment in which groups operate. This perspective has two advantages over the conventional wisdoms described above. First, it treats those who support militancy as the cognitive equals of militant leaders and the governments opposing them. Second, it can explain why individual Pakistanis support some kinds of militancy but not others.

That Pakistanis make nuanced judgments between militant groups should not be surprising. Militant groups that operate with different objectives should be expected to mobilize different grievances. Someone who supports a group operating in Kashmir because they believe that Kashmiris living under Indian control are grievously abused and/or because they believe that other means of alleviating Kashmiris' suffering are non-existent need not have any strong feelings towards the Afghan Taliban. Likewise, a person motivated by anti-Shia sentiment may support those groups targeting Shia, but remain ambivalent about the Kashmiri cause. Support might be driven non-political factors such as the belief that a groups enhances Pakistan's national security or that it provides valuable social benefits such as schools, clinics, and marriage assistance.

If our alternative theory is correct, support for different groups should vary as a function of the causes they espouse, the utility of violence in pursuit of that cause, and the other benefits they provide. This view leads to four hypotheses about specific groups.

- *H5a*: Support for the Taliban should be increasing in dissatisfaction with Afghan government and with US role in Afghanistan.

- *H5b*: Support for al Qaeda should be increasing in anti-Americanism, especially the belief that America has a negative effect on the world.

- *H5c*: Support for the askari tanzeems should be increasing in concern with India's treatment of Muslims in Kashmir.

Of course, our alternative hypothesis also predicts that concern with these issues should be tempered by beliefs about elements of the strategic environment that make violence more or less useful as a means of achieving valued political ends. While we can identify several group-specific conditional hypotheses suggested by our theory, we are unable to test them with the current survey instrument. We do so in ongoing work.

3 Methodology and Data

Our survey data were developed through a joint project between the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA). Fair and the PIPA research staff designed the survey instrument with input from Shapiro and other scholars.⁴⁵ The questionnaire probes Pakistani public opinion on a wide array of domestic and foreign policy concerns including: (1) attitudes towards a variety of militant groups including al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, various "askari tanzeems", and ethnic militant movements such as the Baluchi insurgents; (2) the government's handling of the crises in FATA and at the Red Mosque; and (3) respondents' opinions about the legitimacy of attacks on different kinds of militant targets (e.g. Indian police, e.g. women and children of armed forces personnel, civilian targets such as parliament and national assemblies).

This section describes the data, discusses the limitations of our sample, and then briefly describes how we measured support for militant organizations.

Sample and Limitations

⁴⁵ Question-by-question results are reported in C. Christine Fair, Clay Ramsay and Steven Kull. *Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy and Relations with the U.S.* (Washington D.C.: PIPA, USIP, January 2007).

The survey was conducted by A.C. Nielsen Pakistan which carried out 907 face-to-face interviews with urban Pakistanis in 19 cities from September 12 to 28, 2007.⁴⁶ This was just before then-President Pervez Musharraf declared a six-week state of emergency and well-before the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The sample was designed to be broadly representative of urban Pakistani adults age 18 and up. The overall response rate was 35 percent.⁴⁷ In the event that a respondent was not available, the surveyor made three attempts to establish contact. If those efforts failed, a substitution was made in the same locality with a person having similar demographics. Efforts were made to ensure that the substituted respondent were of the same gender and within two years of the selected respondent's age.⁴⁸ This design yields a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percent.⁴⁹

A.C. Nielsen Pakistan used the 1998 Population Census of Pakistan as the main sampling frame to determine the sample sizes for the nineteen cities. In order to control for possible deviations from random sampling in the administration of the survey we used a vector of demographic variables—age, education, and gender—to construct our own sample weights based on the 2004-5 Household Integrated Economic Survey, the most recent national survey for which data has been released. We found the survey was not well-balanced and note wherever using our sample weights changes the results. Weighting changes few results but does provide additional evidence against two of the three conventional wisdoms.

A key limitation of these data is that they reflect the views of urban Pakistanis, who are a minority (36 percent) of Pakistan's nearly 176 million people (est).⁵⁰ While studying these issues with an urban sample is less than ideal, these results remain

⁴⁶ Cities included were Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Multan, Lahore, Okara, Sadiqabad, Kharian, Quaidabad, Lalian, Khangarh, Karachi, Hyderabad, Tando Adam, Kambar Ali Khan, Shahpur Jahania, Peshawar, Mingora, Lachi, Quetta, and Khuzdar.

⁴⁷ There were 2,618 contacts made, of which 907 completed the interview. Many (268) houses were locked on contact, 26 refused contact, 699 selected respondents were not at home, 83 refused because they could not speak Urdu.

⁴⁸ The Nielson Company, "Fieldwork Method Report : Public Opinion Poll September 2007, Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA)," October 12th, 2007. Available upon request.

⁴⁹ More precisely, given the sample size the 95% confidence interval around the percent responding 'yes' to a 'yes' or 'no' question would be +/- 3.3%.

⁵⁰ Pakistan has not conducted a census since 1998. Thus estimates of population as well as the breakdown of rural and urban population may be subject to considerable measurement error. Figure taken from the CIA World Factbook, "Pakistan," last updated April 23, 2009. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>.

extremely informative for several reasons. First, no similarly systematic data exist that cover both urban and rural areas, so these data represent a large step in the right direction.⁵¹ Second, most of Pakistan's desirable targets are located in urban areas, as is most of the country's wealth. Third, Islamist political parties such as the JI enjoy higher levels of support in Pakistan's urban areas—especially its universities—than they do in the country-side.⁵²

Most importantly, there are strong reasons to suspect urban areas are, in fact, the prime recruiting grounds for militant organizations. While there are numerous anecdotal accounts of the impoverished, poorly-educated country-side producing militants, no one to date has collected systematic data on the characteristics of Pakistani militants. Studies of militant characteristics using convenience samples or textual analyses of militant publications find that many of Pakistan's most lethal militants are from urban areas and are better educated and wealthier than the average Pakistani.⁵³

Given these facts we believe understanding which factors influence the attitudes of urban Pakistanis towards militancy is crucial. We there proceed with our analysis with the caveat that these results cannot be generalized to rural Pakistanis.

Measuring Support for Militant Organizations

Because Pakistanis are understandably reluctant to say they support groups like al-Qa'ida when being questioned by someone noting their answers on a clipboard, we could not directly ask about support for militant groups. Instead, we asked our respondents about the extent to which the activities of the following six groups posed a threat to "the vital interests of Pakistan in the next ten years":

⁵¹ We are currently fielding a survey that will remedy that situation.

⁵² Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 2004) pp. 175-188.

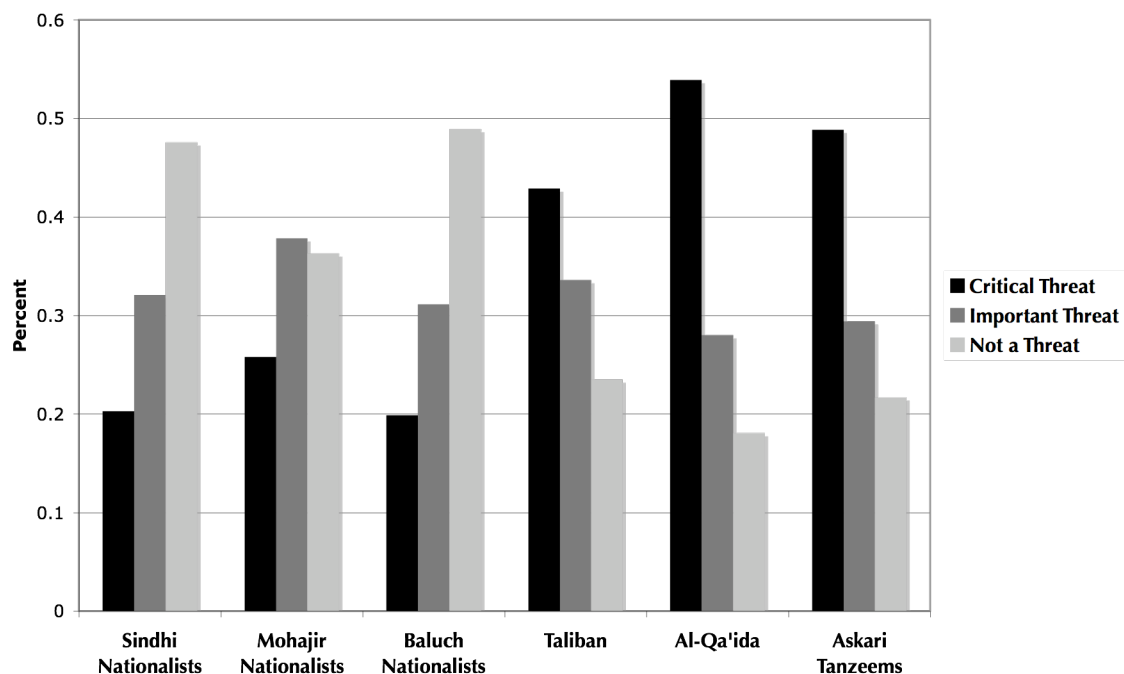
⁵³ Victor Asal, C. Christine Fair, Stephen Shellman, "Consenting to a Child's Jihad in Pakistan: Insights from Survey Data in Pakistan," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 11 (November 2008), pp. 973-994; C. Christine Fair, "Who are Pakistan's Militants and Their Families?," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January 2008), pp. 49-65; Mariam Abou Zahab, "I Shall be Waiting at the Door of Paradise: The Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure), in Aparna Rao et al. Eds. *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghon Books, 2007), pp.133-158; C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: A New Look at the Militancy-Madrasah Connection," *Asia Policy*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 2007), pp. 107-134; Saeed Shafqat, "From Official Islam to Islamism: The Rise of Dawat-ul-Irshad and Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Christophe Jaffrelot Ed. *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2002), pp. 131-147; Muhammad Amir Ranan (trans. Saba Ansari) *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2004).

- Sindhi nationalists in Pakistan;
- Mohajir nationalists in Pakistan;
- Baluch nationalists in Pakistan;
- Islamist militants and local Taliban in the FATA and settled areas;
- Al-Qa'ida;
- “askari tanzeems” in Pakistan.⁵⁴

Asking the question in this way yields higher response rates than asking directly about support and allows us to test hypotheses about support if we make the identifying assumption that fear of militant groups is inversely correlated with support for them.

Figure 1 shows the patterns of support for groups across all respondents.

Figure 1: Response Summaries by Group



Two patterns are evident in this picture. First, the vast majority of Pakistanis see militant Islamist organizations as a threat. Less than 25% think the askari tanzeems are “not a threat.” Second, patterns of support for the nationalist militias differ substantially

⁵⁴ “Askari tanzeem” are commonly understood by Pakistanis to be groups fighting in Indian-controlled Kashmir and engaging in attacks against Indian targets over the Kashmir issue. We cannot rule out the possibility that some respondents understand the term “askari tanzeem” as including sectarian militias.

from those for Islamist militant organizations, suggesting Pakistanis discriminate between different types of militant organizations.

Despite this apparent discrimination, a number of demographic factors including age, education, and gender might still be expected to influence support for militancy across wide swaths of the Pakistani population. The most efficient way to summarize these relationships across a number of groups is through multivariate regression tables. Table 1 reports the results of ordered-probit regressions showing the relationship between support and background demographic variables. Here higher values on the dependent variable indicate less perceived threat and therefore greater levels of support. Through the analysis we treat ordinal independent variables—level of education, income quartile, opinion on a four-point scale, and the like—as continuous only when doing so does not substantively change the results.

Table 1: Demographics and Support

	Sindhi Nat.	Mohajir Nat.	Baluch	Al-Qa'ida	Taliban	Askari Tanzeems
Age	-0.041 (-0.132 - 0.049)	-0.031 (-0.120 - 0.058)	0.002 (-0.093 - 0.097)	0.000 (-0.092 - 0.092)	-0.038 (-0.135 - 0.060)	-0.021 (-0.115 - 0.072)
Education	0.013 (-0.114 - 0.141)	-0.133** (-0.260 - -0.006)	0.100 (-0.037 - 0.237)	-0.212*** (-0.349 - -0.076)	-0.201*** (-0.347 - -0.055)	0.021 (-0.112 - 0.155)
Male	0.000 (-0.162 - 0.163)	-0.138* (-0.295 - 0.019)	-0.226*** (-0.394 - -0.058)	0.120 (-0.051 - 0.292)	-0.049 (-0.226 - 0.128)	-0.026 (-0.196 - 0.145)
Tau_1	-0.887***	-1.026***	-0.779***	-0.509***	-0.369**	-0.043
Tau_2	0.005	-0.021	0.098	0.401**	0.452**	0.768***
Observations	788	790	754	711	692	710
χ^2	0.933	7.846**	8.336**	10.55**	8.308**	0.471

Note 1: Robust 95% confidence intervals in parentheses

Note 2: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note 3: The negative relationship between education and support for al-Qa'ida disappears when using sample weights.

Table 1 clearly shows there is no consistent relationship between demographic characteristics and support for specific militant organizations. While greater levels of education correlate with lower levels of support for Mohajir nationalists, Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, they have no statistically significant relationship to support for the askari tanzeem or the other two nationalist groups. As with figure 1, this second pass through the data suggests there is a great deal of heterogeneity in patterns of support across groups. The next section seeks to explain this heterogeneity.

4 Results

This section begins by assessing the evidence for and against each of the three powerful conventional wisdoms outlined above. We find in each case that the evidence appears to falsify hypotheses that should be supported if the conventional wisdom is correct. We then turn to an assessment of hypotheses generated by our alternative theory. The results are broadly supportive of our theory, suggesting several directions for future research.

Poverty and Religiosity Predict Support for Militant Organizations

The dominant argument in Western policy discourse about the factors that lead people to support Islamist militancy is neatly encapsulated by the *9-11 Commission Report* which concludes that:

“Pakistan’s endemic poverty, widespread corruption, and often ineffective government create opportunities for Islamist recruitment. Poor education is a particular concern. Millions of families, especially those with little money, send their children to religious schools, or madrassah. Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as incubators for violent extremism.”⁵⁵

Note the absence of politics from this argument. Instead, background structural factors are described as motivating support for militant organizations. If this view is correct then our data should offer evidence for *H1*; support for militant organizations should be highly correlated across groups whose perceived missions and goals differ. The six groups we asked about have fairly well-differentiated goals, but can be roughly divided into nationalist and Islamist categories with Sindhi, Mohajir and Baluch militancy falling into the former category while the Islamist militants and local Taliban, Al-Qa’ida and askari tanzeems into the latter.

Examining patterns of correlation in support across groups highlights two factors. First, within categories there is high-degree of correlation between respondents’ support

⁵⁵ *The 9-11 Commission Report*, 367.

for groups. Second, between categories the correlations are much weaker.⁵⁶ In all possible pairings of Islamist and Nationalist groups the correlations were significantly smaller than in any possible within-category pairing. The relatively weak correlation between categories provides initial evidence against the hypothesis that support for militancy is driven by common factors across groups.

To further assess how well support for one group predicted support for other groups, we conducted a series of simple linear regressions. Treating the response variable as continuous, we found that approximately 43% of the variance in support for the Taliban can be explained using expressed support for other groups, while 59% and 56% of the variance in support for al-Qa'ida and the "Askari Tanzeem" can be explained with expressed support for other groups.⁵⁷ This finding suggests there are indeed underlying factors that drive support across these Islamist militant groups.

While the coefficients on responses within categories were uniformly positive and statistically significant, the between-category coefficients were not. In a number of cases expressed support for nationalist militants was negatively conditionally-correlated with expressed support for Islamists. In other words, within both the nationalist and Islamist militant groups, support for one group was correlated with support for the others. However, support for nationalist groups was not significantly correlated with support for Islamist groups and vice versa. This suggests that whatever the level of support is for militancy is, it is not an undifferentiated support for violent politics.

The implicit hypothesis in the above quotation is that Pakistanis' support for militancy is driven by some combination of religiosity and poverty. We measured poverty several ways. First, we assessed respondents' subjective perceptions of the economy by asking: (1) if they felt the Pakistani economy was on the right track or wrong track; and (2) how they felt Pakistan's economy was doing relative to that of India. We assessed objective economic performance by asking respondents who were employed how much cash they earned in the previous year. Unfortunately, a large portion of the

⁵⁶ The differences between correlation coefficients across groups were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level using Fisher's Z-transformation which remains robust when Spearman's correlation coefficients are used (Myers and Sirois 2006).

⁵⁷ Because the proper interpretation of various pseudo- r^2 measures is debated, we chose to quantify explained variation over our categorical outcome variable using the r^2 measure from a linear regression. The respective r^2 measures for the Taliban, al-Qa'ida, and the "Askari Tanzeem" are .26, .39, and .35.

women in our sample did not work and so we could not directly assess their economic status. To overcome this problem and to capture social pressures that might arise from community economic performance, we also used three questions from the 2004-5 Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLMS).⁵⁸ One asked respondents to rate whether their household economic situation was better or worse than in the previous year. The second asked respondents to rate whether their community economic situation was better or worse than in the previous year. The third captured the rates of child immunization by district.

Examining the simple bivariate relationships between our six poverty measures and support for different militant groups revealed no strong patterns. Using a standard chi-squared test, for example, we were unable to reject the null that there is no relationship between whether respondents feel the Pakistani economy is on the right track and their support for any of the main three militant groups. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, respondents who felt the Pakistan economy was doing well with respect to India were more supportive of al-Qa'ida and the Askari Tanzeems. When we add in variables addressing support for other militant groups, subjective perceptions of Pakistan's economic performance relative to India no longer predict support for al-Qa'ida. The positive relationship between subjective economic performance and support for the askari tanzeems remains statistically significant. This pattern makes sense if respondents are thinking strategically about the groups they support as the askari tanzeems can harass India with greater impunity when Pakistan's economy is strong.

We used four questions to assess respondents' level of religious fervor. The first asked respondents whether they felt Islamic law, Shari'a, should play a larger role, smaller role, or about the same role in Pakistani law as it does today. The second asked respondents to rank which of the following categories is most central to their "sense of self or identity": Pakistani, Muslim, individual, citizen of the world, and member of your ethnic group. The third asked respondents to rate their agreement with five statements listing what the goals of schooling should be, with one of the five goals being to "create good muslims." The fourth asked respondents to rate both how important it is for them to "live in a country that is governed according to Islamic principles."

⁵⁸ This is the most recent survey for which district-level data is available.

These four questions were designed to tap into different elements of individual religiosity. We recoded all four questions so that higher values correspond to giving greater priority to religion, e.g. ranking being a Muslim as one's most important identity. Interestingly, the correlation between these four measures was fairly weak, suggesting strongly that personal religiosity is a poor concept in so far as the mapping between preferences about the role of religion in governance, measured in two different ways, is very weakly correlated with either self-identification as a religious individual or with beliefs about the role of religion in education.

Once we account for the both religion and poverty at the same time, we find little support for either *H2a* or *H2b*. Table 2 summarizes the relationship between poverty, religiosity, and support for the three groups of greatest concern to Western policy makers. Including the vector of demographic variables changes none of these results. The table includes only those religion and poverty measures that made statistically significant contributions to explained variance using standard nested-model statistics.⁵⁹ Specific results aside, the very fact that only two of four religion measures and three of six poverty measures helped explain support for at least one group suggests serious problems with arguments about a generic link between religion or poverty and support for Islamist militancy.

Table 2: Religion, Poverty, and Support

	Taliban	Al-Qa'ida	Askari Tanzeems
More Sharia	0.713*** (0.374 - 1.052)	0.699*** (0.358 - 1.041)	0.340** (0.015 - 0.665)
Less Sharia	0.452*** (0.167 - 0.736)	0.414*** (0.132 - 0.695)	-0.01 (-0.275 - 0.255)
Muslim 1 st	0.215 (-0.183 - 0.614)	0.392* (-0.007 - 0.791)	0.569*** (0.193 - 0.945)
Muslim 2 nd	0.033 (-0.386 - 0.452)	0.095 (-0.326 - 0.516)	0.362* (-0.031 - 0.755)
Growth relative to India	0.052 (-0.030 - 0.134)	0.135*** (0.053 - 0.218)	0.199*** (0.119 - 0.280)
Percent Immunized	0.002 (-0.004 - 0.008)	0.006 (-0.001 - 0.012)	0.009*** (0.002 - 0.015)
	0.013***	0.005	0.010***

⁵⁹ Specifically, table 2 includes all religion and poverty measures that yielded statistically significant Wald and likelihood-ratio statistics for at least one group when compared to a baseline model using only demographic factors.

Community Economic Performance	0.013***	0.005	0.010***
Tau_1			
Community Economic Performance	0.789** (0.170 - 1.409)	1.448*** (0.821 - 2.074)	1.554*** (0.931 - 2.176)
Tau_2			
	1.709*** (1.078 - 2.339)	2.332*** (1.694 - 2.970)	2.438*** (1.803 - 3.073)
Observations	563	546	560
Adj. % Pred. Corr.	0.048	0.004	0.038

Note 1: Robust 95% confidence intervals in parentheses

Note 2: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

We see two important patterns immediately. First, support for the Taliban is not well-explained by religiosity. Both those who favored a greater role for Shari'a in Pakistani law and those want Shari'a to play a smaller role support the Taliban and al-Qa'ida more than those who feel the role of Shari'a is just right. This leads naturally to the Goldilocks conjecture: people who want change support militancy, but the change they want is not necessarily greater religiosity in public life. In fact, the askari tanzeems were the only group for whom the relationship was in the expected direction such that greater religiosity led to more support. Second, the predictive value of these models is quite low. The last line of the table shows the adjusted percent predicted correctly. This is the proportion of responses correctly predicted beyond the number predicted by always choosing the most common response. In other words, using measures of religion and poverty to predict support yields less than a 5% improvement over an intelligent guess.

Our analysis reveals further key point: religiosity writ large is a poor predictor of support for militant organizations. Respondents who identified producing good Muslims as a key goal for schools were not more likely to support the Taliban or askari tanzeems. More interestingly, respondents' rankings of the importance of using Islamic principles for governing Pakistan never made a significant contribution to our models. This is an important and subtle policy point; support for the centrality of Islam as a governing principle in Pakistani politics does not predict support for any of the militant groups of concern to Western policy makers.

We also found substantial evidence that religiosity only matters for support on the margins and is much less consequential than underlying political factors. Two specific findings support this statement. First, including support for other groups in these models

shows that the explanatory value of our measures of religion and poverty pale in comparison to that of expressed support for other groups.⁶⁰ Second, the marginal impact of the religion variables is always small even when statistically significant. For the average respondent, moving from not citing Islam as a key identity to saying it is their most important identity, is insufficient to increase the expressed level of support for al-Qa'ida or the Taliban. Taken together these results thus strongly suggest if there is some common factor driving support for all these militant organization, it is not religion.

Poverty fairs even more poorly than religiosity at explaining support for Islamist militant organizations. Perceptions of Pakistan's economic performance relative to India have the opposite relationship predicted by *H2a*. The better a respondent sees Pakistan's economy doing relative to India, the more supportive he or she is of al-Qa'ida and the askari tanzeems. Once we account for support for other militant organizations, this relationship goes away in the case of al-Qa'ida and becomes stronger in the case of the askari tanzeems, again suggesting heterogeneity not captured in the conventional wisdom about poverty and support. Perceptions that our respondents are falling behind economically are also not tied to support for militancy. Quite the opposite, those who see their nation's economy pulling away from India's are more likely to support militant activity directed at India. These results remain robust when controlling for all the religion variables we will discuss in the following sub-section.

Both measures of community economic conditions also run in the opposite of the direction predicted by *H2a*. Respondents from communities that saw their economic conditions improving were more supportive of both the Taliban and the askari tanzeems. Those from communities with high rates of child vaccination were more supportive of the askari tanzeems.

The bottom line from this analysis is that there is at best weak evidence for the notion that religiosity drives support for Islamist militant organizations in Pakistan and there is no evidence whatsoever in our data that poverty does so. Quite the contrary, our data suggest that better economic conditions may be associated with greater support for Islamist militancy in Pakistan.

⁶⁰ A wide variety of nested model tests and fit statistics show that the amount of variation explained by religion and poverty is much smaller than that explained by support for other Islamist groups. Additional summary tables for this and all other results are available from the authors upon request.

Islamist Politics and Support for Militancy

If *H3* is correct, then support for Islamist parties' political goals should correlate with support for specific militant groups. We measured support for Islamist politics in several ways. First, we measured the importance respondents placed on religion as a source of governing principles for society by assessing the gap between: (1) how important Pakistanis felt it was to live in a country governed by Islamic principles; and (2) the extent to which they felt Pakistan is governed by those principles. The greater this gap, the more supportive *H3* predicts Pakistanis should be of Islamist militancy.

We then asked two questions that measured respondents' feelings about issues that were central in the public agendas of Islamist political parties. The first asked respondents whether they supported the 2006 "Women's Protection Act." This act stirred national debate by effectively contravening key portions of the 1979 "Hudood Ordinances" that had enforced extremely harsh punishments against women for extramarital sex and made it exceedingly hard for women to prove rape charges. The amended law places rape under the civil code, eliminated the evidentiary requirement for four male witnesses, and removed the victims' exposure to prosecution for adultery. Politicians within the Islamist parties vociferously insisted these changes would encourage moral laxity and even threatened to resign from the parliament.⁶¹ The second Islamist politics question probed respondents' levels of support for requiring *madaris*—religious schools—to spend more time on math and science. Islamist parties objected to having the state dictate the curriculum at religious schools. *H3* predicts that opposition to both changes should be positively correlated with support for Islamist militants.

Finally, we assessed whether respondents' would like to see the 'Talibanization' of daily life in Pakistan continue. 'Talibanization' in this context meant the imposition of austere Taliban-style social strictures based on a rigid interpretation of Shari'a law. A few notes about the term Talibanization are in order. When our survey was fielded, the term "Talibanization" was already in use in the Pakistani press and it became more common as militants swept the important tourist destination of Swat, an area not previously known

⁶¹ Raja Asghar, "Senate passes women's bill; MMA amendments rejected," *The Dawn* (Karachi), November 24, 2006.

for its militancy. The term appears to imply several things. First, “Talibanization” implies violence and the lethal targeting of security forces (police, military and paramilitary), tribal leaders and other politicians opposing Islamist militants. It also includes the establishment of separate or parallel systems of governance including “sharia” courts dispensing extra-legal punishments. It is important to keep in mind that respondents may reject “Talibanization” because it is a restriction on personal choice—to veil, keep a beard, watch “sinful” DVDs, listen to music, send your daughter to school, to allow her to work—even if they do not reject the Afghan Taliban. In other words, Pakistanis may find the Afghan Taliban to have some utility while operating in Afghanistan even if they do not relish a Taliban-like presence in their own country. *H3* predicts opposition to Talibanization should be negatively correlated with support for all three groups.

Table 3 summarizes the influence of these variables on support for different militant organizations.⁶² Once again we have treated ordinal variables as continuous only where doing so does not substantively impact the results.

Table 3: Islamist Politics and Support

		Taliban	Al Qaeda	Askari Tanzeem
Islamist Politics	Islam as Governing Principle Gap	0.033*	0.045**	0.010
	Opposition to Womens’ Protection Act	(-0.003 - 0.069)	(0.008 - 0.081)	(-0.025 - 0.046)
	Opposition to Math/Science Requirement	0.080	0.072	0.275***
		(-0.043 - 0.202)	(-0.055 - 0.200)	(0.145 - 0.406)
		-0.033	0.093	0.183***
		(-0.165 - 0.099)	(-0.036 - 0.221)	(0.049 - 0.316)
	More Talibanization	-0.078	0.177	0.168
		(-0.415 - 0.260)	(-0.184 - 0.539)	(-0.186 - 0.523)
Religion and Poverty	Less Talibanization	-0.511***	-0.566***	-0.329**
		(-0.800 - -0.222)	(-0.867 - -0.266)	(-0.625 - -0.033)
	More Sharia	0.626***	0.599***	0.399*
		(0.192 - 1.059)	(0.179 - 1.020)	(-0.002 - 0.800)
	Less Sharia	0.421**	0.596***	0.308
		(0.036 - 0.806)	(0.231 - 0.962)	(-0.062 - 0.677)
	Muslim 1 st	-0.001	0.240	0.205
		(-0.522 - 0.520)	(-0.323 - 0.803)	(-0.287 - 0.698)
	Muslim 2 nd	-0.068	-0.039	0.199
		(-0.616 - 0.481)	(-0.629 - 0.551)	(-0.306 - 0.703)

⁶² The small number of responses in table 3 is driven by the fact that non-response rates for some of these questions approached 25%, but the specific non-responses varied across respondents so that a small number of respondents answered all the questions. Removing one or two variables at a time from the models increases the sample size but does not change any core results. We therefore report the full model despite the small sample size.

Growth relative to India	0.169*** (0.063 - 0.276)	0.170*** (0.055 - 0.286)	0.249*** (0.142 - 0.356)
Percent Immunized	0.002 (-0.007 - 0.010)	0.008* (-0.001 - 0.018)	0.015*** (0.006 - 0.025)
Community Economic Performance	0.011*** (0.004 - 0.019)	0.011*** (0.003 - 0.020)	0.014*** (0.005 - 0.023)
Tau_1	0.699 (-0.160 - 1.557)	1.873*** (0.957 - 2.789)	2.702*** (1.734 - 3.670)
Tau_2	1.715*** (0.843 - 2.587)	2.893*** (1.943 - 3.844)	3.834*** (2.815 - 4.853)
Observations	360	346	356
Adj. % Pred. Corr.	0.190	0.126	0.296

Note 1: Robust 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

Note 2: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Note 3: Reference category for Talibanization is that respondents want the same amount of talibanization.

Not surprisingly given our earlier results on religious identity, support for Islamist politics did not translate into support for militant organizations in any clean way. Dislike of the Womens' Protection Act, for example, was correlated with greater support for the askari tanzeem, but not with greater support for al-Qa'ida or the Taliban. A different alignment arose around the gap between respondents' desired role for Islam and its actual role in Pakistani governance. The larger respondents felt this gap was, the more supportive they were for all three groups, but the effect was only statistically significant for the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. Those opposed to imposing a math/science requirement on madaris were more supportive of the askari tanzeems, but were no more likely than others to support the Taliban or al-Qa'ida. Table 3 also shows that contrary to *H3*, support for militant organizations is not positively correlated with support for "talibanization." Those who want to see less talibanization are less supportive of all three militant groups than those who think the level of talibanization is appropriate. However, those who want to see more talibanization than the status quo are not more supportive of militant organizations.⁶³

Overall, our results strongly suggest that support for Islamist politics does not predict support for Islamist militant organizations.

Democracy and Support for Militancy

⁶³ We also see that after controlling for feelings about Islamist politics, the results from table 2 remain the same, casting further doubt on hypotheses linking religion and poverty to militancy

Policy makers and analysts of Pakistan typically argue that democracy exists in opposition to Islamism and militancy and may even correlate with demands for “secularization,” the presumed polar opposite of Islamism and militancy. If this perspective were correct then support for militancy should be decreasing in respondents’ beliefs about the potential for change through democratic institutions, as predicted by *H4a*. We asked two questions that directly measure respondents’ perceptions of the possibility for democratic change. First, we asked respondents how confident they were that if elections were held they would “be free and fair.” We then asked respondents to rate the extent to which they think “Pakistan is governed by representatives elected by the people.”⁶⁴

Those who see democracy standing in opposition to militancy would also expect us to find that support for militancy is decreasing in extent to which respondents’ value individual rights and in the extent to which they have confidence in government institutions which can protect these rights, *H4b*. We asked two sets of questions designed to measure support for core democratic rights. The first set asked respondents about the importance of three key democratic values: minority protection, representative government, and independent courts. The second set asked their confidence in three key institutions of representative government: the national government as a whole, the national assembly, and their provincial assembly.

Analyzing respondents’ responses to these questions yield little support for *H4a* or *H4b*. Table 4 summarizes the results on these variables controlling for religion and poverty. The table does not include the second set of questions on *H4b* because the only statistically significant relationship we could find between expressed confidence in the institutions of government and support for militancy ran in the opposite direction posited by *H4b*. Respondents who said they had “quite a lot” of confidence in the national government, “not very much,” or “none at all” were actually less supportive of al-Qa’ida and the askari tanzeems than respondents who expressed “a great deal” of confidence in the national government. In this survey there was no correlation between lack of confidence in the government and support for militancy.

⁶⁴ The cleanest measure of support for democracy in the survey asked respondents how important it was that Pakistani be governed by elected representatives. Support for democracy was so high and homogeneous there was not enough variation on this variable to identify any impact.

If *H4a* and *H4b* were correct than table 4 should show a series of negative relationships such that, for example, the more confident people are in upcoming elections, the less they support militant organizations. This turns out to be correct, but is the only result supporting these hypotheses. Respondents who feel Pakistan is governed by representatives of the people were not less supportive of al-Qa'ida or the askari tanzeems. Importantly, there was no discernible relationship between respondents' support for core democratic rights and their disapproval of either al-Qa'ida or the Taliban. We do see that those who want minorities protected, or who think representative government is important, are less supportive of the askari tanzeems.⁶⁵ These results suggest that presumption that citizens who favor democracy oppose militancy is incomplete at best.

Table 4: Democratic Values and Support

		Taliban	Al Qaeda	Askari Tanzeem
Potential for Democratic Change	Confidence in Elections	-0.115*	-0.138**	-0.195***
		(-0.236 - 0.006)	(-0.263 - -0.013)	(-0.321 - -0.068)
	Elected Representatives Govern Pakistan	-0.044**	-0.018	0.006
		(-0.087 - -0.001)	(-0.061 - 0.025)	(-0.039 - 0.051)
Core Democratic Rights	Importance of Protecting Religious Minorities	-0.068	-0.002	-0.213***
		(-0.213 - 0.076)	(-0.146 - 0.142)	(-0.365 - -0.061)
	Importance of Representative Government	0.014	-0.004	-0.056**
		(-0.041 - 0.070)	(-0.067 - 0.059)	(-0.111 - -0.001)
	Importance of Independent Judiciary	0.012	-0.040	0.024
		(-0.058 - 0.082)	(-0.107 - 0.027)	(-0.041 - 0.089)
Religion and Poverty	More Sharia	0.935***	0.863***	0.374*
		(0.538 - 1.332)	(0.469 - 1.257)	(-0.000 - 0.748)
	Less Sharia	0.751***	0.700***	0.215
		(0.405 - 1.098)	(0.362 - 1.039)	(-0.101 - 0.531)
	Muslim 1 st	0.109	0.356*	0.585***
		(-0.334 - 0.552)	(-0.056 - 0.769)	(0.172 - 0.998)
	Muslim 2 nd	0.005	0.056	0.306
		(-0.456 - 0.466)	(-0.381 - 0.492)	(-0.115 - 0.727)
	Growth relative to India	0.074	0.164***	0.235***
		(-0.025 - 0.173)	(0.065 - 0.262)	(0.138 - 0.332)
	Percent Immunized	0.005	0.007*	0.009**
		(-0.003 - 0.012)	(-0.000 - 0.015)	(0.002 - 0.017)
	Community Economic	0.015***	0.008**	0.013***

⁶⁵ Wald and Likelihood ratio tests for nested models suggest that adding in support for an independent judiciary never results in a statistically significant increase in explained variance and that adding in support for minority rights and representative government only helps explain support for the Askari Tanzeem.

Performance	(0.008 - 0.021)	(0.001 - 0.015)	(0.006 - 0.019)
Tau_1	0.630 (-0.465 - 1.726)	1.012* (-0.048 - 2.072)	0.293 (-0.796 - 1.382)
Tau_2	1.629*** (0.522 - 2.735)	1.941*** (0.887 - 2.994)	1.236** (0.138 - 2.334)
Observations	459	450	463
Adj. % Pred. Corr.	0.090	0.005	0.157

Note 1: Robust 95% confidence intervals in parentheses

Note 2: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note 3: The negative relationships between the potential for democratic change variables and support for the Taliban and al-Qa'ida disappear when using sample weights.

As an alternative, analysts who are more familiar with the terrain in Pakistan, argue that those who want democracy see no requirement for secularization and see no obvious disconnect between greater Islamism and democracy. Moreover, supporters of democracy *could* be more inclined to support militancy since Pakistan's Islamist parties have historically phrased their appeals in democratic terms. Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), for example, boycotted the 2008 election because they believed it would be rigged. Key parties of the Islamist political coalition, the MMA, consistently argued in constitutional and democratic terms that President Musharraf's tenure as chief of army staff and president was illegal. Leaders of the major Islamist parties—Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI) and JI—criticized Musharraf's extralegal dismissal of a supreme court justice in March 2007. Groups seeking to “liberate” Kashmir often use the language of self-determination and “azadi” (freedom), which reflects a call for some fundamental democracy, as least for Kashmir.

Thus, it is likely that some Pakistanis read the consistent Islamists' democratic critique of Musharraf as evidence of their democratic goals. Similarly, since JI-backed militant groups, Deobandi ground and Lashkar-e-Taiba have mobilized support on the basis of securing freedom and self-determination for Kashmiris, some of their supporters may also impute democratic ideals to these groups. This alternative line of argument suggests that once we control for political grievances, feelings about the importance of democracy, or about the potential for change through democratic institutions, should be unrelated to support for militancy.

To test this hypothesis, we employed two tests. First, we asked whether adding the democracy variables discussed above improved model fit over a model that used

religion, poverty, and a vector of variables addressing group-specific political concerns.⁶⁶ Adding the full vector of democracy variables could only be justified for the askari tanzeems. Breaking the democracy variables down further, we found that none helped explain variance in support for the Taliban after controlling for the political variables. Our respondents' confidence that upcoming elections would be free and fair helped predict support for al-Qa'ida and the askari tanzeems after controlling for political grievances. The importance of representative government continued to help explain variance in support for the askari tanzeems after controlling for political grievances. Overall then, of the 15 possible relationships between support for a specific group and our five democracy variables, only three helped explain the variance in support once political grievances are taken into account.

We then assessed whether controlling for political grievances substantially changed the coefficient estimates where democracy does appear to matter. Including political grievances attenuates the coefficient estimates in four of the six cases where democracy appears to matter in table 4. In the Taliban case, the coefficient on elected representatives governing Pakistan drops away and the coefficient on fair elections is dramatically attenuated in substantive impact and statistical significance. For al-Qa'ida, controlling for political grievances strengthens the relationship between support and feeling elections will not be free and fair. For the askari tanzeems, the coefficient on minority protection drops out, the coefficient on the importance of representative government drops out, and the coefficient on elections becomes stronger.

Overall, controlling for political grievances removes most of the already tenuous relationship between support for democracy and support for militancy.

Alternative View: Political Grievances

In order to test the alternative to views positing a primary role for religious or economic grievances, we asked respondents about several political issues on which the militant organizations of greatest concern express clear objectives. Al-Qa'ida has espoused a number of trans-national Islamist goals (e.g. establishing a Caliphate). However, in recent years, the most visible political goals of al-Qa'ida in Pakistan include ousting the United

⁶⁶ We present the results for these variables in the next section.

States from Afghanistan, eliminating President Musharraf, and compelling the United States to switch its policies in Israel and Iraq. The Afghan Taliban seek to oust foreign militaries from Afghanistan and re-assert their political dominions. The Pakistani Taliban tends to focus its objectives upon Pakistan's tribal areas where they have sought to oust Pakistani security forces and establish Taliban-like parallel systems of governance in Pakistan. The various askari tanzeems seek to liberate Kashmir from India. We can thus assess whether Pakistanis condition support on the political goal groups are serving by assessing how well support is predicted by expressed opinions on these political issues.

To test *H5a* we asked respondents three questions that relate to support for the Taliban. The first asked whether they felt that the current Afghan government or the Taliban has the best approach to governing Afghanistan. The second asked their views on how the Pakistani government should deal with local (e.g. Pakistani) Taliban in the FATA. The third asked respondents feelings about Talibanization in Pakistan.

We asked three questions designed to test *H5b*, that support for al-Qa'ida should be increasing in belief that US influence has a negative effect on the world. The first asked respondents whether they agreed that the U.S. seeks to "weaken and divide the Islamic world." The second asked respondents how much they trusted the U.S. to "act responsibly in the world." The third asked their agreement with the statement that "the U.S. is playing the role of world policeman more than it should."

We asked three questions to test *H5c*, that support for askari tanzeems should be increasing in concerns with Indian treatment of Muslims in Kashmir. We first elicited respondents' perceptions about the Indian government's treatment of Muslims both in and out of Kashmir. We then asked whether Pakistan "has a moral obligation to protect Muslims anywhere in South Asia." Finally, to test *H5d*, that support would be increasing in the belief that groups provide social services, we asked respondents whether the askari tanzeems "provide social and community services."

Table 5 summarizes the results from our tests on the role of political grievances. We have left the control variables for poverty and religiosity out of the table for readability and again treat ordered variables as continuous only when doing so does not substantively change the results. We report the Wald statistics for nested models to whether asking about other groups' political goals helps explain support for each group.

Table 5. Political Grievances and Support

		Taliban	Taliban	Al-Qa'ida	Al-Qa'ida	Askari Tanzeems	Askari Tanzeems
Taliban Political Goals	Current Afghan Gov. Has Best Approach	0.064	0.193		0.256		0.384
		(-0.316 - 0.443)	(-0.273 - 0.659)		(-0.270 - 0.781)		(-0.102 - 0.871)
	Former Afghan Gov. Had Best Approach	0.451***	0.615***		0.457**		0.652***
		(0.173 - 0.728)	(0.259 - 0.970)		(0.069 - 0.844)		(0.271 - 1.033)
	Opposition to Gov't Presence in FATA	0.161*	0.235*		-0.033		0.233*
		(-0.019 - 0.340)	(-0.025 - 0.495)		(-0.331 - 0.264)		(-0.035 - 0.502)
	Support Talibanization	0.128**	0.110		0.124		0.070
		(0.017 - 0.238)	(-0.051 - 0.271)		(-0.030 - 0.278)		(-0.079 - 0.219)
Al Qaeda Political Goals	US Seeks to Weaken and Divide Muslims		0.089	-0.004	-0.104		-0.122
			(-0.181 - 0.359)	(-0.201 - 0.193)	(-0.373 - 0.166)		(-0.388 - 0.145)
	US Plays World Policeman Too Much		0.263	0.418***	0.208		0.004
			(-0.088 - 0.614)	(0.162 - 0.675)	(-0.161 - 0.576)		(-0.347 - 0.354)
	US Cannot be Trusted to Act Responsibly		0.073	0.052	0.088		0.251***
			(-0.102 - 0.248)	(-0.072 - 0.177)	(-0.091 - 0.267)		(0.072 - 0.430)
Askari Tanzeems Political Goals	Indian Not Protect Kashmiri Muslims		-0.011		-0.135	-0.219***	-0.102
			(-0.207 - 0.184)		(-0.340 - 0.071)	(-0.369 - -0.070)	(-0.293 - 0.089)
	Indian Not Protect Muslim Citizens		0.055		-0.054	0.046	0.009
			(-0.115 - 0.225)		(-0.223 - 0.116)	(-0.094 - 0.186)	(-0.171 - 0.189)
	PK Has Obligation to Protect Muslims		0.157*		0.155*	0.045	0.069
			(-0.006 - 0.320)		(-0.016 - 0.326)	(-0.093 - 0.182)	(-0.104 - 0.242)
	Askari Tanzeems Provide Services		0.081		0.330**	0.685***	0.470***
			(-0.239 - 0.402)		(0.005 - 0.655)	(0.435 - 0.935)	(0.150 - 0.791)
	Tau_1	1.749***	3.275***	1.968***	2.635***	1.615***	3.520***
		(0.866 - 2.632)	(1.483 - 5.067)	(0.841 - 3.094)	(0.695 - 4.576)	(0.638 - 2.591)	(1.410 - 5.630)
	Tau_2	2.748***	4.226***	2.917***	3.594***	2.544***	4.620***
		(1.843 - 3.653)	(2.410 - 6.042)	(1.773 - 4.061)	(1.622 - 5.567)	(1.547 - 3.541)	(2.471 - 6.770)
	Observations	388	250	415	245	369	252
	Adj. % Pred. Corr.	0.145	0.184	0.065	0.177	0.188	0.263
	Wald-statistic	23.77***	8.22	11.43***	23.62***	34.48***	29.24***

Robust 95% confidence intervals in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note 1: Reference category for Afghan government performance is that "neither" had a good approach.

Note 2: Wald-statistics for baseline models compares to religiosity and poverty only model.

Dense as it is, table 5 reveals three important patterns. First, and most importantly, the al-Qa'ida-specific political questions do a poor job of predicting support for that group. Once we controlled for feelings about other groups' political variables, for example, feelings about the U.S. role in world affairs were not useful in predicting support for al-Qa'ida's. Moreover, goals which predict support for both the Taliban and the Askari Tanzeem, opposition to the Pakistani government efforts to impose control

over local Taliban in the FATA for example, did not predict support for al-Qa'ida. One potential explanation for this null finding is that some intervening variables is conditioning the relationship between respondents' political beliefs and their support for specific groups.

Second, there were a few political questions that predicted support across groups. Those who felt Pakistan has an obligation to protect Muslims elsewhere were more likely to support the Taliban and al-Qa'ida but not the askari tanzeems. From the perspective of our alternative to the conventional wisdom this makes sense. Respondents believing the tanzeems make things worse for Muslims in Kashmir (as they often do) should withhold their support.

Third, support for the askari tanzeems was not driven by concerns with India's treatment of its Muslim citizens. Indeed, the worse the job our respondents felt India was doing at protecting Muslims, the less supportive they were of Islamist militants conducting attacks in India and Kashmir. This finding is consistent with a relatively sophisticated political calculus by our respondents, one that runs as follows: (1) attacks by Askari Tanzeem may provoke a backlash against Indian Muslims; (2) if India is already doing a poor job protecting its Muslims that backlash could be quite severe and Muslims will suffer; hence (3) I should not support the askari tanzeems.⁶⁷

At a minimum, the results in table 5 suggest that the mapping between political preferences and support for different militant organizations is much more complex than many Western and Pakistani analysts have presumed. In line with our expectations about the interactions between political goals and the strategic environment, we found that support for both the Taliban and al-Qa'ida were decreasing in the perceived threat to Pakistan from U.S. forces in Afghanistan. We might further expect that the positive relationship between dissatisfaction with the Afghan government and support for the Taliban should be attenuated among respondents perceiving a substantial threat to Pakistan from American forces in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the high level of non-

⁶⁷ A similar logic could explain the finding that those feeling Pakistan is falling behind India economically are less supportive of militant groups. Another explanation for supporting askari tanzeems is a fundamental belief about Kashmiri sovereignty that is independent of how India treats its Muslims generally or Kashmiris in particular. Unfortunately our survey did not ask about this.

overlapping missing data in this survey mean we are unable to fully test such conditional relationships.⁶⁸

Overall, the results in this subsection suggest specific political grievances are an important but not decisive driver of support for militant organizations. To further tests whether political considerations play a key role we examined how the explanatory power of the political variables compared to that of our base model using religion and poverty. Table 6 reports these results.

Table 6: Predictive Value of Political Goals vs. Poverty & Religiosity

	Model	Taliban	Al-Qa'ida	Askari Tanzeems
Percent Correct	Naïve Model	44.4	54.2	48.2
Percent Improvement Over Naïve Model	Poverty & Religiosity	4.8	0.4	3.8
	Group Political Goals	14.5	6.5	18.8
	All Political Goals	18.4	17.7	26.3
Percent By Which Group Political Goals Out-perform Pov. & Rel.		302.1	1625.0	494.7

The first row of table 6 shows the percent of responses predicted correctly by a naïve model that assumes all respondents choose the most common answer. The second row shows the percent improvement on this prediction using poverty and personal religiosity. The third and fourths rows show the same for group-specific political goals and all political goals. The fifth row provides the decisive statistic, the percent by which the improvement over the naïve model using group-specific political goals exceeds the improvement for the poverty and religion model. Formal nested model tests, reported in the bottom of table 5, confirm the intuition from table 6. Across all three groups the political variables do a statistically significantly better job of explaining support than explanations that rely on overly-general conceptual categories such as religiosity or poverty. As table 6 shows, the improvement is substantial.

⁶⁸ We are addressing this problem by conducting a follow-on survey with a larger sample size and a quasi-experimental design intended to limit non-response rates and explicitly address the interaction of political concerns with the perceived strategic environment.

5 Conclusion

Several conclusions of this study cast considerable doubt on the conventional wisdoms about support for Islamist militancy in Pakistan. First, support for militant organizations is not correlated between different types of militant groups. This finding suggests that Pakistanis distinguish between providers of political violence.

Second, there is no clear connection between subjective or objective measures of economic strength and lower levels of support for the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. Contrary to common expectations, we found that respondents who come from economically successful areas or who believe Pakistan is doing well relative to India economically are more likely to support askari tanzeems. Thus popular prescriptions that Pakistanis will support normalization of relations with India when they feel confident in their country's economic and other measures of national power are not supported by these findings.

Third, religiosity is a poor predictor of support for militant organizations. A preference for more Shari'a law does not predict support for militant organizations. What does is a desire for change—positive or negative—in the perceived role of Shari'a in Pakistan. Similarly, identifying strongly as a Muslim does not predict support for Taliban militants fighting in Afghanistan or for al-Qa'ida. While Islamic identity does predict support for askari tanzeems, the correlation disappears once we use control for respondents' support for other groups. Whatever the common factor driving support for all these militant organization is, it is not religion per se. Rather, underlying political considerations appear to be what is driving support.

Fourth, we found no discernible relationship between respondents' faith in democracy or support for core democratic rights and their disapproval of the Taliban or al-Qa'ida. These findings suggest that the much-heralded call for democratization as a palliative for militancy may be unfounded.

Overall, the mapping between political preferences and support for different militant organizations appears to be much more complex than many Western and Pakistani commentators and academics have presumed. The Pakistanis in our survey appear to be making rather sophisticated political calculations that are not easily

categorized. While we found evidence that specific political grievances are an important driver of support for militant organizations, they are not decisive. We believe the source of the ambiguity is that respondents are taking both political incentives and a perception of the strategic environment into account.

The bottom line is that there is strikingly little support for conventional views about why Pakistanis support Islamist militancy. Since Islamist militancy in Pakistan is likely to remain a core security concern for the foreseeable future, these results should be of great interest. Commonly suggested palliatives for militancy such as economic development, greater democratization, offering alternatives to religious education, appear unlikely to reduce support for Islamist militancy. This finding implies policy makers should refocus their efforts on alternative policy options such as addressing militants' supporters' core political concerns or taking actions that reduce the perceived value of militant violence as a political tool.