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Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US

A Joint Study of WorldPublicOpinion.org and the United States Institute of Peace

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C. CHRISTINE FAIR
CLAY RAMSAY
STEVEN KULL

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C. Christine Fair, Clay Ramsay, and Steven Kull designed the questionnaire and wrote the analysis for this study, with contributions from Stephen Weber, Evan Lewis, and Ebrahim Mohseni. Mary Speck, Abe Medoff, Melanie Ciolek and Melinda Brouwer managed the editing and production of the report.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, Pakistan has endured a series of traumatic events that have brought increasing stress to its people and its political classes, as well as to American policymakers and the international community.

In March 2007 President Musharraf suspended the Supreme Court's chief justice, a move which sparked a movement of lawyers and professionals in opposition to the government's action. In July, the army retook the Lal Masjid ("Red Mosque") from militant groups in an assault that brought numerous casualties. This led to the breakdown of a tenuous accord between the government and pro-Taliban groups in Waziristan, who resumed attacks on government forces—attacks that have expanded since into settled areas.

In October, the opposition leader Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan to campaign in upcoming National Assembly elections; on the day of her return, an attempt was made on her life that killed 149 others. In November, President Musharraf declared a state of emergency that lasted six weeks, purged the Supreme Court, and put new controls on broadcast media. Finally, in December Benazir Bhutto was killed, precipitating a new situation that seems to be moving—tortuously—toward new elections.

In this fierce succession of events, it is important to not lose a broader perspective. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has gone through many crises in its 60 years, and its resilience has been often underestimated. One source of this resilience has been, necessarily, the Pakistani public. Thus it is vital to ask what are the strengths and weaknesses, the areas of agreement and polarization that characterize the public's attitudes.

Naturally a key concern, especially from an American perspective, is how Pakistanis view the proper role of Islam in society. Central to the US "war on terror" is concern about militant groups, such as al Qaeda and the Taliban, who seek to create an extremely conservative and theocratic Islamist state. How responsive are Pakistanis to the siren song of such ideas? The Pakistani government has taken a number of steps in recent years to reform the madrassahs and laws related to the treatment of women: how do Pakistanis view these developments?

Conversely important is the question of how Pakistanis view democracy. How important is democracy to them and how do they assess the reality of democratic functioning in Pakistan? Likewise, how do they value the independence of the justice system, which has been sorely tested over the last year?

Perhaps most centrally, does the majority feel there are contradictions between democratic governance and Islam's social role, or do they see these as essentially in harmony? Does the current political turmoil arise from deep-seated ideological conflicts on these questions, or do they primarily arise from political power struggles?

The army has long taken the central role among Pakistan's governmental institutions. How do Pakistanis really feel about the army? Is there a single view of the army held by a majority, whatever role the army takes—or do they see its many different roles in different ways?

Over the last year the Taliban and other militant groups consolidated themselves in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and reached increasingly into the Northwest Frontier Province, much to the concern of the United States and its NATO allies in Afghanistan. A key part of this

situation is the fact that the FATA is only loosely integrated with Pakistan as a whole. How do Pakistanis view this longstanding arrangement?

How do Pakistanis look on military action in FATA against Islamist militant groups? When Pakistanis think about Islamist militancy, how do they perceive it? How aware are they of these organizations' actual methods and activities? Do they think of such groups as a threat to Pakistan?

The United States has made major investments in its relationship with Pakistan's government and military. The events of the last year have led to an American debate—likely to grow only more intense—over what direction the United States should take now. Should the United States continue to focus on its relations with the governing elite? Should it engage with Pakistan in a wider and perhaps riskier way, one that includes Pakistan's people and civil society? What do Pakistani public attitudes suggest about the prospects of different possible US courses of action?

To seek answers to these and many other compelling questions, WorldPublicOpinion.org and the U.S. Institute of Peace collaborated on a far-ranging study of Pakistani public attitudes. The survey was conducted from Sept. 12 to 18, just before President Pervez Musharraf declared a six-week state of emergency and before the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The sample included 907 Pakistani urban adults, selected using multi-stage probability sampling, who were interviewed at home in 19 cities. The margin of error is +/- 3.3 percent.

The key findings of the study are:

1. Role of Islam

There is strong public support for giving Islam a wider role in Pakistan. A large majority feels it is very important to live in a country that is governed according to Islamic principles. A majority says it would like to see Shari'a or Islamic law play a larger role in their country than it does today.

At the same time, there is little support for a shift towards extreme religious conservatism. Instead there is significant support for some reforms in the opposite direction. Only a small minority—even among those who want a greater role for Shari'a—wants to see the "Talibanization" of daily life increase. About two-thirds support a recent government plan to reform the madrassahs, including strong support among those favoring Shari'a. A plurality supports the Women's Protection Act, which modifies existing law in the direction of greater women's rights. 5

2. Views of Democracy

A large majority of Pakistanis endorse democracy. Most Pakistanis say it is very important to live in a country governed by elected representatives. Among those who want a greater role for Islam, support for democracy is even higher than among the population as a whole. Likewise, a large majority supports an independent judiciary. 8

3. Assessment of Pakistani Democracy

Pakistanis are lukewarm about how well their government lives up to democratic principles. A plurality is not confident that the next elections will be free and fair, and few think the courts are independent of political or military influence. Assessments of Pakistan's protection of human rights are also lukewarm. 9

FINDINGS

1. Role of Islam

There is strong public support for giving Islam a wider role in Pakistan. A large majority feels it is very important to live in a country that is governed according to Islamic principles. A majority says it would like to see Shari'a or Islamic law play a larger role in their country than it does today.

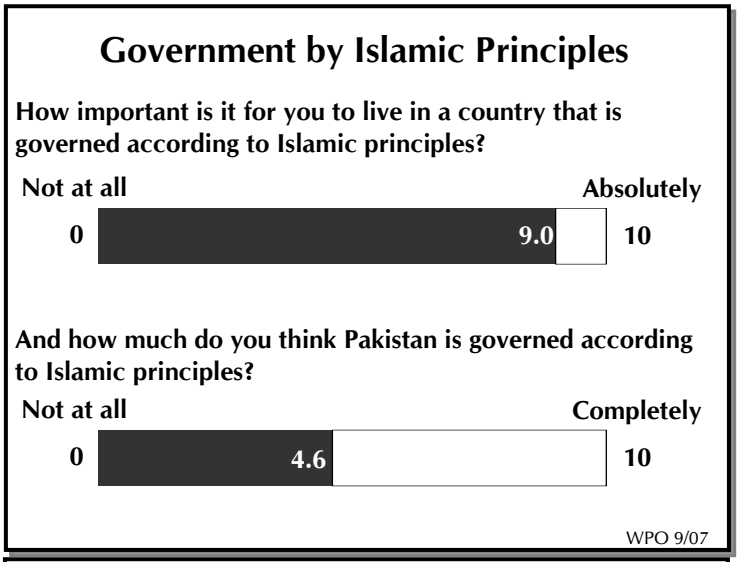
At the same time, there is little support for a shift towards extreme religious conservatism. Instead there is significant support for some reforms in the opposite direction. Only a small minority—even among those who want a greater role for Shari'a—wants to see the "Talibanization" of daily life increase. About two-thirds support a recent government plan to reform the madrassahs, including strong support among those favoring Shari'a. A plurality supports the Women's Protection Act, which modifies existing law in the direction of greater women's rights.

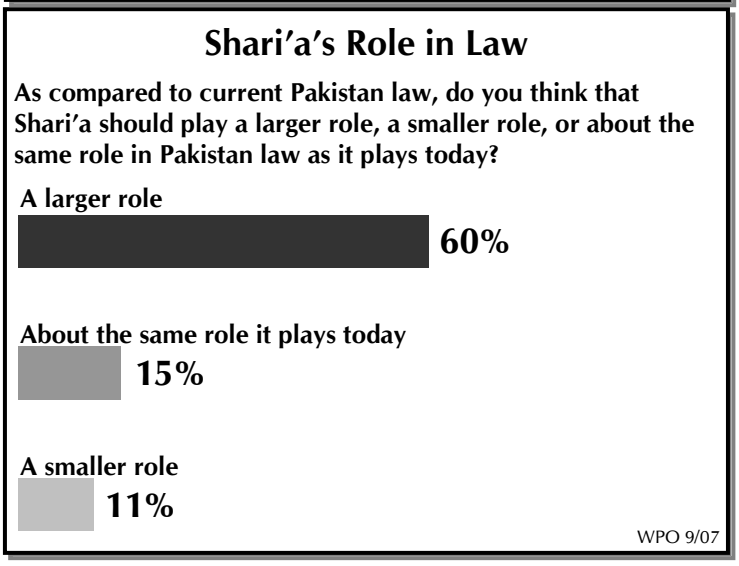
Support for a Greater Role for Islam

Majorities of Pakistanis would like to see Islam playing a wider role in the public life of their country. When asked to use a 10-point scale to rank the importance of living "in a country that is governed according to Islamic principles," 61 percent picked 10 (meaning "absolutely important"), and 81 percent chose 8 or higher. Only a miniscule 4 percent said 4 or less. The mean response was 9.0.

Respondents were then asked to use another 10-point scale to rank how much Pakistan is currently governed by Islamic principles, with 0 meaning "not at all" and 10 meaning "completely." This time 61 percent picked scores of 5 or less. Only 17 percent answered 8 or higher. The mean score was just 4.6.

A clear majority thinks that Shari'a should play a more important role in Pakistan. Asked whether "Shari'a should play a larger role, a smaller role, or about the same role" compared to current Pakistani law, 60 percent said a larger role. Only 11 percent thought the role of Shari'a





should be smaller, and 15 percent thought it should stay the same.

Pakistanis also consider Islam more vital to their identity than ethnicity or nationality. The survey asked respondents to choose which of five identities—Pakistani, Muslim, individual, citizen of the world, member of your ethnic group—was "most central to your sense of self or identity." Sixty-one percent said being a Muslim was the most central (another 31 percent said this was their second choice.) The next most popular was, being Pakistani, which was the first choice of 29 percent (56 percent second choice).

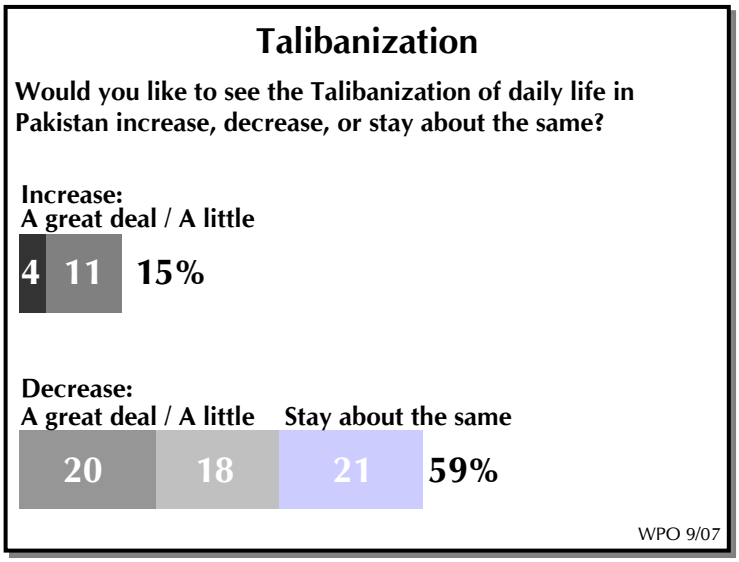
Asked about the "secularization of daily life," only 13 percent said they would like to see more, while 69 percent expressed opposition. A striking 52 percent refused to answer the question as posed and volunteered that that there should be no secularization at all. Another 17 percent said they would like to see secularization decrease.

The question of Islam having a greater role does not appear to be a divisive issue—rather, support cuts across key political lines. Support for a greater role for Islam extends to supporters of all of the major Pakistani leaders, including Pervez Musharraf. Respondents were asked who they thought was best to lead Pakistan (Benazir Bhutto was the most popular at 27 percent while Musharraf and Nawaz Sharif were tied at 21 percent). Though there was some variation, supporters of all leaders mostly favored a greater role for Islam and Shari'a and opposed increased secularization. Mean ratings for the importance of Pakistan being governed by Islamic principles were approximately 9 (on a 0-10 scale) for all groups. Those favoring a larger role for Shari'a varied only slightly: 55 percent among Musharraf supporters, 62 percent among Sharif supporters. Interestingly, opposition to secularization was highest among Musharraf supporters (76%), followed by Sharif supporters (68%) and Bhutto supporters (63%).

Rejection of Extreme Religious Conservatism

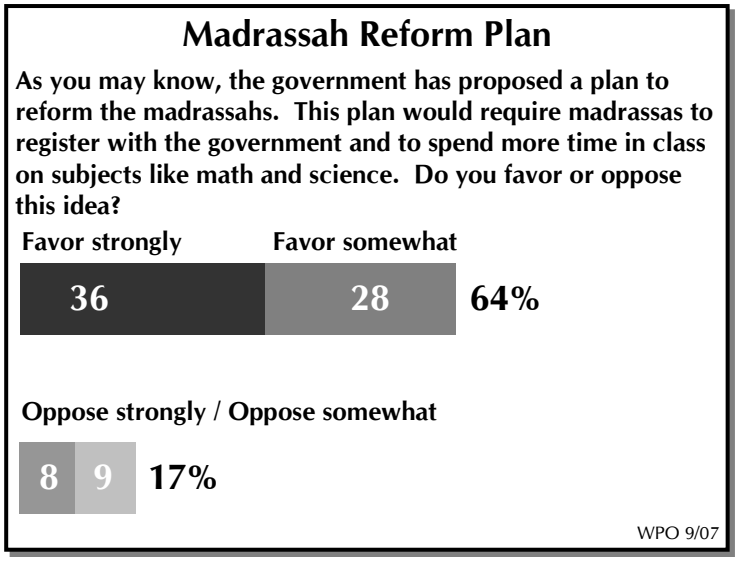
A number of poll questions revealed that the Pakistani public's support for Islam playing a larger role in their country does not signify support for extreme religious conservatism. Majorities of all Pakistanis—even majorities of those who favor a greater role for Shari'a—oppose an increase in Talibanization and support reforming structures of a conservative character dating from the time of General Zia

Respondents were asked about the "Talibanization of daily life," a term widely used by Pakistani media at the time of the poll, which is generally understood to signify extreme religious conservatism and even militancy. Just 15 percent said they would like to see this increase (11% "a little," and only 4% "a great deal"). Fifty-nine percent expressed opposition: A plurality (38%) said that such "Talibanization" should decrease (20% a great deal) and 21 percent said it should stay about the same.



Interestingly, support for Talibanization was no greater among those wanting a greater role for Shari'a.

Perhaps the most important indication that Pakistanis have little interest in extreme religious conservatism is their strong majority support for a recent government plan to regulate the madrassahs, or Islamic schools. About two-thirds (64%) said they would support a plan requiring "madrassahs to register with the government and to spend more time in class on subjects like mathematics and science." This included one third (36%) who said they strongly supported the plan. Only 17 percent opposed such reforms. Interestingly, those who wanted a larger role for Shari'a were slightly *more* likely than others to strongly favor these reforms: 40 percent favored them strongly and only 16 percent were opposed.



Another indication of majority disinterest in extreme religious conservatism is Pakistani reaction to the government's Women's Protection Act, which made the laws on adultery and rape from the Zia period (the Hudood Ordinances) less harsh for women. A 38 percent plurality—and a clear majority of those who answered—supported the Women's Protection Act while only 27 percent opposed it. Another 16 percent volunteered they had not heard of the Act and 19 percent declined to answer.

Pakistanis overwhelmingly reject the attacks on religious minorities carried out by some extreme fundamentalist groups in Pakistan as part of an ideology that demonizes such minorities. Three quarters (75-78 percent) said that attacks on specific religious minorities (Shi'a and Ahmadiyya) were never justified. Only 5-8 percent said protection of minorities was not important or that such attacks were sometimes justified.

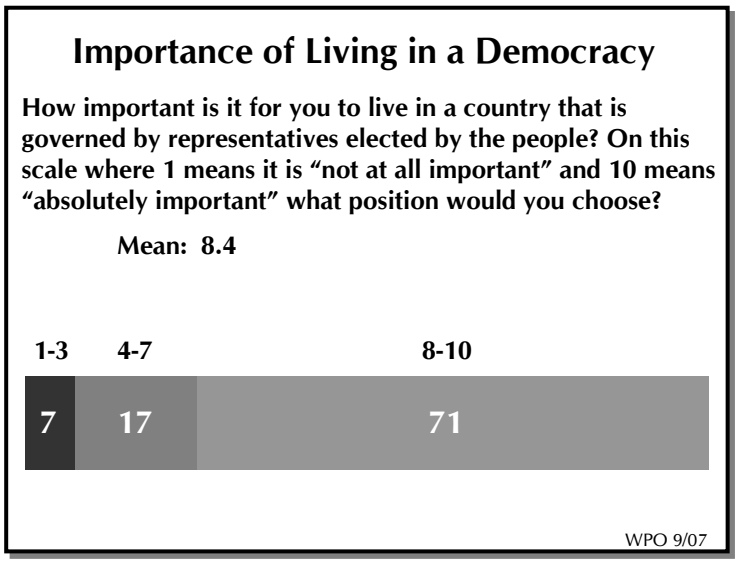
Four out of five (81%) also say it is "important for the unity of Pakistan to protect religious minorities in Pakistan" A large majority perceives that "religious minorities get such protection" either "almost always" (38%) or "most of the time" (31%). Twenty-one percent believe minorities are protected only "some of the time" (15%) or "hardly ever" (6%).

Why do Pakistanis say they want more Shari'a even though they resist extreme religious conservatism and support reforming certain Islamic laws? It is important to note that Pakistan was founded as an Islamic republic and second that Shari'a has been part of the court system since the 1970s, when it was introduced under General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq. Thus when Pakistanis say they want Shari'a to play a greater role, they may be expressing a desire for the system to work better, not for fundamental change. They may simply want government officials to show more wisdom and piety or want their courts (known for long delays) to operate more efficiently.

2. Views of Democracy

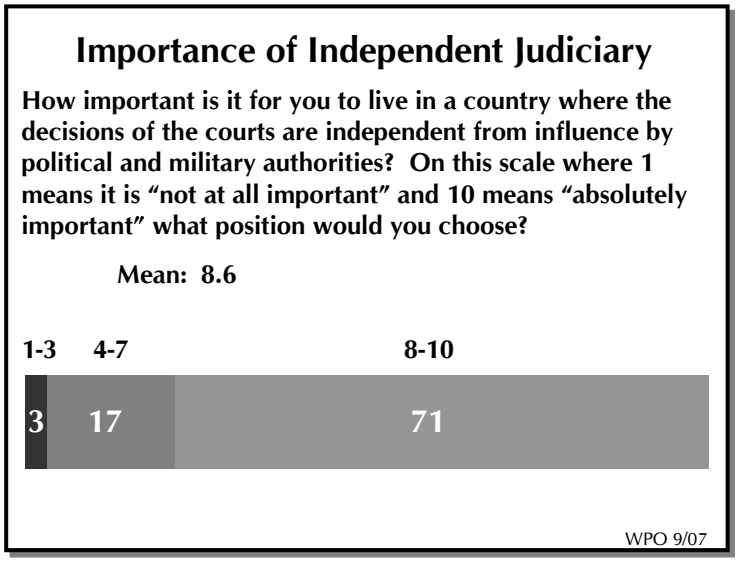
A large majority of Pakistanis endorse democracy. Most Pakistanis say it is very important to live in a country governed by elected representatives. Among those who want a greater role for Islam, support for democracy is even higher than among the population as a whole. Likewise, a large majority supports an independent judiciary.

Most Pakistanis want their government to be democratic. Asked to assess, on a 10-point scale, "How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed by representatives elected by the people," a large majority indicated that it was very important, choosing 8 or higher, and 50 percent chose 10, meaning "absolutely important." The mean score was 8.4. Only 7 percent chose a score of 3 or lower.



Interestingly, those who wanted a larger role for Islam had an exceptionally strong desire for greater democracy. Among the 60 percent majority who support a larger role for Shari'a compared to current Pakistani law, 64 percent give the importance of democracy a 10; among those who want the role of Shar'ia to decrease or stay the same, only a quarter (25-26 percent) give the importance of democracy a 10. Similarly, among the 31 percent for whom it is extremely important to live in a country governed by Islamic principles, *and* who give Pakistan a low rating in this regard, 72 percent give the importance of democracy a 10—22 points higher than the full sample.

Pakistanis also consider it very important to "live in a country where the decisions of the courts are independent from influence by political and military authorities." Asked to assess the importance of this on the 10-point scale, a large majority (71%) chose a score of 8 or higher. The mean score was 8.6. Only a tiny minority (3%) considered this unimportant, giving it a score of less than 3.

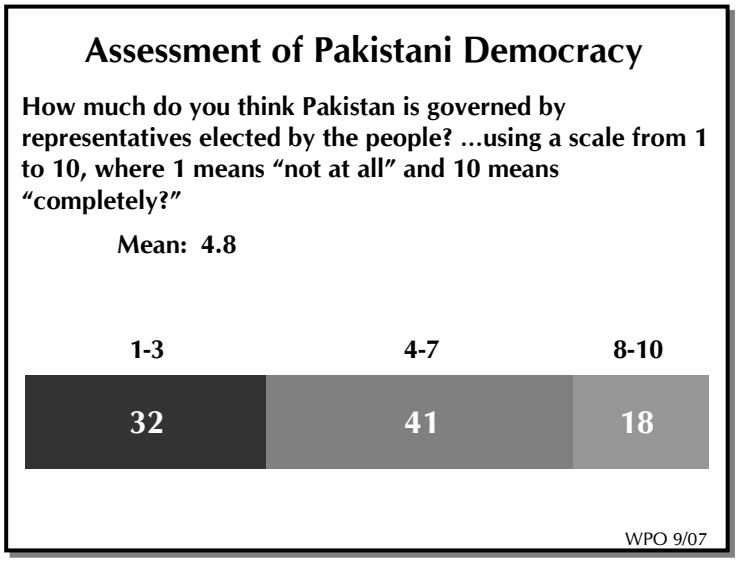


Support for democracy and an independent judiciary is also very strong among supporters of all the various Pakistani leaders. Those saying democracy was important varied only moderately from a mean of 8.1 out of 10 among Sharif supporters to 8.6 among Musharraf supporters (Bhutto supporters, 8.4), while those favoring an independent judiciary varied even less, at 8.4 among Sharif supporters and 8.6 among Bhutto and Musharraf supporters.

3. Assessment of Pakistani Democracy

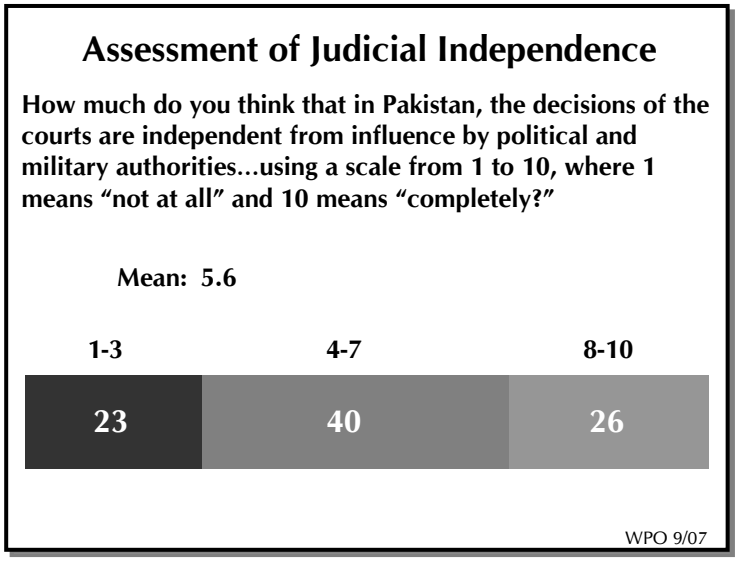
Pakistanis are lukewarm about how well their government lives up to democratic principles. A plurality is not confident that the next elections will be free and fair, and few think the courts are independent of political or military influence. Assessments of Pakistan's protection of human rights are also lukewarm.

When asked to assess, on a 10-point scale, "how much do you think Pakistan is governed by representatives elected by the people," with 1 meaning "not at all" and 10 meaning "completely," the mean response was 4.8. Thirty-two percent gave a score of 3 or lower. Only 18 percent said Pakistan rated an eight out of 10 or higher. Polling was conducted before Pakistani president and army chief Pervez Musharraf declared a state of emergency on Nov. 3. It also took place before the Dec. 27 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.



Pakistanis show skepticism about the quality of elections in their own country. Asked how confident they were that the upcoming elections would be "free and fair," only 39 percent said they were either somewhat (28%) or very confident (11%), while a plurality of 44 percent said they were not very confident (27%) or not at all confident (17%). Nonetheless, a majority of Pakistanis (60%) said they thought there would be elections in 2007, though this was still an open question at the time of the poll. Only 17 percent said they thought there would not be a vote, while 23 percent would not answer.

Relatively few think their own country is fulfilling the ideal of an independent judiciary. Asked to use a 10-point scale to assess how much "the decisions of the courts are independent from influence by political and military authorities" (with 1 meaning "not at all" and 10 meaning "completely"), only 26 percent gave their country a score of 8 or higher while nearly as many (23%) gave it a score of three or lower. The mean score was 5.6.



Similarly, few Pakistanis think their country consistently protects human rights. Only one in four (24%) said

that there was "a lot of respect for individual human rights in our country. Another fourth (26%) said there was "some respect." Forty-two percent said there was either "not much respect" (21%) or "no respect at all" (21%).

4. Views of the Government

Majorities express little confidence in the national government's political institutions including the president, the National Assembly, the Provincial Assemblies, and the police. However, views are mixed about the Nazims and the justice system.

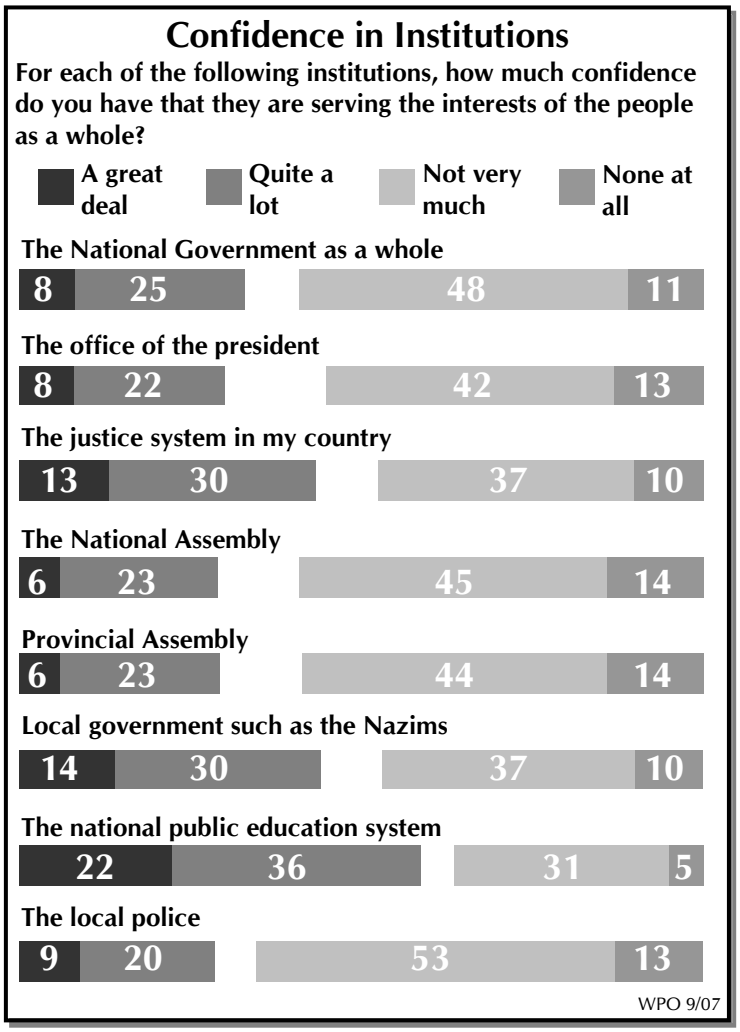
Asked about national institutions—the government as a whole, the president and the legislature—strong majorities in Pakistan express little or no confidence. Two out of five Pakistanis (59%) said either that they did not have very much faith in their "national government as a whole" (48%) or that they had none (11%). Only a third (33%) said they had "quite a lot" (25%) or a "great deal" (8%) of confidence.

There was a similar lack of confidence in the "office of the president." Fifty-five percent had either little (42%) or no confidence (13%) while only 30 percent had quite a lot (22%) or a great deal (8%).

The National Assembly scored even lower. Fifty-nine percent had little (45%) or no confidence (14%) while 29 percent had quite a lot (23%) or a great deal (6%). The same was true of the Provincial Assemblies: 58 percent had little (44%) or no confidence (14%) in them, while 29 percent had quite a lot (23%) or a great deal (6%).

The police received the worst ratings. Two-thirds of those polled said they had either not very much (53%) or no confidence (13%) in the local police.

Local governments, such as Nazims, at least garnered a divided assessment. The Nazims, local administrators (akin perhaps to mayors) who came into being under President Musharraf's Devolution of Power Plan of August 2000, run for election on a non-party basis. Less than half of those polled (47%) showed little (37%) or no confidence (10%) in local authorities, while nearly as many (44%) said they had quite a lot (30%) or a great deal (14%) of confidence.



Pakistani views of their country's justice system are also mixed: Nearly half (47%) expressed little (37%) or no confidence (10%), almost as many (43%) expressed quite a lot of confidence (30%) or a great deal (13%).
Another question asked respondents where they would turn if they were the victims of a crime, giving them a range of formal, traditional or religious options: "If someone in your family suffered from a serious crime, which of the following would you have the most confidence to effectively deal with it in the right way?"

"The courts" was the most popular response, but only 34 percent chose it. Next came "my family or clan" (25%), followed by "the local police" (14%). Very few—only 9 percent—selected any of the religious or semi-religious authority offered ("a local religious leader," 2%; "a jirga," 2%; "a panchayat," 2%; "a mohalla committee," 3%).

This suggests that for many Pakistanis, formal means of justice (police and courts) are seen as the primary source of redress. However, for important minorities, traditional forms of justice (including family and clan and other local religious and cultural institutions) remain appealing.

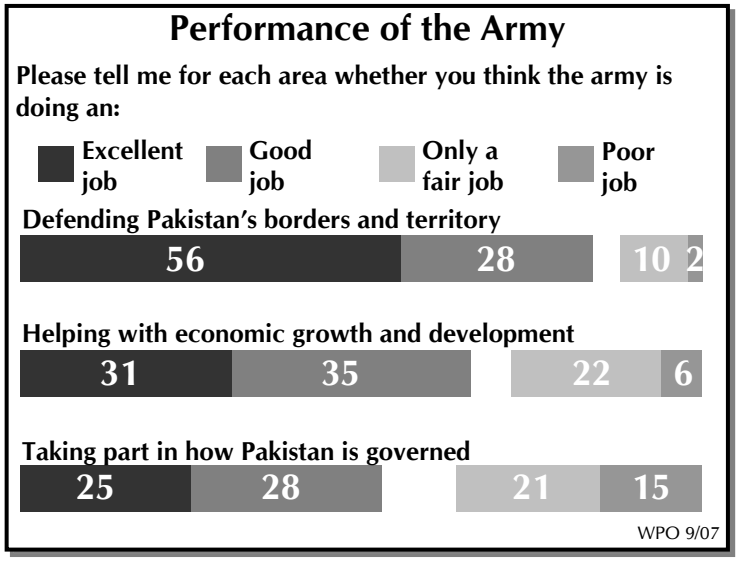
Pakistani attitudes about public officials do not seem to reflect personal experience with corruption. An overwhelming 88 percent of those polled answered "No," when asked "have you or someone in your family been personally affected by an act of corruption by government officials in the past 12 months." Only 3 percent said they had been affected by corruption.

5. Views of the Military

In sharp contrast to their negative views of many civilian institutions, Pakistanis express substantial confidence in the armed forces and give the army high ratings for performing traditional military functions. However, when it comes to the army's role in the ongoing governance of the country, views are complex. While the army is seen as capable, few believe that it has a positive influence on Pakistan's economy and politics. A plurality says that the role of the army should be limited to military matters.

Although they exhibit little trust in many government institutions, a majority of Pakistanis express confidence in the military. Two-thirds said they had either a great deal (34%) or quite a lot (35%) of confidence in the army and other armed forces. Only a quarter said they had not very much (18%) or no confidence (5%).

This approval is especially high when Pakistanis are asked about the military's performance of traditional military functions. More than four out of five (84%) said the Pakistani army was doing either an "excellent" (56%) or a good job (28%) "defending Pakistan's borders and territory." Only 12 percent said its performance was fair or poor.



When asked to evaluate the army's role in the governance of Pakistan, views are complex. Asked to rate the

army's performance in "how Pakistan is governed", a modest majority (53%) considered military participation in governance to be excellent (25%) or good (28%). But large numbers (36%) thought that the army's role in governing their country was either only fair (21%) or poor (15%). Two out of three (66%) also said the army did an excellent (31%) or good (35%) job of "helping with economic growth and development," while 28 percent said these efforts were fair (22%) or poor (6%).

But though the army is seen as capable, there is little enthusiasm for the impact of the army on political and economic aspects of the country. Less than a quarter viewed that army as having a "mostly positive" influence on Pakistan's economy, justice system, education and the rule of law, with more or equal numbers choosing "mostly negative." For each question in the series, 45 percent or more of the respondents either declined to answer or volunteered other responses ("both," "neither," "it depends").

Only one in four (23%) called the army's influence on the economy mostly positive while one in three (32%) called it negative. Pakistani assessments of the army's influence on the justice system were even less favorable: just 17 percent said positive while 27 percent said negative. About the same number said the army's influence on the constitution and rule of law was positive (18%), while one fourth (24%) had a negative view. Less than one in four rated the army's influence on the public education system as mostly positive (23%) and just as many rated it mostly negative (23%). About one in five considered the army's influence on the press, radio and television to be positive (21%) while one in four called it negative (26%).

The highest percentage of "mostly positive'' responses (29%) concerned the army's influence on "national reconstruction, as instituted by the National Reconstruction Bureau," an entity established by General Musharraf in November 1999, just one month after his military coup, to formulate policies for national reconstruction, promote good governance and strengthen democratic institutions. Only 19 percent considered the military's influence on the Bureau to be mostly negative.

A plurality of Pakistanis believe that "as a general rule" the armed forces should "be limited to strictly military matters," rejecting the idea that they should "take a wider role in the country's affairs." Forty-one percent said the armed forces should handle only military matters, compared with 33 percent who favored a wider role.

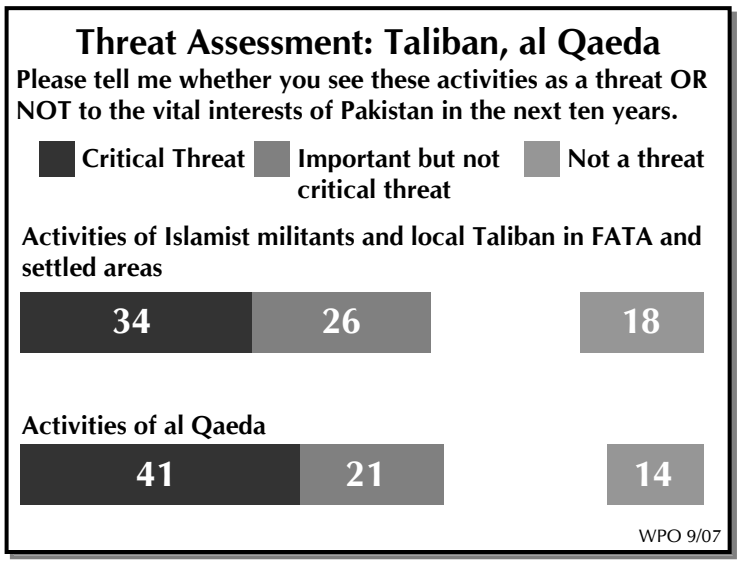
6. Islamist Militant Groups

A large majority of Pakistanis have negative views of Islamist militant organizations such as al Qaeda, local Taliban, and Pakistani militant groups. The activities of these groups are seen as threats to Pakistan and the use of violence against civilians is overwhelmingly rejected. However, a majority also rejects the government's recent military assault to retake the Red Mosque from Islamist extremists and their militant associates. Awareness of Pakistani militant groups' activities appears to be low: few perceive that their operations have targeted civilians, that they have relations with the Pakistani army and intelligence agencies, or that they provide social services.

The degree to which militant groups find sympathy and resonance among the Pakistani public is a primary question for policymakers and analysts. Pakistan's ability to override Islamist militancy and strengthen democracy and the rule of law depends in large measure upon the Pakistani polity's willingness to combat—militarily, politically and through law enforcement mechanisms—the various militant groups fighting in and from Pakistan. Without such willingness, it is unclear whether Pakistan will be able to develop into a stable, democratic state at peace with itself and with its neighbors.

Large majorities of urban Pakistanis view the activities of al Qaeda, local Taliban, and Pakistani militant groups as threats to Pakistan's vital interests. Respondents were asked whether they saw the activities of these various groups "as a threat or not to the vital interests of Pakistan in the next ten years," and, if so, whether they saw it "as a critical threat, or as important but not critical?"

Sixty-two percent said al Qaeda's activities threaten Pakistan, and 41 percent saw this threat as critical. Only 14 percent thought al Qaeda was not a threat. Sixty percent said the "activities of Islamist militants and local Taliban in FATA [the Federally Administered Tribal Areas] and settled areas" threaten Pakistan, and 34 percent saw the threat as critical; 18 percent said these activities were not a threat. Finally, 61 percent thought the activities of domestic militant groups (*askari tanzeems*) were a threat to Pakistan, with 38 percent calling them a critical threat (17% said these were not a threat).



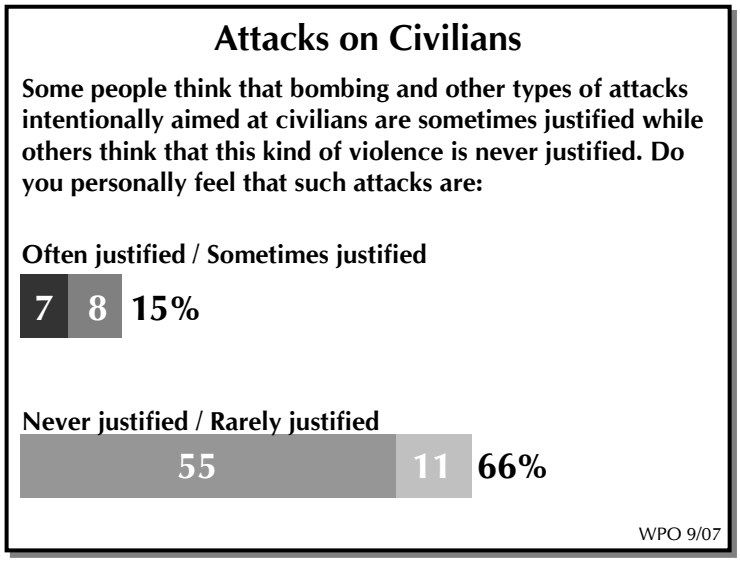
Supporters of all the various Pakistani leaders view Islamist militant groups as threats to Pakistan. Al Qaeda was seen as a threat by 76 percent of Musharraf supporters, 60 percent of Bhutto supporters and 62 percent of Sharif supporters. Similar perceptions were held for other Islamist militant groups.

Rejection of Attacks on Civilians

Substantial majorities also repudiate the tactic of attacks on civilians in general, including those directed against India by Pakistani extremist groups. Respondents were asked:

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

Two thirds (66%) said such attacks were either "never justified" (55%) or "rarely justified" (11%). Only 15



percent called such attacks "sometimes" (8%) or "often" (7%) justified.

Respondents were then asked whether specific types of attacks were sometimes or never justified. Sixty-four percent said "Attacks conducted against government institutions (like the national Parliament in Delhi and state assemblies)" were never justified while 15 percent said sometimes justified. Sixty-seven percent said "attacks in India on families of Indian military personnel" were never justified while 13 percent said they were sometimes justified. And 68 percent condemned "attacks conducted against Indian targets like subways, stock exchanges, and tourist sites" while only 12 percent said these attacks were sometimes justified.

Thus, only a minority of about 15 percent showed any support for the tactic of targeting civilians in general or in specific cases.

Pakistan has long justified its support for militant groups battling India over Kashmir with the argument that because it was founded as the home for South Asia's Muslims, Pakistan has an obligation to protect the Muslims of South Asia. To determine whether Pakistanis believe their country has such an obligation to protect Muslims in Kashmir and elsewhere, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "Pakistan has a moral obligation to protect Muslims anywhere in South Asia." Sixty-six percent agreed (36% strongly); only 21 percent disagreed (13% strongly).

Those who agreed were then asked: "To protect Muslims in South Asia, do you think Pakistan should use any means, including force, or do you think Pakistan should only use peaceful means?" Fifty-one percent of the whole sample thought Pakistan should use only peaceful means; only 12 percent thought Pakistan should use any means, including force. Thus overall, 72 percent rejected the idea that Pakistan should use force beyond its own territory in defense of Muslims.

Attack on Red Mosque

Pakistani perceptions of Islamist extremist and even militant groups as a threat does not translate necessarily into support for using military-style force against them, as in the Pakistani military's attack on the Red Mosque or Lal Masjid in July. The Red Mosque and its affiliated Jamia Hafsa seminary are Deobandi institutions situated in the heart of Islamabad that have been long associated with sectarian militant groups. In recent years, the leadership of the Red Mosque and its seminary engaged in vigilante violence against such targets as women who chose not to wear the veil and stores selling music and movie CDs and DVDs. Throughout 2007, they confronted the Pakistani government by seizing state assets, kidnapping police officers and capturing purported prostitutes. The Pakistani government's military offensive against the mosque and seminaries resulted in the death of the head cleric and a number of students. The exact death toll remains controversial, with wildly varying estimates offered by government and non-government sources.

When asked, "Do you think the Pakistani security forces should have used force to take over the Red Mosque, or do you think that this was a mistake?" nearly two out of three (64%) agreed that it was and only 22 percent disagreed. Another question asked whether respondents approved of "the way Pakistan's government is handling…religious extremism such as the Lal Masjid [Red Mosque]." A majority disapproved (56%) while only 31 percent approved.

Awareness of Activities of Militant Groups

The Pakistani public does not appear to be very informed about the activities of Pakistani jihadist groups. Few think that their operations have targeted civilians, that they have relations with the

Pakistani army and intelligence agencies, or that they provide social services to Pakistani communities.

Pakistanis were asked about three militant groups that are known to have conducted operations in Kashmir—Jaish e Mohammad, Hizbol Mujahadeen, and Lashkar e Taiba. Respondents were asked whether each group "has intentionally targeted civilians in attacks" in Kashmir, or "has never intentionally targeted civilians?" In each case, about the same number—40 to 42 percent—said that the group "has never intentionally targeted civilians," while a miniscule 6 percent said they had. But a majority of respondents would not answer.

Most observers of Pakistan agree that there are substantial linkages between militant groups that operate in Kashmir and India and the Pakistani army and intelligence services. This study sought to learn whether Pakistanis believe that there is such a relationship and, if so, how close it is.

Respondents were offered four options: 1) "no relationship;" 2) "some contacts;" 3) "some elements within the army and intelligence agencies provide support, such as money, training, advice and weapons;" and 4) "the army and intelligence services as a whole work closely with these groups." One in four respondents said "there is no relationship at all." Another 24 percent chose an option indicating some relationship: 14 percent thought there were some contacts; 5 percent believed the army and intelligence provided support; and five percent thought the army and intelligence services worked closely with the militant groups. About half (51%) did not provide an answer.

These groups also claim that they that they provide social and community services in many parts of Pakistan. To find out whether these services might influence Pakistani views, respondents were asked, "thinking about groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat ul Dawa, Hizbol Mujahadeen, and Jaish e Mohammad among other tanzeems, do you think they provide social and community services, or are these not part of their activities?" Less than a quarter of Pakistanis believe that these services are even offered. Only 23 percent said the groups provided such services; a plurality of 42 percent said they did not; and 35 percent did not answer.

The 23 percent who said the groups offered some community services were then asked to name some of them. Nearly all (22% of the whole sample) mentioned religious *madaris* (the plural of *madrassah* or religious school). The next best-known services were humanitarian assistance during disasters (19%), medical care (16%), schools that do not primarily offer religious training (15%), and financial help with marriage and burials (11%).

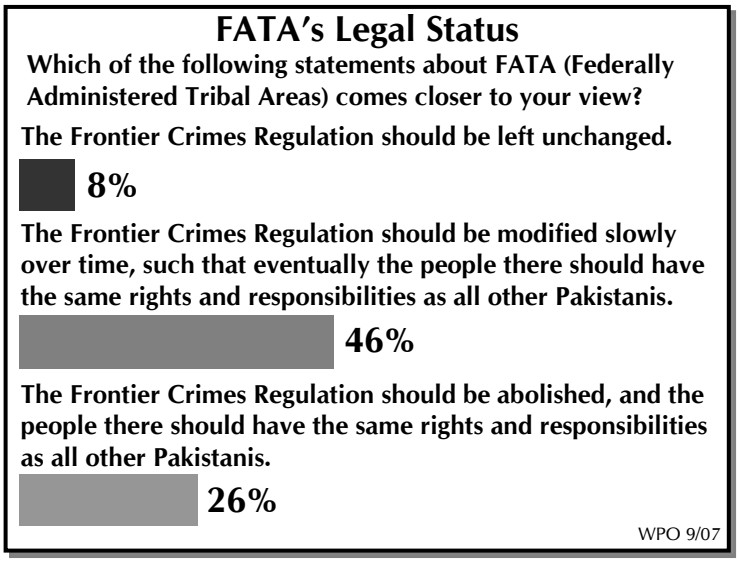
7. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

A large majority of Pakistanis want to phase out the FATA's special legal status and to integrate the areas into the country's overall legal structure. Few want this to happen abruptly, however; a plurality favors a gradualist approach. Pakistanis strongly prefer negotiating with the Taliban rather than fighting them. Only a small minority supports using military force to exert control while a plurality favors a negotiated approach. The current policy of limited military action while pursuing negotiations with local forces receives plurality approval.

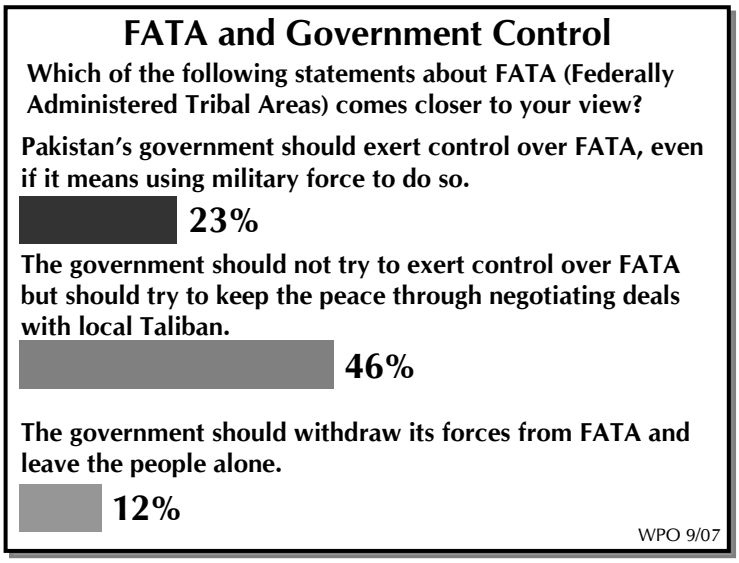
A plurality believes the army should pursue and capture Taliban insurgents and al Qaeda forces crossing into Pakistan from Afghanistan. But overwhelming majorities oppose allowing foreign forces to enter Pakistan in order to do so. Almost no Pakistanis appear to believe Osama bin Laden is in Pakistan, and even if his location were to be established in the FATA, a plurality thinks the government should not try to capture him.

A large majority favors the phasing out of the FATA's special legal status and its integration into Pakistan's legal structure. Respondents were offered three statements about the FATA and asked which came closer to their own views.

The least popular statement—chosen by only 8 percent—was that "the Frontier Crimes Regulation should be left unchanged." Instead 72 percent agreed that these regulations should be modified so that people in the FATA "have the same rights and responsibilities as all other Pakistanis." Only 26 percent thought that "the Frontier Crimes Regulation should be abolished." Instead 46 percent said these regulations should be "modified slowly over time." Thus although there is wide majority support for changing the FATA legal system, which was codified by the British in 1901, a plurality favors a gradualist approach.



Pakistanis express similar caution when asked about other approaches to dealing with militancy in the FATA. Only 23 percent said that "Pakistan's government should exert control over FATA, even if it means using military force to do so." The largest numbers (46%) say "the government should not try to exert control over FATA, but should try to keep the peace through negotiating deals with local Taliban." Another 12 percent said the "government should withdraw its forces from FATA and leave the people alone."



A plurality approves of the way the government is handling the situation in the FATA, a policy combining limited use of military strikes and more extensive negotiations with local forces. Forty-eight percent approved of "the way Pakistan's government is handling" the FATA (14% strongly), while 34 percent disapproved (12% strongly).

Dealing With the Taliban and al Qaeda

As discussed above, 60 percent saw "the activities of Islamist militants and local Taliban in FATA and settled areas" as a threat to Pakistan, and 34 percent regarded this threat as critical. However, only a 48 percent plurality favored "allowing the Pakistani army to pursue and capture Taliban insurgents who have crossed over from Afghanistan," while 34 percent were opposed. The same

pattern was evident when respondents were asked about al Qaeda using the FATA as a sanctuary. A plurality (44%) favored "the Pakistani army entering federally administered tribal areas to pursue and capture al Qaeda fighters," with 36 percent opposed.

Taken together, these findings suggest considerable ambivalence among Pakistanis about the best way of handling the cross-border problems with Afghanistan. There is overwhelming opposition to *outside* forces coming in to fight either the Taliban or al Qaeda, however. When asked "what about allowing foreign troops to pursue and capture Taliban insurgents who have crossed over into Afghanistan," 77 percent thought the Pakistani government should not allow this, and only 9 percent disagreed. Similarly, only a miniscule 5 percent thought "the Pakistani government should … allow American or other foreign troops to enter Pakistan to pursue and capture al Qaeda fighters," while an overwhelming 80 percent opposed such foreign intervention.

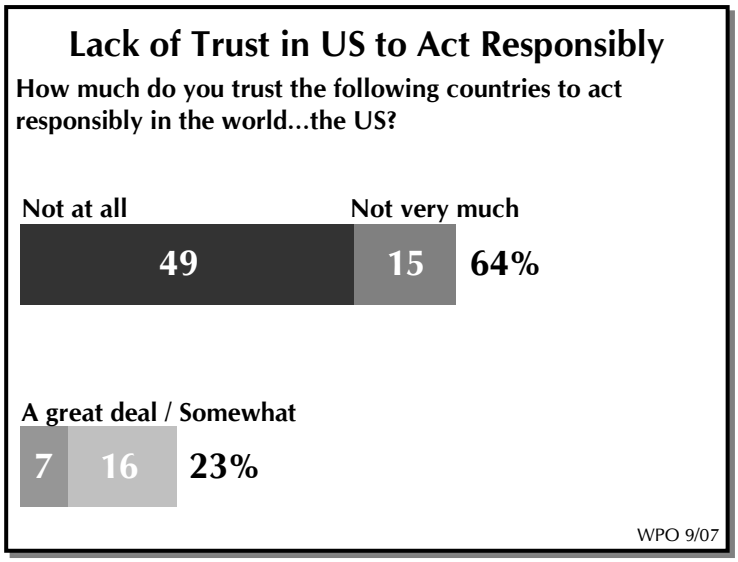
Almost no Pakistanis say they believe Osama bin Laden is in Pakistan, and even if authorities could establish his location in the FATA, a plurality thinks the government should not try to capture him. Respondents were asked to guess bin Laden's whereabouts: "Which do you think is more likely to be true: Osama bin Laden is somewhere in Pakistan; somewhere in Afghanistan; or in some other country?" Only 2 percent said they thought he was in Pakistan, while 18 percent picked Afghanistan. Thirteen percent supposed he was in some other country, and another 8 percent volunteered that he was in the United States. A majority declined to venture a guess.

Next, respondents were asked to "suppose the Pakistani government learned that Osama bin Laden was in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and found his exact location." Even under these circumstances, a 39 percent plurality thought the government should not attempt his capture; only 24 percent thought the government should.

8. Relations with the United States

Majority opinion toward the United States is negative. Large majorities say that the United States cannot be trusted to act responsibly and also believe that it has extraordinary influence over Pakistan. US military presence in the region is viewed as a threat to Pakistan. A large and growing majority believe it is a US goal to weaken and divide the Muslim world. A plurality disapproves of how Pakistan's government has handled relations with the United States. Only one in four feels that security cooperation with the United States has brought Pakistan any benefit.

Pakistanis view the United States as an untrustworthy superpower. A majority (64%) expressed doubt that the United States could be trusted "to act responsibly in the world," including 49 percent who answered "not at all" and 16 percent who said "not very much."



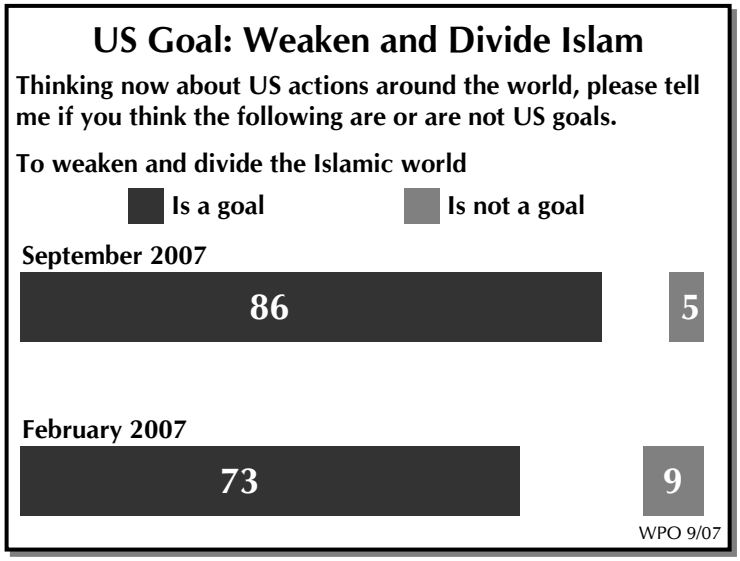
This mistrust is coupled with the perception that the United States is exerting extraordinary influence over what happens in Pakistan. Asked to consider "recent major events happening in Pakistan," a majority of respondents (56%) said that most (32%) or nearly all of these events (24%) were controlled by the United States. Only 26 percent thought events in Pakistan were controlled some (22%) or very little (4%) by the United States.

Most Pakistanis believe the United States' military presence in their region puts their country's "vital interests" at risk. Eighty-four percent said that the US military presence in Asia was either a "critical" (72%) or an "important" (12%) threat to Pakistan's interests. About as many—83 percent—said that the US presence in neighboring Afghanistan was a critical (68%) or important (15%) threat to Pakistan.

A majority of Pakistanis give some credence America's stated goal of defending itself from terrorist attacks. A majority (63%) said that it is a goal of the United States to "prevent more attacks such as those on the World Trade Center in September 2001" (definitely a goal, 41%).

However, larger majorities perceive other, more perfidious, goals. About three-quarters (78%) also said that the United States wants to "maintain control over the oil resources of the Middle East" (definitely a goal, 59%).

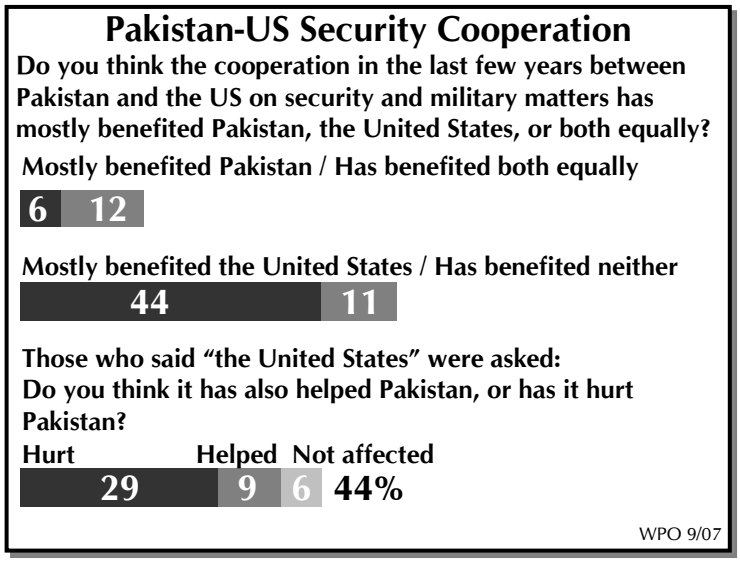
Perhaps most strikingly, an overwhelming majority believes that the United States has goals that are hostile to Islam itself. A remarkably high 86 percent agreed that it was a US goal to "weaken and divide the Islamic world" ("definitely" 70%, "probably" 16%). Furthermore, this view appears to be growing substantially—up 13 points from February 2007 when 73 percent said it was a US goal (definitely, 55%).[1]



Three out of four even believe that it is a US goal to "spread Christianity in the Middle East." Seventy-five percent said this was definitely (53%) or probably (22%) a US goal, while only 10 percent said that it was not.

A plurality of Pakistanis disapproves of the way their government has handled its relations with the United States. Nearly half of those polled (47%) said they did not like the way their government handled these ties, including 25 percent who said they "disapprove somewhat" and 22 percent who said they "disapprove strongly." Thirty-nine percent said they approved somewhat (29%) or strongly (10%).

Few Pakistanis think their government's collaboration with US anti-terrorism efforts has helped their country. Asked about "the cooperation in the last few years between Pakistan and the US on security and military matters," only one in four (27%) said that it had brought any benefits to Pakistan. This includes 12 percent who said it had benefited both countries, 9 percent who said that although it had "mostly benefited the United States" it had also helped Pakistan, and 6 percent who said that it had "mostly



[1] This question was first asked by WorldPublicOpinion.org in a study conducted with the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). The February 2007 result cited above is for the urban portion of that sample, parallel to the urban sample in the present study. WorldPublicOpinion.org's report on the policy-related aspects of that study ("Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians, and al Qaeda") can be found at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf

benefited Pakistan." Nearly one third said US-Pakistani cooperation had actually hurt Pakistan (29%), and an additional 11 percent said it had benefited neither country.

Supporters of all leaders were also united in their negative views of the United States and its motives. Majorities of all supporters said they did not trust the United States to act responsibly in the world, including 68 percent of Sharif supporters, 65 percent of Bhutto supporters and 55 percent of Musharraf supporters. More than seven in 10 of all supporters view the US military presence in Asia as an important or critical threat to Pakistan—varying from 78 percent among Musharraf supporters to 70 percent among Bhutto supporters. About seven in 10 of all supporters—71 percent of Musharraf and Sharif supporters and 69 percent of Bhutto supporters—also believe the United States is definitely trying to weaken and divide Islam.

9. Relations with Afghanistan

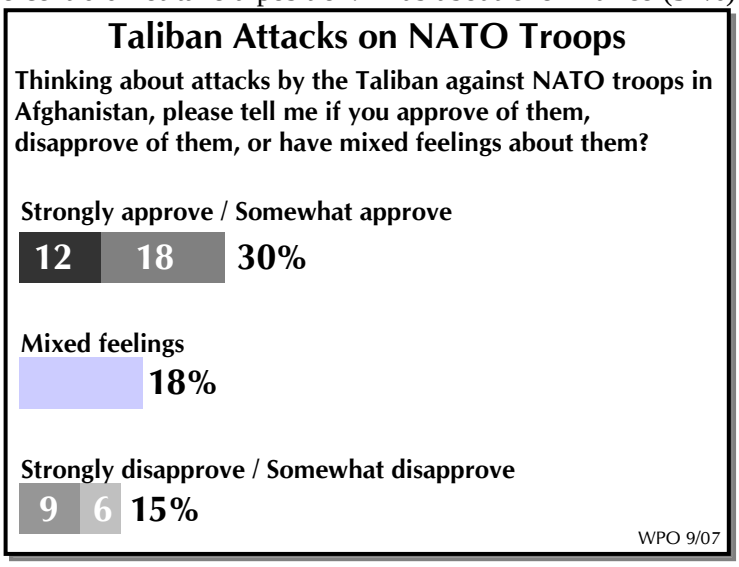
Majorities see the tensions with Afghanistan as a threat to Pakistan's interests and approve of the way Pakistan's government has handled relations with its neighbor. Views of the Taliban's activities in Afghanistan are quite mixed: nearly half show at least some sympathy for their attacks on NATO troops, while one in three show some sympathy for Taliban attacks on Afghan police and troops. Only one in three believe that the Pakistani government is seriously trying to prevent the Taliban from operating in Afghanistan.

A large majority of Pakistanis believe the tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan threaten the vital interests of Pakistan. Two thirds (67%) said they saw these tensions as either critical (40%) or important (27%). Twenty-one percent said tensions with Afghanistan were not a threat to Pakistan.

At the same time, Pakistan's government receives good marks for how it has been handling relations with Afghanistan. Sixty percent approved of its performance (17% strongly) and only 25 percent disapproved (5% strongly).

Views of the Taliban's Activities

Views of the Taliban's activities are remarkably mixed and poorly defined. When asked about the Taliban's attacks on "Afghan troops and police in Afghanistan," only 18 percent said they approved of such attacks (5% strongly). But only 29 percent disapproved (15% strongly) and 14 percent said they had mixed feelings. A large 38 percent did not take a position. Thus about one in three (32%) show some sympathy for such attacks.



When asked about the Taliban's attacks on NATO troops, approval rose to 30 percent (12% strongly), disapproval dropped to 15 percent (9% strongly), and 18 percent expressed mixed feelings. Once again a large 37 percent did not take a position. Thus nearly half (48%) view them at least somewhat favorably.

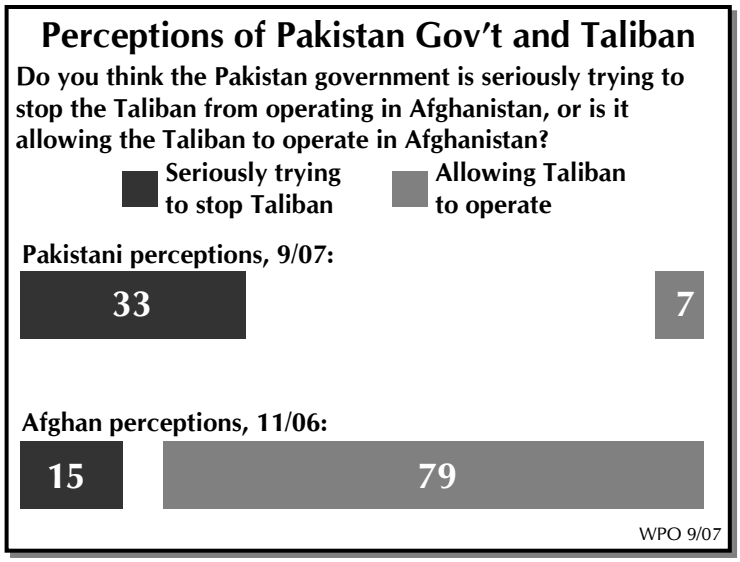
Thus it appears that Pakistanis' views of the Taliban are colored by various

factors. As discussed above, Pakistanis perceive US military presence in Afghanistan as a critical threat, thus potentially engendering some sympathy for their attacks on NATO troops.

Also, about a third of Pakistanis have some sympathy for Taliban. Respondents were asked: "Thinking about the current Afghan government and the former Taliban government, which one do you think has had the best approach to governing Afghanistan?" Thirty-four percent said the former Taliban government, and only 9 percent said the current Afghan government. A quarter (24%) said "neither" and the rest declined to answer.

Perception of Pakistan Government's Efforts to Counter the Taliban

When asked whether the Pakistan government was seriously trying to stop the Taliban from operating in Afghanistan or whether instead it was "allowing the Taliban to operate in Afghanistan," only 33 percent thought the government was seriously trying to stop the Taliban while 4 percent said the government was allowing the Taliban to operate. Another 3 percent volunteered that it was actually helping the Taliban. This means that just 7 percent believed the government was enabling the Taliban in some way. Another 25 percent said "it depends" or "neither," implying they thought the government's policy could not be summed up in either alternative. A third (36%) declined to answer.



The same question was asked in Afghanistan in November 2006. Among Afghans, a very large majority—79 percent—thought Pakistan's government was allowing the Taliban to operate in Afghanistan. Only 15 percent thought Pakistan was seriously trying to stop the Taliban.

Durand Line

Only a small minority of Pakistanis know of the Durand Line and its disputed status as a boundary between the two countries. Sir Mortimer Durand, the foreign secretary of British colonial India, demarked the border in 1893, inducing the then king of Afghanistan to agree. Following partition in 1947, Pakistan accepted the line as its international border, though subsequent Afghan governments have not.

The current study asked: "Are you aware of the Durand Line, dividing Pakistan and Afghanistan?" Only 15 percent said yes, while 63 percent said no. The 15 percent answering yes were then asked whether Afghanistan accepted the line as an international border. Eight percent (of the whole sample) thought Afghanistan did not, while 5 percent thought it did. Thus, despite the dispute's importance for Pakistan's leadership, it seems to have almost no resonance in the general public.

10. Ranking of Perceived Threats

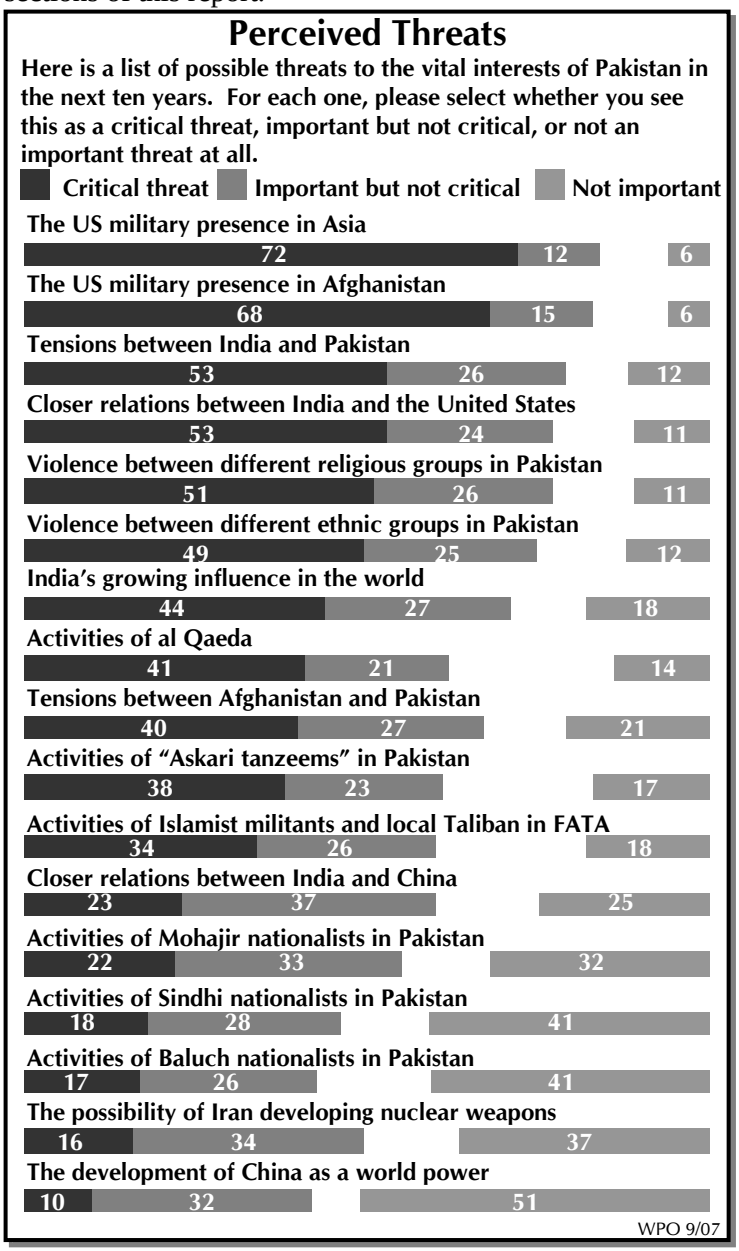
Asked to evaluate a series of possible threats to Pakistan's vital interests, the Pakistani public rates US military presence in the region as a critical threat by the largest percentage. Other threats regarded as critical by majorities include tensions with India and violence between Pakistani religious and ethnic groups. Slightly fewer regard the activities of al Qaeda, local Taliban, and jihadist militants as critical, or the activities of ethnic nationalist movements. Only half see the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons as threatening. A majority considers the rise of China to be no threat to Pakistan.

In order to better understand Pakistani views of what could endanger their country, the study asked an extensive series of questions—17 in all—about "possible threats to the vital interests of Pakistan in the next ten years." The questions included international, regional and domestic threats. Examining them as a group throws light on how the Pakistani public views the world around them and clarifies some of the attitudes discussed in other sections of this report.

The US military presence in the region is rated as a critical threat by the largest percentage of respondents. Almost three in four—72 percent—call the US military presence in Asia a critical threat; another 12 percent call it important but not critical. Almost as many Pakistanis view the US military presence in Afghanistan as threatening. Sixty-eight percent call it a critical threat, and another 15 percent say it is important but not critical.

Somewhat smaller majorities regard tensions with India and violence between Pakistani religious and ethnic groups as potential dangers. Fifty-three percent said "tensions between India and Pakistan" were a critical threat, and another 26 percent called them important. The growth of "closer relations between India and the United States" were viewed similarly, with 53 percent seeing them as a critical threat and 24 percent as important. "India's growing influence in the world" raised a little less concern (44% critical, 27% important).

About the same numbers are concerned about "violence between different religious groups in



Pakistan" (51% critical, 26% important) and violence between different Pakistani ethnic groups (49% critical, 25% important).

While many in the West perceive the activities of al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other militant groups as Pakistan's greatest problem, the Pakistani public regards these as meaningful threats, though less severe than those presented by the United States, India, and the country's own centrifugal forces.

A 41 percent plurality sees the "activities of al Qaeda" as a critical threat, and another 21 percent see them as important; only 14 percent says they are not a threat. The related "tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan" are a critical threat for 40 percent (27% important), but 21 percent says these tensions are not a threat. Only 38 percent sees the activities of militant organizations (*askari tanzeems*) in Pakistan as a critical threat, while another 23 percent sees them as important (17% not a threat). Likewise, "activities of Islamist militants and local Taliban in FATA and settled areas" are viewed as a critical threat by only 34 percent (26% important; 18% not a threat).

The activities of ethnic separatist groups with nationalist ambitions cause relatively little concern to Pakistanis. Only 22 percent saw Mohajir nationalists as a critical threat, with another 33 percent seeing them as important. About a third (32%) said they were not a threat. There was even less concern about Sindhi nationalists (18% critical) and Baluch nationalists (17% critical).

Pakistanis show little concern about the possibility that neighboring Iran is developing nuclear weapons and may become the second Muslim nation, after Pakistan, to join the nuclear club of nations. Only 16 percent viewed such a development as a critical threat to Pakistan. Another 34 percent called it important, while 37 percent said it was not a threat to Pakistan.

A majority sees the rise of China as no threat at all to Pakistan. Fifty-one percent said that "the development of China as a world power" was not a threat. Of the 42 percent who saw it as a threat, only 10 percent called it critical. There was a little more anxiety over the growth of "closer relations between India and China," with 23 percent calling this a critical threat and 37 percent important.

11. Trade and Globalization

Large majorities endorse international trade and see it as beneficial for Pakistan, though only a plurality are positive about the idea of globalization.

Three in four Pakistanis view international trade positively. By 77 percent to 13 percent, respondents said international trade was positive for the economy and 67 percent that it was positive for Pakistani companies. Large majorities also see international trade as good for creating jobs in Pakistan (68%), job security for Pakistani workers (63%), and for their own standard of living (61%). More modest majorities see international trade as good for "consumers like you" (57%), and for the environment (52%). In all of these areas, no more than 25 percent saw international trade as bad.

The Pakistani public's response to the idea of globalization is more hesitant than their response to international trade. Asked whether they believe that "globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for Pakistan," a 48 percent plurality said it was mostly good, 16 percent that it was mostly bad, and 36 percent declined to answer. Some respondents may have been aware of the cultural aspect of globalization and were more reluctant to endorse such changes.

12. Pakistan's Economy

Two thirds feel that Pakistan's economy has gone off on the wrong track. Nonetheless, a majority approves of how the government is handling the economy.

Two thirds of Pakistanis are dissatisfied with how the country's economy is performing. Sixty-eight percent said Pakistan's economy "has … gone off on the wrong track," while only a quarter (26%) thought it was "moving in the right direction."

Further, a majority perceives (correctly) that India is experiencing faster growth. When asked, "As compared to Pakistan, do you think India's economy is growing much faster, a little faster, about the same speed, a little slower, or much slower," a 56 percent majority said India was growing faster (30% much faster). Only 27 percent believed that India was growing at either the same speed as Pakistan (11%), a little more slowly (7%), or much more slowly (9%).

Despite this dissatisfaction, the public shows little inclination to blame Pakistan's government for the country's economic performance. Fifty-five percent said they approved of how the government had handled the economy, either strongly (23%) or somewhat (32%). About a third (34%) disapproved, but only 9 percent disapproved strongly. Perhaps many Pakistanis are conscious that there has been sustained growth in the last few years but are looking for a higher level of economic performance.

13. Education

Majorities express confidence in the educational system and approve of the government's policies. Pakistanis put the highest priorities on teaching children religious values and good citizenship, followed by basic skills, problem-solving, and independent thinking.

Foreign observers and policymakers have expressed concern about Pakistan's educational system, saying that its curriculum has significant Islamist and Islamic content, espouses narrowly nationalist tendencies and does not prepare the poor for better jobs. However, a majority of Pakistanis want to see their schools inculcate a religious and patriotic outlook along with the rest of the curriculum.

A majority views the national public education system positively, with 58 percent saying they have a great deal (22%) or quite a lot (36%) of confidence. Only about a third—36 percent—said they did not have very much (31%) confidence in education or that they had none at all (5%). Almost two thirds (64%) said they approved "of the way Pakistan's government is handling the educational system" (30% approve strongly). Only 28 percent say they disapprove somewhat (21%) or strongly (7%).

To better understand what the Pakistani public wants from public education, the study asked questions used originally by Matthew J. Nelson in his research on Pakistani parents' preferences for their children's schools.[2] All respondents were told to choose the most important and second most important of "five things different people sometimes say about what makes a school a good school":

> A. Some people say that a good school teaches students how to read and write. In other words, good schools provide students with basic reading skills and basic math skills.

[2] Matthew J. Nelson, "Muslims, Markets, and the Meaning of a 'Good' Education in Pakistan," *Asian Survey*, vol. 46, no. 5, pp. 699-720. Nelson conducted a survey of parents in and around the city of Rawalpindi.

B. Some people say that a good school is a school that creates good Muslims. In other words, good schools provide students with strong values and strong religious beliefs.
C. Some people say that good schools teach students how to solve problems and think for themselves.
D. Some people say that good schools prepare students to provide good jobs.
E. Some people say that good schools make sure that every student becomes a good citizen, showing respect for the laws of their country.

Overall, B—teaching children to be good Muslims—was chosen most often, with 32 percent naming it as their first choice and 21 percent as their second choice. Next most important was E—teaching good citizenship—chosen first by 17 percent and second by 26 percent. These preferences were followed by A—teaching basic skills (25% first choice, 12% second choice), C—teaching problem-solving and independent thinking (14% first choice, 19% second choice), and finally, D—preparing students for good jobs (5% first choice, 15% second choice).

This suggests that Pakistanis want education to combine religious and "worldly" content. Work by C. Christine Fair and others finds that the Pakistani educational market is fast evolving new opportunities that reflect this growing demand.

While parents desire religious content in the public school curriculum, a large majority of Pakistanis also support the government's plans for madrassah reform. This appears to reflect the longstanding debate about the madrassah curriculum, which has remained largely unchanged since the nineteenth century and which relies upon texts that are hundreds of years old. Religious scholars have discussed the need to reform the madrassah curriculum to ensure that the seminaries produce religious scholars whose religious training is relevant for a modern Muslim state.

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the Program on International Policy Attitudes
1779 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 510,
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-232-7500, Fax: 202-232-1159
info@pipa.org
http://www.worldpublicopinion.org

United States Institute of peace
1200 17th Street NW - Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-457-1700, Fax: 202-429-6063
http://www.usip.org