

Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan

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Pakistan has used Islamist militants to pursue its regional interests since its inception in 1947. In the last ten years, however, Islamist militancy in Pakistan has become a key international security concern.¹ In December 2001, the attack on the Indian parliament by Jaish-e-Mohammed militants allegedly based in Pakistan nearly sparked a war between India and Pakistan. The perceived threat has intensified further in recent years, as the Pakistani Taliban has established parallel administrative bodies along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, executed suicide attacks against Pakistani government targets, and even seized the Red Mosque in Pakistan's capital. 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 transnational Islamist terrorist organizations.

Summarizing the myriad security problems posed by Pakistan—including Islamist militancy and nuclear proliferation—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued before the U.S. Congress that Pakistan “poses a mortal threat to the security and safety of our country and the world.”² Similar sentiments were echoed during recent deliberations on aid to Pakistan in the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. Subcommittee Chairman Howard Berman opened the hearings by noting that “the United States has an

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1. Pakistan precipitated the first Indo-Pakistani 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, for example, Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, and Jamison Jo Medby, “Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella—Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis” (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001); Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan, and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947–2004* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

2. Hillary R. Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, testimony before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, “New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration,” 111th Cong., 1st sess., April 22, 2009.

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 Pakistan. Nor can we permit the Pakistani state—and its nuclear arsenal—to be taken over by the Taliban.”³

Beyond a substantial investment in security assistance, U.S. and Western policies toward Pakistan over the last ten years have been geared toward encouraging economic and social development as an explicit means of diminishing the terrorist threat and turning back Islamization. Legislation before the U.S. House of Representatives in April 2009 called for the United States 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.”⁴ In testimony 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.”⁵ Washington also played a pivotal role in the April 2009 donors’ conference in Tokyo, where nearly thirty countries and international organizations pledged some \$5 billion in development aid explicitly intended to “enable Pakistan to fight off Islamic extremism.”⁶

These policy prescriptions rest on—and indeed reflect—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.⁷ The second is that personal religiosity and support for

3. See Chairman Howard Berman, opening statement at hearing, “From Strategy to Implementation: The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Relationship,” U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, 111th Cong., 1st sess., May 5, 2009.

4. U.S. House of Representatives, “Pakistan Enduring Assistance and Cooperation Enhancement Act of 2009,” H.R. 1886, 111th Cong., 1st sess., April 2009. The terms of the bill were included in U.S. Senate, “Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009,” S. 1707, 111th Cong., 1st sess., passed by the U.S. House and Senate in September 2009.

5. Richard C. Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Department of State, testimony before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, 111th Cong., 1st sess., May 5, 2009.

6. “Donors Pledge \$5bn for Pakistan,” *BBC News*, April 17, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8003557.stm. See also Robert A. Wood, 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,” U.S. Department of State, April 17, 2009, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/April/20090417123036xjsnommis5.550784e-02.html>.

7. These arguments are reflected in both Pakistani and Western discourse. On the Pakistani side, see “Marshall Plan–Style Aid Drive Needed for Pakistan: Zardari,” *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: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), p. 367. A more nuanced argument is that Pakistan’s derelict public schools and poverty compel Pakistani families to send their children to the madrassas (religious schools), which provide recruits for Pakistan’s jihadi groups. Jessica Stern,

sharia (Islamic law) are strongly correlated with support for Islamist militancy.⁸ The third is that support for political goals espoused by legal Islamist parties predicts support for militant organizations.⁹ The fourth is that those who support democracy—either in terms of supporting democratic processes such as voting or in terms of valuing core democratic principles—oppose Islamism and militancy.

None of these conventional wisdoms rests 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 by Western states to help stabilize Pakistan since 2001.¹⁰ Given the manifest importance of Islamist militancy in Pakistan and the vast resources being directed against it, this lack of evidence is deeply disheartening. Although there has been some systematic survey research on variation over time in how Pakistanis feel about militancy generally, none has been done on subnational variation in those trends, and only recently have these surveys probed how Pakistanis feel about specific militant organizations.¹¹ These lacunas leave analysts with little evi-

"Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 6 (November/December 2000), pp. 115–126. For an alternative view, see Tariq Rahman, "Madrasahs: Religion, Poverty, and the Potential for Violence in Pakistan," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter 2005), <http://www.ipripak.org/journal/winter2005/madrassas.shtml>.

8. In recent years, policymakers and commentators have demurred from articulating these views publicly owing to increased political sensitivity. In private, however, these concerns persist, and they animate many meetings convened by the U.S. and U.K. governments attended by the authors as well as numerous author interactions with British, Canadian, Dutch, Indian, and U.S. intelligence officials, policymakers, and politicians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For a thoughtful discussion of these political concerns, see Toni Johnson, "Sharia and Militancy," *Backgrounders* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations, April 22, 2009), http://www.cfr.org/publication/19155/sharia_and_militancy.html. See also Shadi Hamid, "Resolving America's Islamist Dilemma: Lessons from South and South East Asia" (Washington, D.C.: Century Foundation, 2008), <http://www.tcf.org/publications/internationalaffairs/Hamid.pdf>.

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

10. The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) \$750 million Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) development plan, for example, was predicated on the hypothesis that insurgency and terrorism in the FATA is driven by poverty, lack of education, and unemployment. See United States Agency for International Development, "USAID/Pakistan Interim Strategic Plan, May 2003–September 2006" (Islamabad: USAID, May 2003), <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/673677/USAID-Pakistan-Interim-Strategic-Plan>. 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."

11. 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 its data to identify sources of subnational variation, and they do not appear to collect data on the economic, social, and ideational variables required for such an analysis. See International Republican Institute, "IRI Pakistan Index," January 19–29, 2008, <http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan/pdfs/2008%20February%2011%20IRI%20Pakistan%20Index,%20January%2019-29,%202008.pdf>.

dence as to why Pakistanis support specific militant organizations and therefore little means of efficaciously undermining such support.¹²

There are strong reasons to think that these conventional wisdoms may be mistaken. Before Pakistan's February 2008 general election, 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, Islamists have never done well in Pakistani elections.¹⁴ Second, the Islamists' record of governing the two provinces they won in 2002—the North-West Frontier Province 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 election.

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 policymaking toward 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 militant groups. Doing so allows us to develop a more nuanced understanding of the politics of

12. Presumably, policy-oriented organizations field such surveys because there is an implicit assumption that demand for militancy (e.g., support) correlates in some straightforward way with the supply of violence. There is little evidence to support this assumption, however. Surveys can cast little light on how to reduce violence without more sophisticated data collection and analysis.

13. For a nuanced summary of such concerns, see International Crisis Group, "Elections, Democracy, and Stability in Pakistan," Asia Report, No. 137 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, July 2007).

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, No. 49 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, March 2003). See also Rafiq Dossani and Henry S. Rowen, "Introduction," in Dossani and Rowen, eds., *Prospects for Peace in South Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 13.

15. See International Republican Institute, "IRI Releases Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion," news release, May 11, 2009, <http://www.iri.org/newsreleases/2009-05-11-Pakistan.asp>.

Islamist militancy than was possible with earlier surveys that asked overly general questions.¹⁶ The respondents' answers to questions about specific militant organizations reveal little support for any of the conventional wisdoms; neither religiosity, nor poverty, nor support for Islamist politics predicts support across these organizations. 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 support small militant organizations when two conditions hold: (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-Qaida have no real chance of taking over the state, analysts 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-Qaida's purported goal of reestablishing the Caliphate.

This alternative theory returns politics to a central role 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 militant groups operate.¹⁸

This theory can account for two key findings. First, Pakistani support for militants attacking Indian forces in Kashmir is not greater among those more concerned with India's treatment of Kashmiri Muslims. An individual who believes that 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, we found that support for the Taliban is lower among respondents who believe that U.S.

16. Since 2002 the Pew Global Attitudes Survey has repeatedly asked whether respondents in Muslim countries felt that suicide bombing could be justified "to defend Islam from its enemies." Recent research shows that views about suicide attacks depend heavily on the identities of the attackers and the attacked. It is not obvious how to interpret responses to general questions such as Pew's, given that the strategic context of such attacks is so important. C. Christine Fair and Stephen M. Shellman, "Determinants of Popular Support for Iran's Nuclear Program: Insights from a Nationally Representative Survey," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (December 2008), pp. 538–558.

17. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pushing us to clarify this point and have relied on his/her 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 influences support for different groups and whether these effects depend on personal religiosity or economic circumstances.

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 U.S. forces when evaluating whether those groups pose a threat to Pakistan.

Beyond the specifics of Pakistan, studying the sources of variation in support for specific groups complements previous work on the characteristics of militants and the factors influencing rates of terrorism within countries.¹⁹ Rather than focus on the fighters, we provide evidence about what drives support among nonparticipants.²⁰ To put it differently, we focus on the demand for militancy rather than the supply of militants.

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 researchers can gather about the willingness of nonparticipating Pakistanis to tolerate militant activity and contribute money or recruits to these organizations. From a policy perspective, the belief that reduced support leads to less militant violence is clearly why so many Western policy-oriented organizations field opinion surveys of Pakistanis. How much of a concern reducing support should be, though, is unclear given the current state of knowledge. There are no rigorous studies that demonstrate a linkage between expressed support for militancy and the supply of militants, much less studies that show a linkage between expressed support and realized levels of militant violence. Identifying such relationships requires research designs that move beyond examining public attitudes toward militancy. That said, 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 remains a first-order concern.

19. For evidence that poverty and terrorism do not drive individuals to become terrorists, see Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton, N.J.: 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 (July 2005), pp. 515–530.

20. This distinction is important. Although there is a robust literature on the characteristics of militants, there are few studies of the determinants of support for militancy. Three notable exceptions are M. Najeef Shafiq and Abdulkader H. Sinno, "Education, Income, and Support for Suicide Bombings: Evidence from Six Muslim Countries," SSRN Working Paper, July 2008; Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "Correlates of Public Support for Terrorism in the Muslim World," USIP Working Paper (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 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. 1 (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.

This article proceeds as follows. The first section reviews critically important but poorly understood differences between militant organizations operating in and around Pakistan. The second section discusses the four conventional wisdoms in greater detail and identifies testable hypotheses implied by each. The third section describes our data and the limitations inherent in our urban sample. The fourth section reports our results. The fifth section concludes by summarizing the policy implications of our research.

All Militants Are Not the Same

Analysts tend to describe militancy in Pakistan as a homogeneous phenomenon, or they tend to focus on a particular group 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-Qaida affiliates. Because understanding the variation in support across militant 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-Qaida, the Taliban, and the diverse "askari tanzeems," (militant groups), which claim to focus mostly on the Kashmir issue but are also involved in sectarian violence.²¹

AL-QAIDA

The most important militant transnational group operating in Pakistan is al-Qaida. In the broadest terms, Pakistanis see the al-Qaida threat very differently than the average well-informed Westerner. Many Pakistanis are dubious that al-Qaida exists and that Osama bin Laden is its leader. Even fewer believe that al-Qaida and bin Laden were behind the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. Among Pakistanis who even tentatively concede that al-Qaida may exist, most view al-Qaida operatives as "foreign," and Arab, in particular, or Central Asian militants such as those who make up the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.²²

21. This section draws from author fieldwork 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 (January 2008), pp. 49–65. See also Muhammad Amir Rana, *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*, trans. Saba Ansari (Lahore: Mashal, 2004). For an excellent synthesis of the sprawling Pakistani literature on the varied militant groups based from the country, see Nicholas Howenstein, "The Jihadi Terrain in Pakistan: An Introduction to the Sunni Jihadi Groups in Pakistan and Kashmir," Research Report No. 1 (Bradford, U.K.: Pakistan Studies Research Unit, February 5, 2008), <http://spaces.brad.ac.uk:8080/download/attachments/748/resrep1.pdf>.

22. Author fieldwork in Pakistan since 2002. Most recently, the authors trained six teams of survey enumerators from across the country for a national sample of Pakistanis in April 2009.

In 2004 there was a spate of arrests of so-called Pakistani al-Qaida, which began to alter beliefs among Pakistanis about al-Qaida and its composition.²³ Since the onset of dedicated suicide attacks first throughout Pakistan's tribal areas in 2004 and later throughout important cities, more Pakistanis are coming to believe that al-Qaida could be real and that it—along with its allied groups—poses a genuine threat to Pakistan itself.²⁴ Despite these developments, a 2009 poll showed that only 4 percent of Pakistanis said al-Qaida was responsible for the September 11 attacks; 29 percent blamed the United States; and 4 percent blamed Israel. The remaining 72 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

Since the September 11 attacks, the international community has been focused on the Afghan Taliban. In recent years, a loose network of tribal-based Pakistani militants has formed under the name Tehrik-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan or the Pakistani Taliban.²⁷ Despite some evidence of professionalization among the Afghan Taliban and their long-standing alliance with the transnational al-Qaida, 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, which emerged in 2004 and rose to prominence in 2007, is interested in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan.²⁸ Its immediate goal is to oust the Pakistani military from the

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

24. See "Mingora Attack," *Post* (Islamabad), March 3, 2007.

25. See WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies" (Washington, D.C.: PIPA, February 25, 2009), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/feb09/STARTII_Feb09_rpt.pdf. See also WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians, and al-Qa'ida" (Washington D.C.: PIPA, April 24, 2007), 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. "U.S. Concerned over Hamid's Remarks," *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 (Spring 2008), pp. 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 2008); and C. Christine Fair, "U.S.-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability, and the Future of U.S. Policy," testimony before the Subcommit-

Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). To accomplish this objective, Pakistani Taliban 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 prominent of these was the December 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

THE ASKARI TANZEEMS

There are also a number of Pakistani militant groups that are focused on India. Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Lashkar-e-Taiba have traditionally claimed to focus on the Kashmir issue. Whereas Hizb-ul-Mujahideen has remained active only in Kashmir, since at least 1999, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba have begun operating beyond Kashmir and have increasingly concentrated their activities within the Indian hinterland.

In addition, Pakistan is home to several anti-Shiite groups (e.g., Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan), which came into being to target domestic sectarian targets. These groups argue that Shiites are apostates, and they seek to establish Pakistan as a Sunni state that favors the Deobandi interpretative tradition. When our survey was in the field, Pakistanis tended to group the Kashmir-oriented and sectarian groups under the general label of “askari tanzeems.” These militants are, or at least were, viewed by Pakistanis as distinct from al-Qaida and the Taliban.

These distinctions seems less clear to many outside observers who note that (1) both sectarian and Kashmir-oriented groups have 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.²⁹

There are two complicating factors in studying support for the askari tanzeems. First, they do not all adhere to the same interpretative traditions within Sunni Islam. This makes studying the relationship between religiosity and support more challenging, as respondents following the Deobandi tradition are unlikely to feel kindly toward Lashkar-e-Taiba, which is associated

tee on the Middle East and South Asia, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., January 16, 2008.

29. Several terrorist conspiracies disrupted in the United Kingdom, for example, had links to askari tanzeems. “Pakistan Arrests ‘Led to UK Moves’ 2007,” *CNN.com*, August 11, 2006; “Bomb Trail Goes Cold on Pakistani Ties,” *BBC News*, May 11, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4761659.stm; and Paul Reynolds, “Bomber Video ‘Points to al-Qaeda,’” *BBC News*, September 2, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4208250.stm.

with the Ahl-e-Hadith school and is overtly hostile to adherents of the Deobandi tradition.³⁰

The second complicating factor is that there has been substantial changeover time in the goals and actions of the askari tanzeems. Prior to Pakistan's 2001 reorientation toward the U.S. war on terrorism, it was possible to make sound operational distinctions among militant groups. Before 2002 Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen operated in Indian-administered Kashmir and India, whereas the sectarian groups focused on killing Shiites in Pakistan.

Since 2002 these lines have become less distinct. There has been an important, if poorly understood, shift in the Kashmiri-oriented groups' objectives.³¹ Although Lashkar-e-Taiba has not targeted the Pakistani state, it has begun operating in Afghanistan, where it originated in the late 1980s.³² Many of the Deobandi groups have shifted to anti-Pakistan rhetoric, and their stated goals now include undermining the government, the army, and other state organs. A similar evolution has occurred among sectarian groups, which have begun to support the Pakistani Taliban's efforts to establish a Deobandi-influenced parallel system of government in portions of the FATA. It should be noted that Pakistan's anti-Shiite Deobandi groups have long been active in Afghanistan, despite their stated sectarian goals.

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

30. This relationship is further complicated because the theological divisions between Pakistani militant organizations do not match their patterns of operational cooperation. C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (November/December 2004), pp. 489–504.

31. Peter Chalk and C. Christine Fair, "The Re-Oriented of Kashmiri Extremism: A Threat to Regional and International Security," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 3, No. 22 (November 17, 2005), pp. 8–10; and C. Christine Fair, "Antecedents and Implications of the November 2008 Lashkar-e-Taiba Attack upon Mumbai," testimony before the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, 111th Cong., 1st sess., 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.

Four Common Views about 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 such as voting or in terms of valuing core democratic principles—oppose Islamism and militancy.

Drawing on these conventional wisdoms, popular media and policy analysts in the West and even in Pakistan tend 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 supports militancy outright. If Pakistanis support Kashmiri militant groups, then they are thought to be more likely to support other Islamist militant groups such as al-Qaida, 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-Qaida.³⁴

The view that general socioreligious factors predict support for militancy suggests the existence of a discernible "taste for militancy" among supporters of Pakistani militant groups. If these conventional wisdoms as a package are correct, then support for one group should correlate with support for others, because it is underlying factors such as poverty and religiosity that drive support. This leads naturally to the following testable hypothesis.

33. See lengthy set of quotations to this effect in Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malecková, "Seeking the Roots of Terrorism," *Chronicle Review*, June 6, 2003, pp. B10–B11. 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, http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/show_story.php?id=10802.

34. We believe that this view is driven in part by the conflation of shared networks with shared supporters. Analysts mistakenly assume that because Jaish-e-Mohammed has operational ties to al-Qaida, the two groups also share networks of supporters. This need not be the case, and our data suggest that it is not, at least not among passive supporters. For an example, see "The Mumbai Attacks: A Wake-up Call for America's Private Sector," hearing before the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, 111th Cong., 1st sess., March 11, 2009. Witnesses' statements showed a remarkable lack of clarity about the perpetrators' ties to other groups, their tactics, and their goals.

H1: Support for militant groups should be highly correlated across groups whose perceived missions and goals differ.³⁵

Even if the survey data do not support *H1*, one might still think that specific conventional wisdoms have merit. The remainder of this section therefore examines each in detail and derives testable hypotheses from them.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM #1: POVERTY PREDICTS MILITANCY

The poverty-militancy linkage animated the April 2009 donors' conference in Tokyo that netted nearly \$6 billion in aid for Pakistan.³⁶ It also animates the U.S. government's ambitious FATA development plan and other activities in Pakistan.³⁷ This approach is motivated by a desire to reduce both the demand for militancy and the supply of militants. As the former action plan of the U.S. Agency for International Development for Pakistan argued, "Economic growth means more jobs, which can . . . thwart those who would recruit the unemployed for terrorism."³⁸ Because the current survey cannot directly measure the likelihood of becoming a militant, we test the following demand-side hypothesis.

H2: Poorer people should be more supportive of militant organizations.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM #2: RELIGIOSITY PREDICTS MILITANCY

The religiosity-militancy linkage is seldom expressed so clearly, for obvious political reasons, but it drives public policy discussions about reform of the madrassas (religious schools) 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.³⁹ The more nuanced hypothesis that religiosity

35. 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.

36. After Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, spoke 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 (Update #2)," *Bloomberg*, April 17, 2009.

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

38. See "USAID/Pakistan Interim Strategic Plan May 2003–September 2006."

39. 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." National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 369.

and poverty work in tandem was raised during a May 2009 hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, when several members asserted that madrasa attendance and militant recruitment were related to both poverty and the lack of available options for the poor.⁴⁰ Such nuance aside, arguments about the threat posed by religious schooling and Islamism suggest another simple hypothesis.⁴¹

H3: The more religious people are, the more likely they are to support militant organizations.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM #3: ISLAMISM PREDICTS MILITANCY

Since 2002 analysts have paid considerable attention to Islamist parties in Pakistan. Prior to the February 2008 general election, many 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.⁴² 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 sharia 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 sharia. More broadly, the association between Islamist militancy, on the one hand, and violence, vigilantism, and theft, on the other, suggests that a preference for greater Islamization may imply less support for militant organizations.

There is limited evidence to adjudicate between these divergent possibilities. Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd's study of support for suicide attacks in

40. See "From Strategy to Implementation: The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Relationship," hearing before the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 111th Cong., 1st sess., May 5, 2009. Note, in particular, the comments of Representative Dan Burton on madrasahs.

41. 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 (Summer 2007), pp. 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), pp. 215-240.

42. The Islamist political party coalition—the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal—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 (August 2007), pp. 61-82. For a more nuanced view, see Joshua T. White, *Pakistan's Islamist Frontier: Islamic Politics and U.S. Policy in Pakistan's North-West Frontier* (Washington, D.C.: Center on Faith and International Affairs, 2008).

fourteen countries finds that supporters of 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ Despite the evidence presented in Wiktorowicz's work, the prevailing view is that support for Islamism and sharia correlates with support for militancy, leading to the following hypothesis.

H4: Support for militant organizations should be positively correlated with support for the expressed goals of Islamist political parties and the importance respondents place on religion as a source of governing principles for society.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM #4: ISLAMISM AND TERRORISM VERSUS DEMOCRACY

Policymakers and analysts of Pakistan often assume that democracy exists in opposition to Islamism and militancy.⁴⁵ 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 that core democratic values are important are less likely to support militancy.⁴⁶ This leads to two hypotheses.

H5a: The greater the degree to which respondents believe Pakistan should be or is governed by democratic principles, the less they will support militancy.

H5b: The more that respondents value representative government and other core democratic values, the less they will support militancy.

SOPHISTICATED CONSUMERS OF MILITANCY

Returning politics to the center of explanations for why individuals support militant organizations suggests that they will do so when two conditions hold: (1) those organizations are using violence to advance political goals about which the individual cares deeply; and (2) violence appears to be a reasonable means 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 that 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

43. Fair and Shepherd, "Research Note: Who Supports Terrorism?"

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

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

46. The way in which "secularization" is translated into Urdu (*ladiniyat*) connotes a social state devoid of religion. There are few proponents for such a worldview in Pakistan. Thus many Pakistanis reject the notion of secularization.

wisdoms described above. First, it treats supporters of 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 among 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, or because they believe that other means of alleviating Kashmiris' suffering are nonexistent, or because they hold both beliefs, need not have strong feelings toward the Afghan Taliban. Likewise, a person motivated by anti-Shiite sentiment may support those groups targeting Shiites, but remain ambivalent about the Kashmiri cause.

If our alternative theory is correct, support for different militant 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 three hypotheses about specific groups.

H6a: People dissatisfied with the Afghan government and the U.S. role in Afghanistan should be more supportive of the Taliban.

H6b: People who believe that the United States has a negative effect on the world should be more supportive of al-Qaida.

H6c: People who are concerned with India's treatment of Muslims in Kashmir should be more supportive of the askari tanzeems.

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. Although 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.

Methodology and Data

Our survey data were developed through a joint project between the United States Institute of Peace 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.⁴⁷ The questionnaire probes Pakistani

47. Question-by-question results are reported in C. Christine Fair, Clay Ramsay, and Steven Kull,

public opinion on an array of policy concerns, including: (1) attitudes toward a variety of militant groups including al-Qaida, the Taliban, and various askari tanzeems, as well as toward ethnic militant movements such as the Baluch insurgency; (2) the government's handling of the crises in the FATA and at the Red Mosque; and (3) respondents' opinions about the legitimacy of attacks by militants on different kinds of targets (e.g., Indian police, female relatives and children of armed forces personnel, and civilian targets such as the Indian parliament).

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

The survey was conducted by A.C. Nielsen Pakistan, which carried out 907 face-to-face interviews with urban Pakistanis in nineteen cities from September 12 to September 28, 2007.⁴⁸ This was before President Pervez Musharraf declared a six-week state of emergency on November 2007 and three months before the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The sample was designed to be broadly representative of urban Pakistani adults aged eighteen and older. The overall response rate was 35 percent.⁴⁹ If a respondent was not initially 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 was of the same gender and within two years of the selected respondent's age.⁵⁰ This design yields a margin of error of ± 3.3 percent.

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. 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 sample weights based on the 2004–05 Household Integrated Economic Survey, the most recent national survey for which data have

"Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the U.S.," USIP Working Paper (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, February 2008).

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

49. A.C. Nielsen Pakistan made 2,618 contacts, yielding 907 completed interviews. Many (268) houses were locked on contact, 26 refused contact, 699 selected respondents were not at home, and 83 refused because they could not speak Urdu.

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

been released. We found that the survey was not well balanced and note whether using our sample weights changes the results. Weighting changes few results but does provide additional evidence against the conventional wisdoms regarding education and democratic values.

A key limitation of these data is that they reflect the views of urban Pakistanis, who represent 36 percent of Pakistan's estimated population of 176 million people.⁵¹ Although studying these issues with an urban sample is less than ideal, these results remain 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.⁵² Second, most of the desirable targets for Pakistani militant groups are located in urban areas, as is most of the country's wealth. Third, Islamist political parties such as the Jemmat-e-Islami enjoy higher levels of support in Pakistan's urban areas—especially its universities—than they do in the countryside.⁵³

Most important, there are strong reasons to suspect that urban areas are the prime recruiting grounds for militant organizations. Despite numerous anecdotal accounts of the impoverished, poorly educated countryside 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.⁵⁴

Given these facts, we argue that understanding which factors influence the attitudes of urban Pakistanis vis-à-vis militancy is crucial. We therefore proceed with our analysis with the caveat that these results cannot be generalized to rural Pakistanis.

51. 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, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>.

52. We are currently fielding a survey that will remedy this situation.

53. Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), pp. 175–188.

54. Victor Asal, C. Christine Fair, and Stephen Shellman, "Consenting to a Child's Decision to Join a Jihad: Insights from a Survey of Militant Families in Pakistan," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 11 (November 2008), pp. 973–994; Fair, "Who Are Pakistan's Militants and Their Families?"; Mariam Abou Zahab, "I Shall Be Waiting for You at the Door of Paradise: The Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure)," in Aparna Rao, Michael Bollig, and Monika Bock, eds., *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction, and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghahn, 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 Shafiqat, "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, 2002), pp. 131–147; and Rana, *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*.

MEASURING SUPPORT FOR MILITANT ORGANIZATIONS

Because Pakistanis are understandably reluctant to say they support groups such as al-Qaida when being questioned by someone noting their answers on a clipboard, we could not directly inquire 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”: Sindhi nationalists in Pakistan; Mohajir nationalists in Pakistan; Baluch nationalists in Pakistan; Islamist militants and local Taliban in the FATA and settled areas; al-Qaida; and askari tanzeems in Pakistan.⁵⁵

Asking the question in this way yields higher response rates than asking directly about support for militant groups and allows us to test hypotheses about respondents’ 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 militant groups across all respondents.

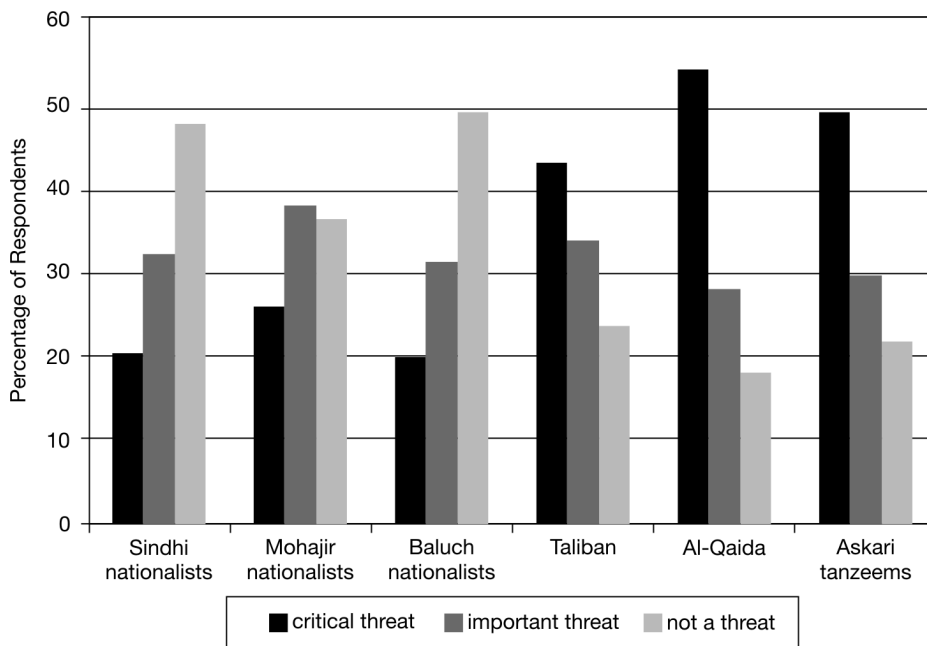
Two patterns emerge from figure 1. First, the vast majority of Pakistanis see militant Islamist organizations as a threat. Less than 25 percent think that the askari tanzeems are “not a threat.” Second, patterns of support for the nationalist militias differ substantially from those for Islamist militant organizations, suggesting that 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 militant groups is through the use of multivariate regression tables. Table 1 reports the results of ordered-probit regressions showing the relationship between respondents’ support for militant groups 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 shows that there is no consistent relationship between demographic characteristics and respondents’ support for specific militant organizations. Although greater levels of education correlate with lower levels of support for

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

Figure 1. Response Summaries by Militant Group



Mohajir nationalists, the Taliban, and al-Qaida, they have no statistically significant relationship to support for the askari tanzeems or the other two nationalist groups. As with figure 1, this second pass through the data suggests that there is a great deal of heterogeneity in patterns of support across groups. The next section seeks to explain this heterogeneity.

Results

This section begins by assessing the evidence for and against each of the four powerful conventional wisdoms outlined above. In each case, 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 AND 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

Table 1. Pakistani Demographics and Support for Militant Groups

	Sindhi Nationalists	Mohajir Nationalists	Baluch Nationalists	Taliban	Al-Qaida	Askari Tanzeems
Age	-0.041 (-0.132-0.049)	-0.031 (-0.120-0.058)	0.002 (-0.093-0.097)	-0.038 (-0.135-0.060)	0.000 (-0.092-0.092)	-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)	-0.201*** (-0.347--0.055)	-0.212*** (-0.349--0.076)	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)	-0.049 (-0.226-0.128)	0.120 (-0.051-0.292)	-0.026 (-0.196-0.145)
Tau_1	-0.887***	-1.026***	-0.779***	-0.369**	-0.509***	-0.043
Tau_2	0.005	-0.021	0.098	0.452***	0.401**	0.768***
Observations	788	790	754	692	711	710
χ^2	0.933	7.846**	8.336**	8.308**	10.55**	0.471

Robust 95 percent confidence intervals in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

The negative relationship between education and support for al-Qaida disappears when using sample weights.

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 madrassas. Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as incubators for violent extremism.”⁵⁶

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 they can be roughly divided into nationalist and Islamist categories with Sindhi, Mohajir, and Baluch militancy falling into the former category and the Islamist militants and local Taliban, al-Qaida, and askari tanzeems into the latter.

Examining patterns of support across groups highlights two factors. First, within categories there is a high degree of correlation between respondents’ support for militant groups. Second, between categories the correlations are much weaker.⁵⁷ In all possible pairings of nationalist and Islamist 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 militant group predicted support for other militant groups, we conducted a series of simple linear regressions. Treating the response variable as continuous, we found that approximately 43 percent of the variance in support for the Taliban can be explained using expressed support for other militant groups, and 59 percent and 56 percent of the variance in support for al-Qaida and the askari tanzeems can be explained with expressed support for other groups.⁵⁸ This finding suggests that underlying factors do drive support across these Islamist militant groups.

The coefficients on responses within categories were uniformly positive and

56. National Commission of Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 367.

57. The differences between correlation coefficients across groups were statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level using Fisher’s Z-transformation, which remains robust when Spearman’s correlation coefficients are used.

58. 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-Qaida, and the askari tanzeems are 0.26, 0.39, and 0.35.

statistically significant; the between-category coefficients, however, 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. Support for nationalist groups, however, was not significantly correlated with support for Islamist groups and vice versa. This suggests that whatever the level of support for militancy, it is not an undifferentiated support for violent politics.

The implicit hypothesis in the *9/11 Commission Report* quotation above is that Pakistanis' support for militancy is driven by some combination of religiosity and poverty. We measured poverty several ways. First, we assessed respondents' perceptions of the economy by asking (1) if the Pakistani economy was on the right track or the wrong track; and (2) how 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. To capture social pressures that might arise from community economic performance, we used three questions from the 2004–05 Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey.⁵⁹ One question asked respondents to rate whether their household's economic situation was better or worse than in the previous year. The second asked respondents to rate whether their community's economic situation was better or worse than in the previous year. The third captured the rates of child immunization by district.

Our examination of the simple bivariate relationships between the 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 hypothesis that there is no relationship between whether respondents feel the Pakistani economy is on the right track and their support for the Taliban, al-Qaida, or the askari tanzeems. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, respondents who felt that the Pakistan economy was doing well with respect to India were more supportive of al-Qaida and the askari tanzeems. When we added variables that address support for other militant groups, perceptions of Pakistan's economic performance relative to India's no longer predict support for al-Qaida, but the positive relationship 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 that sharia should play a larger role,

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

a 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, or 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 how important it is for them to “live in a country that is governed according to Islamic principles.”

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. Preferences about the role of religion in governance, measured in two different ways, were very weakly correlated with self-identification as a religious individual and with beliefs about the role of religion in education. These results suggest that the concept of “personal religiosity” provides little leverage for explaining policy preferences.

Once we account for both religiosity and poverty in the same regression, we find little support for either *H2* or *H3*. Table 2 summarizes the relationship between poverty, religiosity, and support for the Taliban, al-Qaida, and the askari tanzeems. Including the vector of demographic variables changes none of these results. The table includes only religion and poverty measures that made statistically significant contributions to explained variance using standard nested-model statistics.⁶⁰ Specific results aside, only two of four religiosity measures and just three of six poverty measures helped to explain support for at least one group, suggesting serious problems with arguments about a generic link between religion or poverty and support for Islamist militancy.

Two patterns are immediately evident. First, support for the Taliban is not well explained by religiosity. Respondents who favored a greater role for sharia in Pakistani law and those who want sharia to play a smaller role support the Taliban and al-Qaida more than those who feel that the role of sharia 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

60. Specifically, table 2 includes all religiosity 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.

Table 2. Religiosity, Poverty, and Support for Islamist Militancy

	Taliban	Al-Qaida	Askari Tanzeems
Greater role for sharia in Pakistani law	0.713*** (0.374–1.052)	0.699*** (0.358–1.041)	0.340** (0.015–0.665)
Lesser role for sharia in Pakistani law	0.452*** (0.167–0.736)	0.414*** (0.132–0.695)	–0.01 (–0.275–0.255)
Muslim first ^a	0.215 (–0.183–0.614)	0.392* (–0.007–0.791)	0.569*** (0.193–0.945)
Muslim second ^b	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)
Percentage of immunized children	0.002 (–0.004–0.008)	0.006 (–0.001–0.012)	0.009*** (0.002–0.015)
Community’s economic performance	0.013*** (0.007–0.018)	0.005 (–0.001–0.010)	0.010*** (0.004–0.016)
Tau_1	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
Adjusted percentage predicted correctly	0.048	0.004	0.038

Robust 95 percent confidence intervals in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

^aMuslim cited as most important identity out of five possibilities (Pakistani, Muslim, individual, citizen of the world, or member of your ethnic group).

^bMuslim cited as second most important out of five possibilities.

models is low. The last line of table 2 shows the adjusted percentage 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 religiosity and poverty to predict support yields less than a 5 percent improvement over an intelligent guess.

Our analysis of variables not included in table 2 reveals another key point: religiosity writ large is a poor predictor of support for militant organizations. Respondents who identified producing good Muslims as a crucial 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 a significant policy point: support for Islam as a governing principle

in Pakistani politics does not predict support for any of the militant groups of concern to Western policymakers.

We also found substantial evidence that religiosity is much less consequential than underlying political factors. Two findings support this statement. First, the explanatory value of support for other militant groups in these models vastly exceeds that of religiosity and poverty.⁶¹ Second, the marginal impact of the religiosity 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 the Taliban or al-Qaida. Taken together, these results strongly suggest that if there is some common factor driving support for all these militant organizations, it is not religion.

Poverty fares even more poorly than religiosity in explaining support for Islamist militant organizations. Perceptions of Pakistan's economic performance relative to India's have the opposite relationship predicted by *H2*. The better a respondent sees Pakistan's economy performing relative to India's, the more supportive he or she is of al-Qaida and the askari tanzems. Once we account for support for other militant organizations, this relationship disappears in the case of al-Qaida and becomes stronger in the case of the askari tanzems, 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. Instead, those who see Pakistan'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 religiosity variables that we discuss in the following subsection.

Both measures of the economic conditions of respondents' communities also run in the opposite direction predicted by *H2*. Respondents from communities who saw their economic conditions improving were more supportive of both the Taliban and the askari tanzems. Those from communities with high rates of child immunization were more supportive of the askari tanzems.

In sum, our data provide no evidence for *H2*, the notion that poverty drives support for Islamist militant organizations in Pakistan. There is at best weak evidence for *H3*, that religiosity does so. Rather, better economic conditions may be associated with greater support for Islamist militancy in Pakistan.

61. A wide variety of nested model tests and fit statistics show that the amount of variation explained by religiosity 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 *H4* 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 that 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 that Pakistan is governed by those principles. The greater this gap, the more supportive *H4* 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, eliminates the evidentiary requirement for four male witnesses, and removes victims' exposure to prosecution for adultery. Politicians within the Islamist parties vociferously insisted that these changes would encourage moral laxity, and some even threatened to resign from parliament.⁶² The second Islamist politics question probed respondents' levels of support for requiring madrassas 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 sharia law. A few notes about the term "Talibanization" are in order. When our survey was fielded, the term 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 for its militancy. The term appears to imply several things. First, Talibanization implies violence and the lethal targeting of security forces (i.e., 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 courts dispensing extralegal punishments. It is important to keep in mind that respondents may reject Talibanization because it is a restric-

62. Raja Asghar, "Senate Passes Women's Bill; MMA Amendments Rejected," *Dawn* (Karachi), November 24, 2006.

tion on personal choice—to veil, to keep a beard, to watch “sinful” DVDs, to listen to music, to send daughters to school, to allow them 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 it operates in Afghanistan, even if they do not relish a Taliban-like presence in their own country. *H4* predicts that opposition to Talibanization should be negatively correlated with support for all three groups.

Table 3 summarizes the influence of attitudes toward Islamist parties’ major political issues on support for different militant organizations.⁶³ Once again, we have treated ordinal variables as continuous only where doing so does not substantively affect the results.

Not surprisingly given our earlier results on religious identity, support for Islamist politics did not translate into support for militant organizations in any consistent way across groups. Dislike of the Women’s Protection Act, for example, correlated with greater support for the askari tanzeems, but not with greater support for the Taliban or al-Qaida. A different alignment emerged 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 Islamist militant groups, but the effect was statistically significant only for the Taliban and al-Qaida. Respondents opposed to imposing a math/science requirement on madrassas were more supportive of the askari tanzeems, but they were no more likely than other respondents to support the Taliban or al-Qaida. Table 3 also shows that contrary to *H4*, 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 Islamist militant groups than those who think that the level of Talibanization is appropriate. Those who want to see more Talibanization, however, are not more supportive of militant organizations.⁶⁴

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

DEMOCRACY AND SUPPORT FOR MILITANCY

Policymakers and analysts of Pakistan typically argue that democracy exists in opposition to Islamism and militancy, and that it may even correlate with de-

63. The small number of responses in table 3 is driven by the fact that nonresponse rates for some of these questions approached 25 percent, but the specific nonresponses varied across respondents, which means that few 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.

64. 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.

Table 3. Islamist Politics and Pakistanis' Support for Islamist Militant Groups

	Taliban	Al-Qaida	Askari Tanzeems	
Islamist politics	Islam as governing principle gap	0.033* (-0.003-0.069)	0.045** (0.008-0.081)	0.010 (-0.025-0.046)
	Opposition to Womens' Protection Act	0.080 (-0.043-0.202)	0.072 (-0.055-0.200)	0.275*** (0.145-0.406)
	Opposition to math/ science requirement	-0.033 (-0.165-0.099)	0.093 (-0.036-0.221)	0.183*** (0.049-0.316)
	More Talibanization	-0.078 (-0.415-0.260)	0.177 (-0.184-0.539)	0.168 (-0.186-0.523)
	Less Talibanization	-0.511*** (-0.800--0.222)	-0.566*** (-0.867--0.266)	-0.329** (-0.625--0.033)
Religion and poverty	More sharia	0.626*** (0.192-1.059)	0.599*** (0.179-1.020)	0.399* (-0.002-0.800)
	Less sharia	0.421** (0.036-0.806)	0.596*** (0.231-0.962)	0.308 (-0.062-0.677)
	Muslim first	-0.001 (-0.522-0.520)	0.240 (-0.323-0.803)	0.205 (-0.287-0.698)
	Muslim second	-0.068 (-0.616-0.481)	-0.039 (-0.629-0.551)	0.199 (-0.306-0.703)
	Growth relative to India	0.169*** (0.063-0.276)	0.170*** (0.055-0.286)	0.249*** (0.142-0.356)
	Percentage of immunized children	0.002 (-0.007-0.010)	0.008* (-0.001-0.018)	0.015*** (0.006-0.025)
	Community's 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	
Adjusted percentage predicted correctly	0.190	0.126	0.296	

Robust 95 percent confidence intervals in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Reference category for Talibanization is that respondents want the same amount of Talibanization.

mands 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 *H5a*. We asked two questions that directly measured 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 them to rate the extent to which they think "Pakistan is governed by representatives elected by the people."⁶⁵

The belief that democracy stands in opposition to militancy also implies that support for militancy should be decreasing in the extent to which respondents' value individual rights and in the extent to which they have confidence in government institutions that can protect these rights, *H5b*. We measured support for core democratic rights by asking about the importance of three core rights: minority protection, representative government, and independent courts. We measured confidence in representative government by asking about confidence in three key institutions: the national government as a whole, the national assembly, and the respondents' provincial assembly.

Our analysis of respondents' answers to these questions yields little support for *H5a* or *H5b*. Table 4 summarizes the results on these variables, controlling for religion and poverty. The table does not include the second set of questions on *H5b*, 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 *H5b*. 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-Qaida 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.

If *H5a* and *H5b* were correct, then, 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 it is the only result supporting these hypotheses. Respondents who feel Pakistan is governed by representatives of the people were not less supportive of al-Qaida or the askari tanzeems. Importantly, there was no discern-

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

Table 4. Democratic Values and Pakistanis' Support for Islamist Militant Groups

	Taliban	Al-Qaida	Askari Tanzeem
Potential for democratic change	-0.115* (-0.236-0.006) -0.044** (-0.087-0.001)	-0.138** (-0.263-0.013) -0.018 (-0.067-0.025)	-0.195*** (-0.321-0.068) 0.006 (-0.039-0.051)
Core democratic rights			
Confidence in elections	-0.068 (-0.213-0.076)	-0.002 (-0.146-0.142)	-0.213*** (-0.365-0.061)
Elected representatives govern Pakistan	0.014 (-0.041-0.070)	-0.004 (-0.067-0.059)	-0.056** (-0.111-0.001)
Importance of protecting religious minorities	0.012 (-0.058-0.082)	-0.040 (-0.107-0.027)	0.024 (-0.041-0.089)
Importance of representative government			
Importance of independent judiciary			
More sharia	0.935*** (0.538-1.332)	0.863*** (0.469-1.257)	0.374* (-0.000-0.748)
Less sharia	0.751*** (0.405-1.098)	0.700*** (0.362-1.039)	0.215 (-0.101-0.531)
Muslim first	0.109 (-0.334-0.552)	0.356* (-0.056-0.769)	0.585*** (0.172-0.998)
Muslim second	0.005 (-0.456-0.466)	0.056 (-0.381-0.492)	0.306 (-0.115-0.727)
Growth relative to India	0.074 (-0.025-0.173)	0.164*** (0.065-0.262)	0.235*** (0.138-0.332)
Percentage of immunized children	0.005 (-0.003-0.012)	0.007* (-0.000-0.015)	0.009** (0.002-0.017)
Community's economic performance	0.015*** (0.008-0.021)	0.008** (0.001-0.015)	0.013*** (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
Adjusted percentage predicted correctly	0.090	0.005	0.157

Robust 95 percent confidence intervals in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

The negative relationships between the potential for democratic change variables and support for the Taliban and al-Qaida disappear when using sample weights.

ible relationship between respondents' support for core democratic rights and their disapproval of either the Taliban or al-Qaida. We do see that those who want minorities protected, or who think representative government is important, are less supportive of the askari tanzeems.⁶⁶ These results suggest that the presumption that citizens who favor democracy oppose militancy is incomplete at best.

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 no obvious disconnect between greater Islamism and democracy. Moreover, supporters of democracy could be more inclined to back militancy because Pakistan's Islamist parties have historically phrased their appeals in democratic terms. Jamaat-e-Islami, for example, boycotted the 2008 general election, believing that it would be rigged. Key parties of the Islamist political coalition, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, consistently argued in constitutional and democratic terms that President Pervez Musharraf's simultaneous tenure as chief of army staff and president was illegal. Leaders of the Islamist parties—Jamiat-ul-Ulama-e-Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami—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, at least for Kashmir.

Thus, some Pakistanis are likely to read the consistent Islamists' democratic critique of Musharraf as evidence of their democratic goals. Similarly, given that the Jamaat-e-Islami-backed militant groups, Deobandi groups, 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, respondents' feelings about the importance of democracy, or about the potential for change through democratic institutions, should be unrelated to support for militancy.

We test this hypothesis in two ways. 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.⁶⁷ Adding the full vector of democracy variables could be justified only for the askari tanzeems. Breaking the democracy variables down further,

66. Wald and likelihood-ratio tests for nested models suggest that adding support for an independent judiciary never results in a statistically significant increase in explained variance, and that adding support for minority rights and representative government helps explain support only for the askari tanzeems.

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

we found that none helped to explain variance in respondents' support for the Taliban after controlling for the political variables. Our respondents' confidence that upcoming elections would be free and fair helped to predict support for al-Qaida 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 fifteen possible relationships between support for a specific group and our five democracy variables, only three helped to 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-Qaida, controlling for political grievances strengthens the relationship between support and the feeling that 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

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-Qaida has espoused a number of transnational Islamist goals (e.g., reestablishing the Caliphate). In recent years, however, the most obvious political goals of al-Qaida in Pakistan have included ousting the United States from Afghanistan, removing President Musharraf from office, and compelling the United States to change its policies in Israel and Iraq. The Afghan Taliban seeks to oust foreign militaries from Afghanistan and to reassert their political dominions. The Pakistani Taliban tends to focus its objectives on Pakistan's tribal areas, where it has 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 determine whether Pakistanis condition their support on the political goals the militant groups are

serving by assessing how well support is predicted by expressed opinions on these political issues.

To test *H6a*, 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 their feelings about Talibanization in Pakistan.

We asked three questions designed to test *H6b* (i.e., that those believing U.S. influence has a negative effect on the world will be more supportive of al-Qaida). The first asked respondents whether they agreed that the United States seeks to “weaken and divide the Islamic world.” The second asked respondents how much they trusted the United States to “act responsibly in the world.” The third asked whether they agreed with the statement that “the U.S. is playing the role of world policeman more than it should.”

We asked three questions to test *H6c* (i.e., that those concerned with Indian treatment of Muslims in Kashmir will be more supportive of the askari tanzeems). 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 *H6d* (i.e., 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 omitted the control variables for poverty and religiosity from the table to enhance 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 determine whether asking about other groups’ political goals helps to explain support for each group.

Table 5 reveals three patterns. Most important, the al-Qaida-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, respondents’ feelings about the U.S. role in world affairs were not useful in predicting support for al-Qaida. Moreover, goals that predict support for both the Taliban and the askari tanzeems—opposition to the Pakistani government’s efforts to impose control over local Taliban in the FATA, for example—did not predict support for al-Qaida. One potential explanation for this null finding is that some intervening variable is conditioning the relationship between respondents’ political beliefs and their support for specific groups.

Table 5. Political Grievances and Pakistanis' Support for Islamist Militant Groups

	Taliban	Taliban	Al-Qaida	Al-Qaida	Askari Tanzeems	Askari Tanzeems
Taliban political goals						
Current Karzai government has best approach for Afghanistan	0.064 (-0.316-0.443)	0.193 (-0.273-0.659)		0.256 (-0.270-0.781)		0.384 (-0.102-0.871)
Former Taliban government had best approach for Afghanistan	0.451 *** (0.173-0.728)	0.615 *** (0.259-0.970)		0.457 ** (0.069-0.844)		0.652 *** (0.271-1.033)
Opposition to government presence in FATA	0.161 * (-0.019-0.340)	0.235 * (-0.025-0.495)		-0.033 (-0.331-0.264)		0.233 * (-0.035-0.502)
Support Talibanization	0.128 ** (0.017-0.238)	0.110 (-0.051-0.271)		0.124 (-0.030-0.278)		0.070 (-0.079-0.219)
Al-Qaida political goals						
United States seeks to weaken Muslims		0.089 (-0.181-0.359)	-0.004 (-0.201-0.193)	-0.104 (-0.373-0.166)		-0.122 (-0.388-0.145)
United States plays world policeman too much		0.263 (-0.088-0.614)	0.418 *** (0.162-0.675)	0.208 (-0.161-0.576)		0.004 (-0.347-0.354)
United States cannot be trusted to act responsibly		0.073 (-0.102-0.248)	0.052 (-0.072-0.177)	0.088 (-0.091-0.267)		0.251 *** (0.072-0.430)
Askari tanzeems political goals						
Indian does not protect Kashmiri Muslims		-0.011 (-0.207-0.184)		-0.135 (-0.340-0.071)	-0.219 *** (-0.369--0.070)	-0.102 (-0.293-0.089)
India does not protect Muslim citizens		0.055 (-0.115-0.225)		-0.054 (-0.223-0.116)	0.046 (-0.094-0.186)	0.009 (-0.171-0.189)
Pakistan has obligation to protect Muslims		0.157 * (-0.006-0.320)		0.155 * (-0.016-0.326)	0.045 (-0.093-0.182)	0.069 (-0.104-0.242)
Askari tanzeems provide social services		0.081 (-0.239-0.402)		0.330 ** (0.005-0.655)	0.685 *** (0.435-0.935)	0.470 *** (0.150-0.791)

Tau_1	1.749*** (0.866-2.632)	3.275*** (1.483-5.067)	1.968*** (0.841-3.094)	2.635*** (0.695-4.576)	1.615*** (0.638-2.591)	3.520*** (1.410-5.630)
Tau_2	2.748*** (1.843-3.653)	4.226*** (2.410-6.042)	2.917*** (1.773-4.061)	3.594*** (1.622-5.567)	2.544*** (1.547-3.541)	4.620*** (2.471-6.770)
Observations	388	250	415	245	369	252
Adjusted percentage correctly	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 percent confidence intervals in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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

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

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

Third, respondents' support for the askari tanzeems was not driven by concerns with India's treatment of its Muslim citizens. Indeed, the more our respondents believed that India fares poorly in protecting Muslims, the less supportive they were of 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 tanzeems may provoke a backlash against Indian Muslims; (2) if India is already doing a poor job protecting its Muslims, that backlash could be severe and Muslims will suffer; hence (3) I should not support the askari tanzeems.⁶⁸

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 respondents who perceived a threat to Pakistan from U.S. forces in Afghanistan were less supportive of both the Taliban and al-Qaida. 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 U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The high level of nonoverlapping missing data in this survey, however, means that we are unable to fully test such conditional relationships.⁶⁹

Overall, the results in this subsection suggest that specific political grievances are an important, but not a decisive, driver of support for militant organizations. To further test whether political considerations play a key role, we examined how the explanatory power of the political variables compared

68. A similar logic could explain the finding that those who feel that 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. Our survey did not ask about this, however.

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

Table 6. Predictive Value of Political Goals versus Poverty and Religiosity

	Model	Taliban	Al-Qaida	Askari Tanzeems
Percentage Correct	Naïve Model	44.4	54.2	48.2
Percentage improvement over naïve model	Poverty and religiosity	4.8	0.4	3.8
	Groups' political goals	14.5	6.5	18.8
	All political goals	18.4	17.7	26.3
Percentage by which group's political goals outperform poverty and religiosity		302.1	1,625.0	494.7

with that of our base model using religion and poverty. Table 6 reports these results.

The first row of table 6 shows the percentage of responses predicted correctly by a naïve model that assumes all respondents choose the most common answer. The second row shows the percentage improvement on this prediction using poverty and personal religiosity. The third and fourth rows show the same for group-specific political goals and all political goals. The fifth row provides the decisive statistic, the percentage by which improvement over the naïve model using group-specific political goals exceeds improvement for the poverty and religion model. Formal nested model tests, reported at 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.

Conclusion

The results 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 across different types of militant groups. This finding suggests that Pakistanis distinguish among 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-Qaida. 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 sharia law does not predict support for militant organizations. What does predict such support is a desire for change—positive or negative—in the perceived role of sharia in Pakistan. Similarly, identifying strongly as a Muslim does not predict support for Taliban militants fighting in Afghanistan or for al-Qaida. Although Islamic identity does predict support for askari tanzeems, the correlation disappears once we control for respondents' support for other groups. Whatever the common factor driving support for all these militant organizations 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-Qaida. These findings suggest that the much-heralded call for democratization as a palliative for militancy may be unfounded.

These findings suggest that public support for militant organizations appears to be much more complex than many analysts believe. Respondents in our survey appear to be making rather sophisticated political calculations that are not easily categorized. Although we found evidence that specific political grievances are an important driver of support for militant organizations, they are not decisive. We believe that the source of the ambiguity is that respondents are taking both political incentives and a perception of the strategic environment into account.

The implications that follow from this survey do not translate easily into policy action; rather this effort identifies an empirical agenda to better understand and address the roots of support that militancy enjoys in Pakistan. Foremost, policymakers should develop a more sophisticated understanding of the various militant groups operating in and from Pakistan and a concomitant understanding of what drives demand for their activities. This study, though limited in size and scope, demonstrates that such an exposition is possible with adequate resources. It is clear that commonly suggested palliatives intended to reduce generalized support for militancy—economic development, greater democratization, alternatives to religious education, and so on—are unlikely to be effective. Policymakers should refocus their efforts on developing better analytical tools to formulate more effective interventions. It is likely that any effective policy will have to both address the core political concerns of supporters of specific militant groups and diminish the perceived value of militant violence as a tool to achieve political goals.

Second, this study focused on the demand for militancy in Pakistan—not the supply of militancy. Admittedly, it is the supply of militancy rather than public support for it that concerns policymakers. There is, however, no empirical data that support the presumption—inherent in most surveys of Pakistanis' views on these and related subjects—that decreases in the demand for support for militancy translates into a reduction of Islamist violence. Measured support for suicide bombing among Pakistanis in public opinion surveys declined only when suicide bombing increased, suggesting the causal effect from violence to expressed support may be the more powerful one.⁷⁰

Third, there is an urgent need for focused analyses of the impacts of policy interventions on both the supply of and demand for violence. U.S., Pakistani, and international agencies are not configured to rigorously evaluate the impacts of their programming. Given the state of knowledge in this area, policy implementers should be building impact evaluation into their programming, and they ought to establish a more robust process for disseminating the lessons learned.

These recommendations may seem onerous at first blush, but without understanding the impact of programming at various levels, policymakers cannot direct limited resources where they will have the greatest impact. More seriously, it is possible that some interventions may actually aggravate the underlying concerns of militant groups' supporters, or increase the perceived value of violence, especially if the target population believes that the programming will undermine their political objectives. In recent years, for example, many Pakistanis outside of the FATA have expressed considerable dismay at development funding for this region. They believe that Washington is interested in this border area only because of its relationship to the war in Afghanistan, and therefore do not accept this development assistance as anything other than a tool to advance the United States' political agenda in the region.⁷¹ Thus, not only is the impact of these programs in the FATA empirically unknown, but given that the U.S. political agenda is deeply unpopular with Pakistanis, the programs may adversely affect Pakistani attitudes toward the United States outside of the FATA. Similarly, Pakistanis of many social strata resent U.S. efforts toward madrasa reform and curricula reform of public schools, because they believe these programs seek to "de-Islamize" Pakistan.

70. C. Christine Fair, "Pakistan's Own War on Terror: What the Pakistani Public Thinks," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (November 2009). For data as of June 2007, see United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001–2007)*, ed. C. Christine Fair (Kabul: UNAMA, September 9, 2007).

71. See author fieldwork in Pakistan that involved conducting a democracy and governance assessment in April 2008. Interviews were conducted in Lahore, Islamabad, and Quetta.

Such interventions appear to take little cognizance of the fact that Pakistanis generally value Islamic education in combination with other subjects.⁷²

Without replacing common wisdoms about Pakistan with empirically defensible exposition of what drives support for militancy in Pakistan, international (and domestic) interventions are unlikely to be effective and may even exacerbate the underlying problems.

72. Mathew J. Nelson, "Muslims, Markets, and the Meaning of 'Good' Education in Pakistan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (September/October 2006), pp. 699–720; and C. Christine Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008).