



# **Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan, and the US**

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Dr. C. Christine Fair contributed to the conceptualization of the study and the design of the survey instrument.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of 2007, Pakistan has experienced some extraordinary scenes. It is difficult to remember now that President Musharraf's 2007 clampdown was seen by many as a crisis for the country with no visible exit. Instead, powerful events--the return of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from exile, Bhutto's assassination, and her party's victory in an election free of interference--transformed the political landscape and brought Musharraf's departure after nine years in power.

By March of 2009, Pakistan seemed again to be in a crisis with no visible exit. The efforts of the North West Frontier Province's government to strike a deal with the Pakistani Taliban--offering Shari'a courts in Swat in exchange for peace--was formally endorsed by Pakistan's Parliament and President Zardari. The Pakistani Taliban's further spread into areas near Islamabad brought extreme concern in Washington. Secretary of State Clinton spoke of the Pakistani government as "abdicating" from its duty to control its national territory. A short time later, though, the dynamic reversed. The army launched a major offensive against the Pakistani Taliban, and the approach of seeking deals with religious militant groups had apparently lost the political elite's support.

How has the Pakistani public reacted to these extreme twists and turns in the country's fortunes? This report focuses on Pakistanis' attitudes toward the newest and most drastic changes in their national situation. The report addresses the following questions:

In the past the Pakistani public was fairly sanguine about the role of religious militant groups inside Pakistan. How much has this attitude changed? How does the Pakistani public understand the Swat Valley conflict between their government and the Pakistani Taliban? Which do they sympathize with more, and how much confidence do they place in the government and army?

How does the public perceive the Pakistani Taliban? Do most see it as acting in good faith or in bad faith about the agreement it made? What does the public think of the Pakistani Taliban's potential to govern, or of its version of Shari'a?

Has the government's new struggle against the Pakistani Taliban led the public to look more negatively at the Afghan Taliban? Does the public believe there are Afghan Taliban bases in Pakistan that are launching points for operations against the Afghan state? If their own government were to identify such bases, what does the public think should be done?

The new Obama administration has decided on expanding US military forces in Afghanistan and has kept up a strong tempo of Predator strikes aimed at militant targets within Pakistan. How is the Pakistani public reacting to these early choices by the Obama administration?

Does the departure of President Bush and the arrival of President Obama make Pakistanis think future US policies may be better for Pakistan? Or do they essentially expect more of the same as far as the US-Pakistan relationship is concerned? Are there signs that negative views of the US, so prevalent during the Bush years, are beginning to soften? Do Pakistanis view Obama's intentions differently from how they view US intentions in general?

In the past the Pakistani public has not been inclined to view al Qaeda as a threat to Pakistan itself. Have events in Swat jarred people in a way that also affects their image of al Qaeda? When they consider how al Qaeda would like to see Pakistan governed, do they think its ideas are compatible with democracy? Would the public support an army operation to close down al Qaeda training camps if the Pakistani government identified them on national soil?

Events in Swat have provided a major test for all Pakistan’s leaders—not only those in the government, but in the parliamentary opposition as well, and even in militant circles. Which leaders do Pakistanis view favorably, and have their views of them changed significantly in the last few months?

To seek the answers to these questions, WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted a survey of the national population of Pakistan over May 17-28, 2009. The survey was carried out by SEDCO (Socio-Economic Development Consultants, Islamabad, Pakistan). Interviews were face-to-face in respondents’ homes. A total of 1,000 interviews were conducted across 100 primary sampling units in rural areas and urban areas. The margin of error is +/-3.2 percent.

The key findings of the study are:

**RELIGIOUS MILITANT GROUPS AND THE SWAT CONFLICT**

***1. Changing Views of Religious Militants***

The Pakistani public’s views of militant groups operating in Pakistan have become sharply more negative over the last year and a half; very large majorities now see them as a serious threat to the country’s future.....4

***2. Views of the Swat Conflict***

In the Swat Valley conflict Pakistanis strongly support the government and express confidence in its handling of the situation. Views are mixed on whether the government should have tried for an agreement with the Pakistani Taliban, but very large majorities now think the Pakistani Taliban has violated the agreement and will not keep it in the future.....4

***3. Views of the Pakistani Taliban***

Pakistanis show far less confidence in the potential for the Pakistani Taliban to govern effectively than they do for the government, though many also have low confidence in the government. Pakistanis also appear to disagree with the Taliban about the treatment of women and girls, and the meaning of Shari’a in this regard.....6

**VIEWS OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

***4. Afghan Taliban Operating in Pakistan***

Three in five think it would be bad if the Taliban were to regain power in Afghanistan. An overwhelming majority thinks Afghan Taliban groups fighting to overthrow Afghanistan’s government should not be allowed to have bases in Pakistan. Most do not believe the Afghan Taliban has such bases; but if Pakistan’s government were to identify them, three in four think it should close such bases, even if it requires using military force.....7

***5. US Military Activity against Afghan Taliban in Pakistan***

Despite its support for government action against Afghan Taliban bases, Pakistanis overwhelmingly reject US action against such bases. Even more say that current US drone aircraft attacks are not justified.....8

**6. Views of the Operation in Afghanistan**

Almost all Pakistanis disapprove of the Obama administration’s decision to increase US forces in Afghanistan. Very large majorities disapprove of the NATO mission and say it should be ended now. .... 8

**ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES**

**7. President Obama and US Goals**

Only one in three Pakistanis express confidence in President Obama or think his policies will be better for Pakistan. Very large majorities still have an unfavorable view of the current US government and think the US is playing a mostly negative role in the world. Very large majorities continue to think the US has hostile goals--to weaken and divide the Islamic world; to impose American culture on Muslim society; and to maintain control over the Middle East’s oil resources. Only a minority thinks it is a US goal to see the creation of a viable Palestinian state. When asked about Obama’s goals, Pakistanis’ views are almost exactly the same as their views of US goals..... 9

**VIEWS OF AL QAEDA**

**8. Perceptions of Al Qaeda as a Threat**

A very large majority now looks on al Qaeda as a critical threat to Pakistan—a major increase from a year and a half ago. An overwhelming majority thinks al Qaeda should not be allowed to run training camps in Pakistan. Most do not believe al Qaeda has such camps; but if Pakistan’s government were to identify them, three in four think it should close them down, even if this requires using military force. However, views of al Qaeda per se are only moderately negative, and views of Bin Laden are mixed overall. A majority thinks al Qaeda does not favor democracy as a system of government. .... 12

**9. Al Qaeda and the US**

Despite the negative views of al Qaeda, a very large majority says that were the US to identify al Qaeda camps in Pakistan, it would still not be justified in bombing them. In general, while a majority opposes al Qaeda’s attacks on Americans, a majority says they share many of al Qaeda’s attitudes toward the US. .... 13

**EVALUATIONS OF NATIONAL LEADERS**

**10. Leaders in Government, in the Opposition, and in Religious Militant Groups**

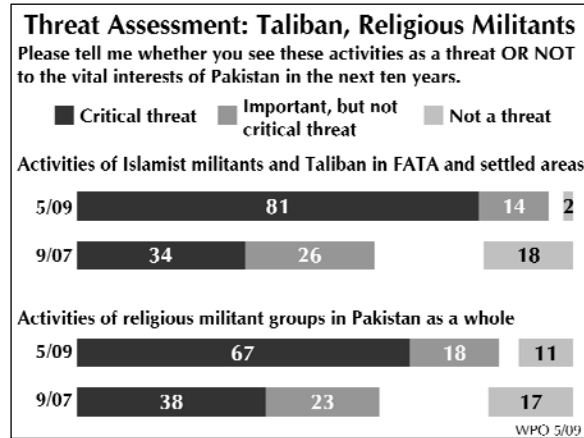
A large majority views President Zardari unfavorably, but there are multiple national leaders whom most view favorably. Prime Minister Gilani is apparently not tarred by negative views of Zardari and gets favorable ratings from three in four Pakistanis. The restored Chief Justice Chaudry is very popular, and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif extremely popular. The leader most associated with the Pakistani Taliban, Maulana Sufi Mohammad, is rejected by three in four Pakistanis. .... 14

**RELIGIOUS MILITANT GROUPS AND THE SWAT CONFLICT**

***1. Changing Views of Religious Militants***

The Pakistani public’s views of militant groups operating in Pakistan have become sharply more negative over the last year and a half; very large majorities now see them as a serious threat to the country’s future.

A major shift has taken place in Pakistanis’ perceptions of religious militant groups in their country. In September 2007, only 34 percent thought the “activities of Islamist militants and local Taliban in FATA and settled areas” were a critical threat. In the current study this increased dramatically to 81 percent. In 2007, only 38 percent thought “the activities of religious militant groups in Pakistan” were a critical threat; in this study, 67 percent did.



Most see the Pakistani Taliban—the group active in the Swat Valley—in this negative light. Three-quarters said it would be mostly bad if the Pakistani Taliban “took control over all of Pakistan,” with 67 percent calling it “very bad.”

However a majority (58%) thinks this outcome is unlikely (very unlikely, 48%). Also a bare 51 percent majority assumed that the group only wants control of Pakistan’s northwest, though a substantial minority (36%) disagreed, assuming the group’s goals are “gaining control of all of Pakistan and imposing their form of Shari’a.”



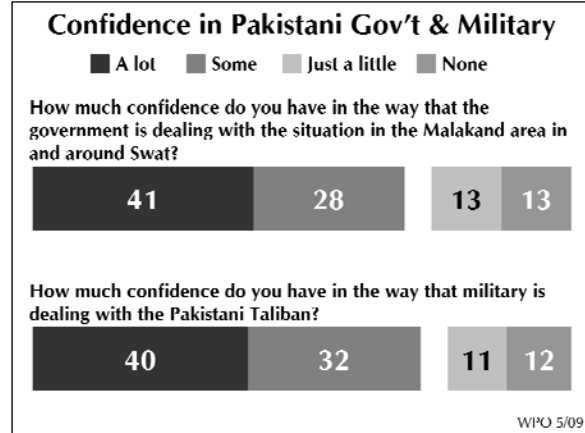
***2. Views of the Swat Conflict***

In the Swat Valley conflict Pakistanis strongly support the government and express confidence in its handling of the situation. Views are mixed on whether the government should have tried for an agreement with the Pakistani Taliban, but very large majorities now think the Pakistani Taliban has violated the agreement and will not keep it in the future.

Pakistanis appear to be quite concerned about the conflict in Swat. Though many Pakistanis have little education and live in areas where information is hard to come by, seven in ten (70%) said they have heard a lot (28%) or some (42%) about the conflict in Swat.

Support for the government in the Swat conflict is strong. Asked whether they sympathize more with the government or with the Pakistani Taliban in the conflict, 70 percent preferred the government, only 5 percent the Pakistani Taliban, and 21 percent said “both equally” or “neither.”

Large majorities also express confidence in the government and army’s efforts. Sixty-nine percent expressed some (28%) or a lot (41%) of confidence in “the way the government is dealing with the situation...in and around Swat.” Likewise, 72 percent had some (32%) or a lot (40%) of confidence in “the way the military is dealing with the Pakistani Taliban.”



**The Aborted Agreement**

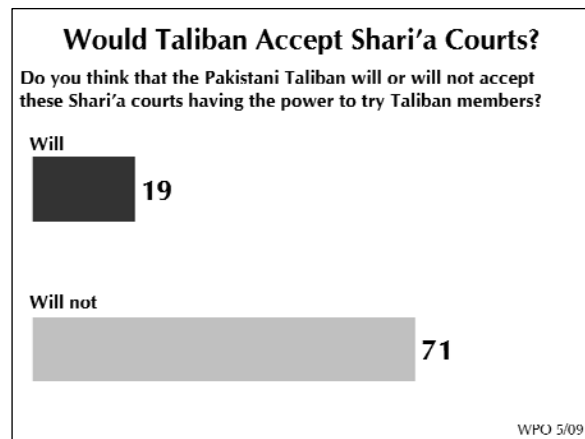
The public leans slightly toward feeling that even though the pact in Swat with the Pakistani Taliban failed, the government was still right to attempt a compromise.

Respondents were reminded that “in April the government and Pakistani Taliban made an agreement. Government forces agreed to withdraw and allow the Taliban to establish a Sharia system in Swat, while the Taliban agreed to shut down their training camps and turn in their heavy weapons.” A 45 percent plurality felt that the government did the right thing in making the agreement, while 40 percent felt the government made a mistake. (This is another sign of a major shift in opinion. Before the agreement in March, an International Republican Institute poll found most (72%) supporting a “peace deal with the extremists.”<sup>1</sup>)

Independent of their view of the original decision to try to make an agreement, Pakistanis appear to view it as largely a failure now. A full two thirds (67%) said that the Pakistani Taliban violated the agreement in “sending their forces into more areas beyond Swat,” and a very large 81 percent said they were concerned by this move.

Pakistanis nationwide do not think the agreement has support in Swat itself. A large majority—63 percent—thought that most residents of Swat disapprove of the agreement; only 21 percent thought they approve.

Very large majorities do not trust the Pakistani Taliban to keep its agreements with the government. Sixty-nine percent said the Pakistani Taliban would not “stop fighting, shut down their training camps, and turn in their heavy weapons” as their agreement with the government specifies. And 71 percent said they would not “accept these Shari’a courts having the power to try Taliban members.” Thus most do not even think the Pakistani Taliban would submit themselves to the jurisdiction of the Shari’a courts they demand.



<sup>1</sup> For IRI’s study, see <http://www.iri.org/newsreleases/pdfs/2009%20May%2011%20Survey%20of%20Pakistan%20Public%20Opinion,%20March%207-30,%202009.pdf>. The finding cited is slide 19.

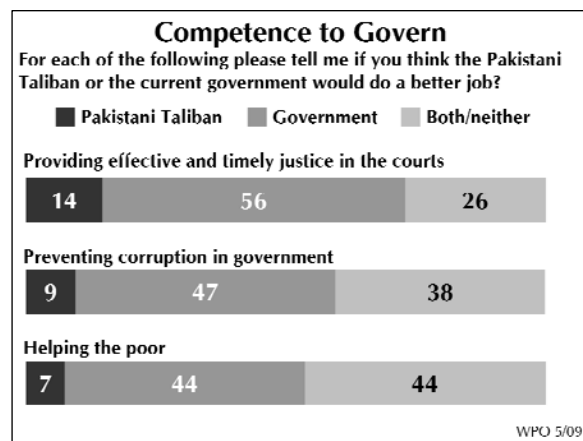
Another key agreement was about the treatment of women and girls. Seventy percent said of respondents said the Taliban would not “allow women to work and girls to attend school” in exchange for a Shari’a court system, as stipulated by the agreement

### 3. Views of the Pakistani Taliban

**Pakistanis show far less confidence in the potential for the Pakistani Taliban to govern effectively than they do for the government, though many also have low confidence in the government. Pakistanis also appear to disagree with the Taliban about the treatment of women and girls, and the meaning of Shari’a in this regard.**

The Pakistani Taliban is not seen as able to compete with the current government on providing justice, curtailing corruption, or ameliorating poverty; however, large numbers also see the Pakistani government as unable to provide these things.

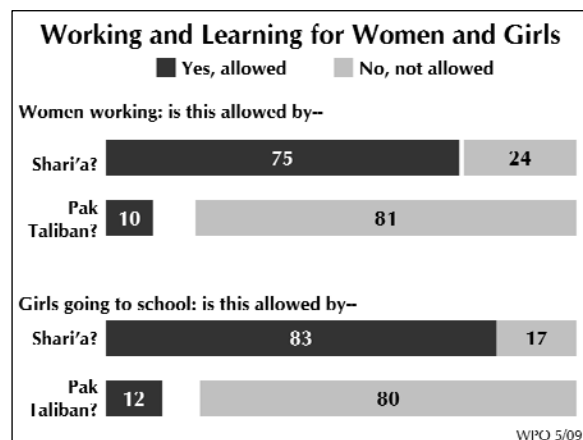
Respondents were asked whether they thought “the Pakistani Taliban or the current government would do a better job of providing effective and timely justice in the courts.” Only 14 percent thought the Pakistani Taliban would do better, while 56 percent thought the government would; however, 26 percent volunteered “both” or “neither.” Asked the same question about “preventing corruption in government,” only 9 percent preferred the Taliban, but fewer than half (47%) preferred the government; a large 38 percent said “both” or “neither.” Finally, respondents were asked the same question about “helping the poor.” Just 7 percent preferred the Taliban; 44 percent preferred the government, but an equal number (44%) said “both” or “neither.”



### Disagreement With Taliban About Treatment of Women and Girls

Respondents were asked whether “when the Pakistani Taliban have control over an area, they will or will not permit” certain activities. Four in five said they will not permit women working (81%) or girls going to school (80%).

Pakistanis appear to disagree with the Taliban’s view on these issues. Asked whether “under Shari’a” women were allowed to work, 75 percent said Shari’a permits women to work. An even larger 83 percent said Shari’a permits girls’ schooling (no, 17%).



Further, 69 percent said the Pakistani Taliban will not permit children being vaccinated (some militant Islamists believe that mass vaccination campaigns are Western plots to sterilize Muslim populations).

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Three in five think it would be bad if the Taliban were to regain power in Afghanistan. An overwhelming majority thinks Afghan Taliban groups fighting to overthrow Afghanistan’s government should not be allowed to have bases in Pakistan. Most do not believe the Afghan Taliban has such bases; but if Pakistan’s government were to identify them, three in four think it should close such bases, even if it requires using military force.

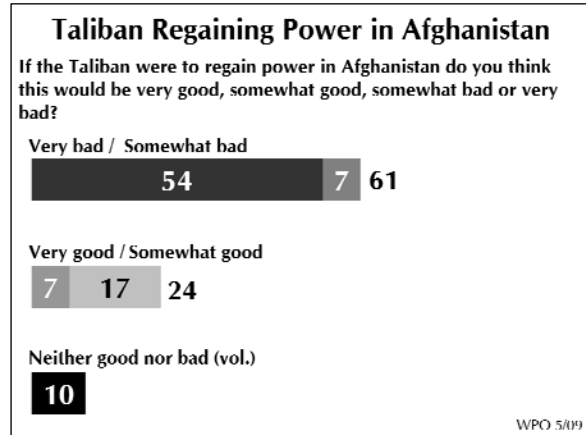
Pakistanis have a negative view of the Afghan Taliban’s efforts to gain power in Afghanistan. Sixty-one percent said that “if the Taliban were to regain power in Afghanistan,” this would be bad; 54 percent called it “very bad.” Twenty-four percent said this would be a good outcome (very, 7%), and another 10 percent volunteered it would be neither good nor bad.

Nearly all Pakistanis say that in principle, the Afghan Taliban should not be allowed to have bases in Pakistan. Eighty-seven percent thought that “Taliban groups who are trying to overthrow the government in Afghanistan” should not “be allowed to have bases in Pakistan”; only 4 percent said such bases should be allowed.

At the same time, most Pakistanis seem unwilling to face the considerable evidence that the Afghan Taliban do operate from sanctuary bases on the Pakistani side of the border. Seventy-seven percent said “that Taliban groups who are trying to overthrow the government in Afghanistan are... not operating from bases in Pakistan”; only 15 percent said that they were.

Pakistanis do seem willing to follow their government if it were to take the lead in clarifying the issue. Asked “If the Pakistani government were to identify bases in Pakistan of Taliban groups who are trying to overthrow the Afghan government, do you think the government should or should not close these bases even if it requires the use of military force?” 78 percent said the government should close such bases; only 13 percent disagreed.

This appears to show a considerable growth in support for Pakistani military action to secure its western border. WPO’s September 2007 poll did find a plurality that favored “allowing the Pakistani army to pursue and capture Taliban insurgents who have crossed over from Afghanistan” —48 to 34 percent—but this support was not at majority levels then.



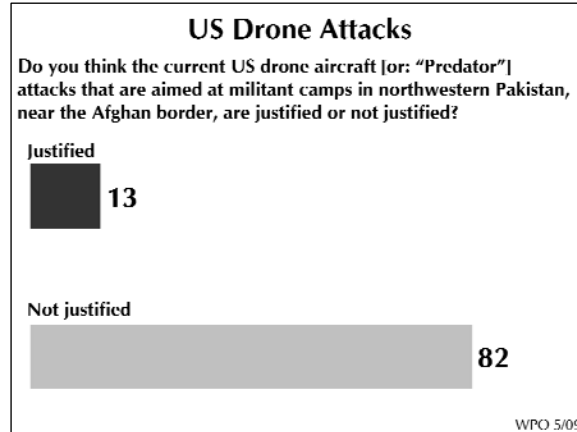
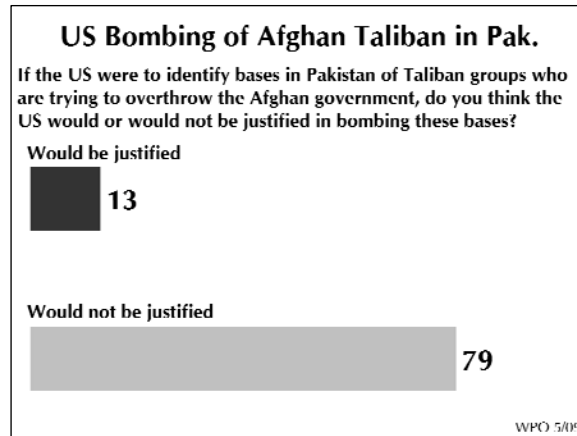
**5. US Military Activity Against Afghan Taliban in Pakistan**

Despite its support for government action against Afghan Taliban bases, Pakistanis overwhelmingly reject US action against such bases. Even more say that current US drone aircraft attacks are not justified.

When the United States is brought into the picture, this overlay gives rise to very different attitudes. Though 78 percent of Pakistanis would support their government if it identified Afghan Taliban bases and moved to close them, this is not the case when the US identifies such bases and attacks them by air. Seventy-nine percent said that the US would not be justified in bombing “bases in Pakistan of Taliban groups who are trying to overthrow the Afghan government,” if it identified such bases.

Further, ongoing operations by Predator drone aircraft are overwhelmingly rejected. Asked about “the current US drone aircraft attacks that strike targets in northwestern Pakistan,” 82 percent called them unjustified; only 13 percent disagreed.

Similarly, in WPO’s September 2007 poll, 77 percent of Pakistanis said the government should not allow “foreign troops to pursue and capture Taliban insurgents who have crossed over from Afghanistan.”



**6. Views of the Operation in Afghanistan**

Almost all Pakistanis disapprove of the Obama administration’s decision to increase US forces in Afghanistan. Very large majorities disapprove of the NATO mission and say it should be ended now.

The recent decision by the Obama administration to send up to 17,000 more US troops to Afghanistan this year is widely rejected in Pakistan. Eighty-six percent said they disapproved of “the Obama administration decid[ing] to increase the number of American troops in Afghanistan.” Only 6 percent approved.

Very large majorities of Pakistanis reject the NATO presence in Afghanistan. Respondents were asked a question that reminded them that the international community, not only the US, originated the military and aid presence in Afghanistan. It read:

As you may know, the UN has authorized a NATO mission in Afghanistan, manned by forces from the US and other countries. This mission is meant to stabilize Afghanistan and help the government defend itself from Taliban insurgents. Do you approve or disapprove of this mission?

Seventy-two percent disapproved of the NATO mission; 18 percent approved.

Asked, “Do you think the NATO mission in Afghanistan should be continued or do you think it should be ended now?” 79 percent said it should be ended now; 13 percent said it should continue.

This level of opposition may be closely related to Pakistanis’ perception that Afghans also want the NATO mission to end. Asked what they thought “most people in Afghanistan” want, 86 percent said “most want NATO forces to leave now.” Among those Pakistanis who hold this belief, 89 percent want the mission ended. However, among the 9 percent who said “most want NATO forces to remain for now,” 71 percent say the troops should remain.



The most recent poll to ask directly about the NATO presence, the ABC/BBC/ARD poll of the Afghan public (conducted in January of this year), found that 63 percent of Afghans approved of the presence of US troops in Afghanistan, while 59 percent approved of the NATO/ISAF forces.

**ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES**

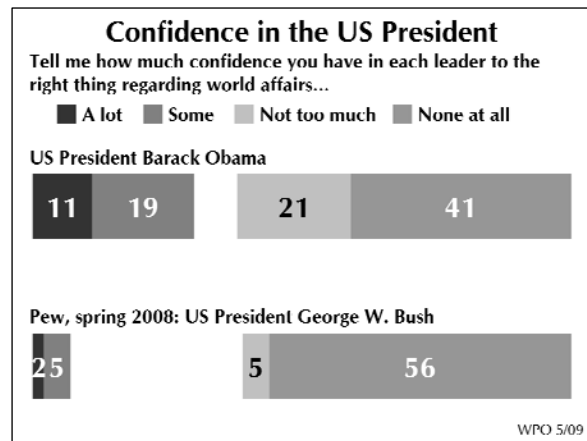
**7. President Obama and US Goals**

**Only one in three Pakistanis express confidence in President Obama or think his policies will be better for Pakistan. Very large majorities still have an unfavorable view of the current US government and think the US is playing a mostly negative role in the world. Very large majorities continue to think the US has hostile goals--to weaken and divide the Islamic world; to impose American culture on Muslim society; and to maintain control over the Middle East’s oil resources. Only a minority thinks it is a US goal to see the creation of a viable Palestinian state. When asked about Obama’s goals, Pakistanis’ views are almost exactly the same as their views of US goals.**

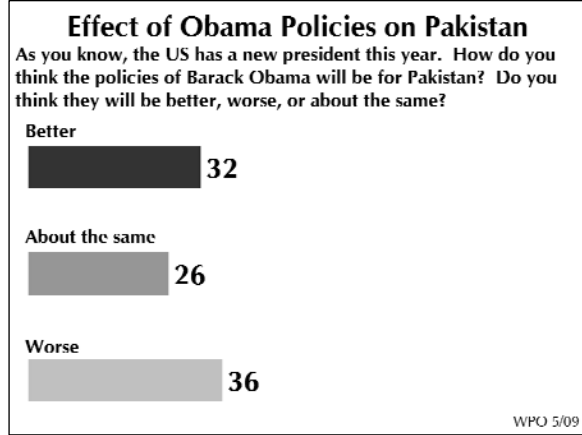
The striking new public willingness to see the government directly oppose Taliban groups and al Qaeda owes little or nothing to an “Obama effect.” While more Pakistanis express confidence in Obama than did in President Bush, the majority expressing a lack of confidence in a US president is the same as with Bush.

When Pakistanis were asked how much confidence they had in Obama “to do the right thing regarding world affairs,” a 62 percent majority expressed low confidence in President Obama. Only 30 percent expressed confidence.

When Pew asked the same question about President Bush in 2008, it found even fewer expressing confidence (7%), but the same number—61 percent—expressing low confidence.



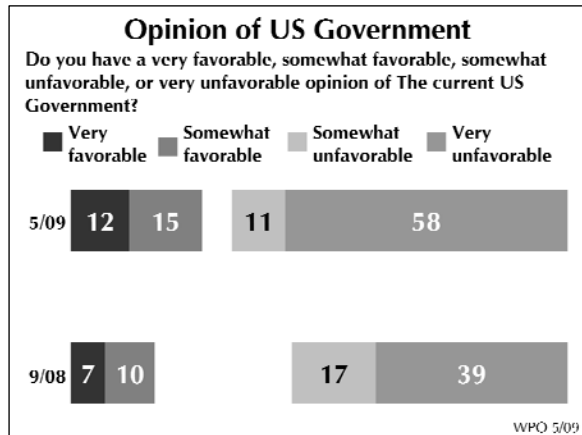
When Pakistanis consider what President Obama’s policies may mean for their country, only one in three expect them to be an improvement. Thirty-two percent said “the policies of Barack Obama” will be better; 36 percent said they would be worse; and 26 percent said they will be about the same. Thus three in five think Obama’s policies mean things will remain as they are, or only get worse, for Pakistan.



It seems possible that some Pakistanis may be a little more intrigued by Obama than they say they are—but doubt that he has real control over US foreign policy and wonder if he is something of a figurehead. To explore this possibility, the study asked how much control respondents thought Obama has over US foreign policy. Most thought he is substantially in charge, with 68 percent saying he has a lot (36%) or some (32%) control and only 26 percent saying he has just a little (22%) or none (4%). Interestingly, those who see Obama as being in charge are more likely to be hopeful. Forty percent of this group think his policies will be better for Pakistan, while among those who think he is not really in charge, only 17 percent think this.

**General Assessments of the US and its Policies**

Views of the United States remain overwhelmingly negative in most regards. Sixty-nine percent feel unfavorably toward “the current US government” (very, 58%). Only 27 percent have a positive view (somewhat, 15%; very, 12%). This is roughly similar to responses in September 2008, when 55 percent were unfavorable and 17 percent favorable (more respondents were willing to answer in the current study).

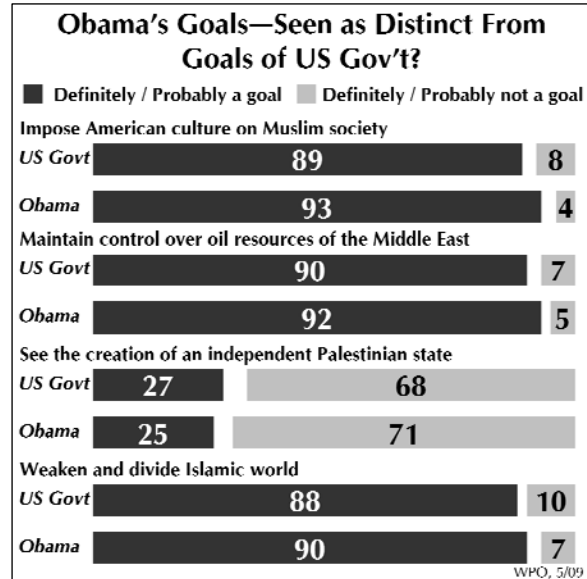


When Pakistanis consider the US as an actor on the world stage, most remain extremely critical. Sixty-nine percent said the US plays a mainly negative role in the world. Only 10 percent said its role is a positive one—though another 20 percent volunteered that it depends (10%) or that its role is neither positive nor negative (10%).

Majorities remain convinced that the goals of US foreign policy are hostile to them. Eighty-eight percent thought it is a US goal to weaken and divide the Islamic world (78% definitely a goal); only 10 percent thought it was not. This is approximately the same as in 2008 (74% a US goal). Similarly, 89 percent thought the US has a goal “to impose American culture on Muslim society” (79% definitely).

In US intentions for the Middle East, Pakistanis seem even more convinced than before of its hostile designs. Ninety percent said it is a US goal to maintain control over the region’s oil resources, up from 62 percent in 2008. On the Israel-Palestinian conflict, 68 percent said it is *not* a US goal to see the creation of an independent, economically viable Palestinian state, up from 27 percent. Those who thought a Palestinian state is a US goal dropped from 36 percent in 2008 to 27 percent.

To probe whether some Pakistanis might see Obama's own goals as distinct from those of the US government, at a different point in the interview respondents were asked whether each of the goals just discussed are Obama's goals or not. Pakistanis' views of Obama's goals did not differ from their views of the goals of US foreign policy. Thus 90 percent thought Obama holds the goal of weakening and dividing the Islamic world; 93 percent that it is his goal to impose American culture on Muslim society; 92 percent that he has the goal of maintaining control over all the Middle East's oil resources; and only 25 percent that he wants to see the creation of a Palestinian state.



Large majorities are critical of what they see as a disproportionate use of American power in the US-Pakistan relationship. Asked, "In our government's relations with the US, do you think the US more often treats us fairly, or abuses its greater power to make us do what the US wants?" an overwhelming 90 percent said that more often, the US abuses its greater power.

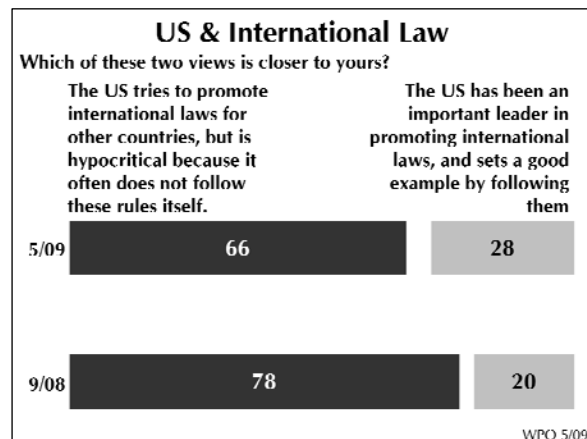
the US more often treats us fairly, or abuses its greater power to make us do what the US wants?" an overwhelming 90 percent said that more often, the US abuses its greater power.

Attitudes are little less lopsided when Pakistanis think about the US's efforts to promote international law and have shown some signs of moderation. Respondents were asked to choose between two statements:

--The US has been an important leader in promoting international laws, and sets a good example by following them.

or

--The US tries to promote international laws for other countries, but is hypocritical because it often does not follow these rules itself.



A relatively moderate two thirds (66%) took the critical view of the US—down from 78 percent in 2008. A significant minority chose the statement praising the US: 28 percent said the US was an important leader on this issue and sets a good example.

Most Pakistanis think that the US's attitude toward democracy in the Islamic world is conditional at best. Respondents were offered three alternatives:

--The US favors democracy in Muslim countries whether or not the government is cooperative with the US.

--The US favors democracy in Muslim countries, but only if the government is cooperative with the US.

--The US opposes democracy in Muslim countries.

Three in five (60%) thought the US favors democracy only if the government is cooperative—up from 36 percent in 2008, when it was also the most common response. A quarter (25%) said the US

simply opposes democracy in Muslim countries—the same number as thought so in 2008. Only 7 percent said the US favors democracy unconditionally (10% in 2008). More respondents were willing to answer the question than before, but only the “conditional” view of the US’s approach increased.

The US is perceived as showing a disrespect toward Muslim countries that a majority think is purposeful. Given three options, only 7 percent said “the US mostly shows respect to the Islamic world” (unchanged from 2008). A substantial one in three (34%) said this is not intentional: “The US is often disrespectful to the Islamic world, but out of ignorance and insensitivity” (up from 22%). However, a 55 percent majority thought “the US purposely tries to humiliate the Islamic world” (2008: 52%). Thus an image of US actions toward Muslim countries as maliciously inspired seems entrenched as a majority belief.

**VIEWS OF AL QAEDA**

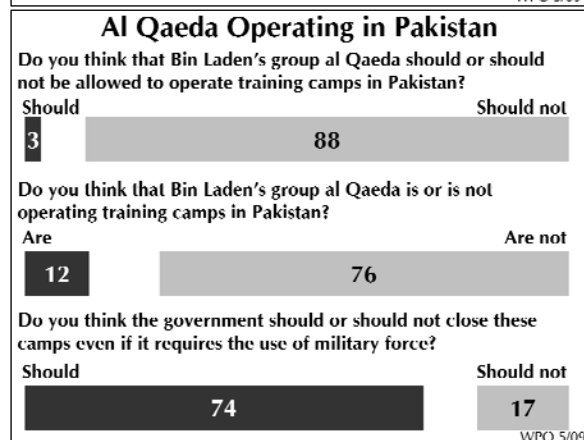
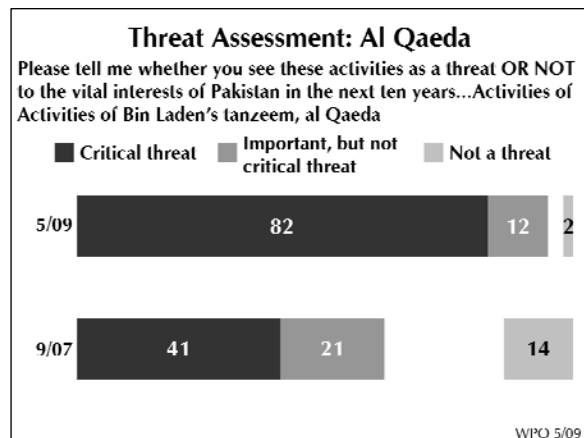
**8. Perceptions of Al Qaeda as a Threat**

A very large majority now looks on al Qaeda as a critical threat to Pakistan—a major increase from a year and a half ago. An overwhelming majority thinks al Qaeda should not be allowed to run training camps in Pakistan. Most do not believe al Qaeda has such camps; but if Pakistan’s government were to identify them, three in four think it should close them down, even if this requires using military force. However, views of al Qaeda per se are only moderately negative, and views of Bin Laden are mixed overall. A majority thinks al Qaeda does not favor democracy as a system of government.

There has been a major shift in Pakistani opinion toward al Qaeda--so far as it regards Pakistan itself. In late 2007, 41 percent saw al Qaeda’s activities as a critical threat to the vital interests of Pakistan in the next ten years; 21 percent called these activities an important, but not critical threat; and 14 percent said they were not a threat. In the current study, 82 percent called al Qaeda’s activities a critical threat to Pakistan—a 41 percent increase. Twelve percent said al Qaeda was an important, but not critical threat; only 2 percent said it was not a threat.

An overwhelming majority (88%) thinks al Qaeda should not be allowed to run training camps in Pakistan. Only 3 percent thought they should be allowed. However, most (76%) think al Qaeda is not operating training camps in Pakistan. Nonetheless, if the Pakistani government were to identify al Qaeda training camps in Pakistan, 74 percent said the government should close them down even if it requires use of military force. Seventeen percent disagreed.

This appears to show a considerable shift in attitudes from 18 months ago. For comparison, in



WPO's September 2007 poll, 44 percent favored "the Pakistani army entering federally administered tribal areas to pursue and capture al Qaeda fighters," while 36 percent were opposed.

Pakistanis' general views of al Qaeda lean distinctly negative, but their views of Osama bin Laden do not. Forty-five percent said they had negative feelings toward al Qaeda (22% very), 27 percent had positive feelings (5% very), and 16 percent expressed mixed feelings. When asked the same question, but about bin Laden, 33 percent had negative feelings (15% very) and 23 percent positive feelings (9% very), while a larger 32 percent expressed mixed feelings. Negative feelings toward bin Laden have increased somewhat—up 20 points since 2008—while positive feelings are unchanged.

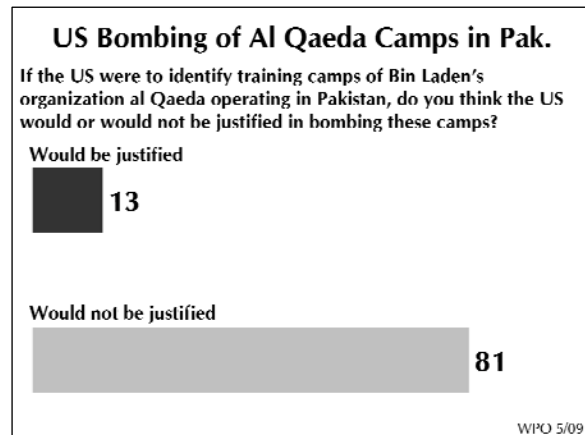
To better understand the image of al Qaeda in the Pakistani public mind, respondents were asked about al Qaeda's notions of governance: "Do you think al Qaeda favors democracy, or do you think it favors some other system of government?" Only 7 percent said al Qaeda favors democracy, and a clear majority (59%) said al Qaeda favors some other system (34% did not give a response).

Those who thought al Qaeda favors a system other than democracy were also asked: "Do you have a mostly positive or mostly negative view of the governmental system al Qaeda favors?" Only 11 percent of the full sample had a positive view and 27 percent had a negative view (21% said "neither" or had no opinion).

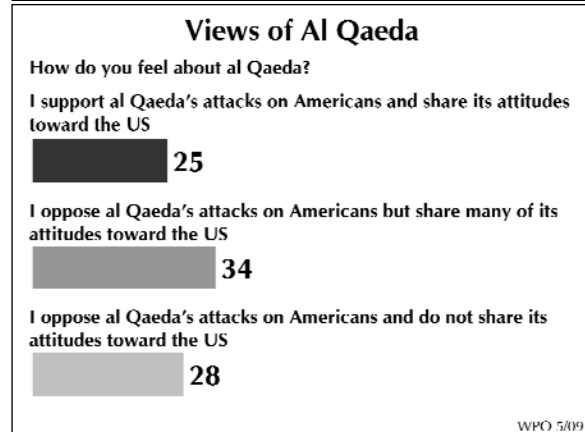
### **9. Al Qaeda and the US**

**Despite the negative views of al Qaeda, a very large majority says that were the US to identify al Qaeda camps in Pakistan, it would still not be justified in bombing them. In general, while a majority opposes al Qaeda's attacks on Americans, a majority says they share many of al Qaeda's attitudes toward the US.**

Even if the US were to identify al Qaeda training camps operating in Pakistan, four in five Pakistanis do not think it would be justified for the US to bomb such camps. Eighty-one percent rejected this, while only 13 percent said it would be justified. Similarly, in WPO's 2007 poll, 80 percent said "the Pakistan government should not allow American or other foreign troops to enter Pakistan to pursue and capture al Qaeda fighters"; only 5 percent thought their government should permit it.



In general, while a majority opposes al Qaeda's attacks on Americans, a majority says they share many of al Qaeda's attitudes toward the US. Offered three alternatives, a quarter of Pakistanis (25%) say they support al Qaeda's attacks on Americans and share many of its attitudes toward the US. A slightly larger number (28%) reject both al Qaeda's attacks on Americans and oppose its views of the US. However, a third (34%) say that on one hand they oppose al Qaeda's attacks, but on the other share many of al Qaeda's attitudes



toward the US. Thus 59 percent say they share many of al Qaeda’s attitudes toward the US.

This is proportionate to past responses to the same question—though more have been willing to answer in each succeeding year. Thus those supporting attacks and sharing the attitudes have gone from 10 percent (2007) to 16 percent (2008) to 25 percent, while those opposing both attacks and attitudes have gone from 16 percent to 22 percent to 28 percent.

**EVALUATIONS OF NATIONAL LEADERS**

**10. Leaders in Government, in the Opposition, and in Religious Militant Groups**

A large majority views President Zardari unfavorably, but there are multiple national leaders whom most view favorably. Prime Minister Gilani is apparently not tarred by negative views of Zardari and gets favorable ratings from three in four Pakistanis. The restored Chief Justice Chaudry is very popular, and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif extremely popular. The leader most associated with the Pakistani Taliban, Maulana Sufi Mohammad, is rejected by three in four Pakistanis.

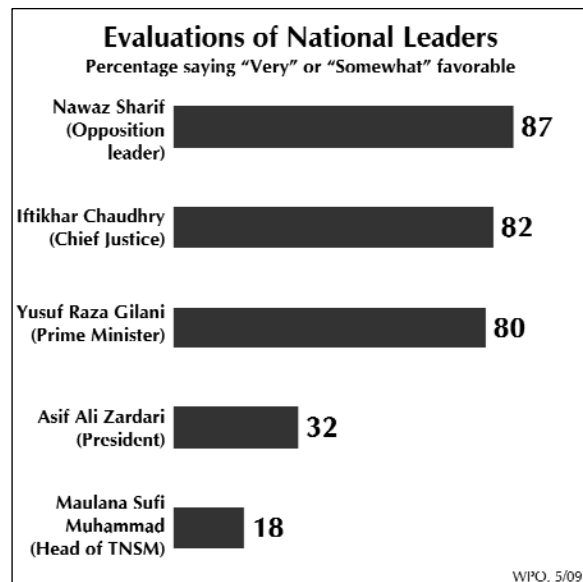
Respondents were asked “Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the following leaders,” and replied to a list of five prominent figures. President Asif Ali Zardari did not fare well, with 68 percent viewing him unfavorably (50% very), and 32 percent favorably (12% very). This is largely unchanged from the International Republican Institute’s March 2009 poll, when 72 percent had a negative view of Zardari and 67 percent said they “disapprove of the job the President is doing.”

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, however, appears to have widespread support, with 80 percent viewing him favorably (33% very) and 20 percent unfavorably. In March IRI found Gilani’s popularity on the upswing, rising from 19 percent (in October 2008) to 33 percent. IRI noted in March that Gilani was the most popular of all his party’s leaders tested.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudry is also very popular, with 82 percent viewing him favorably (39% very). In March, IRI found that positive views of Chaudry had risen from 24 percent in October 2008 up to 54 percent. This rise appears to have continued at least through May.

The opposition leader Nawaz Sharif has very wide appeal, with 87 percent holding a favorable view of him (60% very). He was the most popular figure in the current study, as he was in IRI’s March poll, which found positive views had risen from 60 percent in October 2008 to 75 percent.

The leader most associated with the Pakistani Taliban, Maulana Sufi Mohammad, is rejected by three in four Pakistanis. Seventy-five percent viewed him unfavorably, and only 18 percent favorably. In March IRI found that 58 percent of Pakistanis viewed him negatively and 12 percent positively.





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