

# **The Drone War: Pakistani Public Attitudes toward American Drone Strikes in Pakistan**

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The use of American unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVS), aka, drones, to attack targets in Pakistan has become a source of great controversy in Pakistan. There have been public protests against the drones, the Pakistani parliament has debated the issue and is trying to curtail the use of drones by the United States against targets in Pakistan. The Pakistani government has even forced the US to close an airbase that has been used to launch drone attacks against Pakistani targets. As the United States and Pakistan continue to engage in the process of “re-setting” their relationship after the accidental killing of 24 Pakistani servicemen by US forces in November of 2011 and the raid that ended in Osama bin Laden’s killing in May 2011, the issue of drone strikes is at the center of that discussion. The drone strikes have become a very charged political issue in Pakistan and are of central concern to American policy-makers because of their importance to American strategy in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater of operations.

One of the major reasons why the drone strikes have become such a salient issue among so much of the Pakistani general public is that there is a large amount of media coverage of the drone issue. The killing of major Al Qaeda, Pakistani or Afghan Taliban figures gets regular coverage in the Pakistani print media (such as the newspapers *Dawn* in English and *Jang* in Urdu), as well as television and radio. But the collateral damage from drone strikes also gets major play in the Pakistani media outlets. Scenes of destroyed vehicles, houses, and the bodies of people killed in the strikes are frequent sights on Pakistani television. These visual images (or stories in the newspapers) are often accompanied by interviews with villagers professing the innocence of those who were killed and claiming a high toll among woman and children. TV channels, such as Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) and GEO TV, frequently show footage of the effects of drone strikes and subsequent outrage. This media coverage has made the drone strikes a very highly charged issue among many Pakistanis.

We know from a recent (2010) Pew Global Attitudes Project poll that the drone strikes are fairly unpopular among Pakistanis. They are not universally unpopular, but they tend to be viewed more negatively than they are viewed positively. Table one shows the breakdown of Pakistani attitudes toward drone strikes

in 2010. The question asked was: *Please tell me whether you support or oppose the United States conducting drone attacks in conjunction with the Pakistani government against the leaders of extremist groups.*

Table One about here

As we can see in the table, the majority of Pakistani respondents (across the whole country) are opposed to the drone strikes, with nearly 60% opposed to 40% in favor (among those who answered the question with an opinion). A minority, albeit a significant minority, views the drone strikes as positive.

When one examines opinions across the various provinces of Pakistan, it is obvious that the pattern of opinion holds fairly consistently. Support for the drone strikes range from 43% in Punjab to 36% in Sind. Opposition to the drone strikes ranges from 64% in Sind to 57% in Punjab. Thus, of the Pakistanis polled, Punjabis are the most support of the drone strikes in the FATA. Sindis are the most opposed to the drone strikes. But overall, the provincial differences in support or opposition to drone strikes are not very significant and do not reveal any telling patterns of how particular regions of Pakistan outside of the FATA differ over how the drone strikes affect them.

The 2010 Pew survey allows us to view some of the attitudes that surround the topic of the drone strikes. There are series of questions included in the survey instrument that focus on knowledge of the drone strikes, the necessity of the strikes, their perceived toll on innocent civilians, and the degree to which the Pakistani government is giving assent to the American drone strikes. Table Two shows the results of answers to these questions both across Pakistan and then by province.

Table Two about here

The first question to examine is: *How much, if anything, have you heard about the drone attacks that target leaders of extremist groups—a lot, little, or nothing at all?* This is the gateway question to the questions about the merits and drawbacks of the drone strikes. If a respondent answers *nothing at all*, they are not asked the immediate subsequent questions about the drone strikes. If they answer, *a lot* or *a little*, they are asked what

they think about the drone strikes. Of the 2000 people asked this question, 767 answered that they had heard *a lot* or *a little* about the drone strikes were asked the follow-up questions.

The first follow-up question was: *For each of the following statements about the drone attacks, please tell me whether you agree or disagree: They are necessary to defend Pakistan from extremist groups.* The average of responses among Pakistanis was that 37% agreed with this statement and 63% disagreed with this statement. Thus, a very similar pattern emerges compared to the aforementioned question about support and opposition to drone strikes. In terms of the breakdown by provinces, the pattern is not the same as with the support/opposition question. Punjabis agreed the least that the attacks were necessary (33%) and Balochis agreed the most (50%). One must be wary of the significance of the Balochistan results as the N there was only 8. Balochistan is a very sparsely populated province with a very scattered population. The small sample there creates significant problems surveying and the results must be viewed with that in mind.

The next question in the series was concerned with collateral damage. It asks: *For each of the following statements about the drone attacks, please tell me whether you agree or disagree: They kill too many innocent people.* This question elicited very strong responses in favor of the assertion that the drone strikes kill too many innocents. The Pakistani average response to this question was 95% who agreed that the strikes killed too many innocents. Only 5% believed that they did not kill too many innocents. Across the provinces, the pattern of responses holds. The range of provincial averages go from 92% of Sindhis who think that too many innocents are killed to Balochistan, where 100% of respondents said too many innocents are killed by drone strikes. Clearly, Pakistanis very much believe that the drone strikes carry a very heavy price of innocent lives.

The final question in the series on drone strikes asked: *For each of the following statements about the drone attacks, please tell me whether you agree or disagree: They are being done without the approval of the Pakistani government.* The responses to this question show that Pakistanis are much less united on what they think about this. The Pakistani average is 56% agree that the drone strikes are carried out without the approval of the Pakistan and 44% disagree that the drone strikes are carried out without the approval of the government. This differs significantly across the provinces. While in Punjab, 64% agree that the strikes are carried out without the

approval of the Pakistani government, in the other provinces, the majority believe that the strikes are done with the approval of the Pakistani government.

Thus, overall, the questions about the drone strikes show that Pakistanis are somewhat more opposed to the drone strikes than favor them, they think they kill too many innocent people, and slightly more convinced, on the average, that the Pakistani government does not approve of the strikes.

Another important aspect of the responses to the question about the drone strikes is the large DK/NR rate. Many Pakistanis chose not to respond to the question about the drone strikes. This was either because they did not know about the drone strikes or chose not to respond to the question for other reasons. Because of the way the responses are coded, we do not know which respondents genuinely did not know about the strikes and which simply did not to answer. We may surmise that a very large percentage of the DK/NRs did not answer the question because they were concerned about answering a question about such a sensitive issue of national security. It is quite possible that they did not want to take what they perceived to be the risk of answering a question that could get them into trouble. Since many Pakistanis believe that the drone strikes are sanctioned by their civilian leaders and the powerful Pakistani army, one may posit that many of the DK/NRs are probably individuals who did not want to answer that they opposed the strikes for fear of coming down on the wrong side of the Pakistani authorities. The easiest way to deal with this is to simply not answer the question.

So what motivates Pakistanis to oppose the drone strikes? Why do some Pakistanis support the drone strikes? What can we say empirically about those Pakistanis that refrained from offering an answer to the question? This paper is devoted to answering these questions. The paper will explore the individual-level factors that account for the variation in how Pakistanis think about drone strikes.

The paper uses data from a 2010 survey conducted in Pakistan's four provinces, Punjab, Sind, Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP, now known as Kybher Paktunkwa), and Balochistan. For security reasons, the survey was not fielded in the FATA of Pakistan.

We argue that the primary opposition to the drone strikes will come from those Pakistanis who are opposed to the United States in general because they view the United States as the enemy. This image of the U.S. as the enemy is driven largely by a militant religiosity that views the U.S. at war with Islam. This militant religiosity means that many Pakistanis' core religious values have been used to create very adversarial image of the United States that will likely be very difficult to alter.

## **The Drone Strikes**

The American use of UAVs to attack targets in Pakistan began in 2004. Originally drones, such as the Predator, had been designed to be reconnaissance aircraft that linger over territory for long periods of time and send back real-time imagery to whoever was controlling them from a remote location. But in the early 2000s, the idea surfaced to arm the Predator drone with missiles so that it could engage and destroy ground targets as they presented themselves or to send the drones on specific missions to take out particular targets.

This was a campaign of targeting killing that quickly became controversial. A series of objections were raised from various groups and individuals to the idea of using targeted killings, with a fairly high probability of collateral damage, instead of using law enforcement techniques. A common argument went: "If we are not at war with the people, how can we justifiably kill them?" (see Brunstetter and Braun 2011; Davies 2009; Hoffman 2004; Lowe 2005; Vogel 2010)

The advantages of using UAVs in some theaters of operation have become very clear. Not only could drones linger over an area much longer than manned aircraft, they were much cheaper, largely undetectable by the enemy, did not risk the life of a pilot, and could direct precision weapons on targets with amazing accuracy. In operations where targets often did not stay in one place long amounts of time, it was very useful to have a weapons-platform that could be in the area, spot the target when he appeared and then engage the target if the operator was cleared to do so. All of this could be done with the human operator safely out of harm's way, perhaps several thousand miles away (Khan 2011).

Another important advantage of using drones is that precision strikes on high-value militants can be achieved without having to introduce troops into the air to capture or kill the targeted individual. This is particularly an issue in Pakistan, where there is very high public sensitivity to the issue of American troops on Pakistani soil. While American drone attacks may aggravate many Pakistanis as infringement of Pakistani airspace and therefore sovereignty, they are much less of a salient footprint compared to US forces coming into Pakistan to kill or capture targeted militants. One need only think about the Pakistani reaction to the raid to kill Osama Bin Laden as to how sensitive Pakistanis are to the issue of foreign troops on their soil engaging in military operations, particularly if those operations are not done with the cooperation of the Pakistani authorities, civilian or military. Drones are a way to dampen the anger, if not by much.

The U.S. drone program in Pakistan has been run by the CIA and the US Air Force. The CIA program is the much bigger of the two drone programs (Williams 2010). The drones are flown out of locations close to the areas where militants are targeted, such as Shamsi Air Base in Pakistan until November 2011, but the drones are controlled from the United States. While the CIA has not disclosed where it has its drone control operations, it is assumed by many to be at Langley, Virginia, the site of the CIA's headquarters, or areas in the proximity to Langley (Williams 2010).

The drone strikes in Pakistan are concentrated overwhelmingly in the Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Almost all of the strikes have been in South Waziristan and North Waziristan. According to statistics collected by Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann of the New America Foundation, 73% of the drone strikes have been conducted in South Waziristan and 27% in North Waziristan (Bergen and Tiedemann 2010). These areas are targeted because they are Pashtun tribal areas, where the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, various Pakistani jihadi groups, Al Qaeda, as well as other foreign jihadi militants have sought refuge and use FATA to stage operations in Afghanistan and into Pakistan proper. So a major reason that these areas are targeted is because that is where the militants are concentrated (see Bergen and Tiedemann 2010).

Another major reason why North and South Waziristan have been the loci of the drone strikes is that these tribal regions are only nominally part of Pakistan and are not considered Pakistan proper. They have traditionally been outside the writ of Pakistani law and government control and so drone strikes there are not viewed the same way as a drone strike within one of the provinces of Pakistan. Some of the militants of interest to the United States are located elsewhere in Pakistan. For example, the Afghan Taliban leadership is concentrated in Quetta, in Baluchistan, which is in a province in Pakistan proper. While the US would very much like to use drone strikes against the Taliban *Shura* located in Quetta, it would be crossing a very important political line by attacking a target within Pakistan proper. It would certainly inflame the Pakistani population more than it is now.

The US drone program has not been consistent in terms of the number of attacks over the years. In fact between 2004, when the attacks began, and 2007, there were only 9 attacks. Thus, the Bush administration became slowly convinced that the use of drone attacks was a major way to defeat the militant enemies of the United States seeking haven in FATA. In 2008, there were 33 drone strikes, a major increase over previous years. When Obama became president, the drone strikes increased substantially, as Obama emphasized defeating Al Qaeda as a centerpiece of his administration's strategic plans. In 2009 there were 53 drone strikes, in 2010, the "year of the drone," there were 118 drone attacks, and in 2011, there were 70 drone attacks (Bergen and Tiedemann 2010; The New America Foundation 2012). Drone attacks were suspended between November 2011 and January 2012 because of the killing of 24 Pakistani troops on the Pakistani-Afghan border by NATO aircraft, a matter of huge public fury within Pakistan. The drone attacks have resumed since January 2012, although at a lesser frequency than previously (The New America Foundation 2012).

One of the key sources of public controversy in Pakistan over the drone strikes is who is being killed in the attacks. There have been wildly different estimates offered over how many civilians have been killed relative to militants. Daniel Byman of the Brookings Institute, has estimated that 10 civilians have been killed for every militant killed (Byman 2009). The CIA has released a statement saying that not a single civilian has

been killed since 2009. The New American Foundation, in a very thorough analysis of accounts of drone strikes found that between 2004 and 2010, drone strikes killed between 830 and 1,210 individuals, of who 550 to 850 were civilians. Thus, in that time period, there was a civilian fatality rate of about 32%.

The numbers of who is being killed in the drone strikes has raised two major issues among those observing the drone strike issue: the efficacy of drone strikes and their legality. According to Bergen and Tiedemann (2011) only one in seven of US drone strikes kills a militant leader and less than two percent of the attacks have resulted in the deaths of Al Qaeda or other militant group leaders. As the number of strikes increased under Obama, the number of low-ranking militants being killed, as well as civilians, increased. Thus, Bergen and Tiedemann (2011) argue that the drone strikes are not damaging the insurgencies in Pakistan or Afghanistan. In fact, they assert, the strikes are counterproductive. The strikes alienate the local population and encourage recruitment into the ranks of the militants. Hudson, Owens, and Flannes (2011) echo the view that the drone strikes are alienating the Pakistani population and therefore destabilizing Pakistan. Khan (2011) points to the drone strikes as serving as an impetus for revenge on the part of those who have been hurt by the attacks. The strikes have encouraged attempts at terrorist attacks within the United States. A prominent example of this is the attempted attack on Times Square by Pakistani-American Shahzad. Others, such as O'Loughlin, Witmer, and Linke (2010) have argued that the drone strikes are driving militants out of the tribal areas and into major cities, which is causing a concomitant rise in violence with the interior of Pakistan. Bergen and Tiedemann (2011) pointed out, in a similar fashion, that as drone strikes have risen, so has militant violence. There were 150 terrorist incidents in 2004 and 1,916 in 2009.

Satia (2009) has argued that the drone attacks create blowback for the United States by reminding Pakistanis of the British aerial bombardment campaigns against restive tribals before independence. The drone campaign creates a sense that colonial domination is once again happening. The Taliban thus gain legitimacy as a force opposing the new colonization of Pakistan.

Others counter that the drone strikes have been cast in too harsh a light and that there benefits to the attacks. Johnston and Sabahi (2011) have done empirical research that seems to show that drone strikes have

curtailed terrorist activities in the FATA. The higher the incidence of drone attacks, the lower the incidence of militant attacks, particularly improvised explosive devices (IED) and suicide attacks.

Some Pakistani scholars have argued that while drone strikes may inflame anti-American sentiment in the interior of Pakistan, the situation in FATA, where the drone strikes are occurring, is very different. In a 2009 survey carried out by the Aryana Institute of Regional Research and Advocacy indicates that the drone strikes enjoyed public support in the FATA. The survey showed that 58% did not believe that the drone strikes caused anti-Americanism. Some 52% of the respondents believed that the strikes were accurate. And very importantly, 70% of the respondents felt that the Pakistani state should carry out strikes of their own against the militants in FATA (Aryana Institute of Regional Research and Advocacy 2009). Thus, there seems to be a salient difference, between the views of people in FATA itself, who experience the strikes and the terrorism first hand, and those in the interior of Pakistan who do experience much of either.

But the drone strikes and the civilian deaths associated with them have been a matter of great controversy in the Pakistani public. Previous polls in Pakistan, such a 2009 Gallup Poll, showed only 9% of respondents approved of the drone strikes in their country (cited in Bergen and Tiedemann 2010). The Pakistani government, reacting largely to the perceived public outrage over the drone strikes, has publically condemned the strikes (*Dawn* "Pakistan Lodges Protest against US Attack" 4/14/11.). There is movement among Pakistani civilian and military officials to gain much greater control over the drone strikes if not phase them out altogether (*Dawn* "Resumption of Attacks: Senators Want US Drones Shot Down" 1/18/12). While the Pakistani authorities benefit from drone attacks on the Pakistani Taliban and foreign militants who are threatening to the Pakistani state, the perception of public outrage over the US drone strikes is such that to not try to curtail the drone strikes is to appear to be weak and lap-dogs of the United States. Neither the civilian or military authorities in Pakistan believe that they can appear to be in a situation where they have forfeited Pakistani sovereignty. Thus, the issue of the drone strikes has become perhaps *the* central public issue of US-Pakistani cooperation in the battle with militancy in the Afghanistan/Pakistan area of operations.

So clearly Pakistani public opinion on the issue of US drone strikes in Pakistan matters. We know that the Pakistani public is largely opposed to drone strikes, although not universally. Pakistani public opinion is constraining and, to a degree, driving what Pakistani authorities can do to cooperate with the United States to fight terrorism and militancy in South West Asia. Thus, it is crucially important to understand what is driving the Pakistani public opinion toward the drone strikes because of the centrality of that opinion to the politics of the matter. Who opposes the strikes and who supports them? What motivates their positions on the issue? The rest of paper is devoted to answering this question.

### **The Potential Sources of Pakistani Attitudes toward US Drone Strikes in Pakistan**

There are several possible ways to explain support and opposition among Pakistanis to US drone strikes in the country. There is likely no one single factor that will drive opposition or support for US drone strikes in Pakistan. In the sections to follow, we offer possible explanations of the variation in Pakistanis' attitudes toward the American use of UAVs to kill militants in Pakistan.

#### *Views on the United States*

One of the most obvious reasons why Pakistanis may support or oppose US drone strikes may be their views on the United States. If a Pakistani trusts and has a favorable view toward the United States, then that Pakistani is likely to look more favorably toward the drone strikes. A Pakistani who believes that what the United States is doing in Pakistan is born out of good intentions will be more likely to believe that the drone strikes are a good thing and are necessary. Simply put, a good country does good things and a bad country does bad things. Thus a Pakistani who is anti-American is more likely to oppose the drone strikes because she would believe the attacks for a malevolent purpose.

### *Media Exposure*

As mentioned earlier, the US drone strikes are matter of substantial controversy in Pakistan. They are heavily covered in the media and the coverage is typically negative. The coverage tends to stress the civilian casualties in attacks over the militants killed. Thus, Pakistani media coverage of the attacks tends to cast them in a very negative light. So, someone who is more exposed to that media coverage is either 1.) convinced the attacks are wrong and looks to the media coverage to support that view, or 2.) is intrigued by the issue and is being saturated with negative message about the attacks. In either case, a Pakistani who has more coverage to the media is more likely to be opposed to the drone strikes than someone who has less exposure to media sources.

### *Trust in Elites*

Another factor that may play an important role in whether Pakistanis oppose or favor US drone strikes in the FATA is the degree to which a Pakistani trusts their own elites. Elites are often important sources of information and cues for the general public, which may not have much information on the subject matter or may depend on elites for positions on issues to simplify matters for them and reduce information search costs (Foyle 1997; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Zaller 1990; 1992).

Some elites are viewed as favorable toward the US drone program, whereas others are viewed as opposed to the drone program. Depending on which elites Pakistanis trust may determine if Pakistanis have positive or negative views on the drone program.

Elites who are likely viewed as being favorable toward the drone program would be the civilian leadership of Pakistan as well as the military. The logic behind this assertion is that many Pakistanis likely assume that their government is aware of the drone strikes before they happen and even approve of them, despite the publically critical remarks. As many of the militants killed are enemies of the Pakistani state, namely the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), many Pakistanis must believe that the US is cooperating with Pakistani authorities to target these individuals. Thus, if Pakistanis trust their own government to do the right thing,

then they would have greater trust in the US drone campaign, as they would assume that is sanctioned by their government.

Since the authority to deal with military and security affairs in Pakistan is mostly controlled by the Pakistani military and only somewhat controlled by the civilian authorities, one must think about Pakistanis in terms of their trust in both the military and the civilian government when it comes to supporting/opposing drone strikes. We would hypothesize that those Pakistanis that have trust in both their civilian government and their military are more likely to be supportive of the US drone strikes.

But there are elites that are likely to be viewed as deeply opposed to the drone strikes. Religious elites would fall into this category. Many religious leaders in Pakistan have called for an end to the drone strikes and cooperation with the US, in general, in the war on terror. The coalition of religious parties that make up the Islamist block in the Pakistani parliament, the Difa-e-Pakistan, regularly condemns the drone strikes and call for them to end.

Another group of elites who have been forceful critics of the US drone strikes have been prominent figures in the Pakistani media. Media commentators have frequently used their “bully pulpit” to criticize the drone program and the civilian casualties that it causes. Thus, the Pakistani media, which has definite populist bent for the most part, has been very critical of UAV attacks in the FATA.

Thus, as opposed to those who trust the government or the military, we surmise that those who trust Pakistani religious figures and/or the media will be more likely to oppose the US drone strikes than those who do not trust religious leaders or the media.

### *Support for Militancy*

The targets of the US drone strikes have been militants of various stripes who are viewed as enemies of US interests. Thus, it would follow, if a Pakistani opposed the militants who are operating out of the FATA, she would be more likely to be supportive of the US drone strikes than a Pakistani who supported the militants. A Pakistani may be opposed to a militant group or support it for reasons that may not have to do

with religion. It cannot be assumed that everyone who supports the Afghan Taliban or Al Qaeda ascribes to their extreme Deobandi or Wahabbi/salafi jihadi views. Pakistanis may support the Afghan Taliban because they view them as an important strategic asset to protect Pakistan from an Indian-controlled Afghanistan. A Pakistani may support Al Qaeda because Al Qaeda is means to give the United States a bloody nose, and that person may have no interest in living under an Al Qaeda regime and all that would entail.

While there are a plethora of militant groups that have taken refuge in the FATA, the most high-profile groups are the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, and Al Qaeda. A Pakistani who is more favorable toward any or all of these groups would be more likely to be opposed to the drone strikes than a Pakistani who looked with disfavor toward any or all of the aforementioned groups.

### *Religious Extremism*

One of the key issues facing Pakistan today is the rise of an extremist variant of Islam, strongly influenced by radical salafi clerics. While there are many forms of salafism, including those that abhor violence and stress the non-violent aspects of the Prophet's life when they think about the perfect model of Islam, there is also a variant of salafi Islam that focuses on the punitive measures prescribed by some more hard-line interpretations of the sharia (such as the Hanbali school). The growth in numbers of Pakistanis who now adhere to the harsher interpretations of Islam has been marked in recent years and is evidenced by such things as public support for Pakistan's draconian blasphemy law and the assassinations of religious liberals.

Groups such as Jammāt-e-Islami, Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan, and Jamiat Ahle Hadith, which are all salient political/religious parties in Pakistan, encourage followers to believe in a severe interpretation of Islam, with an emphasis on punishment for wrongdoers and unbelievers. The followers of the more hard-line religious views would self-identify as fundamentalists and would be in favor of such measures as the death penalty for apostates (people who renounce Islam). These groups propagate the view that the United States is at war with Islam and that groups such as Al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and the Pakistani Taliban are righteous fighters trying to protect Islam.

Thus, we would posit that those individuals who share the beliefs of these hard-line Islamist groups will be more likely opposed to US drone strikes in Pakistan as they would view the US as an enemy of Islam and the strikes as attacks against pious Muslims. On the other hand, those Pakistanis who do not hold the more hard-line religious views would be more likely to support the drone strikes.

### **Modeling Opposition to US Drone Strikes in Pakistan**

This study uses a multinomial logit model to help explain opposition to US drone strikes in Pakistan. The model tests hypotheses related to respondents' attitudes toward the United States, various Pakistani authorities, militant groups, religious beliefs, and their exposure to various types of media. The data came from the 2010 Pew Global Attitudes Survey. It collected a sample of 2000 Pakistanis views on a range of issues. Because of missing cases resulting from some questions, we used a sample of 582 Pakistani respondents.

The dependent variable that we use in this analysis is a question that asks: *Now I'm going to ask you a list of things that the United States might do to combat extremist groups in Pakistan. For each one, please tell me whether you would support or oppose it.* The respondent is then offered: *Conducting drone attacks in conjunction with the Pakistani government against leaders of extremist groups.* The respondent is then offered the choice of: support, oppose, don't know, or refused.

The independent variables are operationalized in the following manner. The anti-Americanism argument is operationalized using four different variables. The first is straightforward question about favorability toward the United States. It asks: *Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of... The United States.* The more unfavorable the respondent is toward the United States, the more likely she is to oppose the drone strikes. The second question asks: *Overall, do you think of the US as more of a partner of Pakistan, more of an enemy of Pakistan, or neither?* The respondents who say that they view the United States as more of enemy of Pakistan are more likely to oppose the drone strikes. The third question asks: *How worried are you, if at all, that the US could become a military threat to our country someday? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?* The respondents who say that they are very

or somewhat worried about the US becoming a military threat to Pakistan are more likely to oppose drone strikes. The fourth question asks: *What's your opinion of US policies toward India and Pakistan-would you say they are fair or they favor India too much or do they favor Pakistan too much?* The more a respondent says the policies favor India too much the more likely she is to oppose drone strikes.

The next category of independent variable to consider is related to exposure to the media of various sorts. The first question asks: *Do you use the Internet, at least occasionally?* Those who answer yes would be more likely to oppose drone strikes. The second question is posed as: *Do you send or receive e-mail, at least occasionally?* Since e-mail is a common way to send and receive political information in Pakistan, we would posit that those who use e-mail often would be more likely to oppose drone strikes in Pakistan. The third question is: *Do you own a cell phone?* Those who respond yes would be more likely to oppose drone strikes as media messages are often sent as text messages in Pakistan. Finally, the respondent is asked: *Do you ever use online social networking sites like Facebook?* Because political messages and media content are often transmitted through social networks such as Facebook, the more a respondent says that they use such sites, the more likely she is to oppose US drone strikes.

To operationalize variables related to elite trust, we relied on the following question: *As I read a list of groups and organizations, for each, please tell me what kind of influence the group is having on the way things are going in Pakistan. Is the influence of (read name of organization) very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad in Pakistan?* The respondent is given the choices of President Asif Ali Zardari, the military, religious leaders, and the media-such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Those who say that the influence of the president and the military is very bad or somewhat bad are more likely to oppose drone strikes. In the case of religious leaders and the media, those who say that their influence is very good or somewhat good are more likely to oppose drone strikes.

We have also argued that support for militant groups will condition attitudes toward drone strikes. We argue that those who are more favorable toward militant groups will be more likely to oppose US drone strikes. One question asks: *Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very*

*unfavorable opinion of (Tebrik-e-Taliban-Pakistani Taliban; Afghan Taliban). Another question asks: Now I'd like to ask your views about some additional political leaders and organizations. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of (al Qaeda)?* We also tried to model the views of Pakistanis toward militant groups by measuring their concern about Islamic extremism in the country. The question asks: *On a different subject, how concerned, if at all, are you about the rise of Islamic extremism in our country these days? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism in our country these days?* If a respondent answers not too concerned or not at all concerned, we believe he will be more likely to oppose US drone strikes. We make this assertion because of the tangible rise in saliency of radical Islamist groups in Pakistan in the last several years besides the very obvious growth in terrorist incidents. Someone who is not concerned with these developments is likely sympathetic to the cause of the extremists.

To ascertain the religious views of the respondents, we picked two questions. One was to determine if the respondent self-identified as a fundamentalist. The question asks: *Do you think there is a struggle in our country between groups who want to modernize the country and Islamic fundamentalists or don't you think so?* If the respondent answered yes, the respondent is then asked: *Which side do you identify with in this struggle, the groups that want to modernize the country or the Islamic fundamentalists?* Those who respond that they identify with the Islamic fundamentalists are more likely to oppose the drone strikes. The second question that gets at religious beliefs asks: *Do you favor or oppose making the following the law in Pakistan?: death penalty for people who leave the Muslim religion.* Those respondents that answer in the affirmative are more likely to oppose US drone strikes.

We do not use the questions on attitudes toward the necessity of drone strikes, whether too many innocents are killed, or whether they are done with or without the approval of the Pakistani government because these questions had too many missing cases and would not allow for analysis of the variation in responses toward the dependent variable.

We also add controls for gender, education, and province in which survey was conducted. These variables are added because they could have effects on the dependent variable although we do not have theoretical priors about their causal relationship to the dependent variable.

## **Analysis**

This study uses a multinomial logit model to help explain opposition to US drone strikes in Pakistan (with support coded 1, opposition coded -1, and don't know/no response coded 0). Given that the dependent variable has three, unordered, multiple choice response categories, we relied on these estimations. With  $k$  answer categories, multinomial logit estimates  $k-1$  equations, making the remaining category a baseline. In this paper, the baseline category is composed of the don't know/no response choice. The model tests hypotheses related to respondents' attitudes toward the United States, various Pakistani authorities, militant groups, religious beliefs, and their exposure to various types of media. The data came from the 2010 Pew Global Attitudes Survey. It collected a sample of 2000 Pakistanis' views on a range of issues. Because of missing cases resulting from some questions, we used a sample of 608 Pakistani respondents.

In our study, the coefficients indicate the effects of an independent variable increasing the likelihood that a respondent chose support (1) or oppose (-1) over don't know (0). Consequently, a positive coefficient for any independent variable indicates that a respondent scoring highly on that variable was more likely to say they support drone missiles relative to not expressing an opinion, or that the respondent scoring high was more likely to oppose drone missiles. The probability of selecting don't know/no response is 1 minus the probability of choosing either of the other two answer categories.

### TABLE THREE ABOUT HERE

Table Three shows support for different hypotheses raised in this study. We will discuss each of our hypothesized categories of explanations. Beginning with the anti-American category, we find two significant predictors of attitudes toward drone missiles. In the oppose/don't know analysis, we find that viewing the

U.S. as the enemy is significant at the .01 level, demonstrating our hypothesis that those who view the U.S. as the enemy will be more likely to oppose drone missiles. There is no similar significant relationship found in the support/don't know analysis, however. In the support/don't know model, we find another significant predictor related to attitudes toward the United States. At the .01 level of significance, we see that respondents who believe the United States favors Pakistan over India are more likely to support drone missile attacks. Again, there is no concurrent relationship found in the other model. We find no significant results related to favorability of the United States or worry about the U.S. being a threat.

Turning to the media exposure variables, we find no significant predictors of attitudes toward drones from our variables of internet, e-mail, cell phone, or social networking usage.

Likewise, there are no significant predictors of Pakistani attitudes toward drone missiles within the elite trust category. The potential influences of President Zardari, the military, religious leaders, and the media are not demonstrating an impact on opinions.

In our category considering support for militant groups, we find a series of significant relationships. First, favorability of Tehrik-e-Taliban is significant at the .01 level in both the oppose/don't know and support/don't know analyses. Those who view Tehrik-e-Taliban very favorably are much less likely to oppose drone missiles; however, they were also much less likely to support them. As a result, we can state that supporters of Tehrik-e-Taliban were significantly more likely to state that they did not have an opinion when asked to state their level of support for drone missiles. At the same time, favorability of the Afghan Taliban is significant in both models. Given that both coefficients are positive, we see that rating the Afghan Taliban very favorably makes respondents more likely to both support and oppose drone missiles. Clearly, these two results demonstrate that supporters of the Afghan Taliban appear less concerned with expressing opinions toward drone missiles than supporters of Tehrik-e-Taliban. This leads to a question of sincerity regarding responses to favorability of the extremist groups given that both have been heavily targeted and impacted by drone missiles. There are no significant findings related to favorability of Al Qaeda or concerns with extremism.

Looking at our religion category, we find only a single significant relationship. Individuals who believe there is a struggle between modernizers and fundamentalists in Pakistan and side with the fundamentalists are significantly less likely to say they support drone missiles than those in the don't know/no response category. From this, we can ascertain that respondents who are fundamentalist Muslims in Pakistan are significantly less supportive of drone missiles. The death penalty for deserters measure does not produce any significant findings.

When we examined the results for the demographic control variables, a few stood out. The coefficient for males was positive in the support/don't know model but is not significant in the oppose/don't know. This finding indicates that men were significantly more likely to say they support drone missiles than to state they did not have a response. Education is significant in the support/don't know analysis, showing that the more educated are more likely to state they support drone missiles than not expressing an opinion. Regional differences do not demonstrate any significant impact on shaping public attitudes toward drone missiles in Pakistan.

#### *Performance and Fit of the Model*

To examine the performance and fit of our model, we look at the percent correctly predicted and proportional reduction in error. Here, we are comparing our model to the null model (which only contains intercepts). Rather than explaining anything, this null model merely reproduces the marginal observed probabilities in the dataset. The percent correctly predicted tells us what percent of observations our model gets right. The null model, on the other hand, automatically predicts everyone into the modal category, thus assuring itself that it gets the most possible cases right. The difference between the percent correctly predicted and percent in modal category shows us the proportional reduction in error. In the model from

Table Three, the PCP is 58.72%; the PMC is 48.36%; and the subsequent PRE is 20.06%. The PRE suggests our model is interestingly different from the null model and explains more cases.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Discrete and Marginal Effects*

In nonlinear models (such as multinomial logit), the reported coefficients are not equal to a marginal effect, or derivative of an expected value with respect to a variable. Thus, to get a true picture of the overall independent effect of a variable, it is necessary to mix the results of two sets of estimates to obtain the marginal effects. These values are computed at the overall means of the dataset. The marginal effects for the significant predictors within our model are presented in Table Four.

#### TABLE FOUR ABOUT HERE

Likewise, we can compare our marginal and discrete effects. The discrete effects of independent variables measure the difference in the predicted value as one independent variable changes values while all others are held constant at their means. Unlike marginal effects, which are instantaneous rates of change, discrete effects involve intentionally moving variables from one value to another while holding all others at their means. For our purposes, we have chosen to examine the change in probability for favorability of drones associated with changing independent variables from their minimum to maximum values. This data is presented in Table Five.

#### TABLE FIVE ABOUT HERE

Both the marginal and discrete effects are consistent in their impact. In the opposition analysis, U.S. is Enemy has the highest marginal effect at .114 and the highest discrete effect (.232). Favorability of the Afghani Taliban is the second most substantive predictor with Favorability of Tehrik-e-Taliban third. In the support model, U.S. Favors Pakistan has the greatest substantive impact with both marginal and discrete effects, followed by Struggle Side with Fundamentalists, Favor Tehrik-e-Taliban, and Favor Afghan Taliban.

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<sup>1</sup> If we instead use Herron's method, which focuses on summing the probabilities of being in the observed category rather than making category predictions, our PRE is still 15.83%.

These results confirm the story told by the coefficients. The differences in marginal and discrete effects demonstrate that the range of change in x is relatively large.

A final way to consider the individual impacts of each variable is to consider the predicted probabilities presented by an increase of one unit of each variable while holding all other variables at their means. Figure One represents these findings graphically.

#### FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE

Consider the Struggle Side with Fundamentalists variable. What we see here is that a one-unit increase in this variable decreases the likelihood of a respondent supporting drone missiles by 13%, increases the odds of responding don't know by roughly 4%, and increase the odds of opposing by just under 10%. Similar sizeable changes are caused by viewing the U.S. as the enemy and believing the U.S. favors Pakistan over India.

### **Conclusions**

This study was an effort to understand the shape of attitudes in Pakistan toward American drone strikes in the FATA. We used a Pew Global Attitudes Project survey from 2010 that has one of the best battery of questions available on Pakistani attitudes toward drone strikes. The overview of the Pakistani attitudes toward drone strikes shows that more Pakistanis oppose drone strikes than approve of them by about 60-40%. Of particular concern is the number of innocents who are perceived to be killed in the strikes.

The next goal of this study was to explain the variation one sees in Pakistani public opinion toward the drone strikes. We sought to explain why some Pakistanis support the strikes, whereas others oppose them. We argued that the primary reason driving opposition to the drone strikes would be the narrative of radical Islam in Pakistan, that has argued that the US is at war with Islam and the drone strikes are part and parcel of the that war.

The results of the analysis bear out our argument. Pakistanis who view the United States as the enemy and think of themselves as religious fundamentalists are most likely to be opposed to the drone strikes. Those who support the drone strikes tend to be those who believe that the US favors Pakistan over India.

The attitudes that are formed about drone strikes also seem to be largely the product of information. The more educated and males, who in Pakistan tend to be more educated than women, are more in favor of drone strikes than those who are less educated and women. It is possible that those who are more educated seek out more international news sources and avoid some of the more sensationalist Pakistan media information that tends to paint US drone strikes as part of a war being waged against Pakistan. The more educated may not necessarily agree with all of the American arguments about drone strikes, but they may have the view that the militants are a threat to Pakistan and drone strikes are one of the few things being done to counter them, for better or for worse.

Where do the results leave us in terms of discerning where public opinion in Pakistan is headed in terms of shaping the drone war? We know that Pakistani public opinion matters when it comes to this issue. The media reacts to it. The government and even the military reacts to it. Pakistani public opinion does not drive policy on this issue, but it constrains the range of options that the US and the Pakistani authorities have when it comes to using drones to combat militancy in Pakistan. The US is trying to minimize the negative footprint that the drone strikes leave in Pakistan, in FATA in particular, to minimize the probability to enflaming public sentiment. This includes new, more accurate weapons, and less drone strikes in general. The US is even giving the Pakistani drones to use themselves so that the drone war is not simply a US war. But chances are, as long as the narrative of radical Islam about the US being at war with Islam rings true to a significant share of Pakistanis, the program of US drone strikes in Pakistan will continue to face a majority of a Pakistanis who oppose it.

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