



# PAKISTAN

## Quick Facts

Population: 204,924,861 (July 2017 est.)

Area: 796,095 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Punjabi 44.7%, Pashtun (Pathan) 15.4%, Sindhi 14.1%, Sariaki 8.4%, Muhajirs 7.6%, Balochi 3.6%, other 6.3%

GDP (official exchange rate): \$278.9 billion (2016 est.)

Source: CIA World FactBook (Last Updated June 2018)

## INTRODUCTION

*Pakistan was established in 1947 as a homeland for South Asia's Muslims following the end of British colonial rule on the Indian Subcontinent. The majority of Pakistanis practice a moderate form of Sufi Islam, but Islamist political parties exercise significant influence within society and through the courts, as well as help shape political debates, foreign policy, and the development of legislation. Moreover, throughout Pakistan's history, its military and intelligence services have created and cultivated ties with violent Islamist groups to achieve regional strategic objectives. The U.S. war in Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and Pakistan's role in fighting terrorism in recent years, has severely complicated the Islamist militant landscape in Pakistan. The emergence of the Pakistani Taliban—an amalgam of anti-state militants that formed in 2007 in reaction to the Pakistan military's storming of the notorious Red Mosque in the heart of Islamabad—destabilized the nation significantly between 2007 and 2014. The Pakistani Taliban conducted countless terrorist attacks throughout the country during that period, killing some 30,000 civilians and security forces, and prompting a major Pakistan Army operation against the militants in 2014. This mission, centered in the North Waziristan tribal agency, targeted the Pakistani Taliban and other Islamist militants who were staging attacks on Pakistani soil. While Pakistan continued to be convulsed by terror attacks well into 2017, the number of terror attacks and terrorist violence has fallen significantly since the operation was launched.*

*Pakistan will continue to grapple with its status as a Muslim constitutional democracy, and with developing ways to channel Islamist ideologies that have played a significant role in its identity since 1947. While Islamist political parties are unlikely to take power in the near future, they will continue to influence the country's legal framework and political discourse in ways that restrict personal freedoms, subordinate women and minorities, and enhance the role of clergy within the country's democratic institutions. While societal attitudes will also shape Islamist trends in Pakistan, it can be argued that the military's posture and attitude toward violent Islamists will be one of the core factors in determining the future direction of the country, i.e., whether it remains positively engaged with Western countries or takes a decisively Islamist turn that severs its traditionally strong relations with the United States.*

## ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which consist of seven semi-autonomous tribal agencies along the border with Afghanistan, constitute one of the most dangerous terrorist safe havens in the world today. In 2002, al-Qaeda's leadership moved from Afghanistan into Pakistan's North and South Waziristan sections of the tribal border areas, where they established networks with like-minded Pakistani groups such as the Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM) and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).<sup>1</sup> The Obama administration's aggressive campaign of drone strikes in the region from 2010–2012 helped degrade al-Qaeda's leadership ranks and disrupted the group's ability to plan and carry out international terrorist attacks. In more recent years, however, the number of drone strikes has declined. In the first half of 2017, according to the New America Foundation, there were only four.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, there have been 405 U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan since January 2004, including the strike that killed Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in Pakistan's Baluchistan province in May 2016.<sup>3</sup> The Trump administration may well ramp up the drone war, especially if it expands their use in remote areas of Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces, where senior leaders of the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network—organizations that attack U.S. forces in Afghanistan—are based. Additionally, ISIS's rising profile in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region portends the possibility of new drone targets.

Pakistan has long relied on violent Islamist groups to accomplish its strategic objectives in both Afghanistan and India. Pakistan's support for groups that fight in Afghanistan—namely the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network—and those that primarily attack India (like the JeM and LeT) remains undiminished, even as it has stepped up its military operations in the tribal border areas against the Tehrik -i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, or the Pakistani Taliban).

There are around 150,000 Pakistani troops deployed along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Since 2002, the U.S. has provided nearly \$14 billion to Pakistan in the form of Coalition Support Fund (CSF) reimbursements for Pakistan's military deployments and operations along the Afghan border.<sup>4</sup> In January 2018, the Trump administration, which has indicated a desire to take a tougher policy toward Pakistan than did the Obama White House, froze all security assistance to the country, including coalition support funds (CSF) monies.<sup>5</sup>

*The Afghan Taliban*

Pakistan's military and intelligence services (particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISI) historically have had close ties with the Afghan Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan from 1996–2001. Before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Pakistani government openly supported and recognized Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Although Pakistani officials largely disagreed with the Taliban's harsh interpretation of Islam, they viewed the movement as their best chance to achieve their own strategic interests in the region—which entail having governments in Kabul that are friendly to Islamabad and hostile to India. Pakistan continued to support the Taliban into the late 1990s, long after Osama bin Laden took refuge there in 1996 and despite the growing problems that it created in Islamabad's relations with Washington. Pakistan's high-stakes policy vis-à-vis the Taliban derived from its aims of denying India, as well as Iran and the Central Asian countries, a strong foothold in Afghanistan and ensuring a friendly regime in Kabul that would refrain from making territorial claims on Pakistan's ethnic Pashtun areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Despite pledging to break ties with the Taliban after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Islamabad failed to crack down forcefully on its leaders or to actively disrupt their activities in Pakistan. Indeed, U.S. officials have acknowledged that officials within Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate maintain relationships with Afghan Taliban leaders and see benefits in keeping good ties with the Taliban in the expectation that the Taliban will again play a useful role in Afghan politics.<sup>6</sup>

Pakistan, however, is not the only nation that provides support to the Afghan Taliban. Iran has

periodically funneled weaponry to the Taliban—in both 2007 and 2011, for example, international forces in Afghanistan intercepted shipments from Iran headed for the Taliban. At first blush, the notion of a relationship between Iran and the Taliban may appear hard to believe. The Taliban, after all, is a Sunni militant group that has been accused of targeting Shia Iran in Afghanistan—including a massacre at the Iranian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998 that killed nearly a dozen Iranian diplomats. And yet a shared mistrust of Washington, and of U.S. intentions in Afghanistan, have produced marriages of convenience between Iran and the Taliban—arrangements that could endure if not deepen given the deterioration in U.S.-Iran relations since the Trump administration took office.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Trump's decision in May 2018 to pull out of a nuclear deal with Iran concluded during the Obama era portends a further plunge in U.S.-Iran ties—and the possibility of deeper cooperation between Tehran and the Taliban. Tehran-Taliban ties could also be intensified by the ISIS factor. ISIS, and its modest yet resilient presence in Afghanistan, worries the Iranians. Tehran therefore has a strong incentive to provide arms and other support to the Taliban—a rival of ISIS—to better enable the Taliban to push back against ISIS in Afghanistan.

Russia also has good reason to provide support to the Taliban, and statements by top U.S. military officials in 2017 suggested that Moscow has indeed cultivated ties with the Taliban—including, perhaps, the supply of weaponry.<sup>8</sup> If this is true, then ISIS (as in the case of Iran), would be a major factor. Moscow worries about the presence it enjoys on Russia's doorstep. The other motivation for Russia to reach out to the Taliban is also relevant to the Iran case: Moscow wishes to undercut America wherever it can. What better way to do so in Afghanistan than by bolstering Washington's chief nemesis in that country?

None of this rules out continued cooperation with Kabul. In this sense, there's reason to believe that both Iran and Russia, like Pakistan, will play a double game in Afghanistan—engaging with the Afghan government while furtively providing support to the Taliban.

Hopes for a negotiated Afghan settlement were raised in July of 2015, when Pakistan played host to face-to-face talks between the Afghan government and Taliban leaders. However, weeks later, just before a second round of talks was scheduled to be held, reports surfaced that Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar had died two years prior, causing disarray within the Taliban movement. Pakistan helped install Omar's successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, who was subsequently killed in a U.S. drone strike on May 21, 2016.

Escalating Taliban violence in Afghanistan, as well as major Taliban gains on the battlefield—the insurgency controls more territory now than at any time since 2001—have closed the door on negotiations for the foreseeable future. However, efforts to jumpstart a reconciliation process continue.<sup>9</sup> The United States, China, Pakistan, and Russia have all been involved in attempts over the last few years to bring the Taliban to the table. But the Taliban, which has little incentive to step off the battlefield given its recent gains, has expressed no interest in such a move whatsoever. In February 2018, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani made one of the most generous peace offers ever proposed to the Taliban; If the group put down its weapons, he said, the government would give it the opportunity to open an office and become a political party. But the Taliban did not even bother to respond to the offer.<sup>10</sup>

### *Al-Qaeda*

The unilateral U.S. raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan on May 2, 2011, that eliminated Osama bin Laden exposed deep fissures in U.S.-Pakistan relations. Pakistanis were incensed that the U.S. did not take its leadership into confidence before the raid. U.S. officials, on the other hand, were incredulous that the world's most wanted terrorist could live in a Pakistani garrison town for six years without the knowledge of officials within the military establishment. U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) said the bin Laden killing revealed the “double-game” Pakistan is playing, and called for stricter conditions to be imposed on U.S. aid to the country.<sup>11</sup> Then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told members of Congress in June 2011 that a review of intelligence turned up no information indicating that top Pakistani leaders knew about bin Laden's presence in Abbottabad. She added, however, that it was possible that lower-level

Pakistani officials were involved in protecting the international terrorist.

Pakistan's subsequent arrest of a Pakistani doctor, Shakil Afridi, who helped the U.S. track bin Laden's whereabouts through a fake vaccination campaign, was a further blow to bilateral relations. Afridi was initially sentenced to 33 years in prison by a Pakistani tribal court on trumped-up charges of supporting a militant group. In August 2013, however, Afridi's sentence was overturned, and a retrial ordered.<sup>12</sup> Pakistani authorities privately acknowledge that the doctor is being punished for helping the CIA. In mid-December 2016, a senior Pakistani official indicated that Pakistan would be willing to discuss the release of Dr. Afridi, possibly through a presidential pardon, with the Trump administration.<sup>13</sup>

Media reports in 2017 also suggested that the Pakistanis may be willing to work out a deal with Washington to release Afridi, but as of mid-2018 nothing had materialized. Speculation has long been rampant that Pakistan may agree to exchange Afridi for Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani scientist and cause célèbre in Pakistan who is currently in a federal prison in Texas on terrorism charges.<sup>14</sup> However, the Trump administration is unlikely to agree to such an arrangement, given its focus on radical Islamic terrorism.

The Obama administration's intensive drone campaign in Pakistan's tribal border areas helped degrade al-Qaeda and hindered its ability to plot and train for terrorist attacks across the globe. Pakistani officials and media outlets regularly criticize the drone missile strikes as a violation of Pakistani sovereignty, but the program appears to be at least tacitly accepted at the highest levels of the Pakistan government. Indeed, reportage by Mark Mazzetti of the *New York Times* has found that the ISI and CIA had an agreement authorizing the use of drones, so long as they were restricted to the tribal areas.<sup>15</sup> Of the more than 405 drone strikes that have been carried out in Pakistan since 2004, very few, including the strike on Mansour in Baluchistan and one that the Trump administration carried out in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in 2017, have taken place outside the tribal areas.<sup>16</sup> The hit on Mansour angered Pakistani officials, who called it a "violation of sovereignty."

Due, perhaps, in part to Pakistani public anger over the drone campaign and complaints from human rights organizations about the number of civilian casualties, the U.S. administration has reduced considerably its reliance on drones. But the bigger reason is likely that the United States eliminated all its key targets—which at least as defined by the Obama administration were senior militant leaders with al-Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban, and other terror groups that stage attacks in Pakistan and pose a threat to both Pakistan and the United States. There were only 10 drone strikes in Pakistan in 2015, down from a peak of 128 strikes in 2010. According to the New America Foundation, there were only three strikes in 2016 and eight in 2017, with five through July 2018.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)*

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an amalgamation of Pakistani militant groups loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, was formed in 2007 and has conducted numerous suicide attacks that since 2012 have killed over 9,000 Pakistani civilians and 2,400 Pakistani security forces.<sup>18</sup>

In the six weeks before Pakistani elections in May 2013, the TTP took responsibility for attacks that killed scores of election workers and candidates, mainly from secular-leaning political parties. Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League/Nawaz (PML/N) party ran on a campaign of supporting negotiations with the TTP and failed to denounce the attacks on the electoral process. Six months after winning the elections, the Nawaz Sharif government offered to engage in talks with the TTP. Those talks officially started in January 2014, but did not last long. The TTP claims of instituting a cease-fire were undermined by continued attacks against civilians and security forces. Islamabad claimed that new progress was being made in talks in November 2013, when a U.S. drone strike killed Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud, dealing another setback to a fledgling negotiation process.

Talks broke down altogether following a major TTP attack on the Karachi airport that killed 36 in June 2014. One week later, the Pakistani military announced the launch of a new military offensive against

TTP bases in North Waziristan called Zarb-e-Azb (“Strike of the Prophet’s Sword”). The Pakistani Army intensified its counterterrorism operations following an attack on a military school in Peshawar in December 2014 that killed 130, mostly children. Military operations in the FATA reportedly contributed to a nearly fifty percent decline in the number of terrorist attacks in the country in 2015, as compared to 2014.<sup>19</sup> This decline continued through 2016 and into 2017. However, factions of the TTP have continued to stage sporadic attacks in Pakistan, mostly in the western provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, from hideouts in Afghanistan.

The National Action Plan (NAP) to combat terrorism passed by the Pakistani parliament in January 2015 has attempted to lay the initial groundwork for delegitimizing extremist ideologies. The plan includes steps like lifting the moratorium on the death penalty for terrorists, establishing special military courts to try terrorists, curbing the spread of extremist literature and propaganda on social media, freezing the assets of terrorist organizations, and forming special committees, comprised of army and political leaders, in the provinces to implement the NAP.

Still, Pakistan has a long way to go in reversing the tide of extremism and terrorism in the country, as evidenced by several major terrorist attacks that occurred in 2016 and 2017. On January 20, 2016, militants stormed a university in the Pakistani city of Charsadda, killing at least 20 students and teachers. Afghanistan-based TTP leader Omar Mansour claimed credit for the attack (Mansour’s faction of the TTP was also behind the 2014 attack on the school in Peshawar).<sup>20</sup> A U.S. drone strike in eastern Afghanistan subsequently killed Mansour in July of 2016.

Another splinter group of the TTP, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, was responsible for a suicide bombing at a park in Lahore on Easter Sunday 2016. The group said it directly targeted Christians and that the bombing was a message to the Pakistani government that “we will carry out such attacks until Sharia is imposed in the country.”<sup>21</sup> While the attack was directed at Christians, most victims were Muslim, and about half of the 72 killed were children.

There were two major attacks in Baluchistan in 2016, one on August 8<sup>th</sup> in Quetta, which targeted a hospital and in which 70—mostly lawyers—were killed.<sup>22</sup> ISIS claimed credit for another attack, which took place on October 25<sup>th</sup>, on a police academy in Quetta, killing 61 Pakistani cadets—although Pakistani authorities blamed a local anti-Shia group, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.<sup>23</sup>

In February 2017, Pakistan was convulsed by a series of attacks over a period of four days. Militants struck all four provinces and three major urban areas. The deadliest assault, on a Sufi shrine, killed almost 90 people—the deadliest terror attack in Pakistan since the school massacre in Peshawar in December 2014 that killed 141 people. Additionally, the TTP claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack in the eastern city of Lahore in July 2017 that killed nearly 30 people. TTP attacks continued in 2018, and included an attack on an election campaign rally in the city of Peshawar in July that killed at least 20 people, including a senior politician named Haroom Bilour.

### *The Haqqani Network*

Jalaluddin Haqqani—a powerful independent Afghan militant leader whose followers operate in the border areas between Khost in Afghanistan and North Waziristan in FATA—reportedly died in 2014. Haqqani had been allied with the Afghan Taliban for nearly 20 years, having served as tribal affairs minister in the Taliban regime in the late 1990s, and was known to be close to Pakistan’s intelligence service. Jalaluddin’s son, Sirajuddin, has taken over operational control of the militant network and currently serves as the number two leader of the Afghan Taliban.

The Haqqani network has been a major facilitator of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, and responsible for some of the fiercest attacks against U.S. and coalition forces there. Haqqani forces were responsible for a suicide attack against the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008 that killed two senior Indian officials and over 50 others; a suicide attack on a CIA base in Khost Province in December 2009 that marked the most deadly attack on the CIA in 25 years; a multi-hour siege of the U.S. embassy in

Kabul in September 2011; and—most recently—a major truck bombing in Kabul on April 19, 2016 that killed 65. Afghan officials have also asserted that the Haqqani network was behind a horrific truck bomb blast that killed at least 150 people in Kabul’s diplomatic quarter in May 2017.

The source of the Haqqanis’ power lies primarily in their ability to forge relations with a variety of different terrorist groups (al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and India-focused groups like the Jaish-e-Muhammed), while also maintaining links to Pakistani intelligence. Pakistani military strategists view the Haqqani network as their most effective tool for blunting Indian influence in Afghanistan. Credible U.S. media reports indicate that the Haqqani network, in cooperation with Pakistani intelligence, was responsible for the bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008, killing more than 50 people, including two senior Indian officials.<sup>24</sup> U.S. officials have appealed to Pakistani leaders to crack down on the Haqqani network. During a press conference in Kabul in July 2017, Senator John McCain declared that if Pakistan doesn’t change its position toward the Haqqani network, then “maybe we should change our behavior toward Pakistan as a nation.”<sup>25</sup> However, to this point American authorities have been rebuffed with declarations that the Pakistani military is overstretched and incapable of taking on too many militant groups at once. The Zarb-e-Azb offensive, despite claims to the contrary by Pakistani authorities, did not target the Haqqani network. Instead, many analysts have contended that, after the operation began, the group simply relocated from the North Waziristan tribal agency to the Kurram tribal agency.<sup>26</sup>

On September 7, 2012, under pressure from the U.S. Congress, the U.S. State Department listed the Haqqani Network as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). An organization designated an FTO is subject to financial and immigration sanctions. The designation also publicly stigmatizes the organization, which can help garner cooperation from foreign governments. Since the designation, the U.S. has killed several Haqqani network leaders in Afghanistan and in Pakistan’s tribal border areas—and also, according to multiple media reports, in a drone strike in Pakistan’s Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in 2017.<sup>27</sup>

The U.S. has also blocked military aid to Pakistan due to its failure to crack down on the Haqqanis. The U.S. withheld \$300 million in CSF payments to Pakistan in FY 2015 because the administration could not certify to Congress that Pakistan’s military offensive in the tribal border areas included operations against Haqqani bases.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Congress blocked U.S. funding for the transfer of eight F-16 aircraft to Pakistan in the first half of 2016 because of Islamabad’s lack of action against the Haqqani sanctuary within its borders.<sup>29</sup> And in January 2018, the Trump administration decided to freeze all security aid to Pakistan until the country demonstrates that it is curbing the presence and activities of the Haqqani network on Pakistani soil.

### *Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed*

Groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM, formerly the Harakat-ul-Ansar) focused their attacks throughout the 1990s on Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, but now conduct attacks throughout India and target both Indian and Western civilians. The Pakistani government’s failure to shut down groups like JeM and LeT, of which the latter was responsible for the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, is creating instability in the region and increasing the likelihood of additional attacks, particularly against India, but also involving citizens of other nations. In March 2010, Pakistani-American David Headley, who was arrested in Chicago in early October 2009, pleaded guilty in a U.S. court to involvement in both the Mumbai attacks and a plot to attack the offices of a Danish newspaper for publishing caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed. In four days of testimony and cross-examination, Headley detailed meetings he had had with a Pakistani intelligence officer, a former Army major, and a Navy frogman, all of whom were among the key players orchestrating the assaults. Headley’s revelations raised questions about whether there was official Pakistani involvement in the Mumbai attacks.<sup>30</sup>

Following the Mumbai attacks, Islamabad responded to U.S. and Indian pressure by arresting seven LeT operatives, including those that India had fingered as the ringleaders of the attacks: Zaki ur Rehman

Lakhvi and Zarar Shah. The Pakistani government also reportedly shut down some LeT offices throughout the country. Despite these actions, there are indications that the LeT continues to operate relatively freely in the country. Pakistan released from detention LeT founder Hafez Muhammed Sayeed in June 2009, when the Lahore High Court determined there was insufficient evidence to continue his detainment. Sayeed has taken an increasingly public role in Pakistan and frequently speaks at political rallies, where he calls for jihad against India. In 2012, the U.S. issued a \$10 million reward for information leading to his arrest and conviction.<sup>31</sup> As further evidence of its unwillingness to act against the LeT, Pakistan released Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi from jail in April 2015, just days after the U.S. approved the sale of nearly \$1 billion in military equipment to Pakistan.

The LeT has put down roots in Pakistani society, especially in central and southern Punjab, through its social welfare wing, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), which runs schools and medical clinics. The headquarters of the LeT/JuD is a 200-acre site outside Lahore in the town of Muridke. The JuD increased its popularity through its rapid response in helping victims of the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistani Kashmir. The U.S. government views the JuD as a surrogate or front organization of the LeT. The U.S. State Department designated the LeT as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in December 2001, and later included the JuD on the Specially Designated Global Terrorist Designation list as an alias of the LeT.<sup>32</sup> On December 11, 2008, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on JuD, declaring it a global terrorist group.<sup>33</sup>

There are well-known links between both the LeT and JeM and international terrorism. Shoe bomber Richard Reid apparently trained at a LeT camp in Pakistan; one of the London subway bombers spent time at the LeT complex in Muridke; and al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaydah was captured from a LeT safe house in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The LeT signed Osama bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling for Muslims to kill Americans and Israelis.

Reports indicate that one of the prime suspects in the 2006 London airliner bomb plot had family ties to Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of JeM. The JeM has also been linked to the kidnapping and brutal murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in January 2002. Pakistan officially banned the JeM in 2002, but Azhar has never been formally charged with a crime. Indeed, reports indicate Masood Azhar addressed a large public rally in Pakistan via phone in early 2014 and called on his supporters to resume jihad against India. Furthermore, the JeM conducted a major attack on the Indian air base at Pathankot in early January 2016, just six days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made a surprise goodwill visit to Lahore, where he met with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Efforts by India to have Azhar formally designated by the UN as a terrorist have repeatedly failed, as Pakistan's close ally China has used its Security Council veto to block such a move.

Indo-Pakistani tensions escalated further following a September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 attack by Pakistan-based terrorists on an Indian military base in Kashmir that killed at least 18 Indian soldiers. New Delhi, after initially blaming JeM, concluded that LeT was behind the attack. Ten days later, India launched surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC) to neutralize terrorist bases inside Pakistani territory. Shelling and firing across the LoC, which had become an almost-daily occurrence, decreased later in 2016 and into 2017, but rhetoric from both Pakistani and Indian officials remains heated, and there is a continued risk for military escalation. Indeed, cross-border firing surged once again during the first few months of 2018.<sup>34</sup>

As of 2017, the Pakistan-based anti-India terror groups at the heart of India-Pakistan tensions, like JeM and LeT, remain dangerous. In July 2017, New Delhi blamed LeT for a deadly attack that killed seven Hindu pilgrims in Kashmir. And in March 2018, New Delhi again implicated LeT in an attack in Kashmir, this time an assault on security forces that killed three Indian soldiers and two policemen. However, LeT and JeM are not as operationally active as are Afghanistan-focused groups like the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network, which regularly stage attacks in that country.

*The Islamic State (ISIS)*

ISIS has sought to gain the allegiance of various terrorist groups in the region and in January 2015 officially announced the formation of its Khorasan “province.” Khorasan is an Islamic historical term used to describe the area encompassed by Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan, and parts of other countries bordering Afghanistan. According to the relevant *Hadith* (sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad), South-Central Asia plays a key role in establishing a global caliphate. The *Hadith* contains references to the Ghazwa-e-Hind (Battle of India), where the final battle between Muslims and non-Muslims before the end times will supposedly take place. One *Hadith* further says that an army with black flags will emerge from Khorasan to help the “Mahdi” (the prophesied redeemer of Islam) establish his caliphate at Mecca.<sup>35</sup>

So far, a handful of TTP leaders and Afghan Taliban leaders have pledged their allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as have several hundred Taliban foot soldiers and also some Central Asian militants. The Pakistan-based anti-Shia sectarian outfit Jundullah reportedly pledged support to ISIS in late 2014.<sup>36</sup> In July 2015, a U.S. drone strike in the eastern Afghan province of Nangahar killed more than two dozen ISIS fighters, including Shahidullah Shahid, former spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban, who had defected to ISIS ranks the year before.<sup>37</sup> ISIS’s footprint is deeper in Afghanistan than in Pakistan; the group has carved out a small bastion in Nangahar and claimed a series of attacks in Afghanistan over the last two years, from assaults on Shia civilians to a brazen attack on a Kabul hospital. In April 2017, the U.S. military dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb in its arsenal on an ISIS hideout in Nangarhar, though the group continues to maintain modest numbers of forces in the region.<sup>38</sup> ISIS has also claimed attacks in Pakistan, though fewer than in Afghanistan.

ISIS’ inability so far to make significant inroads into Pakistan is largely due to the well-established roots of al-Qaeda in the region. Most terror groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan are al-Qaeda-aligned and openly hostile toward ISIS. Taliban forces in Afghanistan have actively fought against ISIS members.<sup>39</sup> ISIS’s prospects in Pakistan are also constrained by sectarian issues. ISIS embraces the Salafi school of Islamic thought and rejects the Deobandi school, to which most South Asian militant groups adhere. Though there have been some operational marriages of convenience—for instance, several of the February 2017 attacks were claimed by both ISIS and factions of the Pakistani Taliban and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi—ISIS has found few friends in the flourishing community of militants in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Such considerations reduce the likelihood that the central ISIS leadership, in search of new sanctuaries since losing its territory in Iraq and Syria, would seek out Afghanistan as a new base of operations.

All this said, there is some concern that ISIS may eventually gain influence among the educated urban middle class in Pakistan since it has had success in recruiting among this cohort globally. However, overall, most analysts remain largely skeptical about the future prospects of ISIS in Pakistan.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, the number of fighters that have traveled from South Asia to fight with ISIS in Iraq and Syria remains relatively low. A report from the Soufan Center, published in October 2017, estimated that around 650 fighters had travelled from Pakistan to join the ranks of the group.<sup>41</sup>

For his part, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has sought to strengthen relations with Pakistan-based terrorist groups and make inroads with the Muslim populations in other parts of South Asia to help fend off ISIS encroachment. In September 2014, Zawahiri made a video announcement launching an al-Qaeda wing in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). In the video, Zawahiri assured Muslims in India, Bangladesh, and Burma that the organization “did not forget you and that they are doing what they can to rescue you from injustice, oppression, persecution, and suffering.”<sup>42</sup> Just two days after the launch of AQIS, the group attempted to attack a Pakistani navy frigate in order to use it to target American naval assets in the Indian Ocean. Al-Qaeda, in fact, remains resilient in Pakistan and the broader region even though it has been severely degraded by drone strikes and other counterterrorism tactics. This resilience can be attributed to the support it receives from powerful local terror groups like the Taliban and the Haqqani network, but also to an effort to rebrand itself as a population-friendly insurgent group. This strategy, as described in



recent scholarship by Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr and by Ali Soufan, is meant in part to project al-Qaeda as a softer alternative to the uncompromising savagery of ISIS.<sup>43</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

The strategic environment in South Asia over the last 30 years, and the Pakistani response to regional challenges, has influenced Islamist trends in society and heightened religious-inspired violence. The war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the Islamization policies of Pakistani president General Zia ul-Haq during the same period strengthened Islamist political forces and puritanical sects like the Deobandis over the more moderate Barelvis.<sup>44</sup> The influence of Sufism, dating back to the eighth and ninth century in South Asia, also has had a moderating influence on how most Pakistanis practice and interpret the Islamic faith.

The Jamaat-e-Islami was founded by Islamic scholar Maulana Abul Ala Maududi in 1941. Maududi came of age as British colonial rule was ending on the Subcontinent and an Indian national identity was developing. Witness to Hindu-Muslim communal tensions, Maududi believed the only way Muslims could safeguard their political interests was to return to a pure and unadulterated Islam that would not accommodate Hindus. He denounced nationalism and secular politics and held that the Islamic state was a panacea for all the problems facing Muslims. He further held that for Muslims to mobilize their resources against the Hindus, they had to break free of any Western influences.<sup>45</sup> Reflecting Maududi's early linking of the Muslim struggle with both Indian Hindus and western forces, modern Islamist extremist literature in Pakistan draws parallels between British colonial rule in the nineteenth century and U.S. ascendancy since the middle of the twentieth.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast with Maududi, Pakistan's founding father and leader of the Muslim League, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, supported the idea of Islam serving as a unifying force, but envisioned the country functioning largely as a secular and multiethnic democratic state. Thus, although the argument to establish a separate Pakistani state was based on religious exclusivity, Jinnah's ultimate goal was not to establish Pakistan as a theocratic state.<sup>47</sup> However, soon after the creation of Pakistan, debate about the role of religion in the country's constitutional and legal systems was increasingly influenced by the idea that Islamic principles should inform the conduct of the state.<sup>48</sup>

Maududi's contrasting vision for Pakistan created problems for him and the JI during the early years after partition. Pakistani authorities questioned the allegiance of JI members to the state and even incarcerated Maududi for his controversial positions on the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir.<sup>49</sup> After spending time in jail, Maududi eventually stopped questioning the legitimacy of the Pakistani state and focused on encouraging Islamization of the government and the adoption of an Islamic constitution.

Today's Jamaat-I-Islami (JI) political party in Pakistan, led by Siraj-ul-Haq, draws most of its support from middle class urban Pakistanis. It has generally performed only marginally at the polls, capturing about five percent of the vote in most elections held during the last two decades. The party's influence on Pakistani politics and society outweighs its electoral performance, though, primarily because of its effectiveness in mobilizing street power, its ability to influence court cases, and its adeptness at using Pakistan's Islamic identity to bring pressure on military and democratic governments alike to adopt aspects of its Islamist agenda.<sup>50</sup> In the 2002 elections, the JI formed an alliance with five other religious political parties, and the coalition garnered over 11 percent of the national vote. The resulting coalition of Islamist parties grabbed enough votes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) to form the government, marking the first time the Islamists were charged with running a provincial government (see below).

The other major Islamist movement in South Asia is the Deobandi movement. This movement originated in 1866 in the city of Deoband in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh with the establishment of the Dur ul-Ulum madrasa, (a Muslim religious school), which is still the largest operating Deobandi madrasa. Deobandism was a reformist movement that developed in reaction to British colonialism and from the

belief among Muslim theologians that British influence on the Indian subcontinent was corrupting the religion of Islam. The Deobandis solidified a puritanical perspective toward Islam for South Asian Muslims, much as the Wahhabis have done in present-day Saudi Arabia.<sup>51</sup>

Three wars and several military crises with India have also bolstered the influence of religious extremists, with the backing of the Pakistani state. During the 1990s, the JI focused its agenda on supporting Kashmiri militants, while the JUI turned most of its attention to supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. More recently, both the JUI and JI have rallied their political supporters against U.S. policies in the region, taking advantage of high levels of anti-American sentiment fueled by the post 9/11 American and NATO military presence in Afghanistan and U.S. pressure on Pakistan to tackle terrorists on its own soil. Most Pakistanis blame their country's counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S.—not past support for religious extremists—for the incessant suicide bombings and attacks across the nation that have claimed more than 9,000 civilian lives since 2012.

The erosion of respect for religious pluralism in Pakistan has also been facilitated by exclusionary laws and the proliferation of minority-hate material in public and private school curriculums. Several studies have also documented a broad-based connection between madrasa education and the propensity toward gender, religious, and sectarian intolerance and militant violence in Pakistan.<sup>52</sup> Madaris are spread throughout Pakistan, but most analysts believe that only about 5–10 percent of Pakistani school children attend these Islamic seminaries. A number of these schools are financed and operated by Pakistani Islamist parties, such as the Jamaat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI), and by Pakistani expatriates and other foreign entities, including many in Saudi Arabia. In a seminal study entitled “Islamic Education in Pakistan,” South Asia scholar Christine Fair notes that while there is little evidence that madaris contribute substantially to direct recruitment of terrorists, they do help create conditions that are conducive to supporting militancy.<sup>53</sup> While mainstreaming and expanding the curriculums of madaris is part of reversing extremist trends, it is equally important for Pakistan to improve and modernize its public education sector and to revise textbooks that encourage an intolerant and militant culture. Though Pakistan's National Action Plan—the strategy unveiled in early 2015 to combat extremism—highlights the importance of eliminating hate speech and literature, successful efforts to amend textbooks and other educational sources of extremist material largely remain elusive.<sup>54</sup>

Discrimination against religious minorities—including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis, and Shia—has led to a threefold increase in religious and sectarian violence in the country over the last 30 years. The rising violence against the Shi'ite community (which makes up about 25 percent of Pakistan's total population) has been part of the upward trend in sectarian attacks. In May 2015, gunmen attacked a bus in Karachi, killing 45 Ismaili Shia. In January 2015, at least 61 people were killed after a bombing at a Shia mosque in Shikarpur, while two years prior in January and February 2013, sectarian attacks – including bombings in Quetta – killed nearly 200 Shia. Many of the perpetrators of these attacks remain elusive. In an indication of the impunity that sectarian-minded hardliners enjoy in Pakistan, in November 2017 a group of religious protestors calling for the executions of Ahmadis—another vulnerable religious minority in Pakistan—held a two-week sit in on a major highway outside of Islamabad, snarling traffic for days. In May 2018, a young man with links to the religious political party that organized the November sit-in tried to assassinate Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's interior minister.<sup>55</sup>

In recent years, most of the attacks against Pakistani Shia have been carried out by the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), a Sunni militant organization that receives inspiration and support from al-Qaeda. The Pakistan government has begun to crack down, albeit modestly, on LJ and target its leadership over the past year. In July 2015, one week after his arrest, LJ founder and supreme leader Malik Ishaq and over a dozen of his followers were killed in a police encounter.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami, a particularly virulent faction of LJ, has linked up with ISIS and claimed several attacks in Pakistan over the last few years.<sup>57</sup> Though ISIS finds few friends in Pakistan, one of the few terror groups that would

make for a logical partner is LJ. Like ISIS, it is a sectarian-focused organization that seeks to eliminate Shias and members of any non-Sunni Muslim religious community.

The minority Ahmadi community also is suffering severely from the growing culture of religious intolerance in Pakistan. The Ahmadiyya Jamaat has approximately 10 million followers in the world, including approximately 3 to 4 million in Pakistan. Toward the end of the 19th century, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), founder of the Ahmadiyya Jamaat, broke with centuries-old Islamic dogma by claiming to be an Islamic prophet. (Mainstream Muslims believe that the Prophet Mohammad was the last prophet.) Six years after Pakistan's independence, Islamists led by Anjuman-i-ahrar-i-Islam (the Society of Free Muslims) started a mass movement to declare the Ahmadi sect as non-Muslim, arguing that Ahmadiyya was an entirely new religion that should not be associated with Islam. In late May of 2010, militants armed with hand grenades, suicide vests, and assault rifles attacked two Ahmadi mosques, killing nearly 100 worshippers.<sup>58</sup> Human rights groups in Pakistan criticized local authorities for their weak response to the attacks and for their failure to condemn the growing number of kidnappings and murders of members of the Ahmadi community. In December 2014, a member of the Ahmadi community in Gujranwalla was shot and killed five days after an extremist cleric called Ahmadis "the enemy" in a rant on a popular Pakistani television show.

Christians also are increasingly bearing the brunt of rising Islamist extremism in Pakistan. There have been numerous incidents of violence against Christians and their worship areas in the last few years. In the largest attack to date targeting the Christian community, on September 22, 2013, 85 people were killed during Sunday services when dual suicide bombers attacked a church in Peshawar, Pakistan. The group responsible for the attack, a faction of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), said they were retaliating against U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal border areas. More recently, a splinter group of the TTP carried out a suicide attack against Christians celebrating the Easter holiday at a park in Lahore in March 2016.

There have been some recent signs that the Pakistani government is slowly seeking to reverse extremist trends in society. The most notable was the government's follow-through with the execution of Mumtaz Qadri, the murderer of Salman Taseer. Despite street protests in all of Pakistan's major cities against the execution of Qadri, the government resisted intervention against the Supreme Court's decision, and the death sentence was carried out on February 29, 2016. However, in an indication of the deep levels of radicalization within Pakistani society, thousands of people—many following the orders of local clerics—took to the streets to protest Qadri's execution.<sup>59</sup>

The government took another step forward in support of religious minorities in mid-December 2016 by renaming the National Center for Physics of Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad after Nobel Prize-winning physicist Abdus Salam, a member of the Ahmadi community. Even though Salam received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, his achievement was largely ignored in Pakistan because of the stigma attached to the Ahmadi faith.<sup>60</sup> One week after the government's gesture, however, there were two major incidents of religious persecution against the Ahmadi community. In the first, Pakistani police raided an Ahmadiyya central office in Rabwah, where they beat up staffers, looted the office, and made arrests without a warrant.<sup>61</sup> In a second incident, a mob comprised of more than 1,000 people descended on an Ahmadi place of worship in Chakwal, Punjab.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, in May 2018, in a decision that enraged Pakistani liberals and other supporters of minority rights, Pakistan's National Assembly passed a resolution to remove Salam's name from the National Center for Physics.<sup>63</sup>

The 2007 Red Mosque siege and the events that followed have played a significant role in Pakistani society's current perception of Islamist movements. Early in 2007, students of the notorious Red Mosque in the heart of Islamabad, and an adjacent madrassa for women, launched a vigilante-like campaign to force their view of Islam on the Pakistani people. They burned CD and video shops, took over a local children's library, and kidnapped women whom they accused of running a brothel, as well as several

Pakistani policemen. In July 2007, military troops stormed the buildings. After two days of fierce fighting, the military gained control of the premises, but only after 19 soldiers and 62 militants were killed.

The Pakistani public reacted negatively to the military operation, with Islamist circles questioning the use of force against the country's own citizens and mosques, and more liberal commentators faulting the government for allowing the situation to get out of hand in the first place, noting the past strong ties of Pakistani intelligence to the mosque. The Islamist political parties faced a dilemma in that they largely agreed with the policies the Red Mosque leaders were pursuing but did not support the idea of engaging in violent confrontation with the government to achieve these goals.<sup>64</sup> Following the military operation that ended the siege, then-JI leader Qazi Hussain held the state "wholly responsible" for the confrontation. In addition, the two Islamist parties hailed the Red Mosque militants as "mujahideen who fought for enforcing Islam in its true spirit."<sup>65</sup> The Red Mosque incident's impact on Islamist extremism cannot be overstated. Among other things, it helped inspire the formation of the Pakistani Taliban—arguably the most murderous and brutal terror group in Pakistani history.

However, ever since April 2009, when pro-Taliban militants moved from the Swat Valley into neighboring districts following a peace deal with the government, most observers have believed that the militants overplayed their hand and revealed their long-term intentions of expanding influence throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Pakistanis living outside of the northwest province had previously believed the Taliban's activities could be contained within the tribal areas and Swat Valley. A video that circulated in the Pakistani national media in early April 2009 showing Taliban leaders whipping a young girl also helped turn Pakistani public opinion against the militants.

Tensions came to a head in mid-April 2009, when pro-Taliban forces moved from the Swat Valley into the neighboring district of Buner. On April 24, 2009, under both Pakistani public and U.S. pressure, the Pakistan Army deployed paramilitary troops to the region and then-Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Kayani sent a warning to the militants that the Army would not allow them to "impose their way of life on the civil society of Pakistan."<sup>66</sup> The statement was a positive first step in clarifying Pakistani policy toward the militants and was followed by aggressive military operations.<sup>67</sup> By mid-summer, the Pakistan military cleared the militants from the Swat Valley, and normalcy began to return to the region.

However, vestiges of extremism remain. The Pakistani public was outraged when Malala Yousafzai—a fifteen-year-old girl who openly advocated for the education of girls in the Swat Valley—was shot by Taliban militants in early October 2012 as she boarded a bus from school. Yousafzai miraculously survived the assassination attempt and continues to advocate for female empowerment and education from the United Kingdom, where she graduated from high school in 2017.<sup>68</sup> She is the youngest person ever to have won the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Army's resolve in fighting militants in the Swat Valley, and more recently in North Waziristan, signals greater clarity within the military establishment about the threat to the state from the Pakistani Taliban. However, there are few signs that the Pakistani Army leadership is ready to accommodate U.S. requests to crack down on other groups that target U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, like the Jalaluddin Haqqani network that operates out of North Waziristan and Afghan Taliban leaders who operate mainly from Quetta, Baluchistan. The Pakistani state has also done little to combat India-focused militant groups on its soil.

## ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Following the 9/11 attacks, former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf broke off official ties with the Taliban, supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, granted over-flight and landing rights for U.S. military and intelligence units, facilitated logistical supply to military forces in Afghanistan, and contributed substantially to breaking up the al-Qaeda network in the region. Pakistan helped capture scores of senior al-Qaeda leaders, most notably 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

However, the government's various relationships with Islamist groups were not entirely severed, and progress in this regard has been mixed. In addition to sporadic military operations, the Pakistani government in the past pursued several peace deals with the militants, which contributed to destabilizing the Pakistani state and facilitating insurgent attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

The first peace deal in March 2004, referred to as the Shakai Agreement, was interpreted by locals as a military surrender.<sup>69</sup> A February 2005 peace agreement with now-deceased TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud also backfired, emboldening Mehsud to later form the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Baitullah Mehsud directed a string of suicide attacks against both Pakistani security forces and civilians in 2008-2009. Mehsud was killed by a U.S. drone strike in August 2009 and was replaced by Hakimullah Mehsud, who was also killed by a drone strike in November 2013.

In contrast to their showing in the 2002 elections, Pakistan's Islamist political parties performed poorly in the country's February 2008 and May 2013 elections. In 2008, the JI boycotted the election, and the other Islamist parties garnered only two percent of the national vote. In 2013, the JUI/F won 10 seats, and the JI only three seats in the National Assembly. Several new religious political parties—including one with ties to Lashkar-e-Taiba—were established in 2017, part of a political “mainstreaming” effort, according to some media reports, supported by the Pakistani military to get hardliners to turn away from violence and to embrace the democratic process.<sup>70</sup>

What has been most damaging to Pakistan—and contributed significantly to the country's current instability—has been the Pakistan military's reliance on religious militants to achieve strategic objectives vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India.<sup>71</sup> The Pakistani Army's support for militancy as an instrument of foreign policy has eroded religious tolerance and created strong links between the Islamist political parties and militant groups.<sup>72</sup>

During its time in office, the Obama administration challenged the Pakistanis for their lack of consistency in countering terrorist groups in the region and their failure to crack down on the Afghan Taliban and related groups that threaten the U.S. and coalition mission in Afghanistan. The Kerry-Lugar bill passed by the Senate in September 2009 (formally known as the *Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009*) authorized \$7.5 billion in civilian aid to Pakistan over a five-year period but also conditioned military assistance on Pakistani measures to address terrorist threats. Former U.S. Director of National Intelligence Admiral Dennis Blair testified before Congress on February 2, 2010, “Pakistan's conviction that militant groups are strategically useful to counter India are hampering the fight against terrorism and helping al-Qaeda sustain its safe haven.”<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, the U.S. Congress has used its authority to block U.S. military aid for Pakistan in recent years. The *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) for FY2015 stipulated that \$300 million of the \$1 billion in CSF funding appropriated for Pakistan could no longer be subject to Presidential waiver authority. Thus, when the Administration failed to certify that the Pakistan military's operations in the tribal areas included attacking Haqqani Network bases, Congress blocked the transfer of \$300 million in CSF payments to Pakistan. The NDAA for FY2016 authorized another \$900 million in CSF funding for Pakistan, with \$350 million being ineligible for waiver.

The military confrontation following the siege of the Red Mosque in 2007, the aggressive military operations in the Swat Valley in 2009, and the on-going Zarb-e-Azb operations in North Waziristan against the TTP, all demonstrate that in certain situations the Pakistan military is prepared to confront extremists, even those with whom it previously had an intelligence relationship. The army links to religious militants revolve more around regional strategic calculations than deep sympathies with the Islamists' ideology (though Islamist views are embraced by some within the Pakistani military, giving rise to concerns about sympathetic officers enabling militant infiltration of the military).

While it may take time to fully sever ties between elements of the military/ISI establishment and Islamist militant groups, this outcome is possible—albeit unlikely. So long as the Pakistani military

projects India as an existential threat, the country will maintain its strategy of retaining links to terror groups—which at the end of the day is a strategy meant to target and intimidate India (in the case of LeT, JeM, and its ilk) and to keep India at bay in Afghanistan (in the case of the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network). There is little reason to believe that Pakistan will change its position toward India any time in the foreseeable future.

The hardening stance toward Pakistan among members of the U.S. Congress signals that America's patience with Pakistan's dual policies toward terrorism is wearing thin. While completely isolating Pakistan and disengaging from its leadership is not a realistic policy option, it is quite likely that U.S.-Pakistan relations under the Trump administration could continue on a downward trend—unless there is a substantial change in Pakistan's policies toward terrorist groups that threaten both regional stability as well as fundamental U.S. national security interests. Unfortunately, it appears unlikely that such a policy shift is in the offing any time soon.

The prospect became even more unlikely in July 2017, when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif resigned after being disqualified from office by the Pakistani Supreme Court as part of an investigation into his family's offshore holdings. Sharif, during his four years in power, espoused a more conciliatory position toward India and Afghanistan than did the military, and early in his term had called for more engagement with those two countries—a position that heightened civil-military tensions. In fact, Pakistan's *Dawn* newspaper revealed that in October 2016, the civilian government leadership had confronted top military officials—an unusual occurrence in a nation where the armed forces routinely cut the government down to size—about its need to act more robustly against terrorists of all stripes, and particularly those that target India and Afghanistan.<sup>74</sup>

With Sharif gone, the government's energies will be consumed by picking up the pieces from the premier's ouster and focused on preparing for a critical national election scheduled to take place in July 2018. This leaves the military firmly ensconced in the driver's seat of policy and seemingly removes any immediate possibility that Pakistan will change its long-standing policy and eliminate ties to all of the Islamist militant groups on its soil.

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