

The New York Times

June 21, 2008

“Pakistanis favor negotiating with Taliban militants rather than fighting them and they hold the United States most responsible for violence in the country, according to a new poll. It was conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based nonprofit group that studies extremism and helps form policies to counter it. The poll showed strong public support for Pakistan’s new policy of seeking peace with Islamic militants despite American concerns that a letup in military pressure will allow the Taliban and Al Qaeda to operate freely in the tribal regions along the Afghan border. Three-quarters of respondents said they wanted President Pervez Musharraf to resign or be impeached. The poll surveyed 1,306 adult Pakistanis in interviews between May 25 and June 1. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus three percentage points.”

The Nation

The Nation on Web

June 22, 2008 Lead Editorial

An eye-opener

BOTH the PPP and PML-N need to take into account the findings of the opinion survey conducted by Washington-based Terror Free Tomorrow. The exercise, third in the past nine months, would help map the direction of trends in public perception. These polls indicate a steady rise in popularity of Mian Nawaz Sharif and his party and decline in the case of Mr Asif Zardari and the PPP.

As these polls were conducted in all four provinces, the conclusions are highly significant and should be an eye-opener to the PPP, which considers that the issue of the judges' restoration had been blown out of proportion and has pussyfooted on action against the President. No less than 93 per cent of those interviewed said they were for free judiciary and nearly three-quarters wanted the President to be impeached in case he did not resign. Another factor that has played a significant role in bringing down the graph of the PPP's popularity is the sad state of the economy. After the departure of the PML-N from the federal cabinet the PPP is considered by the common man to be responsible for his

economic woes like the runaway inflation and shortage of power. The PPP leadership can rightly claim that it inherited these problems. Further that policies of the previous government like excessive borrowing despite opposition by the State Bank, lack of fiscal discipline, failure to undertake major infrastructure projects to ensure adequate water and power supply or take timely notice of the rising trends in food and fuel prices and shift the burden of the rise in the fuel prices to the consumer are responsible for most of the misfortunes the people face today. The man in the street however tends to judge the government from what it is able to deliver and thinks he has been provided little economic relief during the last three months.

The PML-N has to realize that it can face similar decline in popularity in Punjab if it fails to deliver. Dissatisfaction with the current government however has not created a soft corner for the military playing a role in politics. The disapproval rate has instead risen from 46 percent last August to 64 percent now. The government has to resolve the issue of the deposed judges and the future of the President at the earliest in line with the public aspirations. The coalition partners have to jointly hammer out an economic policy that can provide relief to the people. For this the PML-N has to be inducted into the federal cabinet at the earliest.



Front Page June 21, 2008

Majority for talks with Taliban; Nawaz rating rising

WASHINGTON: In a resounding setback for American policy, a majority of Pakistanis strongly back negotiations with Al Qaeda and the Taliban over military action, says an opinion poll released on Friday.

The survey by two Washington-based think-tanks — New America Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow — also finds a surge in public support for former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his party.

The surveyors note that most Pakistanis cannot afford flour and blame their government for the food crisis and that public support for Al Qaeda is also gaining ground since earlier this year.

The survey shows that Nawaz Sharif is now the most popular political leader in Pakistan. Mr Sharif's party, the PML-N, will emerge as the clear winner in any national contest, far eclipsing the current largest party in parliament, the PPP.

These are among the many findings of a new and extensive nationwide public opinion survey from May 25 to June 1, 2008, across Pakistan, covering both urban and rural areas and all provinces.

The survey, with face-to-face interviews of 1,306 Pakistanis age 18 or older and a margin of error of three per cent, is the third nationwide poll over the past nine months conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow.

In another dramatic reversal of Pakistani public opinion, Mr Sharif has emerged, by far, as the most popular political leader in Pakistan today. In advance of the June 26 by-election, a striking 86 per cent of Pakistanis have a favourable opinion of Mr Sharif, whose views have made some American policy-makers indicate concern.

Mr Sharif has also seen a steady rise in his popularity, from 57 per cent favourable in the August 2007 poll, to 74 per cent in January 2008 and 86 per cent today. As significantly, those with a very favourable opinion have almost doubled since January 2008 to 43 per cent now -- a level no other political figure in Pakistan comes even close to.

By comparison, Asif Zardari, co-chairman of the PPP, just has a 13 per cent very favourable rating.

If elections were held today, Mr Sharif's PML-N would emerge as the clear winner, garnering 42 per cent of the vote to the PPP's 32 per cent. The PML-N has witnessed a significant surge in popularity. From only 15 per cent saying they would vote for them in the August 2007 poll, to 25 per cent in the pre-election January poll (which mirrored the actual election results), the PML-N today stands at 42 per cent, the most popular party in Pakistan.

The reasons for the rise of Mr Sharif and the declining fortunes of others inside Pakistan can be found in widespread Pakistani discontent with the status quo.

The high cost of food and fuel is hitting ordinary Pakistanis hard. An overwhelming 86 per cent of Pakistanis have faced increasing difficulty in obtaining flour for their daily food consumption -- primarily because of high prices.

And Pakistanis consider their own government most responsible.

Similarly, 81 per cent have been affected by the high price of fuel, with again, in their view, the Pakistani government most responsible, only for fuel closely followed by American and western oil companies.

Overall, just 20 per cent of Pakistanis think their country is heading in the right direction. With the highest priority Pakistanis have for their government (even slightly higher than the economy) an independent judiciary, most Pakistanis now blame the PPP and President Musharraf for failing to restore the judges sacked by Mr Musharraf last year. Almost three-quarters of Pakistanis want Mr Musharraf to resign and if he doesn't, to be

removed by parliament as president.

Dissatisfaction with the current civilian government does not mean, however, that the public wants the Pakistani military to return to political affairs.

In the survey last August, 45 per cent approved of the military playing a role in the political and economic affairs of the country. That number has now dropped to 28 per cent, while those who disapprove have steadily risen from 46 per cent last August to 64 per cent now, with those strongly disapproving doubling to over half.

As many as 44 per cent of Pakistanis think the United States poses the greatest threat to their personal safety. India is next at 14 per cent. By contrast, a mere six per cent feel Al Qaeda is a threat, with four per cent the Afghan Taliban and eight per cent the Pakistani Taliban.

Half of all Pakistanis want their government to negotiate and not fight Al Qaeda, with less than a third saying military action by the Pakistani government against Al Qaeda is called for.

For Pakistani Taliban, 58 per cent favour negotiations to 19 per cent for military action.

In stark opposition to American policy, the Pakistani people themselves would go even further than their own government and not only negotiate with Pakistani Taliban fighters, but with both Arab Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban fighters as well, decisively opposing any military action.

Even before the latest American military incursion (which occurred after the poll was complete), a mere 12 per cent of Pakistanis supported any unilateral American military action against Al Qaeda fighters inside Pakistan. Strong opposition to the US military has also intensified since earlier this year.

A third of Pakistanis now voice a positive view of Al Qaeda, nearly double the percentage from earlier this year. Similarly, for Osama bin Laden, 34 per cent currently have a favourable opinion, up from 24 per cent in January but still below the 46 per cent who thought so in August 2007.

Trust for American motives has sunk to new lows: Three quarters of Pakistanis say that the real purpose of the US-led war on terror is to weaken the Muslim world and dominate Pakistan.

Significantly, when asked who was most responsible for the violence that is occurring in Pakistan today, more than half (52 per cent) blame the United States -- only eight per cent Al Qaeda fighters. Despite the spate of suicide bombings that have shaken Pakistan at the apparent hands of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, Pakistanis see the United States as posing the greatest threat to their own personal safety.

June 24 (Bloomberg) -- Former Prime Minister [Nawaz Sharif](#) was found to be Pakistan's most popular leader by a research group.

The 58-year-old Sharif, ousted by Musharraf in a 1999 military coup, is the most popular political leader in Pakistan and he would win an election held now, according to a report last week by Terror-Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based research group that published a nationwide poll of Pakistanis. The poll found 86 percent of Pakistanis rate Sharif favorably against 23 percent for Musharraf.

Sharif's approval rating in a poll this month was almost double that of Pakistan Peoples Party leader [Asif Ali Zardari](#), his partner in a fragile three-month-old coalition government. About 86 percent saw Sharif favorably, compared with Zardari's 49 percent and Musharraf's 23 percent, according to a [survey](#) of 1,306 Pakistanis by Washington-based [Terror-Free Tomorrow](#). The nonpartisan group researches public opinion in the Muslim world.

The New York Times

June 26, 2008

Many fear mounting Pakistani anger will eventually outweigh military gains, a concern that is borne out in a public opinion survey. A national poll conducted in mid-2008 by Terror Free Tomorrow found that 74 percent of Pakistanis [oppose direct U.S. military \(PDF\)](#) action against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. Washington's support for Musharraf—despite his declining popularity in 2007—has also left the United States without much support within Pakistan.



June 23, 2008

A new nationwide poll across Pakistan by the non-profit polling organization Terror Free Tomorrow shows that favorable opinion toward Al Qaeda is growing inside Pakistan. A third of Pakistanis now voice a positive view, nearly double the percentage from earlier this year. In opposition to American policy,

half of all Pakistanis want their government to negotiate and not fight Al Qaeda and the Taliban, with less than a third saying military action by the Pakistani government is called for.

Even before the latest American military incursion, only 12 percent of Pakistanis supported any American military action against Al Qaeda fighters inside Pakistan.



COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
A Nonpartisan Resource for Information and Analysis

June 26, 2008

Polls continue to show a majority in Pakistan favor talks with the militants over military action. A [May poll by Terror Free Tomorrow \(PDF\)](#), a group that includes Sen. John McCain and 9/11 Commission co-chairs Lee Hamilton and Thomas Kean on its advisory board, found that 58 percent of Pakistanis surveyed favored negotiations, while only 19 percent favored U.S. military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban.



The Washington Times

Lead editorial July 2, 2008

"Any Pakistani government must reckon with the fact that its countrymen prefer negotiation over military action against al Qaeda, the Taliban and other terrorist militants. In a recent study by Terror Free Tomorrow and the New America Foundation, more than half of Pakistanis said the United States was to blame for violence inside the country today, as compared to only 8 percent blaming al Qaeda. This is a perception gap of enormous proportions, and a similarly epic public-diplomacy failure.

Where are public-diplomacy efforts today? The sorry truth is that they have failed in Pakistan just as they have in most Muslim-majority countries. Insofar as the United States can change this context, it creates room for Pakistan's government in the unpopular business of combating terrorism.

Toward that end, President Bush should heed his own words from 2005: "We are not doing a very good job of getting our message out."

TheNational

Peter Bergen and Kenneth Ballen

- July 05. 2008

ISLAMABAD // The US government is pressing the new Pakistani civilian administration to back off efforts to remove Pervez Musharraf from the presidency.

But if the United States truly wanted to shore up democracy and help fight terrorism inside Pakistan, it would pursue the exactly opposite policy and respond directly to the people of Pakistan instead. A new public opinion survey shows why.

More than the ailing economy, the survey, conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow in collaboration with the New America Foundation and the Pakistan Institute for Public Opinion, revealed that the most important priority for Pakistanis is an independent judiciary, with 93 per cent of Pakistanis polled saying so. Last year, Mr Musharraf fired and arrested key members of the judiciary to try to quash any judicial opposition to his election.

Mr Musharraf, backed by the United States, is still seen as the prime obstacle to the restoration of independent judges and the rule of law. This is the issue most important to residents, and the result is that more than three-quarters of Pakistanis want Mr Musharraf immediately removed from office.

However, the coalition government's two main parties, the Pakistan People's Party and the PML-N, remain divided over Mr Musharraf's future, with the United States – which sees Mr Musharraf as a key ally in its war against extremists – said to be leaning on the PPP to slow down efforts to unseat the president.

The survey, which was released last month, polled 1,306 Pakistanis aged 18 or older across 131 urban and rural sampling points in all four provinces of Pakistan, and has a plus or minus three per cent margin of error.

The results showed that Pakistani opinion of Mr Musharraf had sunk to its lowest level, and also that Mr Musharraf's future is a decision for Pakistanis alone to determine, not the US government.

At the same time, favourable opinion toward al Qa'eda is mounting. One-third of Pakistanis now voice a positive view, nearly double the percentage in a poll earlier this year. Significantly, when asked who was most responsible for the violence that is occurring in Pakistan today, most blame the United States; only eight per cent said al Qa'eda fighters.

There is also almost no level of trust in US motives. Three-quarters of Pakistanis said the real purpose of the US-led war on terrorism is to weaken the Muslim world and dominate Pakistan.

Despite the recent spate of suicide bombings that have shaken Pakistan and which are attributable to al Qa'eda and the Taliban, 44 per cent of Pakistanis see the United States as posing the greatest threat to their personal safety.

Its traditional enemy, India, is next at 14 per cent. By contrast, far less than 10 per cent said they feel al Qa'eda and the Taliban constitute any threat.

These are alarming findings. Pakistanis simply do not consider al Qa'eda their enemy, rather, it is the United States.

Al Qa'eda's considerable goodwill inside Pakistan is generated by its perceived goals, which Pakistanis told the pollsters they largely share. More than anything else, Pakistanis think that standing up to the United States is the aim of Osama bin Laden and his terrorism network – and six out of every 10 respondents said they agree with that goal. The poll was conducted before US military strikes last month killed 11 Pakistani soldiers on the Afghan-Pakistan border. So the level of anti-US sentiment now is likely to be even higher.

Pakistan is considered by US national security officials to be the home base of bin Laden, al Qa'eda and many Taliban fighters. From a safe haven in the border areas, fighters are free to train, plan and launch attacks inside Afghanistan and elsewhere. Indeed, last week, Adm Michael Mullen, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said plans for another terrorist attack against the United States are under way – and that the attack would come from Pakistan.

Yet the policy of the United States is to back, seemingly at all costs, the increasingly unpopular and isolated Mr Musharraf, and sink US popularity even further – while raising the appeal of al Qa'eda and the Taliban.

If George W Bush, the US president, and the US government made a forceful and decisive break with Mr Musharraf, it would be the single most important, immediate step Washington could take to restore some measure of goodwill among the Pakistani people, and regain the initiative against terrorists.

Pakistanis long to see the United States in a better light. Two-thirds – including bin Laden supporters – said policies ranging from US business investment, free

trade, educational aid, disaster assistance, medical care and training and increased US visas for Pakistanis, would significantly improve their opinion of the United States.

The surveys show that regardless of the growing discontent, the number of Pakistanis who are now willing to view the United States more positively is higher than at any other time in the past year.

The path ahead is clear. There is no popular mandate inside Pakistan for going after al Qa'eda and the Taliban.

For any Pakistani government, particularly a democratically elected one, military action is almost a non-starter – and unilateral US military action could trigger even greater instability in nuclear-armed Pakistan.

US policy needs to be perceived as on the side of ordinary Pakistanis. For only when Pakistanis see al Qa'eda as their enemy, too, and the United States as, if not their friend then at least not their enemy, will al Qa'eda's days inside Pakistan finally be numbered.

A good start would be for the United States at last to end its support for Mr Musharraf, and support the priorities of the Pakistani people themselves.

Peter Bergen is CNN's national security analyst and a senior fellow at the New America Foundation. Kenneth Ballen is the president of Terror Free Tomorrow.

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

=====*and The Tampa Times*=====

July 4, 2008

The Taliban and its terrorist supporters are operating from the protection of Pakistan's rugged mountains, where Osama bin Laden might be hiding.

But the real U.S. challenge is with the attitude of the people there. A recent poll from Pakistan by Terror Free Tomorrow said that half the people blame the United States for the violence and only 8 percent blame al-Qaida.

July 9, 2008

The United States is struggling with Pakistan. The problem is manifold, encompassing a resurgent al-Qaeda, a Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan with bases in Pakistan, and Islamist militancy in Pakistan's tribal areas and North-West Frontier Province.

But most damaging of all for the United States is that people in Pakistan overwhelming see the United States as the problem.

A [poll](#) conducted at the end of May 2008 by the Pakistan Institute for Public Opinion for the U.S. groups Terror Free Tomorrow and the New America Foundation revealed the intensity of public opposition to American policies. The poll found that 60% of Pakistanis believe the U.S. "war on terror" seeks to weaken the Muslim world, and 15% think its goal is to "ensure US domination over Pakistan." About one-third of Pakistanis now have a positive view of al-Qaeda, twice as many as think positively of the United States.

The poll revealed that 44% of Pakistanis believe the United States is the greatest threat to their personal safety (India is a distant second at 14%). The Pakistani Taliban, who are now organized into the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (the Taliban Movement of Pakistan) and by some estimates have up to 40,000 fighters, are seen as a threat by less than 10%. Al-Qaeda barely registers as a threat, slightly surpassing Pakistan's own military and Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI).

Similarly, when asked who was most responsible for violence in Pakistan today, the poll found that over 50% of Pakistanis blame the United States. About 10% blame respectively India and the Pakistan army (and ISI). The Pakistani Taliban was blamed by less than 5%.

A way forward is not clear. But the first step must be for Washington to consider how its policies in the "war on terror," in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan have failed and now feed public animosity in Pakistan toward the United States and support for the Islamist militancy. For its part, Pakistan needs to have a national conversation on what kind of future it wants, whether it wishes to become the kind of savage and ignorant society that the Taliban offer, and if not, how to confront the Islamist threat.



St. Louis Post Dispatch, July 10, 2008

Perhaps the worst news of all is that the vast majority of Pakistanis – while saying they oppose the Taliban – are in agreement with those stated goals. A recent poll by Terror Free Tomorrow found that while only 3 percent would

have voted for the Taliban if they had been on the ballot in the elections, 75 percent of Pakistanis favor the implementation of "strict *shari'a* law" in Pakistan, and other goals of Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

The logo for the Council on Foreign Relations is displayed within a light blue rectangular banner. The text "COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS" is written in a large, dark blue, serif font. Below it, the tagline "A Nonpartisan Resource for Information and Analysis" is written in a smaller, dark blue, sans-serif font.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
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Council Special Report July 2008

Most Pakistanis tend to believe that U.S. intervention in Afghanistan was more a cause of regional instability than a response to it. Anti-Americanism is widespread and profound. In a national May/June 2008 poll by Terror Free Tomorrow, only 16 percent of Pakistanis had a very or somewhat favorable view of the United States, the lowest popularity rating of all the countries surveyed and less than half that of India.