

**PAKISTANI MILITANTISM:  
A LINK BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS  
AND THE RISE IN TERRORISM ALONG THE AF-PAK BORDER?**

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## **Findings**

Analysis of nine socio-economic conditions reported by the Pakistani Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS) indicate that there are ten districts, within two provinces, that form the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan with conditions that may yield a rise in militantism. Additionally, while the provinces themselves border Afghanistan, the districts in distress are deeper into Pakistan than originally hypothesized. The identified districts are Swat, Mansehra, Haripur, Abbottabad, Karak, Dera Bughti, Bolan, Lasbela, and Jhal Magsi.

## **Problem**

Is there a link between current socio-economic conditions along the Afghanistan Pakistan border and the increase in violent Islamism?

This issue is extremely significant within the Intelligence Community and the Counter-Terrorism community because understanding where terrorism is gaining root will allow the professionals who combat terror each day to help eliminate its spread among other people and nations. More specifically, as it relates to Pakistan, if we as a nation can help the Pakistani government to curb the upward trend of violence and unrest, then the resulting calm will not only assist our war on terror but also provide the Pakistani people a measure of normalcy. The following analysis is intended to be one facet, one GEOINT piece, to an even larger puzzle that will assist with identifying troubled areas in Pakistan before they delve into complete unrest. It is intended to supplement future analyses and help hone in on areas that will require further study.

## **Grounding**

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s to the US involvement in Afghanistan after 11 Sept 2001 to the present day, Pakistan has been a staging area for attacks into Afghanistan (Schmidle). In truth, the situation has evolved slightly, however the people of Pakistan continue to be a strong base for logistics and people headed to Afghanistan. Terrorism has many factors that contribute to how it spreads, however many of the root causes of militant Islamism can be connected to this area of the world over the past 30 years. (Shoebat) One set of factors may be the socio-economic conditions for which a people are living in. While this has no link to the mentality of a terrorist, what it may do is provide an area that is more likely to be a mass base or support area from which terrorists can find a home. Specifically, the local population may support the terrorist group if they provide public services and safety that the government cannot provide. This is the area the study will focus on. Some conditions may allow a terrorist group to have a mass base for support, where the federal government cannot or will not provide services to its people, and the terrorist group in turn can offer those neglected services to the local people in exchange for tacit support.

Within the study area there are numerous geospatial aspects that can be considered important during analysis. Specifically there are components of the Physical, Life, and Intellectual Spaces that help narrow analysis and allow the analyst to better understand the area of study. The Life Space is where much of this study originates. Here, the focus areas include access to health care facilities, schools, housing, water sources, police services, and agriculture. Each of these factors is important because they are things that, typically, are monitored or provided for by a government. Without the government to provide these services, then it is possible for an outside group to exploit these factors. Second, the Physical Space encompasses many of the geographic factors of the study area, to include access to road networks, land use, and elevation. As they pertain to this study, each of these can have a secondary effect on the services provided by the government, specifically dealing with the ease at which representatives and workers can access remote areas. If an area is under distress, and there is little or no way the government can get to that area, then there is a high probability that there are no or few provided services. Finally, the Intellectual Space in this analysis will encompass factors such as economic perception within a household, and individual or group perception of a communal “pull” toward terrorism or militantism. This last factor is hard to assess, however can be determined by trends and news reports over a period of time.

### **Hypotheses:**

The first hypothesis that this analysis seeks to prove or disprove is: If there are numerous socio-economic factors that are predominately negative within western Pakistan, then the conditions could exist for an increase in militant Islamism.

An additional possible hypothesis is if there are unstable areas in Pakistan, then the instability may not be linked to terrorism, based on other additional data.

Third, if there are not troubled areas in western Pakistan, then all factors must even out to yield no appreciable differences between districts.

Finally, a fourth possible hypothesis could be that if the local residents are actually increasing in prosperity then the governmental data may be incorrect and the localities may be undergoing an increase in stabilizing forces.

### **Evidence**

The majority of the data and evidence used in this analysis is pre-existing information. Primarily socio-economic data from the Pakistani Federal Bureau of Statistics from the 2008-2009 time period was used in the analysis. Specific factors that are used in the analysis include:

- 1) Percent of people sick or injured over a two week period
- 2) Percent of people with access to health care facility
- 3) Personal household economic “feeling” (better to worse, year over year)

- 4) Type of tenure for subsidized living accommodations
- 5) Type of tenure for free living accommodations
- 6) Access to Police services
- 7) Access to agricultural land
- 8) Primary source of water, including well, hand pump, or other
- 9) Percent of people who have completed primary school

(Data from Federal Bureau of Statistics for Pakistan. *Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement*. 2008-2009. <http://www.statpak.gov.pk/fbs/>)

Each of these subsets is directly related to the analysis because when they are combined into an analysis they can all give a broader picture of the conditions in which the local population is living under. Any one condition may not yield unrest or dissatisfaction with the government or society, however as a whole there is an increasing likelihood of distress.

Finally, the Pakistani government and the people who collected the values only know the true quality of this information. Since it is professionally reported with significant scientific methodology accompanying it, it can be assumed to be reasonably accurate. However, as a cautionary note, due to the remoteness of some areas as well as the potential hostility to the government, there could be systematic errors induced into the data that are not known or understated by Pakistan.

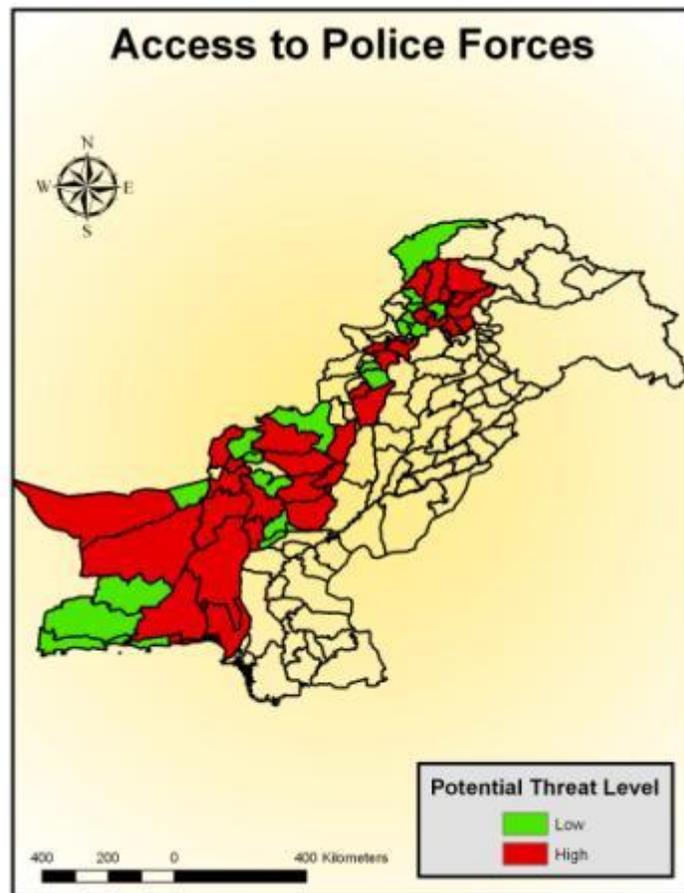
### **Derived Spatial Evidence**

Based on the above stated data, many of the data sets used in analysis were derived from the original FBS data. The general methodology to derive data from the previous information is as follows:

- 1) The original information from the Pakistani FBS was in a PDF document. All of these values needed to be added into a properly formatted Excel spreadsheet.
- 2) With all of the data in spreadsheets, something with a spatial reference and depicting all of the borders within Pakistan was required to properly show each of the socio-economic values by district. An Administrative District (ADM) shapefile was used for this. (GeoCommunity)
- 3) Each of the spreadsheets with the socio-economic information was joined to the ADM file.
- 4) The next step was, potentially, the most subjective of the process. In order to assess the socio-economic values on a meaningful scale, the top 30% districts from each socio-economic category were used in the analysis. Depending on the category, this changed based on what one could expect to find in a neglected or depressed area. For example, the top 30% of districts reporting a very low presence of policing forces was utilized. Similarly, if the districts reported high values for “Much Worse” prosperity year over year, then those

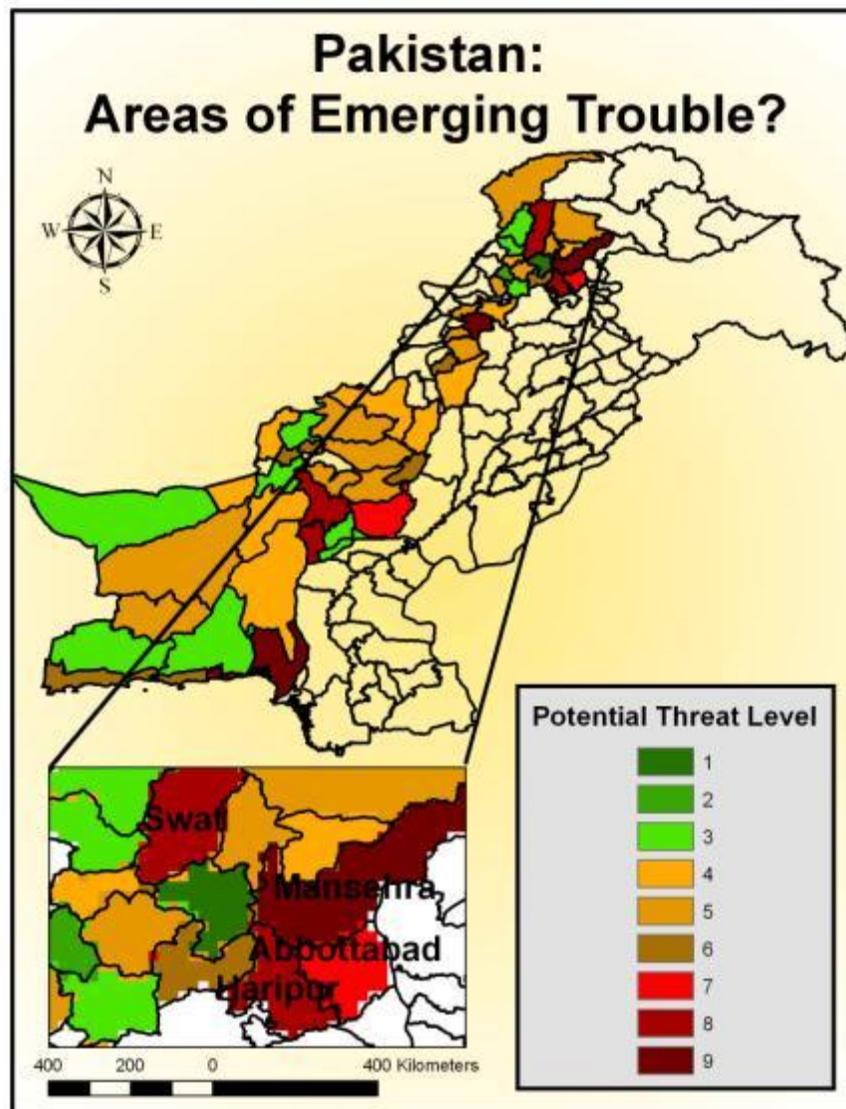
districts were selected and the remaining 70% were ignored. The intent of this is to identify the lowest of the low, while leaving a reasonable buffer to ensure that small changes in unstable districts was not missed.

- 5) With all of the data usable in ArcMap, ArcToolbox was utilized to change the feature classes into a raster dataset.
- 6) Once all of the individual socio-economic factors were in raster format, the map algebra function was utilized to re-assign values to the datasets based on the above stated percentages within each set. This created a second raster with values of either 1 or 0, where 1 equals “true” for the districts having (for example) less than 15% access to policing forces. This process can be seen in the following image. The raster values of 1 or 0 have been re designated as “Low” or “High” depending on where the districts fell in the selection.



- 7) Finally, all of these individual raster layers, by socio-economic factor, were added together (ie. all of the 1's and 0s) to create one raster file with values from 1 to 9 (9 being the total number of factors in the study). On this scale, districts that continually were in the lowest percentile of the study factors had the highest values. This leads to the conclusion that the districts with the highest total values (7-9) are suffering the worst of the economic conditions,

and have the potential for being influenced the most by terrorist groups. The following map depicts the results of this study area.



The quality of the above result is directly relational to the quality of the data from the Pakistani FSB. Additionally, induced error may come through the selection of the appropriate percentile within each socio-economic category (ie. Peshawar was not included in the police or the agricultural categories because it had relatively positive values when compared to the other districts, bumping it above the bottom 30% of comparative districts). Finally, with the conversion from a feature class to a raster, some of the exact shapes of the districts were lost, however, the intent is only to identify the district not maintain exact boundaries.

For future analysis, including additional factors for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA; the null/transparent districts along the northwest AF-PAK border)) would have increased the accuracy and meaningfulness of the analysis. Currently this

area was not included in the Pakistani data, likely due to the remoteness, lack of governmental influence, and insecurity on those areas. Finally, including the provinces of Punjab and Sindh may yield additional troubled areas not included in the study area along the AF-PAK border.

### **Discussion of the Hypothesis and Evidence**

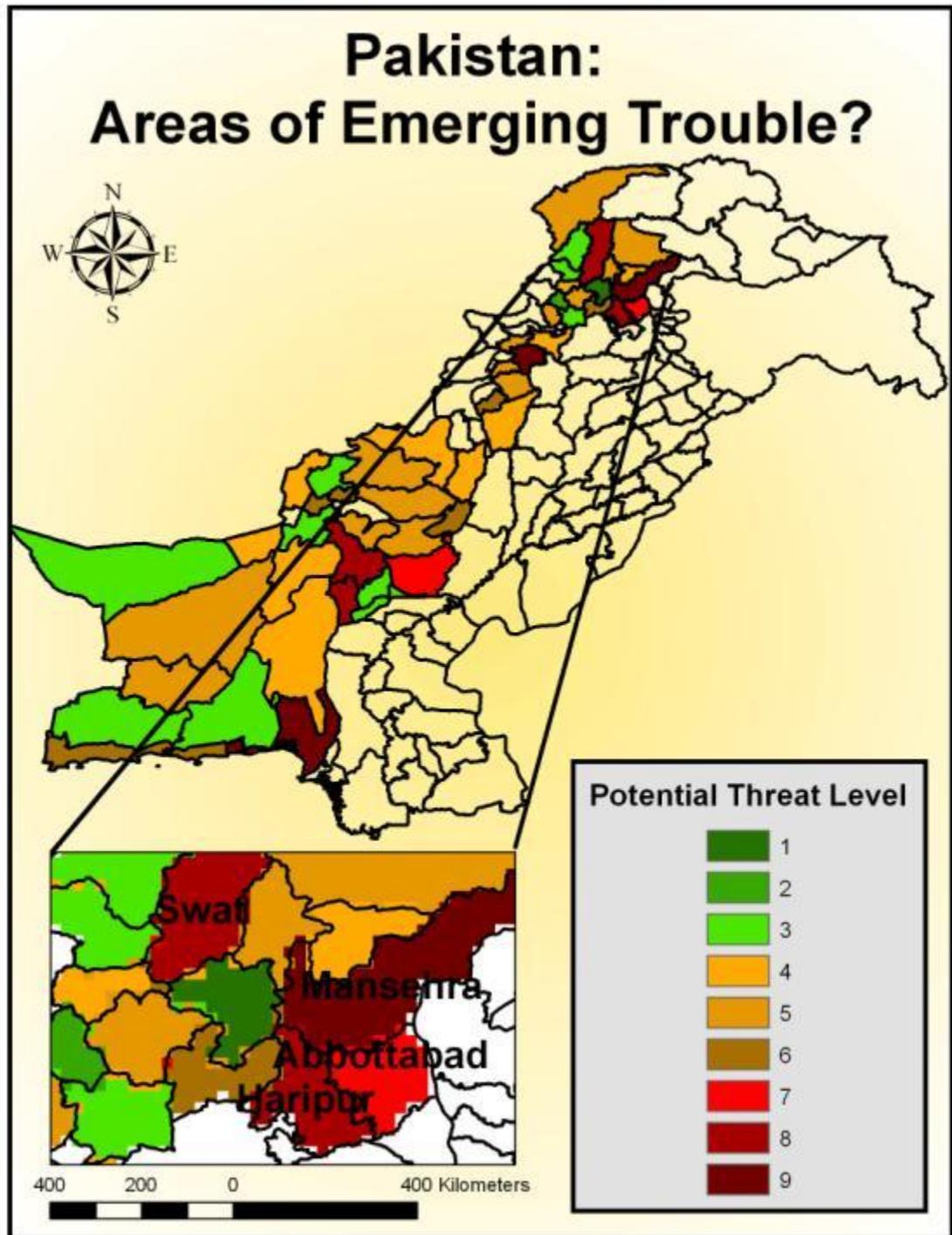
The primary question that this analysis intended to address was if there was a link between worsening socio-economic conditions then there should be an increased likelihood for militantism in the areas via terrorist groups finding a mass-base for support. This is especially relevant and visible in the events of the last 10 days with the death of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan. According to the CNN evening news on Monday 2 May 2011, Abbottabad is a “sleepy military retirement community in the hills outside of Islamabad.” In the analysis, Abbottabad was identified as a potential candidate for an increase in militantism, scoring a 7 of 9 on poor socio-economic factors. A week ago when reports first emerged from Abbottabad, it raised questions of how a seemingly low key, retirement area was the new home of bin Laden. Last evening, Monday 9 May 2011 Fox News reported that new factors are emerging from within Abbottabad that set conditions to allow bin Laden to live un-noticed for years. Additionally, a very intriguing factor in Zahid Hussain’s book *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* highlights the indoctrination of Islam that the military underwent in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Specifically he states:

“Soldiers were encouraged to attend Tablighi gatherings. The purpose was to indoctrinate cadets and young officers with an obscurantist interpretation of Islam. Many of those leader later rose to positions of power and took control of sensitive institutions, including the ISI.” (p. 20)

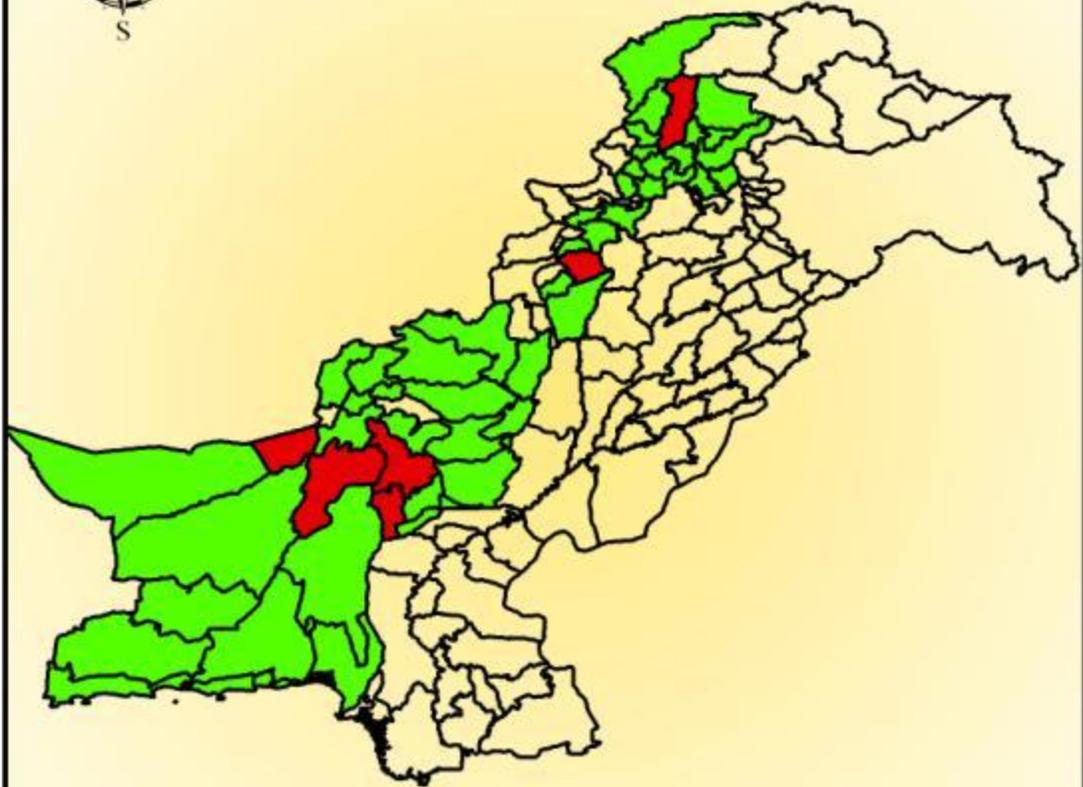
This piece of information, combined with the knowledge that Abbottabad is a military community with a large retirement base, is not a large stretch to infer that radicalized senior military officials knew of and/or supported bin Laden. At a minimum, it is highly likely that many people were apathetic to his presence, and because of a belief in common ideology, would never have turned bin Laden over to Pakistani authorities.

In conclusion, this analysis is intended to be a component of an ever-increasing analysis within Pakistan of areas that may harbor terrorists. This is a very complicated and ever evolving situation, however there are some enduring factors that all extremist groups require to survive. Specifically, as this analysis addresses, terrorist groups require a mass-base of support. This support does not have to be material or personnel, but at a minimum must be tacit and non-interferal. If the group can offer things that the government cannot, then the locals will see them as a source for stability and protection. Identifying these areas can be critical in understanding why and where terrorism takes root. By understanding the where and why, then long-term solutions can be implemented, and the world-wide effort to combat militantism will be infinitely more effective.

APPENDIX A  
MAPS AND GRAPHICS



# Much Worse Economic Prosperity Year over Year 2008-2009



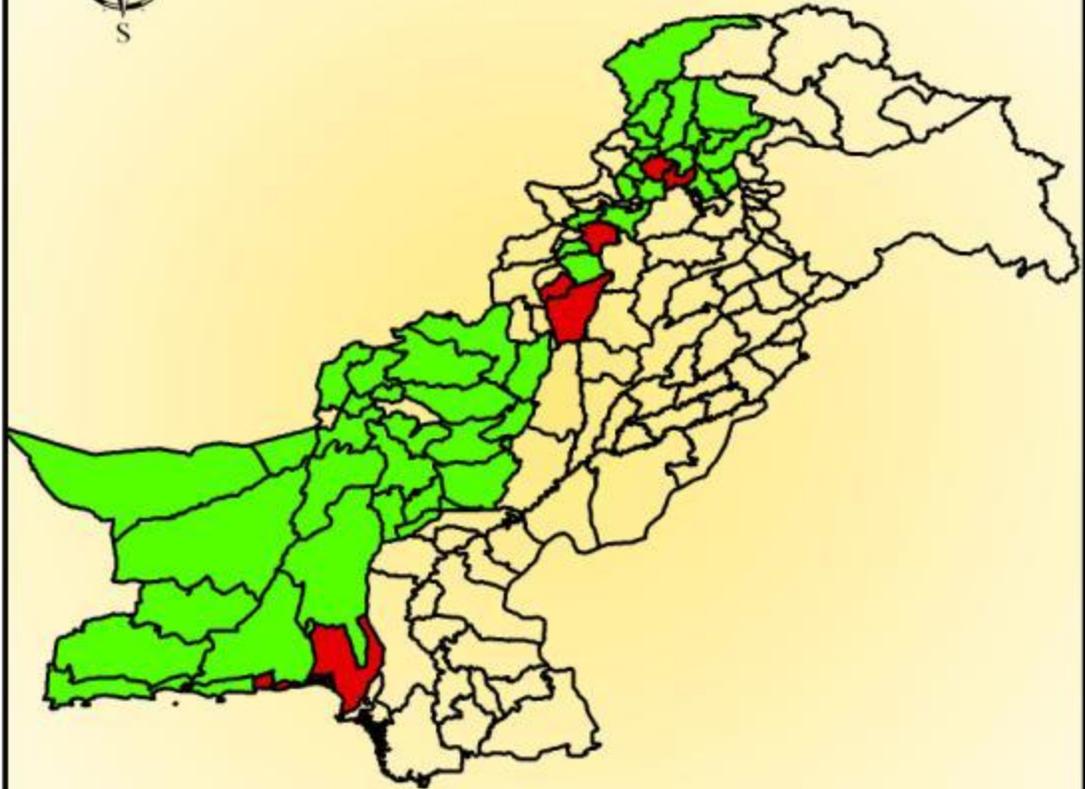
### Potential Threat Level

-  Low
-  High

400 200 0 400 Kilometers



# Population Sick or Injured Two Week Period 2009



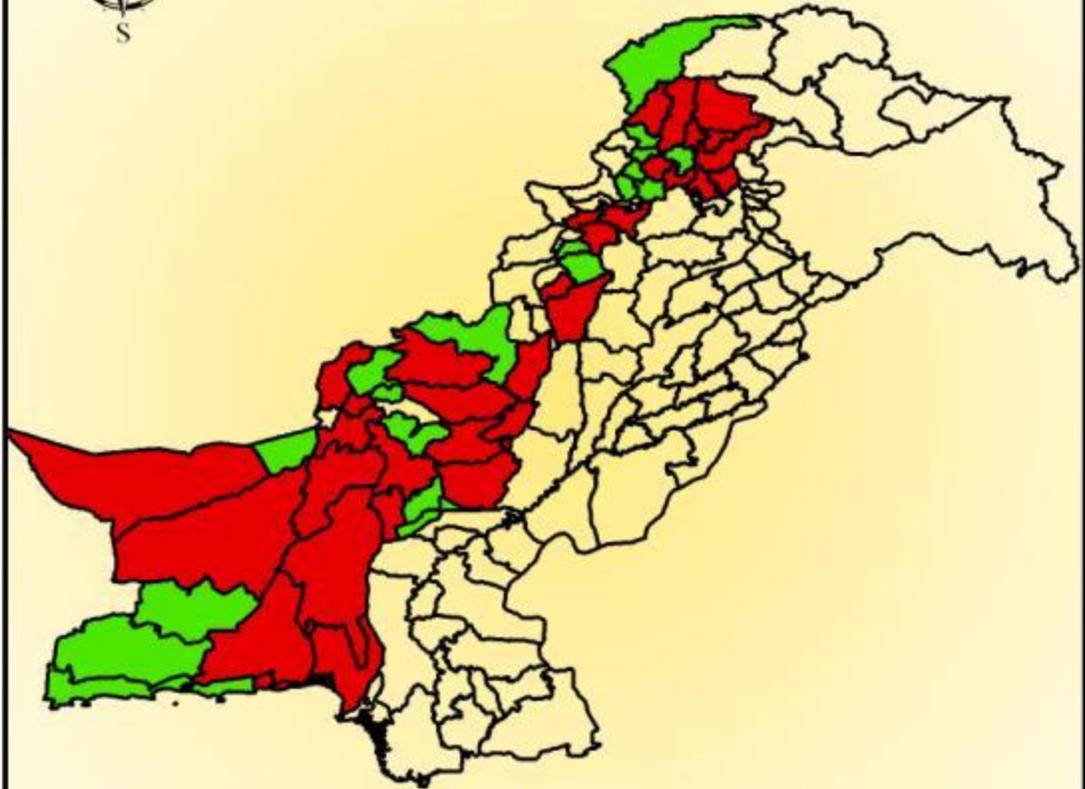
## Potential Threat Level

-  Low
-  High

400 200 0 400 Kilometers



# Access to Police Forces



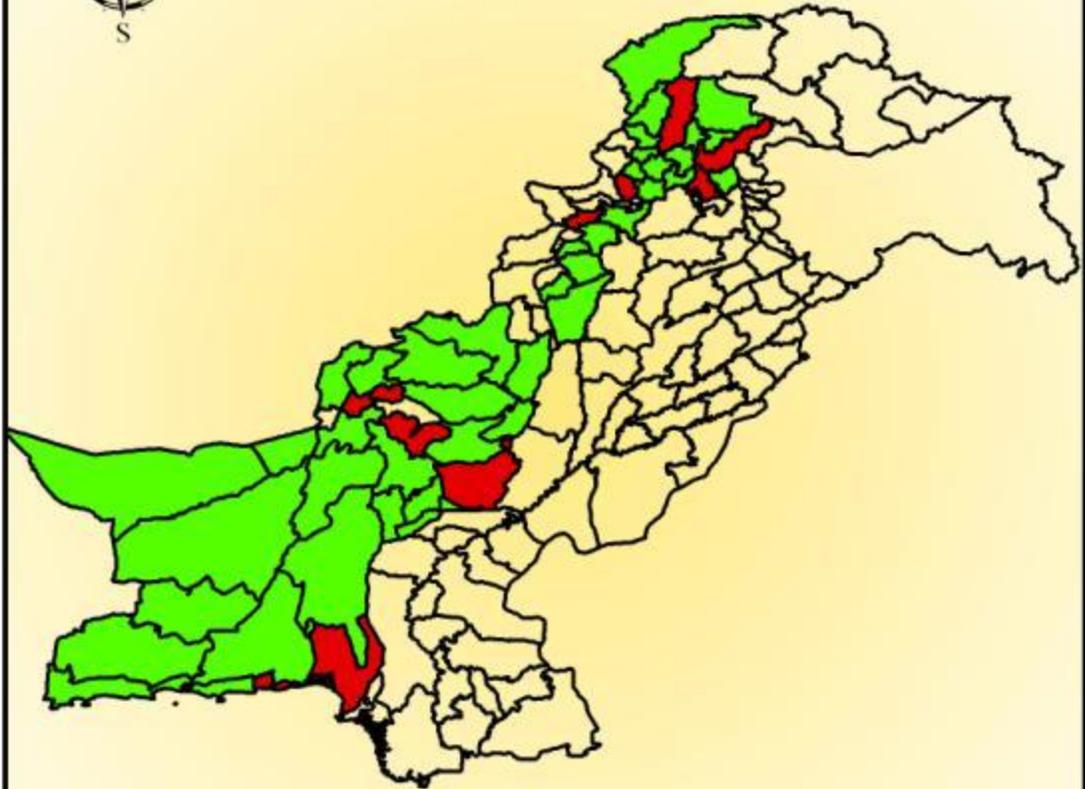
## Potential Threat Level

-  Low
-  High

400 200 0 400 Kilometers



# Population Living in Subsidized Housing 2009



## Potential Threat Level

-  Low
-  High

400 200 0 400 Kilometers



**APPENDIX B**  
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**APPENDIX C**  
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