Pakistan Inequality Report

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October 2019

Executive Summary

Data
Six datasets on wealth and status distribution in Pakistan were analyzed: 2015 World Bank quintile and decile estimates of income, International Labor Organization (ILO) income by occupation data from years 2018 and 2014, USAID Demographic Health Survey (DHS) wealth factor scores and agricultural land ownership from 2012-13, and wealth factor scores from 2006-07.

Results
All six datasets paint a picture of a risk acceptant Pakistani population that has slightly decreased over the past decade, and the average Arrow-Pratt score is higher than most countries in this study, indicating a less risk acceptant population than most countries. Interesting variations and shifts between occupational datasets in risk acceptance may explain the success of Imran Khan's populist campaign; furthermore, the highly risk acceptant scores in the agricultural land ownership datasets highlight the extreme economic inequality that exists in the distribution of agricultural land ownership.

Significance for Risk Taking and Stability
The propensity for risk taking in Pakistan is best understood in the context of Pakistan's widespread corruption and the lack of competent economic governance. Public discontent possibly fuels frustration with these issues and maybe linked to the populist rise of Imran Khan who ran anti-corruption, economic reform, and a strong anti-Western sentiment that places the blame of VEO activity and instability on the US.

Implications for US Interests
Due to the complex socio-political dynamics in Pakistan and the complex regional interests in Islamabad and across South Asia, the US has paradoxical interests in Pakistan's stability. The pronounced decrease in social status registered in this report's analysis of craftsmen coincided with the ascendancy of Imran Khan, and this dynamic is important understanding the populist support that Khan enjoys. The continued success of Imran Khan is supported by his strong anti-Western rhetoric (which resonates with working class Pakistanis), and such sentiment further encourages the growing Sino-Pak relationship. Conversely, a decrease in Imran Khan's popularity could lead to widespread instability and a larger role for Pakistan's security forces in political affairs. Such a dynamic would likely lead to more tacit support for VEOs operating in Pakistan, which is antithetical to Washington's strategic interests.

Implications for China's Interests
Pakistan's social cleavages and wealth inequality do not present immediate concerns to China's economic interests and investments in Pakistan. Given the integral role that Pakistan plays in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and in the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China is more interested in safeguarding their investment and of Chinese citizens working to construct CPEC infrastructure. Such social cleavages and inequality may come to a boiling point that threatens the ability of the Khan regime

to deliver on the economic agreements, and in this regard China may pursue activities that seek to stabilize Pakistan's economy and political security.

Implications for Russia's Interests

Russia stands to gain the most from instability brought on by economic inequality in Pakistan, provided that Moscow can capitalize on such uncertainty by increasing anti-Western sentiment and further contract US presence.

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Introduction

This is a summary report on inequality in Pakistan compiled as part of the Aggrieved Populations project conducted in support of the 2019 Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Future of Great Power Competition and Conflict project conducted for the JS-J39.

This report provides background on why the country was chosen, relevant historical background, literature review concerning inequality in the country, synopses of empirical data sources and analyses, and a concluding section that summarizes the findings. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of inequality and grievance in the country, but to place the empirical analyses conducted on this country in their social and political context and to highlight interesting cases of inequality pertinent to risk acceptance and great power competition. The analyses focus on the measurement of population risk sensitivity as a function of measured inequality using the Arrow-Pratt measure of risk aversion, whose positive values indicate risk aversion and negative values indicate risk acceptance. Studies have shown that risk acceptance is associated with social unrest, terrorism, and other forms of social disruption (Kuznar 2007; 2019). The full explanation of the underlying method and theory is presented in the summary report, *Inequality, Risk Sensitivity and Grievance in Context: Summary of Aggrieved Populations Country Reports*, submitted as part of this SMA project. This report is intended to be supporting material to that report and presumes familiarity with it.

In order to create an inclusive and more representative set of countries, an effort was made to analyze countries from each major region of the world (Africa, Central Asia, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, South Asia).

Why Pakistan?

Pakistan was chosen for five reasons: 1) It is a Central Asian country, 2) it has been a refuge for Taliban forces, 3) it has experienced terrorism, 4) it is unstable, and 5) both China and Russia are seeking influence in the country and region.

Great Power Interests in Pakistan

Pakistan is a pivotal actor in South Asia that has nuclear weapons, contentious relations with regional and supra-regional powers, is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and has territorial contiguity with India, Afghanistan, China, and Iran. Islamabad is caught between great power interests of primarily China and the US, however Russia has pursued a recent rapprochement in favor of the "Sino-Pak geostrategic bond" (Thoker & Singh, 2017). The regional conflicts and domestic concerns that embroil Pakistan are also of strategic consequence to great powers, particularly through Islamabad's influence in Afghanistan, and transnational VEOs operating within Pakistan.

Beijing has enjoyed a close strategic partnership with Islamabad for decades, and this relationship has increased significantly since 2015 when both nations formalized the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Markey & West, 2016). The CPEC entails $62 billion USD of Chinese investment as a cornerstone of China's BRI, and is comprised of numerous energy and transportation infrastructure projects. Such an investment understandably necessitates a host of increased diplomatic and security cooperation between both countries. Given this heavy investment, China's primary interest in Pakistan is ensuring economic and political stability. Security cooperation has recently increased between both nations as militant activity

has not only threatened Chinese investments[1], but through the growing links between Uighur separatists and Islamists and VEOs operating within Pakistan (Basit, 2019). As CPEC and the BRI continue to grow, China will increasingly be tied to Pakistan's stability and national security.

The US has an extremely complex relationship with Pakistan that has often been contentious and strained; this tension has only increased since President Trump took office. US-Pak relations are indelibly linked to the US war on terror and the conflict in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan has been a duplicitous partner of at best, on both of these fronts. Washington has invested billions of dollars in foreign aid that is primarily composed of the DoD's "Foreign Military Financing program" (FMF) over the past two decades (USAID, 2019); the Trump administration has significantly cut this funding, citing that Islamabad has returned "nothing but lies and deceit" in combatting terror groups (R. Khan, 2018). While the US is an important economic partner to Pakistan[2], the paramount US interest in Pakistan is Islamabad's support in stabilizing Afghanistan and combatting transnational terrorism. Pakistan's structure of governance, which places a high degree of power in the military institutions, favors militant sponsorship as a mechanism to secure regime security (R. Khan, 2018). This dynamic curtails the shared interest of US and Pakistan in ending the war in Afghanistan and prevents Washington and Islamabad from pursuing a productive geopolitical relationship. Lastly, the status of Pakistan as a nuclear power is worrisome for the US not only because Islamabad is embroiled in a highly contentious territorial dispute with another regional nuclear power, but also because of the possibility of Pakistan's proliferating nuclear technology to Iran and other actors in the Middle East (R. Khan, 2018).

Russia is seeking to increase influence in South Asia and in Pakistan, and despite historically antagonistic relations, both countries are reevaluating "their bilateral relations in light of changing geopolitical realities" (Akram, 2016). In light of the deteriorating US-Pak security relationship, Russia has increased military-technical cooperation[3] and has also facilitated several multilateral peace talks regarding the Indo-Pak and Afghanistan conflicts. Providing such military assistance and defending "Pakistan's conduct in multilateral organizations" are designed to diminish US influence in the region and unravel the strategic partnership between the US and Pakistan (Ramani, 2018). Because Russia cannot compete with the economic influence of China, the primary mechanism for increasing influence in Pakistan (and thereby strategically straining US-Pak relations) is through military technical cooperation.

Literature Review on Inequality in Pakistan

Pakistan is an extremely economically unequal country that is also plagued by corruption[4] in all levels of governance; both of which are severely hampering economic and political progress. Economic inequality has increased despite a steady decrease in consumption-based poverty and multi-dimensional poverty over the past twenty years[5] (Fazl-E-Haider, 2018). This poverty is disproportionately distributed between urban and rural areas, where 9.4% urban population is below the UN multi-dimensional poverty threshold

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[1] Basit writes that since the 2015 CPEC agreement began, "militants had killed 44 workers on related projects and injured more than 100."

[2] Where the US is "Pakistan's largest export destination country, while China is Pakistan's largest import partner" (US Department of State, 2019).

[3] Primarily through arms sales, counterterrorism and counternarcotic exercises that were detailed in military cooperation pact (Gul, 2018).

[4] With a transparency international corruption score of 33/100 (117/180).

[5] According to a 2016 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report, where "consumption based poverty has dropped from 57.9 to 29.5 percent between 1998-99 and 2013-14, and multidimensional poverty – which includes health, education and living standards – has fallen from 55.2 to 38.8 percent between 2004-5 and 2014-15."

compared to 54.6% of the rural population. Another prominent economic divides exist in land ownership among rural households where, "the top 1% of farmers own as much as 20% of the farm area, the top 20% own 69% and at the bottom end, a small farmer has only 0.3 hectare on average" (Pasha, 2018). Pasha also connects this unequal land distribution to the colonial British Raj period that encouraged feudalist classes.

Because Pakistan is a very poor country that has been unable to execute consistent and high economic growth, a macroeconomic factor such as inflation is "a particularly regressive tax since it increases poverty and inequality" (Burki, Memon, & Mir, 2015). Burki et. al also notes the structural weakness of the tax system, where the tax to GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world, reinforces Pakistan's extremely large informal economy as well as its widespread corruption. Burki et. al also lists the following economic and social cleavages as drivers of inequality:

- A lack of social mobility, where the "majority of the sons of poor fathers remain poor and the majority of the sons of rich fathers remain rich."
- Inequality of opportunity with respect to education, where the "educational gap between rich and poor people is increasing."
- Gender discrimination where females are "are discriminated against in terms of educational expenditure and are concentrated in certain occupational niches."

Country-Level Measures of Inequality in Pakistan

Pakistan will be initially assessed with a collection of country-level metrics. These metrics provide measures of the country's inequality compared to other nations, inequality within the country, social conditions that may be consequences of that inequality, and the prognosis for stability in the future.

Pakistan is an extremely poor country, with a per capita GDP of $1,546 that places it in nearly in the lowest quintile of countries in the world. Pakistan is also one of the most unequal countries (with a Gini coefficient of .335), but enjoys an unemployment rate of 5-6% that has been stable for the past decade (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The 82.4% share of the informal employment explains this anomaly whereby there is widespread underemployment and informal labor that fosters inequality and maintains a low formal employment rate. Interestingly, apportionment of tax revenue is unequally distributed among the economic sectors of Pakistan:

> "The agriculture sector contributes 21% to GDP but just 1% to taxation. Similarly, the services sector contributes over 50% to GDP but only 30% to taxation. And while manufacturing pays disproportionately high taxes, tax collection is quite skewed within the manufacturing sector itself. Nearly 80% of all indirect taxes originate from only eighteen commodities and close to 70% comes from a few commodities such as petroleum products, automobiles, edible oil, and tobacco" (Burki et al., 2015).

Such inequality in tax collection severely hampers political and economic governance and creates an environment that incurs high rates of tax evasion and widespread corruption. The cyclical nature of a large informal economy restricts growth and institutions in the formal sector and increases informal economic activity.

This is an important component to understanding the high degree of political instability in a country that is highly prone to terrorist activity (5th in the world), as corruption hinders the rule of law and the competency of security forces that must contend with porous borders that transnational terrorists have sought refuge in for decades. At best, Pakistan's security forces manage insurgents rather than police them, and the affected Pakistani citizens do not have the economic means to effectively support serious efforts to eradicate terrorist threats.

Table 1. Pakistan: Basic Statistics on Inequality

Measure	Value	Rank	Source
Inequality Compared to Other Nations			
Per Capita GDP 2018	$1546	147 of 187	WB
Country Measures of Inequality			
Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) 2018	0.387	118 of 151	UN
Gini Coefficient 2015	33.5%	132 of 184	WB
Informal Employment as % of Total Employment 2012-13	82.4%	32 of 112	ILO
Measures of State Instability			
Fragile States Index 2018	96.3	20 of 175	FFP
Terrorism Index 2018	8.181	5 of 160	IEP
Probability of Mass Killing 2018	0.074	6 of 161	EWP
Risk Sensitivity			
Average Arrow-Pratt Measure 2015	-3.97	39 of 158	This Study
*EWP – Early Warning Project, FFP – Fund for Peace, IEP – Institute for Economics and Peace, ILO – International Labor Organization, UN – United Nations, WB – World Bank -The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) is a UN measure of well-being and is a scale based on per capita GDP, life expectancy and education levels of the population. - The Fragile States Index is based on twelve conflict risk that include security apparatus, factionalized elites, group grievance, economy, economic inequality, human flight and brain drain, public services, state legitimacy, human rights and rule of law, demographic pressure, refugees and IDPs, and external interventions. The potential range of the index is zero (no fragility to 120 total fragility). - The Terrorism Index scores each country on a scale from 0 to 10; where 0 represents no impact from terrorism and 10 represents the highest measurable impact of terrorism.			

Prognosis for Change to 2029

While the security forces of Pakistan maintain the lion share of power, the recently elected Prime Minister Imran Khan has inspired a wave of populism in the country that may lead to significant change in the country. Imran Khan ran on a platform that was highly critical of the "political machinery of Pakistan" and corruption, which Khan tied directly to the economic woes of Pakistan; furthermore, Khan frequently promotes economic development rooted in Islamist-welfare systems (Kuznar & Aviles, 2018). Khan's campaign capitalized on the decades of corruption scandals of former prime ministers such as Nawaz Sharif and Yousef Raza Gillani, and there is significant pressure for Khan to deliver on the anti-corruption and economic reforms he promised.

Prime Minister Khan faces significant obstacles to improving Pakistan's well-being, namely severe macroeconomic crises[6], numerous incidents of terrorism[7], and rising political tensions with India[8]. Given the populist support of Khan's campaign, it is crucial that Khan can at least portray success in overcoming these obstacles, as well as combatting corruption. Khan has taken noteworthy measures on persecuting corrupt politicians, which receives a high degree of publicity; however, such initiatives do not address the underlying and pervasive corruption that cripples economic growth and governance (Qaiser & Wu, 2019). Given the lax rule of law in Pakistan, instituting structural and deep institutional reforms is a monumental task for any politician, despite the broad and diverse support Khan enjoys. Pakistan is an environment where there is overall lack of political structure and institutions; as such, Pakistan's issues are likely to persist.

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[6] E.g., "substantial budget deficit, formidable debts, and shrinking foreign reserves" (Qaiser & Wu, 2019).

[7] A recent notable example being one of the most deadly suicide bombings in Pakistan's history at an election rally that resulted in 128 deaths (Shahid & Salam, 2018).

[8] A February 2019 attack on Indian paramilitary forces in Kashmir resulted in 40 deaths and responsibility was claimed by the tacitly supported by the Pakistan militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, as well as multiple other border skirmishes (Council of Foreign Relations, 2019).

Empirical Data on Inequality in Pakistan

Dataset 1: 2015 Pakistan World Bank Quintile Data

The World Bank provides data on lowest and highest decile, and quintiles of percentage of income or consumption.[9] These data are used to calculate their Gini coefficients. While not exactly measuring the actual income, the percentage of overall income provides an approximation. The Pakistani data were gathered in 2015. **Error! Reference source not found.** presents the original data and the fitted distribution curve from which the Arrow-Pratt risk sensitivity measures will be derived, as well as the Arrow-Pratt measures of risk sensitivity.
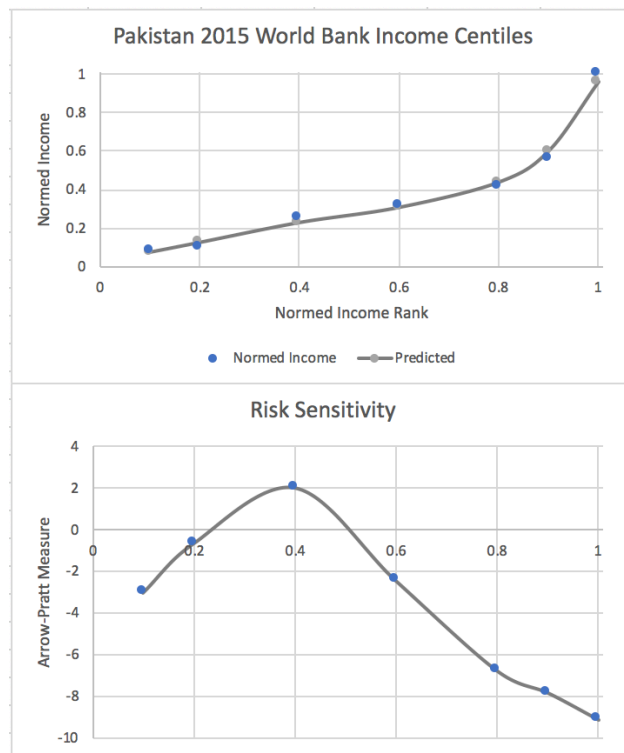

Figure 1: Distribution of Income, World Bank Quintiles Pakistan 2015 and associated Risk Sensitivity.

Summary Dataset 1: 2016 Pakistan World Bank Quintile Data
This dataset demonstrates an extremely risk acceptant population in the highest income earning sectors of society, that is nearly twice as risk acceptant as the poorest Pakistani citizens. The Pakistan middle class is solidly risk averse with a sharp increase in risk acceptance as income grows. The mean Arrow Pratt score for the Pakistani population by World Bank income centiles is -3.97, representing a modestly risk acceptant population overall.

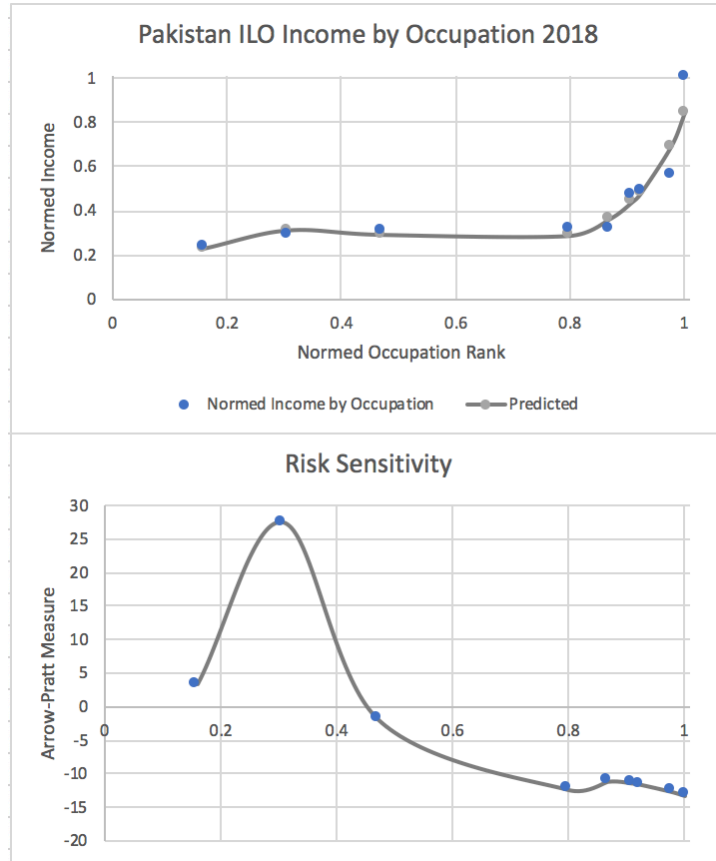[9] Data drawn from: http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/1.3

Figure 2. Pakistan ILO Income by Occupation 2014 and associated Risk Sensitivity

Summary Dataset 2: Pakistan ILO Income by Occupation 2018

The ILO income by occupation dataset presents a somewhat different perspective of risk aversion and acceptance in the Pakistani population. The Arrow-Pratt measure is -4.83, with occupational craftsmen being extremely risk averse while being ranked second in income by occupation. The most risk-prone occupations are agricultural jobs, machine operators, technicians, clerical support, professionals and managers in ascending order. Occupations ranked as such from machine operators onwards are notably clustered together as very risk acceptant, highlighting their much higher wealth status compared to occupational craftsmen and agricultural workers.
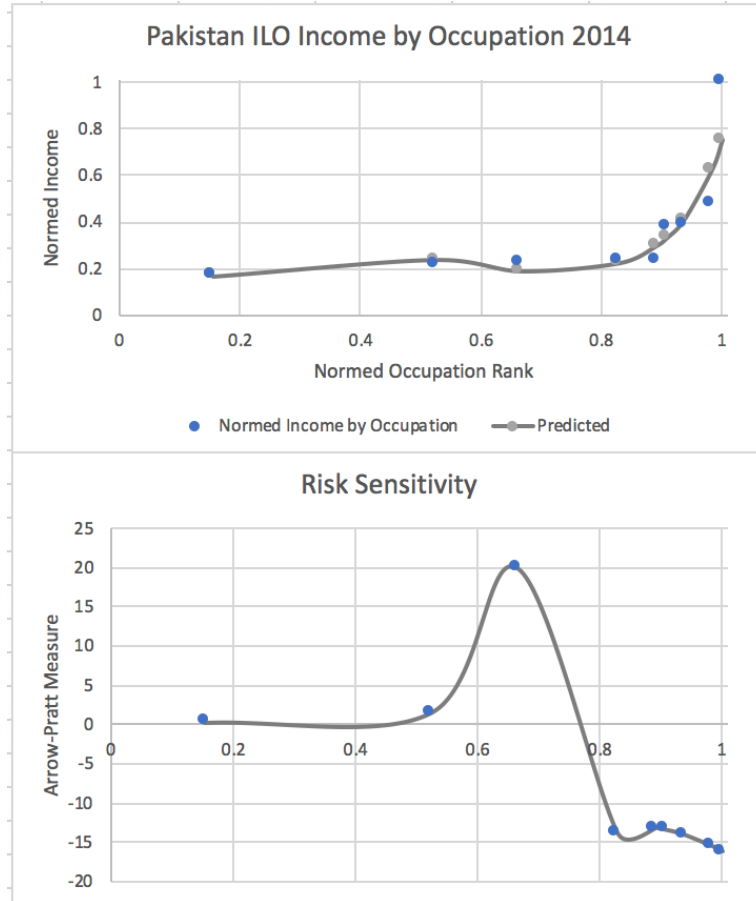
Figure 3. Pakistan ILO Income by Occupation 2014 and associated Risk Sensitivity

Summary Dataset 3: Pakistan ILO Income by Occupation 2014

This ILO dataset from 2014 contrasts with the aforementioned 2018 data that demonstrates a significant shift in status rank for the most risk adverse occupational craftsmen (decreasing from ~.7 in the above 2014 data to ~.3 in 2018). This may be linked to the wave of populist support for Imran Khan, whose campaign heavily focused on combatting corruption (where the domestic Pakistani corruption severely hampers professions like craftsmen) and instituting economic reforms, both of which would be desirable to these craftsmen who have experienced a marked decrease in social status. The overall Arrow-Pratt score for this dataset is -7.15, representing a much more risk acceptant population than found in the 2018 ILO data, indicating a decrease in overall risk acceptance for the Pakistani population when data are aggregated by occupation.
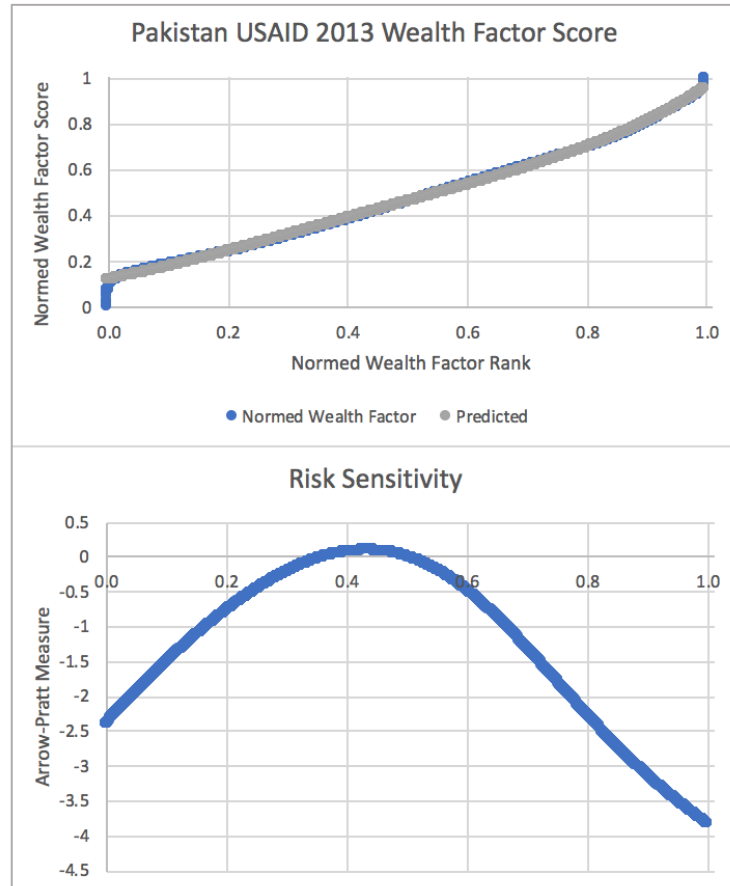
Figure 4. Pakistan 2012-13 Wealth Factor Score and associated Risk Sensitivity

Summary Dataset 4: USAID DHS 2013 Pakistan Wealth Factor Score

The number of households observed in this data is 12,933, with an average Arrow-Pratt score of -1.26 that signifies a slightly risk acceptant population, although the data indicate that nearly all Pakistanis are somewhat risk acceptant. The poorest and wealthiest of households are both risk acceptant with the wealthiest households being slightly more risk acceptant and the middle class of households are barely risk adverse.

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[10] The Wealth Factor Score is an alternative approach of measuring socioeconomic status. Instead of using income, education or occupation as a measure of status, a household's status is measured by assets such as home construction material, house size, appliances, vehicles, agricultural land, and services such as domestic servants, water availability and electricity. A full description of the approach and its methodology is found in Rutstein and Johnson (2004) https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/cr6/cr6.pdf

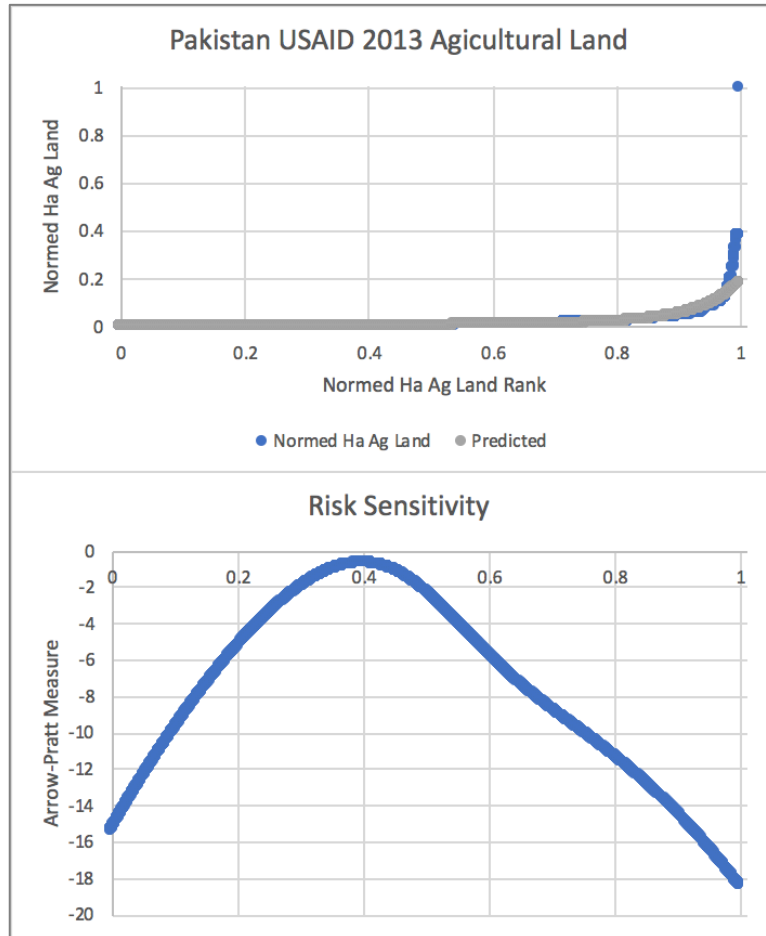*Dataset 5: USAID DHS 2012-13 Pakistan Agricultural Land Ownership*

Figure 5. Pakistan 2011-12 Distribution of Agricultural Land (ha) and associated Risk Sensitivity

Summary Dataset 5: USAID DHS 2012-13 Pakistan Agricultural Land Ownership

This dataset of agricultural land ownership presents an extremely risk acceptant population with an average Arrow-Pratt score of -7.60, based on a study of 3489 households. As aforementioned (see *Literature Review on Inequality in Pakistan*), the distribution of agricultural land is one of Pakistan's most severe and consequential measures of inequality. All households measured in this study are risk acceptant with the poorest and wealthiest agricultural land-owning households being extremely risk acceptant in near parity.

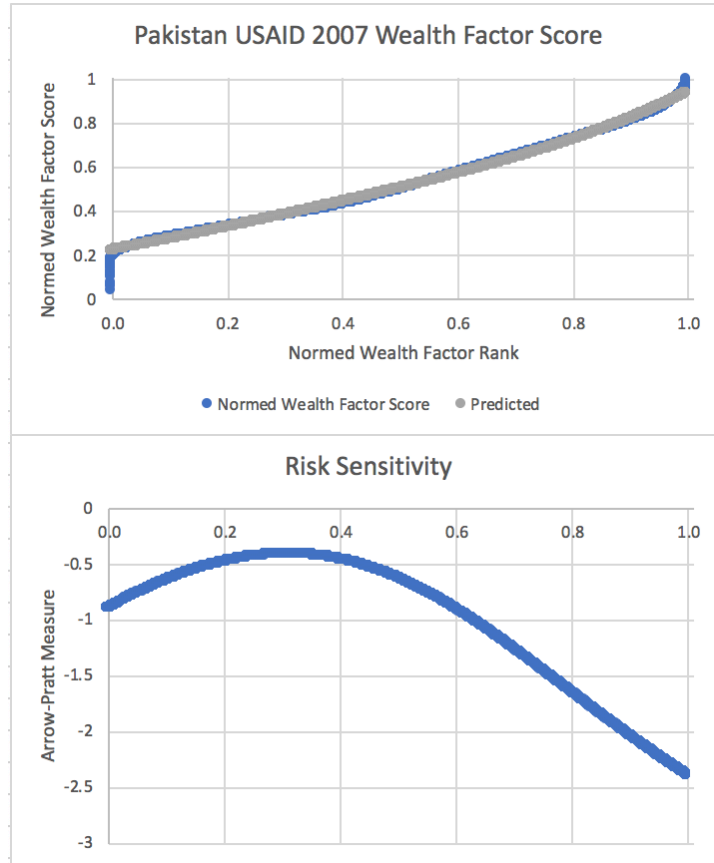*Dataset 6: USAID DHS 2006-07 Pakistan Wealth Factor Score*

Figure 6. Pakistan 2006-07 Wealth Factor Score and associated Risk Sensitivity

Summary Dataset 6: USAID DHS 2006-07 Pakistan Wealth Factor Score
The same USAID-DHS data from six years earlier presents a more balanced risk acceptant population with a mean Arrow-Pratt score of -1.01 from a dataset of 13,844 households. The measure of risk acceptance among the least and most wealthy households are half from the same study taken 6 years later, with the variance between both extremes being much less as well and the middle class of households being more risk acceptant than in the 2012-2013 data. This can perhaps be attributed to the growth in the Pakistan economy that has been unequally apportioned to households, exacerbating inequality extremes of the dataset, and once again indicates that some sectors of the Pakistani population have increased in risk acceptance during this period.

Findings on Inequality in Pakistan

Relevance to Instability and Social Cleavages

Pakistan's inequality is manifest across numerous socio-political and economic cleavages. The highest brackets of society are very risk acceptant and are especially more risk acceptant than their poorest counterparts in terms of occupation. This may be attributed to the extremely high levels of corruption that favor the upper classes of society that are tempted to advance their interests outside the rule of law and take advantage of the weak tax enforcement that cripples Pakistani governance. The resulting social cleavages are pervasive across all aspects of Pakistan society, and it is extremely difficult to amass a degree of wealth in Pakistan without taking some risk by engaging in some sort of deviancy and other practices that circumvent the rule of law. Such socio-political dynamics lend credence to the populist success of Imran Khan and his anti-corruption and economic reformatory rhetoric

Opportunities and Pitfalls for the US and Adversaries

Despite the souring of relations between Washington and Islamabad the US has strategic interests in Pakistan's political stability, as increased unrest and a lack of the rule of law would create a more favorable environment for violent extremist organizations (VEOs) and transnational terrorists. Conversely, the anti-Western rhetoric and policies that underlie Imran Khan's popularity signify a strategic shift to China and a rapprochement with Russia, further alienating a key US strategic partner in the Afghan conflict and across South Asia as a whole. Criticism of Imran Khan and the overall domestic politics of Pakistan can impugn the national dignity and Islamic identity of Pakistan, further encouraging Islamabad to further support Islamist VEOs (Khan, 2018).

The inequality and risk acceptant nature of Pakistani society should be considered in the context of the support and popularity of Imran Khan,[11] where popular discontent can be directed into jingoistic sentiment towards the US and the West. The decreased social status of occupational craftsmen that coincided with the rise of Imran Khan denotes the type of support that the Khan government enjoys, and given the poor perception of the US from the general Pakistan public, any US actions that are perceived in hinder Imran Khan's planned reforms will likely be received poorly. Such actions will likely push public and regime support further into the strategic sphere of China and Russia. It is also not uncommon in Pakistani politics (with Imran Khan being no exception) to blame US intervention in Afghanistan and across the Muslim world for domestic terror concerns (Khan, 2018), and such actors do hesitate to antagonize the US as a rising China can offer comparable economic and security support.

China

China is heavily vested in Pakistan's stability given Beijing's economic contributions via CPEC and Pakistan's geopolitical role in the BRI. The crucial difference being that that the associated issues of domestic economic inequality are not necessarily of interest to China, so long as it does not interfere with the strategic partnership between both regimes. China does however, enjoy widespread favorable perception in Pakistan (80% of the public according to a 2014 poll (Pew Research Center)), largely due to the economic support that Beijing provides. Maintaining such support in the midst of the vast inequality of Pakistan is important to China maintaining their strategic relationship with Pakistan. The risk acceptant character of Pakistanis is also positive for China as many young Pakistanis are "now increasingly looking

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[11] A March 2019 nationwide poll found 57% of Pakistanis found that 57% viewed Imran Khan as doing good or very good job (International Repulican Institute, 2019).

toward China for education and employment," which can increase Chinese influence throughout the region (Toppa, 2018).

To a certain degree China does have to navigate domestic Pakistani politics as there have been numerous militant attacks on Chinese workers constructing CPEC infrastructure projects. In response, China has responded by elevating state-to-state military technical cooperation in an effort to secure the interests of both regimes (Basit, 2019). Beyond such efforts, Beijing largely leaves Islamabad to conduct its affairs and communicate to its populace that Chinese investment is a boon for Pakistani society.

Russia
Russia is best positioned to take advantage of social cleavages in Pakistan as they have little foothold in the region and can inflame and encourage the anti-Western rhetoric of Imran Khan to further diminish deteriorating US-Pak relations. While Russia has often approached security relations with Pakistan through the mechanism of counter-terrorist cooperation, Islamist movements in Pakistan that are staunchly opposed to US presence in Pakistan present an opportunity for Russian influence operations; but by the same token, Russia's historical relations with Pakistan do not lend overwhelmingly favorable views of Moscow by Pakistanis (BBC, 2017).

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