A Study of Recruitment: 
The Making of the Ideal Islamist Extremist in Pakistan

by

Meaghan Elizabeth Cooper

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Abstract

Insurgency has become unmanageable for the Pakistani government during the last decade, increasing the concern over Al Qaeda’s brand of Islamic fundamentalism, and leading to a series of ineffective counter-terror policies as a result. This paper seeks to investigate what tactics are currently employed as militant recruitment strategies to verify what individuals and groups are desired as potential candidates for enlistment. An identification and analysis of the requisite qualifications will therefore confirm Al Qaeda’s potential for expansion and the threat level this generates within Pakistan. Upon an assessment of Al Qaeda’s goals and the type of skills they require to achieve them, this paper formulates a model of recruitment for Al Qaeda and affiliated organizations operating within Pakistan. This model finds the ideal recruit will be male, characterized by a high level of education or experience related to the assigned undertaking. In addition, some element of political dissatisfaction and evidence of support for Al Qaeda’s intention to substitute Pakistan’s secularism for its universal system of Islam must be exhibited. Through an analysis of descriptive statistics, existing literature, and the methods of recruitment pursued by religious extremists, this paper concludes that the availability of Al Qaeda’s ideal recruit is extremely limited, which results in a lowering of standards and consideration of less sophisticated volunteers. This imbalance of supply and demand in combination with a set of contradictory objectives will continue to hinder Al Qaeda and other fundamentalist operations from gaining anything more than a narrow support base.
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1. Introduction

The complex nature of substantial anti-governmental groups and their ability to limit state authority in Pakistan has been a growing concern throughout the country’s existence but most critically during the last decade. Since independence in 1947, Pakistan has had to define itself as a nation several times. In particular, the question of the state’s Muslim character has been one of the most acute to its identity crisis, leading to a multiplicity of out-group challenges, and making it difficult to determine the best counterinsurgency response for the central government.

Even prior to the events following 9/11, Pakistan’s western provinces acted as somewhat of a refuge for Islamic fundamentalist organizations as the war in Afghanistan spilled over the border. These groups have tended to operate and engage in criminal activity with immunity due to the sensitive nature of the Islamic religion. Apprehension or detaining of these groups is viewed as “harassment” of the organizations. This creates a fine line for state intervention since Pakistan is an Islamic republic.¹

However, the post 9/11 era witnessed a shift in Pakistani government policy from support for the Afghan Taliban to the reduction of these alliances due to American involvement in the region. The Pakistani/US partnership and American military involvement have created additional motivation for religious extremist groups affiliated with Al Qaeda and enhanced popular grievance. Correspondingly, insurgency has become unmanageable for the Pakistani government during the last decade, increasing the concern over Al Qaeda’s brand of Islamic fundamentalism, and leading to a series of ineffective counter-terror policies as a result. Subsequently, this paper seeks to investigate what tactics are currently employed as militant recruitment strategies to verify what individuals and groups are desired as potential candidates

¹ Nasr, “Rise of Sunni Militancy.”
for enlistment. An identification and analysis of the requisite qualifications will therefore confirm Al Qaeda’s potential for expansion and the threat level this generates within Pakistan.

Upon an assessment of Al Qaeda’s goals and the type of skills they require to achieve them, I will argue that the ideal recruit must be male, characterized by a high level of education or experience related to the assigned undertaking. In addition, some element of political dissatisfaction and evidence of support for Al Qaeda’s intention to substitute Pakistan’s secularism for its universal system of Islam must be exhibited. Through an analysis of descriptive statistics, existing literature, and the methods of recruitment pursued by religious extremists, I will determine that the availability of Al Qaeda’s ideal recruit is extremely limited, which results in a lowering of standards and consideration of less sophisticated volunteers. This imbalance of supply and demand in combination with a set of contradictory objectives will continue to hinder Al Qaeda and other fundamentalist operations from gaining anything more than a narrow support base.

The following paper will formulate a model of recruitment for Al Qaeda and affiliated organizations operating within Pakistan. Evaluating a number of factors, the discussion below will proceed with a description of Al Qaeda’s main goals and corresponding strategy within Pakistan, a deductive model identifying the qualifications mandatory among potential volunteers, and an assessment of the tactics employed to create interest and support for fundamentalist objectives. Section 2.1 determines that Al Qaeda retains two main ambitions: the transition to a complete religio-political system in Pakistan, and the removal of American military presence in the region. Section 2.2 outlines the basic characteristics of skill and loyalty required among members, focusing on three prime groups of enlistees – young, educated males, foreign fighters, and impoverished citizens – in order to establish what constitutes an ideal recruit for Al Qaeda
operatives. Section 2.3 identifies and assesses several resources manipulated by Al Qaeda for the purposes of increasing the supply of potential enlistees to commit suicide bombings and other attacks. The paper concludes with an analysis and discussion of policy implications in sections three and four.
2. Recruitment Model

For the purposes of this argument, the model discussed below will look at recruitment by Pakistani militant groups that can be identified as having links with the broader Al Qaeda organization. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal and the US Council on Foreign Relations, these most notably include, but are not limited to, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Muhammad. The Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism data also highlights attacks made by these groups, among others.

2.1 The Goals of Pakistan’s Terror

An identification of the major goals expressed by the operations of Al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Pakistan provide an excellent starting point from which to further investigate their method of attacks and for that reason, the type of support and recruits they will require. Both the propaganda material distributed by the organizations themselves as well as an analysis of terrorist attacks in Pakistan over the last decade point to two major objectives for the operations. First and foremost, it is clear there is a desire to overthrow the current secular political leadership in order to instate an Islam-based governing system including the implementation of Shari’ah law. Second, and related, is the elimination of a cooperative relationship with the United States. While both objectives represent the intention to overthrow the current regime, these may in fact lead to the pursuit of an inconsistent dual strategy.

Al Qaeda broadly established its intention of protecting and solidifying the Muslim world against outsiders by implementing the mandate of Osama bin Laden as the groundwork for future development of the organization’s principles. As early as 1998, bin Laden spoke of the need to motivate fellow Muslims to protect the umma or religious community and increase support for Jihad. Thus, the introductory pages of the Al Qaeda Training Manual assert that historical events
demonstrate how attacks on Islam must be overcome by directly challenging nonbelievers. Therefore, those who follow Allah understand “that an Islamic government would never be established except by the bomb and rifle.”

The Al Qaeda Training Manual states: “the young men returning to Allah realized that Islam is not just performing rituals but a complete system: Religion and government, worship and Jihad [holy war]…” The Pakistani branch of the organization echoes these sentiments. In an interview conducted by As-Sahab, Al Qaeda representative Ustâdh Ahmad Farooq explains the demands of supporters within Pakistan. He insists it is the duty of the Pakistani government to implement Shari’ah law and that they have not only failed to do so but also arguably actively work to implement policy in direct contrast to the Islamic legal system. This removes the Pakistani government from any association with the Islamic religion and places its members on an equal standing with the American enemy. As a result, he proposes the jihad within Pakistan must continue until secular governance is brought to an end and Shari’ah law is instated.

A recent article by Abu Obaidah Al-Islamabadi published in Al Qaeda’s online Inspire magazine makes a similar assertion about the Pakistani military. He establishes a link for readers between a past and present where, in both cases, the army is argued to have turned their back on fellow Muslims in favour of supporting a foreign power like the British, during colonial times, or Americans in recent years. Rather than providing support to sustain the Islamist cause, military forces have played a role in reducing the strength of the mujahideen’s fight in Afghanistan, and therefore, its sister operation in Pakistan. This discrediting of the army demonstrates that they

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2 Al-Qaeda Training Manual, 8. The manual was discovered in the house of an al Qaeda operative in May 2000, and introduced as evidence at the trial of the East Africa Embassy bombers. It is located at www.justice.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf.
3 Ibid., 8.
5 Abu Obaidah Al-Islamabadi, “Lust & Fear.”
are perceived as betrayers of the Islamic religious community together with the Pakistani
government.

The words of Al Qaeda spokesmen found in interviews and propaganda material are
supported by an analysis of the targets chosen for terrorist activity in Pakistan over the last
decade. The Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, which hosts a database of all suicide
bombings since 1981, reports that 160 of the 275 attacks which have taken place in the country
since 2002 were carried out against “security” targets, including the Pakistani military and
police. In addition, 47 of the bombings were carried out against “political” targets. Combined,
these two sets of targets account for 75% of all known militant attacks on record in Pakistan
during the given time period.6

The second major grievance expressed by Al Qaeda and its related operations in Pakistan
is the need to end American presence in the region, including the termination of the partnership
between the Pakistani and American militaries. As discussed above, for militant leaders like
Ustâdh Ahmad Farooq, the Pakistani army is considered to be an extension of the American army,
which he argues has overtaken the country.7 The anti-American sentiments expressed by bin
Laden and supporters across the Muslim world uphold this objective.

Furthermore, drone attacks which have been carried out by Americans on Pakistani soil
since 2008 have increasingly been viewed by citizens and analysts alike as one of the most
problematic elements of US foreign policy in the region. Put differently, “drones have replaced
Guantánamo as the recruiting tool of choice for militants”8 looking to capitalize on local
grievances.

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6 “Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism,” University of Chicago, last modified October 14, 2011,
Recognizing some of the same issues identified by the joint study, *Living Under Drones - Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practices in Pakistan*, conducted by Stanford Law School and the NYU School of Law, counterterrorism adviser Marisa Porges highlights why drone policies have resulted in limited success. She states, “America’s heavy reliance on drones also creates more sympathy for Al Qaeda in some countries and, ultimately, may radicalize more people and encourage them to join forces with terrorists – creating more enemies for America, not fewer.”

Though drone attacks threatened to drive extremist factions to pursue underground activity in 2010, “the Taliban will continue to strike back if the drone attacks are not stopped,” stated Taliban spokesman Tariq Azam. He confirms that while these offensive assaults have had somewhat of an impact on their operation, they are predominantly harming the civilian population. Downes confirms this statement. Referencing recent statistics from the New America Foundation, he states, “of the total number of people killed by drone strikes there (between 1,900 and 3,200), less than 3 percent of them (51) were ‘militant leaders’” and argues that this approach of “attrition” is unsuccessful in combating terrorism. The research performed by Stanford Law School and the NYU School of Law cites 12 illustrative cases of individuals and families impacted by this misguided strategy. This overwhelming inefficiency of drone attacks in eliminating Al Qaeda leadership continues to increase the number of disgruntled potential recruits.

For Al Qaeda to be successful on both fronts, they must primarily play an instrumental role in changing the widespread public mindset regarding the current conditions within Pakistan.

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9 Porges, “Dead Men.”
10 Azam qtd. in Khan and Arnoldy, “Pakistan Taliban.”
11 Downes, “Truth.”
12 Stanford Law School and NYU School of Law, *Living Under Drones*, Appendix A.
Support from the poor masses is essential in taking the next steps to overthrow the existing political regime. Sustaining fundamentalist ideals and the desire for change, then, comes through the promotion of the assertion that the current system and its leadership are unwilling and incompetent to provide for the needs of a pious and thriving Muslim society. The reduction of military strength and the central government support base through the assassination of key leadership figures, highlighting shortcomings, and appealing to those groups with existing grievances against them provide the roots from which Al Qaeda vilifies the current Pakistani regime. These tactics paint a picture of un-Islamic zealots who supplement the exploits of invading Western powers.

Likewise, a removal of the American military presence and influence in Pakistan requires widespread support. Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* cites regular protests against American drone strikes in heavily affected regions such as North and South Waziristan, with tribesmen most recently holding a demonstration on January 5, 2103. Building upon this prevalent discontent, anti-American sentiment is spread via an ‘us vs. them’ type of dialogue, popularized by the communicative mediums established between Al Qaeda and the public. This mentality is established through particular language, referring to Western powers as “crusaders” and “Zionists,” for example.

This results in a move to pursue attacks which will further perpetuate the belief that the Pakistani government is incapable of ensuring the safety of individual citizens due to their partnering with a foreign ally and making American goals the priority. The statistics on terrorist activity in Pakistan over the last decade provide support for the premise that Al Qaeda will increase attacks on noncombatants. According to the Chicago Project on Security and

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Terrorism, “civilian” targets are designated as the second most common purpose for attack. Moreover, the casualties in this group outnumber any other listed in the dataset.\footnote{“Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism,” University of Chicago, last modified October 14, 2011, http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search.php.}

While parallels can be drawn between the two overarching goals I have identified, problems arise in areas where the two strategies conflict. Staging violent acts to demonstrate the lack of commitment and competence of the Pakistani government may reduce support of the citizenry while also posing a problem for increasing support for Al Qaeda and other militant groups responsible for the attacks.

Here, it is important to identify the dilemma presented by the contradiction of these tactics. A conflicting set of strategies is inherently problematic for the growth and success of the religious extremist movement in Pakistan. As a result, the significant portion of civilians negatively impacted and the types of individuals preferred for recruitment indicate that support for Al Qaeda and likeminded operations will remain limited. Consequently, a very narrow based appeal surrounding the movement will be maintained since it is not reflective of the majority of the population.

\textbf{2.2 The Ideal Recruit – A Deductive Model}

According to the Al Qaeda Training Manual, all affiliates must meet a basic set of fourteen “qualifications.” These include but are not limited to dedication to the Islamic religion and the organization’s mandate, good health, a patient and sharp-minded disposition, and the ability to act in a discreet manner.\footnote{The Al Qaeda Manual, 15.}

Correspondingly, recruits sought by Al Qaeda and related operations in Pakistan must possess additional similar attributes that also demonstrate an affiliation with regionally established goals. Generally, devoutness to Islam as a complete religio-political ideology and
commitment to the objective of a transition to this system is required. Potential militants must also exhibit intolerance toward Americans (and their presence in the region). In addition, it is essential for individuals to retain the skills and abilities to successfully execute suicide bombings and other attacks.

Skilled males possess the experience and/or a level of education above the average citizen, which will allow them to successfully execute militant campaigns. Fair notes that terrorist organizations assess the value of individuals who volunteer for combat to determine what constitutes a high quality enlistee. Factors “such as educational attainment, previous job experience, and recommendations of persons acquainted with the recruit [are considered] to find the best match in skills for the desired operation.”

Adherents must exhibit a belief system that demonstrates solidarity with the mandate and values of the Al Qaeda platform. Subscribing to the universality of Islam as both a religious practice and system of governance, they avow the right to take action against others who do not share the same ideals. Similarly, a sense of altruism and the idea that the Al Qaeda network and therefore, personal involvement, are ultimately improving the dire conditions within Pakistan are indispensable. In observance of Al Qaeda’s second chief objective, prospective volunteers will also be disgruntled due to the failing political system, expressing revulsion toward American presence and military activity in the region.

However, it is unlikely that a majority of the Pakistanis responding to the calls for enlistment will meet all of the necessary and desired qualifications that construct an outstanding candidate. When the demand for superior recruits outweighs the supply, extremist operatives must settle for a compromise between those who are the best educated and who possess skills to

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16 Fair, Madrassah Challenge. 69.
17 Noonan, “Fundamentalist Foundations.”
be successful in their assigned mission, and others who are devout but perhaps part of a more disadvantaged, less learned class. Further discussion below will demonstrate that the availability of a superlative applicant (who possesses some amount of related grievance as well as skill) numbers much less than 4.8% of the population.\textsuperscript{18} As a result, concessions on what constitutes an ‘ideal’ must be made.

Given the objectives and corresponding strategies outlined for Al Qaeda, and a review of the literature, three major groups can be identified as the focus for the recruitment policies of terrorist organizations operating in Pakistan. In addition to possessing most (if not all) of the basic personality traits described above, an individual prime for enlistment can be classified as a young educated male, foreign fighter, or impoverished citizen.

\textit{2.2.1 Young Educated Males}

While this category may overlap with the others discussed below, here I will identify young, educated male recruits, who reside within Pakistan. In addition, though women are also known to participate in jihadist activity, an overwhelming number of attacks within Pakistan, nearly 88 percent, are still carried out by men.\textsuperscript{19} This subsection will investigate the gender majority by determining what type of characteristics are sought after in the average local male recruit, establishing a common understanding of what defines them as ‘young’ and ‘educated.’

Despite the limited availability of data confirming a particular character profile of suicide bombers in Pakistan, the existing information does demonstrate a preference for men under 35 years old.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore, the age group predominantly targeted for recruitment consists largely of individuals in their teens and twenties with the most significant conclusions regarding age being

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
drawn from the 2011 data, which identifies four of seven suicide attackers to be in their early teens.

Many scholars\textsuperscript{21} point out that, in contrast to the understanding of the root cause approach, terrorists tend to come from educated, middle-class backgrounds. The level of education recruits possess can be anticipated to vary by age, but a minimum of some secondary-level instruction can be assumed. While the average Pakistani citizen can be expected to complete about seven years of schooling,\textsuperscript{22} research performed by Bueno de Mesquita asserts that terrorists “have levels of educational attainment that are at or slightly above the societal mean and are less likely to live in poverty than the average person.”\textsuperscript{23}

Educated recruits produce skilled attackers. However, this term also hosts several connotations making it somewhat difficult to determine from statistics alone what level of education is desired among young males. With the national average of seven years indicating many students do not complete elementary school, the well-educated population of interest here can be assumed to have at least completed some level of high school or post-secondary education. Ideally, individuals who have completed their studies at universities abroad can provide a key asset, something that will be considered further in my discussion of foreign recruits. Madaris (plural for madrassah) are also targeted, as pupils educated in these institutions would possess the background and religious knowledge to make them desirable recruits.

An analysis of the methods used to connect with recruits offers support for their higher level of education as well as some insight into what region of Pakistan they are from. For example, while the style of writing found in Al-Qaeda’s online English language publication,

\textsuperscript{23} Bueno de Mesquita, “Quality,” 515.
Inspire, might be predominantly targeted at readers around the globe from English-speaking nations, it can also act as an important source for reaching out to educated individuals within Pakistan. References to religious scholarship and jurisprudence are complex, determining that the significance of this sophisticated material will only be recognized by literate individuals who are relatively familiar with political Islam.

Recent arrests in Bangalore, India offer a pertinent parallel example from which to draw conclusions about the characteristics of recruits. Searches of the accused in early September 2012 found that educated youth, including a journalist and a scientist employed with the Indian Defense Ministry who had allegedly been influenced by Inspire, were to be involved in a foiled terror plot.24 This case allows the assumption that like the population of its neighbouring state, educated Pakistanis are also being targeted and radicalized via English language propaganda. Several conclusions can be drawn about the nature of these individuals.

The requirement for readers to be literate and have regular Internet access for this type of material to be effective indicates they do not come from a lower income population. Moreover, with only 11% of the total population having Internet access25 and a majority of the population based in rural areas with fewer than 30% of individuals online,26 statistics suggest that a majority of those with Internet access in Pakistan are located in urban centres.27 The conclusions I have drawn regarding the ability to connect to the worldwide web not only support the assertion that educated recruits are preferred but also determine that most of these individuals likely hold skilled or professional occupations in urban Pakistan.

24 The Times of India, “Karnataka Terror Plot.”
26 Mahmood, “E-village.”
27 Ibid. Roughly 11% of the population was accessing Internet in 2009 according to UN data; 64% of population was residing in rural regions as of 2010 according to CIA World Factbook and in 2009, only 30% of rural population had Internet access.
Further, there are two important ways in which young educated males and their challenges with the economic turmoil in Pakistan become linked to their potential as recruits. First, poverty can exist as one of the main grievances of a group, even though it may be non-impoverished actors carrying out a terrorist attack in the interest of others, in response to an unfavourable social or economic situation that is understood to affect the entire community. Crenshaw points out that individuals of a privileged and cynical nature form the basis of terrorist movements but “may act on behalf of a wider popular constituency who have not been consulted about, and do not necessarily approve of, the terrorists’ aims or methods.”28

Second, since educated recruits are ideal, it is important to also consider the impact that the economic downturn of war can have among the more well off population. According to the most recent statistics available, it is evident that unemployment is a significant issue in Pakistan, with an estimated rate of 5.7% in 2011, 4.8% of which are males.29 Individuals from well-off classes, who find themselves out of a job may come to find a new fit in terrorist organizations. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita proposes the hypothesis that a declining economy offers a significant correlation with both a greater number of skilled recruits for terrorist organizations, and an amplification of violent acts. His formal analysis investigates and weighs the benefits of joining a terrorist organization and finds evidence that “greater ideological motivation and economic downturns increase mobilization” of skilled recruits.30

In summary, young men who possess a level of education significantly above the average Pakistani citizen are essential to Al Qaeda running an effective campaign in the region. Moreover, recent graduates who are unemployed as a result of the economic downturn of war

30 Bueno de Mesquita, “Quality,” 520.
and political unrest constitute the ideal candidate for recruitment. Reconsidering the tradeoff between loyalty and skill discussed above, young males who fail to secure adequate employment and are adept to the task at hand embody an ideal prospect. This substantiates the claim that the scope of individuals that meet most or all of the desired standards is extremely limited, leaving extremist organizations to seek out additional recruits.

2.2.2 Foreign Fighters

The appeal to foreign fighters seems to be increasingly pursued by terrorist recruitment policies in recent years. This amplification of calls to potential militants abroad reflects three possibilities. First, the pattern of outsourcing recruitment is indicative of a lack of local recruits that can meet the needs of Al Qaeda. In addition, this shift perhaps reflects the need for a well-rounded knowledge of the invading enemy. Muslims who live or have been educated abroad, particularly in the United States, offer an alternative perspective to that of native Pakistani fighters. Finally, the more significant circulation of petitions for reinforcement from Western residents may also reflect a strategy intended to reduce support for the American war effort by radicalizing young minds abroad.

In his guide, Expectations Full, which discusses preparation for and assumptions regarding the jihad, Samir Khan, a former US recruit to Al Qaeda, provides an overview of what a Western Muslim seeking to join the mujahideen abroad should anticipate and accept as a fighter. Produced by Al-Malahem Media early in 2012, Khan offers advice to potential fighters regarding duties and responsibilities, living conditions, attacks, and injury, based upon his own experience. While vague in most of its descriptions, the currency of this work indicates there is a need for, or at least the expectation that this type of material is sought after, further indicating

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the growing interest in recruits who have strong knowledge and experience with the enemy culture.

*Inspire* magazine, discussed above, first appeared online in July 2010\(^{32}\) and provides a supplementary example of this more contemporary approach of recruitment strategies, aiming its appeal at a wider range of potential enlistees in other regions of the world. Based on the discussion above and the nature of the material circulated, it can be assumed that like other recruits, these individuals are predominantly young, educated, and male. In addition, it may be likely that men accepted as fighters from abroad are also unmarried. Khan informs his readers that while some regions may be able to accommodate families, this is an unlikely possibility that also poses a safety risk to both the individual and his kin.\(^{33}\) Furthermore, while local recruits may have an incentive to join the jihad for the benefits their families may receive, foreigners are drawn in for other reasons.

For example, a report produced by the New York City Police Department on radicalization in the Western world notes that new converts to Islam are particularly vulnerable to recruitment. This is because these individuals “need to prove their religious convictions to their companions [which] often makes them the most aggressive.”\(^{34}\) Further, those who have recently adopted Islam as their religion feel the need to find themselves a new supportive community. Terror plots in the United States, Netherlands, England, Australia, and Canada have all included members that converted during their personal process of radicalization.\(^{35}\) While this study differs from my objective of identifying recruits for attacks in Pakistan due to its focus on


\(^{34}\) Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization*, 29.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
events taking place in the West, it still offers a useful psychoanalysis of the types of individuals that are sought for enlistment with the mujahideen in any region.

2.2.3 Impoverished Citizens

First and foremost, the support of the Pakistani masses is absolutely essential for Al Qaeda and affiliated operatives. This endorsement includes, but is not limited to, recruiting Pakistani extremists for suicide attacks, and also the creation and maintenance of a support base. Therefore, while lower class citizens with a more limited education may not be preferred as recruits, they still play an important role. Given that at least half of the population can be considered impoverished, the support of this group is absolutely crucial for the movement to grow and achieve its goals.

Several indicators identify what constitutes an impoverished citizen. Here, we can understand Pakistanis who fit this category based on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and the “percentage of the population living below the international poverty line $1.25 (in purchasing power parity terms) a day” which is about 23%. The MPI adds supplementary insight according to “household deprivations in education, health and living standards from various household surveys.” In Pakistan, nearly 50% of the population can be classified as experiencing these disadvantages.36

Charitable Islamic organizations are able to access a widespread section of the Pakistani population by filling in the gaps left by the central government when it comes to the provision of public goods and “meeting the needs of the poor.”37 This establishes a key recruitment strategy, which will be discussed further below. Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, and Caluya

recognize the potential for recruitment and propaganda via aid groups backed by Al Qaeda and affiliates:

…there are some associations or organisations that do have ulterior motives, usually political. In both cases, the schools available through these organisations are heavily subsidised or free. Children, especially in poorer countries such as Somalia, Pakistan or parts of Indonesia and Egypt, are provided books, food, and clothing at no or minimal cost to the family. In some of these schools or madrasas (Qur 'anic schools) children are taught to despise 'corrupting Western influences' from an early age, and gain few practical skills for modern society.\(^{38}\)

Similarly, Bueno de Mesquita confirms that “the economy matters to the extent that a failed economy and failed government produce demand for social services not provided by the government, creating a niche for extremist factions to fill.”\(^{39}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{39}\) Bueno de Mesquita, “Political Economy,” 4.
2.2.4 Characteristics of Suicide Bombers in Pakistan

Table 2.1

<table>
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Note: Adapted from the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism
http://cpost.uchicago.edu/index.php

While the data provided by the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism – as demonstrated in the table above – is indicative of a preference for younger males to carry out suicide bombings, it is relatively inconclusive in determining a detailed and reliable character profile of the dominant group(s) targeted for recruitment in Pakistan. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the types of materials and approach most commonly used in Al Qaeda recruitment campaigns.

2.3 Methods of Recruitment

2.3.1 Propaganda

For many of these organizations, it is possible to identify an ‘us vs. them’ mentality, which seeks to provide a defense against defilement of their traditional religious way of life. For example, since the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, radical Islamic agencies have positioned themselves as direct challengers to opposing ideologies such as Communist Russia,
and more recently, the United States, or religious groups such as Christians and Jews. Most notably, Al Qaeda has sought to challenge globalization and a commercialized Western identity, proposing their lifestyle and Shari’ah-based legal system as the only alternative, and urging Muslims to protect the religion.

The principles espoused by Osama bin Laden provided the groundwork for the future development of Al Qaeda, its principles, and hence, its recruitment tactics. As early as his 1998 interview with Al Jazeera, bin Laden spoke of the need to motivate fellow Muslims to protect the umma or religious community and discussed the need to increase support for his jihadist cause. He relayed anti-American sentiments, identifying the United States as the “enemies of our umma” and his suspicion of Jews and anti-Israel stance remains a focal point of his remarks.

This consciousness of infidels or nonbelievers filling the role of enemy is echoed today in publications such as Inspire. In explaining the identity crisis faced by Muslim Americans, Samir Khan speaks to the trouble of a blurred boundary between right and wrong. Acknowledging the penchants of his predecessors, he presents Muslim Americans as traitors to the fundamental principles of Islam and the jihad which aims to protect them.

For Pakistani fundamentalists, the identification of the enemy or the other goes beyond encroaching Western powers to include nonbelievers at home. Ustādh Ahmad Farooq seeks to point out that the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan are one in the same and as a result, it is key for mujahideen forces in both regions to remain strong for the sake of each other. Similarly, building a strong response to American forces is argued as key to reducing the strength and success of their operations in the region as a whole. This includes the defeat of the Pakistani

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40 Miller, “Osama bin Laden.”
41 bin Laden qtd. in Lawrence, “A Muslim Bomb,” 72.
42 Khan, “Blended Duality.”
army, which is painted as an important ally of the United States by fundamentalist writers like Abu Obaidah Al-Islamabadi. He asserts that “the Crusaders keep their influence over Pakistan’s Army by controlling a few handpicked elite Generals who in turn exert their control over the whole army mainly through training curriculum and military laws.”

These grievances, based on disillusionment with the secular nature of Pakistani politics and alliances with the US, allow extremists to testify on behalf of local victims with a significant level of persuasion. Propaganda materials continuously highlight the wrongdoings toward Muslims both within Muslim countries as well as overseas through the identification of actions and events carried out by American troops in cooperation with Pakistani forces. For example, the death of prominent figures like Osama bin Laden at the hands of Americans has been employed by a number of writers to further inspire a jihadist movement around the world. Emphasizing the role that this alliance plays in state failure, groups like the Pakistani Taliban create a connection with the popular desire for change. Presently, “many Pakistanis do not see it as a religious conflict. They see it as a class war. The TTP are focusing on the weaknesses of democracy in Pakistan and winning over supporters in the process.”

These narratives, which identify a common religious community, recognize the goals of Al Qaeda and its affiliates, and promote the elimination of the enemy, are a crucial facet that must be included in all forms of outreach. Whether additional methods of recruitment discussed below seek to approach young educated males, impoverished citizens, or foreign fighters coming from abroad, these tactics share a common necessity to further circulate the objectives and mandate of Al Qaeda in the region to heighten support and pinpoint ideal candidates.

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45 Siddiqi, “Filling the Gaps.”
2.3.2 Provision of Public Goods

Access to the Pakistani masses and the circulation of the messages discussed above is often obtained through the provision of services and support. Rotberg analyzes whether a state is strong or weak based on the delivery of "political goods" to its citizens. He asserts that the state is obligated to take care of its people and live up to certain expectations. The level of security that can be provided to the population should be a top priority and he argues that "the state’s prime function is to provide that political good of security to prevent cross-border invasions…domestic attacks…eliminate domestic threats." Other goods include health, welfare, civil rights, and state infrastructure. However, according to Rotberg’s analysis, the Pakistani state is not living up to any of these criteria, especially its most important role of ensuring human security and militant groups monitor this negligence and emphasize it to support their cause. As a result, they aim to provide an alternative response, as civilians look elsewhere to have their needs met, heightening support for insurgency against the government that has failed them.

Studies which explore the connection between radical groups and the provision of charity, in response to natural disasters, for instance, present evidence of a correlation between disasters and increased support for the rebel organizations behind these relief efforts. Donations and assistance create the opportunity for radical terrorist groups to further develop their source of authority and influence. Since Islamic fundamentalist organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban have been known to offer social programs and funding for natural disaster relief, this provides a gateway through which to obtain legitimacy among the population. For example, as

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47 Ibid., 3.
48 von Hippel, "Does Poverty Serve."
Ghufran has observed, the Pakistani government has heavily neglected the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). She asserts that the “failure to provide the people of FATA desperately needed socioeconomic resources – including basic facilities in health, education, and communications – made it easier for Taliban militants to gain a foothold in the area.” This inability of the central government to establish “political and administrative reforms” has provided a large gap in essential public goods, which the TTP are eager to fill, providing them with legitimacy.49 As a result, the TTP managed to establish itself as an alternative to central government leadership in FATA regions by forging alliances among those demanding equal rights and/or eliminating tribal leaders.

In the interim, provision of services is supplemented by a rhetoric of coercion circulated in the form of Urdu language pamphlets among this group. Most recently, flyers posted and distributed throughout Peshawar in attempts to reach out to a large section of the local population provided an example similar in nature to previous campaigns in nearby regions. Individuals were cautioned against joining groups opposed to the TTP.50 Both the social programs and threatening language are initiated with the intention of reaching impoverished citizens, not only for their potential as recruits but also to obtain their widespread support, which is essential for expansion. By providing services to gain extensive support while at the same time intimidating individuals to prevent them from defecting, local affiliates are engaging in a set of activities which are reflective of the contradictory strategies of Al Qaeda and its related operations discussed above.

49 Ghufran, “Pushtun Ethnonationalism,” 1106.
50 Ahmad, “Threatening Messages.”
2.3.3 Religious Education

The importance of the umma and loyalty to Islam is highlighted in the manipulation of religious materials whether it be in articles or educational facilities. For example, von Hippel suggests that an “extremist agenda” has been more common among madaris located in South Asia than in Arab states and has had both direct and indirect effects on the radicalization of students. Fair makes a similar point, that even within countries such as Pakistan, recruitment for terrorist organizations differs by region, noting that while well-educated recruits tend to be preferred in Kashmir, students who attend a madrassah may be more favourable in regions that border Afghanistan, playing a crucial role in insurgency there. Additionally, she affirms that even where students of these religious seminaries do not create a significant population of acting militants, they certainly allow for a much more welcoming environment for jihadist movements to operate in.

The message of religious membership, which is initiated at a young age within these educational facilities remains of utmost importance in accessing wider sections of the population. This idea of the need to be included suggests that people tend to become terrorists because of their search for a group or activity which they can be a part of. Gupta notes that the grievances of a shared identity lead to “collective action.”

Recruiters must therefore take advantage of this desire and explain that membership not only implies inclusion in a Muslim community but also that it is important and rewarding for individuals as they can promote and protect the messages of Allah. For example, Shaykh Abu Mus’ab Al-Awlaki cites the religious history of the Prophet uniting different communities under the single nation of Islam. This linking of “the Muhājirīn (the Emigrants) and Ansār (the

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52 Fair, Madrassah Challenge.
53 Gupta, Understanding Terrorism, 73.
Helpers) as brothers” in Medina several centuries ago is an important message for the recruitment of new converts and foreign fighters in the West. For example, while Samir Khan argues against American Muslims, heightening anti-American sentiment, his works may also act to radicalize those living in the US or other countries outside of the Muslim world, urging and inspiring them to demonstrate where their allegiance lies.

Madaris, which often provide opportunities for schooling to less advantaged children target Pakistan’s poorer classes in the same way as a public goods provision campaign. With the lack of reliable government-provided education, extremist-affiliated institutions have access to a large section of the population from a very young age. Equally, materials which point to the significance of religious membership seek to connect with a secular adult population by drawing in both new converts and individuals who may have strayed from the Islamic faith by highlighting the benefits of inclusion and identity.

2.3.4 Technology and Multimedia

The idea of a global Muslim caliphate has become much more of a reality via rapid technological advances in recent decades. For example, Hoffman notes that terrorists are not only dependent on “guns and bombs” but have a variety of new weapons at their disposal. As these developments continue at a growing pace, a variety of new and important tools, most notably the Internet, have allowed propaganda and support to flow between organizations and sympathizers at a quicker rate than ever before. This has created a network which is diffused across the globe, and therefore reaches and appeals to a wide-ranging membership. These advances have offered terrorist organizations a new way to enhance their operations, “includ[ing]

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54 Al-Awlaki, “Why Did I Choose Al Qaeda,” 51.
56 Hoffman, “Inside Terrorism.”
the spread of ideology, the justification of violence, recruitment, fundraising, intelligence collection, operational planning, tactical innovation, [and] mission assessment” among other factors.57 The Internet, mobile phones, and international media offer some of the most important devices for connecting with and educating others in an era so heavily dependent on swift and expansive communication. These channels are absolutely essential in allowing certain imagery – such as the war between Western crusaders and the Islamic community, and the martyrdom that results – to become an ever-growing part of messages of propaganda.

Rapid developments in computers, cellular phones, and other mobile platforms have grown up alongside the American War on Terror and increased anti-American sentiment, providing significant and unlimited access to the masses. Research performed by “US think-tank Center for Strategic and International Studies [has shown] al-Qaida and its associated members recognized the importance of information and communication technology and have exploited it for training purposes.”58 Poetry, photography, video, and music are just some of the materials found online, particularly on social media websites, which have played an unrivaled role in accessing youth around the world.

Information is distributed in both English and numerous South Asian languages. The Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), an Islamist propaganda organization affiliated with Al Qaeda, is responsible for the translation of a variety of materials into English and other Western languages. More recently, GIMF has also undertaken the task of creating and circulating information in a number of South Asian languages through a newer sub-division, the Al-Qadisiyyah Media Foundation.59 These documents are predominantly targeted at those

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58 The Times of India, “Karnataka Terror Plot.”
59 Anzalone, “Pakistani Taliban.”
individuals financially secure enough to own or have regular access to a computer. Alternatively, the increase of Internet access to other devices, most notably mobile phones, has established an additional essential method with which to access younger generations.

Globalization has been found not only to be a source of the grievances of Islamic terrorism but also a means by which it spreads and gains support from the worldwide Muslim community. As Paz notes, the Islamic fundamentalist brand of terrorism is still forming and growing despite its history dating back to the 1970s. Globalization has established a doctrine which calls for collective support of jihad to defend against the threat presented by the rest of the world “against Islam as a religion, culture, and a way of life.”

This bid for combat found frequently in the varieties of propaganda material distributed is profoundly facilitated and circulated by media outlets. Devji highlights the important role that international publications and broadcasts, in particular, play in recruitment tactics. He states, “the jihad site is experienced visually” and the journalistic representations have become absolutely key in exposing what defines the common understandings of jihad and martyrdom.

Beyond simply providing widespread exposure of the jihad, these representations are important in bringing Muslims in all parts of the world together for the mutual experience of a fight against the non-believing West. By enhancing the sense of community and solidifying the ‘us vs. them’ mentality, this imagery plays an important role in the effectiveness of the propaganda material being produced. As a result, the viewing of these images “imposes certain responsibilities” on various constituents within the Islamic community.

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60 Paz, “Brotherhood,” 47.
61 Devji, Landscapes, 93.
62 Ibid., 96.
At present, the wealthier classes of Pakistan’s urban areas and their counterparts abroad constitute the groups predominantly accessing materials posted on web pages such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and in online publications. As discussed above, these sites have been an effective method of communicating the narrative of grievance and shared experience as portrayed in international media to the desired audience. However, over time, as mobiles surpass computers to provide cheaper and easier Internet access, the increased accessibility of cellular phones, social networking, and international news media as methods for recruitment will no longer be restricted to the more privileged classes.

2.3.5 English Language Material

Nowhere can the internationalization of recruitment tactics be better exemplified than in the increase of materials aimed at highly educated English speakers, emphasizing globalization and the responsibilities of all Muslims. As previously noted, English transmission of Al Qaeda materials has become more popular in recent years. Propaganda aimed at attracting foreign fighters and those Pakistanis educated abroad is largely circulated via the Al Qaeda-produced Inspire online magazine. Combining a number of the recruitment methods discussed above, “Inspire has been touted by many US think-tanks as an effective tool of al-Qaida for recruiting youths without getting in physical contact with them.” Having a multitude of writers with experience in the West, including a Pakistani-American editor, articles are easily able to draw the attention of the desired readership.

The publication’s mandate justifies the execution of terrorist attacks on ‘non-believing’ nations (or in the case of Pakistan, a secular government) by providing evidence from the writings and analysis of early Islamic legal schools and scholars. For example, Shaykh Anwar

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63 The Times of India, “Karnataka Terror Plot.”
Al-Awlaki draws parallels between this historical rhetoric and current Al Qaeda initiatives, including the carrying out of terrorist attacks on “a nation that is at war with the Muslims.”

References to history, hadith (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), various forms of religious discourse including fiqh (jurisprudence), and teachings established by early Islamic scholars regarding recruitment of individuals in enemy countries are frequently noted throughout the magazine’s eight issues. Further, verses from the Quran and hadith are supplemented by footnotes, which explain religious terminology, aiding in the education of the targeted foreign and/or newly converted population.

This method of recruitment is not only effective in communicating with the desired demographic for enlistment but also may be effective at spawning copycat activities. Inspire’s features – some of which educate readers on how to build small explosive devices – encourage individual endeavours as well as community membership and goals. Though not managed directly under an Al Qaeda operative, these efforts continue to offer support to their cause. As discussed above, English language propaganda not only indicates an enhanced interest in North American Muslims within the last few years, it is also an important way to reach more highly educated males within Pakistan, particularly schooled at Western universities.

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64 Al-Awlaki, “Targeting the Populations,” 42.
3. Analysis

Revisiting the discussion of an ideal recruit and the methods of enlistment employed by Al Qaeda affiliates, it is possible to determine that the target audience for a majority of the campaign described in this paper is young, educated, unemployed males. However, statistical analysis of Pakistan’s most recent unemployment rate for males confirms that those individuals who constitute an ideal candidate exist in a limited group of under 4.8%. Yet not all of the men that can be considered part of this preferred group are interested in partnering with Al Qaeda. Instead, extremist organizations must make compromises regarding who they seek and accept as militants.

Therefore, this paper has noted that Al Qaeda’s need for additional choice among volunteers has resulted in not only the catering to skilled individuals with likeminded grievances, but also foreign fighters and impoverished citizens. This supposition is most explicitly evidenced by the use of enlistment tactics such as enhanced production of English language materials (to be distributed to the former) and the formulation of public goods provision campaigns, including educational opportunities (targeted at the latter).

If the tradeoff between skill and religio-political devotion indicates that educated and experienced recruits are indispensible and that the most commonly shared grievance is one of economic-dissatisfaction, how has religious fundamentalism managed to establish itself as a viable alternative? Despite Pakistan being established out of the need to create a homeland for South Asia’s Muslim population, founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, had never intended for Pakistan to become a state based upon religious principles, but instead, fully supported an independent political and legal system.65 However, the last decade has seen a greater division

65 Pleshov, Islamism.
between Islamisation and secularist platforms, as the situation grows more complicated due to the central government’s alliance with American forces against the Taliban. This has escalated the conflict between the ulema and the state. As noted above, the counter-terror strategy of drone attacks continues to increase anti-American sentiment among Pakistanis with the consequence of political Islam and dangerous extremist alternatives becoming more popular among groups who feel oppressed and forgotten in their own country.

Malik notes that the citizenry has responded to political parties formed by religious organizations, casting votes in their favour within the last decade. Pakistanis are tired of the downward spiral of the country and are looking for alternatives that meet their needs regardless of religious affiliation. At the same time, civilians will not tolerate empty promises as evidenced in 2008 where “the election results dealt a blow to any religio-political parties that failed to deliver on promised reforms in their respective provinces.” Therefore, increased support for religious-based extremist parties is evidence of a lack of satisfaction with the current government in protecting the interests of citizens rather than verification that the population is in fact supportive of the extremist movement. Thus, Malik suggests that legitimate religious and mainstream Pakistani politicians need to work together to thwart the initiatives of violent Islamic extremists and promote Pakistani development.

Accordingly, a more democratic and trustworthy relationship between the Pakistani state and society is what will lead to a more successful counterinsurgency approach. Acharya, Bukhari, and Sulaiman propose the need for greater communication between political officials

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66 Zaman, Ulama.
67 Malik, Pakistan, 139.
68 Ibid.
and the public in order to build a sense of trust and legitimacy. Similarly, Berman asserts the need to form a stronger link between economic development and the central government by increasing economic opportunity and the provision of other public goods. By offering a stronger alternative to the services provided by rebel groups, the government will be able to win back strong civilian support.

Equally, anti-terror programs must aim to reduce the ideological influence and methods of recruitment used by Al Qaeda and affiliated organizations by actively working to diminish popular grievance and the impact of war – most notably the large number of civilian deaths at the hands of American drone strikes. Rather, a shift in military policy should be reflective of alternative approaches to counterinsurgency, which promote a move away from typical modern military procedures.

For example, writing on the roots of civil conflict and investigating conditions which support this, Fearon and Laitin suggest that an effective response “requires government forces to distinguish active rebels from noncombatants without destroying the lives and living conditions of the latter.” As a result, there is a need to overcome an information problem by having military officials work more closely with populations in affected regions. This is absolutely essential when it comes to the American strategy of attrition via drones, which has been counterproductive, acting to radicalize more of the civilian population who have experienced firsthand the anguish of this misguided policy. In Pakistan then, effective counterinsurgency should combine this less mechanized military approach with a more accessible and accountable central government.

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69 Acharya, Bukhari, and Sulaiman, “Making Money.”
70 Berman, Radical.
Mending the damaged relationship with Pakistani voters and increasing transparency and communication is especially important among the groups most desired by Al Qaeda in order to ensure that they are dissuaded before recruitment policies can take a meaningful effect. Returning to the category of young, educated males who are unemployed or unsatisfied with their position in society as a result of increased economic volatility in Pakistan, these men are seeking additional opportunities to remedy their current disappointing predicament in much the same way as the average dissatisfied voter.

As previously noted, while Al Qaeda’s most ideal candidates – individuals who possesses both some amount of related grievance as well as education and skill – constitute up to 4.8% of the population (based on the percentage of unemployed males in 2011), not all of the candidates in this category are interested in involvement with extremist organizations. However, the unemployment rate for young males has increased over the last four years from 4.2% in 2007 to 4.8% in 2011. While this still remains a relatively low number with regard to the supply of volunteers for Al Qaeda, this statistic is significant in the sense that it demonstrates a failure on the part of the Pakistani government to remedy this issue and actively seek out effective counter-terror strategy. Therefore, it is vital for future policy to ensure the most skilled/educated men remain employed and valued members of society. This approach will ensure a further reduction of the pool of potential recruits for Al Qaeda, limiting the opportunity to form a relationship with these individuals.

Therefore, in working to reduce unemployment, Pakistan’s counterinsurgency strategy can successfully depreciate the reach and level of success attained by Al Qaeda and affiliated organizations. Put differently, by decreasing the potential supply of qualified recruits, this

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73 Ibid.
approach to anti-terror policy ensures the need for militants to compromise their standards, looking beyond young, politically-dissatisfied, educated males to other volunteers, having the effect of minimizing the impact of terror campaigns.
4. Concluding Remarks

In the post 9/11 era, conflict continues to escalate between the Pakistani state and religious extremists due to the government’s relationship with the American military, increasing fundamentalist calls to eliminate the secular state. Understanding the goals and recruitment tactics of Al Qaeda and affiliated organizations is crucial in formulating effective counter-terror policy. This paper has sought to assess the intensity of the threat posed by Al Qaeda within Pakistan by creating a model of recruitment that identifies the objectives and corresponding set of candidates required. While Al Qaeda most prefers men who are young, educated, and express a likeminded grievance toward the state, the organization has seen limited results with the enlistment of these individuals. Instead, they have expanded their aim to include foreign fighters and impoverished citizens. Thus, the movement itself continues to be narrow-based due to the relatively small section of the population that views its activities in an altruistic manner.

Al Qaeda recruitment in the region will continue to face two major hindrances. First, as determined above, the initial intended audience is relatively small. As Fair, Malhotra, and Shapiro note, “neither religious practice nor support for political Islam is related to support for militant organizations.”74 While extremist factions avow to instate Shari’ah in Pakistan, “the most common conception of sharia held by Westerners – corporal and physical punishment – is actually not universally accepted by Muslims in Pakistan” and support for Shari’ah law is not significantly correlated with individual interest in political violence.75 Further, staging violent acts to demonstrate the Pakistani government’s lack of commitment to the security of the citizenry likely reduces popular support for Al Qaeda and other militant groups responsible for the attacks. The significant number of civilians negatively impacted by this conflicting set of

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74 Fair, Malhotra, and Shapiro, “Faith or Doctrine?,” 690.
75 Ibid., 705.
strategies substantiates the notion that they are inherently problematic for the growth and success of the religious extremist movement in Pakistan.
Bibliography


