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*A Link Between Poverty & Radicalization  
in Pakistan*

Manzar Zaidi



## Introduction

Contemporary literature review has a tendency to suggest that the presumed post-9/11 link between a reduction in poverty and an increase in educational attainment and a simultaneous de-escalation of international terrorism is quite tenuous. The connections between poverty, education and terrorism have been suggested to be ephemeral, inasmuch as the recent profiles of terrorists suggest that they are not the stereotyped, impoverished and uneducated youths as was generally presumed. Instead they are the progeny of years of frustrated political aspirations and indignity, which inculcates an acute sense of insecurity and consequent hatred against those who are perceived to have brought about these conditions. Much scholarly ink has been spilt in the quest for answers to what produces terrorists, and many theories have been put forward. These range from crime-related theories of terrorism as a rational choice model (Becker, 1968; Ehrlich, 1973; Freeman, 1996; and Piehl, 1998), homicide (and violent terrorism as a manifestation of it) as being decoupled from economics (Piehl, 1998; and Ruhm, 2000) and the demand and supply of hatred (Glaeser, 2002). Economic models which pertain to crime have also been applied to international terrorism (Landes, 1978; and Sandler, Tschirhart and Cauley, 1983). However, economic theories which interpolate terrorism as a variable that could be defined by a rational economic choice model, have all tended to stray from the point that economics by itself cannot explain terrorism; clearly more complex variables are needed.

Studies using hate crime as a variable, which could be examined as having relevance to terrorism have also not yielded unambiguous results. Further analysis using hate crime becomes even more difficult when one remembers that the co-relation of terrorism with economics itself rests on shaky ground. (Hamm, 1998; Kressell, 1996; and Green, Glaser and Rich 1998). Jefferson and Pryor (1999) conclude: “[E]conomic or sociological explanations for the existence of hate groups in an area are far less important than adventitious circumstances due to history and particular conditions.” These projections support Lerner’s classic hypothesis that “the [e]xtremists are not simply the ‘have-nots,’ suggesting rather that they are the ‘want-mores’” (Lerner 1958, p. 368). Lerner has also hypothesized that “[p]overty prevails only among the apolitical mass” (Lerner 1958, p. 368). Angrist’s research in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has indicated that even significant increases in educational attainment of Palestinians in the 1980s could not alleviate the economic troubles of more highly educated Palestinians (Angrist, 1995). The shortcoming of the applicability of the study to a universalistic paradigm, was, however, pointed out.

A simplistic rational choice model of terrorism for economically deprived and uneducated individuals does not even apply unambiguously to the most extreme form of terrorist—the suicide bomber. According to Nasra Hassan’s seminal study: “None of them (Palestinian suicide bombers) were uneducated, desperately poor, simple-minded or depressed. Many were middle class and, unless they were fugitives, held paying jobs” (Nasra Hassan, 2001). These results resonate well with Berrebi’s econometric models of Palestinian suicide bombers; the study concluded that the suicide bombers in question tended to have a higher high school and college attendance average than the general Palestinian population, and that they were less likely to come from poverty-stricken families (Berrebi, 2003). Studies utilizing a broad-based sample representative of many different cultures and terrorist organizations have also tended to project little direct relationship between terrorism and poverty (Russell and Miller, 1983; Taylor, 1988). Krueger and Maleckova postulate that terrorism is primarily a political, rather than an economic phenomenon.<sup>i</sup> It has been suggested that whilst linkages of poverty and militancy have not been demonstrated conclusively in the case of the Islamist leadership or elite, poverty and illiteracy may still be important factors in the motivations of the rank and file of radical organizations. It has also been argued that militancy evolves in a conjunctive environment of many factors, which is particular to a

specific region or ideology, and thus needs to be studied at sub-national, rather than international levels. The tenuous linkage between poverty and militancy is also debated in numerous studies in political science and economics by Dreher and Gassebner (2008), Krueger and Laitin (2008), Abadie (2006) and Piazza (2006); sub-national studies by Piazza (2009) and Krueger (2007) and studies of individuals by Sageman (2004) and Atran (2003). However, there are also studies by Li and Schaub (2004) and Burgoon (2006), which suggest the opposite; about poverty being a significant predictor of terrorist activity. The definitive nuances between religious conservatism, political Islamism, and radical Islamist militancy also need to be contextualized.

Lipset (1960, ch. IV) has pointed to several mechanisms, by which poor people—with their harsh upbringing and authoritarian family patterns—are prone to join militant movements. The factors he identifies are a low level of education, which tends to promote a simplified worldview of politics, and an uncompromising nature due to economic insecurity, which leads to a heightened state of stimulus to perceived disturbing events. This insecurity leads to a search for immediate solutions to problems, including taking up arms. Lipset also postulates that impoverished people are isolated from the activities and controversies of the society at large, which effectively cocoons them from the intricacies of political problems. This also has deleterious effects on acquiring a spirit of tolerance. The lack of tolerance and the propensity to look for shortcuts to politically intricate problems promotes a worldview within which ideologies, especially dogmatic ideologies which tend to provide simplistic revivalist philosophies, find expression, one manifestation of which is radicalization.

Houtman has expanded upon Lipset's thesis by further postulating in his sociological research that authoritarianism, intolerance of non-conformity, and racial prejudice are closely related to poor education (Houtman, 2003). Thus, studying the evolution of radicalization in the context of isolated variables may not be a fruitful pursuit, especially in different theaters where these variables may have different trajectories; the Pakistani scenario may very well be a case in point as far as the relationship of poverty and radicalization is concerned. As far as radicalization is concerned, I do not want to revisit the fiat of the debate about its definition; for the purpose of this study I have chosen Flaherty's definition of radicalization (Azam, 2009). This implies a sense of futility evoking desperate measures, wherein destruction of the existing order is seen as a desirable goal, which precludes any compromises or power sharing. There is a sense of emergency and urgency in the radicalized population, wherein the ends justify the means. The reason for reliance on this particular definition was its underlying prospect of violent change exerting its own inherent appeal, which seemed a good benchmark for the study. As is evident, these concepts seem to resonate closely with Lipset's hypothesis about the poor. Flaherty's postulates can be seen to apply equally not only to the Islamist radicalization process in Pakistan, but also to a large number of other Islamist movements as well.

The past six years have witnessed a significant rise in incidents of terrorism in Pakistan, with the writ of the state being directly challenged by the rise of many militant groups, who have transmigrated from Pakistan's tribal areas. Until recently they were in almost absolute control of areas such as Swat. This extremism is marked by an unprecedented alacrity, organizational capability and impunity. Scholarship about this phenomenon has not kept pace with terrorism, and is in a nascent stage in Pakistan, with little comprehension and research into the drivers of extremism among researchers, analysts and policy makers. Nevertheless, whenever the social issues are raised, amongst the possible factors giving rise to terrorism in Pakistan, poverty and poor social indicators pop up fairly prominently. This paper is an attempt to explore a potential nexus, utilizing the fairly limited variables available in the form of literature, news and opinion pieces, which are tested with the help of a survey.

Since the reasons behind the rise of militancy are multifarious; an analysis utilizing any single variable would be misleading.<sup>ii</sup> However, the terrorism narrative is prominently evident in most of the discourses, whilst the socio-economic aspects are just as significantly absent.<sup>iii</sup> It is also quite pertinent that even the 'non-partisan' think tanks tend to concentrate quite heavily on security scenarios, while governance and socio-economic imbalance take a back seat.<sup>iv</sup> Amongst the socio-economic factors, poverty, especially rural poverty, figures prominently.

The pattern in Pakistan is dismally skewed towards a few feudal families holding large land holdings; barely one percent of households own more than 35 acres of land. This is reinforced by the Gini coefficient<sup>v</sup> of land holding which was very high at 0.6151 in 2001-02. Thus, the problem is not just lower levels of land holding in Pakistan, but also highly unequal land distribution leading to a class of land haves and have-nots. Strikingly, poverty levels tend to decrease in inverse proportion to land holding, with poverty virtually disappearing with holdings of 55 acres and above. This indicates that poverty and landlessness are directly related to each other in the rural areas of Pakistan. Evidence of income disparity rampant in Pakistani society is bolstered by statistics, with the Lorenz curve<sup>vi</sup> of 2001-02 for Pakistan lying below the 1984-85 levels.

This projection also points out the dismal fact that the richest one percent who used to get 10 percent of total income in 1984-85, would be getting almost 20 percent of the total income in Pakistan in 2001-02.

Sohail Abbas has utilized his experience as a psychologist to conduct profiling research of Jihadis in the treatise 'The Jihadi Mindset' (Abbas, 2007). A PIPS study by Safiya Aftab has also documented a similar literature review of Sohail Abbas. Abbas's sample consists of 517 men, interred in Haripur and Peshawar jails in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after they had attempted re-entry into Pakistan from Afghanistan following the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001. Abbas has attempted to profile these individuals by comparing them with a matchable "control" (more affluent) group of individuals of similar socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds which had not joined the jihad. The study limits itself, however, to men inclined to join the jihad, but does not attempt to co-relate drivers of violent terrorist behavior; there is no indication given in the book that the sample population attempted any terrorist acts. The study is nevertheless quite illuminating as an insight into proneness to join jihad and militant Jihadist organizations.

The sample was small but still significant; it is extremely difficult, not to mention hazardous, to interview Jihadis in Pakistan. Arrested militants were studied in two sample groups in Haripur and Peshawar Jails. Abbas concludes that the Jihadis were drawn largely from mainstream Pakistani society, hailing from marginalized tribal society only to an insignificant extent. The majority were not educated in madrassas, contrary to popularly held belief, but were educated in public schools in Pakistan where the majority of the country's population, particularly the rural one, obtains access to education. Surprisingly, their mean literacy level as a group was higher than the Pakistani average for education. The Peshawar group sample, however, had an almost zero percent unemployment rate. The majority (33.8 percent) had worked as tenant farmers, and laborers (24.2 percent), while skilled labor and students were equally represented at about 17 percent each. Ownership of business was at a very low level at about 3.5 percent of the sample. This study seems to go entirely against the popular preconceived notions of Pakistani Jihadis being totally illiterate and unemployed youth.

The PIPS study (PIPS, 2008) also attempted to factor poverty into the research variables, by trying to ascertain the average income level scatter pattern of the Jihadis. The Haripur sample reported a huge 35.7

percent of the respondents with no income of their own. The Peshawar sample yielded comparable results, though the respondents having no income stood at around 26.3 percent. This puts the majority of the respondents at the lowest income percentiles in Pakistan in terms of their individual earnings. However, the majority was employed in one form or the other, though the amounts of dividends of such occupation seem to have been meager. The study does not address the issue that many individuals in Pakistan are supported at home by remaining in joint family systems, wherein income is distributed amongst the less gainfully employed by some family member/s, usually some elder. Similarly, the average income of the Jihadis' families was not factored into the calculation. This is a shortcoming in a study attempting to research a society wherein resources tend to be pooled at the household level.

## The Study

My survey was a supply side study designed to document increased incidence of radicalized ideas amongst the impoverished in Pakistan; and not a study of the co-relation of poverty and militancy in Pakistan. The plethora of literature on studies of militants in Pakistan have provided vague empirical assessments of the proposed links between education, poverty and other aspects of socio-economic status and popular support for terrorism, which although not incidental to the study, can only be used hypothetically to support observations made therein. The study was a link in this chain in an attempt to contextualize the support for radical ideas amongst the less privileged classes in Pakistan, which cannot be used to ascertain their propensity to join militant movements or carry out terrorist acts, as that needs an interpolation of different complex variables.

Militancy is often an organizational phenomenon, with different organizations adopting different criteria for indoctrination of recruits. Fair has commented that sectarian terrorists in Pakistan tend to be madrassa-educated youth,<sup>vii</sup> while other organizations in Pakistan may utilize Mesquita's quality 'game' approach<sup>viii</sup> to indoctrinate and train their human resource. The Taliban tend to recruit persons who have had at least a brush with Deobandi madrassa education, while suicide attackers in Pakistan's tribal belt are impoverished, madrassa educated, or in many cases, illiterate youth. It is not that the organizations want to use suicide recruits of low caliber, but the fact that they are constrained to use whatever human material they have available. There is little popular support for suicide in Afghanistan and Pakistan,<sup>ix</sup> since it is considered *haram* (sacrilegious); this is in striking contrast to the Palestinian and Lebanese territories, where a correspondingly higher popular support for suicide attacks means that the organizations are not supply constrained in choosing suicide recruits. Thus, empirically examining just one variable other than poverty which can promote militancy and extremism, it is easy to see how different trajectories can affect the outcomes of variables in different theatres; perfectly relevant sub-national studies in one theater may yield totally different results in others.

How can one co-relate poverty and education with the process of radicalization? During lean economic times, relatively better qualified, better-educated individuals may add to the ranks of the unemployed, which decreases the opportunity costs for relatively accomplished, educated individuals to participate in seeking simple solutions to complex problems (for example engaging in crime to relieve financial burdens or joining militant organizations to take part in jihad). While lack of educational attainment is disruptive of economic mobility, educational attainment sans comparable employment opportunities is even more dangerous; expectations are raised, which if left unfulfilled, cause cognitive dissonance between the reality-expectation nexus. This can be a major cause of disenchantment with the society, particularly amongst the youth. Militant groups may thus become increasingly free from demand constraints in times of economic recession.

It is important to remember at the outset that this study is not about predicting which of the poor samples may become militants; several layers of indoctrination and ideological permeations operate to make this a complex process, which in any case is not the aim of this study to expostulate upon. It is also beyond the ambit of this survey to co-relate links in education and socio-economic status with supply of recruits for terrorists; the study simply aims at exploring the permeation of radical ideas amongst the poorer segments of population of Pakistan.

### Survey Design and Methodology

The data was collected between October 2008 and March 2009. The survey was originally planned to cover the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along with the other four provinces of Pakistan, but due to escalation of militant activities and the ensuing anti-militancy army operations in FATA, the study team was unable to obtain permission to enter the tribal areas for field survey, which was an unavoidable field constraint. The four poorest districts in each province were chosen as a convenience sample, according to a World Bank Food Program study (Hussain et al, 2003) mapping out poverty distribution incidence in Pakistan, along with four matchable controls of the four richest districts in the same province as per Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>x</sup> It is worth mentioning that 60 percent of the districts which ranked amongst the top one-third more affluent percentiles were from Punjab and 19 percent were from the NWFP, or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as it has since been renamed. Similarly, among the bottom one-third percentiles (the poorest) 47 percent were from Balochistan, and 34 percent from the NWFP (Hussain et al, 2003). Not a single district from Punjab was in the poorest percentiles.

The data was collected with the help of structured questions laid out in a questionnaire, distributed and collected by two field researchers in each province; local researchers were chosen in order to better comprehend the cultural nuances, and a similar pattern of questionnaire distribution was followed in order to reduce interviewer bias. The study was generally conducted by doing household surveys; another method utilized in lieu of 'cold calling' was contacting respondents through the village headmen, or in some cases with the help of local administration. An unavoidable sample bias was encountered when most of the questionnaires were filled in by the educated male members of the household,<sup>xi</sup> or the head of the family, again almost always a male. Female representation was not accounted for; this could have been avoided by asking for the gender of the respondents. However, after intra research group brainstorming, it was decided that asking for the gender of the respondents could create hurdles in respondent compliance, since asking question from women about such sensitive topics could be potentially offensive to the sensibilities of the conservative rural population.

Households having a consolidated land holding of 55 acres or more were discarded. However, many respondents were not forthcoming in response to questions about personal wealth and income, which are considered personal issues in Pakistani rural society; this was again an unavoidable field constraint. Reluctance to answer questions was more visible in the NWFP and Balochistan, with the most difficulty encountered in the NWFP heartlands. This may have been due to the fact that respondents may have viewed the team as a 'western' ploy or attempts by the state to get information about these generally conservative areas. A random sample of villages to be surveyed had to be chosen from within the district sample groups; there is an extreme paucity of data within the districts about the rural breakdown of poverty village wise, which necessitated the random selection of villages within the 32 districts surveyed. A total of 1,147 respondents were surveyed; the provincial-wise breakdown is as follows:

Table 1

Sample Group	Number of Respondents
Punjab Control (more affluent)	158
Punjab Sample (poor)	144
Sindh Control	148
Sindh Sample	164
NWFP Control	145
NWFP Sample	127
Balochistan Control	129
Balochistan Sample	132

Life in a typical Pakistani village is simple; men are usually tenant farmers who work in the fields from sunrise to sunset, while women stay at home to attend to the children or assist the men in their farming activities. The gender balance is somewhat patriarchic, with gender roles skewed in favor of the males. The social life of women centers on births, deaths and anniversaries, with the practice of *pardah* more strictly observed in the NWFP and Balochistan in general, though there are significant variations within the same province.

As for religion, Cohen notes that "most Pakistanis in rural areas remain vague about their Islam, and their religion is strongly intermixed with folk practices, Sufi beliefs, and even Hinduism and Buddhism."<sup>xii</sup> Life in small villages is difficult; some are still devoid of facilities like safe drinking water and electricity, with medical facilities situated sometimes at considerable distance from the more remote villages. At least one-tenth of the rural communities do not even have access to basic facilities.<sup>xiii</sup> Poverty affects family planning and parenthood, with 75 percent more children in poor families on average as opposed to the non-poor households. A disproportionately large number of households are headed by aged persons, who utilize transfer incomes, such as pensions and other forms of social support, sometimes for running the financial affairs of the entire household.

The society is stratified; it is quite easy to pick out the 'common' man in the village by virtue of his relatively simply constructed house. Such houses are typically clumped together in the centre of the village, while the relatively affluent landlords and wealthier villagers tend to construct cemented houses, usually situated on the outskirts of the village.

It is this 'central' village stratum that the research team was interested in; it was easier to identify a poor rural sample universe by going to the heart of the village and conducting a survey there, though this of course constituted a convenience sample.

## Religiosity

The question about the state of religiosity was introduced as a dummy; religiosity is not easy to define in relative terms in Muslim countries, and the researchers were not expecting any useful input by eliciting a close-ended response (high to low). Also, religious ritualism (like praying or going to the mosque) cannot be taken as a benchmark of religiosity, or for that matter radicalization in Pakistan, since Islamic (as opposed to Islamist) sensibilities run throughout the fabric of the society; this was evident in the case of the survey as well, wherein an overwhelming majority of the respondents answered in favor of higher levels of religiosity; any other response could be considered socially embarrassing. The purpose of this question was to serve as an 'adjuster' and for setting the stage for the succeeding questions, which enquired about support for violence by religious groups, Islam as a system of life, etc. (*see below*). This question was relevant in the context of adjusting the following questions, which enquired about the perception of the respondents about an Islamic governance system. As elucidated below, the purportedly high levels of religiosity as a response was at odds with respondents' answers to related questions.

Table 2

Q. 5: Do you support the use of violence by religious groups in Pakistan?	Number of Respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Yes	No	No opinion either way		Yes	No	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	14	89	55	158	8.86%	56.33%	34.81%
Punjab Sample	17	78	49	144	11.81%	54.17%	34.03%
Sindh Control	9	102	37	148	6.08%	68.92%	25.00%
Sindh Sample	19	93	52	164	11.59%	56.71%	31.71%
NWFP Control	13	69	63	145	8.97%	47.59%	43.45%
NWFP Sample	24	62	41	127	18.90%	48.82%	32.28%
Balochistan Control	27	66	36	129	20.93%	51.16%	27.91%
Balochistan Sample	35	59	38	132	26.52%	44.70%	28.79%

Some 11.81 percent of the Punjab sample (poor) replied in the affirmative to the question that asked whether resort to violence by militant groups was justifiable (Question 5), compared to 8.86 percent of the control group. Some 54.17 percent of the Punjab poor sample and 56.33 percent of the control group replied in the negative while 11.59 percent of the poor sample group in Sindh responded positively to the query. Interestingly, 56.71 percent were against the use of militancy by the religious groups. The finding resonated with 6.08 percent affirmative answers and 68.92 percent negative answers in the matchable control group.



The situation was quite different in the NWFP and Balochistan; in the NWFP poor sample, 18.90 percent of the respondents approved of the use of violence by the militants as a political tool while 48.82 percent decried it. The situation was comparable to the NWFP control group, albeit with lower percentages; 8.97 percent approved of militant violence, with 47.59 percent opposing it and 43.45 percent staying undecided. Higher percentages were obtained in the case of the Balochistan poor, with 26.52 percent in favor, 44.70 percent against and 28.79 percent undecided in the sample population, comparable to 20.93 percent in favor, 51.16 percent against and 27.91 percent undecided in the control group.

Is there something inherent in the Pashtun and Baloch cultures, which are inimical to violence, and support for groups using violence as a tool? In the Pashtun culture certainly, an element of violence is ingrained in cultural paradigms. Children get weapons as rite of passage to adulthood in tribal societies, arms and ammunition are considered a status benchmark, and even some children's game contain an element of violence.<sup>xiv</sup>

The Baloch culture is relatively more benign; the rise of militancy in these areas has to be comprehended in ethno-nationalist terms. Balochistan has been the hub of many ethnically driven guerilla insurgencies. Akhtar<sup>xv</sup> points out that the major insurgency in the 1970s, which was crushed by the Pakistani establishment, had a solid ethno-nationalist support base within Balochistan. The current insurgency is a much more amorphous Taliban entrenchment, with Baloch nationalist militancy and other elusive militant entities vying to gain hold of Balochistan's abundant natural resources and "mega development" projects, such as the warm-water port of Gwadar on the south-western tip of the province, projected to be a future linchpin of the warm-water access to lucrative central Asian oil pipelines. The nationalist discourse surrounding Gwadar reveals a deeply ingrained fear of Baloch cultural extinction that has been a consistent theme in both Sindh and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan; nationalists in both regions have maintained that such development projects precipitate an influx of ethnicities other than the Baloch and the Sindhis in the respective provinces, with the resultant dilution of Baloch and Sindhi dominance in culture and politics. Thus the nationalist rhetoric in both these provinces has always contained some emotive narrative of ethnic Baloch and Sindhis becoming minorities in their respective provinces.

The problems are compounded by the fact that Balochistan is predominantly rural and has dismal per capita income levels. Rural poverty in Balochistan was estimated to be 42 percent in 2001-02, slightly lower than in Sindh and the NWFP. However, as of 2001-02, the poverty factor is superimposed by the fact that 78 percent of households owned no land in Balochistan and amongst the landless, Balochistan's rural poverty rate was the highest in Pakistan, at nearly 70 percent.

It may also be worthwhile to remember that sometimes the poor and the deprived compensate for their lack of material possessions by asserting their social status; this can be done by gaining power, authority or privilege,<sup>xvi</sup> sometimes by using force for political ends, which in essence is the process of radicalization. Radicalized persons have a strong perception of being discriminated against, and of alienation from the larger society due to socio-economic deprivation. This is exacerbated by falling education standards, lack of economic opportunities, and unequal access to avenues for social and economic mobilization, which are a hallmark of countries facing turbulent times and paradigmatic cultural polarization.<sup>xvii</sup> The powerless and the impoverished may project their aspirations onto groups which are seen to be 'doing something' about the plight of the deprived masses, as opposed to a bureaucratic and ineffective state. This may account for the rise of militant groups, particularly the Taliban, in the NWFP and Balochistan.

Table 3

Q. 6: Should religious leaders acquire public office in Pakistan?	Number of Respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Yes	No	No opinion either way		Yes	No	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	37	67	54	158	23.42%	42.41%	34.18%
Punjab Poor	40	73	31	144	27.78%	50.69%	21.53%
Sindh Control	31	97	20	148	20.95%	65.54%	13.51%
Sindh Poor	45	93	26	164	27.44%	56.71%	15.85%
NWFP Control	50	69	26	145	34.48%	47.59%	17.93%
NWFP Poor	61	54	12	127	48.03%	42.52%	9.45%
Balochistan Control	39	73	17	129	30.23%	56.59%	13.18%
Balochistan Poor	44	59	29	132	33.33%	44.70%	21.97%

Table 4

Q.7: Is an Islamic state the solution to all of Pakistan's problems?	Number of Respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Yes	No	No opinion either way		Yes	No	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	21	96	41	158	13.29%	60.76%	25.95%
Punjab Poor	36	82	26	144	25.00%	56.94%	18.06%
Sindh Control	18	75	55	148	12.16%	50.68%	37.16%
Sindh Poor	35	63	66	164	21.34%	38.41%	40.24%
NWFP Control	42	63	40	145	28.97%	43.45%	27.59%
NWFP Poor	55	59	13	127	43.31%	46.46%	10.24%
Balochistan Control	46	53	30	129	35.66%	41.09%	23.26%
Balochistan Poor	39	62	31	132	29.55%	46.97%	23.48%

Question 6 was adjusted by Question 7, which asked whether *Shariah* rule could be a panacea for all the problems in Pakistan. Even though more respondents tended to answer in the affirmative to religious

leaders acquiring office, support for *Shariah* as a cure for all of the country's problems was not as forthcoming. This support was at its highest amongst the NWFP poor. This may be an indicator of the way the poor masses of that province think; for them religiosity may be linked inextricably with the Islamists coming to power, which might explain the rise and the entrenchment of Taliban in the province. It is significant that the support among the population in Balochistan, though higher in comparative terms to the Punjab and Sindh samples, was still relatively low compared to the NWFP sample, particularly amongst the Balochi poor. This indicates that many conjunctural forces align to complicate the Balochi imbroglio, amongst which religion may only be one of the stimuli. This lends credence to the above mentioned ethno-nationalist narrative for Balochistan. This also reveals a paradigmatic dissonance within Pakistani society in general; for a state whose citizens purportedly have high levels of religiosity, support for religious leaders and *Shariah* was not very high.

This may be due to the fact that there is a certain ambivalence towards religious leaders and *Shariah* in Pakistan, which has been dwelt upon at some length by earlier surveys as well. For instance, data collected by Pew Research Center in 2002 and 2005<sup>xviii</sup> indicated that even though many people believed that Islamic religiosity was very important, they did not really believe in this becoming ingrained in Pakistani politics. The same trend is revealed by data from the current survey; respondents replied positively to Islam being a potent force in their lives, but were not too keen on it becoming a system of governance. This may have something to do with the way the clerics have been involved in Pakistani politics, which has not been looked upon favorably by the majority of the population, as reflected by poor voter support in Pakistani elections. A WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 907 urban Pakistanis has also revealed the inherent ambivalence in the average Pakistani citizen's mind, wherein a large number of Pakistanis envisage a greater role for Islam and *Shariah* in Pakistani society, but simultaneously want more secular democracy, favoring liberalizing reforms and opposing terrorism.<sup>xix</sup>

Significantly, the provincial-wise and district-wise breakdown showed that support for an Islamic system of governance was more deeply echoed by the poorer respondents. This does suggest that poorer respondents had a simpler worldview on politics; even though Pakistan has had immense trouble synchronizing religion with politics, as demonstrated by the failure of the rightist regime of General Ziaul Haq and the liberal one of General Pervez Musharraf to sway the people. In Pakistan, the balance between the state and the religion does not seem to sit in comfortably with politics. However, the poorer respondents were optimistic that an Islamic state would be a panacea for the troubles of Pakistan, which resonates with Lipset's view that the poor are relatively readier to grab at simple solutions.

### War on Terror and Support for Jihad

It seems that amongst all respondents, support for the idea of a Taliban takeover of the country was relatively higher amongst the NWFP poor, Balochistan poor, Balochistan control and NWFP control sample with a much lower percentage recorded in Punjab and Sindh overall. This still leaves a lot of people in Balochistan and the NWFP opposed to a Taliban takeover in Pakistan, which needs to be explained in its context.

Table 5

Q. 8: Are you in favor of a Taliban takeover in Pakistan?	Number of Respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Yes	No	No opinion either way		Yes	No	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	12	87	59	158	7.59%	55.06%	37.34%
Punjab Poor	17	75	52	144	11.81%	52.08%	36.11%
Sindh Control	9	96	43	148	6.08%	64.86%	29.05%
Sindh Poor	11	82	71	164	6.71%	50.00%	43.29%
NWFP Control	23	74	48	145	15.86%	51.03%	33.10%
NWFP Poor	44	81	2	127	34.65%	63.78%	1.57%
Balochistan Control	24	48	57	129	18.60%	37.21%	44.19%
Balochistan Poor	32	68	32	132	24.24%	51.52%	24.24%

The Pakistani Taliban have been in control of the Waziristan area adjacent to Afghanistan, and until recently controlled Swat, a previously progressive district of the NWFP. Taliban-style militias have also gained dominance in other parts of the NWFP, such as Peshawar, which used to be one of the most open and accessible areas of the province, but has fallen prey to the stealthy advance of extremism. The citizenry in Peshawar have witnessed numerous suicide attacks, as have people in other NWFP cities such as Tank, Darra Adam Khel and Dera Ismail Khan. Girls' schools have been closed, torched or bombed, while video and music shops have also been targeted. Militants have threatened barbers with death for shaving beards. Social campaigns such as administration of polio vaccine have been halted amidst extremists' claims that it is a US plot to sterilize future generations.

Even though former President Musharraf tried to contain these elements under pressure from the Americans, his strategy was mainly to try to regulate the madrassas in the NWFP and elsewhere in Pakistan that provide recruits for the Taliban, seizing their funds and banning them from admitting foreign students. This did not prove to be enough; the army was sent into Swat, taking heavy casualties. The operations were halted with negotiations ensuing, which just allowed more time to the Taliban to further entrench themselves. The harsh measures by the extremists have prompted a public backlash; the Taliban seem to have become unpopular amongst the masses, though of course, they have their ideological support base even amongst the powerless strata in the society, as evidenced by the findings of this study. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss that in detail, the militants seem to have exploited lacunae in distributive social justice in some areas, particularly in FATA, mainly to their advantage.<sup>xx</sup> When they took over the lucrative emerald mines in Swat, for example, they announced the distribution of two thirds of the proceeds of the mines amongst the hitherto meagerly paid miners, which must have been an extraordinary financial incentive for these poor Swatis.<sup>xxi</sup> Similarly, the Taliban have been quick to ask for money and commodities from the large feudal families<sup>xxii</sup> in the areas where they

have entrenched themselves; they have reportedly distributed some of their plunder amongst the poor masses. This could have served to increase their popularity amongst the poor and the downtrodden, and perhaps added to their support base, even though the harsh measures of Talibanization have adversely affected the lives of the common citizenry.

Table 6

Q. 9: Do you condone or condemn the 9/11 Al Qaeda attacks on US?	Number of Respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Condone	Condemn	No opinion either way		Condone	Condemn	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	9	94	55	158	5.70%	59.49%	34.81%
Punjab Poor	22	87	35	144	15.28%	60.42%	24.31%
Sindh Control	13	106	29	148	8.78%	71.62%	19.59%
Sindh Poor	29	68	67	164	17.68%	41.46%	40.85%
NWFP Control	23	65	57	145	15.86%	44.83%	39.31%
NWFP Poor	47	55	25	127	37.01%	43.31%	19.69%
Balochistan Control	28	62	39	129	21.71%	48.06%	30.23%
Balochistan Poor	44	51	37	132	33.33%	38.64%	28.03%

Table 7

Q. 11: Do you support future attacks against US targets?	Number of Respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Strongly for	Strongly against	No opinion either way		Yes	No	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	13	89	56	158	8.23%	56.33%	35.44%
Punjab Poor	11	97	36	144	7.64%	67.36%	25.00%
Sindh Control	21	92	35	148	14.19%	62.16%	23.65%
Sindh Poor	17	94	53	164	10.37%	57.32%	32.32%
NWFP Control	29	68	48	145	20.00%	46.90%	33.10%
NWFP Poor	43	71	13	127	33.86%	55.91%	10.24%

Balochistan Control	35	61	33	129	27.13%	47.29%	25.58%
Balochistan Poor	46	65	21	132	34.85%	49.24%	15.91%

The Western preconception of the typical Pakistani mindset is depicted as being oriented to religious conservatism and militancy. With this overview, one would expect the majority of Pakistani population to be inclined to support the 9/11 attacks, or to espouse further attacks against the US. Suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks would then be contextualized as nothing more than reactions to American military presence in Afghanistan, or a revenge for US unmanned drone attacks in Pakistan's tribal areas. The cyclical argument would run as thus; Pakistan's security forces are purportedly killing the tribal people in FATA and beyond at the behest of the US, which angers the Taliban, who exact retribution by targeting Pakistani state institutions as vengeance for the state's complicity with the US. This worldview has been shaped not only by madrasa education, but as elucidated by Fair (Fair 2007, 2008), also by the regular state education system. Ziaul Haq's government provided state patronage to Islamist groups and militancy, the media was used as a state Islamist propaganda apparatus, and radicalization of young people was allowed to continue unabated. Pervez Musharraf made an ineffective effort to thwart this Islamist nexus, but his manipulation to maneuver the staunchly Islamist Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)<sup>xxiii</sup> diluted his efforts, and tarnished his credibility as a liberal. Despite that, however, there are indications that even the relatively conservative rural society is slowly breaking free of the Islamist spell; this is reflected in the survey response, wherein a majority of the respondents opposed terrorist attacks including the 9/11 attacks. A significant characteristic observed in this case was the large number of respondents who did not answer the question about their stance on the 9/11 attacks, because they were either unaware of them, or were poorly informed.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Table 8

Q. 10: Intensity of grievances against US?	Number of respondents			Total	Percentage		
	Strongly support the US	Strongly oppose the US	No opinion either way		Support	Oppose	No opinion either way
Punjab Control	13	89	56	158	8.23%	56.33%	35.44%
Punjab Poor	11	97	36	144	7.64%	67.36%	25.00%
Sindh Control	21	92	35	148	14.19%	62.16%	23.65%
Sindh Poor	17	94	53	164	10.37%	57.32%	32.32%
NWFP Control	15	88	42	145	10.34%	60.69%	28.97%
NWFP Poor	9	98	20	127	7.09%	77.17%	15.75%

Balochistan Control	12	89	28	129	9.30%	68.99%	21.71%
Balochistan Poor	8	103	21	132	6.06%	78.03%	15.91%

The question about support for the United States within society revealed an almost unequivocal response of condemnation of Washington's policies in the region, even though a majority of the sample population had expressed condemnation of the 9/11 attacks and had not supported attacks against the US. Though the respondent samples may not be characteristic of the Pakistani population as a whole, this response pattern can be indicative of an almost universal disapproval of the policies of the US amongst the sample population. The sharp rise in the number of drone attacks in FATA, which have led to an increase in innocent civilian casualties, the inclusion of Balochistan as a drone target area, Washington's patronage of Musharraf whom the majority of Pakistanis perceived as a dictator, and recent statements by US diplomats, deemed to encroach upon Pakistan's sovereignty, may be just some of the grievances exacerbating patterns of mistrust of the US amongst the Pakistani masses. Boasting about secular values, while remaining relatively oblivious to the core culturally conservative values of Pakistani society has meant that the West, particularly the US, has lost credibility amongst the masses.<sup>xxv</sup> This has also provided leverage to the opposite camp, the Islamists, to harp on about the 'callousness' of the 'Great Satan'.

The US has consistently justified aerial attacks in the FATA region by claiming that important Al Qaeda hierarchy is the target; Ayman Al-Zawahiri has been cited as the most sought after target several times. However, it is debatable what the policy of unilateral incursions into Pakistan would yield. There is also an attitudinal change in Pakistani politics, whence the masses have turned activist, while they were previously regarded as pliant and flexible by policy makers and politicians alike. This has to be factored into any geo-strategic projections about security in the area.

## Conclusion

It is obvious that the poor samples in the NWFP and Balochistan, and to a lesser extent, the control samples in the other two provinces, tend to display a more radical worldview than their more affluent Punjabi and Sindhi counterparts. The study does not contend that poverty alone is to blame; there are a number of factors which interact on the individual within the ambit of society to produce a radical outlook. However, the results of the survey do suggest that poverty by itself cannot be dismissively waved off as a minor determinant variable of radicalization in Pakistani society. As Angrist's research reveals, there are different trajectories to determinant variables of terrorism in different theaters, which may very well be the case in Pakistan where poverty, rather than educational attainment, may be a radicalizing factor, as demonstrated by Fair and Abbas (regarding education). It is also debatable that even employed persons may be facing crippling poverty in some areas of Pakistan, particularly the tribal areas. It seems that a majority of young men from rural backgrounds can only find relatively menial jobs.<sup>xxvi</sup> Over time, the private sector's already constrained capacity to accommodate the youth cohort in employment is shrinking even more.

Even though there has been some improvement in the macroeconomic structure of the country, it is inadequate to keep pace with the growth of the youth cohort,<sup>xxvii</sup> which is one of the largest in the world,

assessed by international comparison of youth, including children, as a percentage of overall population.<sup>xxviii</sup> The size of Pakistan's population between ages 15-24 is estimated at 36 million. A further 58 million individuals are below the age of 15. Coupled together, these account for nearly 60 percent of Pakistan's total population, a proportion that is only second to Yemen. This youth cohort is disproportionately skewed towards the male population,<sup>xxix</sup> which obviously focuses emphasis on their potential to fall victim to radicalization, if left marginalized in the mainstream Pakistani society.

This demands a fresh look at contextualizing how poverty operates to radicalize the poor (including the seemingly employed) in Pakistan; macro level sociological overviews will not produce concrete data for the required purposes. This is particularly important with regard to providing financial assistance to the beleaguered Pakistani state, since investment by the Pakistani government in the social sectors has been less than generous, even when it has been offered soft loans and outright aid packages in the past.

Judging the responses elicited from the study, it seems that even though the Taliban may not be the ubiquitously preferred choice against the Pakistani state, they do have a certain amount of ideological support amongst the poor, and to a lesser extent, amongst the more affluent in the NWFP and Balochistan. Factoring in the support for militant religious groups and the rampant grievances against the US, it seems that the poor are more prepared to opt for militancy instead of an ineffective governance structure as a solution to their problems; this may become increasingly relevant as the Taliban continue to gain footholds in the NWFP districts one after the other, and Balochistan seems poised to attract attention as the new Taliban militant haven. International attention by donors and global policy makers needs to be focused on Pakistan's poverty fault-lines, lest they become ruptured by radicalization and extremism.

### **Annexure 1: Questionnaire**

1. Education (1 = high to 3 = low)
2. Occupation (1 = high to 3 = low)
3. Income (1 = high to 3 = low)
4. How do you describe the intensity of your religiosity? (1 = high to 3 = low)
5. Tell us your opinion regarding the following statement: "I support certain religious groups' use of violence to achieve their objectives." (1 = strongly support 2 = strongly oppose 3 = No opinion either way)
6. Should religious leaders acquire public office? (1 = strongly support 2 = strongly oppose 3 = No opinion either way)
7. Tell us your opinion regarding the following statement: "An Islamic state is the solution to all of Pakistan's problems" (1 = strongly support 2 = strongly oppose 3 = No opinion either way)
8. How do you feel about a Taliban takeover in Pakistan? (1 = strongly support 2 = strongly oppose 3 = No opinion either way)
9. How do you feel about the 9/11 attacks? (1 = strongly condemn 2 = strongly support 3 = No opinion either way)
10. Describe the intensity of your grievances against the United States. (1 = strongly support 2 = strongly oppose 3 = No opinion either way)



11. What is your opinion regarding any future attacks against US targets? (1 = strongly support 2 = strongly oppose 3 = No opinion either way)

### Annexure 2: Most Affluent Districts (Province Wise)

Province	District	HDI	Ranking within country
Punjab	Jhelum	0.703	1
	Sheikhupura	0.621	4
	Bhakkar	0.581	7
	Kasur	0.577	8
Sindh	Karachi	0.618	5
	Dadu	0.535	21
	Hyderabad	0.532	23
	Mirpur Khas	0.522	31
NWFP	Haripur	0.629	3
	Abbotabad	0.598	6
	Kohat	0.537	19
	Peshawar	0.531	24
Balochistan	Ziarat	0.697	2
	Loralai	0.556	13
	Mastung	0.528	28
	Lasbela	0.514	33

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**Annexure 3: Least Affluent Districts (Province Wise)**

Province	District	HDI	Ranking within country
Punjab	Muzzafargarh	0.459	59
	Dera Ghazi Khan	0.471	53
	Narowal	0.472	52
	Lodhran	0.475	51
Sindh	Tharparkar	0.343	88
	Jacobabad	0.393	77
	Shikarpur	0.417	72
	Larkana	0.435	67
NWFP	Shangla	0.332	90
	Kohistan	0.332	89
	Batgram	0.363	83
	Upper Dir	0.369	82
Balochistan	Dera Bugti	0.285	91
	Jhal Magsi	0.345	87
	Kharan	0.346	86
	Kohlu	0.348	85

**Notes:**

<sup>i</sup> Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection? Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, Journal of Economic Perspectives, Volume 17, Number 4, Fall 2003, pp. 119-44.

<sup>ii</sup> Eriposte, "Developing A Framework to Understand and Develop Working Solutions to Major Conflicts: The Case of Mizoram (India) - Part 4", The Left Coaster, Jan 2009. Also see Eriposte, "Language and Ethnic Conflict in South Asia", The Left Coaster, Feb 2009.

<sup>iii</sup> B. Riedel, "Pakistan and Terror: The Eye of the Storm", Annals of the AAPSS, 2008; T. Rubin, "Bruce Riedel: We need to make the war against al Qaeda Pakistan's war, not just America's war", Academy Blog, 2008; B. Gwertzman interview of B. Riedel, "Riedel: U.S. Needs to Tread Carefully in Pakistan", Council on Foreign Relations, 2008.

<sup>iv</sup> Council for Foreign Relations, Pakistan Archives.

<sup>v</sup> The Gini coefficient is a measure of statistical dispersion, commonly used as a measure of inequality of income or wealth distribution. It is defined as a ratio with values between 0 and 1: A low Gini coefficient indicates more equal income or wealth distribution, while a high Gini coefficient indicates more unequal distribution. 0 corresponds to

- perfect equality (everyone having exactly the same income) and 1 corresponds to perfect inequality (where one person has all the income, while everyone else has zero income).
- vi In economics, the Lorenz curve is often used to represent income distribution, where it shows for the bottom x% of households, what percentage y% of the total income they have. It can also be used to show distribution of assets.
- vii Christine Fair, "The Madrassah challenge; Militancy and religious education in Pakistan," (Lahore, 2009: Vanguard Books), p. 70.
- viii Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "The Quality of Terror," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, No. 3, July 2005.
- ix Pew Global Attitudes projects, *Global Opinion Trends 2002-2007*.
- x The HDI is a composite statistic used to rank countries by level of "human development", which usually also implies whether a country is developed, developing, or underdeveloped.
- xi This perception was subjective, since in most of the cases it was hard enough to have the questionnaire completed by a household; the survey team did not have the leeway to request that female members of the household also complete the questionnaire.
- xii Stephen P. Cohen, "The Idea of Pakistan," (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).
- xiii Population Council, "Adolescents and Youth in Pakistan 2001-02: A National Representative Survey," project sponsored by UNICEF, 2002, p. 130.
- xiv Muhammad Azam, *Radicalization in Pakistan; Socio cultural realities, Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Jan-Mar 2009, p. 51.
- xv A. S. Akhtar, "Balochistan versus Pakistan", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Nov 2007.
- xvi Sabeeha Hafeez, *The changing Pakistan society* (Karachi, 1991: Royal Book Company), p. 3.
- xvii Henrik Urdal, "The Demographics of Political Violence: Youth Bulges, Insecurity and Conflict" in Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet (eds), *Too Poor for Peace? Global Poverty, Conflict and Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2007), pp. 90-100.
- xxiii Pew Global Attitudes Project, <http://pewglobal.org/>.
- xix 'A New Lens on Pakistan,' Steven Kull, *WorldPublicOpinion.org*, January 18, 2008, <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brasiapacificra/443.php?lb=bras&pnt=443&nid=&id=>.
- xx See 'A profile of Baitullah Mehsud', September 2008 and 'A profile of Mangal Bagh', November 2008, both by Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, *The Pakistani Taliban pages*, Featured Reports section, *The Long War Journal*.
- xxi 'Emerald Mines of Swat Possessed by Taliban', Ernest Dempsey, March 28, 2009, <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/270005>.
- xxii 'Only Taliban can do it', Saeed Qureshi, April 24, 2009, *Pakistan Observer*, <http://pakobserver.net/200904/24/Articles02.asp>.
- xxiii The MMA was an Islamic alliance of religious-political parties in Pakistan. In the Pakistani parliament, the MMA became a coalition opposition, formed after Pakistan became a part of the "Global War on Terror". The coalition was forged against President Pervez Musharraf because of his support for the US-led 'war on terror'. However, support or dilly-dallying by the MMA helped the Musharraf regime at crucial junctures, earning a reputation for some components of the MMA of being a 'friendly opposition'.
- xxiv A commonly encountered notion by the research team was; 'Didn't the US perpetrate 9/11 on itself?' This was not expressed as a mere conspiracy theory, but in relatively certain terms as if it had been proved, portraying the simplistic worldview entertained by villagers in Pakistan.
- xxv A recent poll puts Pakistan as the third most anti-American nation behind Turkey and Palestine. Umit Enginsoy, "Turkey 'Most Anti-U.S. Country' in World, Poll Says," *Turkish Daily News*, June 29, 2007, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=76984>.
- xxvi The CIA World Fact Book's caption on unemployment in Pakistan aptly captures the current situation; it states "Unemployment Rate: 6.5 % plus substantial underemployment (2006 est.)"
- xxvii Pakistan's Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey 2007-08*, p. 202.
- xxviii Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision; World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>.
- xxix Official statistics for 2006 estimate the male population at approximately 81 million and the female population at 75 million. See Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan, *Pakistan Statistical Yearbook 2006* (Islamabad, 2007), p. 309.

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### **Pak Institute for Peace Studies**

Post Box No. 2110, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Tel: +92 - 51 - 2291586

Fax: +92 - 51 - 2100651

[www.san-pips.com](http://www.san-pips.com)

Email: [pips@san-pips.com](mailto:pips@san-pips.com)