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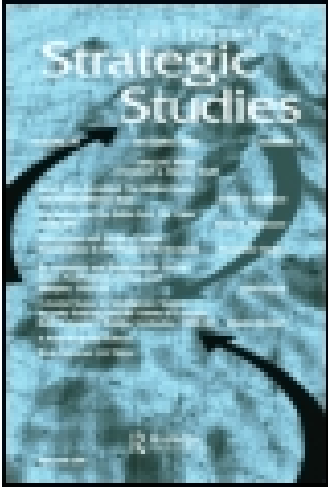
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Journal of Strategic Studies

Pakistani Political Communication and Public Opinion on US Drone Attacks

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Published online: 23 Jan 2015.

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Pakistani Political Communication and Public Opinion on US Drone Attacks

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ABSTRACT Conventional wisdom holds that Pakistanis are overwhelmingly opposed to American drone strikes in their country's tribal areas and that this opposition is driven by mass media coverage of the loss of life and property the strikes purportedly cause. Using an approach based in the literature in political communication and public opinion, we argue this conventional wisdom is largely inaccurate. Instead, we contend that awareness of drone strikes will be limited because Pakistan is a poor country with low educational attainment, high rates of illiteracy and persistent infrastructure problems that limit access to mass media. Moreover, because of these same country characteristics, Pakistanis' beliefs about drone strikes will be shaped primarily by informal, face-to-face political communication, rather than through more formal media sources. We test this argument using data that we collected by fielding a 7,656 respondent, nationally-representative survey carried out in Pakistan in 2013. The results of the statistical analysis support our arguments.

KEY WORDS: Drones, Pakistan, Political Information, Public Opinion, Counter-terrorism

Introduction to the Puzzle

The US government's use of armed drones to target suspected terrorists in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has discomfited many Pakistanis for several years. Pakistani discontent deepened when Barack Obama became the US president in 2009 and dramatically expanded the use of armed drones in FATA.[1] Prior to the end of 2013,

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[1]Under President George W. Bush, the United States launched a total of 47 drone strikes. After Obama assumed office in 2009, the CIA launched 52 in that year alone. CIA drone strikes peaked in 2010 with 122 and then decreased to 73 in 2011, 48 in

when the United States curbed the use of drones, large public protests against the drones were regular features in Pakistan's major cities.[2] Pakistan's Thirteenth National Assembly (2008-13) even declared unanimously that the program violates Pakistani sovereignty.[3] In 2011, the PPP-led Pakistani government forced the United States to evacuate drones and US personnel from the Shamsi airbase in southern Balochistan.[4] While campaigning for the May 2013 general elections, both Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as well as his chief political rival Imran Khan, vowed to end America's use of armed drones to kill suspected militants in Pakistan's FATA.[5]

Commentators on the drone program tend to characterize Pakistani public opinion about drones as nearly universally opposed to the program while overlooking or even disregarding the nuances of Pakistani public opinion about the program, including widespread ignorance of it).[6] Recent research on Pakistani attitudes toward drones has shown that while there is a plurality of Pakistanis who oppose the drones, there are also large numbers of Pakistanis who do not know about the drone strikes at all or have no opinion about the attacks.[7] This research establishes that there is a great deal of uncertainty and unfamiliarity about the US drone program in FATA among the Pakistani population, although that is decreasing over time. But this scholarship also clearly

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2012 and 27 in 2013. There have been no drone strikes in 2014, at the time of writing (New America Foundation, 'Pakistan Drone Strikes: Bush vs. Obama' (nd), <http://natsec.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan/analysis>).

[2]S. Masood, and I.T. Mehsud, 'Thousands in Pakistan Protest American Drone Strikes', *New York Times*, 13 Nov. 2013, <www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/in-pakistan-rally-protests-drone-strikes.html?_r=0>; J. Serle, 'Drone strikes in Pakistan: Pakistan drone strike pause is the longest of Obama's presidency', *Bureau of Investigative Journalism,* 18 Feb. 2014, <www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2014/02/18/pakistan-drone-strike-pause-is-the-longest-of-obama-presidency/>

[3]'Violating sovereignty: Drones report validates PPP stance' *Pakistan Express Tribune*, 24 Oct. 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/621708/violating-sovereignty-drones-report-validates-ppp-stance/>

[4]For a more complicated discussion of US drone bases in Pakistan, see International Crisis Group, *Drones–Myth and Reality* (2013), <www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2013/asia/drones-myths-and-reality-in-pakistan.aspx>.

[5]'Drone attacks must stop: Nawaz', *Pakistan Express Tribune*, 9 June 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/560824/drone-attacks-must-stop-nawaz/>.

[6]International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School & Global Justice Clinic at NYU School of Law, *Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practices in Pakistan* (2012), <www.livingunderdrones.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Stanford-NYU-Living-Under-Drones.pdf>.

[7]C.C. Fair, K. Kaltenthaler and W. Miller, 'Pakistani Opposition to American Drone Strikes', *Political Science Quarterly* 129/1 (2014), 1–33.

shows that the majority of Pakistanis who know about the drones and have a position on their use, oppose them. Supporters of US drone strikes are a small, albeit often ignored, minority within the Pakistani population.

This landscape of opinion and non-opinion raises an important question: How do Pakistanis obtain information about drone strikes, which in turn informs any opinion they may have about them? Although the US government does little to manage public perceptions of this program, the question is still of interest because the program galvanizes anti-American sentiment and because it has been a salient part of Pakistani political discourse. Both for Pakistani domestic politics and for US-Pakistan relations, we believe that it is useful to understand both what Pakistanis believe about the program and the sources of information that shape their beliefs.

Unfortunately, the extant literature on political communication and opinion formation is almost exclusively focused upon studies of industrialized democratic polities. During an extensive literature review, we could find only one scholarly article that focused upon a developing country (Afghanistan); however this essay is empirically-focused and does not provide a theoretical framework for understanding political communication and opinion formation in such countries.[8] In this paper, we put forward a theoretical framework that explains how persons in developing countries obtain political information.

We argue that there are several important differences between developed and developing countries with respect to political communication and opinion formation. On average, the citizens of developed countries are nearly universally literate and have a relatively higher degree of education than citizens of developing countries. Moreover, industrialized countries tend to have the infrastructure that renders mass communications accessible to the general population. Equally important, citizens of developed countries tend to have the financial means to access many forms of media. Taken together, in developed countries, people tend to acquire their political information through the media, if they are so inclined to do so.

By contrast, in developing countries with high rates of illiteracy, low levels of general educational attainment, high rates of poverty and unreliable and sometimes unavailable infrastructure to support modern mass communications on a large scale, the media plays a much less prominent role in political communication than in developed countries. In these countries, we argue that people are more likely to obtain political information through traditional elites, with whom they have face-to-face contact,

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[8]S.M. Rawan, 'Modern Mass Media and Traditional Communication in Afghanistan', *Political Communication* 19/2 (2002), 155–70.

and that information is spread by word of mouth among family and friends rather than through the mass media. This suggests that what Pakistanis know about US drone strikes in their country – if they know anything or much at all – is likely derived primarily from traditional forms of communication. We test these assertions through an analysis of survey data that this research team collected from a 2013, nationally representative sample drawn from Pakistan's four main provinces: Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab, and Sindh.

The remainder of this essay is organized as follows. In the next section, we introduce our dataset and show what our data illustrate about the landscape of Pakistani public opinion toward US drone strikes in FATA. In the third section, we develop our argument about political communication and opinion formation in poor, developing countries. In the fourth section, we use our data to exposit how Pakistanis access local and national news. Presumably these are the sources of information from which Pakistanis will learn about the drones if they know anything about them. In the fifth section, we describe the methods with which we will test these hypotheses, the results of which we address in the sixth section. We conclude this essay with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

The Survey

The most popular data source that analysts use to measure Pakistani public opinion towards drones and other issues is the Pew Foundation's Global Attitudes Survey (2012). However, recent scholarship on Pakistani attitudes towards drones has identified several problems with using the Pew data for this purpose. First, according to Pew's own methodological description, the Pakistan sample is small (typically around 1,200 respondents) and overwhelmingly urban. However, Pakistan's population is still generally rural with only 36.2 per cent of the population living in urban areas.[9] (In Pew's tabulations, they use weights to adjust for this.[10]) Second, as some scholars have recently observed, Pew's datasets on Pakistani public opinion on drones have very high 'don't know/didn't respond' rates. In some years, more than two thirds of surveyed respondents evidenced no knowledge about the program. For these years, the sample of persons who express a view of the program is extremely non-representative of the general population of Pakistan.[11] To better understand what Pakistanis believe and most

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[9]Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book – Pakistan* (2014), <https://www.cia. gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>.
[10]See methodological note on p. 35 of Pew Research Global Attitudes Project (2012).
[11]Fair *et al.*, 'Pakistani Opposition to American Drone Strikes'.

importantly how they come to hold these beliefs, we fielded our own nationally-representative survey of 7,656 respondents, across Pakistan's four provinces.

Because the only available data about Pakistani opinion about drones are not ideal – both because of the limitations of the size and characteristics of the sample and because of the items that Pew includes in the questionnaire – we fielded a 7,656-person survey in the fall of 2013 to achieve four goals. First, we wanted a representative sample of the rural and urban areas of each of Pakistan's four main provinces. Second, we wanted to ascertain the level of Pakistanis' political awareness. To this end, we included a series of basic knowledge questions asking about Pakistani governance. Third, we sought to collect data on Pakistanis' familiarity with, and views about, the drone program. We therefore designed an extensive battery about the program. Fourth, we wanted to exposit how political communication informs and shapes such opinions. To accomplish this objective, we developed a wide-ranging set of questions to ascertain how respondents obtain information about local, national, regional and international events as well as about the sources of information they trust most and least. We also included in the questionnaire standard socio-economic and demographic survey items.

Our final English instrument was comprised of 108 survey items. Our Pakistani partners, Socio-Economic Development Consultants (SEDCO), translated the instrument into Urdu. Our team, which included a member proficient in written and spoken Urdu, worked with SEDCO to ensure accurate translation. We conducted two pre-tests prior to launching the complete survey and made appropriate revisions to both the English and Urdu instruments following lessons learned from pre-testing. In all, there were nine revisions to the English and Urdu surveys before fielding the finalized, tenth version. Team members thoroughly checked the final printed Urdu questionnaire for accuracy prior to fielding.

One of the team members travelled to Pakistan and, in conjunction with SEDCO, conducted enumerator training in two locations. The teams for KP, Punjab and the Federal Territory for Islamabad met in Islamabad for two days of training; the Sindh and Balochistan teams met in Karachi for two days of training. During the training, the team sought to ensure that enumerators understood the questions and could explain the questions in their own words, both in Urdu as well as in their relevant vernacular languages (e.g. Sindhi in Sindh; Punjabi in Punjab; Baloch, Brahui and Pashto in Balochistan; and, Pashto in KP).[12] Trainers instructed the enumerators about the instrument's skip patterns, the appropriate procedures

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[12]While the survey was formally fielded in Urdu, enumerators practiced translating the questions in their relevant vernacular languages to ensure that they could explain survey items in the language that was most comfortable for the respondents.

for using the Kish grid and proper methods for filling out the items of the questionnaire. The team also worked with enumerators to ensure that they could discern whether respondents declined to offer a response because they did not understand the question or whether they simply did not want to answer the question. If the former, trainers instructed enumerators how best to explain the question clearly in hopes of eliciting some form of response from the respondent. Because the entire survey was conducted under the auspices of Kaltenthaler's Institutional Review Board, enumerator training also focused upon human subjects-related concerns such as eliciting consent, protecting the data and other aspects of protecting human subjects.

Working with SEDCO, we drew a random sample of 7,656 adult Pakistani men and women from the four provinces of the country, using the Pakistan Federal Bureau of Statistics sample frame. The respondents were selected randomly within 479 primary sampling units (PSUs), 285 in rural areas and 194 in urban ones (following the rural-urban breakdown in the Pakistan census). We substantially oversampled in Balochistan and KP to ensure that we could generate valid estimates in these provinces, which have small populations in spatially concentrated ethnic enclaves owing to their rugged terrains. We calculated post-stratification survey weights based on population figures from the 1998 census, the most recent available. SEDCO coded all data twice independently in Pakistan. We then merged the two ensuing datasets to identify coding discrepencies, all of which were resolved with reference to the hard copy of the filled-out instruments.

The face-to-face questionnaire was fielded by seven mixed-gender teams between 28 August and 30 October 2013. Females surveyed females and males surveyed males, consistent with Pakistani social and cultural norms. The overall response rate for the survey was 64 per cent (67 per cent in Balochistan, 63 per cent in KP, 65 per cent in Punjab, 61 per cent in Sindh province), which is lower than the 70 per cent obtained in the General Social Survey in recent years but higher than the 59.5 per cent achieved by the American National Election Studies (2008)[13] and other high-quality academic studies. On average, enumerators spent 44 minutes per survey. The enumerators were on average better educated than ordinary Pakistanis with 46 per cent having undergraduate degrees and 22 per cent having masters along with 4.25 years of relevant job experience.

One important caveat about our dataset is required. The CIA has launched drone strikes only in the FATA, with one exception in 2013, which occurred immediately beyond the boundary of the FATA. Soliciting the views of persons close to the drone strikes is ideal.

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[13]American National Election Studies, *2008 Time Series Study* [Data file, 2008], <http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/2008prepost/2008prepost.htm>.

However, conducting such surveys in FATA is extremely difficult due to: the lack of a recent census of the area; turbulent population shifts due to the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan; ongoing security operations in the FATA; and, the persistent presence of varied terrorist, insurgent and criminal groups operating in the area. SEDCO forthrightly conceded to the team during the contracting phase that it is impossible to obtain a scientific sample from FATA. For this reason, we focused our resources upon the four main provinces of Pakistan.

Political Communication in Developing Countries

The existing literature on political issue awareness, opinion formation and political communication is unsuitable for our questions about Pakistan because the extant scholarship is based upon the citizens and political communication cultures in highly developed countries. To understand the questions we have posed about Pakistan – a relatively poor and developing country – we must revise several assumptions inherent in the current body of scholarship.

First, poor, developing countries do not have the same environments for the supply and demand for political communication that rich, developed countries do. This matters because a person must first be aware that an issue exists before he or she can have an opinion on that issue. Zaller, in a ground-breaking study, found that issue awareness is a product of political communication, conditioned by the supply of and the demand for political communication. Individuals become aware of political issues through various forms of political communication but people have to want to be informed in order to become informed.[14]

Second, studies have shown that most people are not interested in politics or that they are not motivated to invest the resources required to inform themselves about political issues.[15] Political apathy is largely a function of education and socio-economic status.[16] Education generally raises a person's exposure to political

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[14]J. Zaller, 'Political Awareness, Elite Opinion, and the Mass Survey Response', *Social Cognition* 8/1 (1990), 125–53.

[15]P. Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics', in David Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent* (London: International Yearbook of Political Behavior 1964); M. Delli Carpini and S. Keeter, 'Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First', *American Journal of Political Science* 37/3 (1993), 1179–1206; W. Eveland, 'The Effect of Political Discussion in Producing Informed Citizens: The Roles of Information, Motivation, and Elaboration', *Political Communication* 21/2 (2004), 177–93.

[16]S. Gordon and G. Segura, 'Cross-national Variation in the Political Sophistication of Individuals: Capability or Choice?', *Journal of Politics* 59/1 (1997), 126–47; K. Grönland and H. Milner, 'The Determinants of Political Knowledge in Comparative

information, makes them more confident that they can understand political issues, peaks their interest in political affairs, and therefore makes them more likely to seek out political information and engage in political debates. Education on its own is not always a sufficient predictor of political issue awareness as not all educated people are interested in politics, but the two are highly linked as more educated people clearly tend to be more interested in politics.[17]

Similarly, the higher a person's socio-economic status, the more likely they are to engage in politics, participate in learning about political issues and take part in the political process.[18] The literature suggests that poorer people are less likely than wealthier people to engage in politics because they are generally more inclined to believe that there is little they can do to affect change and because they have fewer resources through which they can influence politics. This literature also suggests that poorer people do not engage in the political process as much as those who believe they have greater levels of wealth and thus greater perceived political efficacy.[19] Existing research also holds that poorer individuals tend to have fewer resources available to them to consume political information, such as the time or funds to buy access to information, compared to wealthier individuals.[20]

If the extant studies of political awareness, which focus on developed countries, show that people are generally not very aware of many political issues because they lack the education to make them interested in politics and able to understand the subject matter, we must then further adjust our expectations downwards when considering poorer, developing countries with very low relative levels of educational attainment. In such countries, we expect that levels of political interest and

Perspective', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 29/4 (2006), 386–406; J. McCann and C. Lawson, 'Presidential Campaigns and the Knowledge Gap in Three Democracies', *Political Research Quarterly* 59/1 (2006), 13–22; S. Nicholson, 'The Political Environment and Ballot Proposition Awareness', *American Journal of Political Science* 47/3 (2003), 403–10; F. Solt, 'Economic Inequality and Political Engagement', *American Journal of Political Science* 53/1 (2008), 48–60; S. Verba, K.L. Schlozman, and H. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: CUP 1995).
[17]McCann and Lawson, 'Presidential Campaigns and the Knowledge Gap in Three Democracies', 13–22.
[18]R. Dahl, *On Political Equality* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP 2006); J. Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press 1980); Solt, 'Economic Inequality and Political Engagement', 48–60; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*.
[19]Dahl, *On Political Equality*.
[20]Solt, 'Economic Inequality and Political Engagement', 48–60; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*.

awareness will be low. This may explain why, in a country such as Pakistan, a significant portion of the population is not aware of drone strikes despite the controversy they cause and the media coverage they sustain.

With respect to those Pakistanis who are aware of the drone attacks and who answer our question soliciting their views of them, a large body of literature in survey research suggests that the respondent's basic political values or orientation will inform their opinion about the program.[21] However, political values alone do not permit an individual to take a position on a particular political issue because the average person may not have detailed understanding of that issue. For this reason, persons tend to be 'cognitive misers' in that they take intellectual short-cuts that help them figure out which positions they should take. While people do this in both developed and developing countries, the sources upon which they rely will differ.

Many public opinion researchers have argued that elite opinion leaders can play a very large role in shaping what the public thinks about policy issues, particularly policy issues they do not understand very well or do not have an easy ideological frame of reference.[22] People rely upon these opinion elites to parse political issues that they do not fully understand. A person becomes an opinion elite when others take their judgments seriously and rely upon them to form their own assessments. Over time, these elites become recognized by some group of individuals as an expert. Examples of opinion elites include: a

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[21]R. Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Washington DC: CQ Press 2008); R. Inglehart, 'The Renaissance of Political Culture', *American Political Science Review* 2/4 (1988), 1203–30; J. Jost, 'The End of the End of Ideology', *American Psychologist* 61/7 (2006), 651–70.

[22]S. Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Univ. of Chicago Press 1991); W. Jacoby, 'Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending', *American Journal of Political Science* 44/4 (1991), 750–67; J. McLeod, D. Scheufele and P. Moy, 'Community, Communication, and Participation: The Role of Mass Media and Interpersonal Discussion in Local Political Participation', *Political Communication* 16 (1999), 315–36; T. Nelson, R. Clawson and Z. Oxley, 'Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance', *American Political Science Review* 91/3 (1997), 567–83; T. Nelson and Z. Oxley, 'Issue Framing Effects on Belief Importance and Opinion', *Journal of Politics* 61/4 (1999), 1040–67; D. Scheufele, 'Framing as a Theory of Media Effects', *Journal of Communication* 49/1 (1999), 103–22; D. Scheufele and D. Tewksbury, 'Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models', *Journal of Communication* 57/1 (2006), 9–20; Zaller, 'Political Awareness, Elite Opinion, and the Mass Survey Response', 125–53; J. Zaller, 'Information, Values, and Opinion', *American Political Science Review* 85/4 (1991), 1215–37; J. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: CUP 1992).

famous television or radio commentator; an editorial writer in a paper; a political figure; or a teacher at a local secondary school. The mass public will often assume that the opinion elites have better information on issues than they themselves do, and take their cues on complex issues from those whom they consider knowledgeable.[23] As Lupia argues, the more expert and trustworthy the elite is assumed to be on an issue, the more likely it is that individuals will follow his or her cues on issues that are deemed to be in the elite's realm of expertise.[24]

The majority of the political communication literature assumes most individuals get their information from opinion elites through the media.[25] The media is assumed to be an efficient means to learn about political issues because the elite commentators and news presenters are there, pressing their cases for the audience to absorb.

There are, however, other ways of informing oneself on an issue to help formulate an opinion. First, a person can converse with another person who is trusted to not intentionally mislead and whose knowledge he or she values. Such social networks can be very important sources of political information for individuals who are not inclined to search out political information from recognized opinion elites.[26] Family, friends and co-workers, among others, can pass along political

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[23]A. Lupia, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* (Cambridge: CUP 1998).

[24]Ibid.

[25]W.L. Bennet and S. Iyengar, 'A New Ear of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication', *Journal of Communication* 58/4 (2008), 707–31; W. Eveland, A. Hayes, D. Shah and N. Kwak, 'Understanding the Relationship between Communication and Political Knowledge: A Model Comparison Using Panel Data', *Political Communication* 22/4 (2005), 423–46; Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible?*; Jacoby, 'Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending', *American Journal of Political Science,* 750–67; McLeod *et al.*, 'Community, Communication, and Participation', 315–36; Nelson *et al.*, 'Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance', 567–83; Nelson and Oxley, 'Issue Framing Effects on Belief Importance and Opinion', 1040–67; Scheufele, 'Framing as a Theory of Media Effects', 103–22; D. Scheufele and D. Tewksbury, 'Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models', *Journal of Communication* 57/1 (2006), 9–20.

[26]R. Huckfeldt and J. Sprague, *Citizens, Contexts, and Social Communication* (Cambridge: CUP 1995); Huckfeldt *et al.*, 'Political Environments, Political Dynamics, and the Survival of Disagreement', *Journal of Politics* 64/1 (2002), 1–21; R. Huckfeldt, 'The Social Communication of Political Expertise', *American Journal of Political Science* 45/2 (2001), 425–38; A. Zuckerman (ed.), *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP 2005); A. Zuckerman, 'The Social Logic of Political Choice: Picking a Political Party in the Context of Immediate Social Circles', *Politische Vierteljahschrift* 4 (2007), 633–49.

information and influence an individual's position on political issues because they are the sole source for trusted information.[27] It is important to note that the persons in this network may not actually possess high-quality information about the issue even though they are a trusted source for some within this network.

Given that the existing literature speaks to acquisition of political information in developed polities, per force, we modify key assumptions of that literature to pertain to the conditions one would expect to find in poorer, developing countries such as Pakistan. First, we have already asserted that awareness of political issues will likely be much lower in developing countries because of the much lower levels of educational attainment and the high poverty that is typical of such countries relative to industrialized countries. It is possible that interest in political issues may also be lower. But what *if* an individual in a developing country wants to find out about a political issue that he or she has heard of but does not really understand in detail? Where is he or she likely to go to find the information that would inform his or her beliefs on the matter? The extant literature in political communication would say he or she would go to the media (print, television, radio and Internet) first and then perhaps rely on social networks for that information. In countries like Pakistan, however, social networks would be the first place to go for political information and then, if that does not suffice, the individual would listen to traditional elites who would pass the information along in a face-to-face manner.

Rawan found this to be true in a study he did of political communication in Afghanistan.[28] Rawan found that most Afghans obtained their political information from face-to-face contact. While Rawan's study is inductive, it is still meaningful to point to this empirical finding not just because Afghanistan shares many similarities with Pakistan, but also because it reveals how the populace of a poor, underdeveloped country will rely on word of mouth and not the mass media to learn political developments. Why would this pattern be so different from the pattern of political communication in economically developed countries?

Education, personal wealth and country infrastructure are all crucial to understanding why individuals in poor, developing countries are less likely to turn to the media and more likely to utilize social networks and personal interactions with local authorities to garner political information. The relative level of education is very important because people

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[27]Zuckerman, *The Social Logic of Politics*.
[28]Rawan, 'Modern Mass Media and Traditional Communication in Afghanistan', 155–70.

who are illiterate or only barely literate are not going to read news-papers or magazines to gain political information, both because they are unlikely to be able to read newspapers with understanding but also because they may be unable to buy them in the first instance.

Despite beliefs that televisions are ubiquitous, persons in lesser devel-oped countries may not rely upon television as a source of information because they may not be able to afford one, may live in areas without any electrical supply and may not have the vocabulary to understand some kinds of news and cultural programming. Similar problems exist with computer and Internet access. Additionally, with poverty comes the opportunity cost of spending time accessing the media rather than tend-ing to one's livelihood or family. Media access takes time and time is often a luxury for people who are economically disadvantaged. Finally, the country's infrastructure may be a major explanatory factor for the relative irrelevance of media in under-developed countries. For example, inconsistent electrical supply is a common problem in poor, developing countries. All of these considerations make traditional sources of infor-mation gathering, such as face-to-face encounters, more attractive.

Where does Pakistan stand in measures of literacy, poverty and infra-structure? In terms of literacy, Pakistan has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that Pakistan has a total adult literacy rate of 55 per cent, with 67 per cent of men and 42 per cent of women literate. This puts Pakistan 180th out of 221 countries in the world in terms of adult literacy.[29] According to the Pakistan-based Social Policy and Development Centre, Pakistani males have on average 5.5 years of schooling while females have only 3.5 years.[30] With respect to poverty, the World Bank considers Pakistan to be a lower middle income country.[31] Its gross national income per capita is $1,260 (2012 estimate), which puts it 173rd out of 213 countries on the World Bank's list of countries ranked by per capita income.

In terms of infrastructure, Pakistan struggles to provide its citizens with basic amenities. Only 69 per cent of the Pakistani population has access to electricity, far below the global average of 82 per cent.[32] But

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[29]UNESCO, *Country Profiles – Pakistan* (2014), <www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=PAK&regioncode=40535>.

[30]Social Policy and Development Centre, *Social Development in Pakistan: Annual Review 2011–12* (2012), <www.spdc.org.pk/Publications/Annual%20Reviews/AR%2011.pdf>.

[31]World Bank, *Gross National Income 2012, Atlas Method* (2014), <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GNI.pdf>.

[32]World Bank, *Access to Electricity (% of Population)* (2014) <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS>.

the access to electricity does not take into account the actual number of hours that the electricity is available per day. Pakistan has had a severe problem with planned power blackouts (called load-shedding in Pakistan) as well as unplanned blackouts for many years. On average, power goes out for at least 10 hours a day in the cities while in the rural areas, people can expect to have no power for 22 hours per day.[33] Thus, even if many Pakistanis have televisions, computers and even cellular phones, their use is severely restricted by the lack of reliable electric power.

Because Pakistan, by all measures, resembles a developing country more than a developed country, we posit that Pakistanis, on the average, will acquire political information from traditional, face-to-face sources (i.e. local elites, social networks (friends and family)) rather than the media, which we argue will play a relatively minor role in informing most Pakistanis.[34] We argue that even with a contentious and salient issue such as the American drone program, Pakistanis will rely more upon traditional and personal sources of information rather than the media. This gives rise to our testable hypothesis:

Hypothesis: *Face-to-face interactions will be more important sources of information than mass media sources for opinions on drone strikes for Pakistanis.*

The Sources of Pakistani Political Information

First, to assess the degree of familiarity with the drone program, we pose the following question: *Have you heard of American drone attacks aimed at militants in FATA?* A majority (64.6 per cent) indicated that they were aware of the strikes while 35.4 per cent were not. Even though multiple years of Pew data suggest that the percentage of persons who are unaware of drones has declined since 2009, a large minority remains unaware even though drones have been a major

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[33]D. Walsh and S. Masood, 'Pakistan Struggles to Keep Its Lights On', *New York Times*, 27 May 2013, p.6.

[34]M. Anwar and M. Jan, 'Role of Media in Political Socialization: The Case of Pakistan', *Dialogue* 5/3 (2010), 212–27; G. Murthy, 'Pakistan News Television: Who's Watching?', *Country Profiles: Pakistan*, Audiencescapes (2011); H. Shah, 'Inside Pages: An Analysis of the Pakistani Press', *South Asia Monitor*, (2011), <http://csis.org/files/publication/sam_148.pdf>; H. Shah, 'Inside Pages: An Analysis of the Pakistani Press'; *South Asia Monitor*, <http://csis.org/files/publication/sam_148.pdf>; S.A. Siraj, 'Critical Analysis of Press Freedom in Pakistan', *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* 1/3 (2009), 43–7; H. Yusuf, 'Conspiracy Fever: The US, Pakistan, and Its Media', *Survival* 53/4 (2011), 95–118.

political issue in the country. This offers anecdotal confirmation that the mass media may be less important than the conventional wisdom suggests.

Second, among those respondents who had heard of the drone program, we asked: *How much do you support American drone attacks aimed at militants in FATA?* Fifty per cent said 'not at all' while another 5 per cent said 'not much.' A minority of 3 per cent and 7 per cent indicated 'a lot' and 'somewhat,' respectively. However, 35 per cent said that they 'don't know' how much they support them even though they are aware of the drone strikes.

Third, to understand how people obtain information about the drone program and other domestic political affairs, we asked respondents: *How do you learn of events within Pakistan?* The enumerator read out loud to the respondent a list of options (shown in Table 1) and the respondent indicated 'yes' or 'no' to each item read. In Table 1 below, we present the percentage of persons indicating that they rely upon a given source of information.

We have sorted the table according to that source of information which is most often used. If we start at the top of the list and work down, it is apparent that word of mouth and family are the most common sources of information, with 87 per cent and 79 per cent of persons selecting them respectively. Pakistan's Urdu-language government television programming (PTV) is an important source of event information (65 per cent), in general, as are Pakistani private television channels (61 per cent) which are also Urdu language. Traditional

Table 1. Sources of Information on Events in Pakistan

Source of Information	Yes	No
Word of mouth	87.40%	12.60%
Family	79.20%	20.80%
Pakistan TV	65.20%	34.80%
Private TV	60.70%	39.30%
Traditional gathering (jirga, etc.)	41.10%	58.90%
Religious leaders	39.30%	60.70%
Urdu or other native language newspapers	25.90%	74.10%
SMS	16.60%	83.40%
Radio	16.30%	83.70%
International TV	6.00%	94.00%
Magazines	5.80%	94.20%
Pakistani English-language newspapers	4.00%	96.00%
Internet	3.50%	96.50%
E-mail	2.50%	97.50%
International newspapers	2.20%	97.80%

Source: Fair, Kaltenthaler and Miller, 2013 Pakistan Survey.

gatherings were important for 40 per cent of respondents and religious leaders were selected by 39 per cent of respondents. Other forms of information acquisition drop off very substantially. Newspapers, radio, magazines, the Internet and texting are all infrequently used to get information about events in Pakistan. The infrequent use of print media likely results from the relatively low levels of education and literacy prevalent in Pakistan. The few Pakistanis who use the radio, Internet and SMS to get information may be an indication of poverty and the relatively easier accessibility of other forms of information. Taken together, face-to-face interactions (word of mouth, family, traditional gatherings) are the most important means through which Pakistanis obtain information about domestic issues.

Modeling Political Information in Forming Opinions on Drone Strikes in Pakistan

The above descriptive statistics suggest that in general, Pakistanis rely upon informal, personal sources of information to learn about domestic events. In this section, we seek to test whether this is also true of the US drone program in particular. To do so, we estimate a model of respondent opinions on the US drone strikes among those who indicated that they are aware of the program.[35] To operationalize the crucial independent variable on the acquisition of political information, we use the question that asks: *How do you learn about events in Pakistan?* The options are available in Table 1. The model also includes demographic control variables that are typically included in such models: province of residency, education, age, gender, income and urban or rural domicile. We use an ordered probit regression model to test the hypothesis listed above because probit is most suitable when the dependent variable is categorical with more than two response options. Regression results are available in Table 2.

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[35]We analyzed the '*don't know/ no answer*' responses to this question to determine if there seemed to be a social desirability effect or the responses indicated that the respondent really did not know how to answer. We used a regression analysis and included education, general political knowledge, and demographic controls in the model. The '*don't know/no answer*' responses were very clearly predicted by education and general political knowledge. Thus, the responses of '*don't know/no answer*' indicate that respondents chose this response category because they did not believe they had enough information to take a position on the issue rather than feeling like they did not want to answer the question because it was too politically sensitive.

Table 2. Drone Opposition Ordered Probit Model
Dependent Variable-Oppose Drones

Independent Variables	Coef.	SE	First Difference
Info from traditional gathering	.519***	.056	.121
Info from family	−.043	.056	
Info from word of mouth	.208***	.066	.067
Info from religious leaders	−.491***	.052	
Info from PTV	.122**	.048	.038
Info from Private TV	.024	.053	
Info from International TV	−.067	.100	
Info from English newspapers	−.073	.106	
Info from Urdu newspapers	−.130**	.050	
Info from radio	−.067	.053	
Info from Internet	.012	.091	
Education	−.024	.015	
KP Resident	.371***	.072	
Punjab resident	.292***	.064	
Sindh resident	.337***	.076	
Age	.000	.002	
Male	.324***	.048	
Income	.060***	.019	
Urban resident	.010	.046	
Cut 1	−.997		
N	4706		
LR $X2(19)$	242.73		
Prob > chi2	.0000		

Note: Figures are unstandardized coefficients shown alongside standard errors. *p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01 (two-tailed). Cut 1 refers to a 'cut-point' on a standardized normal distribution. Cut points are used to calculate the predicted probabilities for each category of the dependent variable. The constant of the model would be interpreted as the inverse of Cut 1 (.997). Balochistan residents are the comparison group.
Source: Fair, Kaltenthaler and Miller, 2013 Pakistan Survey.

The Results

We predicted the primary information sources for those who are opposed to drone strikes would come from those who secure their information from informal political communication sources such as traditional gatherings, family, word of mouth and religious leaders. We also surmised that print and electronic media would be much less important in providing information to those opposed to drone strikes.

The results that we obtained from our regression (see Table 2) confirm that three of our four predictors are statistically significant. These include the primacy of obtaining political information about Pakistan via traditional gatherings, word of mouth and religious leaders. In

contrast, we found that procuring political information from the family was statistically insignificant. Among the other information variables, acquiring information from PTV and from Urdu and local language newspapers were statistically significant. Of the five significant information variables, two sources – religious leaders and Urdu/local language newspapers – had negative coefficients, implying that respondents who opposed drone strikes were less likely to get their information from these sources.

To determine the relative predictive power of the variables, we calculate the marginal effects of those variables. We do so by calculating the 'first differences,' that is the change in the probability of a respondent opposing drone strikes when the variable of interest is changed from its minimum to its maximum value, while the other independent variables are held constant at their means. We do this for each of the predictive variables in our model. Calculating the marginal effects in this way allows us to determine the magnitude of the impacts of the independent variables upon the dependent variable.

The information sources that predict opposition to drone strikes, in order of predictive relevance, are: traditional gatherings, word of mouth and PTV. 'Traditional gathering' is nearly twice as important a predictor as the others, with a first difference score of 0.121. 'Word of mouth' has a first difference vale of 0.067, making it the second most predictive factor in explaining opposition to drone strikes. 'PTV' is nearly half as predictive as 'word of mouth.' Thus, if we look at the relative sizes of the first difference values, obtaining information about events in Pakistan from traditional gatherings is far and away the most important factor for predicting opposition to drone strikes in FATA.

Conclusion

In this study we sought to understand how Pakistanis acquire information about the US drone program and what sources influence the opinions they develop about it. We suspected that contrary to conventional models on information sources of politics, the formal media in Pakistan would play a relatively insignificant role in shaping opinions on US drone attacks in FATA. Our argument was driven by the nature of Pakistani educational attainment, poverty and the weak infrastructure for supporting electronic media. The pervasive lack of literacy education above a rudimentary level would make it unlikely that most Pakistanis would seek or digest political news in the print or electronic media. Poverty would make it difficult for many families to afford a television or other means of accessing electronic media. It also may be the case that for many Pakistanis who are not economically

well off, the events in far-away FATA may be less important than events in their own localities. Finally, a weak electrical infrastructure, as plagues Pakistan, makes access to electronic media a challenge that would not be as daunting in countries with reliable electricity supplies.

Our data confirm that traditional gatherings and personal sources of information play a much larger role in apprising Pakistanis on drone strikes and in molding their views of the same. At the same time, we find that the media plays a much less important role in shaping overall Pakistani political opinion because of the reasons mentioned.

The implications of these findings are important. Most models of political awareness and communication must take into account the level of economic development of the type of country to which they are applied. Developed and developing countries have very different realities when it comes to the demand and supply of political communication. The role of traditional communication is still quite important in many developing countries, and Pakistan clearly fits into that category. There must be less focus devoted to the media and more to traditional, local leadership structures and social networks in terms of how political information is disseminated in countries like Pakistan.

These findings should also be of specific interest to both American and Pakistani governments who wish to influence Pakistani opinion. Most efforts rely upon traditional media such as television, radio and print sources. Any perception management strategy that relies upon these sources is not likely to succeed given that these are not the primary channels through which Pakistanis inform themselves of events within the country.

While Pakistan faces many daunting development challenges that leave a large portion of its population unaware of important political issues or only minimally informed when they have heard of them, there are many other countries in the world that face challenges similar to Pakistan. This would lead to a certain level of pessimism about the future of democracy in such countries since it has been long assumed that democracy depends on having informed, participatory citizens. Understanding political communication better in developing countries may give us a better understanding of politics in a large portion of the world.

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