

**Enterprising Extremists
Crime, Religion, and Political Violence in Pakistan**

In 2007, when the newly minted Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan began a spate of bloody attacks in the country, the violence was referred to in the public discourse as miscreancy. The use of this vague term to describe suicide bombings is emblematic of the lack of clarity with which violence in Pakistan is often discussed. My doctoral research seeks to specify this violence so that future policy responses can be guided by empirical evidence rather than intuition. I do so by first creating a typology of violence, which includes religious, ethnic, political party, and organized criminal violence. Then, using data on major incidents of violence from 1979-2010, I track variation in levels and types of violence in four major Pakistani cities. My research thus far, has shown both temporal and spatial variation in violence, which I argue is a result of changing opportunity structures that make certain forms of violence more appealing to violent actors at certain times. Surprisingly, I have found that many of these violent actors persist overtime, even as the violence they engage in changes. I call these persistent actors “criminal entrepreneurs” and argue that they represent a successful, core group that is able to adapt their behavior to continue profiting from violence, whatever its most recent permutation.

Clearly, this research project requires sustained fieldwork in Pakistan. I have already conducted two research trips and will likely conduct two more before the dissertation is complete. I am planning my next trip to Islamabad and Lahore in July 2015. I have a number of key informant interviews already scheduled and have also contacted an Islamabad based start-up that works on web crawling software for crime data. Additionally, I plan to conduct archival research, looking at local media reporting of major incidents of violence. I speak fluent Urdu and am very comfortable traveling within the country. Thus, I am well positioned to conduct research in Pakistan and would be sure to make the most of any support offered by AIPS.