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WHO BECOMES A TERRORIST? Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence

By ALEXANDER LEE*

MANY public figures and scholars have argued that poverty and lack of education play a role in participation in political violence.¹ Even George Bush declared that “we fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror,”² and the prevention of terrorism has become a common justification for increasing foreign aid. By contrast, others have argued that terrorism is unrelated to poverty, either across countries³ or among individuals.⁴ This latter view has had the advantage, at least within the social sciences, because most individual-level studies of terrorist groups have concluded that these groups are composed of people who are wealthier and better educated than the average member of the societies from which they recruit.⁵

These accounts have uncovered an important empirical regularity in both terrorism and political participation more generally. Terrorists, like members of other political groups, are drawn not from a random sample of the population but, rather, from those who have acquired information about the political process, are connected to politicized

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¹ Stern 2000; Gore 2002.

² Bush 2002.

³ Krueger and Laitin 2007; Piazza 2006; Abadie 2006.

⁴ Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Berrebi 2004.

⁵ Russell and Miller 1983; Federal Research Division 1999; Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Berrebi 2004.

social networks, and are able to devote time and energy to political involvement. As all of these things are costly, the politically involved are likely to be relatively wealthy and well educated, and this is in fact what we observe for most types of nonviolent political activity.⁶ This article argues that while social status plays a large negative role in selection into politics, it plays a different role when politically active individuals choose to become involved in violence. Within this subgroup, the higher opportunity costs of violence for rich individuals will lead them to avoid it. The members of violent groups will thus tend to be lower-status individuals from the educated and politicized section of the population.

Empirically, this implies that if we want to understand the causal processes that are specific to terrorist recruitment, we should compare terrorists not only to the population as a whole but also to a group of politically involved but nonviolent individuals, preferably with a similar ideological orientation. This article compares the social and educational backgrounds of terrorists and activists using a new data set of individuals involved in the anticolonial movement in the Indian province of Bengal. In line with the previous literature, I find that both the terrorists and the nonterrorist activists in Bengal were far richer and better educated than the population in which they operated. However, the violent sample has a lower social status, measured by education and employment, than the nonviolent sample. This result is robust to a wide variety of controls and robustness checks. Terrorists seem to be drawn from the bottom portion of the politically active class, a finding that supports the idea that they are motivated at least in part by economic opportunity costs and calculations of personal advantage, rather than solely or primarily by ideology or grievance. An important empirical implication is that long-run changes in social and economic development can either increase or decrease the ease of terrorist recruitment. On the one hand, economic and social modernization increases the number of people with time and resources to devote to political activism, which may include terrorism. On the other hand, strong growth may create economic opportunities that will increase the potential rewards of work for the elite and thus push them toward less risky forms of political involvement.

Section I examines the empirical literature on the social backgrounds of terrorists. Section II develops a theory of participation in terrorism and details its testable implications, while Section III presents

⁶Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995.

the testable implications of a variety of alternative theories. Section IV discusses the Bengali case and the structure of the data. Section V presents the results of the analysis, and Section VI examines potential confounding factors and robustness checks. Sections VII and VIII discuss the generalizability and broader implications of these findings.

I. DEFINITIONS AND PREVIOUS LITERATURE

I define terrorism as the use of violence to attain political ends, when this violence is primarily intended to cause fear among the civilian population and when the psychological value of acts of violence is prioritized over their immediate military value. These last criteria differentiate it from insurgencies and coups, where force, rather than the fear of force, is the primary means used. Such a definition of “terrorist group” would thus exclude insurgent groups like the LTTE of Sri Lanka, whose use of terror, while large in an absolute sense, was subsidiary to the broader military and territorial strategy of the organization. It seems probable that such groups also exhibit recruitment patterns that differ from other terrorist groups, as their control of territory enables them to extend better material inducements to members or use coercion in recruitment.⁷

Previous empirical studies of participation in terrorism have long stressed the possibility of a socioeconomic root cause. In the 1970s a literature grew up on the social backgrounds of those involved in the emerging “third wave” of terrorism.⁸ All of these studies found that the perpetrators were in general wealthier and better educated than the populations from which they came, although only Ferracutti and Bruno attempted to make an explicit comparison to an outside reference group.⁹ The increase in Islamic terrorism in the 1990s, particularly suicide terrorism, generated more work on the social backgrounds of terrorists. Despite the radically different cultural and ideological backgrounds of these movements, the results have been broadly similar: Islamic terrorists seem socially privileged,¹⁰ although this result is less strong for suicide bombers than for other terrorists.

Like the older literature, many of these accounts are handicapped by

⁷ For a theory of participation in these kinds of insurgencies and civil wars, see Humphreys and Weinstein 2008.

⁸ On ETA, see Clark 1983; on the Red Brigades, see Weinberg and Eubank 1987; and Ferracutti and Bruno 1981; and on a mixed sample of international terrorists, see Russell and Miller 1983.

⁹ However, they did not present any data on the nonterrorist sample to support their comparison.

¹⁰ Sageman 2004; Federal Research Division 1999; Pedahzur, Perliger, and Weinberg 2003; Hassan 2001.

the fact that, while they examine the sociological backgrounds of terrorists, they fail to compare them explicitly with the population from which they are drawn, leaving the sample selected on the dependent variable.¹¹ Other accounts of Islamic terrorism avoided this problem by using the whole population as a reference group. Krueger and Maleckova¹² examined the backgrounds of dead Hezbollah fighters drawn from online biographies and compared them with the population of young males in Lebanon, while Berrebi¹³ compared a similar sample of Palestinian terrorists with the young male population of the West Bank. Both studies found that the militants were relatively educated and wealthy. This result echoes findings that hate crimes are not correlated with economic deprivation.¹⁴ Similarly, cross-national regressions of the incidence of terrorism have found it to be uncorrelated with per capita GDP.¹⁵ The empirical regularity of terrorists being wealthy and well educated has become a stylized fact that has been the basis for the construction of sophisticated theoretical accounts of terrorist recruitment.¹⁶

II. A THEORY OF VIOLENT AND NONVIOLENT PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

This article argues that within countries, participation in political violence is strongly conditioned by two factors: informational and resource barriers to political participation and economic opportunity costs within the participating group. Below a set socioeconomic threshold, individuals have little chance of participation due to their inferior access to political information, disposable time, and politically salient social contacts. Above that threshold, opportunity costs and calculations of political advantage will lead high-status individuals to prefer participation in violence. This theory flows naturally from a set of assumptions that the discussion here will attempt to justify.

¹¹ There is also a large literature on the psychological backgrounds of terrorists, both Western and Islamicist (Atran 2003; Marvasti 2008; Post 2004; literature reviewed in Victoroff 2005). Often based on interviews with captured terrorists, these accounts tend to be descriptive in nature and focus on personal characteristics observed in terrorists, such as their relationships with their parents, though no consensus has been reached that terrorists are in fact psychologically abnormal in any systematic way (Silke 1998). As this article focuses on the social and economic predictors of terrorism, it will not discuss psychological causes.

¹² Krueger and Maleckova 2003.

¹³ Berrebi 2004.

¹⁴ Green, Glasser, and Rich 1998; Krueger and Pishke 1997.

¹⁵ Abadie 2006.

¹⁶ Bueno de Mesquita 2005.

THE RESOURCE BARRIER

Assumption 1. Political involvement is strongly and nonlinearly associated with socioeconomic status.

can be restated as

H1. Political activists should be concentrated in the wealthy and well-educated segments of the society from which they are drawn.

Terrorism is a form of political activism, one that most terrorists choose freely. A consistent result in the political behavior literature is that participants in the political process—voters, canvassers, candidates, and so on—are wealthier and better educated than the population from which they come.¹⁷ This pattern is caused by differing levels of social and economic resources: involvement in politics or even gathering information about political issues requires an investment of time and money that many cannot afford. Just as importantly, the poor are less likely to become involved in the social networks through which opportunities for participation are channeled. The fact that the poor do not participate in terrorism is thus overdetermined: they are hampered from participating in anything by illiteracy, poor information, or lack of disposable time.

Scholars have already incorporated some element of this logic by comparing their terrorist samples with the young male population, accepting the fact that women, the very young, and the very old are less likely to engage in terrorist activities for reasons that have nothing to do with the variables in the model. However, these restrictions seem insufficient, as there may be numerous social and economic reasons why an individual would not be faced with the choice to become a terrorist, a choice that is in fact presented to only a small section of the population.

I argue that below a certain level of socioeconomic status individuals face major barriers to all forms of political participation, barriers that few are likely to surmount. However, as wealth and education increase, socioeconomic status will at some point reach a threshold level at which individuals have a much higher probability of receiving political information and contacts. The discontinuous nature of this threshold can be thought of either as a product of consumption choices (with food and shelter crowding out expenditure on political activity among the very poor) or as some minimal level of literacy and sophistication necessary

¹⁷ Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995.

to absorb political propaganda and have a basic political discussion. At this “participation threshold” the probability of involvement in violence, as in all forms of politics, should increase sharply.

OPPORTUNITY COSTS AND SOCIAL STATUS

Assumption 2a. Individuals are likely to maintain a larger portion of their existing social status through participation in nonviolent activities than they would in violent activities.

can be substituted by

Assumption 2b. Poorer Individuals are likely to find the political rewards of participation in violence greater than those of participation in nonviolent activities.

Either gives us:

H2. Nonviolent activists should have a higher social status than those who are involved in violence.

I now move from the determinates of political participation in general to those of violence in particular. Once across the resource barrier, individuals have three choices: to not participate, to participate nonviolently, or to participate violently. The choice of nonparticipation within countries is likely to involve weighing the costs of participation (substantial even for nonviolent activists) with the political benefits (the possible triumph of the individual’s cause, which would presumably also give him a prominent political role). At a minimum, activism is thus unlikely to be attractive to those who do not value the political goal highly, such as members of rival ethnic groups.

Individuals who value the goal sufficiently highly face the choice of violent or nonviolent participation. Of the two, nonviolence is generally a “safer” and less radical option, as it allows individuals to keep a higher proportion of their prior or potential income and social status. While both violent and nonviolent activity creates costs for those who engage in them, the costs for nonviolent activists will be lower than those for violent activists, for three reasons. First, governments will generally prosecute terrorists with more severity than their nonviolent counterparts, giving terrorists a higher probability of death and imprisonment.¹⁸ Second, individuals involved in terrorism are unlikely to be able to continue in their legitimate careers. This is not because

¹⁸ For instance, in the Bengal case discussed here the violent activists alone faced the risk of the death penalty or of sentences of more than fifteen years that were given for murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

terrorism is especially time consuming (nonviolent political involvement may be just as time consuming) but because the covert nature of terrorist activity can require substantial changes in location and behavior. Third, the secretive nature of terrorist activity is likely to lead to restrictions in the size of one's personal network and lifestyle, if only for reasons of security. Governments can and do vary the relative costs of participation in violent and nonviolent activities,¹⁹ but within a country and time period they are likely to be constant.

For these reasons, individuals with good jobs or high levels of education (which are linked to earnings potential and social status) will be less likely to be involved in violence, as they do not wish to risk their (relatively high) current status and earnings by incurring the high costs of terrorist participation. Poor and poorly educated individuals are more likely to participate in terrorism, as they are more likely to see the increase in costs as small relative to the potential benefits. This logic is similar to Becker's classic theory of opportunity costs and the causes of crime, though in the case of terrorism the potential benefits of violating the law are political rather than economic.²⁰

Of course, it is possible that many people perceive terrorism as having larger benefits than nonviolent activism as well as higher costs. Individuals could believe either that the marginal political effects of an act of terrorism are greater than those of a corresponding act of nonviolent protest or that the full achievement of the political goal (without possibly unpopular compromises) is more likely to result from violent acts. These beliefs may be correlated with socioeconomic status if we assume that the political abilities of individuals are correlated with their social status. Poor and badly educated individuals will more often lack the connections and presentational skills that would enable them to make an impact in the conventional world and might thus see terrorism (where ability might be less correlated with social status) as their best way of making a contribution. For both groups, personal and political advantage may be aligned, as the triumph of one's cause will more often than not lead to those active in the struggle gaining leading political positions. To put this argument simply, terrorism may represent a way for low-skill individuals to make a political impact they could not have achieved through nonviolence.

The relative roles of opportunity costs and beliefs about the marginal effect of one's participation are difficult to disentangle empirically,

¹⁹ For a theoretical discussion of this mechanism, see Bueno de Mesquita 2008.

²⁰ Becker 1968.

as they produce the same prediction: that terrorists are drawn from among the poorer and less-educated political participants. It is even possible that these mechanisms might reinforce each other, as opportunity costs draw high-status individuals to the nonviolent movement, leading lower-status individuals to conclude that their prospects for advancement within that movement are limited. However, as individuals will presumably have better information about their prospects within their current careers than about their possible political careers, the opportunity costs may be better known to individuals than the perceived benefits. For this reason, while this article will use the term “opportunity cost” to refer to the broad connection between an individual’s current status and the benefits he or she can expect from different types of involvement, it may be that variation in the expected gains from political action is as important as variation in the expected losses.

CROSS-NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

H3. Participants in violence will have a relatively lower social status in richer societies than in poor societies.

Thus far I have discussed the relationship between wealth and education and participation in violence within a given country, using a definition of social status that is relative to the population mean. However, the theory also has implications for how this relationship will vary from country to country. As the threshold for political participation I have discussed is at least in part absolute, its relative location will vary based on an area’s level of economic development. In poor societies such as early-twentieth-century Bengal, only a small fraction of the population is sufficiently educated and informed to be politically active, and the participation threshold is thus at the very highest end of the income distribution. In a rich society many citizens possess minimal political knowledge, and the participation threshold is thus at the middle or even the lower end of the income distribution. Above the threshold, of course, opportunity costs should lead to a negative correlation between social status and violence. Figure 1 gives a schematic view of these relationships. This figure is intended to summarize the theoretical prediction and is not based on data.

The empirical analysis presented below does not give any information on the cross-national relationship between economic development and the social status of terrorists, which is left as a subject for future research. However, this aspect of the theory does have the benefit of accounting for a number of cases in the terrorism literature in which

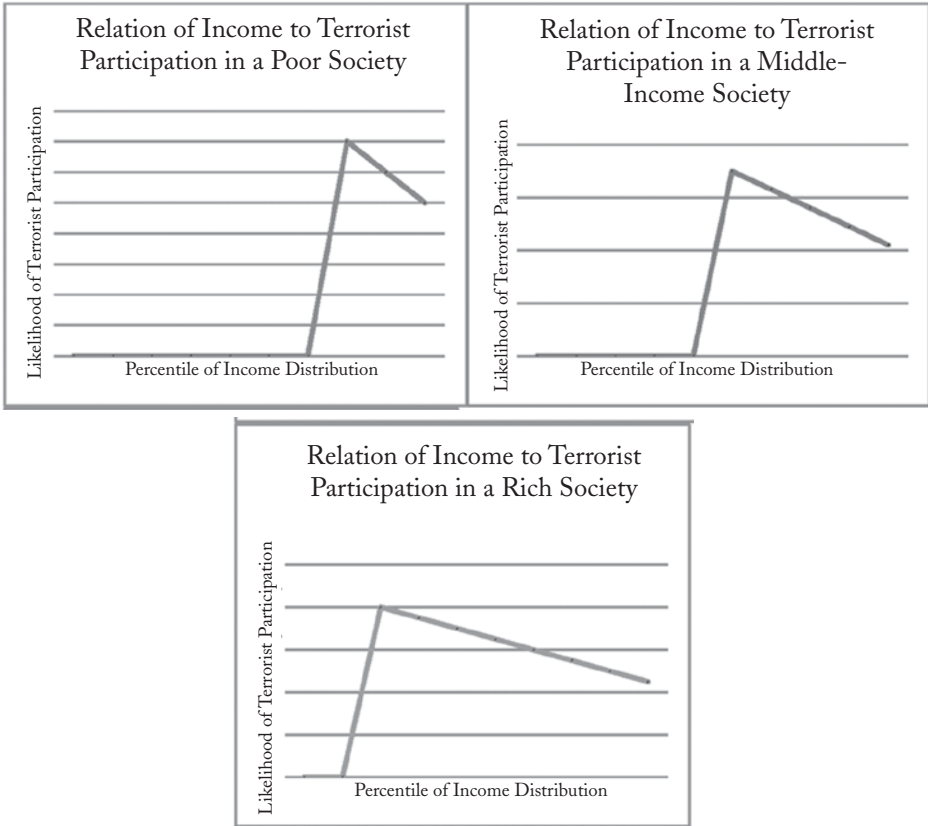


FIGURE 1

THEORIZED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INCOME AND TERRORIST PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETIES AT DIFFERENT INCOME LEVELS (NOT BASED ON DATA)

the violent were demonstrably poorer than the population as a whole. Northern Ireland in particular has presented a puzzle for theories of terrorist participation, as most terrorists there were from working-class backgrounds.²¹ Similarly, Halder²² found that most American right-wing terrorists were blue-collar workers. Such cases indicate the relative nature of terms such as “wealthy” and “well educated.” A secondary school dropout will be at the bottom of the social scale in a rich country but well above the median in a poor one. We may see terrorists as wealthy because the poor countries that have been most often studied also have large groups of politically marginal poor who drive down the average for the “general population.”

²¹ Krueger 2009.

²² Halder 1990.

SCOPE CONDITIONS

While the theory presented here is intended to apply to acts of violence in general, its application is limited to certain types of conflicts. Most importantly, recruitment to the violent movement must be *uncoerced*, while the activities of the violent group must be *clandestine* and separate to some extent from the legitimate political process. The first condition is necessary because this theory is based on individual choices. To the extent that groups are able to alter the basic incentive structures of participants through conscription, a study of participation in violence is modeling the behavior and abilities of groups rather than those of individuals. For instance, while the Vietnam draft represented a mechanism for selection into violence, it is a mechanism for which this theory cannot properly account. The clandestinity condition is necessary because the theory posits nonviolent and violent participation as alternatives that are to some extent discrete, or that at least have substantially different implications. To the extent that violent behavior is legitimate and indistinguishable from the normal run of politics—as in the carefully planned riots of contemporary India or the armed forces of territorial states and insurgencies—a theory that predicates a choice between violent and nonviolent alternatives is unlikely to be helpful. Terrorist participation meets these conditions in most cases, though there are certainly prominent instances of terrorist groups who used coercive recruitment practices or operated with brazen openness. The theory is likely to be less useful for conflicts involving uniformed groups with territorial bases that are likely to have both superior access to coercion and at least some space in which they do not operate clandestinely.

III. ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

While the theory developed in Section II is consistent with the current empirical literature, a number of other influential ideas exist on the determinates of individual participation in terrorism and political violence. This section will briefly examine their testable implications.

SOCIAL CHANGE

Classic modernization theories of political violence focus on countries and social classes rather than on individuals, but they produce implications for behavior at the individual level. Gurr argued that violence was the result of a gap between expectations and social realities that emerged during the modernization process.²³ Huntington argued that

²³ Gurr 1970.

violence was the result of a dislocation of traditional social institutions brought about by urbanization and education.²⁴ These theories seem to imply that those most affected by modernization should be more likely to become terrorists. This means that violence should have a nonmonotonic relationship with social status and “modernity.” The education of peasants should thus be correlated with violence, as should urbanization, migration to cities, and participation in fast-changing sectors of the economy. In the case of Bengal, this should mean residents of Calcutta and Dacca and workers in industry and large-scale commerce should be more prone to violence than landowners. This is reflected by hypothesis 4:

H4. People in sectors of society most affected by social change should be more inclined to participation in violence.

IDEOLOGY

Ideology is the simplest explanation for terrorist recruitment and the closest to the professed motives of the terrorists themselves. Terrorists may claim that their goal is the expulsion of the British from India or Israel from the West Bank and that their pursuit of these goals is entirely unrelated to any personal economic grievance or motive. This seems to be the position of Alan Krueger, who stresses the role of American foreign policy in alienating the Arab world and creating the conditions for terrorism.²⁵ The implications of this theory are that there should be no relationship between terrorist participation and education and wealth, as the two are causally unrelated. If anything, there should be a positive correlation, because education and wealth will enable potential terrorists to have better access to information regarding their ideological grievances; that is, those with satellite television will be more informed, and thus potentially more aggrieved, regarding America’s presence in the Middle East.

H5. Participation in violence should be uncorrelated or weakly positively correlated with socioeconomic status.

ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES

The naïve theory of economic grievance is common among politicians and policymakers, with figures as disparate as George Bush, Al Gore, Tony Blair, and Bill Clinton using the terrorism-poverty connection to

²⁴ Huntington 1969.

²⁵ Krueger 2007, 50–52.

call for increased aid to the developing world.²⁶ The basic idea is reductive and materialistic: the poor are angry because of their economic status, and they channel this anger toward the explicit goals of the terrorist organization. The argument can also be stated with regard to education: terrorism is caused in part by “ignorance” (presumably of social norms or the insubstantiality of their grievances) and ignorance is associated with lack of education. The implication is that terrorists should be less wealthy and less educated than nonviolent activists. In addition, those with obvious social and economic disadvantages, such as those who have flunked out of school, should have a higher risk of participation in violence. Taken to its extreme, the theory should predict that the poorest of the poor, who have the highest levels of grievance, should be the most likely to participate in violence. The fact that we do not observe this tends to militate against purely grievance-based theories. Krueger and Laitin suggest that wealthy “Robin Hoods” could be motivated by the problems of their poor fellow citizens, but they do not find any connection between poverty and terrorism at the national level.²⁷

H6. Terrorists should be poor and badly educated relative to the population as a whole.

RECRUITMENT

The recruitment hypothesis holds that terrorist organizations select from among a large pool of applicants to join their organization in hopes of obtaining those with the best skills.²⁸ Bueno de Mesquita²⁹ combines this theory with a form of the opportunity cost hypothesis. The empirical support for a selection mechanism is anecdotal, but its testable implications are clear: terrorists should be wealthier and better educated than nonviolent activists, assuming that education and wealth are correlated with skill as a terrorist.

H7. Terrorists should be wealthy and well educated relative to the population as a whole.

The Bueno de Mesquita model produces clear testable implications at the national level: economic shocks should be correlated with violence. It is, however, more difficult to test at the individual level, as it posits a double relationship, with less-skilled recruits being willing to join but the terrorist organization preferring those with higher skill

²⁶ Bush 2002; Gore 2002.

²⁷ Krueger and Laitin 2008, 149.

²⁸ Hassan 2001.

²⁹ Bueno de Mesquita 2005.

levels (skill in economic and terrorist activities are assumed to be the same). By varying the importance attached to selection and opportunity cost, one can make the theory account for almost any finding on the economic status of terrorists except for terrorists being the poorest of the poor, making empirical testing difficult.

IV. DATA

To test these theories, I will use a sample of participants in the Bengali agitation against the British Raj in the first part of the twentieth century. The attraction of this movement is that its historical distance means that comprehensive and detailed data on its participants are publicly available, as it is for few contemporary groups. In addition, the British policy of repressing both violent and nonviolent dissent means that police records contain a large number of nonviolent activists, chosen by a selection procedure similar to that used for the terrorist sample.³⁰

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The province of Bengal, lying in the Northeast of the Indian subcontinent, covered the territory occupied today by Bangladesh and the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Bengal was the most populous province of British India and one of the richest. Calcutta was the capital of India, its leading port, and the home of much of its small industrial capacity. This wealth, however, was not evenly distributed. Most of the commercial wealth was in the hands of expatriate British firms, and much of the agrarian wealth was siphoned off by a small class of parasitic landlords. Income inequality and overpopulation led to endemic poverty and occasional famine, of which the 1907–8 event was the most serious in this period.

Bengal was also the educational and political center of India. As the first province of India to be conquered by the British, Bengal had had long exposure to Western education and methods of governing. The Bengali Hindu elite, the *bhadralok*, had taken to the new learning with enthusiasm, creating an impressive system of English-language schools and colleges.³¹ The graduates of this system staffed the government bureaucracy throughout Northern India and formed the basis of a nascent Indian professional class. However, many graduates were

³⁰ See below for a more detailed discussion of the selection procedure.

³¹ Ray 1984; Government of Bengal 1907.

disappointed to find that their degrees did not bring them wealth and social status, as most of the best jobs were still held by foreigners.³² While similar forces were at work in other areas of the subcontinent, they were magnified in Bengal by the large size of the educated classes and gradual decline in the state's economic position and political importance, symbolized by the transfer of the capital to Delhi in 1912.

Due to the proximity of the capital and its high level of education, Bengal had always had a relatively high level of political consciousness. However, the nationalist movement did not become important until the British announced the partition of Bengal in 1905. The British had hoped to create two manageable provinces out of one large one and at the same time to divide Hindus and Muslims. However, the partition unleashed a political firestorm: the *swadeshi* (self-rule) movement. The *swadeshis* conducted a mass political campaign, whose tactics included circulating petitions, boycotting British goods and merchants who sold them, refusing to visit government offices and schools, and holding frequent marches and mass meetings.³³ The campaign benefited from mass participation on a scale previously unheard of in Indian politics, but in the face of official opposition, it gradually lost steam, with the organized boycott petering out in 1908. Political activism continued on the lower level, with the focus shifting to the institutionalization of the movement by the creation of political organizations and Indian-controlled businesses and schools.

The decline of the *swadeshi* movement led to the growth of the violent wing of the nationalist movement. Impatient with the compromises of the political nationalists, these men wished to expel the British by force of arms. They took their inspiration from an eclectic mix of Hindu scripture³⁴ and contemporary world events, notably the Russo-Japanese war and the Irish Republican Brotherhood's campaign against the British. Though the professed aim of the nationalist movement was an armed rebellion, most of the energy of the violent nationalists was devoted to attacking targets symbolically associated with the government: bombing courthouses and office buildings, robbing pro-British landlords, and assassinating British or Indian government officials.³⁵ Many of the *daicoties* (armed robberies committed by five or more persons) committed against rural landowners served the sub-

³² Broomfield 1968.

³³ Gordon 1984.

³⁴ Violent aspects of Hindu spirituality had a widespread influence in Bengal both at this time and later in the twentieth century. See, for instance, Southard 1980.

³⁵ Hees 1993; Government of India 1918. See also "Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal," in Samanta 1995, 1:3–216.

sidary purpose of raising money to finance the movement's day-to-day operations. In its later phases (after the period studied here) the movement diversified its techniques and targets somewhat, attacking nonofficial British civilians and conducting a spectacular assault on the government armory in Chittagong in 1930.³⁶

While the British sometimes described the nationalist movement as a single conspiracy, it was in fact fragmented in both approach and organization.³⁷ Violent attacks were generally carried out by small groups of men scattered throughout the cities and towns of Bengal; the British called them "gangs" and we would call them cells. Some of these groups received ideological inspiration and occasional low-level material support and advice from slightly larger and better organized groups in the big cities. In the first decade of the movement the two most important of these groups were the Jugantar and the Anushilan Samiti, though both organizations were diffuse and contained many who did not participate in violence. The Anushilan Samiti, based in Dacca, was centered on the charismatic leadership of Pulin Behari Das and was strongly influenced by Hindu traditions.³⁸ After Das's arrest in 1908, the many local-branch *samitis* went their own way, with some focusing on *daicoties* and others eschewing violence entirely. The Jugantar, though it later evolved into a formal political party, was in the movement's early days even more disorganized, consisting of individuals influenced by the Calcutta newspaper of that name.³⁹ Though the two groups had initially been indistinguishable, they soon became bitter rivals.⁴⁰

The organization charged with combating the nationalist movement was the Intelligence Branch (IB) of the Bengal Police. Despite a gradual increase in resources and help from the military, the IB was severely understaffed: in 1910 thirteen British officers and 304 Indian constables had to cover two provinces with a population of some 85 million.⁴¹ Another complaint was the inadequacy of the legal system. Many accused suspects were acquitted by judges dissatisfied with the informers' reports, which were the IB's main tool.⁴² Despite these limitations, the police succeeded in keeping the violence to a manageable level by taking advantage of British India's vaguely worded conspiracy

³⁶ Silvestri 2009.

³⁷ Government of India 1918.

³⁸ See Ray 1999; Hees 1993, 259–67.

³⁹ Hees 1993, 242–43.

⁴⁰ Haldar 1977.

⁴¹ National Archives of India. Home Department. A Proceedings, July 1911: 48–50.

⁴² See the reports in Samanta 1995, vol. 2.

statutes, its generous provisions for detention without trial, and its strict gun-control laws, for which it was easier to obtain convictions than for terrorist acts *per se*.

Despite the reversal of the partition of Bengal in 1911, the violent movement remained active until 1939. Along with the nonviolent nationalist movement in Bengal, it had a complex and at times antagonistic relationship with the national leadership of the independence movement that emerged after the First World War. The violence had its ups and downs over the years, usually negatively correlated with the level of official repression: mass jailings without trial in 1918 and 1924 led to immediate drops in violence.⁴³ The decline of violence in the late 1930s can be attributed to the success of official repression and the growing popularity of Marxist ideas, which prioritized eventual revolution over immediate terrorism.⁴⁴ Many members of the Jugantar and Anushilan Samiti joined the Communist Party of India, contributing to its eventual dominance of the postindependence politics of West Bengal.

WERE THE BENGALIS TERRORISTS?

While a wing of the Bengali nationalist movement obviously used violence, it is possible to question whether its members should be referred to as terrorists, a label that carries heavy theoretical and normative implications. Given the unsettled nature of the definitional literature on terrorism, a definitive answer to this question is probably impossible, and for that reason I have tried to use the term “participants in violence” wherever possible. However, there are a number of reasons for thinking that the Bengalis both fit many conventional terrorist definitions and are substantially similar to groups that are canonical in the terrorism literature. First, the Bengalis were most concerned with the psychological and indirect effects of the violence that they were committing, rather than with the direct effects. Like many terrorist groups, they saw themselves as weakening their opponents’ will to resist and inspiring others to broad-based action, rather than participating in such an action themselves. This can be seen in their target selection, which emphasized symbolic and publicity-enhancing actions (robberies of unpopular landlords, bombings in front of government office buildings), rather than their strategic significance. Second, the Bengalis had strong links, both intellectual and personal, with the European

⁴³ R.E.A. Ray, “Report on the activities of Terrorists in Bengal during the period April to December 1930.” In *Samanta* 1995, 2:601–6

⁴⁴ Silvestri 2009.

terrorists of the anarchist “first wave.”⁴⁵ It is clear the Bengalis thought they were emulating these groups to some extent, and European left wingers provided technical assistance in the preparation of explosives. Third, the nationalists clearly rejected both insurgency and the more narrowly instrumental use of violence that is common in Indian political movements. On the one hand, they never made an effort in this period to control territory or establish a rural base; on the other hand, they explicitly rejected and distanced themselves from conventional politics, which they regarded as compromised—indeed their devotion to violence as a means often evolved into a devotion to violence as an end in itself. Finally, the broad distribution of the nationalists’ actions (killings of public officials, some bombings, and many robberies) was typical of terrorist groups before the age of state funding and easily available weaponry. Indeed, their behavior is remarkably similar to their near contemporaries in the Russian group *Narodnaya Volya*, widely cited as the first terrorist movement.⁴⁶

SAMPLE

The sample for this analysis consists of the 740 unique individuals listed in the January 1915 edition of the Intelligence Bureau’s “Red Book.” The Red Book, officially titled “List of Political Suspects in Bengal,” was published for internal reference and listed every individual in the province of Bengal considered to be a political threat.⁴⁷ The volume was compiled by each district’s intelligence officer, who included the name, address, criminal history, and a brief description of all the suspects who had ever resided within his jurisdiction. As the Red Book was confidential, the officers’ responses were full and candid. They constitute a remarkable snapshot of the Bengali nationalist movement, including everyone from celebrities like Aurobindo Ghose and Pulin Behari Das to retarded youths who the IB worried would be persuaded to plant bombs.

The crimes listed varied widely, and many were not even crimes in the legal sense. Some were nonviolent offenses such as giving speeches at political meetings, singing nationalist songs, and picketing shops that sold British goods. Others were cited for offenses that involved or implied violence: planting bombs, possessing guns, and committing or planning *daicoties*. Several were included on less substantial grounds, such as membership in a nationalist organization, close association

⁴⁵ Silvestri 2009.

⁴⁶ See Rapoport 2004.

⁴⁷ West Bengal State Archives. Home Department Intelligence Branch 324/16.

with other suspects, or merely being considered “suspicious characters” by the IB. The Red Book reported crimes or grounds for suspicion for all suspects and included more detailed biographical information for many of them. Whenever possible, I supplemented the information in the Red Book with other information available within the police records of the West Bengal State Archives and the National Archives of India. The three most important supplementary sources were the history sheets (printed personal files) of individuals, detention orders for individuals, and the statements of the accused in criminal trials.

The early part of the nationalist movement was chosen for study both because of the ready availability of data and because the early date enables me to avoid two possible confounding affects. One is ideological: in the 1920s and the 1930s two external ideologies, Marxism and Gandhian nonviolence, became influential in Bengali political circles. These influences would create potential problems for comparing the violent and nonviolent samples, as I might end up comparing groups with radically different political beliefs and goals. Fortunately, in the prewar period the ideological beliefs of the terrorists and nonviolent nationalists were relatively homogenous, with both groups coming from similar political backgrounds and employing similar rhetorical strategies.⁴⁸

The other advantage of an early date is that it reduces the problem of the potential endogeneity of terrorism and poverty. Poor people may be more likely to hold extreme views, but people with extreme political views may be more likely to be poor because of official discrimination in education and employment. This problem is compounded in the Bengali case by the foundation by the nationalist movement of “national schools,” intended to circumvent the government educational system. The early date reduces the problem of endogeneity because most people in the sample had jobs and had completed their education before the agitation began. In addition, those who were expelled from school or fired from their jobs for their political beliefs are classified as having their former occupation, and a dummy was used for those involved with the national schools movement.

THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependent variable in this study is a dummy for terrorist participation. For this study terrorism will be defined as participation or intention to participate in acts of violence, which in the Bengali context includes murders, *daicoties*, and bombings. It also includes those

⁴⁸ Hees 1993; Government of India 1918.

accused of possessing guns and explosives under the Arms Act, on the assumption that these tools would almost certainly be used for acts of violence. For coding purposes, suspicion, usually based on an informer's report to the district intelligence officer, was sufficient to code a 1. This criterion was chosen rather than a higher threshold of indictment or conviction because many individuals came under strong suspicion even though the IB was unable to put together a case sufficient to go to court, and many whom the IB wished to charge were either acquitted or fled prosecution. In addition, the grounds for suspicion were usually more specific than those for arrests and convictions, which generally occurred under omnibus conspiracy statutes.⁴⁹ The only exception to this rule were three individuals acquitted in the Alipur Bomb Case (1909) who were coded as nonviolent, because of strong evidence that the British charged leaders of the nonviolent movement as a means of discrediting them.⁵⁰

One advantage of the IB's use of informers' reports for this study is that it meant that the "skill" of terrorists had little to do with their inclusion. Individuals are included because they were named by one of the government's informers, who were often well established in nationalist circles. Avoiding mention by these informers had more to do with social networks than survival skills. This means that the sample is representative of all levels of terrorist ability, rather than just of those who failed (as in prison-based studies) or those who succeeded (as in studies of suicide bombers). A disadvantage of this approach is that participation in violence is measured with a fair amount of error, error that might well be correlated with the independent variables of interest. This issue is taken up at greater length in Section VI.

The nonterrorist sample is thus composed of all those individuals who are listed in the Red Book but who were not under suspicion for violent crime. It can thus be thought of as the universe of individuals who were known to the IB to be active in the extreme wing of the nationalist movement but not known to be involved in violence. The nature of these individuals' involvement in the nationalist cause varied widely. Many were members of radical organizations, and others had been involved in some capacity in the various licit political movements of the previous decade, such as picketing shops that sold British goods. Some were included for writing for nationalist newspapers, giving political speeches, or composing Bengali-language poetry.

⁴⁹ For this reason there is only a modest correlation between arrest record and participation in violence.

⁵⁰ Hees 1993, 155–230.

PREDICTORS AND CONTROLS

The data include several correlated measures of an individual's socioeconomic status, the key variable of interest. One, *Years of Education*, is the number of years an individual has spent in formal education. Another, *Quality of Education*, is an ordinal scoring (0–4) of the quality of the institutions the individual attended, on the theory that those having attended poor-quality schools would have higher levels of social grievance and unfulfilled expectations than those with better-quality educations of similar duration. The ranking is based on the curriculum taught at the school, the school's association with missionary or government institutions, and the known pass rates on the provincial exams for students from that institution.⁵¹ As most individuals attended multiple schools, the scoring is based on the highest quality institution attended. *National Schools* is a dummy for whether or not the individual was involved, either as a student or as a teacher, in the national schools movement.

Bengali education was heavily focused on passing the qualifying exams for each degree. Extensive study was necessary, and many did not even bother to try. Failure had a significant effect on one's life chances, as most bureaucratic jobs required a particular degree level. The connection between violence and exam results receives anecdotal confirmation: after the FA exam (preliminary to the BA exam) of 1910, for instance, the members of the Mymensingh and Shadona branches of the Anushilan Samiti split, with those who passed leaving and those who failed turning to *daicoty*.⁵² To test this effect, I included an *Exam Failure* variable, which is a dummy for whether an individual ever failed any of his exams. To separate the effect of failure from those who leave without taking the exam, I added a dummy for these individuals.

Within the data the most direct predictor of an individual's economic status is the job that he held. *Job Quality* is an ordinal variable, with the job held by an individual being ranked from one to six, ranging from manual laborers to upper professionals. A great deal of care went into the construction of the ranking systems, which sought to reflect the perceptions of contemporaries of occupational status and to permit comparisons across occupational sectors.⁵³ The definitions used

⁵¹ Government of Bengal 1907.

⁵² National Archives of India. A Proceedings. May 1915: 295–301.

⁵³ For this purpose it would obviously be ideal to have a measure of an individual's income. Unfortunately, income data are preserved for only a small section of the sample (twenty-four individuals). However, for these individuals, job quality and income are strongly correlated ($R=.55$), which is a good sign for the external validity of the measure.

in the coding, and some examples of occupations at different levels, are given in Appendix 1. As students and the unemployed stand somewhat outside the traditional occupational hierarchy, they were coded as zero; and dummy variables were added for each of these categories. *Job Sector* is a categorical variable describing the sector of the economy in which the individual is employed. It also makes possible comparisons between the sample and the population of Bengal, for the Indian census collected data on occupational sector, though not on education or social status. Of the socioeconomic variables, *Job Quality* and *Job Sector* are the least affected by missingness, though they are obviously measured with a degree of error.

The economic status of an individual is also strongly correlated with that of his family. I possess data on the occupations of some individual's fathers and used them to construct two variables *Father Job Quality* and *Father Job Sector*, using the same categories as for the individual variables. Data are also available for the type of land (if any) held by the family; it is a categorical variable based on the status of the individual's family within Bengal's overelaborated system of agrarian subleasing. This variable was tried in many specifications but found to have no perceptible effect on participation in violence, which may be a result of the tenuous relationship between landholding and actual economic position, with many landholders being poor relatives of members of the urban upper class.

In the Indian context, *caste* is a strong predictor of social status. At the turn of the century, before name changing became common, it was relatively easy to infer caste from an individual's surname, though direct information often exists as well within the archival material.⁵⁴ The three most prestigious castes in Bengal were the Brahmins (traditionally priests), Kayasthas (clerks), and Baiydas (doctors.) Together, these castes comprised the *bhadralok* (educated upper class or gentry.) Other caste groups represented in the sample included small numbers of Muslims, Europeans, immigrants from the Bombay Presidency, and people for whom caste was unknown.⁵⁵ A glance at Table 1 will show that the terrorist and nonterrorist samples are very dissimilar to the Hindu population as a whole, with both samples being overwhelmingly dominated by the upper castes: over 85 percent of the terrorist sample, compared with less than 12 percent of the Hindu population,

⁵⁴ Singh 1996.

⁵⁵ Muslims, who constituted 55 percent of the population of Bengal, tended to be pro-British out of fear that an independent India would be dominated by Hindus. For this reason they were severely underrepresented in the nationalist movement in this period.

TABLE 1
CASTE COMPOSITION

	<i>Terrorist Sample N=372</i>	<i>Nonterrorist Sample N=368</i>	<i>Bengal Population^a</i>
Kayastha	204 (54.84%)	227 (61.68%)	5.43%
Brahmin	137 (36.83%)	116 (31.52%)	6.12%
Baida	13 (3.49%)	4 (1.09%)	0.43%
Bombay	1 (0.27%)	1 (0.27%)	NA
Muslim	1 (0.27%)	4 (1.09%)	NA
Other	12 (3.23%)	10 (2.72%)	88.02%
Unknown	4 (1.08%)	6 (1.63%)	NA

^a Hindu population.

belong to the *bhadralok* castes. However, caste does not appear to be a good way to separate the terrorist and nonterrorist samples, as both are overwhelmingly high status.

Several other variables describe demographic characteristics of the sample. *Urban Resident* is a dummy for those who lived at least part time in Bengal's two major urban areas, Calcutta and Dacca. *Urban Migrant* is a dummy for individuals who lived in Calcutta or Dacca but were born in a rural area. In addition, I include dummies for the *District* in which the individual was born, as terrorist involvement could vary widely based on the area in which one lived and the influences to which he was exposed. *Married* is a dummy for married individuals. *Age* is also controlled for, as it is correlated with both years of education and the probability of marriage. *Sadhu* is a dummy for whether the individual has chosen to give up all his property to live as a traveling holy man, a common life choice for upper-caste Hindu men in this period.

It is of course possible that varying levels of participation in violence are caused by variation in ideology or organizational policy.⁵⁶ *Jugantar* and *Anushilan Samiti* are dummies for whether an individual was affiliated with either of the two main political parties (a few were affiliated with both, many with neither). To the extent that individuals choose

⁵⁶ On terrorist factions, see Bueno de Mesquita 2008.

whether or not to participate in violence by joining more or less violent parties, including these coefficients will lead us to underestimate the role of wealth and education in terrorist recruitment.

MISSING DATA

Though the sample is large, it suffers, as does previous work in this field, from a substantial missing data problem. As the Red Book was compiled by different IB officers in each district, the details included vary slightly from district to district. Some officers, for instance, thought it important to include data on marriage, while others did not. All officers tended to include more information on prominent individuals and on those against whom formal criminal proceedings were being instituted. Using additional data sources to fill these gaps in the data adds other patterns of missingness. The history sheets provide very full information, but only those from Eastern Bengal have survived. Even among those, many files have been lost or eaten by the termites that infest the West Bengal State Archives. Among the other sources used, the court records and warrant applications also show a predictable bias toward prominent individuals and those who became involved in a criminal trial.

The missingness in the sample is thus correlated with several of my independent variables. In this situation, any regression or comparison of means that uses listwise deletion will have a much smaller *N* and biased coefficients. This missing data problem also occurs in most existing individual-level accounts, and both Krueger and Maleckova and Berrebi attempt to avoid it by using summary statistics instead of a regression model. Not only does this approach lead to bias, but it also keeps these studies from using potentially important control variables. In particular, age is strongly correlated with both education and marital status, and it is unwise to draw conclusions about these variables without the use of controls.

To fill in the gaps in the data set, I used multiple imputation, using the Amelia II software package.⁵⁷ For the purposes of imputation I used several variables in addition to those discussed in the previous section, most importantly a series of dummies detailing participation in various types of illegal activity that each individual was suspected of—*daicoties*, bombings, and so on. Overall, 22.4 percent of the data was imputed. (For the preimputation *N* of specific variables, see the summary tables.) No values of the dependent variables were imputed.

⁵⁷ King, Honeker, Joseph, and Scheve 2001.

The imputed data sets were then bound together and analyzed using the MI function in Stata.⁵⁸ Imputation is used here as an alternative to throwing out a large number of cases through listwise deletion, a method that would dramatically change both the size and the selection mechanism of the sample. To check the imputation, I also ran regression models on the nonimputed data, and they produced substantially similar results (see Section VI).

V. RESULTS

SUMMARY STATISTICS

The original sample is composed of 368 nonviolent and 372 violent activists. The summary statistics of the two groups are displayed below, along with corresponding statistics for the male population of Bengal as a whole, drawn from the 1911 Census of India. There was some difficulty in getting census statistics that corresponded exactly to the statistical categories in the sample, and the deviations are described in the footnotes. (See Table 2.)

Certain facts are immediately obvious from Table 2. Both samples are far more urban than the general population: 57 percent of the terrorist sample lived in Calcutta or Dacca, compared with 8.5 percent of the Bengali population. They are also more likely than the general population to have moved to the city recently: 34 percent of the nonviolent individuals, 28 percent of violent individuals, and 7.1 percent of Bengalis were migrants. All these differences are statistically significant. The sample's mean levels of education (16.45 years in the nonterrorist sample and 14.11 years for the terrorist sample) are remarkably high when we realize that only 19.9 percent of Bengali men were literate and only 2.65 percent were literate in English. (English literacy as defined by the census would be achieved after approximately eight years of formal education.)⁵⁹

The differences are also evident in the distribution of occupations shown in Table 3. The politically involved come from those holding jobs in the privileged sectors of education, government, law, and medicine.

⁵⁸The data were also analyzed using the slightly different assumptions of the Zelig package in R. The results were similar except for some specifications that involved several of the collinear socioeconomic variables. While a socioeconomic variable was always strongly negatively associated with involvement in violence, the particular variable in question was based on the imputation model used. To avoid basing substantive conclusions on the assumptions in the imputation process, the reported results use only one socioeconomic measure at a time. See the discussion of the results in Section V.

⁵⁹Census of India 1911, vol. 5, pt. 1, p. 312. Percentages are for males over the age of twenty.

TABLE 2
SAMPLE SUMMARY STATISTICS RELATIVE TO BENGAL POPULATION

	<i>Nonviolent Sample</i> <i>N=368</i>		<i>Violent Sample</i> <i>N=372</i>		<i>Bengal Population Mean</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	
Anushilan Samiti Member	0.34 (0.47)	368	0.31 (0.46)	372	
Age in 1915	29.57 (8.58)	354	27.07 (6.52)	336	24.4
Urban Resident	0.59 (0.49)	368	0.57 (0.5)	372	0.085
Dangerousness Rating	0.1 (0.35)	368	0.16 (0.44)	372	
Quality of School (Ordinal)	2.55 (2)	100	2.12 (0.76)	125	
Years in School	16.45 (3.23)	53	14.11 (2.79)	61	
Father's Job Quality	3.73 (0.85)	51	2.71 (1.1)	51	
Exam Failure Dummy	0.16 (0.37)	62	0.19 (0.4)	84	
Income per Year in Rupees	1123 (1267)	15	696 (1102)	9	
Jugantar Member	0.06 (0.24)	368	0.09 (0.29)	372	
Family Land Dummy	0.11 (0.32)	368	0.07 (0.25)	372	
Leader Dummy	0.17 (0.37)	368	0.13 (0.34)	372	
Left School	0.24 (0.43)	51	0.15 (0.36)	60	
Married	0.56 (0.5)	149	0.58 (0.5)	127	0.972 ^a
Urban Migrant	0.34 (0.47)	368	0.28 (0.45)	372	0.071
National School Participant	0.07 (0.26)	99	0.1 (0.31)	125	
Sadhu	0.04 (0.2)	368	0.02 (0.14)	372	
Job Quality (Employed Individuals Only)	2.81 (1.08)	298	2.02 (.87)	284	

^a Male population ages 15–40.

TABLE 3
INDIVIDUAL OCCUPATION RELATIVE TO BENGAL POPULATION

	<i>Terrorist Sample N=284/372</i>	<i>Nonterrorist Sample N=298/368</i>	<i>Bengal Population</i>	<i>English Literate Population^a</i>
Landowning	10 (3.52%)	17 (5.70%)	2.62%	36.89%
Estate Managers	4 (7.39%)	6 (2.01%)	0.46%	7.53%
Commerce	21 (7.39%)	17 (5.70%)	5.01%	A ^b
Labor Contracting	5 (1.76%)	3 (1.01%)	NA	2.58%
Education	43 (15.14%)	37 (12.42%)	0.21%	B ^c
Government	13 (4.58%)	11 (3.69%)	0.28%	9.71%
Industry	8 (2.82%)	2 (0.67%)	7.52%	2.07%
Journalism	0 (0.00%)	10 (3.36%)	0.00%	NA
Jute	9 (3.17%)	3 (1.01%)	0.72%	NA
Law	6 (2.11%)	30 (10.07%)	0.11%	B
Printing	2 (0.70%)	5 (1.68%)	0.05%	NA
Medicine	9 (3.17%)	16 (5.37%)	0.36%	B
Religion	2 (0.70%)	2 (0.67%)	0.81%	2.56%
Retail Trade	23 (8.10%)	20 (6.71%)	0.98%	A
Transportation	3 (1.06%)	8 (2.68%)	2.08%	7.18%
Other	7 (2.46%)	1 (0.34%)	NA	NA
Student	59 (20.77%)	48 (16.11%)	NA	NA
Unemployed	60 (21.13%)	62 (20.81%)	NA	NA

^a East Bengal only. Census of India 1911, vol. 5, pt. 2, p. 378.

^b All forms of commerce 10.14 percent.

^c All professions 16.86 percent.

Teachers, for instance, while only .2 percent of the population, were 15 percent of the terrorist sample and 12 percent of the nonterrorist sample. To put this figure in perspective, at this time 71 percent of the population of Bengal were either tenant farmers or field laborers. The same broad pattern can be seen for the fathers of the politically involved: landowning, government, and the law are all greatly over-represented. All of these distributions are different from the Bengali population by a large and statistically significant margin. The politically involved seem to have belonged to the upper tier of a society in which most people belonged to the low castes and engaged in agriculture or other manual labor.

The comparison between terrorists and politically involved is also interesting. The terrorist sample is younger by two and a half years and has also spent two fewer years in school. Terrorists are more likely to be married, to have failed their exams, and to have moved from country to city. Their fathers hold lower-quality jobs, and they attended lower-quality schools. These results will not be surprising to historians of the nationalist movement in Bengal. Ranjat Kanta Ray,⁶⁰ for instance, argued that the terrorists were drawn from a poorer subsection of the *bhadralok* class than the boycott agitators.

These points become more marked when we can compare the occupations of the sample and their fathers not only with the population of Bengal but also with the English-speaking male population, which is the group most likely to participate in politics. With this reference group, the politically involved individuals in our sample seem far less exceptional. The fathers of our sample are less likely to be involved in agriculture and more likely to be involved in government and the professions than their literate peers, while the individuals themselves are less likely to be in agriculture and more likely to be students and unemployed. With the exception of landlords (the only group of Bengali Hindus who were reliably pro-British), the broad distribution of occupations is similar, reflecting the professions that were considered respectable by upper-class Bengalis.

The comparison of the terrorists and nonterrorists is also interesting. Journalists are relatively unlikely to engage in terrorism, which probably reflects the inherently public nature of the profession. In general, the urban and "modern" occupations in our sample (education, commerce) are generally more prone to violence than "traditional" and rural occupations (estate management, religion.) The most violence-prone occupational categories are government, industry, and jute. Jute, indus-

⁶⁰ Ray 1984. On the influence of lower *bhadralok* in later Bengali radical politics, see also Kohli 1990.

try, and medicine are the most technical and scientific occupations in the sample, a fact that gives a limited amount of support to Gambetta and Hertog's⁶¹ hypothesis about the links between scientific training and participation in terrorism. Government, jute, and industry are also the employment sectors in which employees were most likely to have direct interactions with Europeans. Both these patterns support a social modernization hypothesis, as they show employees in fast-changing, low-status economic sectors to be those most prone to violence.

LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS

I began the analysis of the imputed data in Table 4 with a simple test of the effect of each of my three measures of socioeconomic status: *Years of Education*, *Job Quality*, and *Father's Job Quality*. All measures have a strong and statistically significant negative association with participation in violence. This association is also relatively large in substantive terms. For a resident of Calcutta, an increase of job quality from two to three (from an office boy to a clerk, or from a shop assistant to a small shop owner) is associated with a 12.2 percentage point reduction in the probability of participation in violence. For a Calcutta high school graduate, staying in school an additional two years to earn the first arts diploma would be associated with a 17.5 percentage point reduction in the probability of participation in violence. District dummies are included in all specifications to control for the piecemeal way in which the data set was assembled—there is a large amount of between-district variance.⁶² In addition, the reported standard errors are clustered at the district level to account for the fact that individuals may be influencing each other's decisions to participate in violence.⁶³

Model 1 of Table 4 also includes some additional variables associated with education. The quality of the school attended appears to have no relationship with participation in violence. Exam failure has a positive relationship with participation in violence, though it is actually smaller in absolute terms than the effect of leaving without bothering to take the exam. Both of these results are significant at the 10 percent level but are not fully robust to the inclusion of controls. Model 2 includes

⁶¹ Gambetta and Hertog 2007.

⁶² Twelve cases (evenly distributed between violent and nonviolent individuals) were dropped because the district dummy perfectly predicted participation. The omission of the district fixed effects and the inclusion of these cases would slightly strengthen the reported results.

⁶³ All specifications use logistic regression. Propensity score matching was considered but not used for two reasons. First, the missingness in the nonimputed data means that any research design that matches on even a small number of variables will have a very small N. Second, the comprehensive (and continuous) nature of the treatment variable (socioeconomic status) makes it difficult to assume random assignment to treatment. The author has not been able to find an example of an article in the social sciences that uses occupation as a treatment in a matching design.

dummy variables for students and the unemployed. Both have propensities to participation in violence about average within the occupational hierarchy, which is consistent with there being substantial unobserved variation in socioeconomic status within these groups.

These results remain largely the same in models 4, 5, and 6, where I use the same three measures and introduce controls for various personal variables: *Marriage*, *Age*, *Urban Residence*, and *Urban Migration*. The last three variables have small and statistically insignificant effects, which remain insignificant in later specifications. The small size of these coefficients tends to discredit explanations for political violence that focus on social change and modernization. Marriage, by contrast, has a large and positive effect on violence, probably because, after controlling for age, marriage is associated with a traditional (and perhaps anticolonial or antimodern) family culture. This result may call into question the result in the literature on Middle Eastern groups that marriage is associated with lower participation in violence, as those accounts did not control for age. As in the Middle Eastern samples, in aggregate violent activists in Bengal are less likely to be married than the population as a whole, as they are younger than the nonviolent sample.

The next specifications (models 7, 8, and 9) add controls for political variables: the party to which an individual belonged and whether or not he was a *sadhu*. The *sadhu* dummy is predictably large and negative: traveling holy men seem to have had neither the time nor the inclination for involvement in terrorism. The political party dummies are also significant, with the *Jugantar* substantially more violent than the *Anushilan Samiti*. These models also include a last set of controls, for the danger level ascribed to each individual by the IB (see Section VI) and whether or not the individual is mentioned as a leader. The results remain substantially the same. This fact provides some assurance that the effect I am observing is not merely a result of a task assignment within nationalist organizations or the result of the IB using a differing selection procedure for the Red Book for violent and nonviolent offenders.

The use of only one measure of socioeconomic status at a time obviously keeps me from answering a number of interesting questions related to the relative importance of personal wealth, family wealth, and education. It may be, for instance, that well-educated but poor individuals are more likely to be violent than badly educated but rich ones. However, a number of issues, both theoretical and statistical, keep me from testing such ideas using these data. All of the socioeconomic variables are endogenous to each other, as people with good jobs can get a good education and people with a good education can get better jobs (*Job Quality* and *Years of Education* are correlated at .568). To the extent

TABLE 4
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION WITH IMPUTED DATA
 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE IS PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENCE)

<i>Variables</i>	(1) <i>Violence</i>	(2) <i>Violence</i>	(3) <i>Violence</i>	(4) <i>Violence</i>	(5) <i>Violence</i>	(6) <i>Violence</i>	(7) <i>Violence</i>	(8) <i>Violence</i>	(9) <i>Violence</i>
Years of Education	-0.385*** (0.0639)			-0.416*** (0.0710)			-0.444*** (0.0782)		
Quality of Education	0.0113 (0.101)			0.00238 (0.106)			-0.0168 (0.107)		
Exam Failure	0.442* (0.235)			0.420* (0.249)			0.280 (0.279)		
Left School	0.816* (0.439)			0.803* (0.456)			0.771 (0.514)		
National Schools	0.313 (0.511)			0.332 (0.565)			0.467 (0.646)		
Job Quality		-0.530*** (0.109)			-0.506*** (0.113)			-0.534*** (0.117)	
Student		-1.108*** (0.424)			-1.044** (0.440)			-1.125** (0.439)	
Unemployed		-1.414*** (0.384)			-1.294*** (0.378)			-1.351*** (0.387)	
Father's Job Quality			-0.352*** (0.0774)			-0.338*** (0.0805)			-0.355*** (0.0849)
Age in 1915				-0.0101 (0.0193)		-0.0424** (0.0167)	-0.00878 (0.0180)	-0.0304** (0.0146)	-0.0453*** (0.0155)
Married				0.522 (0.366)		0.428 (0.296)	0.524 (0.335)	0.451 (0.314)	0.431 (0.275)

that the variables are not correlated, this may be a product of the conflict itself (with wealthy individuals dropping out of school to become terrorists, and educated individuals declining good jobs). These problems are magnified by the imputation procedure. Information for education and occupation is available for only a proportion of the cases. In the other cases, the variables are largely imputed of each other. Under these circumstances, the relative value of the different coefficients can vary subtly based on small changes in the imputation model. To avoid this problem, the only reported results that include both job quality and education use the small section of the nonimputed data for which both variables are available (see model 3 of Table 5).

A BRIEF DISCUSSION

The results presented here, when combined with the comparison with the population of Bengal presented in the summary statistics, provide strong support for the theory of political participation in violence outlined in Section II. Both violent and nonviolent political participants are from dramatically more privileged social backgrounds than the population of Bengal as a whole, measured by caste, occupation, and literacy. Among the political participants, however, there is a strong and robust negative relationship between socioeconomic status and participation in violence. The various alternative theories discussed in Section III do not predict this double relationship. Grievance-based theories cannot account for the nonparticipation of the poor, recruitment theories cannot account for the negative relationship between job quality and violence among the rich, and ideological explanations have a hard time explaining any relationship at all. Modernization theories receive inconsistent support from the control variables. While the political participants are certainly more urban and more "modern" in their occupation than the population as a whole, there is little evidence that the violent sample is from a sector of society more affected by urbanization than the nonviolent sample.

VI. POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

MISSING DATA

The use of imputed data was intended to reduce selection bias and allow for the use of a larger sample and more detailed specifications. However, it may be that the results are driven by some aspect of the imputation model or by some small and unrepresentative part of the data set that imputation has magnified in importance. To test this, I

TABLE 5
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION WITH NONIMPUTED DATA
 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE IS PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENCE)

<i>Variables</i>	(1) <i>Violence</i>	(2) <i>Violence</i>	(3) <i>Violence</i>
Years of Education	-0.441*** (0.146)		-0.302* (0.170)
Job Quality		-0.812*** (0.0900)	-0.680* (0.406)
Student		-1.579*** (0.372)	-0.985 (1.421)
Unemployed		-2.023*** (0.317)	-1.692 (1.439)
Jugantar Member	2.334 (1.429)	0.511 (0.321)	2.274* (1.374)
Anush. Sam. Member	1.415** (0.684)	-0.315 (0.241)	1.228 (0.770)
Leader	-0.489 (0.925)	0.0618 (0.337)	-0.167 (1.056)
Dangerousness Rating	0.595 (0.442)	0.534** (0.249)	0.519 (0.554)
Exam Failure	-0.234 (0.939)		-0.636 (1.024)
Left School	0.583 (0.936)		0.207 (0.847)
District FE	yes	yes	yes
Constant	6.611*** (2.195)	1.835*** (0.228)	7.246*** (2.053)
Observations	91	568	84

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$; robust standard errors in parentheses

ran two simple specifications using the unimputed data (columns 1 and 2 in Table 5). Despite the loss of N, the main independent variables remain strong and significant in the expected direction. In fact, the coefficient for job quality is much larger here than the imputed results in Table 4, while that for education is slightly larger. Model 3 includes both *Job Quality* and *Education* in the same specification. Despite their collinearity and a small N, both variables remain significant at the 10 percent level.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The way in which the sample was constructed creates a potential problem. The district intelligence officers who wrote the Red Book were

choosing from the universe of individuals in their districts those who they thought were most dangerous to the Raj or most committed to the nationalist movement. If the intelligence officers thought one form of political involvement was more dangerous or more indicative of commitment than another, it could lead to a biased sample, with one category including individuals whose level of commitment would not have merited inclusion in the other category. “Commitment” and “Dangerousness” thus are potentially influencing the measurement of the dependent variable.

This concern does not appear as a major problem in the archival material. The IB tended to treat violent and nonviolent offenders with similar harshness, if only because they were convinced that both were part of the same vast conspiracy. However, to control for this bias, all specifications in the last three columns of Table 4 included variables that are rough measures of commitment and perceived danger. *Leader* is a dummy for whether an individual is described and being a “leader” or “chief” or “taking a leading part” in an organization. *Dangerous* is an ordinal ranking for how dangerous the IB felt a suspect to be and for the IB’s beliefs about whether the individuals had actually committed crimes. The IB rated all its suspects in this way and took the ratings seriously: the rating given determined the size of the surveillance detail assigned to each man and thus seems to be a credible signal of the government’s beliefs.⁶⁴

Despite these controls, it is still possible that the Red Book sample is a biased sample of the terrorists active in Bengal as a whole, either because of varying effectiveness of the police or because of different criteria for inclusion. To test this theory, I constructed a count measure of terrorist activity for each district by totaling the number of violent incidents and firearm seizure lists in the Rowlett Commission Report⁶⁵ and compared it with the district-level counts of terrorists in my sample. Despite the vastly different sources of the data, a two-sample F-Test failed to reject the null that they were drawn from the same distribution.⁶⁶ This seems to indicate that any bias from the sampling procedure is minimal.

NONPOLITICAL CRIME

It is possible that through some omission in the selection process the sample includes individuals whose crime was motivated by nonpoliti-

⁶⁴ National Archives of India. Home Department. A Proceedings, July 1911: 48–50.

⁶⁵ Government of Bengal 1918.

⁶⁶ The distribution of incidents was slightly more rural than the distribution of suspects, perhaps reflecting the common practice of urban residents visiting isolated rural areas to commit *daicoties*.

cal motives or whose relative poverty is driving the results. Such an inclusion would have run counter to the institutional self-image and self-interest of the IB, who wished to reduce their workload and saw themselves as an elite dealing with an especially important and difficult type of crime. In addition, any sample that included nonviolent criminals would look dramatically different from this one, which not only excludes the very poor (the population traditionally prone to nonpolitical crime) but is also concentrated almost exclusively in the upper-caste urban population, which included the strongest supporters of the nationalist movement. It is particularly notable that while 55 percent of Bengal's population was Muslim, Muslims (usually pro-British or unpoliticized in this period) constituted less than 1 percent of the politically involved sample. Finally, the results remain robust even when the definition of terrorism is confined to crimes such as bombing and murder of officials, for which there is little conceivable nonpolitical motive (see model 4 of Table 6).⁶⁷

MEASUREMENT ERROR

As a group, the nonviolent activists are closely related to the terrorist sample: they are friends, schoolmates, and ideological sympathizers, as well as providers of money and shelter. This closeness is attractive from a theoretical perspective, as it minimizes the differences between the two samples aside from their decision to participate in violence. However, it complicates the empirical problem: due to the imperfections of the IB's information network and the negative nature of my definition, it is possible that many terrorists are included within the nonterrorist sample. Fortunately, this will bias the results toward not registering differences between the two groups, making the finding of a statistically significant difference that much harder.

A closely related concern is that these results may be a product of my definition of terrorism and therefore that excluding certain categories of events would alter them. In particular, *daicoty* and possession of guns could possibly be motivated by nonpolitical objectives, while individuals against whom there is little specific information could well be nonviolent activists implicated by association. To test this theory I ran four alternative specifications with increasingly rigorous definitions of terrorism (models 1–4 in Table 6). *Job Quality* is large and significant in all

⁶⁷ Twelve individuals within the sample had nonpolitical criminal backgrounds that were specifically mentioned. In all but two cases this was either the illegal possession of marijuana or a crime involving the falsification of legal documents. For this reason, the nonviolent sample has slightly more "criminals" than the violent sample.

TABLE 6
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION WITH IMPUTED DATA (DEPENDENT VARIABLE IS PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENCE,
 DEFINED AS NOTED IN THE TOP ROW)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Offenders With Specific Information</i>	<i>Offenders suspected of Crimes</i>	<i>Offenders (No Arms Act)</i>	<i>Offenders (Bombing and Murder)</i>	<i>High-Quality Information Individuals</i>	<i>Only Dangerous Individuals</i>	<i>All Leaders as Terrorists</i>	<i>Anusilan Samiti Members</i>
Job Quality	-0.59*** (0.109)	-0.70*** (0.131)	-0.72*** (0.145)	-0.86*** (0.256)	-1.303*** (0.435)	-0.571*** (0.201)	-0.284** (0.122)	-0.618** (0.255)
Student	-1.16*** (0.432)	-1.370** (0.593)	-1.448** (0.619)	-1.545** (0.725)	-3.071* (1.682)	-1.384** (0.564)	-0.413 (0.392)	-1.103 (0.782)
Unemployed	-1.52*** (0.376)	-1.94*** (0.557)	-2.08*** (0.566)	-2.318** (0.913)	-3.183** (1.459)	-1.219** (0.621)	-0.866** (0.382)	-1.334** (0.595)
Jugantar Member	0.503 (0.376)	0.548 (0.413)	0.570 (0.434)	0.789 (0.512)	1.459 (1.040)	1.812** (0.762)	0.856** (0.413)	
An. Sam Member	-0.75*** (0.252)	-0.257 (0.379)	-0.212 (0.374)	0.0614 (0.442)	0.797 (0.603)	0.149 (0.368)	-0.196 (0.196)	
Leader	0.0894 (0.263)	-0.219 (0.345)	-0.0850 (0.379)	0.0370 (0.470)	-0.744 (0.657)			
Dangerousness	0.509** (0.223)	0.468 (0.328)	0.471 (0.341)	0.890** (0.439)	0.426 (0.349)		0.643*** (0.226)	0.869*** (0.264)
District FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Controls ^a	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	2.784*** (0.521)	4.485*** (0.910)	4.472*** (0.904)	3.764*** (1.042)	4.203** (1.748)	-0.642 (1.222)	0.843 (0.557)	0.937 (0.811)
Observations	675	537	493	313	171	352	728	217

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; robust standard errors in parentheses

^aAge in 1915, Urban resident, Urban Migrant, Married, Sadhu.

specifications.⁶⁸ Even with an extremely strict definition of terrorism, it appears that terrorists are less wealthy than their nonviolent peers.

The use of suspicion as the criterion for inclusion raises a slightly different set of questions about the construction of the dependent variable. It may be, for instance, that the sample includes poor individuals who planned acts of violence but would not eventually have committed them.⁶⁹ More generally, the results may be driven by the inclusion of cases about which our information is too poor to be confident about whether they belong in the violent or the nonviolent category.⁷⁰ To address this concern, I added two additional robustness checks. Model 5 of Table 6 restricts the sample to “high information” individuals, defined as individuals for whom the IB possessed four or more specific pieces of information about their political acts. Within this much smaller sample, the results get dramatically stronger. Model 6 limits the definitions of terrorist to those who were also deemed to be dangerous. As we have seen, this judgment reflected a tangible investment of institutional resources by the IB and should be seen as a strong signal that they believed this person had actually committed acts of violence. The results remain robust to this radical restriction of the size of the terrorist sample.

LEADERSHIP AND SELECTION

Another, very serious potential concern is that the model may be capturing some sort of selection mechanism within the terrorist group itself. Better educated people may gravitate toward leadership roles, and people in leadership roles may choose to separate themselves from direct participation in violence, giving orders instead of committing acts themselves. Similarly, groups could choose to assign wealthy recruits to nonviolent tasks within the group. To minimize this problem, every effort was made in the coding to include as terrorists individuals who participated in the planning of attacks but not in their execution or who had knowledge of violent acts before they were committed. The potential size of such an assignment effect is also severely limited by the low institutionalization and organizational fragmentation of the Bengali nationalist movement. There was nobody with enough power

⁶⁸ For reasons of space, the robustness checks in Table 6 use only *Job Quality* as a measure of social status. The results are robust to the substitution of *Years of Education*, *Father's Job Quality*, or a factor score of all three.

⁶⁹ While the archives describe some cases of acts of violence forestalled by the police, they record no case of one being called off by the planners themselves.

⁷⁰ Models 1 and 2 of Table 6 also address these concerns to some extent by excluding very low information cases.

to divert individuals from violence to nonviolence, and there is little evidence that individuals would have accepted such orders. If anything, pressure was in the opposite direction, as the IB frequently reported that *daicoity* gangs had to use psychological coercion to find recruits.

To test the selection hypothesis, I recoded *all* nonviolent political leaders as terrorists and then reran a model with the standard controls (model 7 of Table 6). The effect of *Job Quality* is somewhat reduced but remains large and negative. As the effect stays large under even the most extreme formulation of the selection hypothesis, we can be confident that the socioeconomic difference between the samples is not a product of selection.

IDEOLOGY AND PARTY

The political affiliation of individuals can affect their propensity to engage in violence. The *Jugantar*, for instance, was smaller, more urban, more violent, and more highly educated than the *Anushilan Samiti*. The party variables are thus included in all specifications in Table 3 to control for the possibility that the different ideological orientations of the two parties gave them greater propensities to violence. In addition, I ran a separate regression for the *Anushilan Samiti* (model 8 in Table 6), which found job quality to have a significant negative effect on violence. The *Jugantar*, with only fifty-seven individuals in the sample (thirty-five violent), was too small for meaningful statistical analysis.

VII. GENERALIZABILITY

Any study of a single violent group cannot be taken as typical, and it can be argued that the empirical results are the product of factors unique to the Bengali case or to anticolonial struggles more generally. In particular, India at the turn of the twentieth century seems remote from the contemporary Middle Eastern cases on which most scholarly and public attention is focused. There is no absolute answer to this critique or to the broader question of whether terrorist groups have similar sociological causes—the only way to test such a theory would be to study each group individually. In particular, to test this theory fully one would need data on both the violent and the nonviolent political activists within a given movement.

While there are thus certain questions that can be answered only using the Bengali case, there are many observables on which we can compare the Bengali sample with existing studies of European and Middle Eastern groups. Remarkably, despite the vast distance in time and space, the groups appear very similar. The terrorist samples are

relatively young and male, with a clustering in the early twenties. All samples are relatively well educated and from high-status backgrounds relative to the societies from which they came, though there are disproportionate numbers of students, unemployed people, and unemployed students. The terrorist groups also are disproportionately urban and geographically mobile. While it is impossible to make statements about the relationship between terrorists and nonviolent activists in the canonical Middle Eastern groups, the close similarities between these cases and Bengal on observable variables indicate that they may also resemble each other in other ways. The result here is also fully consistent with what little information we do have on the backgrounds of the nonviolent peers of third-wave terrorists.⁷¹

To put the situation another way, the summary statistics indicate that the differences in results of this analysis from those in the previous literature are the result of the difference in research design rather than in the nature of the terrorist sample. *When studied with the same research design used in the existing empirical literature, the Bengali terrorists exhibit the same broad characteristics as the groups that have been previously studied; in fact, they exhibit these characteristics in an even more extreme form.* The politically active, both violent and nonviolent, are drawn from the young, wealthy, well-educated, urban, and socially privileged strata of a poor society. This contrast is even more marked in Bengal than in a wealthier society like late-twentieth-century Lebanon. The empirical novelty in this study is to use a new control group—other political activists.

A related critique is that even if the material circumstances of the Bengali case were similar to other cases, the anticolonial nature of the struggle would lead to a different pattern of recruitment than one finds with ideological or religiously motivated terrorism. However, the theory in Section II does not explain why individuals within the politically informed classes choose to become active in politics—a choice that might well be informed by ideology. It instead makes statements about the relationship between social status and violence among activists. It is unclear why this choice would be influenced by the nature of the cause. In addition, many “classic” terrorist movements have mobilized recruits against a foreign military presence perceived as illegitimate—the British in Northern Ireland, the Israelis in Gaza, and the French in Algeria, or the United States in Saudi Arabia, Italy, or West Germany. While some of these causes may seem insubstantial to some observers relative to the harm caused by British colonialism in India, such

⁷¹ Ferracutti 1982.

appeals would presumably create a similar “anticolonial” dynamic in recruitment among those who subscribe to these beliefs.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The empirical results from Bengal show that the highest-risk groups for terrorism thus seem to be those who are in the upper part of society but not at the top, that is, the poorest members of the politically aware class. The situating of terrorism within the impoverished elite seems less strange when we consider it in relation to a wider universe of cases. It agrees with the widespread observation that support for extremist parties and ideologies is strongest within the lower middle class.⁷² It also brings into focus many descriptive accounts of cases in which the nonviolent faction of a movement came from a significantly higher social level than the violent one.⁷³ An important area for future research is testing how the relationship between social status and violence varies across countries, by comparing violent and nonpolitical movements in areas with different levels of social development than those found in early-twentieth-century Bengal to see if they follow the pattern suggested in Figure 1.

These results provide strong support for the theory developed in Section II, which emphasizes both opportunity costs and access to political resources. It is clear from these data that within the elite, social status and education decrease the chance of participation in violence, while increasing the probability of political participation in general. Explanations based on ideology, grievance, and recruitment bias predict monotonic relationships between social status and violent participation that do not match the pattern within the data. Opportunity cost, by contrast, provides an elegant and intuitively compelling explanation for the comparatively low social status of the politically violent and their concentration in certain occupational sectors, while the concentration of activists in the upper strata of society also dovetails neatly with the broader political behavior literature. These results argue that, among the politically involved, poverty and education are important predictors of involvement in violence, a result with potentially large implications for policy-making. To echo Alexander Pope, a little learning may be a dangerous thing, and the politically aware high school dropout may be the person most dangerous to the contemporary world order.

⁷² Chibber 1997.

⁷³ On Northern Ireland, see McAllister 1977.

APPENDIX

JOB QUALITY CODING DETAILS

Rating	Description	Examples
—	no occupation	students, unemployed
0	manual laborers	railway signalmen, “coolie”
1	unskilled white collar	office boys, shop assistants
2	“black collar” (semiskilled white collar, especially clerical)	clerks, small shop owners, primary school teachers, small pharmacists
3	lower professional (skilled or supervisory white-collar workers in either low-status sectors or subordinate positions)	head clerks in large offices, secondary school teachers, traditional medicine practitioners, small talukdars, local revenue officials
4	professionals (liberal professions, non-ICS civil servants, landed wealth)	pleaders, doctors, police inspectors, small Zamindars, professors
5	upper class (large-scale wealth or job that required a long stay in England)	barristers, large Zamindars, college presidents

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