

## **Abstract**

This study compares the drivers of radicalization of Pakistani foreign fighters in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Syria. It tries to understand what unique drivers attract Pakistani foreign fighters to each of these conflict zones. It also examines the degree to which the existing literature on radicalization in general and foreign fighters in particular, mainly produced in a western context, can be used to understand the Pakistani foreign fighters. The study is based on twenty-two semi-structured interviews conducted with experts from police counter terrorism departments, journalists, researchers, senior officials from National Counter Terrorism Authority, and members of religious groups in Pakistan, which were then analysed to determine the relative significance of different drivers for Pakistani fighters travelling to Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Syria. The results show that many drivers that feature prominently in the existing radicalization literature, such as ideology, propaganda, and recruitment networks, are useful for explaining what draws Pakistani foreign fighters to particular conflicts. At the same time, however, the results of my analysis also identified several drivers that have not been highlighted in the Western literature on Muslim radicalization thus far, including geographical proximity and access to a conflict, previous experience as a foreign fighter, and the role of veteran foreign fighters. All of these were pointed out as major drivers in the Pakistani case by my interviewees. These results of this study therefore suggest that the studies of radicalization would benefit greatly from additional studies of foreign fighters outside the context of Europe and America.