

Editorial Treatment of Print Media: Media Conformity Approach and Lal Masjid operation

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Abstract

The following study has been conducted with an investigatory cum quantitative research based upon the editorial treatment of newspapers pertaining to a particular incident. The incident, the editorial treatment of which will be assessed during the subsequent stages of this discussion, is the military operation that was conducted on the Lal Masjid Operation in the year 2007. The execution of a military operation and the subsequent repercussions that occurred in the aftermath on one hand raised serious concerns and questions regarding the issue of radical fueling by religious institutions, and on the other posed apprehension about the role and responsibilities of law enforcement and security agencies of the country. From this research it is quite evident that both newspapers dealt with the issue in different ways but did align their opinion with the fact that the military operation became necessary with the passage of time and that it was as the last resort that the security forces of the country had to prevent

before the entire situation underwent further deterioration.

Keywords: Lal Masjid, Military Operation, Editorials, Media Conformity

Introduction

Pakistan has been battling with different conflicts, internal and external both over its course of history, which have been ethnic, racial, political, and religious in nature. After the 9/11 religious conflicts have been on the rise and Pakistan has been an ally of War on Terror. Historically, the country houses many religious seminaries which have been catering to a section of the population, especially in the absence of educational institutions. One such religious seminary (Madrassah) which was known as Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) tried to create a state within the state, challenging the writ of the then government. In such conflicts the government tries to conform the media news content to their narrative. However, the media in Pakistan tries to remain independent and neutral.

The first incident manifesting the emergence of Lal Masjid conflict took place on January 22, 2007 when baton-wielding women took control of a children's library against the demolition of mosques of madrassas in the city of Islamabad. In extension to this, the second incident took place approximately two months later on March 25 when in the same way students of Lal Masjid caught three women who were allegedly running a brothel in the city who were later released after they promised to lead a sin-free life.

It was the month of April that witnessed some administrative changes taking place inside the mosque. On April 6th the administration of the mosque, under the command of Maulana Abdul Aziz, decided to establish a Sharia court. They threatened the government that attacks would become imminent if the government decided to use force against them. Three days after

this announcement the Sharia court of the mosque announced a decree against former tourism minister Nilofer Bakhtiar for hugging a French parachute instructor. The very next day on April 10th, the government in response to the provocative attitude of the mosque decided to cut all radio. Events took a different turn when they arrested two policemen in response to the arrest of their own followers. However these policemen were later freed.

On June 23, students from Jamia Hafsa kidnapped nine people, including seven Chinese nationals', six women and a man from an acupuncture clinic, claiming that they were running an undercover brothel. Nevertheless, these were also freed following diplomatic pressure from Beijing.

In the beginning of July, relations between Lal Masjid clerics and the government began to deteriorate. Clerics of the mosque claimed that they intended to impose Islamic Sharia in the country in accordance to the Islamic injunctions and doctrine. The government claimed that clerics of the mosque including Maulana Abdul Aziz and his brother Maulana Ghazi were trying to challenge the writ of the state by trying to formulate their own laws and judicial mechanism. Moreover, they were also blamed of fueling radicalism and extremism in the name of religion. In the midst of this, on July 3rd students of the madrassah snatched weapons from policemen deployed at a building facing the Jamia Hafsa. Troops and paramilitary forces cordoned off the Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa compound, leading to a tense impasse between the security forces and militants inside the Lal Masjid. The very next day curfew was imposed around the mosque complex.

The first two days of fighting left at least 16 people dead and some 140 injured. Among the hundreds of people holed up in the complex were women, students and children. Security forces captured Lal Masjid prayer leader Abdul Aziz as he was trying to leave disguised in a woman's *burqa*. In the face of such complicated circumstances, over 1200 students decided to surrender to the security forces.

The very next day on July 5th new sessions of fighting broke out around the mosque. Students started to throw hand grenades and the army in response to this demolished most of the surrounding wall. Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao accused Abdul Rashid Ghazi of retaining women and children as human shields inside the mosque. Meanwhile, it was reported that over 50 more militants left the building voluntarily, and security forces said they had captured eight more. From this point onwards, the conflict transformed into a full-fledged military operation, a sight of which was first witnessed on July 6th in the form of heavy explosions taking place around the mosque complex. From inside, Ghazi announced that he and his followers would prefer dying rather than capitulating in front of the authorities.

Officials say that several hundred students remained inside the complex, along with some 60-armed militants, which remain anecdotal. On July 7th the then President of the country Pervaiz Musharraf announced that any person who decides to stay inside the mosque without surrendering will be killed. The government tried to suppress the number of casualties that had taken place by sticking to a figure of 17 whereas Maulana Ghazi claimed that over 70 had been killed. The situation worsened on July 8th as during an exchange of gunfire a military soldier was killed. Death toll rose up to 24 whereas government began to assess the possible number of options that they had at their disposal for hatching a peaceful deal through the help of negotiations.

On July 9th in a meeting with its key officials' government decided to appoint PML (Q) chief Chaudary Shujaat Hussain as the arbitrator for devising a common ground through which peace could be restored in the capital. The panel also comprised of highly prestigious and reputed names in the field of religious education. The government decided to offer Maulana Ghazi house arrest in exchange for his surrender and put an end to the bloodshed, however negotiations ended in a deadlock when Maulana Ghazi

decided that the options being offered were simply on blackmailing grounds.

With talks failing, a final operation was launched on July 10th by forces. In a series of gun battles and explosions that roared in the area, over 50 people of the mosque were killed along with eight soldiers. Among the dead also included the leader of the revolt, Maulana Ghazi. (Dawn July 11,2007)

Aim of the study:

Most of the information that has been quoted regarding the different events that took place during the Lal Masjid debacle have been obtained and retrieved from media sources, primarily the print media. It is also important to mention here that since the research intends to be studied and analyzed from the perspective of media conformity approach, it is important that the different salient features and benchmarks related to the theory are subsequently satisfied.

Hence the research intends to look into the issue and conflict of Lal Masjid through the editorial lens of prominent print media newspapers. Since editorials in any newspaper serve as the representative of their organizational policies they are a useful and effective tool in answering the research questions that have been formulated for this research. These research questions that are aimed to be answered include:

- RQ1. How did the print media project the entire event? (which in this case is the Lal Masjid operation)
- RQ2. Was the editorial policy of print media in advocacy or antagonistic to the policy formed and exercised by the government?
- RQ3. What was the editorial trend followed by print media during the entire course of event?

Importance of the study

Since the Afghan War, the state of Pakistan has been considered a breeding ground of religious extremism and radicalism. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan billions of dollars were pumped into Pakistan to disseminate education about the Holy War or Jihad to indoctrinate young minds through a well-engineered and planned network of developing madrasah culture in the country.

The teachings disseminated in these madrasahs projected a more myopic and militant version of Islam but was in perfect synchronization to the religious culture that corresponded with the interests of Pakistan's establishment machinery. However, the events that unfolded after the occurrence of 9/11 turned out to be more of a curse in disguise for Pakistan as they now had to destroy the very Frankenstein that they once created with their very own hands.

As an ally of the United States in the War against Terror it now had to initiate a full-fledged campaign through which this radicalized culture had to be eradicated. The entire debacle of Lal Masjid is just one event of this complete campaign. Nevertheless, this one incident provided a comprehensible manifestation to the establishment about the extent of such forces which have proliferated and stabilized themselves within the cultural, political and religious roots of the country.

Apart from the political and religious aspect of the event there is also another important dimension to the event which brings the role of media, print and electronic both, into limelight. Lal Masjid operation reporting has been criticized by all factions of the society, terming it as an incident that testifies the dual and hypocrite nature of media.

Scope of study

This study through a semi-quantitative approach tries to demonstrate the different policies adhered by print media in the

form of their editorials during the time when the event of Lal Masjid took place. This will be helpful in not only developing a better and unbiased approach towards the understanding of print media but will also deepen our knowledge about the media conformity approach and the ways in which is applied for either tarnishing or beautifying a particular event.

Literature Review

The roots of extremism and radicalism and the many ways through which such toxic elements have proliferated and subsequently entrenched themselves in the society of Pakistan can easily be dated back to the time when the region of South Asia was engaged in the religious and ideological conflict created by the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. It was during this time when the society of Pakistan did not only undergo a religious stratification which was strongly fueled by the monster of sectarianism but at the same time also facilitated the massive proliferation of weapons, arms and ammunition in different areas of the country.

It is important that the different aspects and dimensions of this problem and its gravity are carefully analyzed. It is also important to mention that since the occurrence of 9/11 and the emergence of Pakistan as a front-line state in the War against Terrorism it has been confronted with a completely new set of problems and complications which have once again manifested their repercussions on religious, cultural, political as well as on social grounds. Without an understanding of the circumstances and socio-political conditions that prevailed then and now we will not be able to develop a comprehensive approach towards the factors and components that led to an incident of intensity like that of Lal Masjid.

The stance and position that the state and establishment of Pakistan took in either situation whether it was the Afghan war of 1979 or the current ongoing War Against Terror has been in complete conformity and correspondence to the interests of US. This can

further be verified by assessing the relations both these countries have gone through since 1979. When Russian forces invaded Afghanistan, the geostrategic position of Pakistan in the region became extremely pivotal and crucial. Through the help of immense pumping of petrodollars into the country by Arab nations, facilitated by US a jihadi culture was nurtured in the country. This was also encouraged by the intelligence agencies of the country as with the application of these measures they were able to directly support and pioneer the formation of Taliban and subsequently engineer a strategy through which the Red Army could be defeated in the landlocked geography of Afghanistan.

After the Russian army surrendered and decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, it became clear that Pakistan had turned into a bastion of ammunition and a breeding ground promoting the dissemination and proliferation of a militant version of Islam. Even though such activities were being exercised in the country in the post-Afghan way years, widespread projection and propagation of such acts were mainly demonstrated in the events that followed after the occurrence of 9/11 with the destruction of the World Trade Centre.

A month ago before the occurrence of 9/11 , the then Chief of Army Staff of the country Pervaiz Musharraf while giving an interview to a Russian newspaper Nova Ivestia(2001) said that *“Taliban control over 95% of Afghanistan and they cannot be wished away.....we feel that the Western community should engage with Taliban rather than isolating or ostracizing them.....(Winchell, 2003).* With the occurrence of 9/11 Musharraf’s opinion regarding the Taliban regime took a completely new turn since it was extremely dangerous to displease and go against the strategic interests that US had already engineered for this region.

Hence with the government and intelligence agencies of Pakistan siding with the US as the key state in the frontline of War against terror, the state of Pakistan provided every opportunity to extremists, radicals and internal and external terror elements to

unleash themselves in the most destructive form upon the people of Pakistan.

Kfir (2006) through an assessment of the military efforts taken by Pakistan to curb terrorism as well as upon the double game that Pakistan has been proactively playing in the region by being both ally and enemy of terrorism at the same time. This policy has been undermining the stability of Pakistan. He further describes in detail that Pakistan's government became a part of a costly and convoluted military operation in tribal areas of the country with a sole objective of eradicating terrorism and concurrently controlling the proliferation of Madrassas in different parts of the country.

The hypocritical role of Pakistan in the War Against Terror and its efforts in hoodwinking its allies were later also verified by a report that was released by the London School of Economics (2010). Pakistan and its chief spy agency, the ISI (or Inter-Services Intelligence) were accused of secretly funding the Taliban warlords and their networks such as that of Jalaluddin Haqqani and Hafiz Gul Bahadur. The report also stated that Pakistan is well-informed about the whereabouts of Taliban chief, Mullah Omar and about his frequent arrivals in Quetta but all such information has not been shared by Pakistan with US or any of his other allies in the war against terror. (Amoore, 2010)

The military operations that Pakistan army has launched in previous years against militants for the eradication of terrorism from the country directly supporting the forces of Pakistan through all financial means available and hence demand concrete and effective results in return. Such an attitude has been mentioned by Zakaria (2009) when he argues that Pakistan army and government have not launched serious or intense operations or campaigns against Hikmatyar and Haqqani networks which were working and moving actively in the different areas of Pakistan. He further goes to the extent of criticizing the way in which the concept and application of a religious doctrine like Jihad has been manipulated by the government and forces of Pakistan. He recalls the 1965 war

when the government-controlled media of the country proudly propagated messages emphasizing about the significance of Jihad and tells about the “*heroic suicide mission*” while now days, there seems to be no distinguishing ground between freedom fighters or Jihadists and terrorists.

The literature written and disseminated about Jihad is nothing new even in Pakistan. Dr. Pervaiz Hoodboy (2009) relates the strengthening of these Jihadi foundations in the society of Pakistan to the occurrence of Afghan war when increasingly concrete attempts and strategies were being formulated to encourage the Saudization of Pakistan financed with petrodollars. It was during this process of Saudization in which Madrassas proved to be the most effective tool. The ever-surging number of registered and unregistered Madrassas in the country began to propagandize and fuel young minds with a bigoted, militant and intolerant version of Islam which paved way for the formation of an ideology that not only worked against the Soviets but is also effective against resisting the current intervention of US and the perpetually waged Cold War with India.

Safdar (2009) while addressing the International Seminar entitled as Countering Terrorism: Strategies and Sharing Best Practices has been quoted as saying that the threat of “*Islamist militancy and its expansion present the biggest challenge to the government. Much more serious than the faltering economy, socio-cultural decay, eroding state-society relations, capacity gaps and demoralization of Pakistani security forces and difficult foreign relations is view of bad publicity in the international media.*” He further said that incidents of Lal Masjid and Marriott bombing nature have provided concrete proof that the movement and the reach of terrorists is not just restricted to tribal areas and agencies, but by conducting such ingeniously planned attacks they have proved that even the capital of the state is not far from their reach. (Middle East Institute, 2009)

Racine (2009) in an article entitled "*Thirty years later: Is Pakistan changing its strategic paradigm?*" endorses the fact that the creation and support of militias in Pakistan is as old as the history of this country since its independence. This militia can either be in the form of Mujahideen gangs and war groups that have been created by the military and intelligence of Pakistan for countering Indian resistance in the disputed territory of Kashmir or the formation of Taliban for the expulsion of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. (PIPS, 2009)

He further indicates that Pakistan continued to pursue a dual policy under the leadership of Pervaiz Musharraf after 9/11. Despite declaring Pakistan as the key state in the War Against Terror it continued to provide sanctuary to Taliban warlords in the FATA region of the country after their regime collapsed with the invasion of American forces. However Western pressure on Pakistani government eventually manifested itself in the form of predator drone attacks that started to destroy pockets of militants present in these regions ultimately unleashing the Frankenstein monster of extremism and facilitating a double whammy for Pakistani establishment.

He has further articulated that the delay with which Musharraf reacted during the siege of the radical Red Mosque in Islamabad in 2007 was matched by the delay with which Kayani (and new President Asif Ali Zardari) reacted to the challenges raised by the Pakistani Taliban and by the terrorist networks striking across Pakistan.

It has primarily been because of such dangerously appalling circumstances and blundering decisions and policies formulated by our policymakers that earned Pakistan with the title of being the most dangerous nation of the world in a cover story that was published in Newsweek (2007). Quoting a Taliban commander positioned in the province of Ghazni, he said '*Pakistan is like your shoulder that supports your RPG, 'Without it you couldn't fight. Thank God Pakistan is not against us.'*

Studies related to media conformity approach

With the occurrence of 9/11, Islam and Muslims have emerged as the epicenter of discussion by global media. It is also important to understand here that with this change of interests and prioritization different perspectives have been framed by media itself through the help of which it intends to cover and project stories which are either related to Islam and Muslims.

Nonetheless in realizing the contemporary potential and power of media in the process of perception making and development, media baron organizations most of which are owned and headquartered in the US have deployed an enormous propaganda machinery through which they intend to project a maligning image and perception about Muslims and defame the teachings of Islam.

This biased framework of presenting news is not just restricted to the nurturing and growth of Islamophobia in the West but can also be observed in the way they report and cover different events related to their political happenings. Hence in this context it becomes extremely important to develop a comprehensive approach towards the development of media conformity approach.

Poole (2006) quotes Hartman, *“News framing as a set of inferences about what it is related to, that define an area of subject-matter and provide the terms in which it is discussed”*.

Another approach that has been outlined by Herman and Chomsky (2000) states that *“media frames can beautify as well as tarnish the overall picture of event”*

In addition to this many different scholars and experts have also tried to develop an effective relationship between media and terrorism. In this context Jan (2009) elaborates *“terrorism is what, the enemies of a nation do”*.

Apart from these perspectives it is also important to outline that the chief opinion makers after any particular event has occurred are the

media conglomerate organizations who possess the capability of framing public opinion and perception either in correspondence to the foreign policy of the state or the way through which they can safeguard the image of key institutions of the country.

Another prominent issue that journalists and media personnel encounter in the process of covering an event is present in the form of physical barriers and complications. Journalists of Pakistan have mentioned this issue as the greatest hurdle to their coverage of any event. Due to the presence of this inaccessibility media becomes overwhelmingly dependent upon the information that they receive from state organizations which may either be bureaucracy or military.

In many cases the information that they receive from these sources cannot be validated by other sources. In the case of Pakistan journalists are not allowed to proceed beyond Bannu for covering events taking place between security forces and militants present in those areas. Even if they attempt to go ahead, they are either sent back by security forces or they are abducted by militants. Similar was the problem that took place in the coverage of Lal Masjid operation in 2007 as media was provided access of the place after a long time since the conclusion of operation.

Methodology

As mentioned earlier that the methodology for this particular research is based upon the analysis of editorial content of key newspapers present in Pakistan press which for this purpose include Dawn and Jang. Both newspapers with the passage of time have emerged as media conglomerates in their respective capacities and hence news, content and analysis of any event published by these newspapers develop profound impact upon the formulation of public opinion and perception regarding any issue or problem. Similar has been their approach when dealing with the Lal Masjid debacle. In order to obtain a comprehensive approach towards the way in which this issue has been presented and

projected to people it is to make use of the most effective tool which plays an extremely pivotal role in determining the aligning of interests and policies by any particular media, the editorials.

With the help of a semi-quantitative research the content analysis of editorials from these two newspapers has been used as a research method. For the fulfillment of this purpose three-month editorials from both newspapers from 1 May 2007 till 30 July 2007 have been used. In addition to this it is also important that proper components relating the approach of press towards the different stakeholders present in the entire dispute are also understood. For this purpose, a number of categories have been devised which apart from devising a proper relationship also help in making a research trouble-free. These categories include:

- Military operation
- Religious extremism
- Security Measures
- Government negotiation or writ
- Lal Masjid Clerics
- Maulana Abdul Aziz
- Miscellaneous includes
 1. Law enforcement agencies
 2. Suicide attacks
 3. Arms and ammunition
 4. Al-Qaeda

A key limitation encountered in the process of data collection was the reduction in sample size as during the entire course of three months there were some specific dates that published editorials related to Lal Masjid, despite of the fact that it gained grounds at the very starting of the year. However, the publishing of editorials began to gain momentum in July when the gravity of the situation acquired its apogee.

In this case the application of editorials is not different as they intend to form a perception regarding the event through the way it projects and covers the different aspects of the entire Lal Masjid episode.

With the help of content analysis that has been conducted with the help of these editorials the approach and stance of these newspapers and the press can easily be determined as to whether it was pro or anti-government strategy and the different ways of communication that were later applied to present a completely different view of the problem.

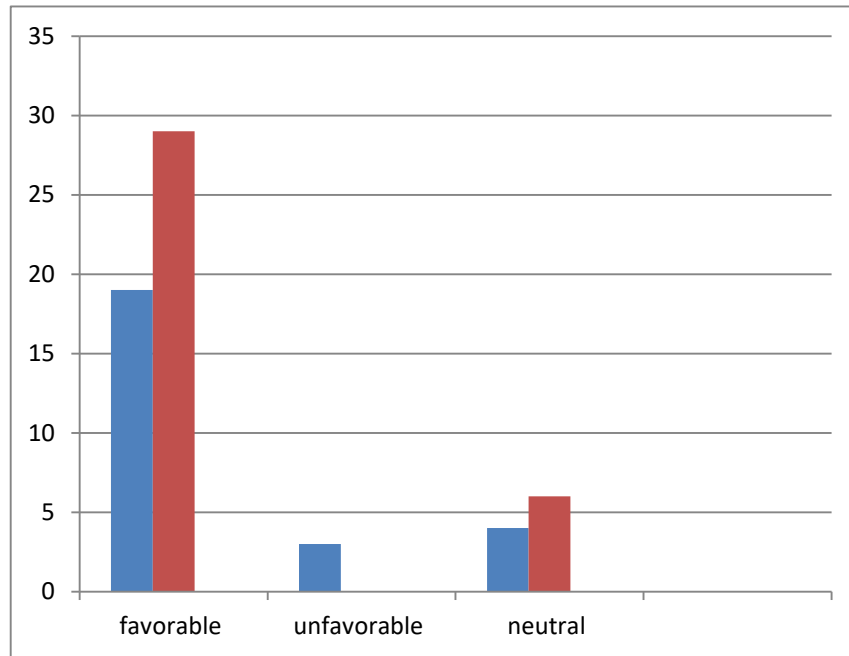
Findings

During the three-month time period chosen for this research 61 editorials were found. Out of these 26 or (42.63%) editorials appeared in Dawn whereas 35 or (57.37%) editorials appeared in Jang. Out of the percentage of editorials obtained from these newspapers it is quite clear that both newspapers in the form of their editorials during the time when the temperature of Islamabad around the premises of Lal Masjid was constantly surging both of these newspapers aligned their interests and organizational policies with the stance and strategy formulated by the government to deal and resolve the brewing extremism and radicalism being fueled and bred by the clerics of Lal Masjid. A tabular presentation of editorial slanting observed in both of these newspapers has been provided below for better understanding of the problem.

Table 1:

Newspaper	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
Dawn	19 (73.07%)	3 (11.53%)	4 (15.38%)
Jang	29 (82.86%)	0 (0.00%)	6 (17.14%)

Total	48 (78.68%)	3 (4.91)	10 (16.39%)
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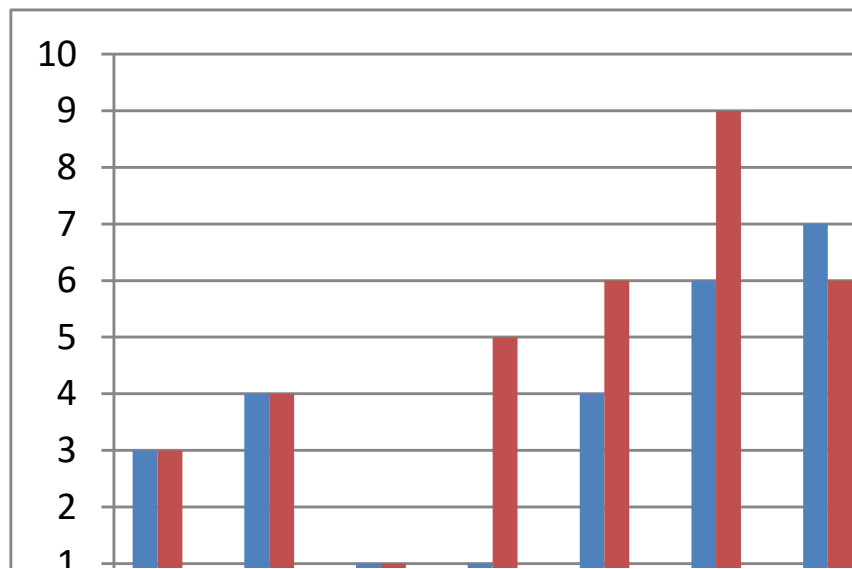
Graph 1 clearly shows that the largest bar encompassing the highest number of editorials lies within the favorable range which implies the alignment of the organizational policies of these newspapers with government strategy. It is important to mention that the blue colored bar presents the editorials published in Dawn whereas red colored bar presents those published in Jang during the same period of time.

It is clearly evident from the statistics obtained that an ordinary number of editorials have been published that can be categorized as either unfavorable to the government policy or were neutral in terms of their approach. Another important factor that can also be highlighted from these figures is that Dawn as compared to Jang

intends to project a more balanced view towards the way it handles and deals with significant issues.

Table 2: Distribution of categories in both newspapers

Category	Military operation	Religious extremism	Security measures	Maulana Abdul Aziz	Govt. negotiations & writ	Lal Masjid clerics	Miscellaneous	Total
Code no	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Dawn	3	4	1	1	4	6	7	26
Jang	3	4	1	5	7	9	6	35
Total	6	8	2	6	11	15	13	61



Following the same color pattern, the categorical distribution presented in Table 2 helps us in reaching to a different set of conclusions which will also help us in finding effective answers of the research questions that we formulated in the beginning of the research. Distribution shows that the editorials of both newspapers

when discussing the issue of religious extremism and military operations have been the same with the total percentage of 9.83%.

Similar has been the case when we see categories of religious extremism and security measures. Even in these categories both newspapers show almost exactly the same percentage which can be calculated to be 13.11% and 3.27% respectively. However, it is with the category of Lal Masjid clerics in which Jang supersedes Dawn with an individual percentage of 25.7%. Many of the editorials that were published in Jang belong to the time period when the military operation in Lal Masjid was about to commence. In comparison to this Dawn had been publishing editorials related to the activities being carried out in the premises of Lal Masjid on periodical basis. On the basis of the findings that we have made it is now important to answer the research questions formulated earlier.

RQ 1: How did the print media project the entire event? (which in this case is the Lal Masjid operation)

There remains less doubt in saying that the entire coverage of the Lal Masjid operation as presented by the print media was in accordance with the way to provide government and state a leverage and to threaten and punish those who dared challenging its writ. The editorials show an overwhelming alliance with the government and its strategy that it formulated for eradicating the terrorism of Lal Masjid clerics

RQ 2: Was the editorial policy of print media in advocacy or antagonistic to the policy formed and exercised by the government?

Statistics have revealed that out of 61 editorials 48 (78.68%) can easily be categorized as being favorable to the government policy which indicates that the editorial policy of print media was in substantial conformity to government policies and strategies.

RQ 3: What was the editorial trend followed by print media during the entire course of event?

In most of the categories that have been chosen both newspapers show almost the very same trend. However, a fundamental difference can be indicated in the editorial trend when considering the categories of Maulana Abdul Aziz, government negotiation and writ and Lal Masjid clerics. In all the three categories it is Jang that overtakes Dawn. Nevertheless, a difference does not necessarily suggest that a change in the editorial policy was also present.

Discussion and Conclusion

From the results that have been obtained after the methodological analysis of results obtained from editorial content reveals that during the execution of the operation the stance and policy of both prominent newspapers was in alliance with that of the government, editorials from either newspaper clearly show that they supported the Musharraf regime during which the operation was conducted. However, it is interesting to note that it was the military operation of Lal Masjid that played a pivotal role in the crumbling and the ultimate collapse of Musharraf government.

Once again it was the media that played a highly effective role in the manifestation of these political aims and objectives. Some of the approaches that these two newspapers took in the course of this entire event and especially in its aftermath are worth considering. Additionally, it is also important to realize that by this time electronic media in Pakistan had emerged as a strong force and hence its role in the process of perception and opinion forming and reinforcement cannot be marginalized.

When considering Dawn, it is important to keep in mind that the newspaper has always been aligned towards the leftist wing and hence it came as no shock that from the very first day it dubbed the clerics and students of Lal Masjid and their Madrassah as radicals,

extremists and terrorists that were moving fast enough to challenge the writ of the government.

The feeling of dislike that the newspaper made clear for these people can be manifested from the fact that in one of its editorials published in early May which was based on a play known as '*Burqavaganza*'. It tried to compare the portrayal of burqa as shown in the play with that of the way the clerics of the mosque tried to impose (Dawn, July 5, 2010). Throughout the timeline when the issue began to gain intensity it repeatedly dubbed the acts of both brothers Maulana Ghazi and Abdul Aziz as '*illegal*' without even having the courtesy of covering the opinion of the clerics. It continuously drummed the mantra of Islamic liberalism without providing any heed to the atrocities and injustices that are conducted in the name of Islam and liberalism in Pakistan.

However, once the military operation began to enter its conclusive phase, Dawn did raise the million-dollar question related to the ways in which the students of Lal Masjid and Jamia-e-Hafsa were equipped with the most sophisticated arms and ammunition to effectively counter and resist military and paramilitary troops. In one of the editorials that it published on July 12, it clearly mentioned that the massive influx of weapons and arms was not possible without political and administrative support.

On the other hand, in the case of Jang it is a completely different scenario, unlike Dawn, proper editorial based on Lal Masjid situation was published towards the end of May in which it denounced the actions of the clerics. In a couple of editorials that were published in the same month it accentuated upon ways through which a political solution with the help of negotiations can be reached through the involvement of all key stakeholders.

However, with the beginning of July a more politicized version of Jang came into limelight. It began to publish editorials on a similar pattern as that of Dawn through which it intentionally created a feeling of defamation and malice for the clerics and students of the

mosque. This process of intentional fueling came out in the open with the banner headline that was published in The News which is an English daily published by the Jang Group after Maulana Abdul Aziz was arrested by security officials when as told he was trying to elude attired in a *burqa*. The headline read as “*Lal Masjid cleric bites the dust*” Even though Maulana Ghazi repeatedly said that his brother has been framed, his voice remained unheard in the havoc and pandemonium that the state owned and private media of Pakistan created which they viewed as a great breakthrough in crumbling the writ of these clerics.

Nevertheless, there is yet another interesting angle to the entire Lal Masjid fiasco when analyzing the situation from the spectacle of Jang. This was mainly their pro-government and military approach in terms of dealing with the problem of Lal Masjid. In an editorial published on July 7, 2007 by the newspaper said “*The patience that the government has exhibited in dealing with the issue of Lal Masjid will help the government in getting massive public support on national as well as international platforms. Even in such crucial and time testing period President Musharraf instructed military troops to prevent collateral damage and unnecessary bloodshed so that the sanctity of the mosque can be safeguarded. Such an approach clearly manifests that in order to maintain the piety of the madrassah, the government has gone to every possible extent. Despite of all such measures if the issue ends in a deadlock then it will be the clerics of Lal Masjid and administration of Jama e Hafsa who will share the responsibility for the resulting consequences*”

Another important feature that must also be mentioned here is that unlike Dawn we do not see Jang raising some key questions related to the access of such enormous number of arms and ammunition present in the mosque but even after the completion of the operation praises the government for the patience that they showed in dealing with the problem. The newspaper had earlier indicated in one of its editorials published on July 11 that after the

negotiations ended in deadlock the option of military operation became inevitable.

Conclusion

The editorial pattern that has been found in relation to the events of Lal Masjid and the approach that print and electronic media take on the issue on contemporary grounds clearly show that the presence of dual standards within the media. At one place where all of them whole heartedly supported the operation against the clerics, later made the very same operation the reason and ground on the basis of which they ultimately coerced President Musharraf to resign as the Head of State.

Some very important lessons though which can be derived from this entire case is that people who stand and speak against the injustice and unethical practices taking place in the society are always treated in a discordant manner. They are dubbed as terrorists, fundamentalists and extremists because within their very own self they challenge the functioning of the status quo and hence the institutional framework which has been engineered on the basis of that status quo. The architects of the status quo do not appreciate any disturbance in the power equation and hence they apply all measures and forces through which any wave of change can either be suppressed or defamed.

Secondly, the model of a liberal media in an underdeveloped society is not viable primarily because the probability of its manipulation and switchover of agendas through its vulnerability towards the penetration of external forces increases substantially.

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