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When Lexemes Go Wrong: Conflict Narrative about Pakistan in the *New York Times*

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Abstract
The analysis illustrates how The New York Times framed the 2007 Lal Masjid operation. It attempts to identify linguistic and ideological biases in the reporting. Discourse analysis is used to analyse Pakistan's culture, politics, and religion. The emphasis is on repeating phrases such as Islamist, radical, and militant. The findings show that the image of the burqa is associated with oppression and extremism, resulting in a limited perspective that ignores cultural dimensions and human choice. At the same time, names such as Jihad and Sharia indicate the myopic construction of narratives. The reporting aligns with broader post-9/11 U.S. media trends that link overseas events to American policy issues. While the media attempts to contextualise the Lal Masjid operation within a larger political, social, and security framework, the language used perpetuates prejudices and conflict-oriented narratives about Pakistan. The study concludes with a recommendation for more accurate language and context-aware reporting in the international media. It highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in gaining a deeper understanding of diverse communities.
Keywords: *Lal Masjid, Pakistan, US, Jihad, Islamist*

Introduction

Print media in any domain address the social issues of global variant societies by filtering information through the process of gatekeeping. Most often referred to as the watchdog of social ills, it does not necessarily depict and present the reality through the mirror model of news production, as 'we live in a world erected on stories we tell, these stories might be real, but it is not reality'[1]. US print media is generally perceived as libertarian and hails objectivity as its approach, following a process of gatekeeping and deciding which countries, their social ills, and individuals should be awarded maximum status and attention.

Pakistan has been an essential ally of America against the War on Terror since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Yet, only a minimal percentage of American citizens have awareness and an accurate image of Pakistan. The primary reason may be the amount of status conferral attributed to Pakistan, as only high-profile cases get coverage in the US print Media. It is said that in the case

of foreign country coverage, only those stories receive coverage in American Print media that are related to American foreign policy and interests, whether economic, social, or security-related[2].

Most US mainstream news outlets discourage the practice of racism, discrimination and false cultural and religious presentation of any society as they hail tolerance and equality, as outlined in the US Constitution and the charters of the United Nations.[3] However, actual practices suggest that the media's role is less favourable, as many news outlets sometimes marginalise others while at other times construct realities about them that may not be true.

The 9/11 and the division of the world into 'us' and 'they', based on the Bush Doctrine, introduced a new pattern of classifying individuals into binary groups, with one side with America and the other with the terrorists. After 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror, the US media introduced Pakistan to Americans as an ally and at the same time as the hub of terrorists. Apart from this, debate over Islam and Muslims began to be heavily contemplated, and the misconceptions regarding the religion and its followers became the hallmark of various US media outlets such as FOX News.

American print media has given a significant amount of status conferral to Pakistan after 9/11, on those issues that have political and social dimensions, thereby presenting its own perspective on the given issue, whether it is the case of Mukhtaran Bibi (2002), Lal Masjid Operation (2007) or the murder of Salman Taseer (2011). Many news agencies of the US have been covering Pakistan since September 11, such as USA Today, Washington Post, The New York Times, etc, as many deployed their journalists to capture the essence of the War on Terror. One of the leading agenda setters in the American Media, the *New York Times* has been covering Pakistani society and its problems related to terrorism. It has covered Pakistani women's victimisation (ladies like Mukhtaran Bibi, Zafran, etc), political instability, terrorist attacks in the country, justice system and judicial crisis (suspension of Chief Justice of Pakistan, 2007), etc. All these stories received coverage as the New York Times deemed them to have direct links with American foreign policy. Due to the changes in PAK-US relationships during the last decades, the coverage of Pakistan has also varied at times, sometimes positive and at other times negative.

The present study is based on The New York Times' coverage of the Lal Masjid incident in 2007. Lal Masjid is situated at the heart of Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. The mosque is located near the headquarters of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In 1965, during the reign of General Ayub Khan, Lal Masjid was built in the capital city of Islamabad, Pakistan, and Maulana Muhammad Abdullah was its leader, who strongly supported the 'US-supported rebellion against Soviet troops in Afghanistan' in the 1980s. In 1998, after the assassination of Abdullah, his two sons, Maulana Abdul Aziz and Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi, took charge of the mosque. After 9/11 and the decision of President Musharraf to act as a US ally, both brothers started to openly criticise the Pakistani President as well as the US policy towards Afghanistan. The stand of Lal Mosque's authorities and female students of Jamia Hafsa not only called President Musharaf to be a follower of America but also asked to enforce Sharia Law, where CDs and massage centres in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan should be banned. For that particular reason, in late June 2007, the female students of the seminary kidnapped six Chinese women from a massage centre and accused them of running a brothel. The Chinese Government expressed its grievance over the kidnapping and called for the release of its citizens, who were released afterwards by negotiation.

But students' confrontation with the Pakistani Government started over the issue of the demolition of an illegal mosque in Islamabad. They demanded the parts of demolished mosques to be rebuilt, and for that reason, they took control of a Children's library in a nearby area. The Pakistani Government agreed to reconstruct the demolished building, but the students of the seminary retained control over the library.

On 3rd July 2007, students stole weapons and radios from the Pakistan Rangers' check post. Their action is said to have triggered Musharaf's anti- terrorist sentiments, who, before the incident, handled them softly. The siege of the Mosque lasted from 3rd July 2007, till 11th July 2007, during which several militants died along with the innocent souls of women and Rangers.

The year 2007 brought various political, judicial and social upheavals in Pakistan, starting from the suspension of the Chief Justice, then the Lal Masjid Operation and later the death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Among all such incidents, Operation Silence, a code name attributed to the Lal Masjid Operation, brings to the forefront the problem that Pakistani society is facing, i.e., the rise of extremism in the name of religion. Global print media has covered this incident to bring into the limelight the rising tide of extremism in Pakistan. As Pakistan is an essential ally of America in the War on Terror, American Print media, especially the NYT (agenda setter for most of the print media), has covered this incident. It is to be analysed whether NYT's coverage has been neutral or whether there are any biases in the choice of lexical items to present Pakistani society.

2. Literature Review

The role of electronic and print media is undisputable in any society, as it sometimes acts as a watchdog of social and political ills, and sometimes as a lapdog of the government, becoming a tool of government oppression. Media also helps shape the views of certain events, cultures, and societies; sometimes presenting the truth and sometimes creating misconceptions about specific societies.

The social order and mayhem of any society are bestowed status through the process of gate-keeping. According to Pamela J Shoemaker, "Gatekeeping is the process of cutting and crafting countless bits of information into a limited number of messages that reach people every day, and it is the centre of the media's role in modern public life."[4]

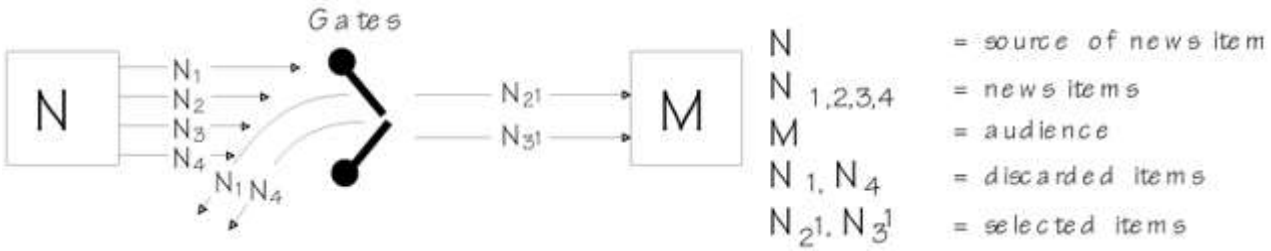
The gate-keeping of social issues relies upon the decision of attributing the amount of status conferral to any particular individual or set of individuals. Behind the decision, numerous factors determine the coverage of any predicament in the print media. Due to the complex nature of decision-making, media experts have elucidated and explained the reasons by putting forth several theories.

In 1963, Sibert *et al. categorised the* world's media into four basic models.[5] These include libertarian, socially responsible, authoritarian and Soviet models. Under the Libertarian model, the media is given full autonomy to articulate its views without government intervention in press affairs. The press has the power even to criticise government policies for the betterment of society. Moreover, the media is driven by commercial needs. It is left to the audience to interpret what to believe and what to consider dubious. Sarah Oates is of the view.

The libertarian media system reduces the power of the media to serve as political "gatekeepers," making issues of media ownership and journalistic bias less critical.[6]

Moreover, she says:
If the system is consumer-driven, then it is much less vulnerable to manipulation, either by a powerful group of elites or by inchoate masses. It places a high level of trust in the audience to decide what is essential and synthesise the critical messages about society.[7]
Although the libertarian model prevents elites from taking control of the media, due to the unimpeded flow of information, it can create unrest. It may prove to be splintering national harmony.
On the other hand, the socially responsible model follows a slightly different path. As the media has social obligations to fulfil, it cannot publish materials that promote anti-social behaviour. The press can hold the government accountable for societal ills.
The social responsibility model provides a level of protection to society from a range of issues, from bad taste to information that could lead to panic or violence. It protects the public from damaging, distorted or dangerous information. [8]

The problem with this type of model is that it divests citizens of their right to obtain complete information, and there is a risk that the government may take control of the media and use it as a tool for manipulation.
The gate-keeping theory, as proposed by David White, also focuses on discarding certain news items while attributing importance to other issues. Below is a conceptual model of the theory that explains how gate-keeping is done in media outlets.



Source: White (1964). (http://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20clusters/Media,%20Culture%20and%20Society/gatekeeping.doc/)

The authoritarian model tends to be under the control of the state. It publishes only that news and material, which it thinks is in the best interest of the government. The press is not given autonomy, and it becomes a lapdog of officials. The censorship laws are strictly drawn and followed. In the event of any anti-government views, journalists can be held accountable and may face punishment. While the Soviet model promises, on the part of the media, to work in the interests of the working class, in practice, the state also controls it.

The United States print media has a long history of following the libertarian model. Still, in 1947, the Commission on Freedom of the Press published a report, which pointed out the inherent flaws in the American media's practices:

The Commission lambasted American media for their emphasis on triviality, for reporting "the exceptional rather than the representative, the sensational rather than the significant". It noted that the media were failing to provide the average citizen with the information necessary to carry out their societal responsibilities in an informed manner.[9]

US print media, which is generally conceived as libertarian in its approach, where the press is given full autonomy to publicise its views, cannot be said to be following the mirror model approach in the representation of any issue. Although US print media claim to be objective and accurate in their depiction of events, journalists' biases often hinder this objectivity. Extremely critical of journalists' biases, John Simpson is of the view:

Journalists often only seem to think in terms of stereotypes: innocent victims, great leaders, evil killers, vicious dictators, tragic children, vengeful wives, love rats…[10]

There is no doubt that news has never been entirely neutral, but the blame cannot be wholly put on journalists and their priorities. Robert M. Entman, in Media Power Politics, explicates the lack of neutrality, stating, "To edit is to interpret, to speak is to define, to communicate is to structure the reality."[11] Pamela also explains the modern trend in American journalism, but with a slightly different perspective:

Modern American Journalism rests on an ideological notion that the media will produce accurate, factual accounts that correspond to an objective reality.[12]

She believes that reality has many facets; sometimes it is constructed, and at other times, it is misconceived and misunderstood. As reality is not always orderly and is often presented in chunks, it is viewed through various prisms, such as cultural, political, geographical, etc. These prisms thus present a single dimension of any event and ultimately lead to stereotyping about specific cultures and religions. The priorities of press officials and journalists in selecting the prism lie in the basic agenda of media outlets and journalists.

In 1972, McCombs and Donald Shaw proposed the Agenda Setting theory, which explains how the media selects events to be portrayed to the public. The indispensable postulate of the theory is Salience transfer. It is "the ability of mass media to transfer issues of importance from their mass media agendas to public agendas".[13] The more coverage an incident receives, the more likely it is that the issue will be considered necessary by the public.

Audience not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, but they also know how much importance is attached to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it.[14]

A set agenda of media outlets and the coverage of events on that agenda makes an issue debatable among the masses. As media outlets in the United States are primarily privately owned, each has its own distinct agenda, which journalists often follow. But sometimes the journalists themselves are not made aware of the newspaper's agenda.

Sarah Oates, in Introduction to Media and Politics criticises the commercial trend in newspapers. To strengthen her viewpoint, she describes the views of other media connoisseurs on the same

theme, noting that Chomsky and Herman oppose the commercial agenda-setting motive of US newspapers. They criticise the libertarian and commercial practices in newspapers.

Particularly prominent among the critics of the commercial media system are Herman and Chomsky (2002), who assert that the corporately owned media "manufacture consent" for the capitalistic, unfair status quo in countries such as the US. It is pretty standard to see warnings about the potential danger that media outlets might reproduce the political, social, and economic agendas of their owners, particularly in systems such as the US, where major media corporations own and operate media outlets.[15]

Both Chomsky and Herman rightly point out the flaws with commercial media outlets, but they seem to overlook the socially responsible attitude of US print media. Although the agenda motive is crucial to media outlets, their role as watchdogs of political, social, and economic issues cannot be taken for granted.

Similarly, *An Economic Theory of News Selection* by John McManus also lacks a thorough understanding of print media's coverage of social and political issues. From his perspective, any event or person receives status conferral, which has the potential to attract audiences that, in turn, would provide economic benefits to the owners of media outlets. The cost-benefit analysis is primarily conducted before selecting news to be presented to the public. McManus illustrates the drawback of the economic motive as he is of the view that "news corporations are unlikely to accept social responsibilities that conflict with business interests[16]".

The economic motive is often on the minds of media owners of media outlets. The political debates and politicians' public and private affairs sell more than the news of climate change. Similarly, sexual assaults and domestic violence in third-world countries get more attention in the US and other developed countries in comparison with the news of the empowerment of women in poor developing countries. McManus in the *Market Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* Refers to Bernstein's views on market-oriented culture in journalism, as he says, "Bernstein blames the market orientation of modern journalism for creating an idiot culture."[17]

The concept of 'idiot culture' can be interpreted in various ways. It can mean the fabrication of reality to gain economic remuneration. The idiot culture may also be linked to the media's frenetic attitude of covering only a depressive and pessimistic view of events. Yet McManus does not give credit to those humanitarian journalists who face odds in court for depicting harsh and bitter realities without considering the economic motives behind their work. John Herbert, in his book Practising Global Journalism, explores and reports on issues Worldwide, explaining the role of journalists in covering global problems. He is of the view that 'Global news flow is all about journalists and their ability to find out what is happening in countries that are not their own.' [18]

There is no doubt that journalists' priorities and biases in covering certain types of stories can alter the perspective on a particular issue. Sarah Oates, in Introduction to Media and Politics, explains, "There is anecdotal evidence that journalists are under enormous personal and professional pressure."[19] She justifies her stance by citing the example of Jayson Blair, a New York Times journalist, who fabricated stories in his articles. In 2003, he was found to have plagiarised and fabricated certain parts in his articles.

Karen Sanders, in her book *Ethics and Journalism,* criticises the practices of the media, as she says:

The media's self-proclaimed role as society's watchdog, exposing corruption and ill-doings for the public good, raises the question of how sound the media's own practices are.[20]

Historian Daniel Boorstin adopts a similar critical approach, as he is of the view:

The American citizen… lives in a world where fantasy is more real than reality, where the image has more dignity than its original.[21]

Similarly, Dr Samuel Johnson holds the same viewpoint: "A reporter is a man without virtue who writes lies for his profit".[22] Fred Inglis in *Media Theory: An Introduction* writes, "lies and deceit permeate the modern media system. The word propaganda was coined about them."[23]

The comments of Boorstin, Johnson, and Sanders highlight harmful practices in the media. But from a slightly different prism, the American press during the epoch of the Vietnam War highlighted the horrors of war, thereby criticising the US government for violating human rights. The media adopted the role of social responsibility and set aside the professional attitude of being objective, as journalists are supposed to be critics rather than mere reporters.

Critics of professionalism and objectivity who also follow the "power approach" charge that the autonomy of journalists serves as a profit- and prestige-seeking device, which makes journalists detached from the public and socially irresponsible. They accuse objectivity of downgrading the journalist from critic to mere reporter of facts, a "communication technician."[24]

But the introduction of advocacy journalism has disrupted the responsible representation of reality, as 'the public is not getting a fair and accurate news report but a biased view of news to advance a favoured position.'[25]

The public sphere theory of media, as presented by Jürgen Habermas in 1989, emphasises the role of journalists in promoting debate among the masses. The more autonomy there is, the more debates over the issue will be generated.

The press should create a domination-free environment where the better argumentation can prevail in a quest for social consensus.[26]

The public sphere theory combines reasoning with the critical debates. At the same time, the postmodern theory of media emphasises the emotional aspect of a story over reason. Rodney Benson is of the view:

Postmodern theory prioritises personal narratives and emotions over abstract reason, celebrating grassroots media that facilitate the playful exploration of identity or the articulation of counterhegemonic interests.[27]

In contrast to public sphere theory, the representative liberal theory by Ferree et al. emphasises the media's role as a watchdog of government activities, social ills, and corporate business affairs, among other things. This theory advocates for the press to adopt a responsible and serious approach to its work.

The press should adopt a critical, serious tone in covering public affairs, defined as the activities primarily of government but also, in principle, of business or other powerful social institutions.[28]

Since the September 11 attacks, the centrality of Pakistan cannot be denied in American foreign policy. Being an ally of the US in the "War on Terror," American print media has been covering those incidents in Pakistan that, in some respect, are crucial to American Foreign policy. As the media cannot cover every incident, it selects stories from foreign countries where its correspondents can easily reach and cover. However, due to various barriers, including the media

agenda of news outlets and journalists' priorities, the neutrality of any coverage is often compromised. "In fiction, in politics, in relationships, in media, often what is most important is what is not said"[29].

Dr. Syed Abdul in the *Image of Pakistan in US Media: Exploring News Framing* analyses the coverage of Pakistan in the pre- and post-9/11 periods and concludes that Pakistan has received more favourable coverage in the post-9/11 period compared to the pre-9/11 period. He bases his argument on the notion that, as the relationship between the US and America has changed and grown positive in the post 9/11 years, the US media, i.e., NYT and WP, has employed relatively positive images of Pakistan in the War against Terrorism.[30]

Susan Moeller in *"The Good Muslims: US Newspaper Coverage of Pakistan" analyses Pakistan coverage in 13 American newspapers, basing her research on two time spans: September 2001-December 2002 and January 2006-January* 2007. She finds that the coverage of Pakistan is done in a way where madrassas are considered as breeding grounds for terrorists, where terrorism is monolithic. Women are good Muslims, and men are victimisers[31]. Such debates over good and bad Muslims of Pakistan in American media came to shift in 2006, when the issue became American foreign policy and whether America has become the "bad guy".

The year 2007 in Pakistan witnessed Operation Silence, where the radicals like Maulana Abdul Aziz, who had been openly criticising Pakistan's pro-American policy, mobilised the students of seminaries Jamia Hafsa and Jamia Faridia to confront the Government. Pakistani Media covered the incident with a mixed approach, as some newspapers negatively portrayed the Government's action, while others remained neutral. Ameen Khalid, in "Role of Print Media in Conflict Resolution: A Comparative Study of Daily Dawn and Jang," brings to the forefront that the English newspaper was neutral compared to the Urdu newspaper Jang in covering Operation Silence.

Methodology

To study the coverage of Pakistani Society in American Print Media, a case study of The New York Times (online) is conducted, as it is considered the agenda setter for most US media outlets. Due to time limitations, the year 2007 is selected, and the Lal Masjid incident will be the focal point of this study. The Lal Masjid incident is chosen because it reveals dimensions of Pakistani society, and it is also interlinked with other issues, such as the judicial crisis and international relations. Moreover, consultations and references are drawn from various newspapers, including The Washington Post, USA Today, and The Los Angeles Times, among others. Research papers, articles, books on Jihad and extremism, as well as electronic media (American and Pakistani), are consulted, including talk shows on the Lal Masjid Operation. The present study is based on qualitative analysis, specifically discourse analysis, of the coverage. Discourse analysis, though it falls in the discipline of linguistics, is also applicable to the study of Media. For that reason, Media discourse emerges to study the relationship between the choice of words by the sender and their real intent behind it. Cook, a renowned linguist, says about discourse analysis.

It is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation, through what medium.[32]

Shaping public perceptions of people, events, and issues through the construction of meaning by employing language, framing, and representation falls under the realm of media discourse.[33][34]

Linguistic choices made by the media practitioners (journalists) and socio-political contexts are encompassed by it. The qualitative content analysis reveals underlying currents of ideologies, biases, and power relations embedded in news coverage through media discourse.

The presented study employed media discourse analysis to investigate how *The New York Times* represented Pakistani society during 2007, the Lal Masjid operation. The framing of via lexemes has been done. The media's framing of broader geopolitical interests and cultural attitudes is also taken into account, as Cook (1989) asserts that emphasis is not only on the language but also on who is communicating with whom and in which cultural and social setting, and through which medium.[35]

It has been observed through employing qualitative media discourse within content analysis that there are recurrent patterns of conflating distinct terms for Muslim identity and suggesting women's clothing as a symbol of oppression. In addition to it, Muslim religious concepts such as 'Jihad' and 'Sharia' have been framed through Western political lenses. The recurrent tactics mentioned above are being analysed in the light of media theories such as gatekeeping,[36] agenda-setting,[37] and manufacturing consent,[38] which uncover undercurrents of predilections, selections, and representations of information or news along lines with specific institutional or national interests.

Hence, this media discourse not only examines the textual layer in this study but also uncovers the implicit undercurrents of ideological positions and assumptions in NYT coverage that shape the image of Pakistan in the post-9/11 scenario.

3. Social Aspects in Lal Masjid Crisis and Analysis of Terminologies

Language plays a vital role in both mitigating misapprehensions and giving rise to prejudice and misunderstandings. The misconceptions regarding any society and its culture reach their zenith when foreigners borrow lexical items from the language to which they have little or no knowledge. In the case of Lal Masjid, various social cum religious issues got the attention in The New York Times coverage, either through introducing words from other languages, such as Arabic and Hindi or putting several words into a single category. As the majority of Pakistani society comprises Muslims, the social aspect can never be separated from religion. This paper deals with how Pakistani Muslims are categorised as radicals, Islamists or militants, as well as in what respect Pakistani women's clothing became a subject in the NYT and also how specific issues like Jihad and Sharia are presented.

3.1 Islamists, Radicals and Militants: Single Category

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, most authors like Mahmood Bin Muhammad believe that for America, the greatest threat became the Muslims and their religion or in the words of Daniel Pipes, the green colour replaced the red colour. According to the April 16, 1979, edition of Time, Edward Said points out that during the 150 years from 1800 to 1950, more than 60,000 books were written against Islam. This implies that one book per day is written against Islam by the Christian West in the epoch. These statistics draw attention towards the fact that the misconception and hatred against Islam was not an anomaly that emerged after the defeat of Communism at the hands of the US, but was a continuation of the tradition. However, the prejudice and ethnocentrism against Islam and Muslims started to emerge in the media, which generally do not accept the allegation of biases towards any religion,

especially against Islam. According to a Muslim scholar of Comparative religion, Dr. Zakir Naik, it is not that all Americans hate Islam and Muslims, but there are a few who do, and they control the US Media.[39] In the coverage of Lal Masjid, *The New York Times* uses lexical items related to Islam interchangeably, such as 'Islamists', 'Radicals', and Militants', for Pakistani society without taking into consideration the historical difference between them. This section highlights the single category in which these words are misused in the coverage. Before quoting the text in the NYT where the terms mentioned above are used, it is essential to discuss the etymology and meaning of the selected words.

'Islamist' by definition means either an orthodox Muslim or a person who is a learned scholar of Islamic Studies.[40] Macmillan Dictionary defines it as a person who follows Islam strictly[41]. Tracing back the historical link, 'the term Islamist was adapted from the French term '*Islamiste'*, replacing the term 'Islamicist' that was previously in use in the English language.'[42] In 1900, *the New English Dictionary defined the term 'Islamist' as an 'orthodox Muhammadan', as at that time Non-Muslim Westerners misunderstood Islam as the religion of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and equated him (S.A.W) with* Christ's position in Christianity (according to Christians). Islamism was defined as Muhammad's religion, but at the turn of the twentieth Century, the term's usage completely disappeared in 1938 with the completion of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* by Orientalists and was replaced by the Arabic word Islam until its usage revived after the Revolution in Iran (1978-79), but with an altogether different meaning[43]. The term Political Islam emerged as a synonym of Islamism, meaning Islam as a political doctrine. The meaning is in itself an oxymoron, as Islam has never been separated from the realm of Politics. The change in meaning led to a change in the meaning of 'Islamist', which is defined as an orthodox Muslim. The orthodox nature is still widely disputed among Muslim societies over its definition. The sense of the Lexical term 'orthodox' means adherence to traditional norms, but in a few online dictionaries, its current usage is in terms of being conservative; it refers to one who is reluctant to accept change.[44] Therefore, when orthodox is used with a Muslim, it can refer to two things: first, a Muslim who follows Islam and second, a Muslim who is reluctant to accept change, whether political or social. Daniel Pipes presents the definition of 'Islamist' as the 'Muslims who most hate the West --- the Islamist'[45] and they reject all notions of Western influence, whether it be political, social, economic, etc.

However, in the words of Martin Kramer, it was a term used by outsiders to denote a strand of activity which they think justifies their misconception of Islam as something rigid and immobile, a mere tribal affiliation.'[46] So, in no respect does the term 'Islamist' mean a person who uses violent means to enforce their ideology related to Islam.

There are various instances where 'Islamist' is used by journalists in the coverage of the Lal Masjid incident, in contrast with the word 'moderate'. It is necessary to establish the contextual definition of these terms in US print media and to identify the biases that arise from the use of these lexical items.

The former official described the encounter as ''cordial'' and said both leaders had agreed on the need to work together as moderates to counter rising attacks by hard-line Islamists in Pakistan.[47] In the above text, the contextualised meaning of 'moderates' is those who are against violent means of any kind, whereas 'Islamists' stand out as the Muslims who use physical violence,

suicide bombing and complicate the peace situation. Daniel Pipes, *in Militant Islam Reaches America, also uses the same pattern and is of the view that ' the real battle, this suggests,* is taking place among Muslims themselves, between the Islamists and the moderates.'[48] By keeping in view the lexicon definition, which states that by no means do 'Islamists' use violence, the contextualised meaning of 'Islamist' presents the biases towards Pakistani society and brings into limelight the sensitivity in the usage of terminologies that is often pretermitted.

On Wednesday, in an Internet recording, Ayman al-Zawahri, Al Qaeda's second in command, urged revenge against the Musharraf government. ''This crime can only be washed by repentance or blood,'' he said in the recording, posted on websites used by Islamists.[49]

In the above text, 'Islamists' contextualise meaning appear to be the persons who are either associated with the terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda or support violence against the Pakistani Government. Similarly, Somini Gupta, in her coverage of Lal Masjid, points towards 'Islamist elements' and uses the term in a derogatory connotation, making it parallel with militants. Thus, NYT journalist Somini Gupta uses 'Islamist' in the coverage, with racist ideology, for Pakistani Muslims who are violent and disturb the peace of society. This meaning has no link with the original meaning.

On various occasions, journalists have used the lexical item 'Islamist' in combination with radicals. Therefore, it is essential to establish the definition of 'radicals'. Radical means a person who advocates social and political reform; that person can be a part of any political party.[50] Its essence as a political reformist emerged in the early 19th century for a section of the British Liberal Party, who called for universal manhood suffrage. The lexical item radical began to cover all those who called for Parliamentary reform. In the United States, the term's widespread usage emerged in the sense of political extremism.[51] Often, the term is equated with extremism, but the etymology of the lexical word 'radical' points toward the fact that, initially, the given word, derived from the Latin word 'radicalis', meaning having roots or going back to the roots, did not have a pejorative connotation. Therefore, being radical means to 'go to the root of something'. By definition, a radical is not a person who uses violent methods to implement their ideology.

An analysis of the terminology used in the coverage of Lal Masjid in the NYT reveals the deviation from the dictionary meaning of the terms. In the following text, journalists have used the terms 'Islamist' in combination with 'radical'—the functional or contextual meaning of the combination suggests their usage in a pejorative connotation. Somini Gupta uses the phrase 'caldron of radical Islamists' for Jamia Hafsa and narrates the life of a female student who, according to her, has come back to her hometown from an institution which emotionally charges students to use violence to fulfil their demands. 'Islamist' nor does 'radical' by definition mean people in favour of violence, so their contextualised meaning is deviant from the original meaning and shows the racist attitude of the journalist towards Islam.

Miss Sarfraz came home two weeks ago, out of that caldron of radical Islamist fervour, Islamabad, back to the prosaic chores of a young woman in the Pakistani countryside.[52]

The blast thrust the capital into a new round of disorder less than a week after a violent siege at a hard-line mosque and seminary that has enraged radical Islamists.[53]

The other word that NYT uses in its coverage, synonymous with 'Islamist' and 'radical', is militant. 'Militant' means a person having a 'combative character', involved in warfare for a political or

social cause. The word has its origin in Latin '*militare', meaning 'serving as a soldier'; however, in current usage,* 'militant' is not a registered soldier. The methods employed by militants may not necessarily be violent. For example, Militant Tendency, a group within the British Labour Party, through the Militant newspaper, intervened in Labour disputes and called for resolution, but was not involved in violent activities.[54] In a single article, the journalist uses 'militant' and radical' interchangeably, thus undermining the difference between them.

The military said its forces went from building to building, and then room to room, battling a small army of Islamic militants who had turned the complex into a well-armed garrison……..

The siege was a watershed confrontation between General Musharraf and the religious radicals who had blossomed in his country.[55]

Throughout the coverage, 'Islamist', 'radical' and 'militant' are used for the students of Lal Masjid, and the difference among the tactics employed by the people of the above categories is sidelined.

A months-long standoff between the Pakistani government and Islamic militants holed up in a mosque in the heart of the capital erupted in violence on Tuesday.[56]

The siege was a watershed confrontation between General Musharraf and the religious radicals who had blossomed in his country.[57]

Pakistanis Capture Radical Cleric In Push to End Mosque Rebellion[58]

The heirs regularly denounce the Musharraf government for being secular and accuse it of being corrupt and a lackey of the United States.

Such pronouncements are not unusual for Islamists in Pakistan.[59]

Apart from using the terms under discussion as nouns, 'radical' and 'Militant', journalists have them used as adjectives in relation to the Lal Masjid without taking into account the difference between the two words. At the same time, associating these words with a Masjid starts another debate of whether it is appropriate to label a Masjid as militant.

In particular, they said, they agreed with the Musharraf government's complaint that the Supreme Court had been too lenient on 61 militant students affiliated with a radical mosque in Islamabad.[60]

A suicide bomber killed at least 13 people here in the capital on Friday as hundreds of angry protesters clashed with the police when the government tried to reopen for prayers a militant mosque that was the scene of a violent siege this month.[61]

The use of derivative terms of Islam and neologisms related to Islam, especially terms such as militant Islam and Islamism, is not politically neutral.[62]

3. 2 Women and their Presentation

Since the war on terror started, *The New York Times* journalists like Nicholas Kristoff turned the world towards the situation of women in Pakistan, who, in his view, are living in deplorable conditions, unable to articulate their opinions and are physically abused each day, except for her ideal Mukhtaran Mai, who stood for women's liberation in a patriarchal society. For this particular reason, Kristoff labels Pakistani society as conservative towards women and limits their role in social life. From 2002 to 2011, Kristoff continued to comment on Pakistani society as being callous towards women, where they are not given fundamental human rights and are punished brutally.

In Pakistan's conservative Muslim society, Ms. Mukhtaran's duty was now clear: she was supposed to commit suicide.[63]

Strangely, he labels Pakistani society as conservative, at the same time, he discusses in one of his articles about the second marriage of the rape victim Mukhtaran Bibi.

By marrying, she has defeated another stigma against rape victims in conservative Pakistani society.[64]

Despite the involvement of women in Lal Masjid in 2006, and their stand against the Government, Kristoff kept on calling Pakistani society conservative in nature, without the fact that women enjoy so much liberty in Pakistan that in 2006, they came out from Jamia Hafsa with sticks in their hands. Moreover, in the political sphere, he notes that Pakistan had its first female Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, elected twice in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. In contrast, America still does not have a female President.

Before discussing the focus on women students of Lal Masjid, a glance at previous research reveals that, up to 2006, the burqa of Pakistani women was the central issue in defining women's liberty[65]. The more dressed the woman is, the more she is subjugated, and the more conservative the society, whereas the less she is dressed, the more she is likely to be perceived as liberated.

Emphasis on Clothing: Burka

In the coverage of Lal Masjid, the dressing of female students is emphasised, and repeatedly they are called 'burqa clad women.'[66] However, before going into detail about how their clothing was discussed, it is essential to examine what Western society, especially Americans, thinks about the burqa. The standard interpretation of the burka or burqa is a symbol of oppression and denial of human rights.

Reporters as well as opinion writers told of the liberation of women in Afghanistan because they were allowed to leave their homes and throw off the burka, and also said of Pakistani women in villages or the tribal areas who remained oppressed. The tell-tale synonym of their oppression was the "veil" that they were "forced" to wear. "Taking off the veil" was therefore a real and metaphorical statement, and women's freedom—and their courage—was measured by how "uncovered" they were and how close their clothing approximated Western notions of dress.[67]

After 9/11, Western society turned towards legislation of banning the burqa for security, social and political purposes, thus undermining freedom of choice and disregarding the essence of multiculturalism. The Muslim woman's 'burqa' became the subject of ethnocentrism, and only those stories appeared in the newspaper where women said that they were forced to wear them. Such framing of stories sidelines those women who wear them willingly and consider them a protective shield from men's lust.

Since 2004, students in public schools in France have been prohibited from wearing a burqa or a headscarf, but some private schools have permitted them. The debate over the burqa became so hotly debated that on July 13, 2010, the French assembly banned the burqa in public and called the ban 'the bill to forbid concealing one's face in public'. President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, came up with the reason "In our country, we cannot accept that women be prisoners behind a screen, cut off from all social life, deprived of all identity".

Though the burqa is not banned in the United States, the coverage of the very issue in the NYT represents the same understanding of the burqa and calls it an issue in the United States.

Westerners became sensitive to the image of faceless Muslim women primarily through the use of the burqa by the Taliban to oppress women in Afghanistan. That garment functions like a body tent, with an eye screen to allow some vision. Years before it became an issue in the United States, French feminists fulminated against the burqa, and later against other radical interpretations of Islam in Afghanistan.[68]

However, President Bush, in a speech in Cairo, spoke against the burqa ban in France, but many news outlets welcomed the act, such as FOX News. It says, 'France Is Brave and Right to Ban the Burqa.'[69] The NYT also shows a similar attitude towards the burqa and considers it a symbol of oppression.

The burka, with its grille-like screen over the eyes, became a totem of women's subordination by the mullahs.[70]

Moreover, only those stories related to the burqa were framed in the NYT where the women wanted to get rid of them, and nothing is said regarding the personal choice of dressing in a burqa.

She pulled the burka she had taken from mothballs that morning down over her face.

The motion quietly revealed how change often stops at the city's edge.[71]

Similarly, in 2010, Belgium's lower house of Parliament passed a bill to ban the burqa[72]. In the same year, Australian Senator Cory Bernardi asked to ban the burqa as he called it 'un-Australian', but the ban was not imposed, and it is still debated. In Tunisia, the General Secretary of Constitutional Democratic Party, Hedi Mheni, goes on to say, "If today we accept the headscarf, tomorrow we'll accept that women's rights to work and vote and receive an education be banned and they'll be seen as just a tool for reproduction and housework."[73] However, Tunisia has banned the headscarf and burqa since 1981. In Tunisia, authorities view them as a symbol of 'Islamic extremism', whereas feminists take it as female oppression at the hands of males.[74] Though the burqa is not banned in the United States, the very veil symbolises the same idea of oppression and religious extremism.

Considering the trend of certain societies towards the burqa, it is essential to explore the answer to what the burqa represents for female students of Jamia Hafsa. Is 7it the dominance of males and oppression of women, or is it just a cultural symbol of Pakistan?

Suppose one takes the burqa's interpretation as that of women's oppression. In that case, the female students of Jamia Hafsa and their role in Lal Masjid are contradictory, as on one side, they are oppressed. On the other side, they are so liberated that to present their ideology, they came out of school with sticks in their hands. To rebut the argument, if one supposes that they were compelled by Maulana Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the Imams of Lal Masjid, then the interviews of the NYT's journalist present them as women of determination who are firm in their ideologies and are bold to articulate their views. At one instance in the news coverage, the journalist quotes the female student, saying that she and others came back with a mission to reform their families and their communities, cajoling their mothers and sisters to hide themselves in black burqas.[75] So, the dress 'burka' does not present women's oppression in the case of female students of Lal Masjid. *The Los Angeles Times says that clerics at the centre forced women to wear burqas, but the interviews of journalists with the female students do not prove the* LAT's stand.

However, if one takes the burka as a symbol of 'Islam', then first there is a need to discuss whether the burqa has any relation with the religion and what the Islamic dress code is for Muslim women. The Hindi word 'burqa' is derived from the Arabic word 'burku', which means veil.[76] It is interesting to note that the word itself does not appear in the Quran. Islam codifies the dress of women in the following words.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزۡوَٰجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ يُدۡنِينَ عَلَيۡهِنَّ
مِن جَلَٰبِيبِهِنَّۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدۡنَىٰٓ أَن يُعۡرَفۡنَ فَلَا يُؤۡذَيۡنَۗ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ غَفُورٗا
رَّحِيمٗا ٥٩

O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.[77]

وَقُل لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنَٰتِ يَغۡضُضۡنَ مِنۡ أَبۡصَٰرِهِنَّ وَيَحۡفَظۡنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا
يُبۡدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنۡهَاۖ وَلۡيَضۡرِبۡنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ
جُيُوبِهِنَّۖ

And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests.[78]

Among the words that define women's clothing is which means head-covers, which means their outer garments, etc Apart from that, there are many verses in the Quran where the dress code of women is discussed (7:26, 33:55, 24:60), but nowhere in the Quran does Allah define women's clothing in terms of burqa. Abu al-ala Maududi, an Islamic scholar/author, interprets the dress of women in light of the Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), which stipulate that Muslim women must cover their bodies except for their faces and hands.[79] So, a burqa is nothing but a cultural symbol, and in the case of female students of Lal Masjid, it is not religious extremism nor a symbol of oppression.

But the contextualised meaning of burqa, which appears from NYT's coverage, is that only the Muslim women who are in favour of the use of violence or are militant wear a burqa or burka.

Dressed from head to toe in an all-enveloping black burka, Umm-e-Okasha joined a pack of students from her militant Islamic school on Friday night, and at midnight they drove to a massage parlour here in the Pakistani capital and rang the bell. [80]

However, it is interesting to note that when the same word is used for men, it is merely to ridicule. One of the clerics tried to escape during the siege, used a burqa to disguise himself and was heavily criticised not only by international media but also by local people and media.

NYT: July 8 2007, The arrest of the leader of the mosque, Maulana Abdul Aziz, who tried to escape in a burqa while leaving behind hundreds of his students, many of them female, has brought ridicule in the news media, which have largely supported the government [81]

WP: July 8 2007, Ghazi's older brother, Maulana Abdul Aziz, was arrested Wednesday night as he attempted to flee the mosque disguised in a burqa. He has since been subjected to nationwide ridicule, with newspapers dubbing him "Auntie Aziz."[82]

4.3 Jihad and Its Misconception

The New York Times' coverage of Lal Masjid addresses various issues related to Islam and Muslims, including Sharia and Jihad. Before discussing how the US print media presents them, it is crucial to understand both concepts in detail.

The Arabic word 'Jihad' is from the root word 'Juhd' or 'Jahada', meaning to make an effort or to strive.[83] In other words, Jihad means to strive or make an effort towards achieving a goal. In the Islamic perspective, there are different forms of Jihad, which means to fight against one's own evil urges, to make an effort to improve one's society, to fight against oppression and tyranny, and it also implies fighting on the battlefield in self-defence.[84] The Jihad can be verbal, by heart and by hand.

It is a common misconception that only Muslims can do Jihad, whereas Allah states in the Quran that non- Muslims also do Jihad. In chapter 31, verse 15, Allah says

وَإِن جَٰهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن تُشۡرِكَ بِي مَا لَيۡسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلۡمٞ فَلَا
تُطِعۡهُمَاۖ وَصَاحِبۡهُمَا فِي ٱلدُّنۡيَا مَعۡرُوفٗاۖ وَٱتَّبِعۡ سَبِيلَ مَنۡ أَنَابَ
إِلَيَّۚ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُونَ ١٥

But if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you do not know, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do.[85]

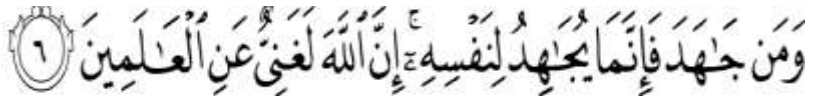
In the above verse, the word is used for non-Muslims that if they do jihad by asking their children to follow any god other than Allah, then do not follow them. So, Jihad is not confined to Muslims alone in this context.

Keeping in mind the meaning of Jihad, it can be classified into two major categories: Jihad fi Sabili Allah (striving in the way of Allah) and Jihad Fi Sabi Shaitan (Striving in the way of the devil), which are considered good Jihad and bad Jihad, respectively. Jihad in no respect can be called a Holy War. Harb-e Mukadisa is an Arabic parallel word of Holy War, a term coined by Orientalists while discussing Islam. Jihad in no respect means Holy War, as the word is not used in this sense in the Quran. While talking about the fighting in the name of Allah, the word 'qital' is used, which means to fight[86] or is referred to as Jihad bi-Saif. However, the NYT does use "jihad" in place of "fighting." After the Lal Masjid Operation, many militant groups called for Jihad against Pakistan's Army.

The latest bombings come at a time of extreme tension in a region used as a redoubt by the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Extremists have called for a holy war against Pakistan's government to avenge the storming of the Red Mosque last week in Islamabad, a military assault that killed at least 76 people.[87]

The military has vowed a fresh offensive and is moving troops into position, while extremists have declared jihad against the president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, and his government.[88]

In Surah Al-Ankabut, the word Jahd is used to ascertain that people do Jihad only for their own benefit and not for the benefit of Allah, as Allah is free from wants. So, in no respect does Jihad mean Holy War.



And whoever strives only strives for [the benefit of] himself. Indeed, Allah is free from the need of the worlds.[89]

However, the concept of Jihad as mere fighting in the way of Allah was popularised after Afghan-Soviet war. The idea of Jihad acquired pejorative connotations, such as manslaughter, afterwards. It is a misconception among Muslims and non- Muslims that Jihad means Holy War, and based on this, many writers like Bernard Lewis, who in his book The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror, use Holy War to connote Jihad.

In the coverage of Lal Masjid and the stands of clerics, the word 'Jihad' is used several times, but nowhere have journalists specified the form of Jihad that the Lal Masjid operatives called for. The word itself is misunderstood not only among non- Muslims but also among many Muslims. Therefore, when left unexplained, a reader would only understand the meaning of Jihad as merely fighting, and upon reading it in reference to Lal Masjid, only the pejorative connotation would appear before the reader.

Some recited the Koran or offered prayers, seemingly oblivious to the firing of bullets and tear gas. A dozen or so students stood around those who made speeches through the loudspeakers and chanted, ''Jihad! Jihad!'' [90]

4.4 Sharia Law

The Arabic word Sharia means ‘path’ or ‘way’.[91] Many Muslim scholars define the Shariah as the set of laws governing life based on the Quran and Hadith. Fiqh Jurisprudence extends the laws to secondary sources, thereby adding the laws through Ijma and Qiyas. The nature of Sharia law varies from scholar to scholar based on their interpretation. Shariah law includes laws related to various topics such as marriage, divorce, crimes (rape, theft, murder, etc), politics, economics, etc. Sunni Muslims incorporate Ijma (consensus) and Qiyas (reasoning, such as the use of analogy to derive laws) into the realm of Sharia. In contrast, Shi’a Muslims and scholars, though they also add Ijma, reject the introduction of Qiyas in Shariah law. The nature of Sharia law differs in various Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Indonesia.

In the coverage of the NYT regarding Lal Masjid operatives to impose Sharia law, the meaning of the word ‘Sharia’ does not appear to the readers, whether Muslims or non-Muslims.

For months, the two men had used their followers to goad the authorities into imposing Islamic law, or Shariah, in the capital and throughout Pakistan.[92]

The mullahs and their students have earned little public sympathy in their own neighbourhood or around the country with their campaign to impose Shariah law, raiding shops and smashing CDs and music tapes.[93]

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to determine whether the coverage of the 2007 Lal Masjid incident in The New York Times was free from biases or if it exhibited any ideological and biased linguistic

tendencies. The depiction of Pakistani culture/society and religion by the NYT's lexical choices manifests that discourse has been blurred by attaching "Islamist,'' 'radical,' and 'militant", infamously and pejoratively. In the same manner, the emphasis placed on women's clothing, particularly the burqa, which is overlooked as a cultural symbol and a personal choice, was depicted solely as an emblem of oppression and extremism.

The research further suggests that the framing of religious and political concepts, such as 'Jihad' and 'Sharia', advances undercurrents of security-oriented and privileged simplification over nuanced or contextually accurate meanings. However, the newspaper attempted to contextualise the entire Lal Masjid operation within a broader political, social, and security framework. Still, its representation in terms of lexical choices and inked reporting was influenced by the broader post-9/11 narratives where the US media connects foreign events with US foreign policy interests.

The findings suggest that, despite the US media's adherence to libertarian principles, the media discourse, agenda setting, and selective lexical choices may be used to shape the reader's perception of foreign societies/countries. Such portrayals in the case of Pakistan risk reinforcing entrenched stereotypes that limit public understanding to conflict-driven narratives.

This study recommends linguistic precision, cultural sensitivity and context-rich reporting in international coverage. A less polarised global public discourse can be shaped through a more balanced approach that must be grounded in diverse perspectives and reflective of complexities within societies like Pakistan.

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