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Blogging in Pakistan

[Analyzing Dr. Afia and the Swat girl-flogging]

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Abstract:

This paper looks at the blogs written about two recent events in Pakistan which caught much of public and media's attention – the Dr. Afia case and the Swat girl-flogging incident. Both events are a product of or related to the war on terrorism in some way. However, both involve women in very different roles. My entry point in this paper is blogs written by Pakistanis and I have studied these blogs via a discourse analysis lens. Highlighting the themes that emerge from the discourse analysis of the blogs, this paper aims to reveal the viewpoints that have been normalized in Pakistan and the implications of these on the society.

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While writing and completing this thesis, my heart goes out to the flood victims of Pakistan and I hope and pray that Pakistan (which is the focus of my thesis) comes out of its difficult times soon.

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Introduction

Two of the incidents in the last couple of years became and to a great extent continue to be rallying points for the Pakistanis. With stark differences and yet an uncanny similarity between the two, their analysis makes an interesting study of the contemporary society in Pakistan.ⁱ They are famously known as the “Dr. Afia case” and the “Swat girl-flogging incident,” which is what I will refer as to them in the course of this paper too. My entry point for the purposes of this paper will be the Pakistani blogs. I will attempt to analyze the discourses around the mentioned events by pulling out the common themes and assumptions that arise in the language of the blogs written around these issues. By comparing the findings between the two, I intend to explore the role bloggers are playing and/or can play and its implications on the contemporary Pakistani society.

Present day Pakistan is faced with volatility both within its borders and in its international relations. Much of this scenario is painted by the conditions that have arisen in the post 9/11 world. Both the “Dr. Afia case” and the “Swat girl-flogging incident” have either resulted from or been directly or indirectly impacted by the conditions that have prevailed since the start of war on terrorism. Most of what we know is mediated and dependant on what we see and hear (Lang and Lang 1966). Furthermore, we tend to interpret a situation “depending on what historical moment the interpretation takes place” (Said, 1997, pp 162)ⁱⁱ. In this way, discourse is both affected by what has been “normalized” in society and in turn also assists in setting the tone of what is accepted as “normal” in a society.

I have chosen blogs as my point of entry as they are the new burgeoning phenomenon in Pakistan, and in my view perhaps also relatively under-studied. By looking at blog posts around Dr. Afia’s case and the incident of Swat girl-flogging, I hope to analyze what the

assumptions and expectations are in the society, what forms the “common sense” and whether the institutionalized thinking is shared by all factions of the society. In doing so, I hope to conclude what the implications are of blogging in Pakistan.

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Methodology

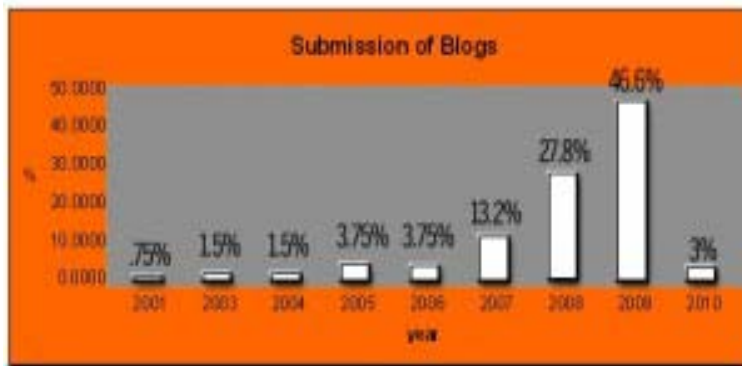
In this section, I have explained in detail the methodology used in this paper. I will be carrying out a critical discourse analysis of Pakistani blogs written on the topics of Dr. Afia’s case and the Swat girl-flogging incident.

Why Blogs?

According to David Perlmutter (2008: 8) the “1st definition in mainstream media of the word blog appeared in the British publication *New Statesman*, Oct 11, 1999 describing ‘a webpage, something like a public commonplace book, which is added to each day...’ ”. However it has only been “since 2002” that “blogs have gained increasing notice and coverage for their role in breaking, shaping, and spinning news stories. It is popular belief to see blogs as an alternative to traditional media where the bloggers are giving voice to those who otherwise would not be heard” (Wikipedia). Perlmutter (2008: 10) resounds the same viewpoint by adding that blogs “have moved politics from the elites to the so-called commoners – everyone can have an opinion, can share the opinion, can get people to agree

or disagree and can attract followers or supporters”. It is their innate feature of challenging mainstream media which makes me interested in analyzing this tool of communication.

In more recent years, blogs have been an increasingly popular phenomenon in Pakistan too witnessing a vibrant growth over the last few years. A famous Pakistani blogger, Ammar Yasir, has started an effort of creating a complete Pakistani blog directory – an endeavour which has grown to a remarkable 1850 bloggers registered as of June 2010, with 900 more pending in approval. Ammar (2010) claimed that according to TeaBreak’s statistics alone they witnessed a 60% growth rate in blogs on their community alone.ⁱⁱⁱ It is further heartening to note that TeaBreak is only one such blog aggregator and there may be hundreds of thousands of more active blogs run by Pakistanis. “The quick growth spurt that Blogs have experienced in the past one year has been almost triple the amount otherwise experienced over the course of several years” (Garib 2010) as shown in the figure below.



In fact, it was to recognize this burgeoning blogging community of the country that Google Pakistan and CIO Pakistan together held the country’s first ever blog awards on May 28, 2010 with awards being handed out in categories ranging from politics and humor to technology. I asked some bloggers via Twitter (who were present at the Blogawards) why they thought it was important to acknowledge Pakistani Bloggers. Faisal who won an award for the Best Podcasts shared that blogs had “given voice to the silent moderate part of our

society...take saad khans example..no one covered it until blogs did."^{iv} Rabia, Editor-in-Chief of CIO Pakistan, in my email exchange with her, shared that "The assumption that bloggers are in greater numbers than the manpower available to a television channel, they can, hypothetically speaking, cover more ground. It is pertinent for the rest of the world to be aware of the fact that there exists a strong and growing blogosphere who they can tune into...we just felt the world needs to be able to identify more "people sources" who they can build trust with."

In short, bloggers are seen as an alternative voice to the mass media representing the causes of the public and representing Pakistani voice worldwide. However, what has concerned me is that whereas the *growth* in bloggers and even *the work* of Pakistani bloggers is being recognized in the country and elsewhere, the *act* of blogging or the *phenomenon* of blogging has not received its due attention. They are seen as a resource and it is assumed that their voice is an alternative voice to the mainstream media and a purer one but how blogs engage with larger civil society has been under-studied in general and perhaps in the case of Pakistan not studied at all^v.

For the purposes of this paper, however, it is the lack of analysis of the phenomenon of blogging as a discourse building medium that has been my foremost reason behind carrying out a research focusing on blogs solely. As a watch dog of traditional media, it is my interest to look at how this supposedly alternative medium reflects stories of interest. In the section titled "Understanding Pakistan" I have gone into some detail in explaining the social and cultural situation in Pakistan and the political context in which blogs have emerged.

Why discourse analysis

In explaining how discourse analysis is beyond just the study of the language and sentence structures, Johnstone (2002: 3) says that "This knowledge - a set of generalizations which can sometimes be stated as rules, about what words generally mean, about what goes where in a sentence, and so on - is what is often referred to as 'language,' when language is thought of as an abstract system of rules or structural relationships. Discourse is both the source of this knowledge...and the result of it." Discourses, on the other hand, is as described by "Foucault (1972, 1980)... conventional ways of talking...conventional ways of thinking...serve to circulate power in society...patterns of belief and habitual action as well as patterns of language...ideas...that influence and are influenced by the ideas....'Discourse,' as mass noun (discourse) and as count noun (discourses) are crucially connected" (Johnstone 2003: 3). Discourse analytical approaches "systematically describe the various structures and strategies of text and relate these to the social or political context" (van Dijk 2000: 35). Discourse analysis, reveals how the content or the text of a given piece relates to the socio-political context revealing the norms and attitudes of a society.

Given blogs are treated by bloggers as a regular diary of thoughts around topics of interest, they also tend to be more casual in nature. Because "bloggers are supposed to represent the non-big corporate voices in the community" (Garib 2010) the sense of accountability for bloggers is not the same as is for journalists in the mainstream media, nor are bloggers bound by the bureaucracy, rules and regulations that run a corporate media sector.

Bloggers have an innate sense of being heard and write in order to give voice to their opinions. Active blogger, Tazeen (2010), who writes cynically about the events in and related to Pakistan, shares she does not have an intended audience in mind – "I think I write for myself and because I don't write for anyone, I end up with a dedicated list of followers."^{vi} Aly Balagamwala (2010), who also goes by the name Discomaulvi and whose

blog covers contemporary issues related to Muslims and their relation with Islam, agrees and says "Part of my intention is ... to write what's on my mind." Due to this unbounded and hence linguistically casual nature of blogs, it can be assumed that bloggers tend to word themselves more honestly and, therefore, present their truer personality. Discourse analysis of blogs would hence reveal usage of local words, their connotations and meanings as well as assumptions and stereotypes about various groups that exist in society. In the process of discourse analyzing, I have divided the above mentioned in the following paper into themes.

Pakistan is an extremely diversified nation in terms of its ethnic multiplicity, the range of languages spoken, the types of education systems running parallel to one another in the country and the political ideologies of the people. Ranking amongst the poorest countries in the world, it is given this background that the country is also home to inequalities in its social structure and home to engrained prejudices about the "other." I have thrown some light on the background of Pakistani society in the section titled "Understanding Pakistan." Given the context I build there, I hope to make it easier to understand the discourses that are revealed in the blogs under discussion.

The Hows of Discourse Analysis

"The blogosphere is a classic social network with special qualities that make it ideal for research. First, the communication on this network appears primarily in text form and, in most cases, is archived....In the blogosphere, one can trace a piece of information back to the first blogger to mention it....Second, the social ties of this network are explicitly designated when a blogger provides a link to another blog" (Treymane 2007: xi). These were the two places I started from, in order to begin my research on blogs written about Dr. Afia's case and the Swat girl-flogging incident.

There are several blog aggregators which act as continually updated archives of blogs. I used aggregators like Google blogs and Tea Break to search for blogs on the given topics and to gain an idea as to which blogs drew relatively more traffic than the others in their category. I found Twitter extremely useful in collecting blogs, links and also in connecting with bloggers who referred me to other bloggers who had written on these subjects. I also referred back to the award winners of Pakistani Blog Awards 2010 to explore the Pakistani blogging field further.

In the course of this paper, I aim to systematically draw out common themes in the text of blogs around the two given topics. These themes are based on words that were repeatedly used, assumptions that were made in the language and connotations of local words that appeared in the blogs. My aim in the paper is to study how these themes ran parallel between the blogs written on the two topics although the incidents are apparently quite different from each other (as I will explain in the sections to follow).

Literature Review

Having only caught impetus in the last 10 years, blogs still remain to be studied in massive detail especially in terms of their discourse analysis. However, I found "Blogwars" of David Perlmutter (2008) extremely useful in terms of trying to understand what blogs are and why bloggers and their followers consider them to be a revolutionary tool in the socio-politics of today. Although Perlmutter (2008) talks about how blogs impact American politics and the participation of American civil society, I found his book helpful in understanding the potential of blogs and the aim of blogs as seen by bloggers especially. According to Perlmutter (2008:xi) blogs bypass regular mass media and contribute towards an alternative form of journalism – "Mainstream photojournalism was shaken to its core by right-wing bloggers who pointed out errors, malfeasance, inconsistencies, miscaptions, and outright fakery in press 'fauxtography' from the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war". Given this understanding of blogs, I approached bloggers and their content on the given topics and to search how this alternative medium of information was sharing knowledge amongst its readers.

(Johnstone 2002: 3) explains that "Calling what we do 'discourse analysis' rather than 'language analysis' underscores the fact that we are not centrally focused on language as an abstract system. We tend instead to be interested in what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language, knowledge based on their memories of things they have said, heard seen or written before, to do things in the world: exchange information, express feelings, make things happen, create beauty, entertain themselves and others, and so on. This knowledge - a set of generalizations which can sometimes be stated as rules, about what words generally mean, about what goes where in a sentence, and so on - is what is often referred to as 'language,' when language is thought of as an abstract system of rules or structural relationships. Discourse is both the source of this knowledge...and the result of it."

Teun A. van Dijk (2000) is extremely informative in explaining why discourse is important to study and how the study of language can reveal prejudices. His chapter on “New(s) Racism” in the book “Ethnic Minorities and the Media” explains how racism may not exist in its earlier more non-discreet forms but “especially because of their often subtle and symbolic nature, many forms of the ‘new’ racism are ‘discursive.’” Because ethnic and social inequalities are discursive in nature, the usage of words and language can reveal “the beliefs people have, such as knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values.” Although Van Dijk’s (2000) argument is focused on North America and Europe, I find it revealing of how media, old and new, engages with its information in the world today.

This similar utilization of discourse all over the world could be a factor of globalization. Chantal Mouffe (2005) describes in her book “On the Political” how in today’s globalized world with the absence of right and left wing, issues have become of more importance and in this context one is either on the right side of the debate or the wrong side of the debate. This has resulted in the division of the world into the binaries of “evil” and “good.” Mouffe argues that by dividing the world into good and evil, we have fuelled more antagonism between those labeled “evil” and those representing “good.”

Richard Jackson (2005) further describes how the binaries of good and evil became a narrative for the counter-terrorism discourse as well. In his book “Writing the War on Terrorism” he analyses the discourse around war against terrorism and argues that “the enactment of any large-scale project of political violence – such as war or counter-terrorism – requires a significant degree of political and social concensus” which is only achieved via the use of language in normalizing certain beliefs. These values are institutionalized not only via the official language employed by the government but also via media and organizations (Jackson 2005: 165). I found Jackson’s book relevant in understanding the discourses that are prevalent in much of the world taking a part in or/and impacted by the war on terrorism.

In further explaining how values are institutionalized, "Gramsci has made the useful analytic distinction between civil society and political society" (Said 1979: 7). He describes how "culture is...found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas...works not through domination but by...consent." Edward Said (1979) finds Gramsci's explanation of how "common sense" operates in society very useful in explaining how "Orientalism" operates too. "Moreover so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism" (Said 1979: 3).

Discourse analysis reveals the relationship between language and socio-political contexts by highlighting what has been engrained in the "common sense" in society. Edward Said (1997: 14) claims that "In the United States ... Islam is mainly a policy question for the Council on Foreign Relations, a "threat" or military and security challenge" and although the program is trying to address the Western perceptions of "Islam," all it does is really strengthen these stereotypes and fails to take a look at "Islam" outside of its military and security threat to the governments of the world today. Richard Jackson's (2005) understanding is that this representation of Islam and Muslims in the Western minds is part of the bigger discourse of counter-terrorism.

Understanding Pakistan

Present day Pakistan is riddled with domestic problems and international pressures that have emerged in the post-9/11 world. Understanding the socio-political context, in which both the Dr. Afia case and the Swat girl-flogging incident occurred, therefore becomes imperative in also better understanding the discourse(s) that appeared around the topics.

Pakistan was formed in 1947 after the British colonizers left South Asia. It was built as a separate homeland for the Muslims of the region, and although the concepts of Islam are deeply inbuilt in its foundations, Pakistan was only declared an Islamic Republic nine years later in 1956. Ever since then Pakistan has been struggling to define its ideological identity. Divided into 4 provinces, the country is home to many dialects, languages and cultures. Ethnic differences have also been a cause of much contention in the country, only being further worsened by the political rivalries of parties.^{vii}

The Terrorism Dilemma

It is safe to claim that what marks the Pakistan's current relationship with the United States and its Western allies has been the War on Terrorism. As Jackson (2005: 5) points out "the war on terrorism is more just a passing phase...it is actually the most profound conflict since the cold war and it has already made indelible mark on both international relations and the domestic politics of most countries".

Pakistan located between India and Afghanistan, chose to ally with the United States against the war on terrorism and has since become a culprit of terrorism believed to be carried out by Tehreek-e-Taliban^{viii} openly resenting the Pakistani government's alliance

with the US in the war on terrorism. Given this context, Pakistan faces drone attacks on the one hand (carried out in those areas where US and Pakistani authorities believe Taliban infiltration exists) and reciprocal suicide attacks on the other hand in retaliation to the war that the US and Pakistani army has embarked upon.

According to 'Pakistan Body Count,'^{ix} since 2004, over 258 suicide attacks have left 3,832 dead and 9,562 injured, which comes out to an astonishing 51 innocent Pakistanis killed or maimed per attack. The death toll of drone attacks is equally worrisome. In the 142 reported drone attacks only 39 al Qaeda activists were killed as opposed to 1,651 innocent people (Alvi 2010). Although there are strong voices in the country which fear "Talibanization" and believe that terrorism needs to be purged by stronger government actions, there are still many who express their dislike for the policies entailed in war-on-terrorism to tackle the Taliban, and others who protest against drone attacks. In a recent survey conducted by Pew, "Only 23 percent thought the Taliban was the greatest threat to their country" while "Roughly six in ten (59 percent) Pakistanis describe the U.S. as an enemy" (Binglani 2010).

The Education Conundrum

While on the one hand there are drone attacks and suicide attacks representing a dilemma facing the country within its socio-political scenario, on the other hand is the conundrum of its education system. According to UNICEF, Pakistan has an adult literacy rate of 55 percent^x. Added to this scenario, there are parallel education systems running in the country which clearly favor the elite and hence provide little room for the social class-divide to decrease.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) recently gave Pakistan the worst “education ranking” of any country outside sub Saharan Africa and Afghanistan.^{xi} An estimated 30% of government schools are “ghost” schools (i.e non-functional) whereby the school only exists on paper. Whereas in government schools and madrassahs, the medium of instruction is Urdu, privately run schools could either be “Urdu-medium” (where Urdu is the medium of instruction) or “English medium.” Not only because of their better quality, but also because of the language of instruction, private schools are believed to provide better standards of education than others giving an advantage to their students from private schools. Private schools are extremely expensive and unaffordable by the vast majority of the country which has to fend for its daily sustenance too. In a very well-written article titled “We are the Problem” George Fulton expresses the impact of this language divide created between the various social classes of Pakistani society. “The English language has created a linguistic Berlin Wall between us and the rest of the country. We remain cosseted inside our bubble. Not wishing to connect with the riff raff ... on the other side of the bridge.”

The Media Struggle

Pakistan has always struggled with democracy in power being shared between corrupt politicians and intermittent but long spells of military rulers. In this process, freedom of speech and media independence have been hampered as a consequence. However, without any doubt, President Pervez Musharraf who came into power following a military coup in 1998 and remained in power till 2009, was the man behind media liberalization in Pakistan. “...Even his critics acknowledge that...Musharraf’s eight-year rule has seen a historic liberalization of television in the country” (Wallace 2008). Before this there were only two major channels, one of them publicly owned Pakistan Television. Following Musharraf’s liberalization, immediately, the media industry witnessed a boom in 24-hour news channels

and entertainment channels in the country in Urdu, English and regional languages airing ranging from entertainment, news, music and sports. However, it was this media liberalization that backfired on him in the latter part of his rule too.

Between 2006 and 2009, Musharraf took certain extremely unpopular steps in the country including a military action against Lal Masjid where male and female students were killed, the assassination of a Baloch nationalist leader, the sacking of the Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry. When media heated its criticism for his actions, Musharraf responded by introducing emergency in the country and a ban on the most popularly watched satellite channels namely ARY, Geo Network, and *Aaj*. Since then media has constantly been under scrutiny, either being banned by government leaders or channel offices being broken by political activists upset at the release of a news by a channel.

In an environment where media was initially given its freedom and then suppressed, people with access to information have filled the media's vacuum to actively use the internet and more so SMS to spread information. It was in this void that bloggers and internet users became extremely active and in fact played a phenomenal role in the lawyers' movement and the ultimate restoration of the CJP Iftikhar Chaudhry. In an excellent paper on how new media is used in Pakistan to promote democracy, provoke action and disseminate citizen journalism, Huma Yusuf concludes that "new media platforms are increasingly effective as tools for community organizing and information dissemination...and that news reporting in Pakistan is gravitating towards a hybrid model whereby old and new media platforms collaborate to keep the public informed."

However, given the social structure of the country above, it is worth noting that in a country with a population of over 160 million, only 18 million people have access to the internet. Close to 89% of the population, hence, cannot even access the internet and hence, having the knowledge of using social media tools and blogs is beyond question for them. Apart

from the lack of resources like electricity, the money to set up computers and networks, and the English language of the internet are all great barriers in accessing the internet. This already makes bloggers a niche part of the population. In another well-written article called "Polarising Media" George Fulton (2010) explains that the "great swathes of our Urdu press and electronic media represent the mindset of the socially conservative and reactionary urban middle class" which implies that English speaking bloggers are not necessarily representing the "conservative and reactionary urban middle class" of the society. Fulton explains how "the English press ... epitomised the values of the western educated, socially progressive elite." In another article he sums up the trouble arising from this well by saying "The English language has created a linguistic Berlin Wall between us and the rest of the country. We remain cosseted inside our bubble. Not wishing to connect with the riff raff and bun kebabs on the other side of the bridge."

Two Women, Two Stories

In this section, I have briefly described Dr. Afia's case and the Swat girl-flogging incident, the knowledge of which is important before beginning to analyze what the bloggers have been writing on the given issues

Dr. Afia's Case

On February 11th 2010, Dr. Afia Siddiqui, a Ph.D in neurology from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was convicted guilty by the US courts for charges of attempted murder of US marines in Afghanistan, despite the fact that the plaintiff failed to produce any evidence against her (Dawn 2010). She is proven guilty on the accusation that in a prison camp in Afghanistan, Dr. Afia tried to steal rifles belonging to US marines while they were sitting next to it and then tried to shoot them with it without managing to hit her target. Since the announcement by the US court, there have been many rallies across the country and by Pakistanis abroad (Tehran Times 2010) voicing anger against what they think is an unjust verdict.

Her case first came to light five years ago when it was claimed by her family and lawyers that she was missing along with her three children all under the age of 7 years and the youngest being only a few months old. They believed that she had been kidnapped by American intelligence agencies in collusion with the Pakistani government. However, it was only close to 2008 that her story caught greater media attention and emerged into public's limelight. This was largely due to the attempts by journalist/ activist Yvonne Ridle, Tehreek-e-Insaf^{xii} leader Imran Khan, and second Jamaat-e-Islami (an Islamic religious party).

Dr. Afia's case is riddled with conspiracies. In an article written by eight journalists and published in Newsweek on June 23, 2003 it was clearly stated that the FBI had arrested Siddiqui. However FBI denied this later and only admitted to arresting Dr. Afia in 2008

saying that she had been arrested from Afghanistan a year ago. Her lawyers claim that she is physically and emotionally abused in prison which has resulted in her becoming extremely unhealthy both physically and mentally. Although, in 2008 “we were also told in a letter penned to the press by the US ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Anne Patterson that the American authorities had absolutely no idea about what had happened to her three children who had disappeared with her in March 2003” (Shafi 2010), her son, then 13, was returned from Afghanistan in 2009 when Dr. Afia was shifted to a cell in New York. The daughter too emerged in 2010 mysteriously at the door of Dr. Afia’s mother’s home and was proven to be Dr. Afia’s daughter through DNA tests. She only spoke English and said that Uncle John^{xiii} had dropped her there. Whilst her son was arrested with her in Ghazni Since then the children have been kept away from media and no extra information has been shared through them (Staff Reporter 2010).

This February after her guilty verdict, there were massive demonstrations across the country against the ruling and demanding Dr. Afia's return to Pakistan demanding that Dr. Afia be saved from the cruelty that is being inflicted on her and returned to justice in her own country. There have been voices that claim she is innocent claiming that a woman of her physical stature would be unable to hold a rifle, others that raise the fundamental human rights questions like the treatment of Dr. Afia, the kidnap of her children and demanding that her trial be held in her own country, while even others who believe she is a terrorist and deserves the treatment she is getting.

The Swat Girl-Flogging Incident

On April 3rd 2009 a video was released on Pakistani television channels showing a 17 year old girl being publicly flogged. The incident was reported to have occurred in Swat, Pakistan and as soon as it was first released, was broadcasted on all Pakistani channels soon to be followed by international ones and then via various sites and tools over the internet. The

video showed some bearded men in turbans wearing local attire (*kurta shalwar*) holding a female down while one of them flogs her 34 times on her back^{xiv}. [ii] Most of what people know comes to them 'second' or 'third' hand from the mass media..." (Lang and Lang 1966, pp 466). Immediately, after the video's release on media, demonstrations were held all across the country by various groups, political parties and civil society members questioning Taliban and Shariah^{xv}. As Susan Sontag (1990) puts it, "Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph" and the video reinforced the fears of the public against the "Talibanisation" of Pakistan.

The common concern pointed out by human rights activists, women organizations, and many members of the general public alike was the brutality and savageness of the "Neo-Taliban" that had begun creating strong holds in Northern areas of Pakistan. As a result of the video being made public on local and satellite television channels, the Supreme Court decided to take a suo moto action^{xvi}, asking the victims, witnesses and affected to come forward with their claims (AFP 2009). The relevant district and provincial governments were asked to bring these people forward but no one from either the crowd or the victims came forward and no evidence was found. The case was dropped.

This incident too was surrounded with conspiracies. Only a couple of weeks before the release of this video, the government had announced a peace pact with the Taliban allowing Shariah law in Swat region in exchange for peace. The video claimed that the incident had occurred after Shariah law had been placed in the region and hence invoked a reaction against Taliban and Shariah law. When following a Supreme Court action, no witnesses or victims emerged, it was felt that even if the video was authentic the incident could have occurred at a different time in a different region and was released at this time to serve propaganda purposes. Following the release of the video, for example, the groups that were foremost in grabbing the opportunity to stage immediate rallies were not only women's

rights groups but also MQM, a dominant political party from Karachi with longstanding rivalries against the Pashtun ethnic group^{xvii}.

Understanding Both

Both the controversial cases of Dr. Afia and the Swat girl-flogging are directly or indirectly products of a post-9/11 world. Dr. Afia, according to the US courts, is accused of indulging in terrorism whereas in the eyes of her sympathizers is a victim of war on terrorism. The girl in the Swat girl-flogging video is a victim of "Taliban" – a group of people seen as causing terror in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and against whom both the US and Pakistan are waging a war on terror. I picked both these cases as they represent many commonalities and differences. Both relate to women but in opposing situations, one a villager as a sufferer of terror and the other an urban educated woman accused of co-opting in it. In their analysis, I hope to discover how Pakistani bloggers view terror, its victims and its perpetrators and the language that has developed in Pakistan post the launch of war on terrorism.

Themes in Blogging

In the following section, I have outlined the themes that arise in studying some of the popular blogs written on the topics of Dr. Afia and Swat girl-flogging.

Barbaric Suppression of Women

One of the first themes that emerge from the discourse analysis of a selection of blogs on the topics under discussion is the continuation of the language utilized in the war on terrorism. Suppression of women was used as a justification by the US government to launch a war against the barbarism of Taliban in Afghanistan. “In the battle of Afghanistan, we destroyed one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind. A regime so barbaric, they would not allow young girls to go to school’ (Bush, 2 May, 2003)” Beena Sarwar (2009) follows the same theme when she declares that “The first casualty of war may be truth but the first casualty of any ‘religious militancy’ is women’s rights.”^{xviii} Nadeem Paracha (2010) too stresses on the barbarism of the Taliban in his blog post on Dr. Afia’s case. In “Maududi to Afia,” Paracha describes the Taliban as “aggravating antics of monsters,”

Edward Said (1979: 26) argues that “one aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed.... all the media resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds” (26). Arbruster and Laerke (2008: 27) describe how “Photos of women in *burkas*, their faces hidden behind embroidered lace grilles, their bodies enveloped in gathered rayon cloth, were a striking feature of the US and UK propaganda of 2001 in the lead-up to the recent Afghan War” as their liberation was used as a justification “for the bombing of Afghanistan and the removal of the Taliban regime.” The contents of the Swat girl-flogging video

reflected the same images – describing the victim of flogging and the perpetrators as "A burqa clad woman" being flogged by "bearded turban men." (Café Pyala 2010). In this instance too, it was argued that the video was deliberately released at this time by those wishing to disrupt the Swat peace pact between the government and Tehreek-e-Taliban allowing Islamic Shariah law to be imposed in the area.

Beena Sarwar (2009) in her blog post titled "Some articles re 'Talibanisation', veiling, flogging," lays down a number of her articles that she has written tackling the mentioned topics. I find it revealing of the blogger's perspective on the issues in the way she has chosen to put her words together even as early as in the title of the blog post. In putting "Talibanisation', veiling, flogging" together, there is an underlying assumption that Taliban are responsible for veiling and flogging. Furthermore, by putting "veiling" and "flogging" together, there is also the assumption in the sentence that both are equally against women and their rights^{xix}. In the same blog post where Nadeem Paracha (2010) calls the Taliban "aggravating antics of monsters," he accuses religious organizations like Jamaat-e-Islami of being insensitive to women's issues - "Not a single rally or a word of condemnation in this respect slipped out from any of the many defenders of Aafia's cause" while recalling another case of rape which became well-known during its time. In effect, he too has accused Taliban, Jamaat-e-Islami and those with "similar" philosophies of harming the rights of women. This attitude of stereotyping varying groups of conservatives under a single umbrella is what brings me to the second theme of my analysis.

“Talibanisation”

The usage of the term "Talibanisation" is also a troubling theme noticed across blogs covering Dr. Aafia's case and the Swat girl-flogging video. "Talibanisation," although having its roots from the propaganda against Taliban of Afghanistan, is beyond just "Talibans".

Beena Sarwar (2009) shares with her readers "how Talibanisation is splitting our South Asian identity and leading to the existing schizophrenia and changing dress codes."

"Talibanisation" in fact, in this instance, is implying to the spread of the so-called Taliban philosophy and more bluntly put the conservative ideology. I present the example of a lawyer invited on a popular program called 11th Hour on ARY News (August 04, 2010) to discuss certain issues that were prevalent in the country's politics at the time. He best highlighted for me how the Pakistani society understands the word "Talibanisation."

Dropping in the word "Talibanised" people in his discussion, the guest then explains the term to include those ranging from either following the Taliban philosophy, or from the "extreme right wing", having "a fundamentalist" background, and went on to also describe them as "Taliban sympathizers" and sympathisers of the various religious parties in which he quoted Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jamiat, and Taliban together^{xx}.

To me the above aptly summarizes what the word "Talibanisation" encompasses in Pakistani discourse and what is clear is that certain bloggers have in fact been impacted by this dominant discourse and viewed the state of affairs in the same light. For example in the article " 'Talibanisation,' veiling, flogging" Beena Sarwar (2009) describes her maid who previously did not cover her head to have started doing so. This may not have occurred due to Taliban demands directly affecting her life but rather the spread of conservative ideology which may be due to many factors evolving in a society. However, it is clear from this example that to blogger Beena Sarwar "Talibanisation" encompasses more than just "Taliban" – it includes the spread of conservative ideology.

In his post titled "Maududi to Afia," Nadeem Paracha^{xxi} (2010) criticizes those sympathizing with Dr. Afia's case and draws a connection between the philosophy of her sympathizers to Islamic scholar Abul A'la Maududi^{xxii} (founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, referred to as Maududi from here on). The title as it stands "Maududi to Afia" shows that if Paracha thinks that the energies of Dr. Afia's sympathizers are misguided and her case misrepresented,

then Maududi must have a hand in it. By tracing it back to Maududi, his teachings and the Jamaat-e-Islami, in effect Paracha has placed all those sympathizing with Dr. Afia's case, believing in Maududi's teachings (even beyond the realm of Jamaat-e-Islami), the political organization of Jamaat-e-Islami itself as well as the Taliban all under the same umbrella. It is this sort of rhetoric that echoes "Islamophobia" which upon analysis I have discovered is a common theme in many of the blogs on the topics under discussion.

"Islamophobia"

" 'Islamophobia' accurately reflects a social anxiety toward Islam and Muslim cultures that is largely unexamined by, yet deeply engrained..." (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008: 5)

Although Gottschalk and Greenberg (2008) in their book "Islamophobia – Making Muslims the Enemy" are explaining Islamophobia in an American context, I find the phenomenon also reverberating in the Pakistani blogs around the cases of Dr. Afia and the Swat girl-flogging. Gottschalk and Greenberg describe this social anxiety as being "buttressed by a similar understanding of current events."

Catriona Luke (2010) has summarized in an article in the Guardian what the global understanding of current events in Pakistan is based on. She believes that "There has been a slow steady drip of negative media coverage of Pakistan since the 1980s, and if it lessened a little in the 90s as civilian governments went in and out of administration, it became inevitably tougher with the return of a military government, 9/11, the "growth" of Islamic extremist organisations in Pakistan, and the ins and outs of apparent ISI-sponsored terrorism in both Mumbai and Afghanistan. At home, Pakistan's image has been affected by debates about burqas, the bombings in London in 2005 and the country's perennial linguistic association with "terror". Although Luke's description is mostly based in the British context, I consider it valuable in explaining how the global understanding of Pakistan has

been “normalized” into Pakistani discourses due to Pakistan’s official role in fighting the counter terrorism war.

Stuart Allen (2004), in his book *News Culture*, demonstrates how dominant ideology enters into the “common sense” of media and hence, public. Drawing from Gramsci’s studies of hegemony and ‘common sense’ Allen (2004, pp 79) explains that “Hegemony is a matter of ‘common sense.’ ...the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the social world”. It is in this light that I found themes of “threat” and “danger” normalized into the bloggers’ language. Jackson (2005: 98) describes that the discourse inciting fears of threat and danger “suggest that not only is the threat ‘new’ and ‘unprecedented’, but it is of such massive proportions that it endangers our physical, psychological, cultural and political lives”. For example, Paracha held Jamaat-e-Islami and Muslim Brotherhood responsible of beginning to “mutate” the society’s natural religio-political evolution. Because he has discussed the “aggravating antics” of Taliban in the same article, by grouping all as one he has managed to depict the threat of such barbaric Islamists as extremely dangerous.

Given the prevalent conditions in Pakistan, the political vulnerability, the incidents of sectarian violence, suicide bomb attacks etc and the internalization of these by society as the common understanding of Pakistan, the sense of threat is evident when Paracha raises the fear that the “conservative flash-in-the-pans,” employ their “‘militant jihad’ to impose their own versions of ‘Islamic rule’ and ‘revolution.’” He describes anyone who has an Islamic political perspective in these words. Edward Said (1997: 14) claims that “In the United States ... Islam is mainly a policy question for the Council on Foreign Relations, a “threat” or military and security challenge.” Kidvai (2009) is also influenced by this “common sense” when he shares his belief that the girl-flogging video is real and those who consider it a conspiracy or doubt its facts are highly misguided. He backs this belief by adding that “They should be demanding that the army...defend against an insurgency that

increasingly threatens the state," referring to the Taliban insurgency. Similarly, explaining why those who opposed the peace pact between Taliban and the government, Raza Rumi (2010) wrote in his blog post titled "Taliban Sympathizers and the Girl-Flogging Video" that "Their apprehensions proved true and the Taliban extended their 'rule' beyond Swat."

Yasir Hamdani (2010), another blogger, who blogged about the Dr. Afia case also shared his anxiety of a threat from conservative followers of Islam. He exclaimed in his blog post 'Coming to terms with Dr. Afia Siddiqui' that "The Islamic right wing has gone into hyper-drive. It is not uncommon to find at these rallies organized by Jamaat-e-Islami and the like young boys of pre-teen and teen years dressed up like Muhammad Bin Qasim saying "Labaik" to free the hapless Muslim sister." In a single sentence Hamdani, like in Paracha's and Sarwar's blogposts has managed to place "Jamaat-e-Islami" (a popular political religious parties in the country that in fact believes in the democratic political process as the way to enter politics), and the "like"- which could include revolutionaries like Taliban, religious parties belonging to varying schools of thoughts under the same umbrella. Furthermore, because all of these groups of people have gone into "hyper-drive" there is a sense of "threat" from all of them." In this process, Hamdani has managed to create a divide between "evil" and "good" - those who were evil were a threat and those who were "good" were sensible enough not taking to the streets like the Islamic right wing. The next theme that comes up in my analysis, hence, is the creation of binaries between good and evil, and in its process the "other"-ing of people.

Creating Binaries and "Others"

Treating a group of people as a threat automatically implies that they have been tagged as the "evil Other" different from ourselves. "Although the strategy of contrasting images of Others is not new to political discourse, it was prominent and influential in the political and

cultural discourses justifying the 2001–2002 war with Afghanistan that began after terrorist attacks on U.S. targets on September 11, 2001” (Abu-Lughod 2002). Even though, Abu Lughod is referring to the Americans creating an image of the Other in Afghans, in Pakistan which is fighting the war on terrorism within its borders, the “contrasting images of Others” involve Pakistanis themselves.

By demonstrating that the religiously inclined are militant in their nature and against women’s rights and by applying this definition to almost all those who belong to a conservative ideology, bloggers mentioned in this paper thus far have managed to divide the society into binaries of “good” and “evil.” As established earlier, according to Pew poll only 23% of the country’s urban dwellers consider Taliban a threat, this representation of religious groups including the Taliban as a threat is directly opposing what the majority think. What is does match is the language around war on terrorism that mainstream media around the world has established especially in the US and its allying countries. Hamdani’s description of the Islamic right wing going into “hyper-drive” remind of the same “time-honored view of Islam” in the mainstream media as always – “...terrorists, and more recently blood thirsty mobs” (Said 1997: 6). “People were made to feel very good and very virtuous by simply participating in the denunciation of the 'evil forces'” (Mouffe 2005: 73). By participating in this “denunciation of the evil forces” then, bloggers too have dangerously distanced themselves from those that represent “evil” and are therefore the “Others”.

In Hamdani’s (2010) statement, for example, “young boys...dressed up like Muhammad bin Qasim” there is not only an assumption that the reader knows what Muhammad bin Qasim appeared as but also the assumption that dressing up like Muhammad bin Qasim is problematic in today’s time. Muhammad bin Qasim is hailed as the young symbol of Islam’s victory in the South Asian region - 17 years of age, he entered the sub-continent in 711 AD and laid the foundations of Islam in South Asia. It is patronizing the way in which the blog post refers to these young boys, almost distancing the blogger Hamdani from the

unreasonable public that is fighting for a “hapless Muslim sister.” Not only has he distanced himself from those he believes are religiously inclined (“Jamaat-e-Islami and the likes”) but also disassociated himself from the members of public who say “Labaik” to the call for “justice” for Dr. Afia. “Labaik” literally meaning “I am here” and is what the pilgrims approaching Kaaba (the Holy Place in Islam) call out implying that they are here for God. By placing this term here, Hamdani has deliberately associated the sympathizers of Dr. Afia with religious sentiments using religious rationale alone.

Saba Imtiaz (2010) in her article “Not a daughter of Pakistan” describes Pakistan as “a country that is easily swayed by self-righteous sentiment, enforced strongly by lurid visuals of Aafia Siddiqui's face, her sister Fouzia Siddiqui's impassioned speeches, and images of Siddiqui's 13-year-old son.” There is a sense of sarcasm in her description of the Pakistani public when she uses the words “self-righteous sentiment” again implying the religious nature of the public. It implies that the entire “country” is easily swayed by sentiments and passions which are fuelled by images, and that their acts “are simply not explainable according to the canons of behavior presupposed by modernization theory” (Said 1997: 31). When Fulton (2010) talks about the English speaking elite of the country treating others as riff raff and unimportant, this is exactly the phenomenon he is referring to. By using the term “Pakistan is a country” Imtiaz has immediately distanced herself from this Pakistan which is being swayed by the sentimental appeal of Dr. Afia's case and automatically in her approach distanced herself from this public that is driven by emotions and self-righteousness. In fact, in another blog post titled “Not a daughter of Pakistan” Saba Imtiaz (2010) feels the need to refute the claim that Dr. Afia is a daughter of the country indicating that this claim must have been widely believed by at least a segment of society.

In blogs related to the girl-flogging case too, this image of the people on the streets protesting for Dr. Afia being irrational and driven rather by passion is evident. Kidvai (2010), in ending his blog post “Beyond Flogging Video Debate” says “My latest T-Shirt

reads: "Anyone for Nizaamé Aql?" This is a sarcastic pun on the word Nizaam-e-Adl which literally means "the system of justice." *Nizaame Aql* means "system of intelligence" and by wording it such Kidvai has clearly conveyed that *Nizaam-e-Adl* based on Islamic Shariah (as demanded by the Taliban) is opposed to intelligence. In a country where the majorities of the people are conservative and believe in its country's formation on the ideology of Islam and its status of Islamic republic, Kidvai too has distanced himself from the irrational public. In his language too, there is a strong sense of divide between the good and the evil, the good representing "intelligence" and the evil representing those that call for Islamic Shariah.

Implications

In summary, both Dr. Afia case and the Swat girl-flogging incident are products of the war on terrorism. The girl in Swat was apparently flogged by "Taliban" who are considered as barbaric terrorists that the country needs to be purged of while Dr. Afia is apparently a terrorist and has hence been imprisoned by the US. In the blogs written about these topics, there is growing concern that women's rights are endangered by "Talibanisation" as is seen in the Swat girl-flogging case. Bloggers have not "gendered" Dr. Afia's case in the same way as they have treated the Swat girl flogging incident. Those who vouch that the video is either fake or untimely revealed are accused by bloggers of turning a blind eye to cases of rapes and other women's issues. On the flip side, human rights activists, lawyers of Dr. Afia and sympathizers like Yvonne Ridley and others have shared how Dr. Afia is a victim of sexual and physical abuse while being imprisoned. Her children too had mysteriously vanished with Dr. Afia in 2003 and two of the three have only been returned, ever so mysteriously, after FBI admitted that Dr. Afia was in their custody in 2008.

Saba Imtiaz has gone as far as to declare that Dr. Afia is not a daughter of Pakistan, and hence someone not worthy of being sympathized with for being a woman. She is purely seen as a terrorist and it does not matter to the bloggers that a human being cannot be sexually abused even if she or he is imprisoned for a heinous crime, that elongated imprisonment is against human rights conventions and that every individual deserves a fair trial. In this analysis, it is clear that the discourse of war on terrorism dominates the ideologies of the bloggers, the discourse which justified war against the Taliban for being barbaric against women and whoever that came under their banner could hence be considered barbaric and anyone that appeared as a barbaric terrorist was an “evil Other” worthy of being punished.

Conclusion

The emergence of an active blogging community and a politically active one are positive signs in any given society. It shows that the people of the society are engaging with independent thinking and progressive in their usage of technology to express their opinion and to spread information. In discussing the sensitivities around Dr. Afia's case and the Swat girl-flogging video, bloggers are definitely pushing media's boundaries and challenging the views of the general public. In the course of this paper, I showed how Dr. Afia is referred to as the daughter of Pakistan by thousands who have taken out rallies calling for her justice but bloggers like Saba Imtiaz and Nadeem Paracha have challenged this opinion and shared their honest opinion about the topic. However, in discourse analyzing these blogs, I also noticed how these independent bloggers and their alternative means of communication are still bounded by ideologies that have been "normalized" in the society.

I discovered a common theme of stereotyping Taliban as barbaric and suppressors of women and their rights, and in connecting this with "Talibanisation" bloggers have essentially drawn all religious parties and groups under the same umbrella – a discourse common in mainstream media across the world in stereotyping Muslims and Islam. In this dangerous level of stereotyping varied groups of people, I noticed the elements of "Islamophobia", a social anxiety against those Muslims who were vocal about Islam. This anxiety reflected fears of Taliban and other religious groups representing a threat and danger in society and in hyping up this threat, bloggers have ended up dividing a group of people and their followers as "the evil Others." All of these themes reflect the discourse that emerged with the declaration of war against terrorism by US and its allies. We read how Jackson (2005) and Abu Lughod (2002) described these discourses that were developed during the war on terrorism and institutionalized in order to justify the attack on other countries like Afghanistan.

A country suffering from immense class differences marked by the systems of education and the language, blogging in English automatically means that it does not represent or speak to the majority segment of the society that does not have the privilege of literacy, education, status or the internet. Edward Said (Media Education Foundation, 2007) speaking about his book "Orientalism" mentions how there is a dearth of intellectual work from within the East. Whether this is because of a lack of critical work or lack of work being translated into English makes it a point worth considering, especially whilst the language of internet and blogs largely remains English. What he is referring to is the lack of independent thinking by those outside the West and he believes this is because of the normalization of "Orientalist" discourse across the world. It is further worrying when this discourse impacts the discussions the educated elite initiate regarding the rest of the public of their own country.

Blogs are seen as an alternative tool, bloggers see themselves as beacons of truth but if they will not represent the same truth or sentiments as the rest, they will be following the same dominant ideology that the country's (political) elite use mainstream media for. The fact that internet automatically eliminates majority of the groups of people in Pakistani society places added pressure on the English speaking bloggers to take into account the thoughts and sentiments of the rest of the nation without alienating them.

In challenging the 'norms' created by the majority middle class that comes out into the streets in protest, the bloggers are in fact engaging in an act of "Othering" the socially conservative, religiously inclined or otherwise, middle class public of the country. So long as English remains the issue and education in Pakistan is not improved, this discourse will remain problematic and continue to elude the same power employed by US and UK in justifying war on terrorism.

ⁱ This paper does not claim to be a complete study of Pakistani society but in fact aims to shed some light on an aspect of Pakistani society as it appears after analyzing the topics under discussion. Furthermore, the research paper is based largely on material written prior to the unfortunate catastrophic floods that occurred in August 2010.

ⁱⁱ Although Said here is referring to how journalists interpret the situation, I find it useful in understanding how in a highly mediated world, all of us interpret situations.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Appendix I for my correspondence with Ammar Yasir for the purposes of this paper

^{iv} Saad Khan was a Unilever employee killed in an accident during a physical activity based game show produced by Unilever. Bloggers brought the news to the foreground when apparently Unilever suppressed the story from reaching the mainstream media.

^v Although how SMS and other social media methods have transformed the exchange of information in society and its implications have been studied, it is difficult to find such analyses of Pakistani blogs yet. This could be because relatively blogging is still newer in Pakistan than in say its developed counterparts or it could be because of the lack of accessibility of blogs for the majority of Pakistanis given the infrastructure of the country and the education or literacy background of Pakistanis.

^{vi} See Appendix II for my correspondence with Tazeen

^{vii} For example the MQM in Karachi, the largest city of the country, hardly sees eye to eye with ANP, representing the Pashtun population of the city. The two strongest political parties of the country Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League (PML) although popular over the country, have strong constituencies in the respective provinces of their leaders' origin.

^{viii} The term Taliban (the group which was struggling for power in Afghanistan) is commonly used by public and in media to refer to the group called "Tehreek-e-Taliban" (Movement of Taliban) in Pakistan. Some analysts and commentators, like Tariq Ali and Antonio Guistozi among others, prefer to call this group neo-Taliban because they argue that the current "Taliban" involves those groups which are a reaction to war-on-terrorism and the world politics that ensued after and its aims are more with being against those who are allied with war-on-terrorism.

^{ix} ((footnote: an initiative by a Pakistani student who has graduated from Florida Tech))

^x Which by definition only means the ability to read and write on a basic level and does not define the education standards of the country.

^{xi} Give reference from Danial Noorani's pdf

^{xii} Tehreek – e-Insaf literally means Movement for Justice. It is the political party formed by world-famous cricketer Imran Khan.

^{xiii} Believed to be referring to an American soldier, intelligence or government personnel.

^{xiv} This paper will not deal with Shariah rulings or the understanding of Islamic jurisprudence which requires a different level of expertise. However, it is worth mentioning here that the debate brought up in both television and print media in Pakistan included the discussion of what the men in the video were committing in the name of Islamic law was in fact being handled un-Islamically and that law was being misused.

^{xv} Shariah, translated as Islamic law, is applied on Muslims and is derived from Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. It is the legal framework based on Islamic jurisprudence which runs the public and private lives of those living under it.

^{xvi} *Suo motu* literally meaning "in its own motion" is when the government or law-making agencies decide to take an action or initiate a process without being approached by a victim, witness or others concerned first.

^{xvii} MQM stands for Muhajir Qaumi Movement literally translated into Migrant National Movement. It aims to represent the Muslims who migrated from the Indian side of the border to Pakistan at the time of its inception, an ethnic group known as Muhajirs or Migrants. MQM has its strongest hold in Karachi where most Muhajirs live. Every government has to form a coalition with the MQM to rule in the province of Sindh where Karachi is located. Karachi too has a huge population of Pashtuns and Afghan migrants from the time of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Standing for Muhajir rights, it is believed that MQM had an active role to play in ethnic rivalries and killings as far back as in the 60s. Taliban are also largely of the Pashtun ethnicity.

^{xviii} A slightly longer, revised version was published in 'The Hindu' on April 14 –Vigilantes, the state and that flogging thing'.

^{xix} Although albeit a simplistic explanation, veiling could be a matter of choice for a woman whereas flogging is something imposed on a woman or man by those who deal with law.

^{xx} All three are widely referred to as groups with militant tendencies. However, they are very different from each other and mostly do not even see eye-to-eye with one another's philosophies. To pool them together is as bizarre as pooling in for example all Christian groups or all Hindu groups together.

^{xxi} Written by a known cultural critic Nadeem Paracha who blogs for Dawn.com (an online website of the country's first and one of the leading English newspapers). Nadeem Paracha is known to have very leftist opinions and is extremely anti-religion.

^{xxii} Syed Abul A'la Maududi, widely referred to as Maududi, was a journalist, theologian and an active political thinker of the Indian sub-continent. He was also the founder of the organization called Jamaat-e-Islami in South Asia before the partition of the continent into Pakistan and India. This party also operates in other countries of the world, is one of the leading Islamic organizations in Pakistan.

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Appendix

Email Exchange with Ammar Yasir

Dated: 26 May 2010

Ammar Yasir

to me, Syed

Hi Fiza,

Following are the present stats of our network:

- Total Number of Blogs: 1850 (plus 900 blogs that are in pending for approval)
- Network growth factor: 61%

Signup Stats:

- Signups this month: 122
- Avg. signups in a month: 169

Total Feeds:

- Total Feeds: 31563
- Total Feeds this month: 3025
- Total Feeds today: 21

Average # of Feeds:

- Monthly: 3909
- Daily: 39

As for blog type or genres, we cant tell you the exact figure for now. But you can either go in our categories section or search with popular keywords to have some idea. If you have any more queries, feel free to ask.

Best Regards,

Ammar Yasir

Fiza Fatima Asar

to Ammar, Syed

Thank you so very much **Ammar** for this information. It is going to be super helpful and is actually going to be very useful. Thank you Asim for forwarding the message on to **Ammar**. You guys are doing a wonderful job and I will definitely contact you if any more questions come up.

Thanks again,
Fiza

Email Exchange with Tazeen

Dated: 25 May 2010

Hi there,

As a blogger, do you have an intended audience in mind? And how would you describe your intended audience?

Will really appreciate your response. Also let me know specifically if you would like to remain anonymous if I do end up quoting you on my thesis (you may remember me getting in touch with you re: my thesis on analysing blogs related to Swat girl-flogging and Dr. Afia).

Thanks a lot,

Fiza

Tazeen Javed

to me

hi,

Sorry was away from the internet for a couple of days.

I dont really have a particular kind of audience in mind. I usually blog about things that i either like or detest so in a way you can say that i blog about matters that i am passionate about.

As I know (through feedback) that most of my readers reside outside Pakistan, I try and give a bit of background about local matters, apart from that, I think I write for myself and because I dont write for anyone, I end up with a dedicated list of followers.

You can quote my name, I am ok with that. By the way, when swat flogging incident came up, a friend and I created a facebook page titled "A voice against shariah Apologists." Sadly, its not active any more. You may find some material there.

Good luck with your paper.


T

- Show quoted text -


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Tazeen Javed

Twitter Discussions

 [Show Conversation](#) [faisalkapadia](#) May 28, 11:01pm via TweetDeck
[@FizaUK](#) check the ratio of so called voice of the ppl news anchors and how many times "credible news services" quote and take comments from

[faisalkapadia](#) May 28, 11:00pm via TweetDeck
[@FizaUK](#) They have created history by being quoted a hell of a lot more internationally then our so called media sources

 [Show Conversation](#) [faisalkapadia](#) May 28, 10:58pm via TweetDeck

@FizaUK They have given voice to the silent moderate part of our society...take saad khans example..no one covered it until blogs did

discomaulvi May 29, 10:54am via Mixero

@FizaUK Blaagers are featured by MSM now on their shows, we have several activists like @DrAwab @Sabeen etc who're out there with issues

Show Conversation  discomaulvi May 29, 10:53am via Mixero

@FizaUK Blogs brought up the Saad Khan story (who died in UniLever contest) when MSM wouldn't.

Email Exchange with Rabia Garib

Dated 6 July 2010

Dear Rabia,

This is FizaUK from twitter. Hope this email finds you well. Thank you so much for sharing your email address with me.

I am actually a Masters student at SOAS and doing my thesis on analysing Pakistani blogs (esp with regards to two issues just to narrow down my paper). I am majoring in Global Media and Post-National Communication.

I was so impressed by the blogawards that were recently held and the live feed from the awards was extremely helpful too. I definitely want to include it in the paper but with greater detail. I was wondering if there is any where or if possible I could have access to the records/figures of blogs and bloggers you as an organizer managed to get for this award. For example the following questions:

1. Figures on bloggers? How many there are?
2. Perhaps distribution with regards to age or location?
3. How many entries in each category?
4. Who funded or organized and how was it publicized?

I have followed articles regarding the awards. I was wondering though what exactly were the aims of the blog awards and why was it seen as necessary now?

If there's any information you think can add value to my research and if you would be kind enough to share, I would so appreciate it. Of course I will give due credits to all.

Thank you so much for all your help,
Fiza Asar

Hey there - Am resending this!! Please confirm receipt?

Also, I am available at: rgarib@gmail.com on googletalk (gtalk only - no email) in case you need to ping me urgently - am usually online there.. Am pasting the email below..

[Rabia](#) [Garib](#)

Reply from Rabia Garib dated August 15, 2010

Hey there,

Really sorry for the delay.. Between KESC, meetings and a really bad flu, I never made it to a working office!!

Am typing up the responses inline..

1. Figures on bloggers? How many there are?

The irony of the situation where we deal in an "accountable" media, is that there really isn't a documented figure.. I have these figures for you though I'm not sure how much they'll help you:

820,000 to 840,000 unique visitors to blogger.com/blogspot.com from Pakistan generating almost 9.8 million page views

390,000 to 570,000 unique visitors to wordpress.com from Pakistan generating almost 3.8 million page views

210,000 to 320,000 unique visitors to twitter.com from Pakistan generating almost 6.2 million page views

1. Perhaps distribution with regards to age or location?

Distribution based on location can be found here: <http://ciopakistan.com/2010/05/where-are-pakistanis-blogging-from/>

Distribution based on age (of the blogs) can be found here: <http://ciopakistan.com/2010/06/insights-into-the-blog-awards-how-old-are-these-blogs/>

1. How many entries in each category?

The entries varied - Categories such as "Personal blog", "Technology blog" or "Political blog" got a lot more entries than did a category such as "Podcast" or "Automobile". All in all, we had about 205 entries across all the categories.

1. Who funded or organized and how was it publicized?

CIO and Google funded the pre-event meetups leading up to the event, along with the event itself. We also raised sponsorships by reaching out to organizations such as Nokia and DELL along with others who pitched in what they could.

Pre-event ads were run through Dawn News - the ads encouraged people to simply log on and vote - You'll find these ads here: <http://webstudio.ciopakistan.com/2010/01/05/promos-vote-for-your-fav-blogs-blogawardspk/>

Bloggers are supposed to represent the non-big corporate voices in the community which mainstream media has no interest, nor commercial interest in covering. The assumption that bloggers are in greater numbers than the manpower available to a television channel, they can, hypothetically speaking, cover more ground. It is pertinent for the rest of the world to be aware of the fact that there exists a strong and growing blogosphere who they can tune into - that's why we reached out to some non-Pakistani judges who carry influence in the citizen journalism and social media circles around the world - that's why we it was important to keep a "UnConference" along side the winner announcements - Discussion and knowledgeshare is what the world needs to see us doing and that was one of the objectives behind hosting the conference.

Blog Awards are a regular practice in developed markets - being a Technology-Media publication who has been involved in content development about the local IT industry for almost 12 years, we just felt the world needs to be able to identify more "people sources" who they can build trust with. The Awards were meant to celebrate the Pakistan blogosphere and force local and international corporate organizations as well as corporate media to take them more seriously.

You'll find all pre and post event videos here: <http://webstudio.ciopakistan.com/category/media/cio-event/blogawards2010/>

I have followed articles regarding the awards. I was wondering though what exactly were the aims of the blog awards and why was it seen as necessary now?

Let me know what else you need?

If there's any information you think can add value to my research and if you would be kind enough to share, I would so appreciate it. Of course I will give due credits to all.

Thank you so much for all your help,

Fiza Asar