



## RESEARCH PAPER

**Media and the End of Musharraf Regime in Pakistan: An Analysis of Dawn's Editorial Page on Judicial and Lal Masjid Crises (2007)****<sup>1</sup> Dr. Saima Perveen\* and <sup>2</sup> Dr. Ahmad Hassan**

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**ABSTRACT**

The central aim of this research is to analyze the relation between media and military regimes through *Dawn*, the most prestigious English newspaper of Pakistan, covering the judicial and Lal masjid crises, the two most decisive events in the political decline of Gen. Musharraf. The military regimes in Pakistan have always been initiated over the argument to safeguard the 'national integrity' or 'national interest' from the 'corrupt and incapable politicians' and end up giving them the government back again; and Gen. Musharraf's military regime (1999-2008) was not an exception. There could be a list of explicit and implicit reasons that contributed in ending his regime but the two most decisive events were the judicial and Lal masjid crises (2007). Through the qualitative analysis of *Dawn's* editorial page this research concludes that *Dawn* played its role in the restoration of democracy and recommends that free media is crucial for stable democracy.

**Keywords:** *Dawn*, Gen. Musharraf, Judicial Crisis, Lal Masjid, Media**Introduction**

Despite being in existence for 76 years, Pakistan has not yet succeeded in creating a stable political culture within the country because of the frequent military interventions, as Martial laws. Politicians in every other country are the same as our leaders, but in developed nations, the military stays out of politics in order to protect "national integrity". For the majority of the past 76 years, the army has exerted authority in Pakistan, either directly or indirectly, and has done so by citing the same justifications. Since the nation's independence, none of the most contentious problems have been resolved. The provinces' relations with the center are at an all-time high. The violence committed by *jihadis* and sectarians has not stopped, and political instability persists. (Grare, 2009) However, Pakistan has gone through multiple military rules, while the military dictators were always able to extend their control with the excuse to clean up the mess created by the politicians. Gen. Musharraf, the fourth military ruler was also not an exception; he was attempting to spend as much time as possible as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and President.

The final two years of the fourth military dictatorship were devoted solely to Gen. Musharraf's collapse. The president, who was still handling the matters delicately, was abruptly overtaken by his own errors of forcing Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary to resign, resulting in the Lawyers movement; and the Lal Masjid crisis. The most intriguing aspect was that the media played a major part in pressuring the president to take off his uniform and then resign from office. The media's pivotal involvement in swaying public opinion against the presidency during this final stage was crucial. Political parties did not take the lead in the overthrow of Pakistan's military rulers, unlike the previous military governments. The alliance of opposition parties persuaded Gen. Ayub to resign and give up power to Gen. Yahya, another military ruler. Even though Z. A. Bhutto chose not to join the opposition coalition, his contribution was nevertheless significant. However, the media, both print and electronic, played a sharp and active role in Gen. Musharraf's collapse. This research argues that there could be many possible reasons for Gen. Musharraf's downfall as

the military ruler of Pakistan, but judicial and Lal masjid crises were the two most significant reasons for his ouster from the government. But as said before, it was not the political parties that pushed Gen. Musharraf to resign but it was the media pressure that made him to quit the government. Therefore, this research has chosen daily *Dawn*, the most prestigious newspaper of Pakistan as its unit of analysis to see media's role in ending the Musharraf regime. Throughout the Musharraf period, the daily *Dawn* continued to be extremely critical, commenting on all the big events, especially the Lal Mosque and judicial crises, sometimes in a caustic and satirical manner.

### Literature Review

Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the reality that, in terms of media freedom, Pakistan saw a dramatic new period of fast transformation during the Musharraf administration. The fact that the media is becoming more powerful in politics is encouraging for democracy. Many scholars like Z. Iqbal (2011) & (2014), R. S. Akhtar (2000), S. I. Ashraf (2023), M. Waseem (2022), M. A. Khan (2009), M. Mezzera & S. Sial (2010), and F. Grare (2009) have discussed the changing dynamics of the relation between media and politics, Media sanctions or military regimes in Pakistan but this research is primarily focused on the *Dawn's* role in the restoration of democracy in the country. This country, which has been ruled by authoritarian administrations ever since gaining its independence, is undoubtedly benefiting from the growing media impact. Due to its relative independence, Pakistani media has established trends in the nation's social and political discourse. However, the media industry's current state is not ideal enough to call it a success tale. Pakistan started a new era in 1999, and as of right now, it enjoys the greatest degree of freedom of expression among the 57 members of the Islamic Conference. (Waseem, 2022) Press freedom in Pakistan may be up for debate, but overall, it can be said with certainty that the media in this time has assisted the country in reaching a new level of awareness and pluralism in public discourse that hasn't been seen in decades. (Ashraf, 2023)

It is astonishing to learn that during his military rule, General Pervez Musharraf, a dictator, established private television networks in Pakistan, marking the beginning of free electronic media. The most progressive and active media in the Muslim world today is Pakistani media. In 2004, the cable system was launched in Pakistan's largest cities, and it subsequently spread throughout the entire nation (Khan, 2009). A growing number of private channels, such as Geo, ARY, 92 News, Express, Dunia, and others, are trying to raise awareness among Pakistanis of the corruption and policies of their government. Looking at the table below one can better understand the changes electronic media went through from 1999 to 2009.

**Table 1**  
**Electronic Media in Pakistan 1999-2009**

Medium	1999	2009
Regional TV Channels	2	71
Radio Stations	22	25
FM Radio Stations (Private)	-	111 (121 licensed)
FM Radio Stations (Public)	-	10
Cable Operators (licensed)	-	1600
<b>Cable Subscribers</b>	-	<b>5,000,000</b>

(PEMRA)

### Newspapers

The *Jang* Group, the *Dawn* Group, and the *Nawa i Waqt* Group are the three main newspaper groups in Pakistan. Mir Khalil-ur-Rehman founded the *Jang*, the biggest newspaper company in Pakistan, in Delhi in 1942 (Mezzera & Sial, 2010). The *Jang* group

publishes the weekly *Mag*, the English daily *The News International*, and the Urdu newspapers *Jang* and *Awaz* in addition to operating four TV networks. *The News* is Pakistan's second-biggest English newspaper. *Nawa i Waqt* is another significant media organization. Hameed Nizami founded the daily *Nawa i Waqt* in 1940 (Mezzera & Sial, 2010). The biggest Urdu daily was previously called *Daily Nawa-i-Waqt*. The daily *Nawa-i-Waqt*, the weekly *Family*, the *Sunday* magazine *Nida-i-Millat*, and *The Nation* (in English) are among its principal publications.

## **Material and Methods**

*Dawn* newspaper was established by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1941, however it wasn't released until 1947 (Mezzera & Sial, 2010). It is the largest English language newspaper of the country. *The Star* and *The Herald* are also the publications of *Dawn* group. *Dawn* is the most popular newspaper of the country in the term of its liberal, unbiased and moderate stance. This analysis has purposefully limited itself to the daily *Dawn's* editorial page and an examination of the editorials and columns that the newspaper published following Musharraf's takeover on October 12, 1999. Regarding the daily *Dawn*, it is the oldest newspaper in Pakistan. It was established as a weekly journal and an official organ of the All India Muslim League in 1941, with its headquarters initially located in Delhi, by none other than Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation. In October 1942, it turned into a daily publication and quickly rose to prominence as the leader of the Pakistan movement. It was moved to Karachi after Pakistan was founded, and it is currently the oldest and most read English-language daily in Pakistan. There is a liberal perception of the daily *Dawn*, especially regarding its editorials and columns, they are not only very educational but also serve as a critical study of the topics in order to shape constructive and beneficial public opinion.

It is undeniable that the columnists and editorial writers of the daily *Dawn* were previously not as free to express themselves freely as they were during the Musharraf government due to the strict and severe regulations governing press activities and publications in the pre-Musharraf era.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Dawn* and the Judicial Crisis**

The judicial crisis was the catalyst for a change in Pakistan's political environment. Even if there has never been a record of judicial independence in Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry's legal problem marked the start of new optimism. The executive's persistent meddling in judicial matters was the only reason behind the judiciary's subpar performance in the past. The first assault on the judiciary occurred in 1958 when General Ayub swore allegiance to the emergency measures that precipitated the military takeover that same year, after the judges had taken a new oath of office. The judiciary bowed to the pressure and accepted the justification that military tribunals would take the place of civilian courts if it did not cooperate with the circumstances. The judges made the decision to uphold the necessity of swearing allegiance to a military dictator in order to maintain their authority over both criminal and civil cases without challenging the prevailing political climate. The subsequent military takeovers were made possible by the judiciary's acceptance of the military coup of 1958.

The military takeover on October 12, 1999 was also endorsed by the Supreme Court, which Justice Chaudhry was present for, in May 2000. Gen. Musharraf, the president of Pakistan, fired Justice Chaudhry after he was charged with acting against the constitution, requesting favors for his son, and maintaining unnecessary formalities for himself. The president and Justice Chaudhry met on March 9, 2007, and following the Justice's refusal to step down from his position as requested by President Gen. Musharraf, a Supreme Judicial

Council was established to look into the accusations against him. The Chief Justice Chaudhry's action was truly audacious and enraged the Musharraf administration. As Sharif-ud-din observed, this may be the first time in Pakistani history that the judiciary appears to be exercising its sovereignty in opposition to an executive branch that is starting to amass greater authority despite the rhetoric around the concept of checks and balances. (Sharif-ud-din, 2007)

Chief Justice Chaudhry's audacious and courageous approach to accepting *suo moto* notices infuriated the government. Consequently, the Chief Justice was relieved of his duties, and Justice Javed Iqbal was named to take his position. In this context, Syed Sharif-ud-din added, "There are two major issues with the rule of law in relation to the government's decree that stops Justice Chaudhry from carrying out his responsibilities due to allegations of misbehavior. First, the Supreme Judicial Council barred Rana Bhagwandas, the country's most senior judge, from conducting the constitutionally required investigation against the Chief Justice. Secondly, the government orders prevented Justice Chaudhry from continuing to serve as an official until it was established that he was the responsible for the accusations made against him." (Sharif-ud-din, 2007) All of this exposed the government's personal problems with the Chief Justice and sparked condemnation of President Musharraf's autocratic methods from the legal and media sectors. Lawyers started a campaign to reinstate the Chief Justice, but the media also addressed the matter with great seriousness and vigor.

The way the Islamabad police treated Justice Chaudhry on the day the Chief Justice was scheduled to testify before the Judicial Council was extremely dehumanizing and exposed the ugly side of Musharraf that was hidden under his purported liberal and enlightened worldview. The Chief Justice who had been sacked was hauled and shoved toward the official car with his spouse. The media's animosity toward the president was stoked by this occurrence in addition to that of the attorneys. Ayaz Amir satirically commented in his column that Pakistan hasn't experienced anything like this before, "especially in the last seven and half years of control and manipulation. It is undoubtedly a taste of "enlightened moderation" and "real" democracy." (Amir, 2007) The events were swiftly bringing the president to his knees; the media was outspoken in its criticism of the Chief Justice's removal and was giving the lawyer's movement extensive coverage. Gen. Musharraf and his legal advisors underestimated Justice Chaudhry's judicial ideology. It was the president's error, and for that reason, he was named Chief Justice by the president himself for a term that would end in 2013.

In actuality, no elected president or prime minister could suspend the Chief Justice in this way, as President Gen. Musharraf did out of conceit for his position of power. A court struggle between the government and the Chief Justice began on June 23, 2006, when a verdict was made against the privatization of Steel Mills Karachi. The government's decision to sell the bulk of Steel Mills Karachi shares—75 percent—to a group of three companies, two of which were foreign-owned, was overturned by Justice Chaudhry in the Supreme Court. The *Dawn's* editorial supported the Court's ruling, stating that while foreign investment in our export sector is welcome, we must exercise caution to avoid coming across as unduly patriotic when foreigners purchase our important economic assets, such as banks, and essential utilities, like power plants. (*Dawn*, 2006) Despite the fact that the Supreme Court's ruling served the interests of the country, our fourth military savior detested it greatly because it went against his unbridled authority.

The truth is that Justice Chaudhry was fired because he dared to investigate a repugnant agreement involving the sale of national assets, asked the government to produce the missing individuals, and ultimately refused to submit to the president general's resignation demand. All of this was sufficient to provide the president a legitimate reason to challenge Justice Chaudhry. As Khalid Javed Khan noted in his column, Pakistan joined the ranks of nations like Myanmar on October 12, 1999, the day General Musharraf conducted

his first coup. The Chief Justice's compulsory suspension and virtual incarceration on March 9, 2007, during the second coup, put the nation on a par. Even after years of martial law, Myanmar has not been able to accomplish this feat. (Khan, 2007) Justice Chaudhry's primary "mistake" stemmed from his attempt to extend the reach of the law to hitherto unreached and concealed regions. The media covered every aspect of the problem, bringing the dramatic drama into our homes and softening the opinions and remarks of independent political specialists.

In addition to infuriating the administration, the media has raised public awareness, which the incident most definitely deserved. According to Khalid Javed Khan, "it is the high time to think and decide about the future of the country, this was a very important event in Pakistan's history. We may be able to enjoy our second freedom if the people seize the opportunity and use their creativity. The general will also be successful in its second takeover if they miss it. Following that, there would be complete darkness throughout the nation and the boondocks." (Khan, 2007) The military has overreached itself in its manipulation of the Chief Justice, and the General's action has diminished his authority. However, the government's attempt to show off its strength has revealed its weaknesses. It is actually the concentration of power in one individual that leads to these kinds of activities. The president's powers were unfettered, which led him to adopt these kinds of autocratic actions, despite his belief in the concept of checks and balances.

For the first time in Pakistani history, the legal community was playing a very proactive and brave role. "Surprisingly, the lawyers are demonstrating a level of togetherness that not only shatters party allegiance but also makes it clear that they are leading the protest rather than the politicians," the editorial of the daily *Dawn* said in reference to the beginning of the lawyer's movement. (*Dawn*, 2007) However, there was a perception that this matter marked a watershed in the political annals of the nation. The editorial went on to say that since the administration is afraid and feels under assault, this is a test situation in which the nation should brace itself to protect the liberties that it enjoys. The audacious actions done by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry were going to alter the previous instances of our judiciary's surrender to military despots. It was time for the country to realize how important the problem is and take action to protect its freedom because the media and the legal movement had united to create a very uneasy and confused government. The legal community's and the media's robust reactions, as well as the widespread support for this movement, were not what the administration had anticipated. That's the reason for the uncertainty within the government.

The most intriguing detail is that Justice Chaudhry was a member of the group of justices that gave Gen. Musharraf the authority to rule the nation for three years in addition to taking an oath under PCO. The president has finally taken action against his supporter. The first blow to the judiciary under Gen. Musharraf's authority was the example set by Gen. Ayub's military rule, which required judges to swear an oath. Qazi Faez Isa claimed in his column that there is no such compulsion in the constitution to retake the oath from the judges. General Musharraf ousted nearly six Supreme Court and High Court judges who refused to take this oath. The basis for their dismissal was not disclosed to either the judges or the people. While it is required of judges in a country to administer justice, the government's treatment of them was harsher than that of any other subordinate. Even in the age of "transparency," "soft image," and "enlightened moderation," the Chief Justice's misbehavior claims remained undisclosed. The Chief Justice, the attorneys, the media, and the people of Pakistan all demanded that the Supreme Judicial Council's hearing take place in camera. The reason, in-camera hearing was not permitted, was because the government was afraid of it.

In his column, Qazi Faez Isa also brought up the fact that "Chief Justice Gen. Musharraf was wearing his COAS uniform on March 9 during their meeting. Just this one gesture taints the entire judicial accountability system. The most crucial matter is to

determine whether it is constitutional for General Musharraf to meet with or summon the Chief Justice while wearing an army uniform.” (Isa, 2007) The chief of army protocol reports to the Chief Justice, and the entire conduct directed towards him is a catalogue of brutality, abuse, intimidation, and blatant disregard for his fundamental rights. The accusations made against the Chief Justice were baseless; they were only part of a plot to remove him from office as he was starting to stand in the way of General Musharraf's autocratic policies. Beyond all the claims of transparency and modern enlightenment, the administration has yet to disclose in public the specifics of the misconduct allegations against the Chief Justice. Ayaz Amir expressed his criticism in his column, saying, “Notably, at a time when the allegation against Chief Justice refers to his demand of favors for his son and extra protocol for himself, the relatives of the president, Shahzad Alam and Dr. Nigar living in Lahore, are always escorted by the police and have police guards outside their houses in 12-E Model Town, and 130 M Extension, respectively.” (Amir, 2007) There is no concern about being mentioned negatively. Actually, there was harsh condemnation in every media outlet, even the daily *Dawn*. In front of the public, they were exposing numerous obscure facets of the problem. During this period, a number of TV networks were also outlawed, but the outpouring of criticism and irony directed at the government persisted. Not only did the general public feel desperate, but the media was also filled with reports of deals between the PPP and the government following the democratic charter. The nation as a whole found fresh bravery in response to the president's remark against the Chief Justice.

According to the Supreme Judicial Council's July 20, 2007, decision, Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry was reinstated in his position. The presidential decree prohibiting the Chief Justice of Pakistan from sitting as a Supreme Court judge was unanimously overturned by the Council as unlawful. The Council unequivocally said that there was no legal basis for the directives appointing Justice Javed Iqbal as the acting Chief Justice. The media, lawyers who started the campaign for the reinstatement of the Chief Justice, and the Pakistani people all felt victorious over the Musharraf administration as a result of this ruling. The editorial from June 21 stated, “On that crucial day in the Chief Justice and President's meeting, Gen. Musharraf did not foresee the consequences of his conduct.” (*Dawn*, 2007) He was prepared for the Chief Justice to submit to the overwhelming evidence against him and then quietly fade away. Rather, Justice Chaudhry maintained his ground and, with a single, audacious gesture, finally shifted the nation's political power dynamics. The masses of Pakistan had a constant sense of change in their circumstances following the coup on October 12.

It wasn't the first time in Pakistani judicial history that a judge dared to disagree with the autocratic regime. A large number of judges were dismissed from their positions in 2000 when they were requested to take the oath of office under PCO. However, they did not have the same backing as Justice Chaudhry did from Pakistan's legal community, the general public, or the media. Chief Justice Chaudhry would now be viewed as the country's rescuer. There was a mystical belief among the populace that the Chief Justice might somehow revive the spirit of the constitution, as Tanvir Ahmad Khan pointed out in his column. “Because of the Chief Justice's moral courage and commitment to the constitution, the public's hopes have now shifted from the parliament, which gave up on them as soon as the elections were over, to him.” (Khan, 2007) The Seventeenth Amendment was drafted by the parliament in a context reminiscent of reductionism, with the Supreme Court serving as a safeguard against the Constitution's tampering and corruption.

The notion that at least one person might defend the nation's fundamental values had restored hope to the Pakistani people, who had been disappointed by the return of democracy after the 2002 elections. If there had not been military coups in Pakistan, these issues might have been settled long ago. Without a doubt, the return of democracy is the only thing that can keep Pakistan as a state alive,” said Tanvir Ahmad in a follow-up statement. (Ahmad, 2007) There wouldn't have been any legal difficulties in Pakistan if the country had been enjoying a functional democracy. If Pakistan's parliament was willing to

respect law and order rather than just legalize the clearly unlawful and unconstitutional activities of individuals who gain power in this terrible country, such crises would never arise. Unfortunately for Pakistan, though, the military has always believed it had to “save the country” from political instability and to get involved in matters of social, religious, economic, and other concerns. They always come in as rescuers, but the nation soon got tired of the old ones and started looking forward to the new ones.

### ***Dawn and Lal Masjid Saga***

While the Supreme Judicial Council was still considering the presidential reference against Justice Chaudhry, another issue involving the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad arose. The main characters were two brothers, Maulana Abdul Rashid and Maulana Abdul Aziz, who violated the country's law and order by bringing illegal weapons into the mosque and the *Jamea Hafsa madressah*. They also contested the legitimacy of the government. A military operation was launched against them, disregarding the mosque's honor and dignity. Negotiations were attempted prior to the initiation of the militant action against the Red Mosque, but Abdul Rashid Ghazi was unaccommodating. Both points of views, regarding the government's decision to take military action, were given space in the newspaper *Dawn*. The editorial expressed disapproval of the cowardly attempt of Maulana Abdul Aziz to flee while wearing a *burqa* and expressed support for military action, saying that the government must relentlessly pursue terrorists and criminals disguising themselves as “soldiers of Islam.” (*Dawn*, 2007) They are cowards because they know that their position is ethically questionable, even if they have the capacity to periodically cause issues for the government, as shown by Abdul Aziz's offer of escape and the conclusion of the Lal Masjid siege. As a result of its liberal views and lack of involvement in any sectarian activity, the daily *Dawn* has widespread popularity within the country's intellectual circles. It has also been known to present unbiased coverage of the issues of national or international concern. On the editorial page of the newspaper *Dawn*, there was a heated debate over the events around Lal Masjid, the history of this religious militancy, and solutions for handling this national problem. In his column, I. A. Rehman gave a very quick overview of the history of religious extremism in Pakistan. “Soon after Pakistan was established, the ulema who had supported the independence movement on religious grounds demanded that the state be converted to Islam. Consequently, in 1949 the Objectives Resolution was accepted by the Constitutional Assembly. There remained friction between the country's liberal and religious components even under Gen. Zia's leadership, when the state began to resemble a theocracy.” (Rehman, 2007) I. A. Rehman says that the new class of religious militancy has several major objectives in Fata and the surrounding areas, and Lal Masjid is a pretty minor item on their list. He continued, saying that “Pakistan's true dilemma is that the military supports militancy while it is in control. Even if these militants are unsuccessful in toppling the regime, they will have cleared the path for the rise of religio-political parties, which is the ultimate outcome of the military establishment's political incursions.” The Taliban faction, which was created by military dictator Gen. Zia, has exposed the theocratic camp's elevated status in addition to bringing in the bloodiest new form of religious militancy. The maintenance of the nation's democracy was the only way to combat the threat posed by religious radicalism.

Qazi Faez Isa, in a column, touched on the Ghazi brothers' beginnings in very little detail. “It is commonly known that in an effort to challenge the political establishment, Gen. Zia chose to back extremist groups.” (Isa, 2007) Isa went on to say that “once the government gave the two brothers, Abdul Rashid and Abdul Aziz, ownership of the Lal Masjid site, they began to disobey the rules and laws. When Ejazul Haq, the son of the same army general, took over as the head of this new military administration and banned any criminal charges from being made against them—even after weapons were discovered in their car—they gained more power.” Since Ejazul Haq was the son of the former army chief, the Musharraf regime was happy with his dealings with him; nonetheless, these

fundamentalists refused to accept the military government's privileges. The Lal Masjid issue was encouraged and fostered by the military government, which also purposefully initially treated it lightly. Maulana Abdul Rashid and Maulana Abdul Aziz, the brothers, have been fighting the state's authority since January 2007, when *Jamea Hafsa* students took control of the children's library. Instead of being addressed from the start, the issue was permitted to worsen. It shouldn't be difficult to handle the *Hafsa* women when they occupy the children's library in January, as proposed by Anwer Syed. (Syed, 2007) It might only take a dozen or so strong, competent police women to enter the building, eject the suspects, or make an arrest. By contacting the female police from the other provinces, the issue may be resolved amicably even in the upcoming months of March or April. Without a doubt, the government's inaction is to blame. Furthermore, the government ought to bear accountability for the results. The government could have prevented the deaths of the children and female students at *Jamea Hafsa* if it had acted promptly. Despite its rhetoric of liberalism and enlightened moderation, the Musharraf government actually followed the lead of Gen. Zia, his military predecessor, who sided with fundamentalist religious groups. Additionally, Gen. Musharraf fueled the flames of religious intolerance in order to obtain his vested interests. His alliance with the king's party, the PML (Q), and the MMA's religious political organizations is an eloquent illustration of this. Even the 17th Amendment's passage came about as a result of the military-mullah cooperation.

The Ghazi brothers were emboldened by the Musharraf government's stance, and they launched a raid on a massage parlor and abducted numerous Chinese citizens. Despite being against the law, the administration chose to ignore the fact that they had numerous firearms in the mosque. Ayaz Amir interpreted it as the part of Pakistan army's smartly propagated philosophy that the 'national interest' of the country is never safe in the hands of political leadership and they always run the government incompetently. (Amir, 2007) Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif's political administration would never have let this situation to get out of hand in the first place. Such unrestricted access would never have been granted to the Ghazi brothers. There was a widely held belief that the government was staging this drama in order to deflect public attention away from the judicial crisis. However, the editorial board of the daily *Dawn* refuted this conspiracy claim, stating, "A lot of people are wondering if this whole thing was just a plot to divert attention away from the many other pressing issues the administration was dealing with. It is completely nonsensical to connect it to the Chief Justice incident. While the case against the Chief Justice was pending in March, the girls from *Jamea Hafsa* took over the library in January." (*Dawn*, 2007) The editorial further stated that, despite the denial of any connection between the judicial crisis and the Lal Masjid issue, the government's inaction in handling the Lal Masjid affair during its slow development into a major crisis raised concerns among Pakistan's intelligentsia. And this demands that the government launch a legal investigation into the violent Lal Masjid standoff, make the findings public, and punish anyone found guilty of mistakes or violations of the law while performing their duties. It was also a truth that the Lal Masjid affair demonstrated the government's inability to deal with religious militancy and the intelligence community's lack of seriousness in handling the matter at the appropriate time. Initially, the Ghazi brothers and the students at *Jamea Hafsa* were allowed to do as they pleased, but when their irrationality got out of control, the military violently put an end to them. The observation that a democratic administration would never have allowed the Lal Masjid militancy such unrestricted access as the Musharraf regime did was spot on.

Muhammad Shehzad commented in his column that the discontinued supply of food, water, gas and electricity could have been used to safeguard the common people from the tyranny Lal masjid gang, practiced at the name of Islam. (Shehzad, 2007) There were numerous ways to prevent the Lal Masjid affair from developing into a full-blown crisis. However, none of the initiatives mentioned to end Lal Masjid militancy were really taken by the Musharraf administration. In actuality, despite all of the government's efforts to put an end to terrorism in the guise of religion, religious militancy was expanding quickly. Due to



the fact that this monster was likewise the product of a military ruler appeasing America, the government was unable to defeat terrorism. And while the Musharraf government was making every effort to prevent these religious extremists from receiving any further support from America, the Lal Masjid incident exposed both the government's shaky hold over Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as the militants' stronghold. This issue damaged the reputation of the president and the government's management of the fight against terrorism. This situation also contributed to the president's and the PML (Q)'s political defamation. According to Ayaz Amir, "The Lal Masjid brigade and the administration are completely unpopular with the population." (Amir, 2007) If a poll is conducted, it will likely show that public mistrust and discontentment with the Ghazi brothers and Gen. Musharraf are roughly equal. In actuality, the Musharraf administration—which was already dealing with a crisis in the judiciary—was pursued by a different issue that exacerbated the fear it was already experiencing. *Dawn* maintained its stance of moderation and handled the entire situation extremely fairly. On its editorial page, it provided space for views supporting the government as well as those opposing or criticizing it. The paper's editorials addressed the government's lack of crisis prediction skills and its decision to give the Ghazi brothers a long rope. On the other hand, it made numerous insightful recommendations and attempted to comprehend the government's issues with the fight against terrorism. The *Dawn* has attempted to comprehend the entire problem rather than merely criticizing in an attempt to increase reading.

## **Conclusion**

The military intervention on October 12, 1999, brought about a new dynamic in the politics of the country as well as the role of the media in politics. Amazingly, the media's function changed during the fourth military dictatorship (1999-2008). However, the media's role did not suddenly alter; rather, it did so over time. The media could no longer be controlled or forced to present the public with a biased image since times had changed. Musharraf owed the media a duty to give them their due. Due to the fact that our unit of analysis is limited to the editorial page of *Dawn*, we have focused on the editorials and columns that were published judicial and Lal masjid crises (2007), the two most decisive events, resulting in the downfall of Gen. Musharraf. Regarding the daily *Dawn*, it is the oldest newspaper in Pakistan, having been started as a weekly publication in 1941 by Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the country, as a representative of the Muslim League from Delhi. In October 1942, it turned into a daily newspaper and quickly gained national recognition. It was moved to Karachi after Pakistan was created in 1947, and it is currently the oldest and most read English-language daily in Pakistan. There is a liberal perception about the *Dawn*. Regarding its editorials and columns, they are not only very educational but also serve as a critical study of the topics in order to shape constructive and healthy public opinion. *Dawn's* editorials were quite eloquent, offering the administration very helpful recommendations in addition to criticism on the matter. Not only did it foster good public sentiment, but it also raised political consciousness among Pakistan's general populace. In addition to offering insightful historical comparisons of both the significant problems of national concern, the *Dawn's* editorials also offered constructive criticism.

## **Recommendations**

This research studied the role of *Dawn* in the restoration of democracy in the country through analyzing the columns and editorials published on the editorial pages and found that the critique, suggestions and recommendations made by the distinguished columnists and editor of the paper were worth considering for Gen. Musharraf. But unfortunately Pakistani military dictators are usually surrounded by yesmen and do not consider the advice outside from their circles.

Based on the findings of this research, it is highly recommended that if we want stable democracy in the country, its necessary to liberate media of all the political pressures

and also prestigious media organizations like *Dawn* should be considered while policy or decision making because these are the only platforms where the academic scholars or experienced journalists can communicate to the political leadership, whether military or civilian.

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