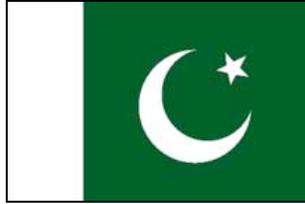

THE “GOOD” MUSLIMS:



US NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF PAKISTAN

September 11, 2001 – December 31, 2002

January 1, 2006 – January 15, 2007

AN ICMPA MEDIA STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The “Good” Muslims: US Newspaper Coverage of Pakistan evaluates how thirteen mainstream American newspapers have covered the nation of Pakistan—first in the year following September 11, 2001 and then five years later, in 2006. What were the events and issues and angles that were covered? In the years since 9/11 and the attack by al Qaeda on New York and Washington did coverage change? Did the frames of news reporting shift? In both years under investigation, what was covered—and what was not?

In one of the most famous short stories ever written, Sherlock Holmes engages in a conversation with Inspector Gregory, a Scotland Yard detective, over clues to the disappearance of a valuable race horse named Silver Blaze. After the two men go over the facts in the case, Gregory asks Holmes, “Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?” Yes, Holmes replies, “To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” Gregory is puzzled: “The dog did nothing in the night-time.” Exactly, says Holmes. “That was the curious incident.”¹

In fiction, in politics, in relationships, in the media, often what is most important is what is not said.

News media don’t cover all news. They can’t cover all news. So they triage. They cover the news they think is important to their own audience—in the case of US media reporting on global events, that typically means news that has a strong, direct link to American interests (usually security or economic interests, but at times humanitarian ones). They cover stories they can physically get to (visas are available, plane flights are possible, and the costs in time and money are not exorbitant) and where still or video images can be taken. They cover major international breaking news—the big event that just happened—but usually only in those places of long-term or specific interest to Americans: a hostage-taking in Iran and the British response, nuclear disarmament talks in North Korea, massive protests against the US in Iraq, stark evidence of global warming in the Bay of Bengal. They cover global trends and issues—terrorism, nuclear weapons, cataclysmic disasters—especially those that have received attention by the White House or Congress or by some other significant political player.

Knowing that, this study analyzed how major American newspapers did cover, and how they did not cover the country of Pakistan—an essential staging ground in the US war in Afghanistan, a staunch Muslim ally (the government, if not the people), a frontline in the “War on Terror,” a critical player in nuclear politics, a key conduit in the narcotics trade, a major recipient of American aid. What was said...and what was not said? And finally, what did we observe that was, like Sherlock Holmes’ dog, “curious”?

SUMMARY

The “Good” Muslims: US Newspaper Coverage of Pakistan is a study that analyzes news coverage of Pakistan by thirteen major agenda-setting US newspapers: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Miami Herald*, *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Seattle Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*. Two time periods were considered: September 11, 2001 to December 31, 2002 and January 1, 2006 to January 15, 2007.

The “Good” Muslims supports five major findings about these newspapers’ coverage of Pakistan during these two periods:

1. Terrorism Is Monolithic—All Terrorism Is Conflated

News coverage of Pakistan reinforced the Bush administration’s representation of global terrorism as a single category of threat. Journalists often referenced the Taliban and al Qaeda together, and failed to specifically identify other indigenous Pakistani groups when they were responsible for acts of terror. And following the December 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament, journalists raised the specter of “terrorists” gaining control of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons.

2. Madrassas Are Breeding Grounds for Terrorists

News coverage of Pakistan emphasized the role Pakistan plays in global terrorism. One way in which that was done was through stories about “madrassas” which were represented as indoctrination centers for young “jihadists” and as breeding grounds for discrimination against women.

3. Victory in the “War on Terror”—at least in Pakistan—Is Not Assured

News coverage assumed the centrality of Pakistan in US foreign policy, but even with American troops in the region the reporting did not reflexively wave the flag, even in the months immediately following 9/11. While US-based stories on the region accepted the Bush administration’s assertion that “War on Terror” was being successfully fought on the ground in Afghanistan, articles datelined from the region were cautioning that victory in the war against the Taliban and for hearts and minds was not so evident.

4. In 2001/2002: Pakistani Women Are the “Good” Muslims

News coverage and commentary in 2001-2 represented the role of women in Pakistan as essential. Post-9/11, when American periodicals were asking plaintively “Why Do They Hate Us?”—where the “they” meant “Muslims”—finding “good” Muslims became a pressing concern. Women became those “good” Muslims; they were the “peacemakers” who the West could use to find the solution to terrorism at the family, the tribal or ethnic and the national level.

5. In 2006/2007: Maybe American Foreign Policy Is to Blame

By 2006 the compelling issue in much of the news coverage of Pakistan was no longer who were the Muslim “good guys,” it was whether (or even how) Americans had become the “bad guys.” Reporters, columnists and opinion writers observed that it was not only the enemy who was acting reprehensibly—it was the Bush administration’s prosecution of the “War on Terror” that was the “moral burden.”

The “Good” Muslims: US Newspaper Coverage of Pakistan is organized into two main parts, a “Major Findings” section that details the key conclusions of the study and a “General Findings” section that gives additional analysis. In that latter section there are extensive citations of the newspaper articles in order that those reading the study can assess at least to some degree for themselves the validity of the qualitative analysis made here.

MAJOR FINDINGS

This study supports five major findings about the way US newspapers (specifically the 13 newspapers considered) reported on Pakistan from September 11, 2001 to December 31, 2002 and from January 1, 2006 to January 15, 2007. Perhaps unsurprisingly, differences did emerge from these two spans of time, not only in the quantity of coverage, but in the stories covered and the framing of them.

1. Terrorism Is Monolithic—All Terrorism Is Conflated

In both time periods, news coverage of and commentary on the “front-line state” of Pakistan reinforced the Bush White House’s political representation of global terrorism as a single category of threat.² Different types of terrorism (terrorism by the state or by non-state actors, for example) and distinctions among different terrorist groups were rarely adequately distinguished. The Taliban and al Qaeda were often referenced together, and other indigenous Pakistani groups that engage in terror were often not identified as the perpetrators of specific acts—the term “terrorist” being used generically—or if they were identified the groups were not usefully differentiated.

The distinctive terrorists groups and their histories were too often glossed over or blurred, as in this 2006 article by *The Dallas Morning News*:

- DMN, Jan. 22, 2006: “The Pakistani military's desires to "prick" India (and support a jihad against Soviet forces in Afghanistan) helped build a Frankenstein monster of Islamist terrorism that swept across the world.

Today, Pakistan is a key ally in the Bush administration's war on terrorism. Pakistani officials say they've cracked down on terrorists and scattered them to remote mountain areas. But organizations supporting al-Qaida and terrorist attacks in India operate openly in Pakistan and are tolerated as long, government officials say, as they do not engage in terrorism.”³

A range of terms was used often interchangeably in a single article, among them “terrorist,” “militant” and “extremist,” further obfuscating real differences in tactics, motives, history and politics and culture among the groups.

Papers drew connections between al Qaeda and other groups—even without explicit reasons—and linked in fears of al Qaeda or some unnamed “terrorists” gaining control of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, as in this editorial from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

- PI, June 4, 2002: “The United States has given insufficient attention to South Asia over the years. That changed after Sept. 11. Now, the U.S. interest in calming this region is clear. The militants that launched terrorist attacks into India—like the December assault on the Indian Parliament or the one last month on an Indian army camp—may even have links to al-Qaeda.

The gravest danger should India and Pakistan again face off is that even a conventional fight would escalate into a nuclear conflict. The worst scenarios put casualties from a nuclear attack as high as 12 million.

In another nightmare scenario, an unstable Pakistan could result in the moderate president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, being replaced by Islamic extremists, who would then have nuclear weapons. At that point, forget about eliminating al-Qaeda remnants in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”⁴

The consequence of this? Audiences should be afraid, very afraid.

2. Madrassas Are Breeding Grounds for Terrorists

In both time periods, news coverage of and commentary on Pakistan emphasized the role Pakistan plays in global terrorism. Once again language played a role in reinforcing Pakistan’s links to terrorism.

Pakistan was linked to terrorism through stories about “madrassas.” Madrassas were noted as breeding grounds for terrorists and for discrimination against women. Very few efforts were made to define the term “madrassas” for the American audience. “Madrassa” literally means school in Arabic (and other regional languages, although Arabic is the root), but the word was most often used by the news outlets in this study to refer to a school that is an Islamic fundamentalist one. As the recent controversy over Sen. Barack Obama’s childhood schooling pointed up, the use of the word “madrassa” carries a loaded political meaning. *The New York Times* in fact ran a correction to its January 24, 2007 story covering the Fox News controversy:

“An article on Wednesday about a pointed exchange between CNN and Fox News over a Web site report that said Senator Barack Obama had attended an Islamic school or madrassa in Indonesia as a child referred imprecisely to madrassas. While some teach a radical version of Islam, most historically have not. (Mr. Obama’s office has said the report is untrue.)”⁵

In this study, few articles that used the term “madrassa” were careful to signal that the term has been politicized. As a result when articles mentioned “madrassas” the inference readers were supposed to make was that all those schools were anti-American, anti-Western, pro-Taliban, pro-terrorist centers having less to do with teaching basic literacy and more to do with political indoctrination. Numerous stories referred to Pakistan having thousands of madrassas across the country, making it appear that the country was virtually awash with training camps for terrorists masquerading as schools for boys, as in this *Seattle Times*’ article from Sept. 16, 2001: “While most of Pakistan’s 140 million people are devout but relatively moderate Muslims, there are several strong militant Islamic groups operating in the country and tens of thousands of religious schools that turn out young boys dedicated to jihad holy war.”⁶

“Jihad” and “jihadists” were other words, like “madrassa,” that when employed were rarely noted as being politically loaded terms. As typically used in the US press, “jihadists” was understood to be a synonym for “fanatics in an Islamic holy war,” but in the Arab and Muslim

world the term “jihad” carries dozens of meanings and connotations, only one of which is “Islamic holy war.” In fact “Jihad” is a common first name in the Arab and Muslim world for both men and women, even for those who are Christian.

3. Victory in the “War on Terror”—at least in Pakistan—Is Not Assured

There has been much criticism directed at the media in general for their stenographic reporting in late 2002 and early 2003 of the Bush administration’s message on Iraq. This study found that the Afghan and Pakistan theater, by contrast, was more critically and more independently reported and analyzed. The perfunctory patriotism that swept the United States following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon did not entirely blind those reporters on the ground in Pakistan to what was taking place in the region in the administration’s “War on Terror.”

In both time periods, journalists and commentators assumed the centrality of Pakistan in US foreign policy, but they offered contradictory perspectives on Pakistan’s role that were more blunt than the official line from Washington. By early 2002, the administration’s failure to capture Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar prompted reporters and other analysts to look critically both at the conduct of the war and the rhetoric of the White House:

- Articles did represent Pakistan as a Western ally but they also emphasized that it was a base of operations for Osama bin Laden, the Taliban and “terrorists” in general,
- Articles represented Pakistan as a regional model of moderation but did not hide that it was also a tinderbox for regional conflagration,
- Articles represented Pakistan as a relatively stable state under the control of a progressive military leader but did also report on the shocking religious and tribal excesses—that were on occasion artfully managed by that military dictator.

While there was a general tendency in the year following 9/11 for the coverage to emphasize the more benign first characterizations, and a general tendency in 2006 for the coverage to stress the more pejorative second characterizations, in both time periods there were articles that focused on the positive force Pakistan exercised in the area and in the world as well as articles that characterized Pakistan as part of the problem—in the fight against terrorism, nuclear nonproliferation, narcotics, etc..

4. In 2001/2002: Pakistani Women Are the “Good” Muslims

News coverage as well as commentary in 2001-2 represented the role of women in Pakistan as essential. Women would be the saviors of the region; they were the “good” Muslims who wanted peace and freedom. Although the newspapers did report on occasional news from Pakistan that centered on a woman or women, what strikingly emerged post-9/11 in the media’s coverage of Pakistan was the insertion of women into stories that did not affect women specifically or predominately.

- Post-9/11, when American periodicals were asking plaintively “Why Do They Hate Us?”—where the “they” meant “Muslims”—finding “good” Muslims became a pressing concern. In article after article, women became those “good” Muslims; they were the “peacemakers” who the West could use to find the solution to terrorism at the family, the tribal or ethnic and the national level.
- Many stories depicted women as “saviors.” Multiple tales of women struggling to gain an education for themselves or to facilitate the education of others spoke about the transformative power of women’s education at the local level. Stories about women in authority—in politics and business—spoke about the transformative power of women at the national and international level.
- Women, rather than children became the most notable “innocent” victims of indiscriminate violence. Certain children were not innocent, articles made clear—indeed they were to be feared. Boys, even very young boys were part of the terrorist matrix, in large measure, it was suggested, because of their indoctrination at madrassas.
- Articles about women’s “victim” status at the hands of men validated the binary idea that Muslim women are “good” and Muslim men are “cruel,” perhaps even “terrorists.” Care was sometimes taken to articulate how that victimization did or didn’t accord with fundamentalist or moderate Islam.
- Women’s clothing was a subject of intense interest. “Taking off the veil” was both a real and metaphorical statement and articles measured women’s freedom by how “uncovered” they were and how close their clothing approximated Western notions of dress.
- Women were seen as the “canaries in the mines”—their relative health and safety and even their public presence, was discussed in articles as a prime indicator of political well-being and religious tolerance. Many stories observed that a nation’s attitudes towards women were a test for whether or not that nation could be a “real” ally in the “War on Terror.”

5. In 2006/2007: Maybe American Foreign Policy Is to Blame

By 2006 there was no longer a need to employ Muslim women as a foil to Muslim men. The compelling issue in much of the news coverage of and commentary on Pakistan was no longer who were the Muslim “good guys,” it was whether (or even how) Americans had become the “bad guys.” Articles reported that it was not only the enemy who was acting reprehensibly—it was the Bush administration’s prosecution of the “War on Terror” that was the “moral burden.”

1. There was still an interest in women's education, but not because empowering women would end terrorism. Journalists made lesser and more familiar claims—women's education would help fight poverty and over-population pressures.
2. Articles were noticeably more pessimistic about women's victimization. Their victimization was no longer used to distinguish usefully between women and men in Pakistan. Media used the rape stories from 2006 to indict the country wholesale. Articles noted that women found themselves twice victims: first of a crime, then of the Pakistani system of justice.
3. In 2001, the media generally represented that the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan would bring great changes for women in the region, including Pakistan. Five years later that was clearly not the case. As a result, the metaphorical references to women taking off "veil" faded, and there were fewer articles about Muslim dress, at all—even despite the contemporary tempests in France and elsewhere over the banning of headscarves in schools.

GENERAL FINDINGS

More Coverage in 2001-2002 than in 2006

There were far more articles about Pakistan and that mentioned Pakistan in the months and year following 9/11 than there were in 2006. Indeed, there were far more stories about and datelined Pakistan in 2001 and 2002 than there had been for years. There were four key reasons:

1. American Troops Go to Pakistan (and Afghanistan)

The rapid deployment of US and allied troops to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan following the World Trade Center bombing meant that the coverage of that operation in late 2001 and 2002 frequently referenced Pakistan in three ways: as a launch site for American and coalition forces moving into the region, as a hiding place for Taliban fighters and al Qaeda operatives, and as a destination for refugees.

Many of these stories were in keeping with similar stories about American forces in other regions and in other wars. The American filter in the media's coverage, the notion of relevance to the United States, was paramount. What are the US soldiers doing? As a headline in *The Boston Globe* had it: "Preparing for War's Casualties as US Troops Move into Afghanistan: Medics Prepare to 'Bring Good Medicine to Bad Places.'"⁷

Articles across the board implicitly asked: What does this war mean for "us"? A typical war story in this mode was a page-one *Boston Globe* article, jointly reported from Washington and Afghanistan in early November. Said the lead: "The US-backed Northern Alliance yesterday captured the embattled city of Mazar-e-Sharif in a preliminary victory that could boost the American military campaign by opening the first land route for military forces and humanitarian aid into Afghanistan, alliance commanders and US defense officials said."⁸

Other articles implicitly supported the administration's drawing of direct connections between the military combat in Afghanistan and the safety of Americans at home by folding the news together into one article—oft-times into the same sentence. Dan Baltz wrote in his lead to an October 2001 front-page story in the *Washington Post*, for example: "U.S. forces unleashed a fresh round of airstrikes at military and terrorist targets in Afghanistan yesterday as the Bush administration issued an extraordinary series of alerts aimed at protecting Americans and the nation's economic infrastructure from new terrorist attacks."⁹

The numbers of outside journalists based in Pakistan meant extensive coverage, however, of a quite wide range of diplomatic, political and even cultural and economic stories about the country that would never have been reported without a critical mass of media on the ground in the region. Stories appeared about refugees streaming across the Afghan border carrying all their belongings in plastic bags as well as about Osama bin

Laden hiding in the NW Frontier Province, about Christians in Pakistan as well as about Pakistani “jihadists,” about an epidemic of hemorrhagic fever as well as about the political machinations of Pres. Pervez Musharraf, about the physical risks of covering a covert war as well as about the exorbitant costs of helicopter rides.

Interestingly, the patriotism that swept the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 spilled over relatively little into coverage of Pakistan. Articles datelined in Washington represented Americans (and at times their coalition and Pakistani allies) as the good guy rescuers, the Taliban and al Qaeda the “evil” villains, in the words of President Bush, and the Afghan people as the helpless victims to be rescued. The US-based stories that used a simplistic set of characters exaggerated the agency of American intervention in the region, minimized the involvement and efficacy of indigenous and coalition efforts in Afghanistan, and made plausible the notion that there was a simple military solution—over-powering / throwing out the Taliban—to the articulated problem that Afghanistan and Pakistan were harboring terrorists.

But many stories datelined from Pakistan—even in 2001—were cautioning that the world seen from South Asia looked far different; there were no easy solutions. An *LA Times* story from October 2001 was representative of many of the nuanced accounts by reporters in the area. The front-page story by Tyler Marshall told of villagers in Pakistan who “see Islam under attack” by US military bombing of Afghanistan:

- LAT, Oct. 24, 2001: “A sense of smoldering resentment pervades the atmosphere here—part of a larger mood that has spread across Pakistan's wild and remote frontier region since the bombing campaign began 2 1/2 weeks ago. In these areas where tribal ties and the rhythm of life have long ignored national borders, the feeling is that cousins—often quite literally—are under attack in neighboring Afghanistan.

This strong reaction to recent developments has helped fuel opposition to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and to his decision to side with the West in the war against terrorism. It has also stoked anti-Americanism even where American culture never intrudes and has shaken the quiet calm of rural life.”¹⁰

And as early even as January 2002 journalists were writing a more complicated story not only about Pakistan and Afghanistan, but about Washington politics—in part because the war news that had been freely given out by the Bush administration in late 2001 was now off-limits, as David Sanger of *The New York Times* noted in a page-one article:

- NYT, Jan. 10, 2002: “Today, officials raised alarms about Iranian meddling in the lawless western reaches of Afghanistan and an American transport plane crashed, for still-unexplained reasons, in Pakistan. American troops were engaged in a search of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan for hundreds of Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders still at large, and what just weeks ago looked like a ruthlessly effective war from the air today looks more like police work in a bad neighborhood.

The new complexities are evident from the way Mr. Bush and his top aides speak about their challenges these days -- and what they have suddenly chosen not to talk about.

‘We're in a dangerous phase,’ the president volunteered on Saturday during a swing through the West Coast. He was speaking of the cave-to-cave searches in Afghanistan and the death on Friday of Sgt. First Class Nathan R. Chapman, of the Army Special Forces, killed in a firefight that now appears to have been an ambush. But he could just as easily have been talking about everything else that has cropped up while he was cutting new trails across his 1,600-acre ranch.

Once Mr. Bush talked about the hunt for Mr. bin Laden and Mullah Omar regularly, without prompting. Now he rarely does, beyond a cursory repetition, in every speech, that sooner or later, somewhere, the United States will bring ‘the evil ones’ to justice.”¹¹ *(All sections with bolded type are emphases added by the study’s author.)*

2. The “War on Terror” Gets Personal for Journalists

The kidnapping and beheading of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Karachi, Pakistan in early 2002 also brought much coverage of Pakistan. In part the attention was due to media covering the disappearance then death of one of their own, but the coverage was also due in part because the case appeared to open another—more personal—front in the “War on Terror.”

As an editorial in the *Boston Globe* said:

- BG, Fed 23, 2002: “Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl died going about his business.

In that respect he is like the office workers who perished in the World Trade Center, the rescuers who tried to save them, the personnel cut down in the Pentagon, the passengers on the planes hijacked on Sept. 11, and all victims of terrorism who died before that date and since.

A video of Pearl's execution has confirmed one more barbarous political statement made by extremists and one more heart-wrenching loss of an innocent soul. Pearl leaves his wife, Mariane, pregnant with their first child, his parents, his family, his friends, and his colleagues in grief and shock in a replay of the pain felt by so many other mourners.”¹²

In breaking news stories and well as longer features, relentless images and emotional language brought home the vulnerability of Americans—and especially journalists—on the frontlines of the war on terrorism.

And media used the identification of Daniel Pearl as a Jew by his captors to draw explicit and implicit connections between the new terrorism of al Qaeda and historic terror of the past, including the Nazi era.

That kind of argument, however, further obfuscated two key unanswered questions: What is terrorism? and Who are the “terrorists” “we” Americans are fighting? Indeed, a major problem noted in the study was that throughout all the years looked at during this study, few journalists stopped to make usable distinctions among groups labeled as

terrorist, often mentioning that a certain group or individual had “ties to al-Qaeda” or was “linked to al Qaeda” without specifying what that meant. The inference drawn, therefore, was that terrorism is monolithic—that especially in Pakistan there are no meaningful distinctions among different groups.

Following the bombing of the Indian Parliament in December 2001, a number of newspapers, the *Wall Street Journal* among them, wrote articles on the State Department’s additions of Umma Tameer-e-Nau and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, two of the Kashmiri-based groups to the list of proscribed terrorist organizations.¹³ And while some journalists, such as Daniel Pearl, took that opportunity to write about those groups and Pakistan’s possible complicity in their terrorist activities,¹⁴ not all the papers or articles were clear about who those groups were or what their connections were not only to the attacks in India but to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. In one *Washington Post* editorial for example, a number of organizations—Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Taliban and al Qaeda were all mentioned effectively in one virtual breath, with no effort to distinguish among them or even to identify them beyond calling them all, interchangeably “terrorist,” “militant” and “extremist” groups:

- WP, Dec. 20, 2001: “Policymakers are still debating where the war on terrorism should go next, but as a practical matter it has already moved—to Pakistan, where it has been driven by an extraordinary and dangerous confluence of events in the past few days. Hundreds of Taliban and al Qaeda fighters, probably including a number of senior leaders, have filtered into Pakistan from Afghanistan, eluding the army of Gen. Pervez Musharraf. At the same time—and surely not by coincidence—Pakistani terrorist groups long connected to both al Qaeda and the Taliban [Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed are named later in the editorial] have been credibly blamed by India for carrying out a suicide assault on the parliament building in New Delhi. Mr. Musharraf, who chose, after Sept. 11, to align his military regime with the United States and against the terrorists, now faces a crucial, two-front test of that commitment. **Final defeat of the Taliban and al Qaeda may depend on how aggressively his forces move to kill or arrest the militants who have crossed the border; and a serious move against the Pakistani groups is essential to divorcing his government from extremism and avoiding military action by India.**”¹⁵

By 2006, journalists still often reported on terrorist attacks by blaming al Qaeda, on occasion because it was not known which specific groups had been responsible for individual attacks. As a *Chicago Tribune* article that reported on the March 2006 bombing near the US Consulate in Karachi and referenced two earlier attacks in 2002 said: “Most of these attacks have been blamed on Islamic militant groups linked to al-Qaida.”¹⁶ But the result of such attributions was to continue to lead Americans to believe that al Qaeda’s reach was everywhere.

Papers not only continued to throw up al-Qaeda—and Pakistan—as the ultimate link in global terrorism, but interchangeably used the terms “terrorists,” “militants,” “extremists” and “jihadists,” as in this article from the *Chicago Tribune*:

- CT, Aug. 12, 2006: “Until recently, many counterterrorism officials believed that extremist enclaves in Pakistan largely offered inspiration, ideological inculcation or even limited training for a new generation of militants living in the West who became radicalized or inspired by al-Qaida propaganda.

The potential lethality of these cells ranged from the apparently innocuous, such as the so-called paintball jihadists in Virginia, to the extreme, including the London transit bombers who killed themselves and 52 others last year.

But the nature of the alleged trans-Atlantic plot foiled last week, a scheme that appears to have required substantial technical expertise and detailed planning, suggests the "homegrown" groups that pose the greatest terrorism threat may now be receiving more significant support, if not direct coordination, from within Pakistan.”¹⁷

But, as in that same *Tribune* article, there was more active acknowledgement of how much remained unknown about the terrorist “networks,” a lesson learned from the Iraq theater where it had become abundantly clear that intelligence sources, especially anonymous ones were not to be unreservedly relied on:

- CT, Aug. 12, 2006: “While much is still unknown, including whether there were any substantive ties between the alleged trans-Atlantic plotters and senior al-Qaida leaders hiding in Pakistan, current and former senior U.S. intelligence officials say Pakistan clearly serves as a bridge.

On one side are militants from the West who want to join the global jihad. On the other are more experienced extremists who can help fulfill those wishes, offer guidance, or even serve as conduits for senior al-Qaida lieutenants.”¹⁸

3. Evidence of the Expansion of the “War on Terror”

In the 16 months or so after 9/11 there were a number of terrorist attacks that occurred in Pakistan that appeared to target American or Western people or institutions. In addition to the kidnapping and death of Danny Pearl, the incidents that made at least some news in the US were as follows:

1. On March 17, 2002 two men from a group affiliated with al Qaeda attacked the International Protestant Church, a church that predominately serves the ex-patriot community. Five people, including two Americans, were killed by grenades thrown by the bombers and 40 were injured.
2. On May 7, a suicide car bombing in Karachi killed 15, including 11 French naval engineers.
3. On June 14, a truck driven by a suicide bomber was detonated outside the US Consulate in Karachi. Eleven people were killed, including a car full of Pakistani women, and 40 were injured. Although not confirmed, the attack also appeared linked to al Qaeda.
4. On July 13, 13 tourists, mostly Germans and Austrians, were wounded while they visited archaeological sites in Mansehra.

These stories were treated as short-term crises, and rarely lasted as long as a week in the news, despite the clear longer-term reverberations they would have in the region. But the fact that they were covered at all served to legitimate the notion that the “War on Terror” was expanding, and that Americans and Westerners in general were not safe anywhere. As *The New York Times* wrote after the US consulate bombing:

- “In a country rife with extremism and anti-American rage, officials here not only fear new terrorist acts, they expect them.

Last month, after the suicide assault on May 8 in Karachi that killed 11 French workers and three others, Pakistani intelligence officials told President Pervez Musharraf that a number of the country's most militant Islamic groups, including remnants of Al Qaeda, had agreed to join forces to launch fresh attacks against American targets.”¹⁹

It is worth noting that the following significant terrorist acts that killed Pakistanis in 2002 received relatively little international attention:

1. A March 2 attack on a procession of Shiites that killed 43 and wounded 160;
2. An August 5 attack by four gunman on the Murree Christian School for foreign students that killed six Pakistani guards;
3. An August 9 attack on a chapel in a missionary hospital in Taxila that killed three Pakistani nurses, one of the assailants, and wounded 20 others;
4. A September 25 attack by two gunmen that killed seven Pakistani Christian aid workers at the Institute for Peace and Justice in Karachi.

4. Not “Terrorism,” But “Horrors” Perpetrated Against Women

The treatment of women—often specific women—in Pakistan received significant international attention in 2001-2 because of spectacular individual cases. The rape victim Zafran Bibi, who was charged with adultery and sentenced to death by stoning, and the village elders-sanctioned gang rape of Mukhtaran Bibi gained national attention through the campaigning of Pakistani women’s rights groups. That publicity then brought international attention to not only the tribal and extra-judicial abuse of women, but to the violence tacitly allowed by the Hudood Ordinance and the Qisas and Diyat Ordinances.²⁰

“Gee-whiz” stories, as they are sometimes called in the trade, are always of interest—especially on slow news days—but the extraordinary abuse of women in several of these cases came to light in Pakistan because the country was under international scrutiny, and many foreign journalists were in the country and looking for stories to cover. *The New York Times* followed the case of Zafran Bibi, in part because they took her story to be emblematic of endemic problems in the country:

- NYT, June 8, 2002: “The case reached the court when Ms. Zafran, who is about 26, accused her brother-in-law, Jamal Khan, of raping her in the remote village in northwestern Pakistan where they lived.

No charges were brought against the brother-in-law because under the Islamic statutes in use here, called zina, rape can only be proved with the testimony of four male witnesses, a standard that is almost impossible to meet.

The fact that Ms. Zafran was convicted of adultery as a result of being raped was not unusual in Pakistan. Human rights groups say as many as half the women who report a rape are charged with breaking the laws of zina, which forbid any sexual contact outside marriage.”²¹

Women as a Prominent Focus of Attention in 2001-2002

Although certain major stories on Pakistan did emerge over the 16 months from September 12, 2001 until the end of December 2002 that specifically turned on a news event that featured a woman or women—the stories on Zafran Bibi and Mukhtaran Bibi, for example—what curiously emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 was the import of discussions of women into stories that did not affect women specifically or predominately. At a time when American periodicals were asking plaintively “Why Do They Hate Us?”—where the “they” meant “Muslims”—finding “good” Muslims became a pressing concern. Women became those “good” Muslims; it was through their intercession that the West—and especially the United States—would find the solution to violence.

All the US media in this study both tacitly and explicitly acknowledged that terrorism was the compelling story of the time. Terrorism became the issue to follow and even tangential stories—international business stories or travel stories or entertainment stories—often brought a terrorist angle into the coverage. Countries and issues that did not fit into this formulation fell off the radar, while other countries and regions gained new importance when an integral relationship between them and President Bush’s articulation of a “War on Terror” was identified.

Pakistan was a “beneficiary” of this new, intense interest—“beneficiary” in that the country was more prominently covered in the media. But unlike in the PR world, all news is not always good news, and much of the news that emerged from Pakistan was not good. There was a perception in US newsrooms that Pakistan was a key ally of the United States in the War on Terror, yet the news of Daniel Pearl and of the seemingly safe haven for the Taliban and al Qaeda forces in the NW Frontier Province gave US media pause. How to represent Pakistan as a desirable ally, yet report on the terrorists at work in the nation?

It is common in mainstream media’s coverage of international affairs for the media to tar an entire country or even region with a wide brush, to make few distinctions among even very active political opposition groups within a country—for example, much of the reporting on the Palestinians and the Iranians falls into this category. But in other situations, especially when reporters are stationed on the ground and there is ongoing interest in a region, nuances emerge in coverage: the politics and the peoples are not represented so monolithically. In those situations—coverage of the Balkans is a pertinent example—often one distinct group is identified as holding the moral high ground. Sometimes that group is represented as the victims of another group (often true, but not always as blamelessly as represented). Sometimes that group is identified as potential “saviors” in the situation—i.e. if only that group held the reins of power the situation would be ameliorated, at the very least.

Such was the case in the US media’s coverage of Pakistan in the months following the September attack on the World Trade Center and through all of the next year. The group that was identified as the potential saviors were women.

Women as Saviors: The Transformative Power of Women

Women were bluntly seen as “saviors”—through their intercession, courage and energy, figurative “light” would be brought to benighted places. Multiple tales of women struggling to gain an education for themselves or to facilitate the education of others spoke about the transformative power of women’s education for Pakistan (and often for Afghanistan) and the transformative power of women, such as in this page-one story in the *LA Times*.

- LAT, Oct. 8, 2002: “When the Jalal family went door to door 20 years ago urging parents to let their daughters attend a new girls school, people in this desert outpost branded them heretics.

The town's elders, many of them illiterate, declared that the Jalals were ‘opening the gates of hell.’ Once girls started getting educated, one man charged, they'd be able to write letters to their boyfriends.

But a few dozen brave parents, particularly those working as servants, enrolled their girls anyway. And that has made all the difference in their lives.

A decade after the first class graduated, this isolated desert region near the Iranian border has been affected in ways both simple and profound.

The school, which now hums with the voices of nearly 1,000 girls, has brought jobs here. It has tilted the economic balance in favor of the graduates, who have emerged as their families' breadwinners and hold the best-paying jobs in town.

The school also has brought colorful clothing, confidence and even condoms here. Girls as young as 10 have learned to just say ‘no’ if they don't like the men their parents have picked out for them to marry. Several have gone on to college, living in hostels a three-hour drive from home—independence inconceivable just a few years ago.

The classism and racism that still are powerful forces here are also beginning to erode. Darker-skinned servants' daughters--the descendants of African slaves--who never would have been chosen as brides by the town's landowners now dream of becoming doctors. One black student became a teacher and has built her family a house that sports a big new satellite dish.^{”22}

- CSM, Oct. 22, 2002: “In the short term, freedom can be as simple as venturing outside at 11 p.m. for the very first time, or ordering pizza just the way they like it. But for five young Afghan women who started their studies in the United States this fall, **freedom for their homeland encompasses long-term goals: peace, education, and equality, for starters.... it is bravery—their own and their families'—that has brought the women this far. During the Taliban's reign in Afghanistan, Ms. Sahar's father took her and her sisters to Pakistan so they could continue their education.**^{”23}
- LAT, Oct. 27, 2002: “In 1997, Shah, Saeed and 11 other women, all born in Pakistan and now Southern California residents, decided that **the best way they could help their homeland was to help its girls. They established the literacy group to take education to girls in the countryside.** For five years, they have worked and watched as their dream has become reality. The organization, once run out of members' homes, now runs offices in Los Angeles and Islamabad. Affiliate chapters have sprung up in six U.S. cities and in

Singapore. More than 10,000 girls have walked through the doors of the group's schools.”²⁴

There were multiple stories about women in authority and how their example distinguishes Pakistan from other more “backward” Islamic countries—stories about Benazir Bhutto and women who hold seats in Parliament and as ambassadors (in the month after 9/11 both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* wrote prominent profiles on the Pakistani ambassador to the US, Maleeha Lodhi), to women who were starting up beauty salons in post-Taliban Afghanistan, having learned their trade in Pakistan.²⁵ Stories also mentioned that General Pervez Musharraf was “widely viewed as progressive,” in part because of his “guaranteeing seats for women and minorities in the new Parliament.”²⁶

- USAT, Oct. 14, 2002: “**among the educated urban elite, it's not unusual to find women in powerful positions.** Samina Sultana runs a well-known cotton-buying firm here; Asma Jehangir is a prominent lawyer; and Benazir Bhutto was prime minister twice from 1988-90 and 1993-96.”
- WP, July 3, 2002: For a Muslim woman from a developing country, [Maleeha] Lodhi said, stereotyping still tests her patience. Only a couple of days ago, when she and her deputy chief of mission, Zamir Akram, arrived at a U.S. senator's office, a young female staffer came out to greet them. ‘This way, Mr. Ambassador,’ she said, addressing herself to Akram, who leaves Washington next week to become ambassador to Nepal. ‘He will have his own mission and he will no longer have to explain it is not him, but her,’ Lodhi quipped. ‘The good part is that, together, we are denting this male-sided -- for lack of a better word to describe lop-sided -- world view. **We women in Pakistan have a long way to go, but we have been making a difference,**’ she said in thanking Marilyn Sephacle, president of the Women Ambassadors Foundation. There are now 17 female ambassadors in Washington.”²⁷

But others compared Pakistan to more developed “liberal” countries with substantial Muslim populations and found it lacking in its treatment of women, one indication of its susceptibility to terrorism. *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman noted:

- USAT, Oct. 14, 2002: “... where Islam is imbedded in a pluralistic, democratic society, it thrives like any other religion. Two of India's presidents have been Muslims; a Muslim woman sits on India's supreme court. The architect of India's missile program, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, is a Muslim. Indian Muslims, including women, have been governors of many Indian states, and the wealthiest man in India, the info-tech whiz Azim Premji, is a Muslim. The other day the Indian Muslim film star and parliamentarian Shabana Azmi lashed out at the imam of New Delhi's biggest mosque. She criticized him for putting Islam in a bad light and suggested he go join the Taliban in Kandahar. **In a democracy, liberal Muslims, particularly women, are not afraid to take on rigid mullahs.**

Followed Bangladesh lately? It has almost as many Muslims as Pakistan. Over the last 10 years, though, without the world noticing, Bangladesh has had three democratic transfers of power, in two of which—are you ready?—Muslim women were elected prime ministers. Result: All the economic and social indicators in Bangladesh have been pointing upward lately, and Bangladeshis are not preoccupied hating America. Meanwhile in Pakistan, trapped in the circle of bin Ladenism—military dictatorship,

poverty and anti-modernist Islamic schools, all reinforcing each other—the social indicators are all pointing down and hostility to America is rife.

Hello? Hello? There's a message here: It's democracy, stupid!”²⁸

Women as “Peacemakers”

Women were identified as “peacemakers” rather than as terrorists. Article after article—some by reporters and others by commentators—argued that women exercise a temperate influence at the family, the tribal or ethnic and the national level.

- BG, Oct. 28, 2001: “To know what's going on in communities that breed terrorism, some of our best allies are the women at the grass-roots level who want stability and have a strong sense of what's going on. **The communities that breed terrorism relegate women to highly subservient roles. Women are often a moderating influence, and just having women visible can be an antidote to terrorist ideology.** In refugee camps in Pakistan, Afghan girls are not being educated. Countries where women have been elevated politically - Bangladesh, Turkey, and Iran, among others - are not breeding this terrorist culture. **Terrorist ideology and women's leadership are not compatible, so one way to attack terrorism is to advance the role of women.**”²⁹
- LAT, Nov. 16, 2001: “Since the Taliban overtook Kabul in 1996, **Westerners have tended to see Afghan women merely as the victims that they indeed are. Now we must see them as allies....** there must be an understanding that women's advancement is not just about giving women a fair shake, but about creating a safer, more stable world for us all. **By encouraging more active and integrated participation of women throughout the Islamic world, we can help foster moderation.**”³⁰
- BG, Nov. 14, 2001: **In light of reports of the rebel Northern Alliance's sudden military advances and reported excesses, including summary executions and looting,** [Eleanor] Smeal said **it was urgent for US and UN policy makers to ensure that women, who make up nearly 50 percent of Afghanistan's 27 million people, have a role in establishing public security and a civil society.**
 ‘It's not a feminist thing, it's not some girl thing. It's a democracy thing,’ said Theresa Loar, the State Department's adviser on women's issues during the Clinton administration.”³¹
- CSM, Nov. 7, 2002: “In fact, **the advancement of women has been a moderating force against religious extremists....** In Pakistan's elections last month, extremists fueled by outrage over US military intervention in Afghanistan made significant gains in electoral office. **A third of the parliamentary seats, however, are reserved for women, who—although they may be Islamists—defy extremists' proscription against women in public life.**”³²
- AJC, June 9, 2002: “...there is a little-known but vigorous grass-roots movement within Pakistan of nongovernmental organizations—mostly headed by women—that is attracting moderate, educated people to push for government reform.”³³

- WP, June 2, 2002: **“A group of women from India and Pakistan who came here for a peace conference in April returned home to find their countries on the brink of a nuclear catastrophe.... For the 10 women from India and Pakistan, coming to Westfield was an occasion to analyze how governments on each side had hijacked discourse to portray the other as the ‘enemy.’”**³⁴

If Women Are the “Good” Muslims then Men Are Evil

Women’s victimization at the hands of Muslim men—either through extra-legal means or through the law and courts—served to confirm the evil of what was considered the aggressively male Muslim extra-legal or official institutions. Articles, op-eds, editorials and other commentary about women’s “victim” status at the hands of men (through tribal law as well as Hudood ordinances, etc.) helped to cement the notion that women were the “good” Muslims.³⁵

- ST, Dec. 16, 2002: “Pakistan’s leading human-rights group said yesterday it was shocked at the public humiliation of an elected female official beaten and paraded naked through a village on the orders of a powerful landlord. The News on Sunday newspaper said the Dec. 7 incident in a village north of Lahore lasted several hours. It said the widowed mother of seven was beaten, stripped and paraded naked through the village by the landlord and his sons after she refused to back his candidate in a local election. Kamila Hyat, director of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said the incident was not the first of its kind. ‘At least four similar cases have been reported this year,’ she said, adding **the incident was indicative of the low status of women in Muslim, male-dominated Pakistan.**”³⁶

The victimization of women also validated the binary idea that Muslim women are “good” and Muslim men are “cruel,” perhaps even “terrorists.” Care was sometimes taken to articulate how that victimization did or didn’t accord with fundamentalist or moderate Islam.

- LAT, Nov. 4, 2001: “...’hate’ is the operative verb here. **Fundamentalists may claim that the sequestration and covering of women serves to ‘protect’ the weaker, more rape-prone sex. Or that they ‘protect’ men from having unclean thoughts. But the protection argument hardly applies** to the fundamentalist groups in Pakistan and Kashmir that specialize in throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women. **There’s a difference between protection and a protection racket.**”³⁷
- NYT, Aug. 6, 2002: **“How could a tribal council in the Pakistani village of Meerwala Jatoi decree that a young woman be raped in revenge for a crime allegedly committed by her brother? They were certain they could get away with it, of course.** And they would have, except that the local imam spoke out against it during Friday prayers; a journalist in the mosque that day reported the case; the story was picked up nationwide, then worldwide. Absent this circumstantial chain, the rape would have gone unremarked.

That was and is the norm for rape -- except that no tribal council (known as a panchayat or, in regions bordering Afghanistan, as a jirga) is known to have pronounced such a sentence before. Government officials routinely turn a blind eye to panchayat or jirga justice, which mostly settles matters related to land or family disputes. Police chiefs

and district commissioners attempting to end jirga law find no support from the government.

The strengthening of jirga law beyond Pakistan's tribal areas (where it has some legal sanction) has run parallel with the rise of Islamic extremism. Many Pakistanis connect the two as being "traditional" and therefore similar, but the fact remains that the jirga tradition has no connection to religion, and that many so-called traditions, particularly "Islamic laws," are not based in religion or tradition.³⁸

- NYT, July 17, 2002: Ms. Bibi's rape by decree might never have come to light; the family was afraid to fill in the blanks for the police. But a local imam, Abdul Razzaq, 40, heard about it. Though Ms. Bibi's father would not say much, Mr. Razzaq took a risk with his own safety by addressing the case during Friday Prayers almost a week later.

'I condemned this incident: that a poor girl had been raped and that they had invited the wrath of Allah,' he said. 'Such a barbaric and oppressive injustice has never been witnessed before.'

Mr. Razzaq believes in the panchayat as a way for poor people to resolve their disputes, often according to Islamic law. But this, he said, was **'against the spirit of Islam.'**

'This was not a panchayat," he said. "This was their cruelty."³⁹

Many of the articles that mentioned or featured women were "FYI" stories. Women and their stories were used to overturn the knee-jerk reactions of Americans in the aftermath of 9/11 that all Muslims were "bad." Anita Hill, a prominent professor and African-American activist, wrote an op-ed in the *Boston Globe* that emphasized the connection between the struggle for equality and the fight against terrorism. Women, in her estimation, were part of the solution, not part of the problem.

- BG, Jan. 21, 2002: "The new visibility of Afghan women—some veiled, some unveiled—served as poignant reminder of what **the war on terrorism at its best symbolizes: the end of one of the severest forms of government-enforced gender oppression, exclusion and silencing in recent history.**

Even a cursory look at history informs us that ending evil is all but impossible. But bringing about the end of oppressive laws that distinguish on the basis of gender and race is within our human potential. **The photo-journalistic focus on the faces of the women liberated from the rule of the Taliban was critical. It symbolized not only our gains but also our potential to achieve, and, in the case of Afghan women, restore, basic rights around the globe....** Since December the media focus on women in Afghanistan faded. And despite the fact that two women serve as cabinet members of the new coalition government, little is said about the role women will play in moving the country forward in the days to come.... Until all levels of economic contributions made by women in so-called troubled regions are fully understood and appreciated, any effort to develop sound geopolitical/economic policy is incomplete.

So far no woman has been captured or imprisoned in this new war.

However, **as our country moves to fight terrorism, the absence of women in terrorist activities should not detract from the meaningful role women in this country and in Afghanistan can play in ending it.**⁴⁰

Accounts of a male-female human rights double standard were many. A front-page story in the *Boston Globe* told the stories of several women:

- BG, Jan. 14, 2002: “Rahima and her older sister are victims of the cruelest Catch-22 of the former Taliban rule: Unable to support themselves in Afghanistan, they fled to Pakistan, where they now earn their living as ‘keeps,’ women who have sex with four or five regular customers each month in exchange for money to pay rent or the electric bill.
‘In America, I think it is possible to live without a man,’ said Rahima in halting English. “But here, even in Pakistan, you need a father, a husband, or a brother. We don’t have any man. . . . It makes our life so difficult.””⁴¹

A *New York Times* article quoted a Pakistani human rights activist as saying: “Government officials have made repeated promises to improve the plight of women, but they have failed to act...**When so many things are happening in this region, important things like human rights are not put in their proper perspective**”—the clear implication being that human rights for women, not just the fight against terrorism, should be of paramount local and international concern.⁴² A similar article ran in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* making the same point, but this time in the global arena: that human rights violations in Pakistan—like “honor killings”—“no longer draw the automatic condemnation of the United States....**Human rights have been pushed off the world’s agenda because the test of being a decent government means you support the war on terrorism. If you do that, all sins are forgiven.**”⁴³

Caring about Women More: The Hierarchy of Innocence

Women were seen as the “canaries in the mines”—their relative health and safety and even their public presence, was taken as a prime indicator of political well-being and religious tolerance. Said an op-ed in *The New York Times* a month after 9/11: “When radical Muslim movements are on the rise, women are the canaries in the mines. **The very visible repression of forced veiling and loss of hard-won freedoms coexists naturally with a general disrespect for human rights. This repression of women is not about religion; it is a political tool for achieving and consolidating power.**”⁴⁴

- LAT, Dec. 1, 2002: “**In three days, a visitor counted only eight women on the street.** In contrast, elsewhere in Pakistan it is not uncommon to see at least older women in the bazaars, buying cloth or carrying a child. **But Chaman has a conservative rural culture. The only schools most people go to are madrasas, conservative religious institutions from whose ranks many in the Taliban came.**”⁴⁵

What happened to women was taken as a synecdoche for what was happening to the country as a whole. Women (and children) became the most notable victims of indiscriminate violence, often the only ones mentioned in an identifiable way. Summaries of violence for Western consumption typically pick out certain features that are considered to be salient for that audience—were the victims foreigners (and therefore presumably of more interest)? Were the victims women and children? A front-page article in *The Washington Post* highlighted some—but not all—of the characteristics of those who had been killed, with a clear eye towards featuring those elements that it assumed would be of greatest interest to its readers:

- WP, Aug. 10, 2002: “A bomb exploded in front of a hotel in Karachi on May 8, killing 11 **French engineers** and three others [presumably Pakistanis?], including the bomber. The attempted car bombing of the U.S. Consulate occurred five weeks later.

The attacks have not, however, been limited to Karachi. A militant attacked a Protestant church in Islamabad on March 17, killing five people, including **two Americans**; six Pakistanis were killed when gunmen assaulted a Christian school in Murree on Monday; and three Pakistani **nurses** were slain today at the Presbyterian-supported hospital in Taxila, 25 miles west of Islamabad, Pakistan's capital.

News services reported that three men, one of them brandishing a pistol, ran through the front gate of the hospital, locked two watchmen into a guard booth and threw grenades at women who were leaving a chapel on the hospital grounds.

‘The attackers **targeted the female worshipers** as they were leaving the church,’ said the chief of police for Taxila, Syed Marvat Shah. ‘**The terrorists knew that their target will be innocent women and children because they dominate the church attendance on weekdays.**’ **At least 25 other people were wounded, half of them seriously.**”⁴⁶

- WP, June 23, 2003: “Investigators now believe the June 14 explosion outside the U.S. Consulate here was caused by a huge fertilizer bomb loaded aboard a pickup driven by a suicide bomber, according to Pakistani and U.S. officials close to the investigation.

FBI experts estimate the bomb weighed 500 pounds. It was so powerful that it reduced the pickup to pieces so small and scattered that they were initially taken for shards of another vehicle, a Toyota Corolla owned by a driving school. Investigators now believe that car, which carried five Pakistani women, was merely near the explosion, not the cause of it. **All five women died, along with seven other Pakistani passersby** [presumably adult males] **and the driver of the pickup.**

The previous theory, that a bomb was hidden in the Corolla without the occupants' knowledge, confounded investigators because it entailed the deliberate killing of unwitting Muslim women and a remote-control detonator. Investigators see the consulate bombing as the latest in a string of suicide attacks Islamic militants have launched against Western targets in Pakistan, with the apparent assistance of Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist network.”⁴⁷

In previous media studies conducted by the author,⁴⁸ the studies have identified a hierarchy of innocence used by journalists, the public and even human rights investigators. Typically those presumed to be the most “innocent”—and therefore the group that an outside audience would care most about—are infants, and then in descending order: young children up to the age of 12, pregnant women, teenage girls, elderly women, all other women, teenage boys, all other men. Or as *The New York Times* quoted a Scotland Yard war crimes investigator exhuming a mass grave in Kosovo in 1999: ““There were 60 bodies, all shot....There were seven children under 12, including a 4-year-old. There were three women, one over 60.””⁴⁹ In that story, 10 people were identified by age or gender or both. Fifty people were left entirely anonymous—the implication being that they were adult men, and therefore not only of less interest but perhaps even partly culpable in their own deaths because they were of an age and gender who could be fighters.

There are few other obvious innocents in this world than children. In depicting wars or famines, for example, children (and their mothers) make ideal victims, while men associated with violent

political factions can be murdered or can die by the thousands without creating a flutter of interest in their victim status. With many wars no longer being fought along ideological grounds transparent to Americans—as was the case during the Cold War—it can be problematic to champion, willy-nilly, “victims’” rights in general. As writer David Reiff has written, “humanitarian relief workers have learned to their cost [that] the kind of human empathy and instinctual solidarity with victims has not only proved to be insufficient, at times it has proved to be counterproductive, even destructive. That is because victims, except when they are children, are not just victims. The Rwandan Hutu refugees [suffering from cholera] in the camps in what was then eastern Zaire...are a case in point. They were victims all right; but many of them were also guilty of genocide.”⁵⁰

Adults in similar circumstances as children, therefore, usually elicit less concern. The innocent child is usually the indicator species. Just as the viability of certain frog species speaks to the overall health of an ecological microclimate, the well-being of children often speaks to the overall health of a political climate. Images in the American media of Kosovo orphans, young Darfur famine victims, Sierra Leone amputee survivors, Tamil Tiger child soldiers, pre-adolescent Thai prostitutes or shantytown urchins in Brazil, for example, have been used to rivet an American audience because the children are depicted as innocent victims of situations beyond their control. Their abused innocence implicitly condemns their home political environment. When children, therefore, are among the victims of violence, they are usually mentioned first, then women, then men.

What was fascinating in the coverage of Pakistan was that women were often the first victims mentioned. A *New York Times* front-page story on a shooting in a church in Pakistan noted the deaths in this way:

- NYT, Oct. 29, 2001: ‘**Sixteen worshipers died, including seven women, three children and the Protestants' 45-year-old pastor....** Islamic militant groups have been staging anti-American protests across Pakistan for weeks, and nobody at the church doubted that the protests had boiled over into something far more sinister. Their fear, voiced repeatedly, was that these killings were only the start.... **As mothers fell on daughters and big sisters on smaller ones,** [one assailant] marched forward until he stood above a pile of wounded and dead and pulled the trigger again and again until the screaming and the moaning stopped, according to survivors.’⁵¹

In this front-page article, only 11 of the 16 killed are accounted for: seven women, three children and a clergyman. Mothers, daughters and sisters are mentioned. Presumably, the other five killed were men, but they weren’t referenced by gender or family relationships.

By the same token, discussion of women’s human rights was at times mentioned before comments made about the status of children.

- NYT, March 29, 2002: “A report by a Pakistani human rights organization paints a bleak picture of respect for human dignity here, particularly for women and children.
Every day, on average, two women are victims of so-called honor killings, slain by a male relative for having ‘dishonored’ the family name, usually by marrying without permission. The killers are rarely punished, the report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan notes.

Over all, the report says, women have ‘almost no rights’ and are ‘bound to follow the wishes of male family members.

Nearly half the country’s children are malnourished, physical and sexual abuse of children is ‘rampant’ and young boys are smuggled to the Middle East to serve as jockeys in camel races, the report says.”⁵²

In considering why the coverage of Pakistan would be distinctive from the coverage of violence and abuse elsewhere, a number of articles about children—problem children—offered a possible explanation. Certain children were not innocent—indeed they were to be feared. Boys, even very young boys were part of the terrorist matrix through what articles identified as “Islamic religious schools,” known as madrassas.

- BG, Feb. 24, 2002: **“History and current demographic trends give us a new warning: Beware the wrath of boys.**

Journalists who covered the fleeing Taliban in Afghanistan commented on how young they were. ‘They all look about 12 years old,’ one reporter said. But boys can be deadlier than men, with no life experience to temper their impulses, especially if those impulses are manipulated by older people with a violent agenda....

Chaos and instability in society and young men who lack access to good jobs make an incendiary mixture—especially when you throw in messianic ideology or fundamentalist religion. **And this may be the forecast for much of the world: boys who inculcate rage against the West, against their own societies, and against women at a very early age.**

For example, the religious schools that are springing up all over Pakistan create societies in which young boys are indoctrinated in a fundamentalist brand of Islam that teaches hatred of the West and of Jews. The schools are all-male societies in which the boys have no contact with girls or women - except maybe a mother or an aunt. They develop few social skills and come to regard the opposite sex as alien, the source of sin, uncleanness, and a temptation to male virtue.”⁵³

In the months following 9/11, numerous articles explained the education system, emphasizing that the boys who went to such schools were distanced from the softening “influence” of women:

- NYT, Oct. 2, 2001: **“Boys, raised without fathers, were sent to religious schools, or madrassas, taken away from daily village life and away from the influence of women.”⁵⁴**
- LAT, Nov. 4, 2001: **“Hence, perhaps, the all-male madrassas in Pakistan, where boys as young as 6 are trained for jihad, far from the potentially softening influence of mothers and sisters.”⁵⁵**

Madrassas were noted both as breeding grounds for terrorists and for discrimination against women. Intellectuals as diverse as *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich spoke harshly about the role the Islamic schools play in advocating hatred:

- Thomas Friedman, NYT, Aug. 14, 2002: **“50 years of failed democracy, military coups and imposed religiosity have produced 30,000 madrassahs—Islamic schools, which have**

replaced a collapsed public school system and **churn out Pakistani youth who know only the Koran and hostility toward non-Muslims.**⁵⁶

- Newt Gingrich, NYT, Sept. 8, 2002: “What Sept. 11 has made clear is that we must shift our national security policy from containment to pre-emption. **It is also unmistakable that some people really hate us. This is not a problem of communication. They understand what America is and what we stand for, and still they want to kill us.**

Reactionary Islam, as distinct from modern Islam, will always oppose us because our very existence threatens its values. American women who drive, vote, wear modern clothing and work, all without a male relative watching them, are a threat to the core tenets of reactionary Islam, which is prepared to impose its values by violence. **The Wahhabi sect has become a worldwide movement of radical Islam perpetuated by madrassas that indoctrinate young males into this fanatical belief system, of which Al Qaeda is merely a symptom. Its goal is to create a world incompatible with our survival.**⁵⁷

Articles that quoted Pakistanis seemed to confirm the view that the madrassas were having a toxic effect on Western values. A front-page article in *USA Today* ten days after 9/11 quoted one Pakistani to demonstrate the threat: “**It is biologically, religiously and prophetically proven that men are superior to women,**” said Maulana Adil Siddiqui, spokesman for the Dar-ul Uloom Haqqani school in the northwest Pakistan city of Akora Khattack. It is one of Pakistan's largest Muslim schools.⁵⁸

Poverty and a lack of state-funded public education had led to the growth of madrassas across Pakistan—there are an estimated 7,000-11,000 such schools, serving between 600-700,000 children, almost all boys. Many articles profiled the Haqqani madrassa, the oldest madrassa in Pakistan and two hours north of the capital, Islamabad. Articles observed that the Dar-ul Uloom Haqqani madrassa is the alma mater of 90 percent of the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan.

Other madrassas that received attention in the US press were also those that fed their students into the ranks of the Taliban and al Qaeda, as was mentioned in this page-one *Post* article:

- WP, March 14, 2002: “For anyone wishing better circumstances for their male children, the Darul Uloom Islamia madrassa in Karachi offers a number of benefits. The 10,000 boys there receive proper meals and medical care at a clinic staffed by doctors. The youngest boys—ages 5 to 7—mostly sleep at home, but older students stay in rooms that usually sleep three or four. Tuition and room and board are free.

The teachers and scholars at the madrassa were held in high esteem by Afghanistan's Taliban leadership and by Osama bin Laden -- so much so that bin Laden invited half a dozen members of its faculty to attend his son's wedding in February 2001. The madrassa is believed by Pakistani experts to be a breeding ground for terrorist organizations.⁵⁹

Many stories made explicit note of how boys as young as 10 were already indoctrinated with an anti-American fervor:

- DMN, Sept. 26, 2002: “Mohammad Sayub, a boy with a dancing smile and high-top sneakers, gets up in the dark cold of 4 a.m. to begin his prayers at a mosque in Islamabad.

Fifteen hours later, he is still bent over the Koran, his tiny head bobbing as he forces the foreign Arabic words into his mind.

He is 10. He must memorize the whole Koran, he says, demonstrating a verse in a sweet melodic chant. He knows his future, he told a visitor who asked what he will do when he is older.

‘Oh, **I want to go to the jihad,**’ or holy war, he said, and pedaled off on a shiny purple bicycle.”⁶⁰

- CSM, Jan. 30, 2002: “At another madrassah in Islamabad, a sweet-faced 10-year-old boy, who has already learned 12 sections of the Koran, says he has other hopes for what he’ll do when he grows up. **‘I’m studying to be a scholar,’ says Mohammed Schwaib, ‘but I would prefer to go to fight jihad.’**”⁶¹

Women Unveiled: Clothing as a Literal & Virtual Metaphor

Women’s clothing was a subject of intense interest; almost always clothing was spoken of, at least in part, metaphorically. The word “veil” was commonly used, although specific terms for women’s covering (the “burka” or “burqa,” the hijab, the chador) were also explained together with girls and women’s reasons for wearing them.⁶² Reporters as well as opinion writers told of the liberation of women in Afghanistan because they were allowed to leave their homes and throw off the burka—and also told of Pakistani women in villages or the tribal areas who remained oppressed, and the tell-tale synonym of their oppression was the “veil” that they were “forced” to wear. “Taking off the veil” was therefore a real and metaphorical statement and women’s freedom—and their courage—was measured by how “uncovered” they were and how close their clothing approximated Western notions of dress. **“Some have compared [the burka] with a death shroud, an apt description symbolically as well as physically,”** noted a story on the front page of the @issue section of the *Sunday Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.⁶³

- USAT, Oct. 17, 2001: **“‘I couldn’t hear. I couldn’t see. I couldn’t walk,’ Nazir says. ‘It was as if the world no longer existed to me and I no longer existed to the world.’** Nazir, 38, who lives in the rural north where anti-Taliban forces hold sway, now refuses to wear the ‘full veil’ required by the fundamental Islamic regime that has controlled much of Afghanistan since 1996.

The all-encompassing burqa has become a nearly universal symbol of the oppression of women by the hard-line Taliban militia. **The Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), based in Pakistan, calls it ‘killing us with cotton.’**⁶⁴

- NYT, Sept. 15, 2002: “The most visible change in the way women in Kabul appear in public is the increasing number who venture out without wearing the **shroudlike burka**, the head-to-toe covering the Taliban made mandatory for every woman outside her home. **The burka, with its grille-like screen over the eyes, became a totem of women’s subordination by the mullahs.**”⁶⁵
- AJC, Nov. 25, 2001: **“The burqa, a cumbersome, head-to-toe cloaklike covering, is perhaps the most visible symbol of the Taliban militia’s harsh treatment of women. In parts of Afghanistan that wrested free of Taliban control over the past few days, women lifted their burqas and showed their faces for the first time in five years.”**⁶⁶

- AJC, Oct. 22, 2001: “Secret beauty parlors have sprung up in Afghanistan. **Women go, in violation of the law, to have their hair done and their faces made up with cosmetics from Pakistan and Dubai.** Unbeknownst to the Taliban police, beneath the burqas some Afghan women wear lipstick, and even skirts. **‘This is the only reason the women feel that they’re alive,’** Mansoor said.”⁶⁷
- NYT, Sept. 11, 2002: “A year ago, Hassen Taj Shirzad felt the full force of the Taliban’s restrictions on girls in school and women at work. She had spent four years sewing at home despite her master’s degree in science. Her younger daughter was secretly studying at home; her older daughter had gone to Pakistan to finish her education.
Today, the older daughter has returned to Kabul to study medicine; her little sister is back at school. Mrs. Shirzad, 42, walks and works freely in Kabul.
But one recent morning, when the car she was in entered Wardak Province, where Badam is located, **she pulled the burka she had taken from mothballs that morning down over her face.**
The motion quietly illuminated how change has often stopped at the city’s edge.”⁶⁸

The war in Afghanistan was not the only regional conflict in which women’s clothing was mentioned. Although reporting on the conflict in Kashmir was not considered by US media to be part of their coverage of the “War on Terror”—despite the terrorism in the region, such as torture and summary executions—the battles there were also defined along religious as well as political lines:

- USAT, Jan. 9, 2002: “**The Pakistani militants are accused of introducing into traditionally moderate Kashmir an extreme, Taliban-style brand of Islam. Islamic extremists were threatening last year to throw acid in the faces of Kashmiri Muslim women who did not wear veils.** Despite the threats, most Kashmiri women continue to walk around with their faces uncovered.”⁶⁹

As an aside, it was often mentioned (sometimes it was the only detail that was) when al Qaeda forces or other terrorists disguised themselves by wearing “women’s clothes,” as in this front-page *LA Times* story:

- LAT, Dec. 26, 2002: “In Pakistan, police said two people dressed in **concealing burkas** went to a small church in a provincial village and threw a grenade at worshipers. Three women were killed and 11 other people were injured, four critically, authorities said.”⁷⁰

The idea of “burka” as disguise informed articles about women wearing them, as well. Wrote a reporter for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution who lived in Pakistan for two years:

- AJC, March 27, 2002: “**I ended up using the burqa to cross the border back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan several times. No one ever asked me for my name or identification. To my surprise, I felt empowered. I could have been Osama bin Laden crossing the border undetected.**
Sometimes I wore a burqa while conducting a sensitive interview and people didn’t want their neighbors to know they were talking to a Western journalist. I wore it for

protection if I wanted to avoid the crowds that pressed around me when I left my face exposed.

The burqa also gave me the benefit of not being looked at as a sexual object. Some Afghan and Pakistani men have seen music videos of Western female singers and assume all Western women behave that way.

I ran into trouble when, instead of a burqa, I put on a salwar kameez, the baggy pants and tunic worn by people in the region, and a veil that covered my head and chest. My interpreter said one of the bodyguards of Hamid Karzai, head of the Afghan interim government, made crude sexual references about me. He also said a few men offered him money to take me to their homes for sex.⁷¹

Yet, wrote the reporter, while many women are “afraid” to discard their burkas and say “they care more about being permitted to study and work than about whether they must cover themselves from head to toe,” the burka “can be viewed as a patronizing and paternalistic view that will keep Afghan women from being treated equally. In some ways, covering women up makes them more vulnerable to the very abuses men want to protect them from. **Women who are shrouded become more forbidden to men—and as a result more desirable.**”⁷²

Five Years Later: 2006-2007

Five years after 9/11, two years after the start of the Iraq War and the drive to Baghdad, there were, overall, far fewer stories referencing Pakistan. As was the case in the earlier time period, most of the stories that did appear were breaking news stories on US forces and military interests in the country, on the political and diplomatic peregrinations of Pres. Pervez Musharraf, and on violence and terrorism inside the country. Most were rather short, not very prominent who-what-where-when articles—the kind of pieces that appear inside a paper (if at all) and rarely tell much of the background or context to the news event that has just occurred.

Focus on Powerlessness of Women, Not Political Potential

There were some feature stories and some opinion stories, however, and a fair number continued to reference women. By 2006 a lot of the hopeful (and naïve) notions expressed in the US media about women’s possible roles in ending the “War on Terror” had been lost. Some few stories did continue to articulate that attitudes towards women were a bellweather test for whether or not a nation could be understood to be a “real” ally in the war on terrorism.

- CSM, Jan 3, 2007: “Pakistan's treatment of women shows why they should be considered US allies in the war on terror, unlike Saudi Arabia.

To win the war on terror, the US needs allies it can trust. Some countries deserve to be considered friends of the US, and some don't. A US ally should share the ideals of liberty and justice - or at least be moving toward the adoption of these values. And it is especially critical for America to know which countries it can depend on in the Muslim world.

The US considers both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to be allies in the terror war. But only Pakistan is worthy of this status. A simple look at how each nation treats women reveals why.”⁷³

And there were upbeat stories on the opportunities for education for girls living in the refugee camps formed for those displaced by the 2005 earthquake and on a mixed-gender marathon in Lahore that was designed as a fundraiser for quake victims.⁷⁴

Yet most articles were noticeably more pessimistic than four and five years before. That came out clearly in stories that looked at the experience of women in the country. A number noted that although human rights advocates in Pakistan were repeatedly calling—and protesting in the streets—for greater attention to women’s rights, too many women still found themselves twice victims: first of a crime, then of the justice system. As a *NY Times* headline bluntly put it: “Vendetta Rapes Continue As Pakistan Resists Change.”

- NYT, Oct. 14, 2006: **“Pursuing justice is not easy for a woman in Pakistan, not if the crime is rape. Ghazala Shaheen knows.**

Two years ago, relatives say, an uncle eloped with a woman from a higher social caste. The revenge by the woman's family was the rape of Ms. Shaheen, she and relatives charge, after a gang of men raided her father's home and abducted her and her mother in late August.

It is not uncommon in Pakistan for women to suffer callous vendettas for the wrongdoings of their male relatives.”⁷⁵

- NYT, March 28, 2006: **““There is no such thing called justice in Pakistan,”** said Ms. Jahangir, a prominent lawyer in Lahore. “It has simply collapsed.’ Even professionals like Ms. Jahangir are targeted if they confront the government. Last year, for example, the police attacked her and a group of other middle-class women demonstrating for women's rights. She says that an aide to President Pervez Musharraf gave the police instructions about her: ‘Teach the [expletive] a lesson. Strip her in public.’ Sure enough, the police ripped off her shirt.”⁷⁶

There were still calls in op-eds and columns for aid to women’s education, but not because empowering women would end terrorism. It might, however, help fight poverty. As Nicholas Kristof’s column about Mukhtaran Bibi in *The New York Times* had it, terrorism and poverty were two separate challenges:

- NYT, April 4, 2006: “I make a big deal of Mukhtar because if poor nations like Pakistan are to develop, they need to empower women. When a country educates girls, they grow up to have fewer children and look after them better. They take productive jobs. And plenty of studies show that as women gain influence over family budgets, the money is less likely to go for tobacco, soda or alcohol, and more likely to be invested in small businesses and in children's education.

This means that **gender equality is not only a matter of simple justice, but also essential for fighting poverty and achieving economic development.** If Pakistan is to become a rich and powerful country, it must empower its women—and that is what Mukhtar's revolution is all about.

So General Musharraf, back off! Leave Mukhtar alone, and go find Osama.”⁷⁷

In 2006 and early 2007 US media quite extensively reported on the debate, the opposition to and the ultimate approval by Pakistan’s lower house of Parliament of amending the Hudood

Ordinances. The attempts to change the laws in Parliament, wrote the *Boston Globe* in an editorial “**has exposed festering tensions not just between Musharraf and opposition parties, but also between Islam and the West.**”⁷⁸ Once again articles about women were taken as illustrative of larger cultural and political issues. In many of those stories, even those that covered the final vote, the concluding sentiment was that a women’s life in Pakistan remains bleak. In an op-ed for the *Boston Globe* written by an editor at Pakistan’s *Friday Times*:

- BG, Sept. 3, 2006: “The battle for basic women's rights - including the right to have a rapist prosecuted - is back on the agenda in Pakistan.

Since 1979, laws known as the Hudood ordinances have placed a heavy burden on Pakistani women. Among other things, the ordinances criminalized extramarital sex. They also stipulated that if a complaining rape victim failed to produce four credible male witnesses to prove the rape, she had indulged in extramarital sex and thus committed a crime. In 1979, there were 79 women in jail; by March 2006, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, more than 6,000 were in custody. Three-quarters were awaiting trial for violating the Hudood ordinances.

To Pakistan's shame, it has taken 27 years for a bill amending these misogynistic laws to appear in front of its legislature. Among other changes, rape would be added to the country's penal code. Four witnesses would no longer be required to prove the crime, and indirect and circumstantial evidence could be considered. Extramarital sex would become aailable offense, so the accused at least would not languish in jail.

Whether women will ultimately benefit from the debate remains to be seen.⁷⁹

- WP, Dec. 17, 2006: “In June 2002, 28-year-old Mukhtar Mai, from the tiny Pakistani village of Meerwala, was raped by four members of a powerful tribe to avenge her 12-year-old brother's supposed crime of speaking to a young woman. **In Pakistan, women have no more rights than livestock,** Mai says in her plainly written but important memoir, *In the Name of Honor* (Atria, \$24), co-authored with Marie-Therese Cuny and translated by Linda Coverdale.”⁸⁰

Life is so difficult for women in Pakistan, argued one *New York Times* article (only partly tongue-in-cheek), that the only way to get ahead as a woman is to be a man:

- NYT, Jan 3, 2007: “**Ali Saleem may have devised the perfect, if improbable, cover for breaking taboos in conservative, Muslim Pakistan.**

In a country where publicly talking about sex is strictly off limits, Mr. Saleem has managed not only to bring up the subject on his prime-time television talk show -- but to do so without stirring a backlash from fundamentalist Islamic clerics. And he has done so as a woman.

When Mr. Saleem takes to the airwaves, he is Begum Nawazish Ali, a coquettish widow who interviews Pakistan's glitterati and some of its top politicians.

A real woman could not possibly do what Mr. Saleem does. In the unlikely event a station would broadcast such a show, the hostess would be shunned. And taking on the guise of a married woman -- whose virtue is crucial to her whole family -- would be equally impossible.

But apparently a cross-dressing man pretending to be a widow is another matter entirely.⁸¹

In 2001, there was a general sense that the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan would bring great new opportunities for women in the region, including Pakistan. Five years later that was clearly not the case. As a result, the metaphorical references to women taking off “veil” faded, and there were fewer articles about Muslim dress, at all. In fact a number of articles that did appear argued the reverse of what was said in the earlier period. “A veil doesn’t mean ‘oppressed,’” stated a headline in a *USA Today* story written by Souheila al-Jadda, a member of *USA Today*’s board of contributors and a producer of “Mosaic: World News from the Middle East,” on Link TV.⁸²

Tales of Women’s Victimization Used to Indict Pakistan & US Politics as well as the “War on Terror”

By 2006, Pakistani women remained prominent victims of terrorist-related crimes, but stories about domestic crimes, such as rape, for example, were no longer seen as potentially upbeat stories where the woman’s victimization (and occasionally their victories against their male oppressors) drove the story and distinguished usefully between women and men in Pakistan. The rape stories from 2006 effectively served to indict the country wholesale. In 2001-2, a story about rape or adultery was perforce framed as a human rights story. In 2006, articles that mentioned adultery and rape were more likely to be as much about politics and the justice system as about a particular woman’s story.

- NYT, Jan 21, 2006: “**Mukhtar Mai**, the Pakistani woman whose defiant response to being gang-raped by order of a tribal court brought her worldwide attention, **was denied a chance to speak at the United Nations on Friday after Pakistan protested that it was the same day the country’s prime minister was visiting.... Asked at a news conference why Pakistan had taken the action, the prime minister, Shaukat Aziz, said: ‘I have no idea. You have informed me and so have some other people as I was walking in. I don’t know how the place functions.’**”⁸³
- ST, April 29, 2006: “**A Pakistani couple, jailed after the woman’s father objected to their marriage, appeared in court on Friday after spending five years in prison without trial.**
‘I have committed no adultery,’ said Sodi, 23, who wept in a courthouse in the southern city of Hyderabad as she told her ordeal to journalists.
‘I was 18 when I got married of my own free will with Kashkeli. Our marriage was contracted before a maulvi [preacher] and registered,’ said the woman, who has been held in a separate jail from her husband.
The couple were arrested in October 2001 on adultery charges after the woman’s father, a farmer, lodged a report with police accusing the man of abducting his daughter and committing adultery with her.
The Supreme Court ordered the civil court to expedite a decision on the case after receiving an appeal the woman had smuggled out of jail.”⁸⁴

And it wasn’t just stories about women as victims at the hand of Pakistani officials that made the news. One of the biggest stories of the year was the story about the women who were victims of a US military attack—part of the Bush Administration’s “War on Terror.” On January 13, 2006 the CIA attempted to assassinate Ayman al-Zawahiri in the village of Damadola Burkandy, four

miles from the Afghan border, using unmanned Predator aircraft equipped with Hellfire missiles. Zawahiri was not killed in the attack, but 18 civilians were, many of whom were “innocent women and children,” as a *New York Times* editorial wrote.⁸⁵ The attack which some considered an extrajudicial killing not only prompted thousands to take to the streets in Pakistan, but prompted lengthy investigative reports and editorials in the US media about the CIA’s “targeted killing” program.

“It's tempting, as several senators did Sunday, to simply dismiss the deaths of innocents as unavoidable in a war in which the enemy is slippery and intelligence hard to come by,” observed an editorial in *USA Today*. “But a backlash in Pakistan demonstrates the high risks of failure—and why such attacks should never become routine.”⁸⁶

The classified nature of the assassination program meant, as a front-page story in the *LA Times* reported, that “The Bush administration has refused to discuss how many strikes it has made, how many people have died, or how it chooses targets.” The article quoted a former CIA counsel who argued that while the program was a deterrent for foreign governments, it also created its own problems: “You give shelter to Al Qaeda figures, you may well get your village blown up...Conversely, you have to note that this can also create local animosity and instability.” The reporter observed that the Bush administration’s justification for its “targeted killings” (a terminology first employed by the Israelis) “is the same justification Bush has used for a recently disclosed domestic spying program that has the National Security Agency eavesdropping on American citizens without warrants, and a CIA ‘extraordinary rendition’ program to seize suspected terrorists overseas and transport them to other countries with reputations for torture.”⁸⁷

The Press Now: Outing “the Devil You Know”

Coping with Pakistan remains a necessity for the Bush administration no matter which way it turns. As a February 2006 editorial in the *Boston Globe* noted: “The strategic importance of Pakistan is obvious, but it is not exactly a blessing on the land. In an interview here [in Islamabad] this week, President Pervez Musharraf said the country lies at the nexus of five world concerns: terrorism, democracy, human rights, narcotics, and nuclear nonproliferation. He might have added the widening gap between Islam and the West.”⁸⁸

The centrality of Pakistan in US foreign policy, in other words, is not only a quirk of geography. An editorial in *The New York Times* specified that Musharraf is “unable, or unwilling, to close down the sanctuaries that three different groups of terrorists—Qaeda, Taliban and Kashmiri—have established along three Pakistani borders.”⁸⁹ *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland shared that cynicism. He observed snidely, “Pakistan is essential and helpful in fighting the al Qaeda network—except when it is not. Without Musharraf's help, the United States and its NATO allies cannot put down the rebellion in Afghanistan being waged by Osama bin Laden's fanatics and the Taliban. Without Musharraf's complicity, that rebellion could not continue at its increasingly murderous intensity. We've got Musharraf right where he wants us.”⁹⁰

Hoagland noted that the military policies of the Bush White House carry a “moral burden”—no longer was the US press in 2006 championing the Bush administration’s prosecution of the “War on Terror” and charging that only the enemy was acting reprehensibly.

By 2006 and 2007 there was no longer a need to employ Muslim women as a foil to Muslim men in media coverage of the so-called “War on Terror.” The compelling issue was no longer how to find Muslim “good guys,” it was whether Americans had become the “bad guys.”

It wasn't that the newspapers in this study were expressing hesitations about whether it was appropriate for US forces to target al Qaeda fugitives, what now came out in the coverage were questions about the manner and methods the US authorities used to try and kill them. The debate in the US media turned to whether the Americans still could “claim to hold the moral high ground in the anti-terror campaign,” as a *Miami Herald* editorial wrote. “Must the United States use tactics that are reminiscent of those used by the terrorists that we seek to destroy in order to defeat terror? No, of course not.”⁹¹

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This study *The “Good” Muslims: US Newspaper Coverage of Pakistan* analyzed the way thirteen US newspapers reported on Pakistan from September 11, 2001 to December 31, 2002 and from January 1, 2006 to January 15, 2007.

Like previous studies of media coverage of international affairs since 9/11, this study observed that the American press used the Bush administration’s “War on Terror” to frame coverage of Pakistan. The newspapers generally adopted—seemingly without conscious recognition—the administration’s monolithic framing of terrorism as well as the demonizing of an entire population: in this case Pakistani Muslim men and boys.

But the newspapers’ coverage of Pakistan was in some significant ways more independent, more critical, more nuanced than coverage of other theaters in the “War on Terror.” The fact that dozens of journalists were not only on the ground in Pakistan and Afghanistan but had the opportunity to travel relatively freely (if not always without substantial physical risk) meant that they had the chance to interview a broad spectrum of both American military and officials as well as Pakistanis and Afghans. They had first-hand exposure to breaking stories, as well as the time and access to conduct lengthy investigations. Their sources, their perspective were considerably less filtered than that of their colleagues focused on Iraq.

Ironically over the years of this study, coverage of Pakistan and Afghanistan did not make the front-pages to the same degree as the reporting from Iraq—but the Pakistan coverage was often stronger. The best coverage of Pakistan resulted when the country was examined in-depth in the context of a specific event or issue. The worst coverage of Pakistan resulted when the country was reflexively mentioned in political stories about terrorists and the “War on Terror.” The best coverage of Pakistan resulted when the country was covered by a reporter less committed to a particular “beat,” than committed to covering an important breaking event or issue, no matter whether the focus was ultimately about national security, economics, human rights, religion, crime or whatever. Stories that were followed over a period of days, weeks and even months allowed for context, background, multiple sources, even changes in perspective. The worst coverage of Pakistan resulted when the country was treated as just another political story, where the focus was more on the United States than Pakistan and more on Washington’s “War on Terror” than the region’s war on the ground.

The most “curious incident” that this study uncovered was how women emerged so unmistakably in the 2001/2002 period as a focus of attention. The Muslim women of Pakistan (and Afghanistan) were not just victims tallied or written about to gain readers’ sympathy, they were saviors who would themselves change their communities and their countries. They were not just the human-interest anecdotes that led stories about larger concerns, for a brief period of time they were the main event.

METHODOLOGY

The “Good” Muslims: US Newspaper Coverage of Pakistan is a study based on an analysis of articles from thirteen major agenda-setting US newspapers: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Miami Herald*, *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Seattle Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*.

Certain of these news outlets—*The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*—were selected either because of their national circulation, and/or because they are acknowledged agenda-setters in international news coverage (across American media, whether print, broadcast or online outlets)—in part because of their investment in sending their own foreign correspondents on international stories. The other newspapers were selected for regional balance: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Miami Herald*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Seattle Times*.

To capture change over time the study looked at two timeframes, the immediate post 9/11 era, from September 11, 2001 to December 31, 2002, and the recent past: January 1, 2006 to January 15, 2007. It should be noted that the findings in this study were at times supplemented by secondary analysis and references to news coverage that occurred outside the two designated periods. The study employed such tactics when it appeared that reporting that occurred in the time periods under investigation could be more fairly evaluated by reference to coverage and events outside the chosen year-plus spans.

This study used articles primarily downloaded from the electronic archive services Lexis-Nexis and Factiva. Individual news organizations daily submit their articles or transcripts of their programs to the electronic news archives, which are then searchable by keyword, date, byline, periodical, and so on. One advantage of the electronic archives is that any corrections to articles and programs appearing after the original publication date are retroactively appended to the electronic record of the original piece. Using a keyword search for simply the term “Pakistan,” the data archives were mined for all coverage that included mention of the country in the two study periods. Those articles were then reevaluated and only those where mention of Pakistan was significant (i.e. “Pakistan” was not just referenced in passing) were saved as MS Word documents, read in their totality, and further electronically searched and qualitatively analyzed.

It is worth mentioning that there was a substantial difference in the number of articles—and the length of the individual articles—downloaded from each news source. But the major intent of this study was not to compare the coverage of one news outlet to the others, but rather to see whether common news items, news frames, and news values emerged from the coverage in general. For this reason as well, the study looked at staff-written news, features and analysis stories, and also considered editorials, columns and op-ed pieces.

¹ <http://www.readprint.com/chapter-3670/Arthur-Conan-Doyle>

² See, for example, articles such as Ahmed Rashid, "US Grows Unhappier with Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 2, 2002, A15.

³ Jim Landers, "In Pakistan, Extremists Aren't Always in Shadows," *The Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 22, 2006.

⁴ "Unconventional Fears," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 4, 2002. See also the editorial "Ease the Tensions," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 27, 2001. Following Pres. Bush's speech to the United Nations and his meeting with Pres. Pervez Musharraf, papers also took up Bush's admonition. As *The Dallas Morning News* wrote: "The president further reminded delegates of al-Qaida's quest to obtain chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons. 'These same terrorists are searching for weapons of mass destruction, the tools to turn their hatred into holocaust,' Bush said." David Jackson, "U.S. Will Provide More than \$1 Billion in Aid to Pakistan, Bush Says," *The Dallas Morning News*, Nov. 11, 2001.

⁵ Correction, *The New York Times*, Jan. 27, 2007, A2.

⁶ The Associated Press and Reuters, "Pakistan Cautious in Pledge of Support," *The Seattle Times*, Sept. 16, 2001, p. A9. A *Seattle Times* story a month later revised the number of madrassas it said were "scattered through Pakistan" to 5,000: *Dallas Morning News* and *Newsday*, "Two Schools of Thought," *The Seattle Times*, Oct. 28, 2001, A3. Said that article, "Some of the more radical madrassas have expanded their curriculum to also include instruction in how to use automatic weapons and explosives, skills that madrassa alumni have put to use in some of the region's 'holy wars.' What all the religious schools share in common is the conviction that the West, especially the United States, is a place of great moral and cultural wickedness."

⁷ David Abel, "Preparing for War's Casualties," *The Boston Globe*, Oct. 23, 2001, C1.

⁸ Bryan Bender, "Fighting Terror: The Military Campaign: Rebels Take Key Afghan City," *The Boston Globe*, Nov. 10, 2001, A1.

⁹ Dan Balz, "U.S. Strikes Again at Afghan Targets; Nation Put on High Alert for Attacks," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 9, 2001, A1.

¹⁰ Tyler Marshall, "Response to Terror," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 2001, A1.

¹¹ David Sanger, "A War of Loose Ends," *The New York Times*, Jan. 10, 2002, A1.

¹² "Daniel Pearl's Story," *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 23, 2002, A14.

¹³ Glenn Simpson, "Bush Targets Assets of Two Pakistan Groups," *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 21, 2001, A3.

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³³ Martha Ezzard, “India, Pakistan can still step back from unthinkable,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 9, 2002, 6F.

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One woman featured in the piece was identified in a photo caption as follows: “Rehima, 35, kissing her son Osama. Rehima, the wife of a powerful member of Jamaat-i-Islami, one of the most prominent fundamentalist groups in Pakistan, is a supervisor at Jamia Khadijatul-Kubra-Lil-Binat madrassah. Most of the students and teachers at this religious boarding school are the children and wives of Jamaat-i-Islami members. This photo was taken in Rehima’s home, across the street from the school in Peshawar.”

She was quoted as saying: "I named my son Osama because I want to make him a mujahid. Right now there is war, but he is a child. When he is a young man, there might be war again, and I will prepare him for that war. In the name of God, I will sacrifice my son, and I don't care if he is my most beloved thing. For all of my six sons, I wanted them to be mujahedeen. If they get killed it is nothing. This world is very short. I myself want to be a mujahid. What will I do in this world? I could be in heaven, have a weekly meeting with God. Jihad is when you are attacked, you attack back. This is God's wish. We are not afraid. I am already asking my husband if I can go to Kashmir and train to fight. I will suicide bomb. If there are 20 to 30 non-Muslims, there I will commit martyrdom. If America attacks, we will put our hands on the throats of Americans and kill them." Lynsey Addario, "Jihad's Women," *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, Oct. 21, 2001, 38.

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