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## The Development of Militant Organizations' Print Media in Pakistan

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### Abstract

The militant organizations' print media in Pakistan also could be called jihad media, new media or radical media. Different from the mainstream media in Pakistan, the media of militant organizations were one of the alternative media. The media of militant organizations originated in 1979, since the outset of the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan. The media of militant organizations' rise had deep ideological roots. And the media of militant organizations were influenced by social environment in Pakistan at that time. This paper was focused on the rising and preliminary developments of the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan. The militant organizations' print media in Pakistan were closely related in Pakistani media situation. Terrorist activities were now rampant around the world. So, it had great practical significance to study the history and operation of the militant organizations' print media.

**Key words:** Pakistan; The militant organization; Print media; Publication; Development

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### INTRODUCTION

The militant organizations' print media in Pakistan also could be called jihad media, new media or radical media.

The militant organizations' print media in Pakistan were much different from the mainstream media in Pakistan. In fact, the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan were one of the alternative media in Pakistan. The militant organizations' print media in Pakistan were originated at the end of 1979. At that time, the red army of Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. After the outset of the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan, the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan had developed rapidly. The rise of the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan had deep ideological roots. And the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan were influenced by social environment in Pakistan at that time. This paper was mainly focused on the rising and preliminary developments of the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan. The militant organizations' print media in Pakistan were closely related in Pakistani media situation. Terrorist activities were now rampant around the world. So, it had great practical significance to study the history and operation of the militant organizations' print media in Pakistan.

## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE MILITANT ORGANIZATIONS' MEDIA IN PAKISTAN

### 1.1 Domestic Environment of the Militant Organizations' Media in Pakistan

The emergence of journalism in Pakistan was closely related to its political, religious and regional background. When the sovereign of Pakistan was established in 1947, this young Muslim nation had to face many challenges from all aspects.

The first challenge was the question of its identity. That was to say, Pakistan was created to safeguard a separate state for the Muslims in the South Asia subcontinent or to secure the social, political and economic rights of the British Indian Muslims. The confusion of Pakistani

identity impacts on its social, political and religious affairs.

For the survival of a country, it is essential to establish distinctive national characteristics. So does Pakistan. Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan had said in the Constituent Assembly on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1947:

We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State. (Ali Jinnah, 1947)

But Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah died soon after the founding of Pakistan, who envisioned a modern nation state on Western lines (Cohen, 2004, p.267) After confronted with so many domestic political, social and economic challenges and the threats from India, the leaders of Pakistan after Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah had drew out a new plan for development of Pakistan, which was complete opposite to Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's narrative. They were going to change Pakistan into a country with much more religious atmosphere. Since then, the development of Pakistan had been deviated from the orbit of the secular state that was once envisaged by Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

In 1977, Gen. Zia ul Haq took over power from civil government led by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Since then Gen. Zia ul Haq announced a halt to the implementation of the Pakistan 1973 constitution, the cessation of political activities, and the dissolution of the Pakistan National Parliament and the cabinet. And Gen. Zia ul Haq established a non partisan military government, served as a chief executive of martial law (Liu, Wang, & Gui, 1988, p.72). Gen. Zia ul Haq legalized his regime by the implementation of the Islamization. Gen. Zia ul Haq cooperated with Jamat e Islami, the largest fundamentalist Islamic party in Pakistan. In the field of law, economy, education and so on, Gen. Zia ul Haq took a lot of measures to achieve overall Islamization.

Firstly, in order to promote the construction of the Islamic regime, Gen. Zia ul Haq not only made a lot of changes to the Pakistan 1973 constitution, and formulated a series of laws based on the teachings of Islam, but also set up a Islamic court.

Secondly, in the field of economy, according to a Sunni sharia, the government led by Gen. Zia ul Haq levied zakat tax, which aroused strong opposition from the minority Shia Muslims. In order to fight against Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims established their own armed force in 1985 which named the prophet disciple. The prophet disciple was the first extremist organizations in Pakistan.

Besides, in the field of education, the government led by Gen. Zia ul Haq changed the methods of secular education and implemented Islamization education to emphasize the value of Islam. As a result, religious

schools, in another name were Madrasas, were to be found all over the country (Zhang, 2004).

In a word, during the reign of Gen. Zia ul Haq in the Pakistan, on the one hand, the ruling class used religious doctrine to govern the Pakistan and vigorously promoted Islamic teachings which were very political. On the other hand, lack of essential guidance in the folk, thus the majority of the Pakistan ordinary people were very passively accepted the Islamic propaganda and edification. (Zhang, 2015)

These series of measures of overall Islamization and its support for Islamic fundamentalism had stored up huge problems which should responsible for the emergence of a variety of extremist organizations in the later Pakistan. In addition, unstable political system, slow economic development, ethnic differences and increasing nationalist movements in Pakistan further aggravated the situation of Pakistan. In such circumstances, non state militant organizations and religious political parties were deemed as the protectors of national identity based on Islamic values (PAKISTAN INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES, 2010, p.10). These kinds of non state militant organizations and religious political parties had provided the fertile soil for the breeding of the militants' media in Pakistan.

## 1.2 External Stimuli of the Militant Organizations' Media in Pakistan

At the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia, Pakistan had located in the east direction of Iran and Afghanistan. On the one hand, this advantageous location confers Pakistan great ascendant strategic position and strategic value, but on the other hand, this advantageous location also made Pakistan vulnerable to external shocks. There were two events that had far reaching impact on the militant organizations. The first event was the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The second event was the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan in the end of the same year.

After the Islamic revolution in Iran, Pakistani Shia Muslims became more and more powerful under the support of the government in Iran. Shia Muslims activism had been greatly developed since the Islamic revolution in Iran. In addition, during ten years of the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan, the Islamic fundamentalists changed their previous attitude and took active part in all kinds of combats. These people gradually became the main force of subsequent militant organization. The war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan had strengthened the thought of holy war, in another word is "Jihad", which became the theme of militant organizations' publications. Besides, the number of militant organizations in Pakistan had rapidly increased. These developments made the organizational foundation for the genesis of militant organizations' print media.

## 2. THE GENESIS OF THE MILITANTS' PRINT MEDIA IN PAKISTAN

The origin of the militants' print media in Pakistan could be trace back to the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan, in another name was the first Afghan war. The war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan had a close relationship with the militants' print media in Afghanistan. The militants' print media in Afghanistan was not totally a new phenomenon at the time of start of the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan (PAKISTAN INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES, 2010, p.21). In fact, in Afghanistan, there were many Islamic print media before the invasion of Soviet Union red army. At that time, Islamic thought was most important part of mainstream ideas. For example, The Institute of Higher Islamic Learning in Kabul had published Islamic literature inviting the Muslims to true tenets of Islam (Ul Islam, 1989).

In 1950s, a daily newspaper named *Suranga* was published from Paktia Province of Afghanistan and another monthly magazine *Paiman e Haq* was published in 1960s from the Afghanistan capital Kabul which promoted Islamic teachings and thoughts (Ibid.). Besides, in order to thwart the influence of the Soviet Union, some religious groups published some bulletins, leaflets, pamphlets, night letters and so on.

After the Soviet Union red army invaded the Afghanistan, different Islamic groups and individuals in Afghanistan also started to print simple leaflets or brochures in local languages to disseminate their messages against Soviet Union and puppet government of Afghanistan led by Dr. Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai (Ibid.). But in that time, due to lack of money, printing facilities and outlets were not perfect. As the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan was prolonged, foreign militants and money from other countries came into Afghanistan, such as from America and some Arab countries, which promoted the development of the militants' print media in Afghanistan.

Four types of media publications were present at the inception of the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan in 1979, which provided news and information on Afghanistan to local and global audience: the western countries' media, the Islamic world's media, the Soviet Union block countries and the pro Soviet Union countries' media (including the state media of Afghanistan's puppet government led by Dr. Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai) and mainstream media of Pakistan (PAKISTAN INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES, 2010, p.22). Although all these media had reported the same events, but all these media' focuses were very different from each other.

For example, the Soviet Union block countries and the pro Soviet Union countries' media had focused on highlighting the communist interests in the region.

Pakistani mainstream media and religious groups' publication had focused on selected militant groups fighting in Afghanistan. The Islamic world's media relied on Western countries' media for getting news and information about Afghanistan.

So the leading militant commanders and their fellow leaders gradually got the view that these Pakistan mainstream media outlets were working for their own interests. And the leading militant commanders and their fellow leaders felt they were imperative to establish a new media front, which could exclusively focus on "Jihad and Mujahideen" (Ibid., p.23). In a word, in addition to recruiting and training members, the leading militant commanders and their fellow leaders also launched media and propagated the ideology of 'Jihad'.

*Sout Al Jihad* published by *Jamiat e Islami* was the first Arab magazine, which was published in Peshawar. *Al Bunyan Al Marsoos* published by *Ittehad e Islami*, *Al Mauqaf* published by *Hizb e Islami* and *Al Jihad* published by Dr. Abdullah Azam were some other monthly Arab magazines which followed the *Sout Al Jihad*. All these Arab magazines, along with other Arab magazines, were being published in Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi and abroad. Besides, monthly *Terjuman ul Quran*, weekly *Asia*, and daily *Jasarat* published by *Jamat e Islami*, monthly *Al Haq* published by *Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak*, *Al Jamiah* published by *Jamiat Ulema e Islam* and so on were published at the same time.

As the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan was continued, more and more militant organizations began to issue their own publications. At the end of the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan, militant organizations were well aware of the role of their own media. Besides, wide circulation and popularity of the militant organizations' publications provided them with an opportunity to propagate their ideologies and beliefs to a larger audience. Islamic and militant organizations' media were targeting not only 'Afghanistan Jihad' but also on achievement of Islamic objectives, protection of Islamic literature and culture.

## 3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MILITANTS' PRINT MEDIA IN PAKISTAN

By 1989, the number of the militant organizations' publications in Pakistan was more than the figure one hundred. Most of the militant organizations' publications were published in Peshawar and Quetta. These two cities located near Afghanistan. In order to meet the need of different kinds of targeted audiences, militant organizations published their magazines and newspapers in several languages, including Urdu, Arabic, English and vernacular languages, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pushtu.

With the continuous improvement of militant organizations' print media, militant organizations'

publications could be categorized into four main groups according to their publishers: publications published by militant organizations, publications published by sectarian groups, publications published by Madrasa (religious school) and publications published by vernacular media.

The main publishers among militant organizations were Jamat e Islami, Lashkar e Taiba ( Jamat ud Da waa), Al Rasheed Trust ( Al Amin Trust ), Jaish e Muhammad ( Tehrik Khuddamul Islam ), Tehrikul Mujahideen and so on. The highest circulation among all the 51 militant organizations' newspapers was the weekly Ghazwa published by Lashkar e Taiba, whose circulation was more than 20 thousand copies.

There were 82 sectarian organizations operated in whole Pakistan, out of which 22 were involved in violent sectarian activities and five have or had close working relations with militant organizations. Among all the sectarian organizations, sipah e sahaba issued the most popular publications.

As a vital medium for disseminating extreme political, religious, social and sectarian thought, a lot of Madrasas also had published their own publications. The main Madrasa publications included Baieynat, Al Farooq, Al Qasim, Al Khair, Ilm o Amal, Mutalia e Quran, Munady e Islam, Al Mufakkaratul Islamia, Al Hassan, Haramain, Ikhwa, Taifatul Mansoorah, Addawato e Lallah and so on.

As regards the vernacular media publications, the Jamat e Islami had the largest media group, which included a daily newspaper, and several weeklies and monthlies. Apart from Jamat e Islami's official publications, the individuals who were or had been affiliated with the party or inspired by its religious and political ideology were running such media. For example, Nawa I Waqt Group had published the magazine Nida i Millat. Muhammad Salah ud din had published the magazine Takbeer, who used to be an activist of Jamat e Islami.

The main contents of these newspapers and magazines could be generalized to the following nine aspects: The Jihad related issues, the religious issues, the anti west / Israel and anti India issues, the historical issues, the general organizational activities, the current affairs, the social / political / economical issues, the anti Pakistan government and anti sectarian issues.

The largest proportion of the contents was Jihad related issues. It could reach 25% of the whole contents. The proportion of religious issues, the anti west / Israel and anti India issues were very considerable, both could reach 20%. So these three segments account for more than half of the total contents. And these three segments became the primary focuses of militant organizations' printing media. Moreover, there are several momentous themes of these publications, containing the question between Palestine and Israel and the coverage on Afghanistan, Iraq and Jammu and Kashmir.

The militant organizations' printing media in Pakistan had influenced both society and mainstream media of Pakistan. Undoubtedly, the militant organizations' printing media in Pakistan had a positive impact during the war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan. The effects of the militant organizations' printing media were as follows.

Firstly, the militant organizations' printing media had popularized the concept of the jihad all over the world. As the Al Bunyan Al Marsoos of the Ittehad e Islami reported in 1989:

The Muslim youth around the world knew little about Jihad, a fundamental obligation in Islam, before start of the Afghanistan war. Although they were aware of the Islamic states which had been occupied and/or controlled by infidels, the militant organizations' media widen their knowledge base. The militant organizations' printing media had encouraged and motivated them to rise against enemies to safeguard Islam.

Second, the militant organizations' printing media had contributed to recruit many new members of Mujahideen and got finance support for militant organizations. Besides, the militant organizations' printing media had a wide impact on public opinions, even in rural areas, because there was the traditional custom of reading newspapers collectively in Pakistani villages.

Moreover, the segments of Islam teaching in publications had helped some Pakistani ordinary people understand Islam much better. Finally, the militant organizations' printing media indirectly influence the mainstream media of Pakistan by setting some trends, such as glorifying Jihad.

As for my view, with United States had adjusted its South Asian policy and its policy toward the question between Palestine and Israel, the rapid changes of internal situation in Pakistan and even the entire South Asia region , militant organizations in Pakistan would constantly adjust their agenda in their own media.

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