

# News Media Performance of Intelligence Oversight in Pakistan: A Discourse Analysis of Dawn, The News, The Nation And The Express Tribune

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** The aim of this study is to analyze the oversight role of Pakistani News Media in relation to Intelligence Agencies of the country, during the Abbottabad Raid of 2 May 2011, an intelligence failure, while assessing applicability of normative model of Claudia Hillebrand in our local context. In new democracies like Pakistan, this effective watchdog role is a must yet ironically has become extremely difficult. After the GWOT this informal oversight of civil society, media being part of is the only hope, which must deliver, especially when formal oversight by the parliament or legislature has not been effective or existent.

**Methodology:** This study conducted analysis of news reports of *The Dawn*, *The News*, *The Express Tribune*, and *The Nation*, in light of OBL hunt by US Special Forces. Due to the nature of high context culture of the country/media, the qualitative method of discourse analysis of Teun .A Van Dijk was used to analyze the media text, press reports or stories.

**Findings:** The study results presented a dismal position of media in the enshrined role of oversight or monitoring. The deficiencies identified are of capacity, resources/expertise, will, and precedence.

**Conclusion:** Security lapses and Intelligence Failures have been inevitable even to world powers, but their continued neglect can easily lead to National or Collective Failure, which all countries must try to avoid at all costs.

**Keywords:** Intelligence Oversight, OBL Operation. Watchdog role of the News Media, New Democracies, Intelligence Agencies/Failures, Pakistan, Discourse Analysis.

## Article History

Received:  
July 26, 2024

Revised:  
September 23, 2024

Accepted:  
September 25, 2024

Published:  
September 30, 2024

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolved old democracies (especially across Atlantic), the monitoring or watchdog role of the young 'fourth pillar' media, in relation to another pillar, the executive and its organs, has been well-established. Though even these are now being criticised for not doing enough 'in comparison to the reforms that followed the intelligence scandals of the 1970s' (León-Reyes, 2024). This is also being labelled as

Snowden Paradox<sup>1</sup>. However, in evolving South Asia, contemporary studies on 'security sector reforms' are limited to Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. In the case of Pakistani press, only the 'formal oversight' by the state/government organs are discussed and no attention being paid to the independent/informal oversight. Here the military and intelligence agencies are still the mighty "powerhouses," both overtly or covertly, especially after the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) under the old euphemism of "establishment", despite the recent waves of judicial activism.

The social media is progressively being handicapped due to restrictions, reach, credibility, and maturity issues and electronic media has been forced to appear partisan. Only the print media and its few influential English newspapers are the last straw left to take on the scrutiny of the security apparatus and its tool, the intelligence agencies. Only hope is the consolidation of recently re-emerged media (since 2008, under continuous democratic regimes) for some betterment or resistance.

This is the first of its kind research about news reports (not editorials) analyzing the 'informal' monitoring or oversight role of print media in the contemporary democratic context, while using the recently upgraded normative framework of Public Communication (Normative Theories of 2009) along with the Claudian Model of Intelligence Oversight by media. In this Pakistani social text and the news reports, being of a high-context nature, are assessed using discourse analysis (of news reports) by Teun A. Van Dijk, under critical approach to view the deep power relations.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The chosen topic is new, especially in relation to type of data (news reports and oversight -informal), language and the area or country, so the literature review took relevant input from local and foreign academic sources simultaneously, yet restricting it to three basic constructs: democracy, media's role, and intelligence oversight, in order of their importance to society.

### **2.1 Democracy**

Lexically the original definition of democracy in Greek was a construct of 'demos' meaning village or the people - qua native adult male residents of a polis and 'kratos' meaning power/strength - the root/arche meaning of 'the power of the people'. Among Athenian it was referred to the power in the sense of 'capacity to make happen or do good things in the public realm'. However, the later aberrative concept of 'majority rule' was an intentional inclusion by the critics (Ober, 1998). In Pakistan, other than being satirically 'the best revenge' means different to different stakeholders and is temporal in nature. However, the public is yet to see the normative/some purest form of the same. This willful reduction of the whole concept to a mere voting drama is flawed, as it unilaterally omits the innate value, potential and direction of the real democracy or process. Jesper Stromback presented four basic normative models of democracy (on a continuum) for their influence on journalism as procedural, competitive, participatory, and deliberative, all with theme of 'service to the public' (Stromback, 2005). David Held, categorized from minimal to maximal variants, namely as elitist, participatory, and deliberative (Held, 2006).

According to Tadeusz Szaweil (Szaweil, 2009) the new process or emerging democracies involves following stages: -

- a. Liberalization of Non-Democratic Regime (Authoritarian or Totalitarian).
- b. Transition to democracy (Institutional Change).
- c. Democratic Consolidation.
- d. Institutionalization of Democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Snowden paradox debate the positive and negative consequences of his actions, which are viewed differently by various stakeholders, including governments, media, privacy advocates, and the general public, yet not talking about the atrocities reported therein (An analysis of post-Snowden civil society accountability in book 'Intelligence Oversight in Times of Transnational Impunity' by Didier Bego).

Last century's post-colonial '3rd Wave' of global democratization upgraded more than 60 countries from authoritarian rule to some kind of democratic regime believing that this 'rule of the commoners' (democracy) would mutate into a well-established system of government through a 'parliament' but was ironically taken over by the 'influential minority' for their love of *kratos* (power). Progressively the 'rule of/by the majority', has been eroded and eliminated. Robert A. Dahl calls it polyarchy, a concept in a functional perspective, which is neither a democracy nor dictatorship and power is invested in multiple entities (Dahl, 1971). A more nuanced and flexible approach. The temporal dimension of 'democratic consolidation' is a process, where new democracy matures or gains enough strength, where there are unlikely chances of it reverting back to authoritarianism, albeit an external shock. Linz and Stepan have defined it in a phrase, "the only game in town" (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 15), stipulating five criteria or 'arenas' namely political society, rule of law, bureaucratic structure, economic society, and civil society (including media). Robert Putnam (Putnam, 2000) identified the importance of civic society and voluntary associations, vital to the lifeblood of any democracy, while presenting that civic society in general, and social capital in particular, has suffered substantial erosion in the postwar (World War 2) years in America, visible through a low level of trust in government and civic participation.

Another important issue, a byproduct of contemporary democracy is clientelism, which according to Richard Graham is a set of actions based on the principle of 'take there, give here', allowing both clients and patrons to gain advantage from each other's support (Graham, 1997). It is common in new democracies due to lack of infrastructure, weak state institutions and the citizens not well off or educated (Stokes, 2013). Russell Dalton has identified the same as: *"Democracies are facing a challenge today... the challenge comes from democracy's own citizens, who have grown distrustful of politicians, skeptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions: (Dalton, 2004, p. 1).*

Structurally there are two types of democracy: direct and representative. According to systems, there are three basic systems: parliamentary, presidential, and mixed. Within the 165 democracies in 2023 there are only 24 as full fledged democracies. Remaining 50 are called flawed, 34 hybrid and 59, authoritarian. Pakistan is ranked 118 under Authoritarian regime. (Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), UK, 2023). Old democracies have a well-established system of control and oversight system, which includes ministries, parliamentary committees, ombudsmen, civilian review committees and the judicial and penal system. The national intelligence organizations mainly exist for one primary purpose: - 'to inform and support foreign policy decision-makers' or information processing services for the elected leadership. Counterintelligence, a 'high policing' is a secondary mission assigned to a separate civilian agency such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Concept of 'New Democracies' (1940s), by Mao Zedong's "Bloc of Four Social Classes" theory in post-revolutionary China stipulated that democracy in China is to take a decisively distinct path to that of many other countries of the world. (On New Democracy, Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, 2024), where democratic transition is viewed through different parameters (also used in Central/Eastern Europe and South America). These institutionalize democratic civil-military relations (CMR) by establishing new security institutions—military, police, and intelligence agencies which progressively come under democratic civilian control (democratization of intelligence agencies being the most daunting mission, because agencies rely on secrecy for effectiveness and efficiency, whereas democratic control requires transparency, openness, and accountability). This seemingly oxymoronic task can be taken with will to 'invest' in intelligence and intelligence reform. External factors (independent and pluralistic media, civil society, international groups, and human rights practitioners), play a crucial role in achieving balance between control and effectiveness.

This democratization of intelligence, according to Timothy Edmund (in an old or new democracy) involves a few simple steps. (Edmunds, 2008) : -

- a. Creating a new agency or reorganizing old ones along with process of crafting the legal frameworks (intelligence roles, control, oversight, accountability, and transparency).
- b. Establishing and strengthening institutions and mechanisms to ensure that intelligence at some level is accountable to citizens/their representatives. Including legislative or its standing or ad hoc committees, judiciary, internal legal accountability mechanisms within intelligence organizations (general counsels and inspectors general), and finally the external mechanisms like free press, independent think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other international organizations.
- c. Recognition of the need to develop additional principles and practices, that boost the effectiveness of the intelligence agencies and strengthen the democratic nature of control and oversight (raising public interest on intelligence and security matters; increasing civilian expertise in intelligence; institutionalizing processes that support transparency and effectiveness; fostering apolitical culture that supports intelligence in society and inside the agencies; and, professionalization of the intelligence services).

In the democratic universal indexing, Pakistan is back to Authoritarian Regimes of 2007, when it was under a dictatorship. Under civil-military relations, barring the debate of ‘encroachment of space’ or the common principle of inevitability of a vacuum to be left unfilled, Army’s involvement in politics, from 1958 onwards, is by now a grim reality. The increasing influence of the military in aspects of foreign policy, nuclear weapons issues, internal security, judiciary, politics and even economics has created unease in most parts of society. Even ‘being on same page’ is far from the desired constitutional equation as the imbalance had worsened in last democratic government (s). It is one step forward and two step backwards. While in form, democracy seems consolidating, yet the recoil of 2022 has brought it back to zero or worse and real substance (real executive power by democratically elected for welfare of public) worsened to current regressions of 2023 and 2024. Lately, the retort of the executive can be seen in failed attempt to bring ISI under Interior Ministry in 2008, creation of National Counter Terrorism Authority (2009) and superimposition of National Intelligence Coordination Committee (2020). The last two also had the purpose of creating a set up like that of Office of Director National Intelligence (ODNI of USA) which brings the military/intelligence under civilian control for accountability. National Internal Security Policy (NISP) in 2012-14, placed 26 Civil and Military Agencies under NACTA for terrorism and extremism.

For accountability of executive Mathew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz compared in USA and contrasted the two approaches of accountability with the ideas of “police patrolling” and “firefighting.” (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984) First is of ‘routine vigilance’ a patroller ‘the lawmakers’ overseer, regularly review executive branch programs. The second case, he only comes when an alarm or breach has occurred or reported and takes the response accordingly. But once the firestorm subdues, he returns to relative normalcy or inaction. Following this Vian Bakir has identified two periods of accountability or oversight as ‘journalism as usual period’ and ‘whistleblowing period’, but stresses that oversight of media becomes more important during ‘journalism as usual period’ (Bakir, 2017).

In Pakistan, the second case of a ‘placebo’ firefighting by formal scrutinizer has been ‘more frequent’, and concept of whistleblowing is nonexistent. What it needs is some kind of ‘grand dialogue’ among the state institutions at the highest level as various organs and institutions have increasingly encroached on each other’s space. On January 17, 2019, Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Asif Saeed Khosa proposed an inter-institutional dialogue at the summit level (Sigamony, 2019).

## **2.2 Media’s Role**

According to Julianne Schultz the press, “starting as ‘bastard estate’ of 18<sup>th</sup> century, won its independence by following freedom of expression in the next” (Schultz, 1998, p. 1). The less elitist it became, the more power it wielded in public scrutiny. But now, with its head in politics and feet in commerce, it is being

termed as a flawed embodiment of the original concept (p.22), which resulted in a substitute concept of the 'fifth estate' a grouping of outlier viewpoints (in contemporary society) of bloggers, publishing in non-mainstream media outlets. It also includes the mainstream media, but as an entity to be monitored (Wiki Leaks a vivid example). The desired revival of the 'fourth estate' is only possible through journalistic independence, political autonomy, increased accountability, responsiveness, and the transition of the press to the purest task of journalistic investigation.

Media has to be 'objective to the core' and to inform, entertain and educate. According to Dr. Zafar Iqbal's Structural-Functional model all institutions in a society support each other in the Macro Social System for their proper functioning (homeostasis) and a problem in any institution, consequently, causes problems in other institutions too (Iqbal, 2014, p. 13). According to Denis McQuail, it has to serve the 'Public Interest' whether by design or chance, .... can be held accountable for the same (p. 68). For this, the basic proposed values are freedom, equality/justice, and order/solidarity (Mcquail, 1997, p. 70).

A working model for media was proposed by James Curran, where the 'core' includes Public Service TV and the 'periphery' has Private Service Enterprise, Civic, and Social Market and Professional sectors. The vigilant scrutiny of government and power centers remains the basic requirement. (Curran, Mass Media and Democracy Revisited, 1997).

According to Yochai Benkler this new 'Networked' Fourth Estate is a set of practices, organizing models, and technologies, associated with the press and provide a public check on government branches. It has a diverse set of actors including small for-profit media organizations, non-profit media organizations, academic centers, and distributed networks of individuals even within the larger traditional organizations. This explains the growth of non-traditional journalistic media on Internet and how it affects the traditional press (Benkler, 2011).

The concept of 'openness' is an important requirement for democratic governance that relies on an informed electorate. Citizens should be able to make informed judgments and participate in the political community. The focus remains on 'serious' news outlets, or 'public affairs news'. However, in Pakistan despite the mushroom growth of private media, the desired role of public scrutiny is still deficient. Lack of investigative journalism, objectivity, training, over-reliance on official sources, more concentration on economics (conglomeration) and entertainment, disreputability in issues of national security/foreign policy and more concentration on personalities than institutions are examples of this deficiency.

Pakistani Public Affairs news setups practice the scrutiny functions in an infrequent, ad hoc, and informal manner, which does not easily fit into existing conceptual frameworks of intelligence oversight. Inherent weaknesses of covering intelligence topics, external factors such as military interventions or its hold, government or intelligence service's secrecy agenda, and the weak regulatory frameworks are the reasons. The recent Pakistani Global War on Terror (GWOT) has further turned the media into a 'lapdog.'

The relationship between citizens, the intelligence services, policymakers/formal scrutinizers, and the informal scrutinizer, is a complex one. The Geneva Centre For Security Governance (DCAF) a think tank has identified four main responsibilities for civil society/media in this role (H. Born & G. G. Mesevage, 2012, p. 8):-

- a. To investigate policies and activities of intelligence services and intelligence oversight bodies.
- b. To expose improper, illegal, ineffective, or inefficient conduct of the intelligence services.
- c. To inform the public regarding intelligence service policies, activities, and its oversight.
- d. To encourage public debate about policies, activities of intelligence services and oversight bodies.

For its efficacy and effectiveness, Glenn. P. Hastedt has identified four necessary conditions which a press must have (Hastedt, 2016).

- a. Public must perceive or believe the press, to be a legitimate agent of oversight, in reality or practice.
- b. In press reporting, the information should be given out piecemeal, in a process, giving sustained attention and input with background and context in elementary/uncomplicated manner. For sustenance of issue Loch Johnson proposes “*A sustained coverage in leading newspapers, say, several weeks running with at least a few front-page stories.*” (Johnson, 2006, p. 343)
- c. Being in political domain, the existence of disagreement among the policymaking elites is the third necessary condition. Because according to E. E. Schattschneider’s (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 2) “*at the root of all politics is the universal language of conflict*”; “*the audience determines the outcome of the [political] fight*”; *which is determined by the extent to which the audience becomes involved . . . the scope of its contagion.*” This identifies the importance of both sustained coverage and framing by the press.
- d. Finally the issue must be of public’s interest, as Bernard Cohen noted, while press coverage directs readers’ attention to the issues, but it “*may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think. . . . The world will look different to different people*” (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). However, these all are specific to the political culture of the country and trade-offs between preserving national security and protecting civil liberties being viewed differently, while reactions can be different on revelations of wrongdoings. There is no specific ‘tipping point’ for media attention, however pollster Daniel Yankelovich (Yankelovich, 2006) suggest that it is near when three factors emerge: one, the size of the public majority in favor or opposed to a policy; two, the intensity and urgency of opinions; and three, whether or not the public believes the government is responsible. Yet, according to Rahul Sagar (Sagar, 2013, p. 203) the intelligence oversight in US is an “*unruly contest, and that no easy way exists by which to part the veil of secrecy surrounding intelligence operations.*”

Dusan Reljic (Reljic, 2005) also presented a dynamic model of assessment of media’s performance with four emerging realistic assessment fields: -

- a. The Political Environment of Media
- b. The Economic Environment
- c. Journalistic Skills
- d. The Political Psychology of the Public

He further suggested that media is just one of the factors and in view of the above factors, an idealistic approach be avoided.

According to Freedom House 2023, Pakistan in world press freedom index, is ‘Partly Free’ since 2019 (the categories are Free, Partly Free and Not Free) (Freedom House , 2019). ‘Reporters Without Borders-RSF- 2023’ has ranked Pakistan as 152 out of 180, with previous comments like “*Pakistani media, which has a long tradition of being very lively, has become a priority target for the country’s “deep state,” ... to subjugate the civilian executive. ... And, as has been the case for at least a decade, there was total impunity for crimes of violence against journalists* (Under the military establishment’s thumb, 2019). Now following the precedence, the ‘deep state’ has been (once again) let loose altogether.

Major issue of this relation of ‘establishment’ or their Intelligence Agencies with media is due to a structural problem posed by ‘State Secrecy’, which create ‘information asymmetry’, with which intelligence officials manipulate the constitutional safeguards or the balance. Everything is hushed down on the pretext of secrecy or security to the most elusive construct of ‘national interest’. Rahul Sagar presenting a ‘retrospective approach’ for addressing this issue states that the nature of goals of two institutions are fundamentally in tension with factors like ‘Peacetime Oversight’ versus the National Security Crisis, the result (victory or defeat) and type of government (dictatorship or democracy) having

considerable effect on this desired balance (Sagar, 2009). The future trends of warfare and changed media environment make media-military relations more difficult, yet the symbiotic relation between the two in shapes of leaks, embedding and mutual politicization of intelligence analysis, like that of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq War of 2004 also exist. In Pakistan due to the 'transitional nature' of both, (democracy and media) it is too farfetched to expect the oversight role under the western/old democracy's principles. However, it does not restrict us from using those benchmarks with a minimized threshold or lowered bracket. New democracies can be taken as the direction, yet according to own context and ground realities.

### **2.3 Intelligence Oversight**

Intelligence according to Mark. M. Lowenthal (Lowenthal M. M., 2003, p. 08) has three connotations. First as a process, it is the means by which governments request, collect, analyze, and disseminate certain types of required information leading to covert or counter-intelligence operations. Second as a product of these gathering, analysis, and covert operations. And finally, as an organization, those agencies that carry out these functions.

Intelligence craft, the "oldest profession," has the inherent issue of negative perception due to its nature, scope, and enshrined role in a state. The most important function in a democracy is keeping the country informed about external and internal threats. These consolidated organizations include members of intelligence agencies, military intelligence, civilian intelligence, and analysis directorates, operationalized under executive ministries of government. With primary mission of Intelligence 'collection' and secondary of 'counterintelligence', to main agencies, the domestic security intelligence, or high policing function, is assigned to separate civilian agencies. However, there could be other types of agencies with different mandates, scopes, and operations.

The term oversight refers to supervisory functions and Reg Whitaker and Stuart Farson (Whitaker & Farson, 2009) claim it is broadly used today, referring to the scrutiny of government action before, during, and after, dealing with both matters of propriety and efficacy. Oversight is not accountability, but it may lead to it. From this perspective, the media has an obligation to keep governments in check and investigate their activities including the realm of intelligence. Simon Chesterman (Chesterman, 2011, p. 80) pointed out that meaningful accountability of intelligence services depends on the level of public debate which may be opposed by the actors in question, proscribed by official secret acts, and constrained by the interests of elected officials. Genevieve Allison Lester divides "accountability" into two sets of components: one is of external accountability (by parliament, opposition, judiciary, civil society, and media) and internal accountability (control mechanisms, institutional culture, and organizational standard operating procedures), but all linked in chain (Lester, 2015).

Among the four main set ups (executive/internal, legal, judicial, and public) the public (informal) oversight constitutes the news media, think-tanks, civil society activists and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Scrutiny by these institutions can lead to the final public accountability, through elections, or 'the public-at-large' can hold the intelligence accountable. Public oversight is primarily focused on security sector and human rights issues. But public can exercise direct political pressure on the government, where the media plays a key role in increasing public awareness as access to reliable information is a pre-requisite. Scandal can also lead to investigation and result in structural reform, which improves both the accountability and the effectiveness of intelligence. Legal rules about the classification or declassification of information can reconcile accountability and transparency, while maintaining the required or reasonable secrecy through: -

- a. Initiating the freedom of information laws allowing public access to government's data.
- b. Proper classification schedules or timeframes that clearly define what, when and how long the information will be kept secret and the designated timeframe for its de-classification.

- c. Legal jurisprudence provide protection (from punishment or victimizations for violating their pre-obtained pledge of confidentiality, loyalty or obedience) for intelligence or other personnel who reveal information that exposes misconduct.
- d. Whistleblower protection is equally important with the understanding that such disclosures can compromise national security, even when serving a wider public interest.

Every aspect of intelligence activity, be subjected to democratic ‘control’ and ‘oversight’ or ‘will of the people’ as it also protects the intelligence services from political abuse, while creating a well-resourced, motivated, merit-based, non-discriminatory workplaces for professionals. Here ‘control’ means the power to direct an organization’s policies and activities, by making rules, codes, or policies. Whereas ‘oversight’ means verifying whether rules, laws are obeyed, and codes, policies are applied. Oversight can be undertaken by many different institutions, while control is typically of the concerned executive branch. But this all has to work in an ‘agreed system in vogue’.

In the theoretical domain Claudia Hillebrand (Hillebrand, 2012) has identified three key oversight roles for the news media: -

- a. A crucial purpose refers to the transmission and scrutiny of information about government’s undertakings and bringing issues to public domain and debate.
- b. A step further, in view of a situation where formal scrutinizers appearing to be inept, or unwilling is that of a substitute watchdog. To fill in the gap.
- c. In an indirect way, media coverage can contribute to the legitimization of intelligence services and the related policies (including monitoring).
- d. Kristof Clerix talks of role of ‘sensitization platform’ for espionage activities of hostile intelligence, where the media’s task is to sensitize the public regarding the espionage risks and related activities like fifth generation warfare (Clerix, 2013, p. 185).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century security landscape, the intelligence and security system of a democratic country has to work efficiently on four fronts, simultaneously: -

- a. Control should be brought under the democratic civilian setup, in principle and practice.
- b. The Intelligence setup should be extra effective (from war to peacekeeping).
- c. This efficiency of the Intelligence agencies and missions should be with minimum cost while remaining within the bounds of propriety and law.
- d. Required approach should be ‘offensive defense’, with effort on sound preemption and research rather than being responsive and reactive.

The only solution to security–democracy paradox is that democracies must make all-out efforts to balance both the features of deliverance, namely transparency and secrecy, while maintaining the required homeostasis.

## **2.4 Intelligence Failure**

The concept of intelligence failure is an old construct and according to Mark Lowenthal it is the outcome of inadequacies within the intelligence cycle, which essentially consists of (simultaneous) six steps: requirements, collection, processing and exploitation, analysis and production, dissemination and consumption, and feedback (Lowenthal M. M., 2000, p. 49). In the West the study of intelligence failures is the most academically advanced field in the study of intelligence (Hedley J. H., 2005), however limited attention has been given in the case of Southeast Asia. A comparative analysis of intelligence failure of three incidents of the region, including the Bin Laden Killing in 2011 was given by Ashraf and Sarkar, in 2016 (Sarkar, 2016).



Pildat (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency) has done some work, but the same is intelligence centric and covers only 'formal oversight' of parliament.

Muhammad Shahbaz Siddique & Dr Bushra H Rahman of Institute of Communication Studies, Lahore conducted content analysis of editorials of six Urdu and English dailies from watchdog standpoint (Rahman, July 2017).

Critical Discourse Analysis of 'editorial coverage' of OBL Operations by two English newspapers (Dawn and The News) was undertaken by Amna Zulfiqar of NUML University in March 2021 (Amna Zulfiqar, 30 March 2021).

No discourse analysis of news reports relating to Abbottabad Operation has been done so far.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The orientation is essentially 'responsive' in nature, as the study is being conducted after the event or case, in hindsight or retrospect (Clausing, 2016). The 'monitoring role' of the media has been well outlined in the book "Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies" a sequel to the famous "Four Theories of the Press" of 1956. The media roles are explained from three levels of philosophical, political and the media's role, including each stage as monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative, with different matrices for each (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009). But due to minimal theorization of intelligence oversight in academic research and neglect to the setting or context of East, no local benchmarks are available for evaluation of efficiency of media outlets. The theoretical framework of a traditional 'media research' also becomes challenging due to normal journalistic practices (newsworthiness, source, or sequence of 5Ws/1H) while covering intelligence (Micheler, 2015), yet overall approach remains normative in nature. In absence of relevant framework, Grounded Theory Approach was utilized in inductive effort of this study. The 'High Context Culture' of Pakistan (including the journalists) was also taken in consideration for the discourse analysis.

Due to this less/placebo oversight (firefighting) the case specific orientation (OBL Raid) was maintained, especially when press is unable to fulfill its four necessary conditions/requirements. This also limit the scope to few well circulated presses, having the capability to monitor intelligence from the required pedestal.

The nature and influence of intelligence agencies as a 'powerhouse' was also kept under view as on one side is a well-established organ of the state and on the other an institution (press) still not coming out of its myopic view.

The Public (main factor for whom all this machination of 'accountable democracy' has been created) is also devoid of basic 'citizenry cognition' and been tamed to reflect in a particular way due to being credulous, 'public doesn't demand, and the media doesn't provide'. It is also known that the current situation of the country under Hillebrand's perspective warrants a 'substitute dog's role', as 'formal oversight' is non-existence, incapable or marginalized.

The approach taken by different researchers (Hastedt, Clausing, Bakir and locals) has been mainly quantitative and some qualitative for editorials, while 'News Reports' have been left unattended. Therefore 'Discourse Analysis', with both dimensions, as a method of analysis of the text and as a perspective of power relations between two power houses of the country (intelligence and media) were used. The methods of Teun A. Van Dijk of News Schemata, Textual Discourse Analysis and Opinions & Ideologies in Press, were used to analyze the text of news reports (comments, opinion included). The analysis was then viewed under the Claudian model for desired democratic role, performed or otherwise. Luuk Clausing (following Claudia) in "Under the Supervision of Media", on role of news media in intelligence oversight has identified or 'itemized' indicators for measuring these four roles, which have been utilized also (Clausing, 2016).

### 3.1 Research Questions

**RQ-1:** Has the Pakistani press been able to play its democratic oversight role of Information Transmitter and Stimulator for the formal scrutinizer?

**RQ-2:** Has the Pakistani media been able to play a Substitute Watchdog in absence of deliverance by the formal scrutinizer?

**RQ-3:** Has the Pakistani media been able to legitimize the Institution of Intelligence and the process of oversight?

**RQ-4:** Has the Pakistani press been able to sensitize the public regarding the hostile espionage risks and related activities?

**RQ-5:** Is the Intelligence Oversight Framework for media, given and exercised in west effective in relation to Pakistani context? If not, what could be the model for the same?

The population for this study was the media reports reported in the English press during the OBL Raid of May 2011. The basic criterion is the relevance to the topic of intelligence oversight role, either partially/referentially or totality.

Due to the expected lack of relevant news reports, the census sampling frame was used. Relevance to the issue or case and the temporal relevance to the incident or scandal governed the selection.

*The Dawn, The News, The Nation, and The Express Tribune* newspapers were selected for this study. These papers cover the political spectrum and have been chosen for their importance, publication in the English language, high circulation, and influence, with the capacity and capability to take on the desired role.

In the light of the model, the four major variables were: -

- a. Transmitter or Stimulator
- b. Substitute Watchdog
- c. Legitim�er
- d. Sensitizer

Additional variable for this study was the ‘efficacy’ variable of the Claudian model in relation to Pakistani context and setting.

This study is a jumping-off point or milestone towards understanding this new topic of ‘informal oversight’ of intelligence agencies by the press or media.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Table – 1 *Showing Performance of Oversight Role by 4 x Newspapers on OBL Raid*

<b>Dawn</b>	<b>News</b>	<b>Express</b>	<b>Nation</b>	<b>Summary</b>
‘ Good Reports – 6/19	‘ Good Reports – 5/18	‘ Good Reports – 2/14	‘ Good Reports - 0/23	‘ Good Reports - <b>Dawn</b>
‘ Days Reported - 10	‘ Days Reported - <b>12</b>	‘ Days Reported - 11	‘ Days Reported - <b>12</b>	‘ Days Reported - <b>Nation</b>
‘ Average – 22.05 (13)	‘ Average – <b>27.35</b> (12)	‘ Average – 23.99 (5)	‘ Average – 6.23 (21)	‘ Overall Average - <b>19.58 %</b> (The News= <b>27.35</b> )

Reproductions – 7 (36.8 %).	Reproductions – 9 (47.3 %).	Reproduction – 4 (28.5 %).	Reproduction – 10 (45.4 %).	Reproduction – <b>Express (?)</b>
Info Leaks – 1 (ISPR)	Info Leaks – 2 (Generals & US- Media)	Info Leaks – 2 (ISI, Intelligence)	Info Leaks – 5 (ISI, ISPR, PCNS, Opposition)	Info Leaks – <b>Nation (5)</b>
Max in a Day – 7 (2 May)	Max in a Day – 3 (3 May)	Max in a Day – 3 (7 May)	Max in a Day – 5 (3 May)	Max in a Day – <b>Dawn</b>

Data/news reports/news stories were collected from digital newspaper archives, websites, and National Library Islamabad in hard and soft form. Considerable news reports were re-typed from the originals as well.

The main data collection was about oversight responsibility of press, however other factors have also emerged, which tell further about this watchdog role of the media. Each report, from the start of event till the end when the public/ media's interest saturated in the issue, was analyzed. The relevant reports were segregated and tested individually under the instruments as under: -

- Microstructures-Local (Semantics-Coherence). Model of Van Dijk
- Thematic Realization (Macro-Micro)-Themes. Model of Van Dijk
- Topic Derivation (Schema-Superstructure)-Topics. Model of Van Dijk
- Oversight Roles Played by News Media. Claudian Model (plus L. Clausing and K. Clerix).

Later a summary of these relevant reports was prepared to derive main points of the observations, which further lead to yet another shorter summary to derive the crux. The concluding points of that summary have been subsumed or consolidated under following suitable headlines.

#### **4.1 Oversight or Watchdog Role**

According to James Curran 'Watchdog role is said to override in importance all other functions of media, and to dictate the form in which the media should be organized' (Curran, Mass Media and Democracy Revisited, 1996) . But the collective performance of oversight role of the selected 4 x newspapers remained dismal at 19.58 out of 100, which is low by all standards. *The News* tops the average at 27.35, while *The Nation* remained the lowest at 5.83 percent despite producing maximum of reports (20) in the same period. *Dawn* and *Express Tribune* remained at 22 and 23 respectively. In the case of 'Good Oversight Reports' *Dawn* leads with 6 x reports of 50 percent or above mark, whereas *The Nation* could not produce a single good oversight report. *The News* and *Express Tribune* produced 5 and 2 respectively. Overall, the quantitative and qualitative factor of *Dawn* remained at the top with *The News*, *Express Tribune* and *The Nation* respectively.

#### **4.2 Timeliness**

'The news value of Timeliness includes the related concepts of newness, recency, currency, immediacy, and so on, since they are all concerned with establishing the relevance of the event in relation to the time of publication' (Caple, 2017). In the case of this study *Dawn* was the quickest to report (mostly on digital website) with 7 x related reports on the first day of the event, whereas others (*The News*, *The Express Tribune* and *The Nation*) could only report on the next day (being 24 x hours late). The reported stories of *Dawn* were diverse and covered the topic from both ends thus maintaining the standard and setting the pace. *The News*, *The Express Tribune* and *The Nation* were late by 24 hours and could not comprehend and report a single related report despite the obvious nature and quantum of the event. *The Express*

*Tribune* also could not report a single report from its monitoring desk on the webpage till it finally reported on the next day along with other newspapers.

### **4.3     *Reproduction or Cut and Paste***

News stories are supposed to be original acquisition/piece of the journalist who had taken input from different sources and presented in his own wordings with required attribution. The same are then vetted by Editorial Board or Staff of the newspaper before printing. Under Be Accountable and Transparent in SPJ Code of Ethics it is stated that “Journalists have a moral obligation to be accountable to the public for the work they produce and how they produce it” (SPJ’s National Convention in Nashville, Tenn, 2014). However, this how was kept hidden and a large number (30) of the reports out of total (74) have been reproduced (40.5 percent) from reports of either foreign or local media (even newspapers), press releases and input of news agencies. In some cases, it was a ‘cut & paste case’ without any output from the journalist or newspaper. Being capacity issues of the papers also identifies a lethargic attitude, paucity of investigative journalists, weak knowledge of intelligence related matters and deficiency of English language (also identified by mistakes in the text). *The News* and *The Nation* has the maximum of reproductions of 47 & 45 percent with no or few comments or remarks. Even *Dawn* regurgitated & misrepresented foreign reports of which few were later found to be factually incorrect as well. A point also identifies as elite sources of agenda setting in case study research by Dr Marwan, Dr Shahid and Dr Ahlam in Dec 2019 (Amir Hamza Marwan, 31 Dec 2019).

### **4.4     *Press Being Used for Information Leaks***

Watch dog role demands that media should excoriate those in power or public office while being critical to the core, albeit it starts working in cohorts with local or external masters. It also becomes more dangerous when the media does not recognize of being used by others. Under ‘Act Independently’ in SPJ Code of Ethics it is stated that “Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money.” But despite the incidental nature of the reported event, visible signs of influence could be identified in 10 x reports out of total 74 making a percentage of 13.5 percent. In this *The Nation* and *The News* were more influenced than *Express tribune* and *Dawn*. Influencing institutions included ISI or ISPR, Opposition and government. Main purpose remained of either responding to a narrative or creating a new for local or external readers.

### **4.5     *Narrative/Major Themes***

‘Media has always been a single most decisive factor in shaping the minds of the people’ (Hafeez, 2015). So different competing narratives (and also the responses) were built during the incident reports between the well synchronized US and its media on one side and the confused leadership of Pakistan and unprepared media on the other. US media had initiative on its side and was well prepared, whereas Pakistani media received the first report with shock/surprise (nightmare). The First US narrative of ‘False Dilemma’ showing an equivocality was initiated by US media and reproduced first by *Dawn* as ‘Complicit or inefficient’ (caught). PM of Pakistan initiated confusion by initially ‘hailing’ the event as victory (appreciating own facilitation) and later asking for sharing the blame of failure. The media followed with words like ‘stumped’ or ‘embarrassed’ in the headlines. The second US narrative of ‘Mistrust’ was also picked up by *Dawn*. The paper also shared the response (government) along with modification of stance to ‘Violation of Sovereignty’. Taking the lead *The News* proposed the narrative of ‘Subaltern’ (bakshoo) as a response to US hegemonic narratives. *Dawn* also reported the first Pakistani narrative (in response) of ‘Collective Ownership of Failures’ whereas *The News* reported the defensive narrative of ‘We are good but not God’. In response to the mistrust narrative of US media the *Express Tribune* reported the narrative of ‘Unilateralism’ as a rebuke. *The Nation* along with *The Express Tribune* also took up the ‘Demarche’ and ‘Inevitability of Failures’ narratives along with ‘Revision of Policy and Strategy’.

On 06 May 2011, *The News* picked up the narrative of 'Formal Intelligence Oversight' with an investigative report, though next day the third narrative of US/Media was launched through *Newsweek*. This narrative of putting pressure on 'DG ISI to Quit' was taken by all four newspapers. It was clubbed by the narrative of 'Disclosure of In-Contact ISI Operatives with OBL' for further pressurizing Pakistan. The narrative of 'Poor Media handling' covering 'Image Restoration' and 'Blame Game' was initiated by COAS/ISPR but was not followed by the press.

On 13 May 2011, the narrative of 'Parliamentary Supremacy' was beaten up after briefing of joint session by military/intelligence. Next day *Express Tribune* initiated the narrative of 'National Failure' instead of the narrative of just 'intelligence failure' being taken up till then.

From 17 May 2011 the US due to final tough stance of Pakistan changed course and after frequent visits of MPs/CIA operatives the new narrative was of 'Reproachment'. *The News* through innovative 'public polls' idea, clubbed the old narrative of 'Nuclear Security.'

On 19 May 2011 *Dawn* (due to saturation) changed to introspective narrative of 'Leadership Treachery' while in viewing the drone issue, which continued further for a time.

On 31 May 2011 *Dawn* also initiated the narrative of 'How to Handle National Failures' to the arena which was subsequently followed and later changed with yet another.

After this preponderance of narratives in the media field the normalcy returned and both the nations or their agencies and media started working together, though some bitterness remained.

There were also (numerous) supporting/opposing themes taken against these narratives in the text, which were either given by the reporter or being reported upon.

#### **4.6 Professionalism/Investigative Journalism**

Specialized beat reporting and investigative journalism are the cornerstone of any newspaper or media; however, these were found to be the most neglected field. Beat reporter were not prepared for this task which resulted in different mistakes (including textual, factual, and judgmental). Reproduction and not being able to report on time were a symptom of this deficiency. This resulted in input from external writers (mostly editorial writers) which changed the genre of the reports to a hybrid (report cum editorial). Despite few mistakes *Dawn* did not take support of externals and 3 x good investigative reports were initiated (by Badar Alam and Khalid Hassan Mahmood). *The News* took help of Umer Chema, Saleem Shahzad (later killed for same reporting) and even Ansar Abbasi for writing investigative pieces. *The Express Tribune* asked Dr Ayesha Siddiqi for a critical output despite her known bias. *The Nation* did not pay attention to this aspect at all and resultantly had the maximum of mistakes. Maximum of editorial type reports were reported in *The Express Tribune* (4) taking help of Dr Younis Samad & Dr Ayesha. Others included two reports of Mariana Baabar (*The News*), Saleem Bokhari (*The Nation*) and Ahmed Noorani (*The News*). In the intellectual output think tanks like PILDAT and SDPI played a positive role to fill up the deficiency.

#### **4.7 Intelligence Failure**

John Hedley states "The study of Int Failures is perhaps the most academically advanced field in the study of intelligence." (Hedley J. H., 2005, p. 437). Whereas in Pakistan it is the opposite. Yet the most common theme/topic or construct, common in most of the reports had been the 'Intelligence Failure. Some reports exacerbated it to 'Military Failure' or to the ultimate 'National Failure. It was an intelligence failure of two counts: first of not knowing about the presence of OBL in Abbottabad and second a security lapse of not knowing/responding to the conduct of raid on 02 May 2011 by US special forces. The theoretical explication identifies that the contemporary study of Intelligence Failures has three major perspectives for its occurrence. Namely the Role of Intelligence Organization, the Cognitive Beliefs (both Policymakers & Intelligence Analysts) and the Operational Performance of Security & Intelligence Agencies. Accordingly, Loch Johnson notes that in an Intelligence Organization the

“Weaknesses exist in each step of Intelligence cycle, from planning & direction to collection, processing, analysis, & dissemination” (Johnson 2006: 116). In Planning & Direction step, it is caused due to lack of well-defined planning & direction by senior officials and intelligence customers (Johnson 2006: 118). In Collection & Processing step, the overwhelming of the task of Intelligence collectors, due to abundance of data, resultantly makes him fail to process the data in a timely manner and provide it to the analysts (Johnson 2006: 120). In the Analytical step, the Intelligence analysis being at the ‘heart’ of Int cycle, requires the analyst to add his/her ‘insight’ to convert a piece of information into actionable Intelligence (Johnson 2006: 120). The factors which can cause poor analytical judgment include professional incompetence, limited information, or the political manipulation. In the Dissemination step, it is the failure to draw the attention of the national security decision makers (by Intelligence Analyst) who are often pre-occupied with multiple competing issues. Or it can be due to lack of attention of policymakers or tendency to “cherry-pick” preferred information from Intelligence reports (Johnson 2006: 121).

The introduction of this term in the reports was a consequence of the use of term “Intelligence Success” in US/Western Press. This also suited the Pakistan’s initial narrative of a better option (of a lesser evil nature) rather than being complicit/involved in supporting/hiding Osama (though this has not been clearly stipulated by the Pakistani Government, but rather rejected officially).

Throughout the reports of all newspapers this narrative remained persistent, as was imposed by US/Media from the outset. Neither the confused government nor the weak media of Pakistan could properly respond to this theme, or generate any of its own.

#### **4.8 Oversight (Formal and Informal)**

*The News* was the first to report about Restructuring of Intelligence & Formal Oversight in the report of Umer Cheema on 6 May 2011, which was followed up by *Express Tribune* on 8 May, where Dr Ayesha Siddiqa talked about Civilian Oversight. Two of the formal oversight bodies (Parliamentary Standing Committee on National Security – Senate and Defence Committee of Cabinet – National Assembly) also conducted meetings on 9<sup>th</sup> and 12 May 2011, which were reported by *The Nation* and *The News* accordingly. *The Nation* also reported on the input of think tanks (PILDAT and SDPI) on formal oversight bodies and their actions on 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> May.

Ironically this meager coverage was all about the formal oversight bodies and their undertakings, who just conducted single meetings to show their presence or derive some form of legitimacy of their existence. The media or judiciary had no knowledge of their oversight role in such like situations. The word ‘Informal Oversight’ was not even used in press releases of the think tanks as if it never existed. This ignorance prevailed throughout as a blessing for Intelligence Agencies and the military establishment.

#### **4.9 Research Questions**

The data collection and analysis has been summarized as under giving an overall picture of different expected roles and their percentages.

Table – 2 Showing Performance of Oversight Role by 4 x Newspapers on OBL Raid

<b>Transmitter &amp; Stimulator</b>	<b>Substitute Watchdog</b>	<b>Legitimizer</b>	<b>Sensitizer</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
† Dawn-29.1	† Dawn-30.3	† Dawn- 10.6	† Dawn- 10.1	<u>Overall Category Only</u>
† News-28.1	† News-51.6	† News- 14	† News- 13.1	† News at top, <b>26.7 %</b> (12 out of 18 stories).
† Express-35	† Express-26.2	† Express- 14.2	† Express- 21	† Express Second, 24.1 % ( <b>5</b> out of 15 stories).
† Nation-12.6	† Nation- 5.71	† Nation- 2.1	† Nation- 4.3	

All - 104.8/4	All - 113.8/4.	All - 40.9/4	All - 48.5/4.	Dawn third, 10.2 % ( <b>15</b> out of <b>19</b> stories).
Average - <b>26.2</b>	Average - <b>28.45</b>	Average - <b>10.22</b>	Average - <b>12.1</b>	Nation last, 6.1 % (21 out of <b>23</b> stories).
<u>Role Wise</u>				
Substitute Watchdog.				
Transmission & Stimulation.				
Sensitization.				
Legitimization.				

Overall, media could only perform on average between 16 and 19 level of it enshrined role by all general standards. This is despite to the unanimous (terminal) agreement that, the incident was a failure.

**AQ-1:** Pakistani press has been able to play an average of 26.2 of its democratic oversight role of Information Transmitter and Stimulator for the formal scrutinizer.

**AQ-2:** Pakistani media been able to play an average of 28.4 of its democratic oversight role of Substitute Watchdog role in absence of deliverance by the formal scrutinizer.

**AQ-3:** Pakistani media had been able to play an average of 10.22 of its democratic role of legitimizer role of Intelligence Institution and process of oversight.

**AQ-4:** Pakistani press been able to play an average of 12.1 of its democratic role of sensitizer of the public regarding hostile espionage risks and related activities.

**AQ-5:** The Intelligence Oversight Framework for media, given and exercised in west is not effective in relation to Pakistani local context. The factors are the different ground realities of political, economic, social and psychological indexes with contemporary situation, utterly different from the west. The advised Pakistani model be of basic and transitory nature, with periodic improvement of media's capacity and will, sensitization of public to demand same from other stake holders, involvement and concurrence of establishment for transparency and space and temporal consolidation of democracy with effaceable rule of law. High context of social discourse will not be much of an issue then. For all this a national dialogue by all the stakeholders for a new social contract becomes a must.

#### **4.10 Recommendations**

The problem of imbalance of institutions including the Intelligence Agencies is more complex and has taken seventy-seven years to mature to contemporary state. The issue is mainly of 'acquired space' which no institution wants to giveback easily. A temporal, progressive, local, and comprehensive solution by all stake holders is the requirement of the time or the frequent oscillation will give away to centrifugal force eventually.

1. Truth and reconciliation before or after a Grand National Dialogue. A new social contract which should be 'public centric' and be truly democratic for national cohesion. Civilian primacy.
2. Publicize the Abbottabad Commission Report including the missing pages and develop a punitive dimension of the same.
3. Make the formal accountability system strong, professional, and pervasive. Improve internal mechanisms of agencies (ombudsmen).
4. Informal Accountability should be built from scratch and encourage media's enshrined role of substitute watchdog.
5. Encourage professionalism and investigative journalism among press, journalists, and media.

6. Use and guide social media for fifth generation warfare and hostile entities (including Intelligence). Harness its power for positive initiatives.
7. Homeland security, a high policing function, should be separated from regular intelligence and Intelligence Bureau be improved.
8. Freedom of Information Act be implemented in spirits. Classification declassification policy be introduced along with Whistleblower's Protection legislation.
9. Local Intelligence Oversight model be developed.

## Acknowledgements

None.

## Conflict of Interest


Authors declared NO conflict of interest.

## Funding Source

The authors received NO funding to conduct this study.

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