

INTERPRETING THE MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF TERRORISM IN
DAILY NAWA-E-WAQT AFTER 9/11 (2001–2026): A QUALITATIVE
INTERVIEW STUDY

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Abstract

The study examines the changing narrative of Daily Nawa-e-Waqt during on terrorism in post 9/11 era from the interpretation of media scholars, researches, academics, journalists and other media experts. The study takes a qualitative and interpretive perspective and relies on expert interviews and analysis of the responses to the questions about the themes, framing, editorial orientation and link of the newspaper with the national-security and counterterrorism discourse in Pakistan. The theoretical elements used to interpret the construct of terror-related narratives and potential political, institutional, ideological and security context impact to prominence are those of Framing Theory and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. The research results reveal that the newspaper's narrative about terrorism went through four general stages: resist and ideology (2001-2007), transition to recognize terrorism as an internal threat (2008-2014), national consensus, and strengthening the state (2015-2020) after the Army Public School attack, and regional security and strategic (2021-2026). The five themes that emerged were: Criticism of U.S. foreign policy and the "imposed war," changing portrayals of internal militancy, Western double standards and the structure of the Muslim Ummah, the difference between liberation movements and international terrorism, and the dynamics between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and external threats. Overall, the study concludes that shifts in the framing of the newspaper about terrorism were mostly based on Pakistan's political and security climate and not a shift in the ideological perspective of the newspaper. Accordingly, there is a sense of continuity in its coverage in terms of ideology and a pragmatic flexibility after the APS attack, which saw a greater focus on state security and counter terror, and then a focus on regional and strategic security concerns. The study makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the development of terrorism discourse in the Urdu press of Pakistan and the relationship between media framing, ideology and national-security discourses.

Introduction:

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) transformed international politics, national security and international media (Khan & Safder, 2010). They led to the creation of the “War on Terror”, an initiative of the United States which changed the international geopolitics and had far-reaching implications for the countries directly involved in the security regime, especially Pakistan (Awan, 2026). Pakistan was now a frontline country in the battle against the terror and witnessed significant political, military and social changes, some of which were reflected in the media of the country. Urdu newspapers played a significant role in conveying these changes and making sense of national and international security issues, as Urdu is the language of a large population in Pakistan and Urdu newspapers' editorial opinions have high influence on shaping public opinion (Nazir *et al.*, 2024).

According to Ahsan *et al.* (2021) Daily Nawa-e-Waqt has a great impact on the Urdu Press due to its journalistic approach and its preference to discuss Pakistan's sovereignty, foreign policy and national security. During the post-9/11 period, the newspaper's foreign terrorism coverage, war reporting, counterterrorism policies, cross-border terrorism, and regional conflicts coverage were significant (Nazir *et al.*, 2024). Its function was not just to convey news events, though. Like other news media, Daily Nawa-e-Waqt did not just convey the meaning of terrorism but also constructed it through selection, emphasis and framing, which may help in creating perceptions of the issue (Hussain, 2020). The processes investigated in the present study are therefore analyzed based on the opinions and interpretations of media scholars, researchers, academics, and working reporters, instead of a systematic analysis of the newspaper's full coverage.

Media reporting can't just be reporting of events, it's also a means of creating meaning. From a different perspective, Entman (1993) maintains that Framing Theory helps to explain the process of highlighting one part of an event, while

ignoring others, and thus shaping the meaning of political and social realities. The complementary contextual perspective of Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model offers a way of understanding how institutional interests, authoritative sources, political connections and dominant ideological constructions can create salience for specific narratives (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). These views offer different lenses to the public to consider representations of governments, militant groups, victims, foreign agents, national security, and counterterrorism policies in the context of terrorism. This research investigates these aspects from the perspective of the perception and interpretation of Nawa-e-Waqt's narration on the issue of terrorism.

Change in political and security situation also has influenced the depiction of terrorism in the Pakistani print media. During the first few years following 9/11, the media paid attention mainly to the foreign war against terror, Pakistan-American relations, and Afghanistan (Baber & Paracha, 2021). As the domestic militancy resurfaced with the Tehriki-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant organizations, sectarian violence, suicide attacks, military operations and internal security emerged as matters of increasing concern. Other events such as Operation Zarb-e-Azb, National Action Plan, and militancy resurgences also shaped the reporting of terrorism (Amin, 2020; Rashid, 2008). In the current study, the issue of linkages between these evolving contexts and depiction of international terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt is explored.

The previous research work related to the reporting of terrorism has mainly adopted comparative content analysis or quantitative methods to assess the difference between Urdu and English newspapers and newspapers with different orientations (Ali *et al.*, 2022; Khan *et al.*, 2023; Nazir *et al.*, 2024). While these studies have helped identify various aspects of the media in relation to terrorism, there is a lack of research that investigates the opinions of media scholars, researchers, academics, and practicing journalists about the representation of international terrorism in one influential Urdu newspaper

(Daily Nawa-e-Waqt). Terrorism has also been studied, using content and framing analyses, visual analysis, and comparative studies, and comparatively less research have focused on interview-based interpretations of the newspaper's evolving narratives.

So, to this end the present study is based on qualitative techniques of interviews and attempts to determine the experiences of the participants about the media coverage of international terrorism from 2001 to 2026 in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt. It is about the prevailing themes, storylines and frames of interpretation that participants see in the newspaper's coverage of international terrorism and how these differ across time. The study also investigates the participants' insight of the newspaper's portrayal of terrorism and the institutional, political and ideological aspects that could be relevant to the salience of specific portrayals in the light of the concepts of Framing Theory and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. It aims to do so by adding to the existing knowledge on the discourses of terrorism, the political communication in Pakistan and media representation in the minds of media practitioners and academics over a span of 25 years in relation to a very influential Urdu newspaper. While doing so, it aims to add to the growing body of knowledge on terrorism discourses, political communication in Pakistan and media representation by the lens of media professionals and academics in Pakistan over a span of 25 years of an influential Urdu newspaper.

1.1 Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to find out the perception of the participants about the representation of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt in the post-9/11 era (2001–2025) with a qualitative approach based on interviews. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To investigate the themes and frames that are dominant in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt's framing of terrorism during 2001–2025 as identified by media scholars, researchers, academics, and working journalists.

2. To explore how continuity and change in newspaper portrayal of international terror have been perceived in various stages of the post-9/11 era.

3. To investigate the participants' perceptions about the newspaper's editorial stance and its approach towards international terrorism.

4. To explore how the participants regarded the relationship between Daily Nawa-e-Waqt's depiction of terrorism and national-security and counterterrorism discourse in Pakistan.

1.2 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the major themes and frames used in the representation of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt from 2001–2025?

RQ2: What are the participants' views regarding continuity and transformation in the representation of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt during the different phases of the post-9/11 period?

RQ3: What do participants mean, in their own terms, by how Daily Nawa-e-Waqt frames terrorism with respect to its editorial position?

RQ4: What are the participants' perceptions about the Daily Nawa-e-Waqt's concept of terrorism and Pakistan's national-security and counterterrorism discourse?

2. Review of Literature

Literature Review

The study of media portrayal of terrorism is an important topic since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) (Ahmad, 2016). The attacks had an impact on the international security discourse and how news outlets around the world cover terrorism (Hu, 2024). Media institutions are crucial in the process of creating public opinion through their choice of events, interpretation of their meaning and highlighting certain political and security discourses. Since the entry of Pakistan in the global War on Terror, the issue of terrorism came into the focus of national security in Pakistan and print media played a

pivotal role in spreading national agendas on terrorism (Hussain, 2017).

Newspapers not only report events but also create or construct social reality through selection, interpretation and framing. Gamson and Goffman (1975) pointed out that framing can be used to comprehend how humans organize and interpret social events, and Gao *et al.* (2023) built upon the concept by examining how the media selects phenomena and accentuates their salience to create problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral judgments, and proposed solutions. Framing may be used to present an event as a national-security threat, an ideological battle, an international conspiracy, or a humanitarian problem in the news coverage of terrorism. These viewpoints are pertinent for the current study in terms of understanding and analyzing the framing of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt from the informed media scholars, researchers, academics, and working journalists' point of view.

The print media in Pakistan has been a mirror of the security scenario since the post 9/11 period. The newspapers were initially interested in the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, the strategic ties of Pakistan with the Western powers and the regional impact of the War on Terror. The growing internal militancy and organizations like Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) brought a focus on the issue of suicide bombings, insurgency, sectarian violence, military operations, and internal security. With the transformation of the nature of terrorism, newspapers started to cover more on counterterrorism, military operation, rehabilitation and the broader political implications of terrorism (Khan *et al.*, 2023). These changes provide an important perspective for understanding participants' perceptions of changing representations of terrorism across different stages of the post-9/11 era.

One of the leading Urdu newspapers, the Daily Nawa-e-Waqt, has taken the nationalist stance, stressing the issue of national sovereignty, national institutions and national security issues. Previous studies have mostly presented it as the menace to the stability and territorial integrity of

Pakistan and the importance of security institutions and state for combating militant groups (Khan *et al.*, 2023). This editorial orientation serves as a useful point of reference to explore how participants interpret the newspaper's position, security narratives, and depiction of terrorism.

Previously, research on the coverage of terrorism in Pakistan has been conducted using content analysis, and comparative newspaper analysis. They have analyzed Urdu and English newspapers in terms of their coverage of terrorism, portrayal of counterterrorism policies, visual reporting, and impact of media discourse on the public perception. In general, these studies reveal that there are variations among the newspapers regarding themes, sources and orientations which are due to the political and ideological differences in Pakistan.

The Propaganda Model, along with the Framing Theory, offers another complimentary model to the understanding of the institutional and ideological basis behind the production of news (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The model highlights the roles of ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and dominant ideology in news selection and presentation. It emphasizes authoritative sources, institutional relationships, and ideological filters to be useful in the analysis of the institution of reporting terrorism in high-stakes environments. But in the context of the present study, the model is not assumed to be a propaganda institution but rather, it offers a framework for understanding the observations made by the participants regarding the political influences, authoritative sources, institutional interests, and the dominant national-security discourses.

Given these contributions, very little study has been conducted to analyze the Daily Nawa-e-Waqt's representation of terrorism from the perspectives of media scholars, researchers, academics, and working journalists. In the past, comparative newspaper analysis, quantitative content analysis, visual analysis or specific incidents of terrorism have been used and little attention has been given to the analysis of

themes, frames, editorial orientation and security narratives from the media professionals and scholars' perspective in one important Urdu newspaper over time. In the present study, this gap was filled by using the qualitative approach and interviews conducted to gain perspectives and interpretations of participants on the issue of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt from 2001–2025.

2.1 Relevant Research

Media studies have demonstrated that the media has a key role in influencing public perceptions of terrorism in agenda-setting, framing, and generating security narratives which are crucial to public perception (Karniel & Lavie-Dinur, 2024). There is a vast amount of literature on media representation of terror on the international level, and more recently, in Pakistan, there has been an increasing focus on media coverage of terror, policies to counter terror, and on political violence in the post-9/11 era. In general, these studies have shown that newspaper reporting is not entirely objective, but rather shaped by the editorial viewpoints, political stance and institutional concerns of the newsroom (Ali, 2022).

Khan *et al.* (2023) examined the pictorial representation of the War on terror in major newspapers in Pakistan such as Daily Nawa-e-Waqt, Daily Jang and Dawn. Through their qualitative content analysis, they found that Urdu newspapers showed more "emotional" pictures of conflict/violence than English newspapers, which also indicated the possibility of framing the images in a way that shapes the perception of the readers regarding the issue of terrorism and national security. In another systematic study of media reporting on terrorism in various news reports from 2001 to 2018, Safwan and Razzaq (2023) also observed that the newspapers in Pakistan were more positive than many international news media in terms of reporting on counterterrorism, especially on the part of Pakistan in the anti-terrorism campaign. Their analysis also reveals that the media's narratives are tightly linked with political settings and national-security interests.

In this regard, Ali, Saleem, and Ahmad (2022) analyzed how counterterrorism operations were portrayed in the major Urdu and English newspapers after the attack on the Army Public School. They concluded that newspapers typically published positive narratives about government and military actions against terrorism, which helped to legitimize national-security policies and state actions. This underscores the significance of editorial framing to apprehend the impressions of counterterrorism, military operations, and state bodies in Nawa-e-Waqt.

Younis and Khan (2026) studied pictorial representation of terrorism in major newspapers of Pakistan and concluded that during times of high level of terrorist activity, the number of images of violence increased while during times of political reconciliation and reduced violence, the number of images of peace increased. Their results indicate that the choice and emphasis on specific aspects of terrorism and conflict in the visual framing can complement textual reporting. Afzaal *et al.*, (2026) on the other hand conducted a quantitative content analysis of two Urdu newspapers and discovered that those incidents with high casualties, property damage, and significant public attention had a higher likelihood of being covered. Such results clearly illustrate the ways in which news-selection practices might factor in the salience of certain terrorism aspects to the public agenda.

Nazir *et al.* (2024) explored the connection between media framing, agenda-building, and the public perceptions of terrorism and political instability in Pakistan. They concluded that newspaper salience and interpretation were linked with public perception of the terrorists, and they found support for the use of the Framing Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory in the context of reporting about terrorists in Pakistani print media. Agenda-Setting Theory is not a prime theoretical framework in the current research, but it is research that is relevant to know and understand the concept of media salience and media framing. The present study, however, brings together a combination of Framing Theory and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model

to investigate the perceptions of media representation and the institutional and ideological context of the media.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that political context, editorial stance, national security concerns, sources, and institutional motives influence the reporting of terrorism in Pakistan (Ali, 2022; Fatima *et al.*, 2026). The existing studies have used quantitative content analysis method, comparative newspaper analysis method, visual analysis method or event-specific methods (Fatima *et al.*, 2026; Hussain, 2020). Few qualitative interviews have been conducted with media practitioners, researchers, academics and media scholars on the representation of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt during the larger context of post-9/11.

The present study aims to tackle this issue by using a qualitative method, interviews. It does not rely on the newspaper as a source of empirical information but rather explores the views and interpretations of the informed participants about Nawa-e-Waqt's evolving narratives, frames, editorial attitude, national-security discourse, and counterterrorism depictions between 2001 and 2025. Framing Theory offers the main tool for analyzing how terrorism-related topics are selected, emphasized and interpreted, and Propaganda Model offers a complementary tool to Herman and Chomsky to explain the sources of authoritative information, interests of institutions and political connections, and dominant ideology narratives.

3. Theoretical Framework

The current study is informed by two related theories, the Framing Theory and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. The concept of Framing Theory is based on Goffman's (1974) idea of frames as interpretive structures through which people make sense of social experience and has evolved in the world of mediated discourse by Gitlin (1980) and Entman (1993). Entman (1993) theorizes framing as selection and salience, which involves the selection of specific elements of perceived reality, their salience, interpretation of the nature of a problem, moral judgements, and

proposed solutions. In the case of reporting on terrorism, an event can then be described as a national security issue, political conflict, ideological battle, a result of foreign influence, or a geopolitical issue. The primary conceptual framework in this study is Framing Theory, which examines the perception of the selection, emphasis and presentation of the issues related to terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt.

With respect to the relevance of framing, the view of terrorism presented by Nawa-e-Waqt has changed over time, depending on the political and security context. It has covered issues such as U.S. policies, the War on Terror, national sovereignty, domestic militancy, internal security, the attack on the Army Public School, counterterrorism measures, National Action Plan, Afghanistan, TTP, border security, and regional geopolitics. The study's findings also corroborate with the previous studies that have noted differences in the newspaper's coverage of the War on Terror and counterterrorism policies (Gul & Paracha 2019; Ali *et al.*, 2022). This study therefore investigates if participants differentiate between the ideological/anti-imperialist perspectives and the more recent national-security, state-survival, counterterrorism and internal-stability perspectives regarding terrorism. These categories are considered as analysis options and not as predetermined results. Importantly, it is not a quantitative or systematic content analysis of the newspaper, but the perceptions of the participants are interpreted using Framing Theory.

The second approach is Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model (1988), Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. The model elucidates the influence of structural and institutional factors on news production in terms of five filters: ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, ideology. In the current research, special focus is put on authoritative sources, institutional interests, political relationships, and dominant ideologies that can shape the prominence of specific narratives in security-sensitive settings. The model is not intended to mean that Daily Nawa-e-Waqt

is a purely propagandist institution; it is only a framework for discussing potential linkages between the representations of media, institutional interests, state narratives, and national-security discourse.

This view is even more relevant in the context of shifting security discourse of Nawa-e-Waqt. The earlier investigations suggest that the newspaper was critical of some of the government policies in the initial stage of the War on terror, but toward the end, the newspaper was more supportive of counterterrorism measures and military operations (Gul & Paracha, 2019; Ali *et al.*, 2022). With the 2014 Army Public School attack and the subsequent National Action Plan as reference points, the study sheds light on the perceived shift in the newspaper's security discourse to a greater focus on the issue of national unity, state security, military action and counterterrorism. The Propaganda Model enables these developments to be discussed in terms of institutional interests, authoritative source, political context and dominant ideology without any preconceived notions about an intention to propagate.

These two perspectives offer complementary analytical aspects to this qualitative interview study. The Representation of terrorism: framing theory and the meaning of terrorism outlets and the Propagating model: an overview of how the meaning of a certain narrative, source, and interpretation can become more salient under certain institutional, political, and ideological conditions. The framework also allows for the study to account for the shifts in the participants' perceptions of Nawa-e-Waqt's evolving explanation of terrorism, such as the possibility of going from an anti-imperialist/Nawa-e-Waqt policy perspective to a national-security/external-threat perspective, alongside the impact of political conditions, political authoritativeness, institutional relations, and media-state congruence. The framework is therefore applied to look at the evolution of understanding around the notion of 'terrorism' and the contextual factors which might have helped or hindered

certain representations becoming prominent between 2001 and 2025.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative and interpretive research methods, which aims to explore the development of narratives related to terrorism from 2001 to 2026 in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt. The study will be based on the transformations undergone by the newspaper's approach to terrorism in various political, security, and geopolitical contexts, and will discuss the continuity of its overall ideological and national-security stance.

Data for the study are based on expert interviews and assessments of journalists, media scholars, analysts and commentators with pertinent expertise in Pakistani media, terrorism, national security and regional affairs. Their evaluations are analyzed to see how Nawa-e-Waqt's narrative of terrorism has evolved over time: the perception of the U.S.-led War on Terror, domestic terrorism, state counterterrorism efforts, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine, and international terrorism.

The analysis is presented in a historical and narrative approach. The four phases are: Defensive National Narrative (2001-2007); Threat Recognition Narrative (2008-2014); Counter-Terrorism Consensus Narrative (2015-2020); and Strategic Security Narrative (2021-2026). The phases offer a basis for tracing changes in the newspaper's narrative over time.

The findings are arranged under five analytical themes that occurred frequently in the analysis: U.S. foreign policy and the "imposed war"; internal militancy; terrorism and Western double standards; liberation movements versus international terrorism; and Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and external conspiracy. Themes from these are used to synthesize the evidence coming from the expert assessments, and to explain the overall pattern of ideological continuity and strategic flexibility in Nawa-e-Waqt's narrative of terrorism.

Findings:

The experts' viewpoints on Nawa-e-Waqt's coverage of terrorism were largely similar. Dr. Shoaib Hussain and Adnan Munawar highlighted that the newspaper highlighted more on national security and less on peace journalism. Likewise, Shabbi Hussain said Nawa-e-Waqt was adopting a "zero tolerance" stance towards its coverage by noting that the newspaper's environment was becoming more like a war newspaper where the voice of the state was louder and the other narratives and perspectives were given less coverage.

The newspaper coverage of the attack on the Army Public School (APS) was highlighted by several experts. Ali Saleem noted that Nawa-e-Waqt took a more positive stance following the attack of the APS, especially in regard to counterterrorism, the National Action Plan, and military campaigns. The same was true for APS coverage, which focused on the issue of terrorism from the point of view of national security and state action, as noticed by Nazia Hussain. A more positive depiction of the National Action Plan, military operations and other state actions with regard to national security was also noted, Ihtisham Ali said in his discussion of editorials and columns covering the period between 2014 and 2019.

Naeem Gul and Sajjad Ahmad Paracha observed that Nawa-e-Waqt editorials were on the whole more critical of Gen. Musharraf's 'War on Terror' policy as compared to other Urdu newspapers though the paper sometimes supported the state line. Naeem Gul pointed out this trend specifically in the period of 2001-2008 during which the newspaper was more critical of the War on Terror and at times took the state's side.

Others put the focus on the language and the ideological aspects of the coverage. Post 9/11, Shahid Nawaz said that the language adopted regarding the issue of terrorism and Kashmir was emotional, ideological and national-interest oriented, both because of the national-security concerns and the historical standing of the newspaper. Muhammad Arshad, comparing Nawa-e-Waqt and Dawn (English-language)

newspaper, described Nawa-e-Waqt's coverage of Pakistan, terrorism and Islam as being "more emotional and ideological." However, Muhammad Ahsan added, it had a firm national security and ideological slant in its coverage of terrorism and regional conflicts, with the exception of its use of the word "Pakistan" to refer to the state, which was still present. He continued that its vocabulary and framing tended to go in the direction of state and national narratives, and that its ideological bent had not changed significantly over time, except for the addition of the word "Pakistan" before the state's name.

On the modern issue, Munir Ahmed Zia Rao pointed out that an effective counter-narrative is needed to not just look at the issue of terrorism as a military challenge but as an ideological and social challenge as well. Dr. Munir Masood Marath also connected the national counterterrorism campaign to state security, countering extremism and the need for an ideological response. Ahmar Safwan and Asim Razzaq observed that in the last few years, the national media has been showing Pakistan as responsible as well as responsible to be a target of the terrorists.

Historical Phases of *Nawa-e-Waqt's* Terrorism Narrative

Based on the expert narratives, the study categorizes the Nawa-e-Waqt's reporting and policymaking approach on terrorism from 9/11 to the present into four historical periods.

Phase I (2001–2007): The War on Terror and American Policy – A Resistive and Ideological Narrative. The description of this stage is a resistive and ideological narrative. Immediately in the aftermath of 9/11, Nawa-e-Waqt witnessed most terrorist acts primarily in the light of America's "War on Terror." The newspaper's focus was on the point that Pakistan was being subjected to external pressures, national sovereignty was being violated, and the American policies were inducing instability in the region. The ideology that formed the major thrust of this phase included national sovereignty, criticism of

the American policies, pressure on Pakistan, and ideology itself.

During this period the newspaper's attempt seems to focus mainly on emphasizing that Islam and terrorism should not be regarded as one and the same. Meanwhile, criticism against the American War on Terror and foreign policy was still in the spotlight. The stories highlighted in this stage were:

- Islam is not a religion of terrorism.
- The actions of a few groups cannot be equated to the whole Muslim world.
- There is no doubt that Pakistan is not responsible for terrorism, but it is a victim of pressure.
- Western media are portraying a negative picture of Muslims.

Phase II (2008–2014) Transition Toward Realism:

During this time, suicide attacks, the Swat conflict, Lal Masjid, and public loss of life became an internal crisis of terrorism. The first important shift in the newspaper was that criticism of American policy remained but for the first time, the newspaper also showed terrorism as a direct threat to Pakistani society. In this period, the newspaper, on the one hand, again criticized the general impression created against the Muslims and on the other hand, it also recognized that the activities of some extremist organizations are also damaging to the Muslim world.

The narratives emphasized in this phase were:

- The most damage done by the terrorists is to the Muslims themselves.
- Pakistan itself is a victim of terror.
- Double standards of the west are also a part of the problem.
- Internal security.

The prevailing theme of the phase was internal security, with the fear of terrorism as a national threat, criticism of the weaknesses of the State, and persisting criticism of the United States.

Phase III (2015–2020) National Consensus and State Support: The newspaper's tone changed most noticeably after the APS attack. Now it was

more about the message of the importance of state action against terror. Military operations, the National Action Plan and national unity were put forward in a more positive light. The paradigm shift that stands out after the APS seems to have been the transformation of the stance that 'terrorism has nothing to do with any religion' but is rather a criminal act.'

The stories of this stage were:

- The terrorists are not Muslims.
- The Muslims are the worst hit by terror.
- In the battle against terrorism, Pakistan has sacrificed a lot.
- Zero tolerance.

The prevailing attitude of the phase consisted of national unity, sympathy for military action and strictness against the terrorists.

Phase IV (2021–2026) Regional Security and a Strategic Narrative: Following the American pullback from Afghanistan and the Middle Eastern events, the newspaper was no longer limited to reporting events but also their regional impacts. Now terrorism was associated with the foreign policy, border security and regional stability of Pakistan. During this time, the newspaper's main focus gradually shifted to Afghanistan, Daesh, TTP and the geopolitical situation of the Middle East.

The narratives highlighted in this phase were:

- Terrorism is an issue of regional instability.
- It is incorrect to equate Islam and terrorism.
- Pakistan should be judged on a fair basis at an international platform.

The primary axis of the phase involved regional stability, security of borders, TTP and Afghanistan and state security policies.

The most important topics that appeared in the newspaper's portrayal of terrorism during the four phases can be summarized as:

Phase I (2001-2007): National sovereignty, criticism of American policies, pressure on Pakistan, an ideological stance.

Phase II (2008-2014): Internal security; terrorism as a national threat; criticism of state weaknesses; criticism of the United States continues.

Phase III (2015-2020): National unity, support for military action and a hard-liner approach to terrorists.

Phase IV (2021-2026): Regional stability; border security; TTP and Afghanistan; state security policies.

Reasons for the Changing Narrative

As expressed in the phase descriptions, the experts do not see the reasons behind the changing narrative in the changing ideological identity of the newspaper but in the changing political and security situation of the country. The rise of internal violence (suicide attacks, the Swat conflict, Lal Masjid and the killing of people in public places) made terrorism an internal issue and this is portrayed as the reason the newspaper began to describe terrorism as a direct threat to Pakistani society, despite its continued criticism of American policies and Western double standards. The most important turning point is identified as the APS attack, because after it, the newspaper began stressing the “indispensability of state action against terrorism”; military operations, the National Action Plan, and national unity were also presented more positively. The recent events of American withdrawal from Afghanistan, activities of the TTP and crisis in the Middle East are depicted as events which have shifted the newspaper's focus from reporting the events to their impact and effects in the region, thus connecting the event of terrorism with Pakistan's foreign policy, border security and regional stability. Meanwhile, there is evidence of good continuity in narrative change, as suggested by the expert accounts. The language and the narrative of the newspaper were always state and national, as noted by Muhammad Ahsan, and no changes were found in the newspaper's ideological orientation after a period of time. The ongoing separation from the word ‘terrorism’ in each of the phases – ‘Islam does not teach terrorism’ (Phase I), ‘terrorists do not represent Islam’ (Phase III), and ‘conflating Islam

and terrorism is wrong’ (Phase IV) – also indicates the shift was not in terms of underlying position but in terms of emphasis and framing.

Narrative Evolution Model

Based on the above, the synthesis of the study suggests a four-part model of narrative evolution with each part identified as having a specific period, dominant narrative orientation, and thematic emphases:

1. **A resistive and ideological narrative (2001–2007):** A narrative that focuses on the American War on Terror as the main context for analyzing the phenomenon of terrorism, the external pressure, the sovereignty of the nation, criticism of American policies, dissociation of Islam from terrorist acts.
2. **A transition toward realism (2008–2014):** References to the recognition of the terrorism as an internal issue; direct threat to the society of Pakistan, criticism of American policies and western double standard, criticism of weakness of state and recognition that extremist groups pose threat to the Muslim world itself.
3. **National consensus and state support (2015–2020):** Emphasis on the necessity of state action and a positive construction of military operations, the National Action Plan and national unity with zero-tolerance following the APS attack.
4. **A regional security and strategic narrative (2021–2026):** Terrorism in the context of Pakistan's foreign policy, border security, regional stability, Afghan situation, Daesh, TTP and geopolitical space of Middle East.

Overall, the model shows how there has been a progression from an exterior, resistant perspective on terrorism, which focuses on American policies and external pressure on Pakistan, through the shift to a traditional counterterrorism frame supported by the state, to a regional and strategic perspective. The transformation has been in the newspaper's conception of what terrorism means in different political and security environments, but without any variation in the newspaper's ideology.

Overall Findings and Narrative Evolution

All of the expert accounts together illustrate that Nawa-e-Waqt's reporting on terrorism throughout was imbued with a strong national-security and ideological frame, where war journalism seemed to have been dominant and peace journalism was rather limited and Islam was never linked to terrorism. However, within this continuity, the results show that there is an evident shift in the newspaper's terrorism framing in various political and security situations. During the earlier period, it appeared to be more critical of some of the facets of the War on Terror than other Urdu newspapers, even though in some instances it was supporting state policy, and more sensitive towards the sovereignty of Pakistan and its being subjected to external pressure. During the latter phase, especially after the attack on the APS, the framing of the establishment of Pakistan has moved in the direction of strengthening its stance on counterterrorism and on measures related to state security and, in the latest phase, framing it as a regional and strategic approach to terrorism in the context of Afghanistan, the TTP, Daesh and the Middle East. The expert opinions on the ongoing phase complete the picture: The newspaper's contemporary presentation is perceived as state-supportive and security-focused, and at the macro-level of Pakistan's media environment, an unfinished ideological job is identified, that of an effective counter-narrative and a recognition of terror as a military, ideological and social problem.

Discussions

The interviews with senior journalists and media experts offer valuable insights into the elements that contributed to Nawa-e-Waqt's changing narrative on the issue of terrorism in various eras. Their narration is especially focused on the paper's ideological ambiguity in the pre-militancy era and the gradual shift in its perspective towards the recognition of militancy as an internal and existential threat to Pakistan.

Expert Perspectives on Nawa-e-Waqt's Terrorism Narrative

The interviews with the senior journalists and media specialists provide some insights into the factors that made Nawa-e-Waqt's coverage of the issue of terrorism different at various times. Their understandings bring into focus both the continuity in the ideological thrust of the newspaper and the shifts in the way militancy was dealt with as an internal and existential threat to Pakistan.

Salim Safi: From Ideological Ambiguity to an Internal Threat

For a long time, Nawa-e-Waqt's reporting on Afghan affairs was noted as "ideological ambiguity," said senior journalist and columnist, Salim Safi. He noted that following 9/11, the newspaper was no longer opposed to the hard-liner ideology of the Taliban and tended to see the militants as an "anti-American force. He said that the situation of the attack on security forces as well as civilians by the TTP demanded a shift in this attitude and the newspaper marked militancy as an internal and existential threat for Pakistan.

Zahid Hussain: Between the Jihadi and State Narratives

The journalist, writer and defense expert Zahid Hussain said that Urdu media has been oscillating between the 'jihadi' narrative and the 'state narrative' for a long time, citing Nawa-e-Waqt as an example of such a tendency. He said the newspaper discussed international events with the concept of a "legitimate war against America" and the Afghan resistance against the Taliban is an example of this. This system also had an impact on its local coverage. Hussain says that the Army attack on the Public School in 2014 was a stark shift, and now, the newspaper was no longer ambiguous but rather viewed domestic militancy as a 'war of survival' for the state.

Dr. Ayesha Siddiq: A Reflection of the Military Mindset

Dr. Ayesha Siddiq, a defense analyst and writer, explained Nawa-e-Waqt's story on terrorism and the military thinking on national security. She noted that the newspaper had been calling for negotiations even after 9/11, right after the military leadership was relatively lenient towards the militants. Later, when the army chief blamed the terrorism on Indian sponsorship and implemented a Zero Tolerance policy, the newspaper's editorial stance also shifted. So she described the subsequent move as being more pro-military and anti-militancy.

Tauseef Ahmed Khan: The Oppressed Ummah and Western Propaganda

According to columnist Tauseef Ahmed Khan, two issues in Nawa-e-Waqt's reporting on international terrorism stand out: "the oppression of the Muslim Ummah" and "Western propaganda. He said this is unlike moderate English-language newspapers like Dawn, which constantly used the notion of 'western countries equating Islam and Muslim countries with terrorism' to present world events.

Najam Sethi: National Security Over Liberal Principles

Senior journalist and media group editor Najam Sethi claimed that Nawa-e-Waqt has always been against liberalism and focused on "national security. He singled out its coverage of Kashmir and Palestine, calling it "dogmatic, hard-hitting" and one which appealed to its "old right-wing readership. The national newspaper expresses condemnation against terrorism and at international level, he said it differentiates armed groups in Kashmir and Palestine from the definition of terror by likening them to freedom fighters and countering the western media analysis.

Dr. Ghaliya Akhtar: Full Alignment with the State Narrative After APS

Media scholar and researcher, Dr. Ghaliya Akhtar noted a clear shift in the stance of Nawa-e-Waqt

after the Army Public School incident. She has discovered that the newspaper gave a favorable description of the National Action Plan and military operations without any restrictions under the pretext of national survival. Her reading of the situation was that on national security issues, the newspaper was completely in line with government policies.

Professor Dr. Muhammad Nawaz Khan: Islamic Nationalism and Criticism of the War on Terror

Media analyst Professor Dr. Muhammad Nawaz Khan has concluded that Nawa-e-Waqt was more critical of government policies regarding the War on Terror than Dawn, on the basis of comparing the editorials of these two newspapers. He read the newspaper as "Islamic nationalist" and claimed it remained to challenge the Pakistani governments when they were seen to have caved to the American pressure. This viewpoint made the War on Terror appear as a war that was imposed on Pakistan.

Ahmed Rashid: The Ambiguous Early Narrative of the Urdu Press

Media analyst Professor Dr. Muhammad Nawaz Khan has concluded that Nawa-e-Waqt was more critical of government policies regarding the War on Terror than Dawn, on the basis of comparing the editorials of these two newspapers. He read the newspaper as "Islamic nationalist" and claimed it remained to challenge the Pakistani governments when they were seen to have caved to the American pressure. This viewpoint made the War on Terror appear as a war that was imposed on Pakistan.

Professor Dr. Mubashir Nadeem: Sensational and Graphic Presentation

Professor Dr. Mubashir Nadeem, columnist, pointed out the difference between Urdu and English media reports as far as the presentation is concerned. He said that Urdu press had been more sensational and graphic in reporting terror activities in Pakistan and often utilized blood-soaked pictures in their news coverage of terror. He also noted that the newspaper has covered a

lot of pictures of atrocities done on Muslims worldwide, which has given them the feeling of oppression and unity. He termed this the "emotional framing".

Ziauddin: The Traditional Defense of the Ideology of Pakistan

A senior journalist, columnist and former editor, Ziauddin called Nawa-e-Waqt's message "the traditional defense of the Ideology of Pakistan. He was able to differentiate between the information on internal and international violence which were published in the newspaper. He said that attacks within Pakistan, even by TTP are perceived as unpatriotic while the way it treats Kashmir and Palestine is not the same; the newspaper doubts the Western interpretation of the issue and supports what it views as the struggle of the Muslim Ummah for liberation, and it does not accept the term "terrorism" to describe armed movements. He said this is a "double standards" approach in the media worldwide.

Synthesis of Expert Interpretations

The experts' interpretations together suggest that there is a difference between an ideological continuity and the treatment of internal militancy. Some experts mentioned that Nawa-e-Waqt persistently continues to look into the Ideology of Pakistan, Islamic nationalism, Kashmir and Palestine, criticism of American policy and the oppression of Muslim Ummah. However, their reports reflect a major shift in policy regarding domestic militancy, especially after the 2014 APS attack.

The first period had an ambivalent attitude toward the militants, a pro-negotiation attitude, criticism of the War on Terror and a view on militancy in the context of American intervention. This was termed by Salim Safi as 'ideological ambiguity' and by Zahid Hussain and Ahmed Rashid as 'travel between jihadi and state and anti-American discourses'. Professor Dr. Muhammad Nawaz Khan also pointed out the newspaper's criticism of the War on Terror and its Islamic-nationalist bent.

The latter period was understood differently. Dr. Ayesha Siddiqi linked the shift to a change in the military stance on militancy, whereas other experts like Dr. Ghaliya Akhtar, Zahid Hussain and others saw APS as an important milestone in the move towards more support for state security, military operations, and counterterrorism measures. The newspaper's coverage of domestic militancy was thus anti-militancy and state oriented.

The experts also pointed to a persisting divide between domestic terrorism and international warfare that involves Muslim actors. Tauseef Ahmed Khan made references to Muslim oppression and western propaganda, Najam Sethi and Ziauddin brought up the issue of the treatment of terrorism within Pakistan and armed movements in Kashmeer and Palestine. The sensationalistic and graphic presentation of the atrocities committed against Muslims and terrorism was added by Professor Dr. Mubashir Nadeem who brought a visual and emotional touch to the event.

These interpretations thus imply that the newspaper's story was not consistent in all its readings on issues related to terrorism. Instead, its approach to internal militancy increasingly came to be seen as knee-jerk reaction, as a state response, as military action, as a national security issue, and as a state-driven response to militancy. Its general ideological stances on Western policy, Muslim identity, Kashmir, Palestine and the international portrayal of Islam were relatively stable. In modern interpretations, parallel narratives also stress the importance of counter-narratives and taking an approach to the issue of terrorism that is not just military, but also ideological and social.

Conclusion

This study did not conduct systematic content analysis but rather explored the phenomenon of terrorism in Daily Nawa-e-Waqt from the perspectives and interpretations of media experts, scholars and journalists. The results show that the newspaper's discussion on terror has undergone four historical phases: the first phase is a

resistance and ideological discourse (2001-2007), the second phase is a discourse of internal crisis (2008-2014), the third phase is a discourse of national consensus and state support after the attack by the APS (2015-2020), and the fourth phase is a discourse of regional security and strategic policy (2021-2026).

The central finding is that this evolution entailed keeping to the same ideology while maintaining flexibility in strategies. The newspaper continued to largely hold its traditional stances on issues of the foreign policy of the United States, Kashmir and Palestine, and the portrayal of Islam concerning terrorism as issues. However, it underwent a significant shift in dealing with internal militancy. The ambiguity towards militants and focus on dialogue and the impact of foreign intervention were associated with the earlier period while the deterioration of Pakistan's internal security situation including after the APS attack was related to increased support for counterterrorism, state measures, military operations and zero tolerance towards militancy. Consequently, Nawa-e-Waqt was flexible with its narrative around terror without significantly diverging from its general ideological stance. The coverage of terrorism after 9/11 can thus be seen as part of a combination of stability and flexibility, where the definition of terrorism shifted with the evolving security landscape and the newspaper's overall editorial voice remained fairly consistent.

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