Role of Media in Securitization of Terrorism: A Case Study of War on Terror in Pakistan

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This paper explains the media process in reporting political communications in the securitization dialogue. It explores media agenda and framing practices, and their ensuing effects on the process of securitization of terrorism in Pakistan. Defining the relevance of media in securitization process, it takes the Army Public School (APS) attack in Peshawar in 2014 as a watershed event to examine its impact on all segments of the society including media and evaluates its contribution to securitizing terrorism as a threat to the country. Two influential newspapers, daily Dawn and daily Jang, were examined through content and discourse analysis. A comparison of media framing and agenda setting before and after the APS attack highlights the level of securitization in the country and role media play in this process.

Key Words: Securitization, Terrorism, Mass media, Agenda Setting, Framing

Since 9/11, there has been an increased focus on terrorism as a global threat with lasting consequences for the nation states. Countering violent conflict against terrorists as a front line coalition partner was one of the most daunting challenge for Pakistan. During these two decades, Pakistan has been the worst hit country due to terrorism.[1] Over 70,000 citizens including 6900 security personnel have perished due to terrorism. The consequences have also caused a loss of $125 billion to the state. Despite the fact that Pakistan was one of the biggest victims of terrorism, a large portion of its society viewed terrorism with suspicion and deemed it a politically cultivated issue instead of a real threat. During the last decade, media has increasingly taken the role of a leading opinion builder in the country and is often termed as the 'fourth estate' which helps to further national interests, objectives and goals.[2] During any intense period of threat, the masses require an accurate update to avoid chaos or uncertainty. Accurate information and astute analysis is vital for determining and influencing public perceptions and its ensuing

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[1] Dominic Dudley, "Terrorists Targets: The Ten Countries which Suffer Most from Terrorism" *Forbes*, November 20, 2019.
[2] Muhammad Akram Somroo and Bushra H. Rehman, "Reasons to Remedy: Framing of Terrorists Attacks in Major Urdu and English Newspapers of Pakistan" *South Asian Studies*, 33:2, (July-December 2018).

response during a crisis situation.[3] Media thus played a key role in questioning common perceptions amongst the masses about the origin of the terrorism threat. The terrorist attack on the Army Public School (APS) at Peshawar was a watershed event with lasting effects on all segments of society including media. The way Pakistani print and electronic media framed the perceptions on the securitization of terrorism in Pakistan before and after the APS attack on December 16, 2014, was significantly different. It is in this backdrop that this paper endeavors to examine the 'processes' that media underwent with entirely different effects on securitization of terrorism in Pakistan.

Theoretical Construct

Securitization, agenda setting and media framing are used as analytical tools for this paper. There are three types of issues; non-political, political and securitized. Non-political issues are those which are not related to public debate, political issues are most debated issue which become part of the public policy and securitized issue are those which are declared threat to a referent object and they require action outside the political domain.[4] The key determinants in Securitization process are; securitizing actor, referent object, functional actor and audience.[5] Since the last two decades, terrorism has emerged as an existential threat to the state of Pakistan. While discussing the traditional military security, state is still the most important but not the only referent object, and the ruling elites are the most important but not the only securitizing actor. It can be said that military security rotates largely around the capability of governments for their preparedness against internal and external military threats. It can also involve the use of military power to defend states or governments against non-military threats to their existence, such as migrants or rival ideologies (terrorism).[6]

When the apparent threat is internal, military security is primarily about the ability of the ruling elite to maintain territorial integrity, law and order in the face of challenges from

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[3] Syed Ali N. Abdullah, "A Study of Reporting about Terrorism on two Pan-Arab Television News Channel" PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, posted on April 11, 2016.

[4] Vladimir Dolinec, "The Role of Mass Media in the Securitization of International Terrorism" Politicke Vedy Studies, 2011, available at www.semanticscholar.org

[5] Ibid.

[6] Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver and Jap De Wilde, *Security: New Framework of Analysis*, (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

its citizens, which may include terrorist, militant separatist or revolutionary.[7] Thus the state of Pakistan is referent object which faces an existential threat and ruling elite of Pakistan, institutions who speak on behalf of Pakistan and media are actors which have declared terrorism as a threat to the state; and people of Pakistan are the audience who are to be convinced through speech act that terrorism is a threat. Media becomes relevant as an actor once it is directly influencing the audience through its editorials and opinions. It is mediator of speech act once it is only reporting through its news reports. Functional actors are the one who influence the process of securitization indirectly.[8]

According to agenda setting theory media plays an influential part for the issues to gain importance in the public domain. Agenda Setting is a dynamic process in which change in media agenda causes changes in public awareness of a specific issue. Agenda Setting theory leads the audience on 'what' to think about the issue, whereas the framing theory tells the audience 'how' to think about that issue.[9] Media framing is thus an extension of the agenda setting which focuses on certain events and then places them within specific meaning. The process of framing is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text."[10] Erving Goffman presented the framing theory in 1974 on how individuals develop a sense of their world in which they live.[11] Theory further evolved the concept of how frames develop out of social and political context, and then assesses the effect of these frames on social and political consequences. Framing challenges the concept of objectivity in journalism. Social institutions dominate and have the power to influence the frames used in news coverage of the social world.

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[7] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and International System,* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

[8] Vladimir Dolinec, "The Role of Mass Media in the Securitization of International Terrorism" op. cit.

[9] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience,* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

[10] Noshina Saleem, "US framing of foreign countries: An Analytical Perspective" *Canadian Journal of Media Studies*, 2:1, (2007).

[11] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience,* op. cit.

Terrorism in Pakistan

The rise of extremism and terrorism for political gains has added new challenges to the state security in Pakistan.[12] Since 9/11, terrorism has often been viewed as a new threat to global security. Pakistan has been the one of the worst victims of terrorism during last decade and a half. From 2008 till 2014, terrorists carried out 371 suicide attacks killing thousands of Pakistani citizens and law enforcement agencies personnel.[13] Pakistan has been seriously affected due to terrorism in the last ten years not only in loss of human lives and damage to property but economically as well. According to one estimate the country has suffered a loss of $125 billion due to terrorism.[14]

The year 2008 witnessed the worst situation of terrorism in Pakistan. During this 12 month period, 2267 Pakistani citizens were killed in 2148 terrorist incidents that included 63 suicide attacks.[15] In May 2009, the government launched a military operation in Malakand Division against terrorists. This Operation was named 'Rah-e-Raast' (i.e., The Right Path). Over one and a half million people had to be temporarily displaced before the launch of the operation and were relocated after the operation was over. Another operation in South Waziristan Agency was launched in 2009 after the Swat operation. This operation was named 'Rah-e-Nijat' (The Path of Riddance). The gains of this operation could not be consolidated as rampant terrorism continued all across the country.

On the night of June 8, 2014, the terrorists launched a brazen attack at Karachi airport killing 28 people. Post operation intelligence suggested that planning of this attack took place in the terrorist sanctuaries in North Waziristan. Thereek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) took the blame thereby compelling the state to initiate a full scale operation in North Waziristan Agency on June 16, 2014; named as Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb.' However a significant political development hampered the success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

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[12] Noel Israel Khokhar, "Perspectives on Pakistan's National Security" *NDU Journal*, 2015.

[13] Aarish Ullah Khan, "The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan" *SIPRI Policy Paper 11,* September 2005.

[14] Arshad Ali, "Economic Cost of Terrorism: A Case Study of Pakistan" Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief No. 57*,* Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, April 11, 2010.

[15] Global Terrorism Database, available at www.start.umd.edu/gtd/ accessed on January 11, 2020.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) declared an agitation on August 14, 2014 against the Government of the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif alleging electoral rigging in the 2013 general elections. Media, which was playing an important role in building the much needed national consensus in counter-terrorism efforts, diverted its attention towards the coverage of the fanfare surrounding the agitation sit-ins of the two opposition parties. This six months' long standoff was a period of intense political activity from August 14 to December 16, 2014. Media is always inclined to highlight and focus towards the sellable story line, in the period the violence, propaganda, and interests of dominant groups in the society.[16] It sometimes blows up the ensuing conflict, to achieve higher ratings.[17] Incidents of Kerry-Lugar Bill 2009, Raymond Davis and the American raid on Osama Bin Laden compound in Abbottabad on May 2, 2011, the national elections in 2013, the 'Dharna' (sit-in) by PTI against the government in 2014, the diversions that contributed as the main hurdles in the securitization of terrorism in Pakistan.

Agenda Setting Framing of Terrorism and Securitization

For the purpose of this study, framing is selected as a theoretical framework to study the reporting pattern of terrorist attacks in one major English daily *Dawn* and one Urdu daily *Jang* Newspapers of Pakistan. Both newspapers are considered highly significant opinion makers in the country. As the duration for content analysis is spread over seven years, the data was selected on a fortnightly basis. The ensuing content analysis revealed that the advertisement was the major priority of both newspapers; thereafter, 22% political news in *Dawn* and 20% news in *Jang* were accorded second priority in their respective news content. *Dawn* allocated 18% space to terrorism while *Jang* gave this topic 19% space. Only incidents of major intensity like suicide attacks and drone strikes were accorded space in *Dawn* on front and back pages. However, *Jang* placed the bulk of terrorism news on its front and back pages.

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[16] Seow Ting Lee and Crispin C. Maslog, "War or Peace Journalism? Asian Newspaper Coverage of Conflicts" *Journal of Communication*, January 2006.

[17] Rukhsana Aslam, "Peace Journalism: A Paradigm Shift in Traditional Media Approach" *Pacific Journalism Review*, 17:1, (2011):119-139.

The number of episodic frames indicates that both newspapers only reported terrorist incidents as an event; there was no effort devoted to any follow up stories or investigation regarding the terrorist groups involved. Media only covered the incidents to highlight casualties and the number of injured persons. Both newspapers did not provide their readers with any thematic account to offer a picture of synthesized information related to terrorism. Media usually covers official, military, humanitarian and crime related frames of the news related to terrorism.[18] In terrorism reporting, the onus of attack is either claimed by an individual or entity or the media apportions the responsibility on someone. The 'Responsibility frame' presents an issue in such a way so as to attribute responsibility for causing, or solving, to either the government or to an individual or group.[19] Various framing perspectives and media coverage affect how the public learns, understands or thinks about an issue.[20]

Dawn was more inclined to frame the humanitarian sufferings with 43.1% as compared to *Jang's* 39.7%. The humanitarian suffering of collateral damage due to drone strikes were more pronounced in both the newspapers. The terrorists targeted girl schools in Swat, effects of which were highlighted by *Dawn* newspaper. Targeting of Shia *Imambargahs* in Peshawar and Quetta, innocent civilians killings in shrine attacks and killing of lawyers in Quetta were duly highlighted by both newspapers. Both newspapers also seemed to embrace the official perspective occasionally, in that *Jang* newspapers made 22.7% official and 27.6% military frames compared with *Dawn,* which made 18.5% official and 28.7% military frames.

Perspective of a news story usually carries a major impact on the reader. Both newspapers focused on events as a crime stories; thus more the casualties, bigger was the display. The news stories where security forces were targeted, were given a bigger coverage, thereby building a hidden perception to a general reader that the civil society

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[18] Daniela V. Dimitrova and Collen Connolly-Ahern, "A Tale of Two Wars: Framing Analysis of Online News Sites in Coalition Countries and the Arab World During the Iraq War" *Howard Journal of Communications*, 18:2, 2007.

[19] Holli Sematko and Patti M. Valkenberg, "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News" *Journal of Communication*, 50:2, (June 2000):93-109.

[20] Kahtleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists, and the Stories that Shape the World,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

was not the target of terrorism. Media also focused less on consequences of terrorist incidents. Its attention was more on creating chaos and encouraging the reader to form its own conclusion regarding the perpetrators of the terrorist act. *Dawn* stories' focus apportioned 22% on the event, 43% on victims and 28% on accommodating details of incidents; only 4% of Dawn coverage highlighted the consequences. Similarly, *Jang* rarely highlighted consequential aspects of terrorism and gave more attention to victims and the details of incidents quoting official sources.

As the initial details of terrorist incidents are often reported manually while official updates are issued later, media mostly relies on anonymous sources, who are usually not authorized to speak to the media. The power of framing is also mediated by the credibility of the source. *Dawn* heavily relied on its correspondents with 21% and also used 17% official sources, while *Jang* used 25% official sources and relied 15% on its correspondents for corroborating the details of its news stories.

The TTP is known to be the main terrorist outfit, which has been targeting government, military and civilians alike and declaring responsibility.[21] 34% news in daily *Dawn* was attributed to TTP as the spokesman of terrorist outfit claimed responsibility of the attack. Another 36% attacks were not attributed to any terrorist outfit and the newspaper left it open for the readers to ascertain who carried out the attack. Most of the terrorist attacks were labeled as security lapses, without divulging any details or background on the reasons. This approach of not identifying the responsibility towards any group left a vacuum in the securitization process. A doubtful narrative will never make any lasting impact on the people's minds; as a reader mind is persuaded through a consistently recurring narrative.

Terrorist victims' display with details and background information plays a significant role in earning public sympathy and constructing public opinion. *Dawn* newspapers mostly mentioned civilian casualties, security forces and terrorist dead in a single count.

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[21] Sara Mahmood, "Decapitating the Tehrike-i-Taliban Pakistan: An Effective Counter-Terrorism Strategy?" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, 7:6, (July 2015):24-29.

There was no differentiation of casualties. This pattern was quite similar to any criminal act or a road accident to report total number of casualties. There was no empathy for those innocents who died during the heinous act or the security forces' personal who laid down their lives while fighting terrorism. In Khyber Pakhtoonkhawa, over 1200 police officials have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty but it has never been eulogized in media reporting.[22]

In major incidents of attack *Dawn* newspaper covered the terrorists' upper edge using specific phrases, for example while reporting GHQ attack in September 2009, *Dawn* reported "In a brazen but highly organized attack on General headquarters, Pakistan Army's nerve center in Rawalpindi, a group of militants armed with automatic weapons, grenades and rocket launchers drove upto the compound and shot their way through one checkpoint before being intercepted by soldiers at the second checkpoint." Reporting of Killing of two senior military officers during the attack and many others taken hostage further sensationalized the news, which said, "Six Army personnel, a brigadier and lieutenant colonel among them, and four militants were killed in the daring attempt." Newspaper rarely used the word 'terrorist' and termed it as an 'attacker' thereby bringing them at par, as legitimate fighters, with security forces. In the same breadth it used word 'killed' for all casualties, whether the terrorists, citizens or the security personnel. The newspaper tried the portrayal akin to sectarian groups carrying out attacks in Indian occupied Kashmir and Afghanistan. The underlying signaling could insinuate that the security forces are facing the wrath of its own growing. By resembling the technique of attack being used in Afghanistan, it draws reader's attention that perpetrators were homegrown terrorist outfit. In its headline while reporting the GHQ attack, *Dawn* reported "Audacious Attack rocks GHQ; Brigadier, Lt Col among 6 army men killed; hostage saga continues." Apparently it is a simple headline reporting the attack on a headquarters, which is responsible to fight terrorism. But the headline itself glorifies the terrorist act and undermines security forces as a weaker entity. The word 'audacious' is an adjective used to express willingness to take bold risks. The word attack is also specific to military action of 'acting aggressively against enemy forces.' Similarly,

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[22] Ahmad Riaz, "1206 Police personnel killed in K-P since 2006" *The Express Tribune*, July 29, 2016.

'rocks' is an informal expression which is used show that it surprised or rattled the security outfit. There was no attempt to use the headline to show that it was an abhorrent act of terrorism.

Daily *Jang* reported GHQ attack with headline "*GHQ par Dehshargardoon ka Hamla, Brigadier, Colonel sumait 6 Ehlikar Shaheed, Mutadad Yarghamal.*" (Terrorists attack at GHQ; 6 security officials including a Brigadier and Colonel embraced Shahadat and many made hostage). At the surface, this news story emphasizes the intensity of the terrorist attack 'Army Headquarters was attacked and high-ranking officers along with few soldiers were killed and many were taken hostage.' A closer analysis shows that this news does not only tell the act of terrorism but by using the word General Headquarters in its headlines magnifies the act without stating the obvious. It further sensationalizes the incident by adding in its headlines '6 including a Brigadier and Colonel among killed and many made hostage.' This was highly organized attack, in which the terrorists came wearing uniforms, entered GHQ (the Headquarters which controls counter terrorism operations), killed senior officers and others and took many hostages. The global superstructure of this Urdu newspaper persuasively summarizes a tragic incident with an attempt to highlight the severity of the incident at the one hand, and depicting a somewhat softer and helpless image of the security forces, on the other hand. It also contains causalities' details with figures. Even the follow up arrests and investigations were also reported quoting sources. In an overview, this type of news reporting created a negative framing for the readers.

Dawn editorials were highly assertive in responsibility framing. The analysis shows that 29% editorials did not discuss any reason for the terrorist attacks nor suggested how the government could overcome the menace of terrorism. It left a void for the readers to infer the reasons of terrorist attacks on their own. *Dawn* was critical of government's foreign policy towards Afghanistan and the US and mentioned it as a major contributing factor towards terrorist attacks. Additionally, 15% editorials commented that military operations are not helping to overcome the menace of terrorism. 29% editorials of *Dawn* were highly critical of the internal security policy for countering terrorism.

15% of daily *Jang* editorials did not refer to any reasons of the terrorist attack. 22% editorials considered the Afghan policy shift as the major reason of the attacks and a somewhat lesser number of editorials suggested that the military operation were ~~as~~ the reason. 26% editorials mentioned internal security, counter terrorism policy, and the flaws in strategy to overcome sectarian issues, as major contributory factors leading towards terrorism. During the discourse analysis of an editorial written after the terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, the editorial turned this terrorist act as political wrangling between Centre and Punjab Province, which was an irrelevant insinuation

Representation of Voices in Media

Given that the media coverage is all about drawing the readers' attention and focus, it is no surprise that media chooses what statements to include and which ones to ignore. It depends on the appeal of the person involved. A popular voice will be more likely to be reported by the media prominently as compared to a less popular or minority voice. That is why newspapers only publish statements of popular political leaders, sportsmen or film celebrities or even philanthropists. It raised suspicions during the discourse through illusionary reporting and linking terrorists with support from security forces. In this backdrop, the newspapers tend to prefer a greater inclusion of voices, which were critical of security forces, while excluding voices who supported securitizing the threat. *Dawn* hesitated to include views of security forces' officials and expressed its eagerness for the US voices, which were largely critical of security forces of Pakistan, alleging their involvement in deterioration of law and order in Afghanistan. *Dawn* did not use the lexis to describe word 'terrorists', it preferred to us 'fighters' and 'attackers' which became an obstacle in mobilizing a sympathetic public opinion against terrorism. The damaging negativity associated with the terrorist groups were not highlighted, while the ills associated with the security forces remained on the preferred *Dawn* prominent agenda The newspaper also did not use the adjective of a 'martyr' (The one who lays down his life in the right path) to describe Pakistan Army, the Frontier Corps or the police. Daily *Jang* did use the word 'Dehshatgard' for terrorist and 'Shaheed' for martyr for soldiers who were laying their lives in this war against terrorism. *Jang* also afforded an

opportunity to represent all voices; including the Government, Security Forces, Political players and US/Afghanistan. But this newspaper also distracted the process of securitization by resorting to highlight the stories of missing persons. The newspaper could have highlighted the miseries of families of martyrs to gain sympathies for security forces and law enforcement agencies, which it chose not to.

Attack on Media Framing in the Case of APS Peshawar Attack

On December 16, 2014, Pakistan witnessed a horrendous terrorist attack in Army Public School (APS) Peshawar in which 131 school children were brutally killed in cold blood, who were targeted simply because the school had many wards and children of military officers and ranks. This merciless attack was condemned not only in Pakistan but the world over. The shear brutality of this terrorist act shocked the entire world. The U.S. President Barak Obama called Prime Minister of Pakistan and expressed his deepest condolences; the Governments of China, UK, France, India, Germany, and dozens other, denounced the act and expressed solidarity with government of Pakistan and the bereaved families.[23] After this terrorist attack, unity of Pakistan's political elite was more pronounced against ~~to~~ fighting the menace of terrorism. Urgency was felt for a comprehensive strategy with a common resolve at all levels to fight and overcome the menace of terrorism. A National Action Plan (NAP) was charted as manifestation of the resolve of the nation against terrorism.

Content analysis of the two newspapers, daily *Dawn* and daily *Jang* between December 17, 2014 till December 31, 2018 shows a significant shift in media framing leaning towards securitization. Media frames 'terrorism as home grown problem' changed to 'terrorism a threat to Pakistan.' Political communication was visibly effective to highlight the threat of terrorism. Formulation of National Action Plan through an amendment in the Parliament and military courts was a reflection of consensus amongst the political elite. Ultimately political communication became the media agenda as well. Lifting of the moratorium and urgency to pursue the Afghan government to take action against terrorists hiding in the sanctuaries were accorded prominent frames by both newspapers.

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[23] "132 Children Killed in Peshawar School Attack" *The Express Tribune,* December 16, 2014.

Conviction of terrorists by military courts remained a front page story in the leading newspapers. Legislation by the parliament and statements of politicians and government officials enforced the perception of government as an actor for securitization. This had a visible impact on media framing; resultantly the media started making official and military frames. *Dawn* was critical in pointing out inadequate actions by the government on various clauses of the National Action Plan, which indirectly was helpful in the securitization process. The official frames included government's steps taken to block terror financing, revival of the peace Jirga, confidence of people of FATA in Security Forces and their belief that TTP had been defeated; which were all big achievements in support of denouncing terrorism. Military frames highlighted the successes in ongoing kinetic operations and the destruction of terrorists' hideouts in FATA through aerial strikes. Condemnation by the political leaders, both from government and the opposition benches, was visibly seen in the media. Condemnation of terrorism by political leaders has been counted in official frames since it helped the securitization process.

The perspectives of news stories regarding terrorism were visibly changed after the APS attack. Consequences and official view alongside victims' miseries were more pronounced in the follow up stories. Glorification of terrorism and conflict framing reporting were visibly reduced. A major shift was observed in perspective from event to consequences. It was a major change to securitize the issue of terrorism. 13% news stories of *Dawn* had perspective on consequence and 10% stories of *Jang* had their inclination towards highlighting consequence of terrorism for future. Though *Dawn* maintained its objective stance but it did include official perspective and concerns of the government with regard to the involvement of hostile foreign agencies and conviction of terrorists by military courts. It did give a good coverage to the announcements of conviction to terrorists by military courts but also editorially commented its reservations on resorting to military trials and the weaknesses in judicial system and loopholes in prosecution by the law enforcement agencies.

Identification of perpetrators helps to securitize the issue. The TTP is the main group which has been targeting government, military and civilian targets alike and taking

responsibility.[24] In KP, Sindh and FATA, most terrorist acts were carried out by the TTP. Terrorist outfits were made responsible for acts of terrorism. 57% stories of *Dawn* made terrorists responsible for terrorist attack while 15% stories highlighted security lapses on part of the government and security agencies. However, still 26% news coverage was left to the readers' choice regarding who was responsible for the terrorist act. Daily *Jang* had same percentage of stories in which terrorists were made responsible for the attack thus raising awareness about prevailing threat and leading towards securitization. 56% *Jang* stories made terrorists responsible and 36% left the news open for readers' choice.

Discourse analysis shows a change in media language. *Dawn* language displayed a tilt towards securitization of terrorism. While reporting an aerial strike by security forces, it reported '92 suspected militants were killed in their hideouts in aerial strikes in North Waziristan and Khyber, two Federally Administered Tribal Area Agencies.' News contained all the details with dateline and byline. It described that 76 suspected militants were killed in North Waziristan Agency and 16 in Khyber Agency. Newspaper used word 'in a precise aerial strike' making a military frame and endorsing the killing of terrorists who were taking shelter in their hideouts.

Another feature story in *Dawn* effectively focused on securitization; Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returning to their homes after restoration of peace in South Waziristan Agency. The reporter of the newspaper travelled to an IDP camp at Kohat and shared first-hand account of returnees' ordeal and their impressions. Procedural delays in necessary documentation by officials and concerns regarding their future household and local businesses were quite evident. Underlying perception gained from   the story was that people were happy that they are returning to a peaceful area where no threat of Taliban existed anymore. All of them expressed satisfaction over prevalent peace in the area.

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[24] Sara Mahmood, "Decapitating the Tehrike-i-Taliban Pakistan: An Effective Counter-Terrorism Strategy?" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, 7:6, (July 2015):24-29.

While reporting the visit of the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) to Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) headquarters on May 16, 2015, daily *Jang* reported that the COAS appreciated the role of ISI in counter terrorism operations and the sacrifices being rendered by the members of the agency. He said that the work of intelligence agencies remains hidden but their achievements must be highlighted and appreciated. Underlying message of the newspaper was that a foreign hand in fueling terrorism in Pakistan was repeatedly evident. It further argued that the incidents of terrorism particularly in Balochistan and KP were not in isolation. The Pakistani terrorists hiding in safe havens in Afghanistan were being supported by the NDS and RAW, the Afghan and Indian Intelligence Agencies, to carry out terrorist acts in Pakistan.

Another change was in *Dawn* editorials to highlighted consequences of the threat country was facing, suggesting a joint national approach to tackle this threat. Foreign policy gaps did continue to be highlighted in *Dawn* and *Jang* both. *Dawn* was editorially active on counter terrorism after the APS. It was critical and occasionally frustrated in its use of the language On May 29, 2016 its editorial stated that NAP was is going nowhere. Underlying message was that the Government is only focusing on arresting and displaying numbers of those arrested; and that there was no effort to cleanse the roots of terrorism.

By the end of 2017, terrorism incidents substantially reduced after reaching at peak in 2014.[25] Media focus also shifted back to the political events. Panama Leaks, Dawn Leaks, tweet of military spokesman about rejection of inquiry report, removal of PM Nawaz Sharif from office by an accountability court and the 2018 national elections were the main focus of media agenda. Meanwhile Army also announced the completion of Kinetic Zarb-e-Azb Operations in FATA and placed more emphasis on intelligence based operation in various cities. Security Forces, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, continued their surge in urban areas to eliminate hiding terrorists. Since remnants of terrorists fled away to far flung areas of Balochistan, focus of intelligence

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[25] Global Terrorism Index, available at http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2018/12/Global-Terrorism-Index-2018-1.pdf accessed on April 9, 2020.

based operations also shifted accordingly. During 2017, the inquiry against corruption cases of the former Prime Minister, commonly known as the Panama Case, dominated the news in media. Terrorist incidents had been substantially reduced by mid-2018, when new government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf was installed in the country. Meanwhile the US also announced reduction of troops and initiated the process of peace talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

This study has discovered that both newspapers went beyond material reality and their reports before the APS attack were influenced by their pre-existing ideas and beliefs about terrorism. Conforming to the global environment, Pakistan adopted the norms which assisted it to change its behavior towards fighting terrorism. An adopted norm takes years to complete its life cycle and get accepted by the people. The second stage is the internationalization of norms. However, this transformation could either not be observed or was ignored intentionally by the international community, critical mass in the country and the media alike. It left a gap between the perceptions of the state and media which forced media to frame terrorism the way it did, which in turn led to slowing down of the process of securitization. Masses are unable to form their own opinions based on superficial knowledge. They need a detailed guidance to reach a conclusion of abstract reality. Thus a securitizing actor and the media give shape to the abstract reality for the public.

Media saw the individual or organizational acts of few banned outfits through the same prism and did not resort to the securitization outlook. This view of media understanding was further fortified by external forces through acts of terrorism within their own countries and conveniently blaming Pakistan for supporting these groups. Inter-media affect has a dominating influence in an era of digital technology. Thus for an effective securitization process, political communication should remain dominant throughout. The state narrative should be pervasive at all stages till an issue is securitized avoiding entropy. Rumors and misinformation should be quickly rebutted through all available mass and social media means. The vacuum in information domain must not be tolerated

so that it is not occupied by opposing forces. In a polarized society like Pakistan's, consensus among political elites is the fastest tool to securitize an issue.