

Journalism and the regime change in Pakistan (2022): exploring the solidarity and political discourses on the social media

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Abstract:

For the first time in Pakistan, a sitting prime minister has been ousted through a ‘No-Confidence Motion (NCM)’ initiated by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) in April 2022. PDM, the coalition of 15 political parties, claimed the success of NCM as the win of democracy. The ousted PM and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Mr. Imran Khan, alleged that the motion was a ‘regime change’ attempt backed by a foreign conspiracy initiated by internal and external elements. Pakistani journalists, who are already labelled as political partisans, took to the social media platform Twitter, and started spreading the ‘political discourse’ about the removal of Khan from the PM office. This research explores the predominant themes within the discourse produced through the Twitter handles of the selected journalists; Arshad Sharif, Hamid Mir and Mazhar Abbas. Secondly, to determine whether and to what extent the journalists have produced the ‘political discourse’ and or the ‘solidarity discourse’. We have employed thematic analysis as a theoretical and methodological tool to achieve the research objectives. The findings show a clear divide between the journalists and an explicit polarization within the discourse produced through their Twitter posts on the issue, and the solidarity discourse is virtually non-existent.

Keywords: PTI, PTI Government, Imran Khan, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), Pakistani journalists, no-confidence motion, coalition government, democracy.

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1. Introduction

Pakistan has gone through regime changes many a times throughout its 75 years of history. The latest of which occurred on April 3rd, 2022, when for the first time a sitting Prime Minister was ousted from power by a vote of no confidence by the Parliament (Bokhari, 2022). On April 3rd, 2022, Pakistan, again went through a political crisis of the worst kind. A vote of 'No-confidence' was supposed to be held which would oust the Premier from power. But the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament rejected the motion by declaring it a conspiracy against Pakistan by the US to punish it for not conforming to their illegitimate demand of providing army bases to carry out their attacks on Afghanistan. Later, in a political move, Imran Khan, advised the President to dissolve the National Assembly and hold fresh elections. This was taken up by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in a Suo-moto case and a five-member bench declared the then government's decision unconstitutional and ordered to carry out the task of 'No-Confidence-Motion' by the National Assembly, the result of which was the removal of the Prime Minister Imran Khan from the power.

In the aftermath, many scholars warned the nation about the possible economic impact of this on the public. The opposition's narrative of deteriorating economic condition and PTI's failure to deliver on its promises were exposed badly when the public was further shoved in financial and economic crunch by following the orders of the IMF -International Monetary Fund (Ahmar, 2022). In consequence, PMLNs' popularity is suffered badly as they failed to bring stability to the country and Imran Khan took to the streets with his narrative of the foreign conspiracy (Cheema, 2022). The former premier Imran Khan, while criticizing about his government's overthrowing by an apparent external conspiracy, blamed the Pakistan establishment for not recognizing the detrimental step that the political system of Pakistan had taken. Pointing towards the incumbent government and the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), he lamented that giving the reins of the country to these corrupt politicians would cause great harm to the economy and prestige of Pakistan. He believed that if he the country's economic condition would suffer so would the 'neutrals' by not realizing the danger that has befallen on Pakistan (Shehzad, 2022). In conclusion, the former premier Imran Khan believes that removing him from the government was a big mistake that the political and military elites of the country has made, and they also realize it now (after 13 months of failed PDM government).

Pakistani journalists, who are already blamed to be taking sides and spreading the political narratives of various political parties, as political enthusiasts along with their conventional media platforms took to their Twitter handles and started chewing the political discourse of either side. In this study we have focused on the twitter handles of Arshad Sharif, Hamid Mir, and Mazhar Abbas. Arshad Sharif, who was murdered in Kenya on October 24th 2022, when he left Pakistan after the 'regime change' (Siddique, 2023) was an investigative journalist with a supportive tilt towards the PTI and Imran Khan. Arshad Sharif used to tweet at @ arshed. Hamid Mir, who survived a murder attempt on April 19th 2014, is a celebrated TV journalist in Pakistan. He blamed his murder attempt on Pakistani military establishment (CPJ, 2015 April 15; Hanif, 2014). Hamid Mir tweets at @ Hamid Mir PAK. Hamid Mir's journalistic tilt is towards the PDM, and anti-Imran Khan given the fact that Imran Khan has long boycotted the GEO news channel where Mr. Mir hosts a famous news talk show 'Capital Talk'. Mazhar Abbas is comparatively a neutral and balanced journalist. He is associated with the GEO TV

however he has maintained his rather unbiased image in the journalistic fraternity in Pakistan. Mazhar Abbas tweets at @ Mazhar Abbas GEO.

Arshad Sharif (late) was an investigative journalist, news anchor and analyst. Since 1999 Arshad Sharif worked with different media outlets including; weekly *Pulse*, daily *The News* and daily the *Dawn*, *Aaj News TV*, *Dunya News TV*, and *ARY News Channel*. Before joining as a bureau chief *ARY News* Islamabad, he worked as director news at *Dunya News* and *Aaj News*. He started hosting a political show 'Kyun' at *Dunya News*, then switched to *Dawn* news and ran a show 'News Reporter' and finally he got affiliated with *ARY* media group where he conducted his famous news talk show 'Power Play'. He also ran his YouTube channel 'Arshad Sharif Official'. Arshad Sharif's professional experience spanned over two decades. He was considered a critic of Pakistan's powerful military in recent years (Abbas, 2022; Agahiawards, 2018; Feleke & Madowo, 2022; Hussain, 2022). Arshad Sharif supported Imran Khan and the PTI and opposed the PMLN. He was pro-military before the ouster of Imran Khan as prime minister and started criticizing the Pakistan army's role behind this whole activity. In October 2022, he got assassinated in Kenya during his self-exile.

Hamid Mir is one of the most popular journalists, TV anchor, columnist, writer and analyst in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2019; Ali & Priest, 2015; Mayr, 2008; Mufti, 2007; Sultan et al., 2017). He joined journalism as a profession in 1987. He has worked with daily *Jang*, daily *Pakistan*, daily *Ausaf* as editor. Currently he is hosting his political talk show with the name 'Capital Talk' on *Geo News* (Sultan et al., 2017) for the last twenty years. Besides he writes for daily *Jang* with the column title 'Qalam Kaman' (Mir, 2022). He has a working experience of 35 years in the field of journalism and media. During his professional career, he was kidnapped, shot, harassed allegedly by the powerful institutions, groups and banned organizations multiple times. He faced threats, attacks, censorship, bans (Aslam, 2015; Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014; Maher, 2021; Sambrook, 2015). He has bagged many national and international awards for his services to journalism including the Free Press Unlimited, the Most Resilient Journalist Award in 2016 (Tariq, 2016). He is pro-democracy and anti-military government or martial law in Pakistan. He raises voice in favour of the constitutional and civilian supremacy in the country. He resisted military establishment's intervention in the political affairs and got banned and attacked many times (Ahmed, 2019; Hashim, 2021). He does not support any single political party however during Imran Khan's regime (2018-2022) he turned into a staunch critic of the PTI because Imran Khan blamed *GEO* for supporting PML-N, boycotted the channel and the Hamid Mir as banned for some time during that regime (Sultan et al., 2017).

Mazhar Abbas is a Karachi based senior journalist, political analyst, author and columnist (Writer Archive, 2023). He belongs to a well-known journalist family. His brother Zafar Abbas is the editor of *Dawn* (Abbas, 2022), another brother General Athar Abbas remained the DG ISPR in General Musharraf's era (Cheema, 2014). Mazhar Abbas' professional career is spanned over four decades. He started his career as a working journalist and worked with various newspaper and TV organizations such as *AFP*, *ARY*, *Geo News*. Currently, he appears as an analyst in the famous news show of *Geo News* 'Report Card' and writes articles for daily *Jang*. He also participates as an analyst in different news talk shows (CPJ, 2007). As a prominent media activist (Mezzer & Sial, 2010) and the champion of media freedom (KLF, 2021) he has worked for the freedom of press practically after he was selected as the secretary general Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ). During his career he faced many threats including death threats and police cases especially in Musharraf era (Report, 2007; The News

on Sunday, 2023). In 2007, he was awarded with the International Press Freedom Award by the Committee to Protect Journalists in recognition of his services for the freedom of press. Mazhar Abbas supports democracy in the country and a strong opponent of military rule. He does not feel himself attached to any single political party, but he usually supports the political process in the country. Chiefly, he is considered a big name who resists the muzzling of media voice in the country.

Considering the significance of these journalists, this research is focused on their journalistic role regarding production of the ‘political discourse’ and/or ‘solidarity discourse’ within the context of the removal of the premier Imran Khan from the PM office in Pakistan. The researchers have analyzed tweets from these three journalists during April 10 to April 14th, 2022, i.e. first five days after the removal. The research questions of the study focus: (a) What are the predominant themes produced by the selected journalists on their twitter handles regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office during April 10th to 14th 2022? (b) Whether and to what extent Arshad Sharif, Hamid Mir and Mazhar Abbas have produced the ‘political discourse’ and/or the ‘solidarity discourse’ on their twitter handles regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office during April 10th to 14th 2022? Moreover, the objectives of the study are: (a) To explore and analyze the predominant themes produced by the selected journalists on their twitter handles regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office during April 10th to 14th 2022; and (b) To determine whether and to what extent the selected journalists have produced the ‘political discourse’ and/or the ‘solidarity discourse’ on their twitter handles regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office during April 10th to 14th 2022.

This study is focused to explore and analyze the predominant themes within the discourse regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office in Pakistan (2022) produced by the selected journalists on their respective twitter handles; @arsched, @Hamid Mir PAK and @Mazhar Abbas GEO. Secondly, the researchers have attempted to determine whether and to what extent the journalists have supported and/or criticized the ‘regime change’ in Pakistan. Through the identified predominant themes, the researchers have attempted to determine whether and to what extent the journalist have produced the ‘solidarity discourse’ during the politically polarized media environment in the aftermath of the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office. Both the key terms; political discourse and solidarity discourse have been defined as follows.

2. Literature review

There is a huge amount of research evidence available to support the claim the Twitter as a microblogging site has become a significant social media platform for politicians, political parties, world leaders, celebrities, institutions and also for journalists. Twitter has been used extensively during elections (Bessi & Ferrara, 2016), by politicians and celebrities for in formalisation (Manning, 2017), for the sake of political persuasion (Diehl et al., 2016), and for the sake of political agenda setting (Gilardi et al., 2022). It is evident from the available research findings that the social media, especially Twitter, has altered the dynamics of political agenda setting as it allows easy political communication, expands the number of actors in shaping political agenda, and finally increases reach beyond the traditional media users to a huge number of dynamic social media users.

Twitter's growing centrality in the news warrants greater scrutiny from journalists and scholars. Journalists use Twitter widely and many are required by their employers to be active on the platform. The effects of their use on news judgment have not yet been assessed. Twitter represents a unique communication sphere where the media, political actors, and the public are all present. McGregor and Molyneux (2020) assume that journalists pay such attention to Twitter (as part of their daily routine) that it influences their news judgments. Twitter can serve as an important early warning system for journalists, alerting them to stories under the mainstream news radar. Journalists have described Twitter as essential to their work, a new and indispensable news wire. Since Twitter launched in 2007, journalists have widely used the site. For journalists who incorporate Twitter into their reporting routines, and for journalists with fewer years of experience, tweets were deemed equally newsworthy as AP wire stories (McGregor & Molyneux, 2020).

Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are being heavily used in the political context, whether it be by the general public, journalists, or by the political parties themselves. Social media has vastly enabled them to reach out to their audience and engage directly with the citizens and the voters. This phenomenon has not only enabled them to disseminate the information amongst the general public, but also to voice out their opinions via these social networking sites. One of the most common phenomena observed is the concept of microblogging which primarily takes Twitter into the account. There have been multiple political incidents where Twitter has been used as a primary source of disseminating information, running political campaigns, voicing out opinions, protesting and so on and so forth (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013).

Gilardi et al. (2022) claim that whoever has control and influence over the social media and resultant over the political agendas has a lot of power. Furthermore, the people or politicians who have this power, are aware of the relationships and dynamics between social media and agenda setting to properly utilize the features and tools provided to them. Social media provides more freedom and control as compared to the traditional media because of virtually no gatekeeping and the existence of 'hybrid media systems' which majorly enhance the power and influence of political actors than that they had initially on traditional media systems to shape their political agendas.

Social media are thought to have changed the way people talk to each other and share information in recent years. In particular, the usage of social media in a political setting is on the rise. Microblogging services (like Twitter) and social networking sites (like Facebook) have recently been viewed as having the potential to increase political participation. Considering the meteoric rise of platforms like Twitter and Facebook, it's no surprise that these platforms are being utilized more frequently in political contexts, both by ordinary citizens and official political bodies. In a relatively short amount of time, politicians in modern democracies around the world have embraced social media as a means of communicating with their constituents, having open and frank conversations with individuals, and sparking lively debates on political issues (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013).

Drawing on the review of available literature it can be concluded that the Twitter as a microblogging and social media website has become a significant social media platform for politicians, political parties, world leaders, celebrities, institutions and also for journalists. So, it is pertinent to find out how three Pakistani journalists have used their Twitter handles to

comment on and analyze the political situation occurred in April 2022 when the then PM Imran Khan was ousted from his office under the name of 'No-Confidence Motion'. It is interesting to know that whether these journalists have promoted the political discourse of 'regime change' backed by a 'foreign conspiracy' or they have promoted the political discourse of 'No-Confidence Motion' / win of democracy. Or, instead of fuelling the political polarization they have produced any 'solidarity discourse' by highlighting the economic difficulties faced by the general public.

3. Political discourse and solidarity discourse

Generally, the term discourse is used to refer to the conversation taking place through any form of communication. In academic and social scientific terms, the discourse is a formal way of using language to express one's thinking (Ruiz, 2009). Within the political science perspective, the political discourse is the talk, text and conversation related to politics and policy making done by various political parties, professional politicians, political institutions, governments and political pundits (Kitaeva and Ozerova, 2019). In this study, by 'political discourse' we mean the Twitter posts shared by the selected journalists on their Twitter handles during the time period under study regarding the 'regime change' in Pakistan (2022) containing one or more key terms like; 'No-Confidence Motion / NCM', 'opposition movement', 'political situation', 'imported government', and 'foreign conspiracy'.

Jeffrey C. Alexander (2016; 2006) in his *Civil Sphere Theory* argues that the media as a communicative system in a society assuming the role of a 'vital centre' performs the function of 'civil repair'. This role is carried out by producing the 'solidarity discourse' by highlighting the 'civil codes' and by resisting the 'anti-civil' codes during and/or after any conflict in the society (Ghauri et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021). In this study, by 'solidarity discourse' we mean the Twitter posts shared by the selected journalists on their Twitter handles carrying concerns regarding economic difficulties faced by the general public, requests/appeals/suggestions to mitigate political polarization and emphasizing common understanding of solidarity in the aftermath of the removal of PM Imran Khan.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Data collection and sampling

All three journalists commented very actively on the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office by the PDM. For instance, Hamid Mir tweeted 26 times on April 10th, 2022. So, bearing in mind the enormous amount of data and the space required for data analysis we have focused on the tweets during first five days after the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office i.e. April 10th to 14th 2022. After applying data cleansing technique on all tweets from these three journalists during these five days we found out that Arshad Sharif shared total 17 tweets regarding the issue, Hamid Mir tweeted 57 times and Mazhar Abbas tweeted 07 times regarding this issue. Two out of seven tweets by Mazhar Abbas were only links of columns published in two different newspapers regarding the issue under study. Therefore, remaining five tweets from Mazhar Abbas have been selected as sample. Similarly, to gain equal size of sample from the tweets of Arshad Sharif and Hamid Mir we have applied the lottery sampling method. So, the total sample size under study is 15 tweets including five tweets from each selected journalist.

4.2. Data analysis: thematic analysis

Considering the suitability and appropriateness with the research questions, the research objectives and over all scope of the study, the researchers have employed the Thematic Analysis (TA) as a tool to analyze the selected data set. The practice of discovering patterns or themes in qualitative data is known as thematic analysis. It is not bound to a certain epistemological or theoretical position, unlike many qualitative methods (Dawadi, 2020). A theme, as previously stated, is a pattern that highlights something important or intriguing about the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are no hard-and-fast rules or guidelines regarding what forms a theme. The relevance of a topic defines it. If you have a very small data collection, there may be a substantial overlap between the coding step and this stage of finding early themes.

As for as generating the codes is concerned (for post coding), the researchers identify sections of the data that they deem relevant to their research question and label it as such with post codes. Researchers employing thematic analysis establish which research participants are important, how are they related to each other, and which categories are associated. By identifying codes, themes and creating patterns are developed in a qualitative data set. Data is classified and interpreted to develop non-obvious and credible meaning from complex data sets (Herzog et al., 2019).

Thematic analysis is one of the most appropriate systematic approaches to data analysis, especially while analyzing complex and diverse sets of data. Thematic analysis provides a rationale for comparison by identifying trends and patterns in the data and establishing correlations. This way generalizations can be established to enhance theory construction and reform application. Moreover, TA helps in data interpretation to explain variations in thoughts, actions, and behaviours, in coding and categorization of data. TA can be particularly useful while gauging differences in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour of participants (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). So, considering the suitability and appropriateness with the research questions, research objectives and over all scope of the study we have employed TA inductively to explore and analyse the predominant themes within the discourse produced by the selected journalists through their Twitter posts regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office during the time period under study.

5. Findings and interpretations

5.1. Thematic analysis of the tweets by Arshad Sharif (late) (@arsched)

First tweet from the sample of Arshad Sharif's tweets contains relevant codes such as 'Quaid-i-Azam', 'Azaadi', 'Zehni Ghulami', 'Jang', Hashtags 'Imported Hakumat Namanzoor' and 'Pakistan Kitny me Becha'. He conflated Imran Khan's political struggle (Jang) with the historical independence war of Quaid-i-Azam (The Founder of Pakistan). By using the two hashtags he promoted the 'political discourse' of the deposed Prime Minister Imran Khan. 'Imported Hakumat' i.e., imported government is the slogan raised by Imran Khan for the PDM government. The slogan elaborates his political discourse that the PDM government is the result of US backed conspiracy against his government. So, the predominant theme in this tweet is the 'regime change' backed by a 'foreign conspiracy'.



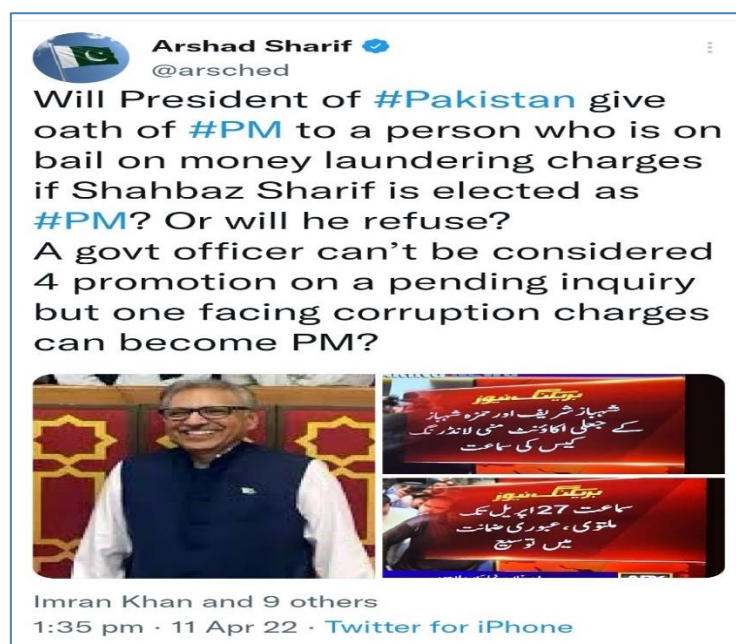
Second tweet contains relevant codes such as ‘Zameer ki Awaz’, Hashtags ‘Imported Hakumat Namanzoor’ and ‘Pakistan Kitny me Becha’. In this tweet Arshad Sharif shared pictures of mass protests against the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office and projected these protests as the ‘peoples’ conscience voice’. By using the two hashtags he promoted the ‘political discourse’ of the deposed Prime Minister Imran Khan. So, the predominant theme in this tweet is the ‘regime change’ backed by a ‘foreign conspiracy’.



Available codes in the third tweet are on bail, money laundering charges. In this tweet he asked a question from the Director General Inter Services Public Relations (DGISPR, A PR institution of the armed forces in Pakistan) whether the Service Chief would attend the oath taking ceremony of a person who was on bail for money laundering charges. Here the late journalist highlighted the corruption of the PDM PM Mr. Shehbaz Sharif. So, the predominant themes in this tweet are Anti-PDM, Critical on the Military Establishment, and corruption.



Available codes in the fourth tweet are on bail, money laundering charges, pending inquiry, corruption charges. In the fourth tweet also, Arshad Sharif asked the same question from the President Arif Alvi that whether he would give oath of PM to a person who was on bail for money laundering charges. Here the late journalist highlighted the corruption of the PDM PM Shehbaz Sharif. So, the predominant themes in this tweet are Anti-PDM and corruption.



The fifth tweet by the journalist, Late Arshad Sharif contains codes such as ‘Adhi raat adalat’, ‘bunyadi haqooq per daka’, ‘qomi salanti ka masla’, Hashtags ‘Imported Hakumat Namanzoor’ and the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The fifth tweet by Arshad Sharif also contains ‘Regime change’ and ‘foreign conspiracy’ as predominant themes because of the available codes such as opening of court in the midnight, violation of basic human rights, issue of national security, and the two hashtags. Arshad Sharif highlighted the ‘political discourse’ of Imran Khan.



5.2. Thematic analysis of the tweets by Hamid Mir (@HamidMirPAK)

The first tweet from the sample of senior journalist Hamid Mir’s tweets contains the codes such as ‘qanoon ki hukamrani’, ‘tehreek-i-adam etemaad’, ‘Imran Khan gher qanooni tareeqa’. The predominant theme in this tweet about the removal of the Prime Minister Imran Khan from the PM office is ‘No-Confidence Motion’ (NCM) and ‘Win of Constitution’. In this tweet, Hamid Mir supported the ‘political discourse’ of NCM which has been moved by the PDM. He conflated the deposition of premier Imran Khan with the win of constitution which was the narrative of the PDM.



Second tweet selected as unit of analysis from the sample of Hamid Mir's tweets contains codes such as game changer, bound to help Supreme Court, implementation of order, constitution. All these available codes imply that the predominant theme in this tweet is 'Win of Constitution'. The journalist in this tweet again supported the 'political discourse' of NCM raised by the PDM. He conflated the deposition of Imran Khan with the win of constitution which was the narrative of the PDM.



Third tweet is full of binary codes such as victory of democracy, defeat for selfishness and arrogance, Imran Khan voted out, NCM, foreign conspiracy, fake news. So, the predominant themes in this tweet are NCM and Win of Democracy. This tweet is full binary codes reflecting an explicitly polarized political inclination towards the political discourse of the PDM. Hamid Mir conflated the deposition of Imran Khan with the victory of democracy. He labelled Imran Khan as selfish and arrogance. The journalist approved the political discourse of the PDM by arguing that the foreign conspiracy was a fake news.



Available codes in the fourth tweet are Shehbaz Sharif, elected Prime Minister, NCM. The predominant them in this tweet is NCM. Hamid Mir supported Shehbaz Sharif for congratulating Imran Khan after he was elected as PM in 2018. The journalist criticized Imran Khan for not congratulating Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the PM. So, the available codes and the theme of NCM imply that the journalist is in favour of Shehbaz Sharif.

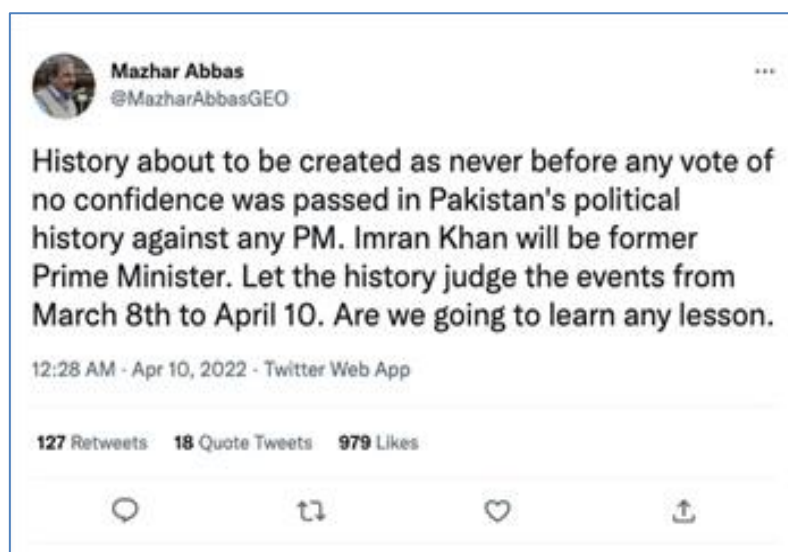


The last tweet by Hamid Mir contains two explicit codes such as foreign conspiracy and dangerous virus. The predominant theme is anti-Imran Khan and NCM. The available two explicit codes show journalist's biasedness and hatred against Khan. He is thanking the foreign conspiracy in a satirical way and conflating Imran Khan with the virus. This tweet also reflects his personal dislike for Imran Khan. For instance, in another tweet he blames Imran Khan for removing his brother from a job at the state-run TV PTV. He labelled Imran Khan as civilian dictator for removing his brother from the government job.

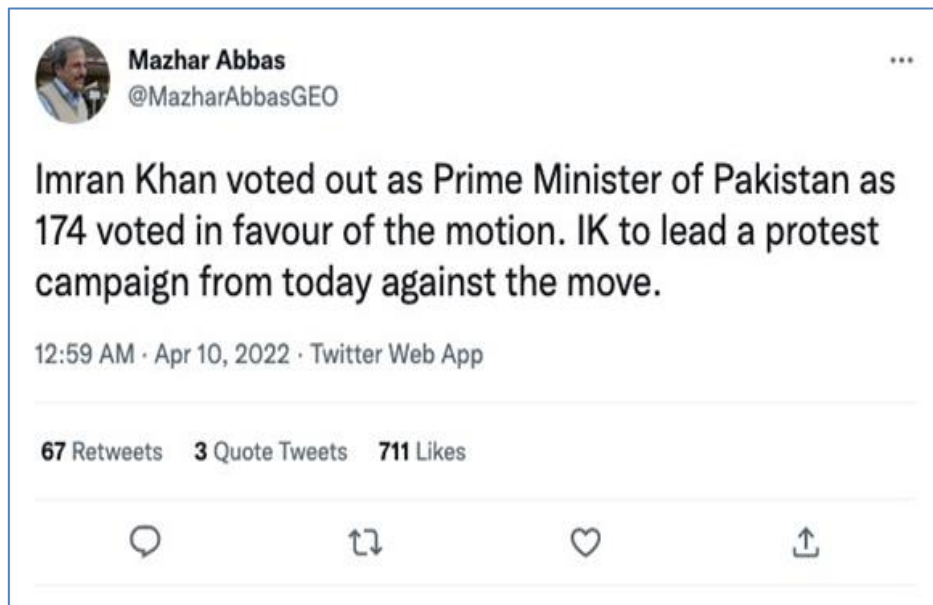


5.3. Thematic analysis of the tweets by Mazhar Abbas (@MazharAbbasGEO)

First tweet from the sample of Mazhar Abbas' tweets contains codes such as history created, political history, vote of no confidence, lesson. This tweet contains predominant theme of NCM. However, the available codes suggest that the journalist is neither supporting nor opposing the NCM. The tweet doesn't seem to be supporting nor criticizing any of the political discourse. Rather, the journalist seems to be trying to create some kind harmony by stressing the need of learning the lesson from the political history of Pakistan. So, the 'solidarity discourse' is evident in this tweet in the form of an attempt to create harmony in the society.



The second tweet selected as unit of analysis from the sample of Mazhar Abbas' tweets contains codes such as voted out, the NCM (motion), protest campaign. This tweet again contains NCM as a predominant theme but in the form of a news only. No commentary has been made by the journalist. So, this tweet doesn't contain any of the political discourse or the solidarity discourse.



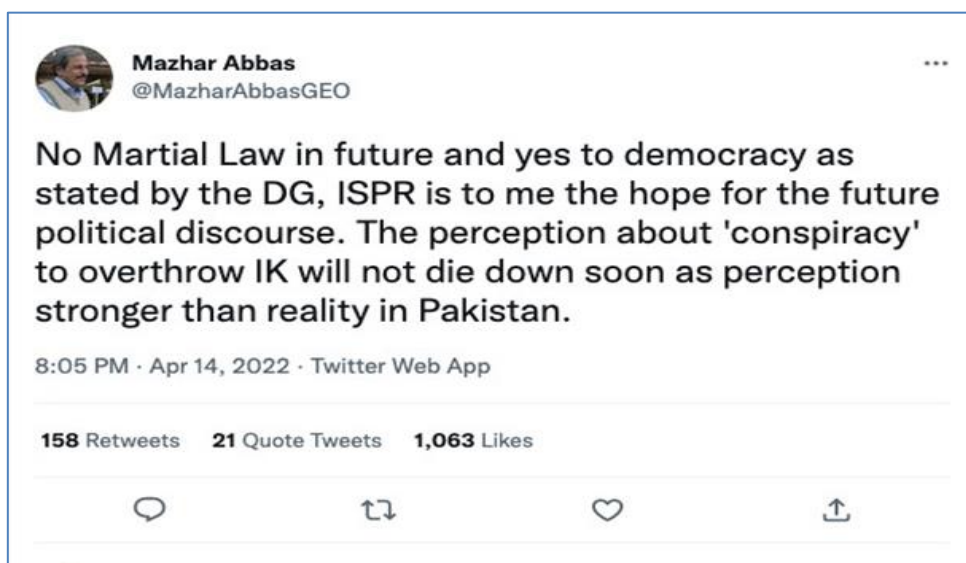
Third tweet by Mazhar Abbas contains codes such as challenges and stiff opposition. This tweet doesn't contain any of the under-study themes regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office. It has a commentary regarding the political situation in the national assembly. In his commentary, Mazhar Abbas argues that Imran Khan would turn out to be stiff opposition to the newly nominated PM Shehbaz Sharif. The journalist hasn't used any loaded words or labels for any of the political leaders. So, this tweet doesn't contain any of the political discourse or the solidarity discourse.



The available codes in the fourth tweet of Mazhar Abbas are resignation, re-visit, boycott of elections, and changing the system. This tweet also doesn't contain any of the under-study themes regarding the removal of Ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan from the PM office. This tweet turns out to be a political advice to the deposed PM by the journalist regarding the resignations from the assembly. So, this tweet also doesn't contain any of the political discourse or the solidarity discourse.



The fifth tweet by Mazhar Abbas contains the codes such as Martial Law, democracy, political discourse, conspiracy, overthrow Imran Khan, perception, and reality. This tweet contains the NCM and the foreign conspiracy as the predominant themes in it. However, the journalists do not seem to be supporting and/or opposing any of the political discourses. However, there is a slight hint of rejection of Imran Khan's political discourse of 'foreign conspiracy'. This rejection is evident from the codes 'perception; and 'reality'. The said journalist seems to be conflating the political discourse of 'foreign conspiracy' with the perception only and not with the reality.



6. Conclusion

Available codes in the selected tweets of Arshad Sharif (late) suggest that the predominant themes in his tweets regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office were regime change, foreign conspiracy, anti-PDM, Critical on the military establishment, and corruption. The journalist highlighted the political discourse of 'regime change' backed by a 'foreign conspiracy'. The political discourse was generated by the deposed PM Imran Khan. So, the journalist, in an explicitly polarized way, supported his political discourse and remained critical to the newly elected PDM PM Shehbaz Sharif by highlighting corruption and money laundering charges against him. In his tweets the 'solidarity discourse' or any attempt to mitigate the political polarization is completely non-existent.

Available codes in the selected tweets of Hamid Mir suggest that the predominant themes in his tweets regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office were NCM, win of democracy, win of constitution, and anti-Imran Khan. The journalist highlighted the political discourse of 'NCM' and foreign conspiracy as fake news. The political discourse was generated by the PDM. So, the journalist, in an explicitly polarized way, supported PDM's political discourse and remained critical to the deposed PM Imran Khan by conflating the success of NCM with the win of democracy and constitution, and by labelling Imran Khan as a virus, selfish and arrogance person. In his tweets the 'solidarity discourse' or any attempt to mitigate the political polarization is completely non-existent rather his personal hatred and dislike for Imran Khan is evident.

Available codes in the selected tweets of Mazhar Abbas imply that the predominant themes in his tweets regarding the removal of Imran Khan from the PM office were NCM and foreign conspiracy. However, the journalists didn't support nor oppose any of the political discourses. However, there is a slight hint of rejection of Imran Khan's political discourse of 'foreign conspiracy' in one of Mazhar Abbas' tweets wherein the journalist conflated the political discourse of 'foreign conspiracy' with the perception only and not with the reality. Consequently, Mazhar Abbas' tweets didn't contain any of the political discourse or the solidarity discourse. The 'solidarity discourse', however, is evident in one of his tweets in the form of an attempt to create harmony in the society. Mazhar Abbas did not use any of the hashtags in his tweets.

So, overall, the findings are evident that Arshad Sharif and Hamid Mir were on two extremes in promoting political discourses of Imran Khan and the PDM respectively. Where Arshad Sharif was in full support to Imran Khan's political discourse of 'regime change backed by a foreign conspiracy', Hamid Mir was equally opposing this political discourse. He was equally supporting the political discourse of NCM as win of democracy and the win of constitution. Hamid Mir's tweets contained hatred and dislike for Imran Khan in the form of name calling as virus and in the form of labels such as selfish and arrogance. Solidarity discourse in the tweets by both this journalist was completely non-existent. However, Mazhar Abbas turned out to be a neutral journalist and political commentator. His tweets didn't contain binary codes rather one of his tweets contained the solidarity discourse.

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