Polarization and Ideological Weaving in Twitter Discourse of Politicians

Farzana Masroor1, Qintarah N. Khan1, Iman Aib1, and Zulfiqar Ali2

Abstract
The form and functions of political discourse have considerably taken a new orientation with the evolving ways of communication. Twitter is a platform that is increasingly preferred by the political elites for the purpose of gaining public acclaim and propagating political ideologies. The political discourse on Twitter requires a critical attention toward linguistic structures and strategies to uncover the relationship between language and social practices. For this purpose, tweets of two eminent Pakistani political figures are chosen for unmasking a variety of discourse strategies at work from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA) through the socio-cognitive model of ideological square. The analysis uncovers the hidden ideological structures and strategies realized through a number of rhetorical moves in the selected tweets. The cognitive binary of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation help achieving political domination and legitimization of political actions by controlling the public opinion. The underlying motives vary and are context bound such as the aims to topple a government or to restore public faith in the governance. This research is significant for political discourse analysts as well as the general public, as a means for analytical activism propagated by any CDA inquiry, and paves way for further research in the use of social media platforms for political purposes.

Keywords
political discourse analysis, ideology, Twitter, positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation

Introduction
The nature of language as a neutral medium of communication is not accepted without some criticism. The communication process is vastly driven by the interests of participants, whether at the individual level or in groups (Habermas, 1984). This entails the need for some systemic mode of inquiry due to the fact that humans may possess an ability to identify this view but are not always actively and consciously interested in doing so (Chilton, 2004). For this reason, some kind of reflexivity and activism is advocated by “critical” approaches toward analysis of discourse (e.g., Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996) for the exposition of hidden agendas of domination and inequality.

Political communication is a site of struggle for various power groups that engage in a race for winning public acclaim at the cost of maligning their opponents. Political elites are ideologically conscious and resort to various structures, strategies, and rhetorical moves in opposition to the other powerful groups when their interests are at stake (van Dijk, 2006c). The advent of electronic media and social network sites (SNSs) vastly impacted political discourse resulting in new forms and strategies for achieving such political intentions, mostly due to the fact that these platforms have frequently replaced the traditional modes of political communication (Himelboim et al., 2013; Hsu et al., 2013). Owing to the growing use of Twitter by politicians for achieving political goals (Hsu et al., 2013; Ross & Rivers, 2018; Smith, 2011), the ideological loading and discursive strategies in this newly found medium require the focus of research. An interesting case in question is the social media warfare witnessed in the form of tweets by Maryam Nawaz and Imran Khan, the leaders of two opposing political parties in Pakistan. The prime minister of the governing party of Maryam Nawaz, being charged with corruption and money laundering, was demanded resignation from the opposition party led by Imran Khan. This resulted in an interesting series of tweets by...
both leaders against other, thus building an impetus for this research. This research is driven by an understanding that political discourse is ideological in nature and a site for politicians to gain public acclaim and repute by defaming all those that are in opposition. This analysis is focused to uncover strategies and structures hidden in the discourse of politicians to meet their goals of political survival and to counter political threats. For this purpose, the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is considered suitable for uncovering hidden agendas and strategies of the politicians in the light of the concepts of power and dominance.

This article is structured by first contextualizing the concepts of ideology and power in the domain of political discourse, followed by an account on the forms and strategies used by the political elites on the social media and Twitter. The theoretical foundations of the study are provided by situating the discourse of political leaders in social identity theory. The research methodology explains the “critical” approach toward language structures, and analytical framework of ideological square, discussed under the socio-cognitive approach of CDA (van Dijk, 1998). The analysis uncovers a number of polarization strategies of “us” and “them” at work in the tweets of the chosen political leaders to legitimate their in-group ideologies in comparison with the out-group for serving their political interests. The uncovered rhetorical techniques help toward interpreting the hidden agendas behind the political discourse of tweets and aims to fulfill the emancipatory goals of a CDA study by providing the public with a mechanism of how politicians achieve sustenance of their political order while keeping them ignorant of their real intentions.

**Ideology, Power, and Political Discourse**

Politics involves resolving of conflict by making use of persuasion, where language acts as a primary and significant tool (Hague et al., 1998). To identify a discourse as primarily political, several aspects require consideration. It can be identified through its actors or more precisely politicians, as well as recipients such as the public and other groups of interest, when the context, “functions and implications” of their communication is in essence political (van Dijk, 1997b).

The purpose of influencing the minds of recipients is not a straightforward affair for the political agents. It involves the use of rhetoric and presupposes the usage and promotion of certain themes and strategies that are mostly indirect and implicit. An influence that is legitimate may not require a hidden agenda to be fulfilled. However, an illegitimate influence may also be exercised through the use of discourse, such as in the form of biased or incomplete information, to serve the interests of the manipulators to achieve a political maneuver (van Dijk, 2006a). The intensions are usually hidden from the public in such cases. Resultantly, political speeches, acts, and activities tend to be ideological in nature to fulfill hidden intensions (Fairclough, 1995). “Ideology” is perceived as a system of ideas that have social dimensions, or a “set of factual and evaluative beliefs—that is, the knowledge and the opinions—of a group” functioning as “values, identities, relations, aims, positions and power of social collectivities of specific kinds” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 48). A political discourse makes use of certain ideological strategies underlying the surface structures of a discourse which may not always be apparent to its recipients, where some maybe more prevalent than others (van Dijk, 1993).

The discourse structures, being part of social structures, are strongly linked to the concepts of power and dominance within social groups. According to van Dijk (1993), “Dominance is defined [here] as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality” (p. 250). One aspect of this power comes from the social rank and status of political leaders who can have privileged access to the mass media and can influence and persuade a vast majority of public (van Dijk, 1993, 1998). This aspect of social power is based on the privileged “access” to socially valued resources like wealth, social position, force, education, or status. With the advent of social media, the distance between politicians and public is minimized and the “access” of such platforms are no longer available to the powerful only. However, another aspect of this “social power” is still valid in this kind of relationship, which involves control that is basically “to change the mind of others in one’s own interests” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). This type of power is manifested as the “soft power” by the politicians and political organizations, which has discursive dimensions and permeates through the ideologically manipulated and legitimized forms and strategies (Chouliaraki, 2005). In this sense, ideology is not only the instrument of domination but also of in-group cohesion, competition, resistance, and opposition. Dominant ideologies tend to become neutralized, closer to the concept of Gramscian hegemony, where status quo is accepted as the norm and power structures of elites are deemed legitimate (Wodak, 2009).

The language of politicians to shape public opinions has intrigued many linguistic researches in multiple settings (such as Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 1998; Geis, 1987; Glendon, 2008; Harris, 1991; R. T. Lakoff, 1990; Schaffner, 1997; Wodak, 1989). The extreme eloquence of political discourse invited researchers to analyze the most widely used strategies of rhetoric and persuasion, especially in political speeches. The strategy of persuasion is mostly used by politicians as an indirect means to induce certain presuppositions and bring more followers into their group (Cohen, 1995). Persuasion also acts as a tool by politicians to evade accountability and cross-questioning from the media, mostly by highlighting their positive attitude of trust toward the public (Bhatia, 2006). Among others, the most remarkable pattern of political discourse is the polarization strategy of “US” and “THEM” marked by the binary propositions of *positive*...
self-presentation and negative other-presentation (Leudar et al., 2004; Oddo, 2011; Oktar, 2001; van Dijk, 1993, 1998). This strategy is used in political discourse for a variety of purposes. It may act as a means to legitimize war by the politicians through the projection of self as good and innocent and the other group as evil aggressors, thus necessitating the acts of violence (Oddo, 2011). Other legitimation strategies under this binary may include legitimation by reference to moral values, group membership, and temporality (Oddo, 2011). While a number of researches have been carried out on the use of this “US/THEM” macro binary proposition in the traditional political platforms such as speeches and press conferences, its use in the newly emerging political platforms like SNSs is not yet exploited to the full, and is in need of discourse analytic studies from this perspective.

SNSs and Political Discourse

The face of political landscape is vastly affected by the emergence of SNS. Social media is gaining a substantial presence in today’s politics especially during the times of heightened political activity (Himmelboim et al., 2013; Hsu et al., 2013). The traditional political discourses (such as political speeches) are getting frequently replaced by information and communications technology (ICT)-based modes of communication (Hsu et al., 2013). Resultantly, politicians have changed their preferences. The formal modes of communication with the public such as press conferences and speeches are still in vogue and used by the politicians on certain occasions. Since social media platforms were not initially meant for political communication (Himmelboim et al., 2013), their use by the politicians exists as an option and not compulsion. However, some politicians, just like actors and movie stars, prefer to engage their followers in their times of leisure, on regular basis instead of engaging them through more formal modes of communication (Fairclough, 2000; Wilkins, 2000).

Twitter is better known as a conversational blog (Barash & Golder, 2010), and though not developed specifically for the purpose of political deliberations (Himmelboim et al., 2013), is increasingly used equally by the public and politicians to express, along with other social functions, political content (see Choi, Park, & Park, 2011; Gulati & Williams, 2010; Hsu et al., 2013; Ross & Rivers, 2018; Smith, 2011). It is serving as a viable platform to reflect prevailing political sentiments and concerns of people (Kreis, 2017).

In the domain of politics, access to the public is important for elites. Twitter allows users to frequently and instantly communicate electronically, by keeping a profile that can be viewed, by default settings, publicly through a variety of devices and interfaces. This ease of communication has enabled users to discuss social and political issues by allowing others to see and comment on their tweets, thus giving birth to a new style of news coverage (Hsu et al., 2013). Limited to 280 characters, the site provides an easy-to-reach platform to the community to convey messages directly and efficiently in minimum but meaningful words. The character limitation has led to the nonexistence of a proper form and content, making it a more natural and concise form of social discourse (Himmelboim et al., 2013; Milstein et al., 2008) which is often observed to have abundant spelling inaccuracies, slang words, abbreviations, paralinguistic features such as smiley faces, and other semiotic aspects.

Twitter’s language is characterized by a bag-of-words model that ignores the discourse particles such as linking words but plays an effective role in generating semantic meanings, although they are embedded in unstructured noisy medium (Mukherjee & Bhattacharyya, 2012). The paralinguistic and multimodal features can be effective tools for the construction of political identity through, for example, racialized hashtags such as “blacktags” for Black Twitter identities (Sharma, 2013). The characters such as hashtags “#” and the prefix “@” can act as ideological resources by enhancing “connectedness” among people, a form of “searchable talk” meant to serve the purpose of creating affiliation and community building among people with similar ideological bent (Zappavigna, 2011, 2012).

The apparent political intentions of using Twitter by the politicians include gaining visibility and electoral support (Kruikemeier, 2014), however, the media can also be used for fulfilling hidden political agendas and motives. One such motive behind Twitter use by politicians, such as that adopted by the United States’ President Donald Trump, could be to establish credibility in the eyes of the public by denouncing media criticism and presenting themselves as the only truthful sources of information (Ross & Rivers, 2018). This behavior of Trump on Twitter is labeled as a strategy of “deflection” (G. Lakoff, 2017). The extreme level of such behaviors could lead to the construction of hegemonic discourses by the political authorities for the legitimation of an authoritative regime (Boukala & Dimitrakopoulou, 2018). This entails the use of Twitter as an indirect means, a passive media facilitating ease of access to the ideological content for the public consumption that goes in favor of political elites.

The critical approaches toward Twitter discourse have uncovered the reflection of xenophobic and racial opinions as an expression of extremist ideology (Bartlett et al., 2014; Chaudhry, 2015). It may appear in the form of nationalist and conservative ideologies as a move to serve national and cultural interests. The politicians may use Twitter to project “others,” like immigrants and refugees, as criminals, dangerous, and a burden on economy (Wodak & Boukala, 2015). The similar trend can be witnessed in other social media platforms like Facebook, where fake Facebook pages are used for spreading racist propaganda and anti-Muslim sentiments (Farkas et al., 2018). Apparently, there is no direct link of Twitter (or similar platforms) with any extremist activity, but its enhanced features of connectedness and “searchability” may help toward opinion formation, creating affiliations, and community building.
The importance of Twitter discourse in the domain of politics cannot be ignored. The previous researches exploring the use of Twitter (and other such platforms) from “critical” perspective for the construction of ideology and power have emphasized upon the need for further researches in this domain (such as Bouvier, 2015; Bouvier & Machin, 2018; Kreis, 2017). There are multitudes of power relations and power structures working at different levels in the discourse of political tweets. While Twitter language has been critically explored for ideology construction and dissemination of racist and nationalists ideologies, more research is required to explore the exploitation of this medium by the political elites for the propagation of their political ideologies. The increasing reliance on technology for communication in politics requires more attention of critical research toward this media from the perspective of discourse analysis. The idea of “dominance” and “power” is crucial since the tweets of politically active figures reflect the contest of ideologies and this discourse is easily made available for the public consumption. Therefore, this research is intrigued by the question of exploring the forms and ideological strategies used by the selected political elites in relation to their opposing groups by the creation of “in-group” and “out-group” identities, an area that requires further empirical inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

Ideologically loaded language structures and strategies require a critical stance toward the analysis of discourse. Such a view of language is derived from critical theory normally associated with the Frankfurt School, and contributions of Jürgen Habermas in the social theory. Accordingly, language is a tool used by power groups in a society to serve their interests and is in need of a “critical” stance with the aim of “de-mystifying” social practices by allowing human beings to achieve emancipatory goals through self-reflection (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The theory is influenced by the contributions of Michel Foucault, among other philosophers who have contributed toward the theories of power and resistance, with a view of discourse as a manifestation of social action. Foucault’s works extensively mention the relationship of discourse and the “real,” which is at times misconstrued as a negation of the real. The “construction of the real by discursive structures” is never defined as a negation of the existence the real but that the interpretation and meaning of the objects and events relies on the discursive structures (Mills, 2002, pp. 49–50). In this regard, Frow (1985) points out toward the role of discourse in giving structure to the “real” while being a product of real structures.

The tendency of humans to categorize themselves into groups, and thus the in- and out-group ideological strategies of political leaders, can be explained in the light of an interdisciplinary approach as provided by social identity theory, suggested by social psychologists (Hogg, 1992; Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Giles, 1981). The theory postulates hierarchical structuring of society into groups which stand in relation to each other on the basis of power and status. The social standing of groups endows them group identity, as a determinant of who they are and what evaluative status this identity entails regarding what they can and cannot do and how they position themselves in relation to others. In contrast to other approaches in social psychology, such social identity approaches (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel, 1981; Turner & Oakes, 1986) advocate the dependency of individual behavior on social norms, situations, context, and characteristics of social groups, which allows for a study of more socially constructed nature of intergroup relations and dynamics (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002). Besides, the theory exists at the motivational and cognitive level, thus shows best suited compatibility with the socio-cognitive analytical approach of van Dijk (2006c) by serving as an explanation for the workings of positive-self and negative-other representation strategies (as explained in the next section).

The extension of this theory is provided in self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) that emphasizes the existence of certain comparative and normative measures at the cognitive and motivational levels for the placement of self and others in social hierarchy within a particular context. The prototypes and schemas define group boundaries and aggrivate intergroup differences. In-group biases are resultant motivations of boosting self-esteem in relation to the others in the out-group. Stereotypical representations of self as positive and others as negative are legitimized and considered as normative for the group identity (Oakes et al., 1994). The social groups appeal to valued socio-cultural dimensions in a particular context to gain public approval and legitimize their biases.

Research Methodology

CDA, as an interdisciplinary analytical approach, attempts to study language as a form of social practice. It systematically investigates the relationship between structures of discourse and structures of ideologies by unmasking hidden ideologies, inequality, dominance, power distributions, and so on, which are embedded within discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). While deriving its theoretical understandings from critical linguistics, CDA advocates multidisciplinary approach toward discourses, having its roots in rhetoric, text linguistics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology among others. A number of prevalent approaches exist within this larger arena as advocated by the prominent theorists of the domain such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun A. van Dijk. There are some commonalities in all the approaches: they are interested in naturally occurring instances of language, exploring the dimensions of discourse beyond the study of discourse grammar to the functional use of language in the larger social, cultural, political, or cognitive contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The term “critical” in this approach is not “negative” as is
exist as "US" versus "THEM" (van Dijk, 1998, 2006b) can discursively in relation to how the group members represent themselves. The term “cognitive” entails that political ideologies and beliefs are stored as well as generated as ongoing processes of personal and social memories. Therefore, the theoretical framework under which van Dijk’s model operates is a triangle between cognition, society, and discourse. This makes political ideologies as part of social cognition and generated, disseminated, reproduced, and challenged by socially situated discourse.

The function of ideologies for social cognition can be studied by exploring their social representation in discourses (van Dijk, 1998). These ideologies are crucial but uncovering them requires a systematic approach. In this regard, Kress (1996) asserts that CDA must uncover the system of inequalities by unmasking the way it works and the effects that it puts on the minds through “the analysis of potent cultural objects—texts—and thereby to help in achieving a more equitable social order” (p. 15). van Dijk (2006c) maintains that it is in this discourse that different and opposed groups, their power, struggle, and their interests are at stake. To survive and compete, these political groups need to be ideologically conscious and well organized. While this discursive dimension is crucial, the analysis of these ideological constructs can be achieved through discovering the structures and strategies of ideologies—uncovering the structural units as well as the strategic ways of what social actors are doing with language in a particular context. In other words, the analysis of strategies and structures of social actors entails uncovering “concepts, propositions, mental representations or networks, and the strategies of their mental manipulation in production and understanding” (van Dijk, 1998: 54). The structuring and organization of the beliefs of group members about their social struggles and conflicts provide an insight into socio-cognitive ideologies.

The format of these beliefs can be revealing when viewed in relation to how the group members represent themselves and others in discourse. This polarization schema of “US” versus “THEM” (van Dijk, 1998, 2006b) can discursively exist as positive self-presentation (in-group favoritism as a macro-strategy used for “face keeping” or “impression management”) and negative other-presentation (meant to strengthen the division between in- and out-groups, good and bad, or superior and inferior). The set power goals are linguistically achieved in this ideological square by the four moves or strategies of emphasizing Our good things and emphasizing Their bad things, while de-emphasizing Our bad things and de-emphasizing Their good things. The functional analysis of ideologies interwoven in tweets of political elites might prove fruitful for providing group schemas in the wider area of social and political context. The discourse can be critically looked upon through the lens of CDA by paying attention to the devices and strategies used by political actors specifically in how actors are projected, type of authorities referred to and considered respectable, how arguments are constructed, how in- and out-group categories are made to work, and how the devices of evidence, facts, presupposition, vagueness, victimization, polarization, and self-glorification are manifested linguistically for contesting and enforcing specific ideologies. Although, most of the studies carried out in the domain of CDA or discourse analysis make use of thematic analysis, the method of analysis goes without reporting. The strategies as provided by van Dijk (1998) are taken as broader assumptions and structures and the thematic discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is used latently to expand on the themes of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation by providing hidden sub-themes. The method is considered as a flexible method and can be applied in its own right across a range of theoretical and epistemological accounts.

Data

For this study, tweets of two eminent Pakistani political actors, Maryam Nawaz and Imran Khan, were chosen from October 2016 to December 2016. The rationale for this period of data collection emerged from the intensified political activity, especially on the social media, among the political elites in the wake of the Panama Leaks, and the subsequent allegations faced by the ruling government as an aftermath. The series of tweets for the game of political survival and extinction between the two politicians became an interesting case for political discourse analysis. There are a number of influential political parties and politicians in Pakistan but only a few of them are fully active on the social media for political reasons. Besides, the chosen political leaders are influential in their domains for a number of reasons. Maryam Nawaz is the daughter of Mian Nawaz Sharif, who thrice served as the prime minister (PM) of Pakistan and is the founder of one of the biggest political party Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN, usually called “Noon League”). Recently, the politics of Pakistan are turning out to be more like family lineage; therefore, being the eldest daughter, Maryam Nawaz is considered as second to Nawaz Sharif in the party and political circles. Imran Khan is a renowned personality across the globe for his contributions to the field of cricket as a fast bowler. In Pakistan, he earned great repute and respect among the people due to his achievements for Pakistani Cricket as well as his contributions toward building the first charity cancer hospital in the country. His decision to join Pakistani politics was motivated by his resolve to fight corruption, and due to his huge fan following from his previous repute, the move resulted in many people joining and supporting his political party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).
The data collection period was politically hard-pressed time for the governing political party, PMLN since the then PM Nawaz Sharif was facing extreme criticism due to the charges of corruption and money laundering in the backdrop of the Panama Leaks. In this regard, Imran Khan, being the chairman of the then strongest opposition party, was leading the movement to oust the “corrupt” PM out of his office. Meanwhile, Maryam Nawaz, for her association with the PM and the party, was highly active in countering the criticism aimed at the government and his father. The selected tweets of the two leaders in this context are historical with respect to the ultimate political gains. They helped building the rhetoric against the corruption in Pakistani politics and led the austerity drive under the leadership of Imran Khan, who ultimately won his case and succeeded in becoming 22nd PM of Pakistan in the wake of 2018 General Elections.

The tweets were delimited to a sample of 40 tweets by each leader. Since CDA makes use of a number of approaches suitable to answer specific research question, there is no typical gauge for data size (Meyer, 2001). Instead of sole reliance on topic and content analysis, the operationalization of strategies and structures focuses on linguistic categories and concepts such as actors, time, context, and argumentation (Meyer, 2001). For such type of analysis, a complete list of linguistic devices cannot be provided, and a thorough analysis of even “a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages”; thus a complete analysis of a large corpus of text is “out of question” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 99). Based on some considerations such as theoretical saturation and depth of research analysis including context, text surface and rhetorical means, the data size of this study was kept small. This facilitated the research goals of uncovering socio-cognitive strategies in the ideological construction of in- and out-group discourse strategies which required an in-depth and rigorous analysis in alignment with the constructionist and interpretative vein.

Analysis of Contesting Ideologies in Political Tweets

The selected political tweets are marked with structures representing “underlying ideologies” of the parties as a social group enacted by attacking ideologies of the opposing party. These ideological expressions are better understood as the principles governing actions, identity, goals, beliefs of a social group which draws its strength not only by acknowledging positive attributes and actions of the “in-group” but also by exposing weaknesses of the other “out-group” (van Dijk, 2006b).

Both of these political leaders are held in esteem by the public; the discourse showcases dominance in their tweets and their words intricately express their embedded political ideologies. Having the social access and social power over the masses, both of them try to convince the masses into their own ideologies by forming such macrostructures in their discourse which are important for the general public. Their ideologies are also replicated in their microstructures on another level, thus they represent characters from their in-group, that is their own political party in a positive light through positive self-presentation and they tend to show the opposing characters who are members of the out-group in a negative light through negative other-presentation.

Negative Other-Presentation

Creating bad image of the other in the public eye is the motive of this strategy. In the discourse of political tweets analyzed for ideological patterning, it was observed that negative other-presentation is achieved in a number of interesting ways or sub-strategies meant to serve plentitude of purposes.

The “Other” Is Disloyal to the Country

The strategy is meant to showcase bad intentions and disloyalty of the other to the country. Most of Imran Khan’s tweets are based on negative other-presentation, with this “other” being the PM of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif and his whole party PMLN.

For instance,

- Exposing CM Punjab’s priority: a new executive jet! (IK, 11 December 2016)
- Shocking how far Sharifs will harass Pak citizens for personal gains. Would never happen in an effective democracy. (IK, 10 December 2016) (The emphasis such as underlining is our own)

He does so by using such lexicalization as “Exposing CM Punjab’s priority” to show that the PM is already involved in some guilty acts and he is now being exposed. In fact, by using terms such as “exposing” and “shocking,” Imran Khan wants to show that the Punjab government lacks a sense of modesty to their land, and are not fulfilling their promises as they were expected to, and will consequently, “harass Pak citizens for personal gains.” The choice of words here carry an underlying message to the public: a true democracy would place public good in the forefront while the current government lacks the true spirit of democracy, as it is not serving the public but its own good. Hence, an indirect message is delivered to the public that their leaders are being disloyal to them. Through the use of such lexicalization, Imran Khan emphasizes upon negative other-presentation, to build a positive self-presentation.

Similarly, Maryam Nawaz uses lexicalization and categorization in her tweet, when she writes “TRUE” in brackets with “other.” She specifically uses capital letters to emphasize on this word thus categorizing PTI as “evil” in direct terms:
The other (TRUE) side of the story . . . The evil face & intentions of PTI revealed once again. (MN, 28 October 2016)

The tweet is crafted in the form of an eye-opener or a revelation to the public who is innocent and ignorant of the hideous intentions of the other party.

The “Other” Lacks Credibility

Maryam Nawaz employs this strategy in her tweets to reach out to the masses by presentation of the other out-group members in a negative light and presentation of self in positive terms. This type of strategy is meant to prove that the other is never to be trusted by the public due to other’s insincerity. In simple words, the other is a liar and an immoral person:

So much hue and cry, slanderous allegations & attempts at defaming the Sharifs & this is what you come up with! (MN, 11 November 2016)

Actually fear for Imran Khan Sb. Too many unfounded allegations & bhohtaans. There’s a Divine Court too. (MN, 7 November 2016)

The causes of his downfall were never his political follies & blunders, but his blatant lies & allegations. (MN, 30 October 2016)

They will never take it to the court because their propaganda will be exposed as court is not a talk show. (MN, 7 November 2016)

These tweets by Maryam Nawaz show how through negative other-presentation, she tries to glorify herself and her in-group. Using phrases like “defaming the Sharifs,” “slanderous allegations,” “political follies and blunders,” “blatant lies,” and “unfounded allegations,” and their association with Imran Khan, she tries to portray him in a negative light, automatically glorifying herself and her party. There is a presupposition that whatever the other says are “lies” and “allegations” which are obviously “blatant,” “unfounded,” and a “propaganda.” Similarly, she tries to reach out to the masses with the tactic of lexicalization, that is, code-switching in the second tweet above by the use of word “bhothaan.” The word is meant to convey a deeper local meaning, especially when it comes to a woman. This serves a double purpose here, to create a bond with the masses at a closer level and to achieve negative other-presentation.

These tweets by Maryam Nawaz also show another crucial aspect of political discourse, that is victimization. By forming polarizations of “us” and “them,” she tries to pose a victim by presenting herself and her party as targets of baseless allegations. Thus, she again fulfills the purpose of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Here, it is important to note that she has used victimization and tried to attract empathy, while on the other hand, Imran Khan is direct in his attacks. This involves their gender roles too, as being a woman staying indirect helps her posing as a victim in a move to gain more sympathies.

One may notice that in the following four tweets, Imran Khan uses a hyperbolic hashtag that is “jhootonkidastan” (Urdu word: Trans: a tale of liars) to achieve negative other-presentation. It is significant to focus on the hashtag because it has become one of the postmodern techniques in the social media to express everything in a single hashtag and serves the ideological purpose of building affiliation among the followers through easily searchable conversation threads (Zappavigna, 2011, 2012). The hashtag “jhootonkidastan” is itself a hyperbolic phrase that intensifies the message in the tweets:

The startling video abt Sharif lies & “Noon Turns” seems to be breaking all records of viewership. #JhotoonKiDastaan (IK, 28 November 2016)

A combo of Sharif lies & Noon turns, an eye opener on how our ppl have been taken for a ride; #JhotoonKiDastaan

More Sharif lies exposed. #JhotoonKiDastaan (IK, 27 November 2016)

People exposing the mountain of Sharifs’ lies. A revealing video: #JhotoonKiDastaan (IK, 27 November 2016)

It can be discerned that hashtags are helpful in instantly shaping the perceptions of people. Notice how Imran breaks the news in a sizzling manner, as if a trailer of a much awaited movie is released: “Sharif lies & Noon Turns.” The effect is heightened through the use of vocabulary from food industry, such as “combo.” The use of metaphorical reasoning is considered as a salient feature of political discourse (Chilton, 2004; Musolff, 2004) for building arguments. Here, these metaphors suggest to the public regarding what has been cooked up by the other party and that how they had been fooled in the past by their rulers. Similarly, using other hyperbolic phrases such as “startling video,” “people exposing the mountains of Sharifs’ lies,” “a revealing video,” Imran attempts to persuade his audience and indirectly builds certain ideologies in the minds of the audience.

The “Other” Is a Looter

The effect is achieved by drawing comparisons to prove that the other is being dishonest with the nation’s capital. Imran Khan employs the strategies of number games, hard facts and empathy too. The difference here is that instead of seeking empathy, he is showing it in solidarity with the nation:

While the Sharifs’ abuse public funds, 45 percent of Pakistan’s children have stunted growth because they are unable to get 2 meals a day (IK, 3 December 2016)
This is another negative other-presentation, where Imran Khan attempts to show empathy to the poor Pakistani children, who are shown to be a kind of puppets in the hands of Nawaz. To prove his argument, Imran uses Number Game to appear credible, such as “45 percent” and “two meals a day” to prove his sympathy to the Nation. Imran Khan keeps on using hard facts to justify his claim as we see:

Hasan Nawaz was a student in ’99 & 2 yrs later was doing real estate business in bns of rupees. Not hard to figure out where money came from. (IK, 2 December 2016)

Using a hard fact before accusing the other is a highly powerful tool to persuade the audience that whatever has been said is based on facts. “Not hard to figure out where money came from” is an ironic phrase to sarcastically suggest that Nawaz has been involved in the money laundering. He further justifies his claim by mentioning hard facts and direct quotes to appear truthful to the audience:

Where are the bns from? NS gave answer in his add to nation: “when u make money through corruption u don’t keep assets in your own name.” (IK, 2 December 2016)

**The “Other” Is a Criminal**

This strategy is used to prove to the public that whatever wrongs have been done are because of the criminal mind-set of the other. Imran Khan directly blames the government for being responsible for the lawlessness in the country by emphasizing their unlawful acts:

Not surprising to see crime rising in Punjab given that the province is ruled by criminals who have destroyed all vestiges of law & order. (IK, 2 December 2016)

This is another negative other-presentation where Imran Khan uses ironic phrases such as “Not surprising to see crime rising in Punjab” to assert that crime has always evolved from the Punjab, and by using hyperbolic phrases as “destroyed all vestiges of law & order,” he attempts to exalt the trauma that has occurred due to the Punjab government that has destroyed the law and order. Imran Khan uses direct language by tagging the other party categorically as “criminals.”

**The “Other” Is Proven Guilty**

The tagging of other as a criminal is culminated by pronouncing a verdict by some authority against the other for his or her unlawful acts. An important tool in political discourse is hyperbole. The hyperbolic phrases are extremely significant because they add little magic to the words and exaggerate the meaning of the idea to fully convince the audience, for instance in the following tweets:

The burden of proof is on Nawaz Sharif not on PTI as eminent jurists of Pakistan point out: (IK, 9 December 2016)

Another Trustee skeleton in NS’s cupboard exposed. This time Kulsoom Nawaz, declared dependent of NS but property not declared. (IK, 3 December 2016)

Imran Khan continues presenting Punjab government negatively by using hyperbolic phrases such as “the burden of proof” that is on Sharif’s party and “trustee skeleton in NS’ cupboard exposed.” Here again, we witness an interesting interplay of metaphors by Imran Khan from the domain of court and justice hinting at the gravity of the criminal deeds which could be interpreted in a sequence of events such as: murder committed, court trial, and ultimately the murderer exposed. Moreover, Imran Khan mentions authority (“eminent jurists of Pakistan”) to support and justify his claims. This is another technique to persuade the audience, since it is easier for them to believe in claims made by the credible authorities.

An interesting case here is the way Maryam Nawaz uses Authority, Burden (Topoi), Consensus, and Presuppositions in her arguments to win the masses’ hearts. As majority of Pakistani population is Muslim, she uses religious beliefs as Topoi because they present the views on which there is a consensus in the target audience. She takes God as an Authority and uses Him time and again in her tweets to validate her own arguments. This can be exemplified from the following tweets:

Truth prevails and falsehood perishes. Those who lied about me should seek Allah’s forgiveness. (MN, 17 November 2016)

actually fear for Imran Khan Sb. Too many unfounded allegations &bohtaans. There’s a Divine Court too. (MN, 7 November 2016)

Divinity has its own ways of instilling wisdom in the minds of those who do not pay heed to the warnings. #IK is wisdom-less. (MN, 30 October 2016)

In these tweets, evidently Maryam Nawaz constantly relies upon the religion and God as higher authorities through the use of words “divine court,” and “Allah’s forgiveness.” Here again, although we can witness the directness in her language use, she stays less assertive and less authoritative than Imran Khan. She constantly uses nationalism and divinity as crutches for her support rather than using facts and figures or direct attacks through her words.

**The “Other” Is an Oppressor**

Creating bad image of the other is achieved by projecting other as a tyrant who lacks the ability to win debate but imposes his views on the other, by hook or by crook. In
Maryam Nawaz’s tweet below, hyperbole is used as a tool for the negative other-presentation, serving again the purpose of attacking the personal character of the other by creating comparisons:

We all know who in U.S was referred to as “National Embarrassment,” but who in Pak do you think deserves the title of a “National Bully”? :) (MN, 2 November 2016)

The use of words such as “bully” paints the other as a nonbeliever in democratic principles, who lacks polite and decent ways of doing politics.

The “Other” Lacks Rationality

Maryam Nawaz effectively uses irony and sarcasm for a verbal attack against her opponents by proving that the other is insane:

Divinity has its own ways of instilling wisdom in the minds of those who do not pay heed to the warnings. #IK is wisdom-less. (MN, 30 October 2016)

The use of sarcastic and ironic phrases and words in these tweets are an effective way to attack the opponents in a tripling manner, conveying at the same time one’s own agenda and ideology.

Positive Self-Presentation

The positive-self is expressed either by reinforcing negative other-presentation or by creating comparisons between the self and the other.

The “Self” Is Personification of Goodness

The strategy is used to emphasize, mostly though comparisons or evidence (of varying degrees) the positive attributes of the “self” such as hard work, efficiency, courage, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, and resilience. The comparisons drawn can serve the purpose of showing good image of the self to the public through self-proclaiming praises of the deeds done. Imran Khan also creates this polarization in his tweets:

In contrast to Punjab police, KP police now a professional force with no political interference. Recognised as best police force in Pak. (IK, 2 December 2016)

Imran Khan uses polarized terms such as “In contrast to Punjab police, KP police . . .” to endow self-glorification and positive self-presentation to his party and to those who belong to his group.

In another tweet, Imran Khan employs positive self-presentation to present attributes of self in front of the public:

Before resuming mission to get to Bani Gala by afternoon. I salute P Khattak & PTI KP for their courage, resilience & sheer guts. (IK, 31 October 2016)

He evokes empathy for PTI team and salutes their “courage, resilience, and shear guts.”

Similarly, Maryam Nawaz uses irony and evidentiality for positive self-presentation, and negative other-presentation. She uses facts to glorify her own party:

Bcoz we’ve been working on it for the past 3 yrs. It is due to increase in generation & decrease in shortfall. (MN, 8 November 2016)

PM shows President Erdogan “Wall of fame” that exhibits pics of ex-PMs. PM NS is the only one to have three pics :) (MN, 17 November 2016)

Gradually but surely marching towards the fulfilment of promises made to the nation. May Allah help us. (MN, 7 November 2016)

However, it is important to note here that she uses the number of pictures and years but not concrete facts per se; rather she relies on the obvious information that goes in her favor. This again points to her weak stance in arguments, in comparison with Imran’s assertiveness in his claims, as also reflected in her reliance on the religion and God as the higher authorities.

Maryam Nawaz also uses hashtags to achieve similar purposes:

#NawazTheLeaderOfLions#BrandNawazSharifIs it a change? @betterpakistan “asked” Youth responded #BigChange. (MN, 21 November 2016)

Through the use of hashtags, Maryam Nawaz creates a hyperbole by calling her father the leader of lions, thus achieving the purpose of positive self-presentation. Here, Maryam uses hashtags to gain visibility especially among the Pakistani youth, who have the largest representation in Pakistan’s population.

The “Self” Is the Only Hope for the Nation

Another expression of the positive self involves representing the self or one’s political party as the last hope for the country:

A paradigm shift . . . PMLN is evolving & the only political entity with a futuristic view. (MN, 4 December 2016)

Here, Maryam Nawaz proclaims PMLN as “the only political entity” holding a futuristic view which is obviously an exaggeration and an example of a hyperbole.
**The “Self” Is ONE With the Nation**

A successful strategy used by the political actors is to convince the followers that the glory and success of the nation is the victory of the self, and whatever is good for the nation is good for the self and vice versa. The personal preferences are mitigated through this strategy to create empathy for the political party in the followers, and personal gains are dubbed as national achievements:

Tomorrow we will celebrate our victory. I want everyone who wants to see accountability/end to corruption to join us with their families. (IK, 1 November 2016)

Congratulations to the nation. Today’s SC decision is a day for celebration. When ppl stand up for their rights democracy is strengthened. (IK, 1 November 2016)

In these tweets, Imran Khan employs positive self-presentation and uses polarized terms as “we will celebrate our victory” to convince the audience that they belong to his party and it is his party’s victory. Further on, he employs national self-glorification when he says “Congratulations to the nation,” and attempts to generalize his victory to the whole nation. Moreover by saying “I want everyone who wants to see accountability/end to corruption to join us with their families,” Imran Khan attempts to glorify himself and his position. This positive self-presentation is used to create polarization between us and them as the invitation “to join us” is used to show that his party is against the evil of corruption.

Similarly, Maryam Nawaz also draws on this device of National Self Glorification; in fact, she uses it more than Imran Khan. Here again, two facts are important to note as already mentioned above. First, Maryam Nawaz’s voice is not as assertive as Imran Khan’s and second, being the daughter of the PM and his mouthpiece on the social media, she has to clarify her father’s moves as favorable to the national interest. Thus, she constantly draws on to this device to build a positive self-image:

Prime Minister praised Shaheens for displaying matchless feats in the air during exercise High Mark this morning. (MN, 9 November 2016)

Proud moments: PM applauds the brave EAGLES/SHAHEEN during his visit to Sargodha to witness PAF High Mark exercise. (MN, 9 November 2016)

Congratulations to our new CJS & COAS. May Pakistan prosper InshaAllah. May Pakistan prosper. (MN, 26 November 2016)

These tweets of Maryam Nawaz show that she heavily relies upon these strategies of National self-glorification. Being part of the ruling party, she seems to “own” the national achievements and projects them as the government’s and her father’s achievements. The tweets exemplified above are apparently simple praises and acknowledgments of the country’s institutions, but they are highly interesting as they serve a dual purpose. On one level, they serve the purpose of self-glorification but a critical analysis of these tweets unveils another agenda at a covert level. These praises and applauds are aimed at Pakistan Armed Forces (Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army), which have a strong and omnipotent presence in Pakistani history and politics due to their role in countering existential threats to Pakistan from its immediate neighbors right from its inception (Raja, 2016). The healthy relationship between the military and Nawaz’s government considerably deteriorated in the wake of the Panama Leaks (Raja, 2016). These tweets by Maryam also act as a covert move toward pleasing the military and restoring their confidence in Nawaz’s government.

**Polarization Through Pronouns**

An interesting way to observe the image of the self and others was to analyze the usage of pronouns and how they function to serve the ideologies of the political leaders. The use of pronouns was explored by carrying out a frequency count of pronouns “I,” “me,” “we,” “us,” “our,” “them,” and “they” via AntConc software and their functional analysis in context.

The pronouns that seem to reflect positive self-presentation are observed to be “we,” “us,” and “our.” In these tweets, pronouns have been visible for the function of positive self-presentation by creating polarization between “us” and “them.” This can be observed in the below examples:

 tomorrow we will celebrate our victory (IK, 1 November 2016)
 we have been working on it (MN, 8 November 2016)
 join us with the families (IK, 1 November 2016)
 may Allah help us (MN, 7 November 2016)
 congratulation to our new CJS (MN, 26 November 2016)

Most of the personal collective pronouns show inclusiveness, to reflect solidarity and oneness with whole the nation, whereas the use of collective we as representing PMLN party is usually meant to express the efficiency and hard work of the party as a team. The function of “we” in political discourse is associated with a sense of collectively (Bull & Fetzer, 2006; Håkansson, 2012). While these pronouns function as a polarizing strategy of positive self-presentation, the pronoun “they;” is used as a distancing device (Håkansson, 2012) for negative other-presentation. The pronoun “us” meanwhile is used to defy itself by blaming the “other,” hence it brings a negative presentation of the other. For instance,

 They are unable to get it (IK, 3 December 2016)
 They will never take it to the court (MN, 7 November 2016)
The above expressions reflect the inability and inefficiency of the other, portrayed as “they.”

The pronoun “I” is observed to play a significant role in these tweets. By the use of “I,” the speakers are in a better position to claim and assert. Thus, instead of using passive voice, the speakers in some instances have also asserted their opinion. The pronoun “I” is more prominent in the tweets of Imran Khan, where Maryam Nawaz seems to be less direct and less assertive in her tweets:

- I want everyone who wants to see. (IK, 1 November 2016)
- I salute PTI. (IK, 31 October 2016)
- Those who lied about me should seek Allah’s forgiveness. (MN, 17 November 2016)

The use of “I” is found to be more empowering for the expression of high stature and esteem in oneself. In political discourse, the use of personal pronouns is observed to be linked with a show of dominance and authority (Håkansson, 2012). This function of “I” is found more frequently in Imran Khan’s tweets, whereas in Maryam Nawaz’s tweets, a rare usage of “me” is observed where the positive self-presentation is highlighted by equating those disrespecting her as under the direct wrath of God (Figure 1).

The use of positive self-presentation through personal and collective pronouns is altogether more frequent in comparison with the negative other-presentation as expressed by the second and third person pronouns. Moreover, positive self-presentation is reinforced frequently through the collective voice of party (“we,” “our,” and “us”), whereas individualization (“I”) is comparatively limited in this type of political discourse.

**Conclusion**

The study has explored the newly emerging forms of political discourse such as political tweets by expanding on the broad themes of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 1998). The presence of such binary conceptualization is deemed as a common phenomenon of political discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), as is reflected through analysis. However, this research has contributed toward the social theories of group identity and ideological square by building an understanding toward realization of these binaries by the politicians in their tweets, as sub-themes in local/micro contexts for their online ideological presence.

This research has uncovered the binaries existing in political tweets to highlight the ideological differences between in- and out-groups. In this regard, the salient strategies at work include presentation of self (and in-group) as a good human being, well-wisher of the public, hard-working, loyal, brave, courageous, resilient, the savior, and inevitable for the nation’s survival. The negative other-presentation includes presenting the other (or out-group) as disloyal, selfish, greedy, looter, corrupt, liar, immoral, criminal, untrustworthy, bully, and insane.

The existence of such binaries has opened up avenues for several intriguing questions including why these political elites resort to these strategies and what they aim to achieve through them. The answer to this question is context bound, but fruitful for the students of politics and the general public alike, in alignment with the emancipatory goals as suggested by a CDA inquiry (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Other studies on political discourse have also reported the use of positive self-presentation of political leaders, such as posing as good and innocent (Oddo, 2011) in the traditional political platforms, such as speeches. On Twitter, politicians are reported to be frequently presenting themselves as credible and truthful (Ross & Rivers, 2018). The reasons for using these strategies could be multiple which include the desire to establish credibility in the eyes of the public (Ross & Rivers, 2018), “deflection” from criticism (G. Lakoff, 2017), and legitimization such as of an authoritative regime (Boukala & Dimitrakopoulou, 2018).

In the current context, however, the strategies used by Imran Khan and Maryam Nawaz have different goals and work in opposition to each other. Imran Khan has the obvious aims of building a case for the change of the then government by providing good comparisons to the public. This is achieved through praises of the own party for their courage, resilience and good provincial governance. Moreover, he frequently aligns himself with the nationalistic goals of freeing the...
country from the clutches of corruption as a “saviour.” These strategies closely resemble the self-branding strategies adopted by celebrities (Page, 2012) in the sense that they reflect appropriate use of linguistic capital for gains in the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1977). In comparison, Maryam uses positive-self strategies to gain more time for the government from the public (and covertly from the military) and to restore their shattered trust. This is reflected through sharing futuristic evolving plans of the government for a paradigm shift and a resolve to fulfill all the promises made to the public. Interestingly, in these hard times, she is also floundering for a support from the military to prolong the government’s stay in power.

The political parties have used multiple strategies to malign the other group. The linguistic structures through which these strategies are expressed are quite revealing. Most of the structures are in the form of “revelations” or “eye openers” to the public. The public announcements are made (such as “it is shocking,” “it is revealing”) with the presupposition that the public is naïve and unaware of what is hidden under the carpet. This rhetoric plays a crucial role and serves multifarious purposes. “Spin” and persuasion indeed are considered as one of the favorite tools by politicians (Wodak, 2009). Imran Khan uses these negative strategies to show the incapability of Nawaz and his government to meet the required standards of governance. This is carried out by pointing toward how damaging this government is toward democracy and nation. A mastery of rhetorical and stylistic devices is displayed by the politicians when presenting others in a bad light. The impact of these messages is intensified by avoiding straightforward language and resorting to ingenious use of metaphors (such as “a combo of lies,” “skeleton in cupboard exposed”) and hyperbole (e.g., “mountain of lies”). The metaphors from various domains are frequently used by the politicians for building arguments and reasoning for a certain impact on audience (Chilton, 2004; Musolff, 2004). The use of emotions (pathos) is heightened further by using it in combination with logos through the provision of hard facts and figures for convincing.

In this regard, hashtags further help building public perceptions by ensuring maximum visibility (Zappavigna, 2011, 2012). On the other hand, Maryam Nawaz counters the attacks by “deflecting” (G. Lakoff, 2017) and claiming the charges by Imran Khan as “slanderous allegations” and “blatant lies.” She aptly uses the negative other-presentation for self-victimization. The effect of these intensifiers is further amplified by the use of code-switching (Urdu words) to convey a particular emotion. Maryam effectively and frequently uses pathos by evoking her female identity and projects these allegations as a mere tool for her character assassination. She declares that the person responsible for such a crime is inviting the wrath of God. In this regard, religion is used as a moral police and a tool to arouse particular sentiments in the public.

The analysis reflects that the goals of political conversation are driven by the political ideologies constructed out of social realities and accomplished through the essential tool of language by employing various rhetorical strategies (O’Barr and O’Barr, 1976). Persuasion and rhetoric as an age-old tool for politics (Cohen, 1995) plays its part in allowing the politicians to use their “access” to resources (van Dijk, 1993) as a means to grab attention and project themselves. Among several other purposes such as political survival and building public opinion, Twitter is used by the politicians for the performance of their identities (Page, 2012), a mode of self-actualization, a backdrop on which they enact as a political being and give their best performances.

Most importantly, the real-world politics in the offline political landscape is increasingly observed to have a corresponding relationship with the political positions expressed and contested by the politicians on Twitter, to an extent that they can potentially determine the outcomes of an election (Tumasjan et al., 2010). This research is a socio-diagnostic critique (Wodak, 2009) which has related the text to its producers and their hidden interests in the light of the prevailing context. Around 1.64% of Pakistan’s population (around 3.1 million) is Twitter user (“Over 44 million social media,” 2017), the number which is growing every day. Since the preferred modes and settings of political communication are rapidly changing, it is believed by some social theorists that the future of political landscape lies in the modern modes of information such as the electronic media (Calhoun, 1988; Mutz & Martin, 2011). In the wake of the increasing use of SNS for communication, it is crucial that public is able to make informed political decisions for the sake of local and ultimately global peace and prosperity. This onus lies on researches in social sciences to create awareness among the public to carefully exercise their political will, by exposing them to the construction of political realities through the symbolic power of language (Bourdieu, 1977). In this vein, political and media discourses are extremely significant discourses for providing socio-cognitive insights from a “critical” perspective (van Dijk, 1997a). Further research is recommended to explore the growing political nature of social media and its use for political gains. This research was constrained by the limited data and number of politicians. Further data from varied contexts can be collected to validate the discovered themes as well as uncover new strategies under the changed times and situations such as during the elections or after them.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Farzana Masroor https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6980-1952

References

Abrams, D. E., & Hogg, M. A. (1990). Social identity theory: Constructive and critical advances. Springer-Verlag.
Barash, V., & Golder, S. (2010). Twitter: Conversation, entertainment, and information, all in one network! In D. L. Hansen, B. Shneiderman, & M. A. Smith (Eds.), Analyzing social media networks with NodeXL: Insights from a connected world (pp. 143–164). Elsevier.

Barlett, J., Reffin, J., Rumball, N., & Williamson, S. (2014). Anti-social media. Demos, 1–51.

Bhatia, A. (2006). Critical discourse analysis of political press conferences. Discourse & Society, 17(2), 173–203.

Boukala, S., & Dimitrakopoulou, D. (2018). Absurdity and the “blame game” within the Schengen area: Analyzing Greek (social) media discourses on the refugee crisis. Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 16(1–2), 179–197.

Bourdieu, P. Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans (1977). Richard Nice, ed. Jack Goody. Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology, 16.

Bouvier, G. (2015). What is a discourse approach to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media: Connecting with other academic fields? An Introduction. Journal of Multicultural Discourses, 10, 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2015.1042381

Bouvier, G., & Machin, D. (2018). Critical discourse analysis and the challenges and opportunities of social media. Review of Communication, 18(3), 178–192.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

Bull, P., & Fetzer, A. (2006). Who are we and who are you? The strategic use of forms of address in political interviews. Text & Talk, 26(1), 3–37.

Calhoun, C. (1988). Populist politics, communication media and large scale societal integration. Sociological Theory, 6(3), 219–241.

Chaudhry, I. (2015). # Hashtagging hate: Using Twitter to track racism online. First Monday, 20(2).

Chilton, P. (2004). Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice. Routledge.

Choi, S., Park, J., & Park, H. (2011, February). Twitter, a medium for social mobilizing?: An exploratory study on the use of Twitter. Paper presented at the International Network for Social Network Analysis, St. Petersburg, FL.

Chouliaraki, L. (2005). Introduction: The soft power of war: Legitimacy and community in Iraq war discourses. Journal of Language and Politics, 4(1), 1–10.

Cohen, J. E. (1995). Presidential rhetoric and the public agenda. American Journal of Political Science, 39, 87–107.

Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical discourse analysis. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1998). Political discourse in the media: An analytical framework. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), Approaches to media discourse (pp. 142–162). Blackwell.

Fairclough, N. (2000). New labour, new language? Psychology Press.

Fairclough, N. (2015). Language and power. Routledge.

Farkas, J., Schou, J., & Neumayer, C. (2018). Platformed antigenism: Racist discourses on fake Muslim Facebook pages. Critical Discourse Studies, 15(5), 463–480.

Frow, J. (1985). Discourse and power. Economy and Society, 14(2), 192–214.

Geis, M. L. (1987). The language of politics. Springer-Verlag.

Glendon, M. A. (2008). Rights talk: The impoverishment of political discourse. Simon & Schuster.

Gulati, G. J., & Williams, C. B. (2010). Communicating with constituents in 140 characters or less: Twitter and the diffusion of technology innovation in the United States Congress. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

Habermas, J. (1984). The Theory of Communicative Action: Jurgen Habermas; Trans. by Thomas McCarthy. Heinemann.

Hague, R., Harrop, M., & Breslin, S. (1998). Comparative government and politics: An introduction (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Håkansson, J. (2012). The use of personal pronouns in political speeches: A comparative study of the pronounal choices of two American presidents [BA dissertation, Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden]. Retrieved from http://lnu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A531167&dswid=-996

Harris, S. (1991). Evasive action: Politicians and political interviews. In P. Scannell (Ed.), Broadcast talk (pp. 76–99). SAGE.

Himelboim, I., McCreery, S., & Smith, M. (2013). Birds of a feather tweet together: Integrating network and content analyses to examine cross-ideology exposure on Twitter. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 18(2), 40–60.

Hogg, M. A. (1992). The social psychology of group cohesiveness: From attraction to social identity. Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Hsu, C. L., Park, S. J., & Park, H. W. (2013). Political discourse among key Twitter users: The case of Sejong city in South Korea. Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia, 12(1), 65–79.

Jost, J. T., & Kruglanski, A. W. (2002). The estrangement of social constructionism and experimental social psychology: History of the rift and prospects for reconciliation. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 6(3), 168–187.

Kreis, R. (2017). #refugeesnotwelcome: Anti-refugee discourse on Twitter. Discourse & Communication, 11(5), 498–514.

Kress, G. (1996). Representational resources and the production of subjectivity: Questions for the theoretical development of critical discourse analysis in a multicultural society. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis (pp. 15–31). Routledge.

Kruikemeier, S. (2014). How political candidates use Twitter and the impact on votes. Computers in Human Behavior, 34, 131–139.

Lakoff, G. (2017, January 13). A taxonomy of Trump tweets [On the Media]. WYNC. http://www.wync.org/story/taxonomy-trump-tweets/

Lakoff, R. T. (1990). Talking power: The politics of language in our lives. Basic Books.

Leudar, I., Marsland, V., & Nekvapil, J. (2004). On membership and politics: An introduction. Discourse & Society, 15(2–3), 243–266.

Meyer, M. (2001). Between theory, method, and politics positioning the approaches of CDA. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (pp. 14–32). SAGE.

Mills, S. (2002). Discourse. Routledge.

Milstein, S., Chowdhury, A., Hochmuth, G., Lorica, B., & Magoulas, R. (2008, November). Twitter and the micro-messaging revolution: Communication, connections, and immediacy—140 characters at a time. O’Reilly Media. http://www.weigend.com/files/teaching/haas/2009/readings/OReillyTwitterReport200811.pdf

Mukherjee, S., & Bhattacharyya, M. (2012, December). Sentiment analysis in Twitter with lightweight discourse analysis. In Martin Kay & Christian Boitet (Eds.), Proceedings of COLING 2012: Technical Papers (pp. 1847–1864).
Ross, A. S., & Rivers, D. J. (2018). Discursive deflection: Accusation

Turner, J. C., & Oakes, P. 1. (1986). The significance of the social
groups and social categories

Tajfel, H. (1981). Differentiation between social groups: Studies in
social psychology of intergroup relations. Blackwell.

Oddo, J. (2011). War legitimation discourse: Representing “us” and “them” in four US presidential addresses. Discourse & Society, 22(3), 287–314.

Oktar, L. (2001). The ideological organization of representational processes in the presentation of us and them. Discourse & Society, 12(3), 313–346.

Over 44 million social media accounts in country. (2017, February 15). Pakistan Today. https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/15/over-44-million-social-media-accounts-in-country/

Page, R. (2012). The linguistics of self-branding and micro-celebrity in Twitter: The role of hashtags. Discourse & Communication, 6(2), 181–201.

Raja, R. H. (2016). Why is military so powerful in Pakistan?. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-is-military-so-powerful-b_13269780

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). Discourse and discrimination. Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism. Routledge.

Ross, A. S., & Rivers, D. J. (2018). Discursive deflection: Accusation of “fake news” and the spread of mis-and disinformation in the Tweets of President Trump. Social Media+ Society, 4(2), 1–12.

Schaaffner, C. (Ed.). (1997). Analyzing political speeches. Short Run Press.

Sharma, S. (2013). Black Twitter?: Racial hashtags, networks and contagion. New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics, 78, 46–64.

Smith, A. (2011). 22% of online Americans used social networking or Twitter for politics in 2010 campaign. Pew Internet and American Life Project. http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1871/internet-politics-facebook-twitter-2010-midterm-elections-campaign

Tajfel, H. (1978). Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations. Academic Press.

Tajfel, H. (1981). Human groups and social categories. Cambridge University Press.

Tumasjan, A., Sprenger, T. O., Sandner, P. G., & Welpe, I. M. (2010). Predicting elections with Twitter: What 140 characters reveal about political sentiment. In M. Hearst, W. Cohen, & S. Gosling (Eds.), ICWSM 2010: Proceedings of the Fourth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (pp. 178–185). Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence.

Turner, J. C., & Giles, H. (1981). Introduction: The social psychology of intergroup behaviour. In J. C. Turner & H. Giles (Eds.), Intergroup behavior (pp. 1–32). Blackwell.

Turner, J. C., & Oakes, P. 1. (1986). The significance of the social identity concept for social psychology with reference to individualism, interactionism and social influence. British Journal of Social Psychology, 25, 237–252.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory. Basil Blackwell.

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. Discourse & Society, 4(2), 249–283.

van Dijk, T. A. (1977a). Discourse as structure and process of discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction (Vol. I). SAGE.

van Dijk, T. A. (1997b). What is political discourse analysis? Belgian Journal of Linguistics, 11(1), 11–52.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. SAGE.

van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Multidisciplinary CDA: A plea for diversity. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (pp. 95–120). SAGE.

van Dijk, T. A. (2006a). Discourse and manipulation. Discourse & Society, 17(2), 359–383.

van Dijk, T. A. (2006b). Ideology and discourse analysis. Journal of Political Ideologies, 11(2), 115–140.

van Dijk, T. A. (2006c). Politics, ideology, and discourse. In Encyclopedia of language & linguistics. https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-044854-2/00722-7

Wilkins, G. K. (2000). The role of media in public disengagement from political life. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 44(4), 569–580.

Wodak, R. (Ed.). (1989). Language, power and ideology: Studies in political discourse (Vol. 7). John Benjamins.

Wodak, R. (1996). Disorders of discourse. Longman.

Wodak, R. (2009). Language and politics. In J. Culpeper, F. Katamba, P. Kerswill, R. Wodak, & T. McEnery (Eds.), English language: Description, variation and context (pp. 576–593). Palgrave Macmillan.

Wodak, R., & Boukala, S. (2015). (Supra)national identity and language: Rethinking national and European migration policies and the linguistic integration of migrants. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 35, 253–273.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis history, agenda, theory, and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods for critical discourse analysis (pp. 1–13). SAGE.

Zappavigna, M. (2011). Ambient affiliation: A linguistic perspective on Twitter. New Media & Society, 13(5), 788–806.

Zappavigna, M. (2012). Discourse of Twitter and social media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web. A & C Black.

Author Biographies

Farzana Masroor (PhD, University Technology Malaysia) is Assistant Professor in Linguistics at Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Her research interests include written argumentation, language and power, ESP/EAP, genre analysis, and contrastive discourse analysis.

Qintarah N. Khan is a Research Scholar studying English language and literature at Air University, Islamabad. Her research interests are critical discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, and genre analysis.

Zulfiquar Ali is Assistant Professor at Department of English, City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, Pakistan. His research interests include attitudes and motivation in learning English as second language and discourse analysis.