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Talking Post-Truth: Elite
Rhetoric on Democracy
in Pakistan

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Talking Post-Truth: Elite Rhetoric on Democracy in Pakistan *

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Abstract

Post-truth is increasingly linked to the decline of democracy. In this article, contrary to popular belief, I propose post-truth as a discourse strategy. Post-truth can have an important role during democratization. I introduce a new interpretive methodological approach to analyse textual data for post-truth narratives which I apply to 1209 newspaper articles from three leading Pakistani newspapers during national elections between 2007-2018. I identify post-truth narratives on democracy and find that post-truth narratives highlight the democratisation attempts in the country. Post-truth narratives act as mobilising strategies as opposed to being associated with the decline of democracy. This paper presents the re-evaluation of post-truth as a discourse and argues that its role during elections can be a powerful mobilizing strategy.

Keywords: post-truth, elites, democracy, newspapers, Pakistan

1   Introduction

The devaluation of truthful information to make informed decisions is intrinsically linked to the decline of democracy. Post-truth is a rising buzzword in politics increasingly linked to the decline of democracy (Farkas and Schou, 2020; Bennett and Livingston, 2018; Davies, 2018). The affixation of 'post' to be something after truth commonly synonymises it with fake news, misinformation (Kapantai et al., 2021; Rochlin, 2017; Tandoc Jr, Lim and Ling, 2018), and emotional appeals (Durnová, 2019; McIntyre, 2018; d'Ancona, 2017; Dahlgren, 2018) to influence individuals' perceptions of truthfulness. This approach implies that people can either be emotional or cognitive, simplifying public opinion to a dichotomy. Once we move beyond these features and truth is considered as just one of the various priorities that accompany discourse, we are left with analysing the prefix 'post' in a different light, and post-truth becomes a type of political discourse within this domain.

Previous literature shows how affective discourse is effective in increasing support for political parties and leaders (Harteveld and Wagner, 2023; Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2022; Brader, 2020; Valentino et al., 2011). I argue that post-truth narratives affect citizens' perception of reality not only limited to emotional appeals. Building on previous findings (McCoy, Rahman and Somer, 2018; Graham and Svolik, 2020) on the relationships between affective populism, polarisation, and democratic decay, I argue that post-truth narratives can foster democratization.

I posit post-truth as a discourse strategy and argue that post-truth discourse is a type of political discourse structured around the articulation of desire and the means to capture the desire, evoking a sense of belonging to a shared identity, as well as the yearning for the fulfilment of the desire (Author, 2024). Building on this theorisation, I develop a new interpretive methodological approach to analyse textual data for post-truth narratives. The framework is premised on analysing the relationship between elite rhetoric of desire, emotions, and citizens' positionality within a political narrative to understand the meaning-making and social identities informed by post-truth claims. Through this framework, I analyse the mechanism where emotions combine with cognition to understand why certain claims can grip citizens. I apply this approach to Pakistani newspapers to identify post-truth narratives on democracy to explain the democratic attempts and setbacks in the country.

By positing post-truth as a discourse strategy, I argue that post-truth narratives can neither be falsified nor factually corrected, as these narratives are structured around the articulation of desire and the means to capture the desire. This renders the dichotomy of truth and post-truth obsolete. Considering this theorization of post-truth discourse, I argue that post-truth narratives can both bol-

ster or hinder democratic values. To test the relationship between post-truth narratives and episodes of democratization, I apply this theory to Pakistan as it presents a democratization episode between 2002-2010 and stalling between 2010-2020 (Maerz et al., 2021).

I contribute to the literature on democracy and political communication in three primary ways. First, I challenge common wisdom associating post-truth with the decline of democracy by re-conceptualising post-truth as political discourse different from disinformation, misinformation, and fake news. Second, I introduce a new interpretive methodological approach to analyse textual data for post-truth narratives, and I test this approach to newspaper articles around national election periods. Third, I apply this approach to Pakistan to analyse patterns of post-truth discourse in an electoral autocracy that experienced substantial democratization and yet stalled in more recent years. This approach allows us to move beyond research on liberal democracies and post-truth (Montgomery, 2017; Rose, 2017; Marshall and Drieschova, 2018), by showing the extensive applicability of post-truth discourse in a different regime typology and the context of South Asia.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I outline the current literature on post-truth and the decline of democracy. Then, I present the interpretive discursive approach to analyse post-truth discourses. This is followed by describing the context of the case study, the media landscape in Pakistan, and the research design. Next, I present an analysis of the post-truth discourse on democracy in Pakistani newspapers. The paper concludes with the implications of applying the interpretive discursive approach of post-truth discourses to textual data.

2   Post-truth and the Decline of Democracy

By dichotomising truth and post-truth, the former is linked to factual and objective truth; a core democratic value and the latter is associated with undermining this value. Facts seem to be integral to liberal democracies (Van Dyk, 2022; Waisbord, 2018). Whereas post-truth which has been synonymised with "ambiguous statements" (Keyes, 2004), "lying" (Bilgin, 2017), "bullshit" (Frankfurt, 2009; Ball, 2017) and "fake news" (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Horne and Adali, 2017; Davis, 2017; Farkas and Schou, 2018) pose a threat to democracy. The resulting situation is where the hegemonic truth discourse is threatened by opinions and emotionality, leading to extreme populist discourse and fuelling affective polarization undermining democratic institutions (Somer, McCoy and Luke, 2021; Orhan, 2022; McCoy and Somer, 2019).

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Thus, when there is a lack of consensus and the validity of facts is questioned, the very foundations of the political domain start to shake, and "there are reasons to worry about the ability of democratic guarantees to prevent the way for political dominion discourses" (Giusti and Piras, 2020). The decline of political institutions with a growing distrust of journalism and enlightenment values may very well be reflective of post-truth, and "if so, democracies based on norms of debate, deliberation, compromise and reason will not fare well" (Bennett and Livingston, 2018). In this sense, post-truth is associated with attacking the values which underpin liberal democracies.

However, such an understanding presumes that the functioning of democracy is hinged only upon reason and consensus and that post-truth which is linked with fake news and misinformation is a direct threat to the sustenance of democracy. This has created a moral panic and informed a plethora of solutions focusing on fact-checking and corrective strategies to reinforce the idea that truth is a core democratic value. In doing so, these solutions may hinder dissent and popular sovereignty fuelling the crisis of democracy, rather than focusing on strengthening democratic institutions (Farkas and Schou, 2020).

I argue that post-truth discourse is not premised upon the dichotomy of truth and falsehood, nor is it a polarising populist discourse which tends to be volatile and dichotomises elites and masses (Mudde, 2004). Instead, it is a type of political discourse that is structured around the articulation of desire, creating a sense of belonging to a shared identity, while also evoking the yearning for the fulfilment of the desire (Author, 2024). Therefore, the common association of post-truth with variants of false information, such as misinformation, disinformation and fake news, providing biased, imbalanced and incorrect information proves to be dissimilar to post-truth narratives. Post-truth is not equivalent to lies which indeed do stand in stark opposition to factual truth. It is a fact that hot water freezes faster than cold water, and the denial of it would be a lie, not post-truth. Instead, I propose that post-truth narratives hinge on the articulation of desire, conveying a logical argumentation within a specific context in the hope of converting common sense into meaning-making. The textual data has to be assessed in terms of the rhetorical attributes within a rhetorical context of the narrative to determine the articulation of desire and the affective process that creates a shared identity within the narrative.

Considering this theorisation, post-truth discourse can both bolster or hinder democratic values, as post-truth discourse can act as a mobilising strategy that articulates a desire, evoking a shared experience and an identity. For democratization attempts in an autocratic context, such as that

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of Pakistan, an emphasis needs to be placed on elite rhetoric of desire and the creation of social identities, rather than on elections and the multiplicity of opposition. The crisis of democracy must be re-evaluated because the problem cannot be limited to the infiltration of misinformation, rather, we need to study the interplay of rhetoric, emotions, and citizens' shared experiences in analysing the "defiance of the autocratization trend" (Wiebrecht et al., 2023).

3 A Framework for Identifying Post-truth Narratives in Textual Data

The framework is premised on identifying and analysing the relationship between elite rhetoric of desire, emotions, and citizens' positionality within the narrative using discourse analysis (Figure 1). The framework is divided into two components: (1) elite rhetoric of desire, and (2) citizens' positionality (shared identity) within the narrative.

Within elite rhetoric, the focus is on identifying and analysing the rhetorical attributes within the textual data. These attributes refer to (i) lack (an aspirational desire), (ii) fantasy (means to fulfil the desire), (iii) emotional appeals (inducing a sense of belonging and yearning, creating a social identity and a shared experience) co-occurring to illustrate (iv) fantasmatic logic (the ability of the narrative to 'grip' the audience). In completing the dimension of analysing elite rhetoric, the rhetorical context and the political actor become important to analyse. They co-occur to create a contextually relevant logical political argumentation, illustrating the means through which elites can capture citizens' desires. Drawing from discourse analysis methods such as Lacanian Psychoanalysis I analyse the logical underpinning of post-truth rhetoric and grasp the functioning of "desire" (Lacan, 1977), helping in grounding the meaning that emerges within a discourse and "how rhetorical speech helps make public sense" (Martin, 2016). I analyse how language and rhetoric in political narratives in newspapers illustrate the desire and the ways to capture the desire. In addition to the election period, the types of newspapers and subsequently, the readership analysed informs the specific political argumentation in a given context. To analyse the rhetorical context in which political argumentation takes place, I draw on Rhetorical Political Analysis (Finlayson, 2007) to analyse how common sense within a narrative is articulated into a logical and coherent political argumentation to create meaning and a shared identity.

Within the citizens' positionality, the focus is on analysing how the rhetorical attributes and the rhetorical context invoke a sense of belonging to the aspirational desire and a sense of yearning for the fulfilment of the desire within the narrative. Affect intertwines with discourse to exemplify how a logical political argumentation can create desire and recruit support. The intertwining of discourse and affect (Blackman and Venn, 2010) exemplifies how a logical political argumentation can create desire and recruit support. Emotional rhetoric is strategically harnessed to construct a reality that forges an emotional connection with the citizens, aiding them in deriving meaning from their surroundings. Ahmed's notion of a 'sticky surface' (2004) helps ground belonging to an aspirational desire, identity and the yearning for the fulfilment of the desire.

The relationship between elite rhetoric of desire which is meant to induce a sense of belonging and yearning within the audience defines post-truth discourse. By introducing this framework, I shed new light on examining distinct types of political narratives which are not limited to episodes of misinformation and fake news, but rather act as mobilising strategies for democratization. In this article, I focus on the varied elite rhetoric of desire surrounding democracy in Pakistani newspapers.

4   The Case of Pakistan

I apply this framework to Pakistan to study the democratization episode between 2007 – 2010, and the subsequent stalling between 2010 – 2018 (figure 2). Research on South Asia in the context of post-truth (Cosentino, 2020) remains underrepresented. Pakistan is a deviant case (Seawright and Gerring, 2008) for three reasons, making it an excellent case study to analyse the relationship between post-truth and democratisation.

First, Pakistan has witnessed multiple military coups with instances of democratically elected governments and soft interventions (Siddiqa, 2007; Shah, 2002; Clary, 2022; Fair, 2014; Haqqani, 2010; Shafqat, 2019; Shah, 2014; Ahmed, 2013), leading to the creation of a "hybrid regime" (Carothers, 2002; Adeney, 2017). The pursuit of democracy in Pakistan, thus, has been shaped by the interaction between the military-bureaucratic elite, known as the establishment, and the political elite (Mufti, Shafqat and Siddiqui, 2020). Whereas the establishment is committed to the cause of Pakistan's territorial and ideological defence, the political elite has adopted the electoral system to ensure succession and policy influence in the parliament. Such a fractured political history has shaped public opinion
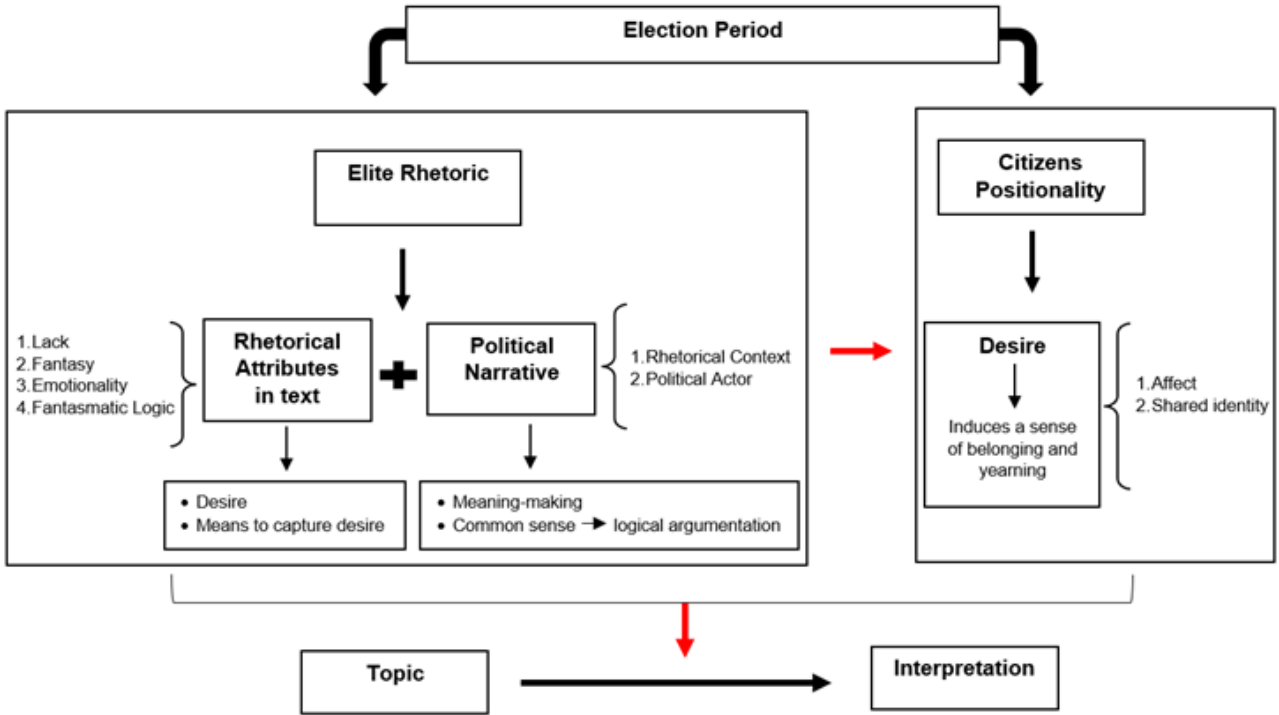
Figure 1. Identification of Post-truth Narratives in Textual Data

on the forms of regime type and informed identities surrounding political narratives on various issues (Clary and Siddiqui, 2021).

Between 2002 – 2010, Pakistan witnessed democratisation, and stalling of democratization between 2010 – 2018 (Maerz et al., 2021) (Figure 2) raising the question of what went wrong. To analyse the stalling of democratization in Pakistan, I turn to analysing political discourse created by elites. The political discourses in Pakistan have been informed by the evolution of the Pakistani political domain where the institutions of military, dynastic politics, and grassroots mobilisation have been prominent during various periods in history. A timeline of selected events between 2007 and 2018 is listed in the appendix.

Second, previous literature on post-truth focuses on the US and Europe, liberal democracies, where post-truth has been associated with fake news (e.g. Knuutila, Neudert and Howard, 2022; Egelhofer and Lecheler, 2019). Yet in choosing Pakistan, I shift the focus to electoral autocracies and analyse how post-truth discourses act as mobilising strategies for democratization. Since 2007, Pakistan has witnessed varying political elites and rhetorical situations which have shaped the narrative of democracy for citizens. Whereas the fervour for democratization was at a peak against a military dictator in 2010, it stalled since 2010 during elected governments which raises questions about the

effectiveness and longevity of post-truth discourses in democratization attempts as well as the role of political elites in rallying for democratization.

Third, while Pakistan has experienced a turbulent history with military dictatorships and episodes of democratization attempts, there has never been a single hegemonic discourse to understand democratization in Pakistan. The military, dynastic political elite and Jihadists are highly influential in shaping Pakistani political debates. The 2008 election witnessed the democratic narrative opposing military interference in the political domain and the supremacy of civilian rule and judicial freedoms. The narrative takes a turn in 2013 and 2018 which focuses on removing dynastic politicians, and is championed by the new political party, PTI:

President Zardari and his 'brother' Nawaz Sharif had completed their tenures and they both failed to rid the masses of poverty and unemployment. Peace, stability, and a corruption-free society could only be established through justice, [...] former rulers promoted the 'thana and patwari culture' for their vested interests instead of serving the masses (Report, 2013)[D].

On the other hand, the narrative posited by Jihadists blame Pakistan's degeneration due to the presence of 'liberal' forces and Western democracy taking root in Pakistan – the swaying of Pakistan away from Islam and Islamic values:

The TTP is opposed to secular democracy in principle, viewing it as incompatible with Islamic belief, and their dislike of the secular PPP, ANP and MQM (AFP, 2013)[D].

Pakistani political discourse on democratisation is extremely varied, providing an excellent case study to analyse the rhetoric of desire articulated by various elites and the subsequent creation of social identities during a national election period.

4.1   Media Landscape in Pakistan

Social media is increasingly becoming the dominant medium for news consumption for the public (Valeriani and Vaccari, 2018), especially in light of the rapid penetration of information technology in developing countries (Valenzuela, Bachmann and Bargsted, 2021). In the case of Pakistan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf has been the harbinger of campaigning extensively on social media (Khalid, 2020; Khurram, 2021). However, the Pakistani internet population in 2008 was just 7% of the entire population, which grew to 15% by 2018 (Bank, 2021). The nationwide dissemination of newspapers in Pakistan as opposed to social media platforms makes them a stronger dissemination medium to examine political narratives. For instance, Dawn is one of Pakistan's most widely read newspapers,
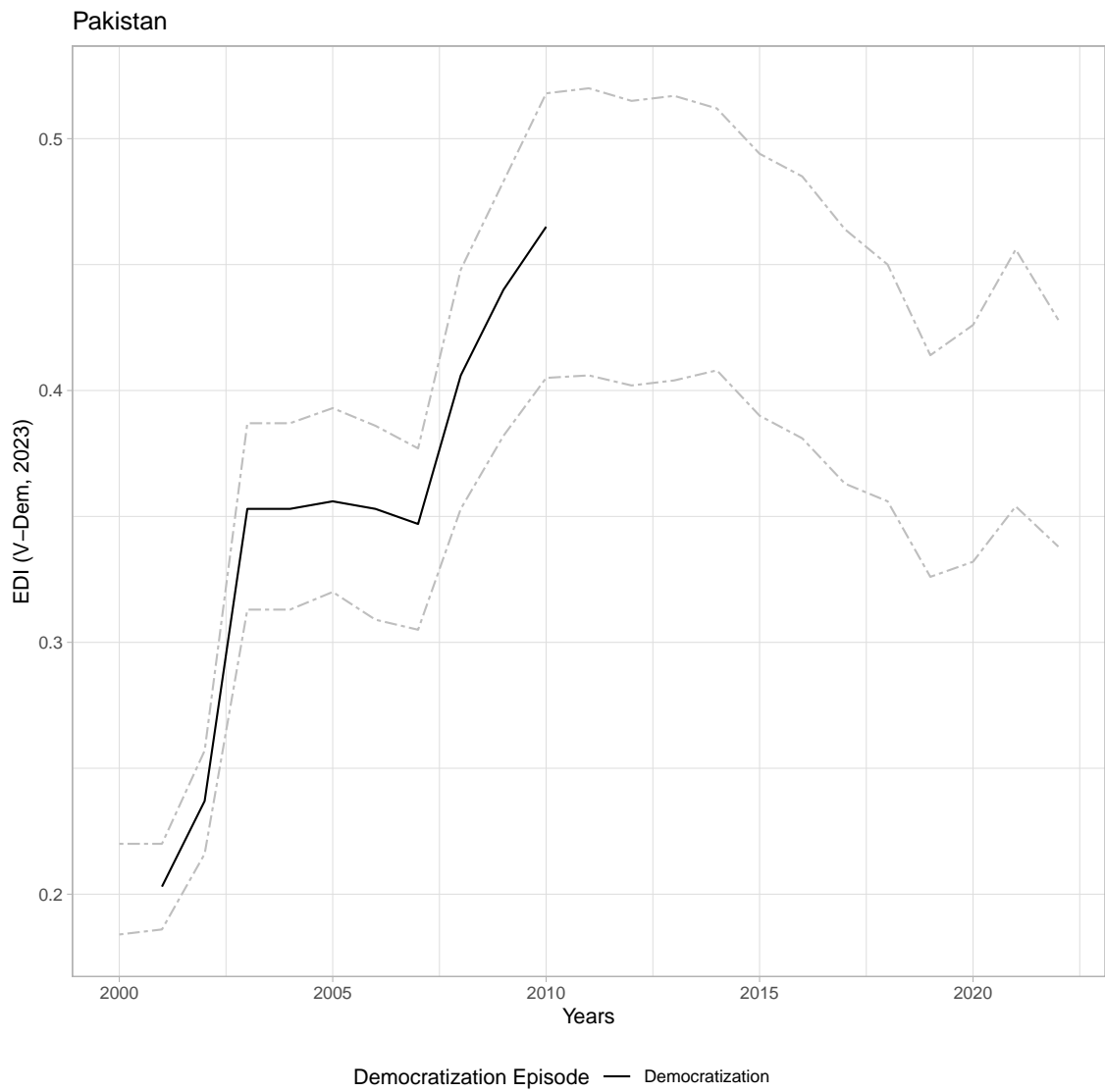
Figure 2. Pakistan's Democratization Episodes since 2000

having a daily circulation of 109,000 (Shah, 2010; Reference, N.d.). Although English newspapers can only be read by just 11 per cent of the population English newspapers cover all the provinces in Pakistan as opposed to Urdu newspapers which are more regionally focused. English newspapers also remain very popular and influential among the political, military and business elite in Pakistan (Siraj, 2009), and therefore have an impact in political and social circles. Newspapers in Pakistan do have clear partisan leanings, Dawn is liberal, The Express Tribune is center-left, and The Nation is right-wing (Michaelsen, 2011) making them a rich source for analysing the various rhetorical contexts in which elite rhetoric emerges and the subsequent identity formation.

Media in Pakistan has ventured through various stages, from being a medium for intimidation and control by the state, especially the military governments that used print and broadcast media to disseminate a unified national position, to being liberalised and becoming an alternative political force by being critical of the government (Yusuf and Schoemaker, 2013). The interference of the military in politics and media (Khan and Pratt, 2022; Rashid, 2018; Boone, 2015; Rahman and Shurong, 2021; Aziz, 2007) has impacted media freedom (Freedom, 2023; without Borders, 2023; Hussain, 2014b; Zahra, 2015; Hussain, 2014a), and the types of political narratives in the country, providing an abundance of political actors and a variety of rhetorical contexts within which political narratives are situated.

There is ample literature contextualised in Pakistan which has examined news framing in media (Siraj, 2010; Jehangir, 2023; Mahmood, Obaid and Shakir, 2014; Shah, 2017). For instance, Rizwan (2019) documents the construction of a patriotic and nationalistic identity on Pakistani social media owing to the pan-Islamism and religious romanticism. Others have focused on news framing on the War on Terror in Pakistan (Qadir and Alasuutari, 2013; Paracha, Imran and Khan, 2012). For instance, Ahmed and Zahoor (2020) in examining the impact of the War on Terror on media reporting about Christians in Pakistan, find evidence for an increased tendency to frame Christians as the victims of terrorism and a decrease in the level of dehumanization after 9/11. Building on this, there are several studies analysing the effects of news framing on public opinion (Hussain and Munawar, 2017; Fair, Kaltenthaler and Miller, 2016; Hassan, 2018). For instance, Fair et al. (2016) find evidence that the negative framing of drones killing civilians in media was reflected in the opposition to drone strikes in public opinion. Similarly, Silverman (2019) in a framing experiment about counterinsurgent airstrikes in Pakistan finds evidence that citizens' biases about the perpetrators translate into their political attitudes about the support of the operation.

I echo the sentiment in these studies that media interference has influenced news framing, and hindered freedom of media, propagating particular types of political narratives. However, choosing English newspapers in particular, mostly read by elites in the country, allows us to focus on elite rhetoric, and analyse the varying desires which emerge in various rhetorical contexts. Since written texts are amenable to discourse analysis (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002), newspaper articles which highlight biases become useful sources to examine the relationship between elite rhetoric of desire which is articulated, and how it structures social identities in specific contexts. Elite newspapers are a rich resource for identifying the relationship between the articulation of desire and the subsequent identity formation. This paper is premised on identifying the mechanism which ties the elite rhetoric on democratisation between 2007-2018 and the subsequent identity formation that emerges within the discourse on democracy.

5 Data and Methods

I randomly chose three prominent English newspapers disseminated in Pakistan: Dawn[D], The Nation[N], and The Express Tribune[ET], and accessed their online digital archives. A thorough purposive sampling of news reporting of major events and election speeches before the national elections of 2008, 2013 and 2018 was carried forth to create the dataset. [1] These are the three consecutive national election years in Pakistan. I collected, coded and analysed a sample of 1209 newspaper articles between 2007 and 2018 in NVivo.[2] From within this sample, I narrowed the parameters to include 3 months before and 1 month after the national election date. The starting date was useful to review the discourse building up to the election date, including the beginning of electoral campaigning. The end date allowed to review the political discourse when the new government is in the early days of formation.[3] Although the political discourse intensifies a few months before the election, the year leading up to and following an election is pivotal for analyzing political discourse. For instance, parties such as PTI began their campaign a year before the 2013 election. The total breakdown of news articles per newspaper is in the appendix.

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[1]Each newspaper has a National news section and specific Metro section (e.g. Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi) that are printed daily. I chose news articles reported in the National News section.

[2]The digital archives for the year 2008 are limited. The only accessible newspaper was Dawn.

[3]After the election, independent candidates have 72 hours to join a party, which means they can also switch parties. The National Assembly meets on the twenty-first day following the day on which a general election is held.

The coding strategy is in Figure 3. The first round of coding of the newspaper was carried out by the author and the research assistant to identify broad topics that appeared in newspaper articles, namely Politics, Socio-economic affairs, and International relations. We code for 1,635 references to these three topic domains in the dataset which is plotted in Figure 4. The author carried out the second round of coding to identify the main issues within these three topic domains. A consistent pattern was identified in the domain of politics where rhetoric on democracy and democratisation was systematically reported during election periods. There were specific references made to four issues within the discourse on democracy: (1) elections, (2) route to power, (3) military interference, and (4) democratic transition. In the analysis, I discuss how post-truth rhetoric along these four issues acts as mobilising strategies for democratization.
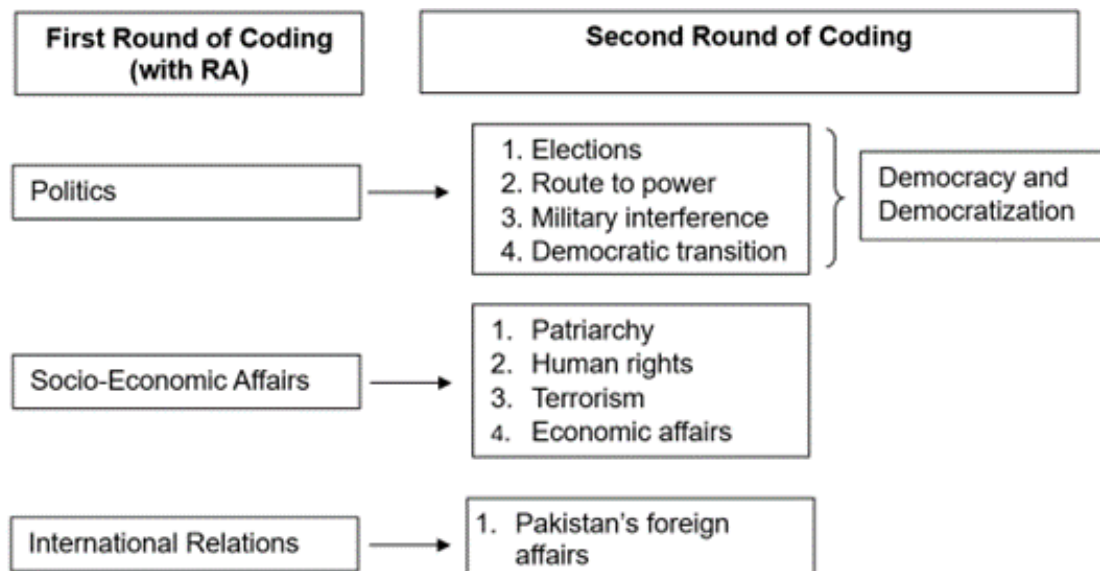
Figure 3. Coding Strategy

I implement critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Richardson, 2017) in Pakistani newspapers during election periods, which are potential focal points also for regime changes (Morgenbesser and Pepinsky, 2019; Knutsen, Nygård and Wig, 2017; Lindberg, 2009). I use an interpretive approach to analyse newspaper data for post-truth narratives, identifying the desire in the text, and placing the citizen at the centre of analysis. In the following section, I focus on the application of the framework (Figure 1) to analyse the discourse on democracy and democratization.

Figure 4. Main Topic Count in Newspapers during Elections in 2008, 2013, 2018

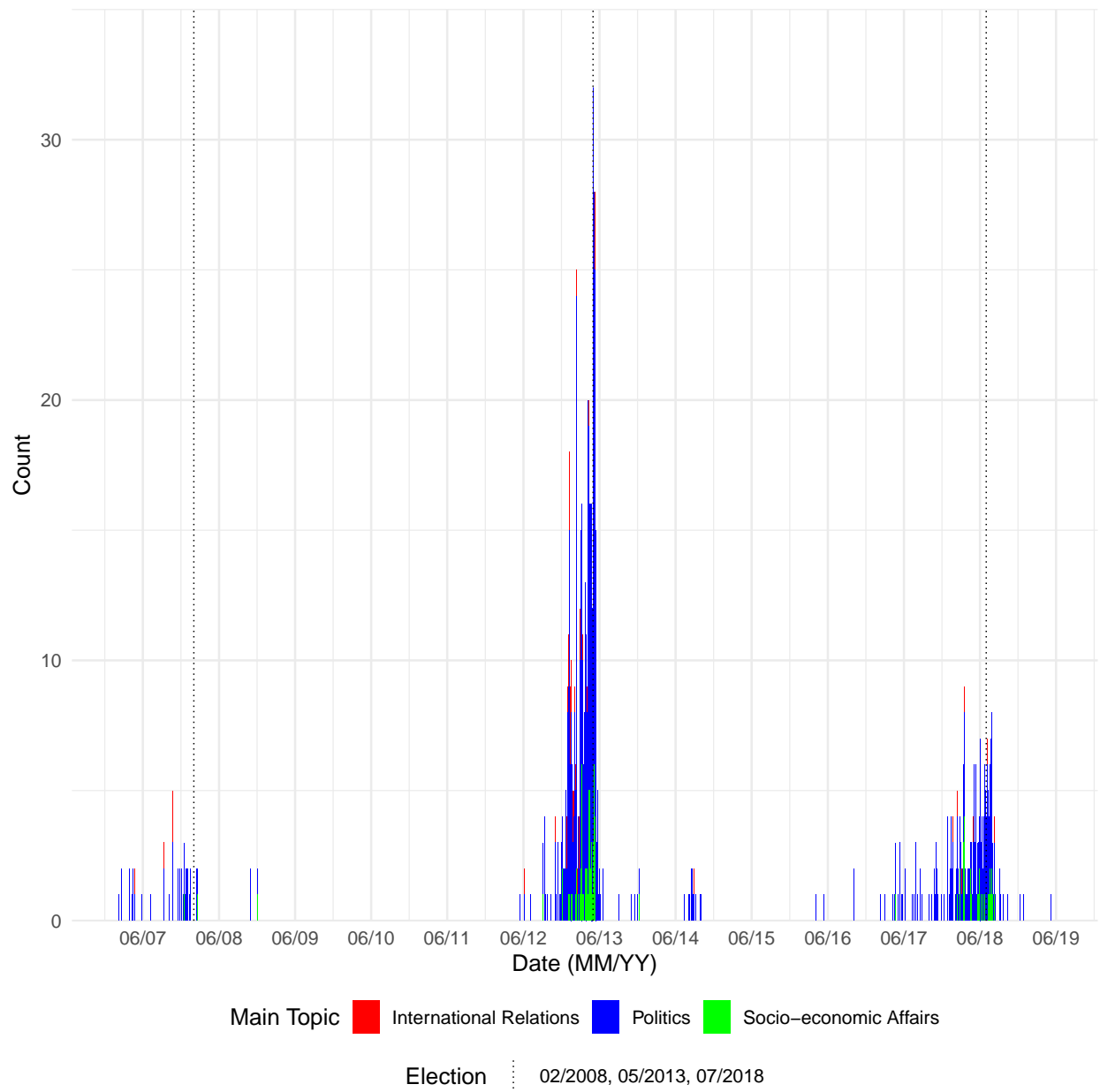# 6 Post-truth Discourse and Democratization

6.1 Post-truth Discourse and Democracy Attempts in 2008

Following the military coup in 1999 which displaced the sitting Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, the Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf [4] assumed control of the executive branch of the government. To legitimise the coup which was declared legal by the Supreme Court in 2000, elections were scheduled for 2002. A referendum in 2002 was held to allow Musharraf to continue as President for the next five years. In the 2002 national elections, Pakistan Muslim League – Quaid e Azam Group (PML-Q), a pro-Musharraf party came into power. In October 2007, "Pervez Musharraf won a one-sided presidential election for another five-year term from a truncated parliamentary electoral college amid boycotts and protests" (Asghar, 2007)[D]. In November 2007, he enacted an emergency rule (Report, 2007)[D] where "he staged a coup against his own office as president, imposed martial law, and suspended the Constitution" (Syed, 2007)[D]. Amid growing protests against the re-election of Musharraf, the dismissal of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the continued interference of the military in the political domain, democratic attempts in 2008 took place.

Within this account of democratic attempts, the perils of military interference contextualise the articulation of the desire for democracy. The imposition of martial law does not recognise the choice of citizens, their freedoms, their will, and the institutions which can guarantee these freedoms. The fantasy of capturing this desire emerges in the elite rhetoric of political parties, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) who labelled the day Musharraf came into power as a "black day" (Asghar, 2007)[D], and demanded his resignation.

[...] it is a piece of architecture that is intrinsically unstable and that constitutes a frontal assault on democracy [...] Pakistan would continue to be a security state (Masood, 2018)[D].

The means to capture the desire lies with the restoration of civilian rule and the freedom of the judiciary:

Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif will return with the power of the people of this country (Report, 2007)[D].

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[4]General Musharraf was the Chief of Army Staff and became the President of Pakistan between 2001 until 2008.

[...] before the people of Pakistan throw him out of power (Report, 2007)[D].

[...] demand for restoring democracy in countries like Pakistan (Iqbal, 2007)[D].

PPP's chairperson Benazir Bhutto was the last hope for the restoration of democracy and civil rule in the country (Wasim, 2007)[D].

The desire is intended to evoke a sense of belonging to a shared identity, a shared experience of the aspirational desire, and a shared yearning for the fulfilment of the desire (lack) through fantasy. Affect becomes critical in creating these social identities by othering and cultivating the yearning for the fantasmatic ideal. In this narrative on democratic attempts, the affective rhetoric on the desire for democracy surfaced in conjunction with the restoration of civilian rule and the freedom of the judiciary. It highlights the distinction between *us* (those favouring democracy) and *them* (the military).

The narrative, offers a logical argumentation for the restoration of civilian rule. The references to a judicial crisis, the suspension of the Constitution, and the promulgation of an emergency rule are indicators of the perils of military interference impacting political, social and media freedom in the country. The desire for the restoration of civilian rule is structured around the promise of the reclamation of freedoms and accountability. The desire articulated by the political elites aims to induce the emotions of anger and frustration to mobilise citizens to stand up for democracy and the removal of a military dictator.

The narrative on democratic attempts offers a logical political argumentation about the gains that a democratic civilian will bring – freedom of choice which is every citizen's right and has been revoked by the imposition of a military dictatorship. The result of the 2008 national election highlights the transition towards a democratically elected government. There is a 12% increase in the Electoral Democracy Index according to V-Dem between 2007-2010 (Coppedge et al., 2022; Pemstein et al., 2022), following the 'Episode of Regime Transformation' dataset (Knutsen et al., 2023) triggering a sharp episode of democratization. This fulfils the desire for citizens' right to choose elected representatives. Political parties joined hands to denounce military interference. We see that the post-truth rhetoric on democracy acts as a positive force in fostering democratization.

6.2 Post-truth Discourse Fuelling Challenges to the Incumbents in 2013

As we move to the 2013 national election year, the narrative on democracy shifts to focus on the ideals of the will of the people:

True democracy stands for a government in which the people's will prevails. It stands for justice, equality, accountability, and transparency. It ensures the rule of law and supremacy of the Constitution. It paves the way for good governance, which in return gives the people peace, progress, and prosperity. If a system of government lacks these basic features, then it is not a democracy, but a mockery of democracy. (Waziri, 2013)[N]

Within this account of democracy, the perils of incompetent incumbent leaders take centre stage, highlighting the experiences of ordinary citizens.

The country has drifted deeper into abysmal political chaos and economic uncertainty. The common man's life could not be more miserable with uncontrolled food and energy shortages, unabated violence, and countrywide lawlessness (Ahmed, 2013)[N].

The rhetoric of change surrounding the 2013 elections was built on the notion of removing the "corrupt politicians" and "circus lions" and referring to "the day of accountability" (Haq, 2013)[D] with the appeal of asking individuals to elect a new leadership which can bring about a change in the country and put it on the road of progression.

The fantasy of democratic rule is constructed in response to this by the new entrants in the political domain who referred to the incumbent civilian rule as dictatorial rule. It was primarily the dynastic politics followed by military interference which dominated the narrative of regaining control. There is a contrast from the 2008 narrative which focused solely on removing a military dictator from politics and restoring democracy. However, a reference to military interference remains a constant reminder of the dark days when military intervention risks the lack of freedom and right of choice, the reasons for which can be summarised as follows:

In reality, [...] military remains a powerful political actor in Pakistan [...] the fact that the military has chosen not to directly interfere in politics in the past decade does not necessarily mean that it no longer can do so, nor does it imply that it has not played a role behind the scenes (Javid, 2017)[D].

Had they not attacked the civil side, the country would not have faced the grievous problems [...] a military man was calling shots to suppress his party (Zia, 2013)[N].

The dictatorial rule of incompetent dynastic politicians mirrored the interference of the military in politics, infringing upon social and political freedoms, and the welfare of citizens. The fantasy structures and sustains the desire for 'change' through the entrenchment of a 'true' democratic rule by removing the incompetent dynastic politicians. The desire was prominently advocated by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) which gained traction in 2013 and continued to dominate the political sphere in the subsequent electoral cycle as well. The political elites espousing a true democratic rule refer to the new entrants in the political realm, the PTI from whose perspective the current status quo is being apprehended, and the targeted audience, the youth. The fantasy of entrenching a democratic state sustains the desire for change and a better future for the youth of the country who are portrayed to be those affected.

The word *Naya* (new) in conjunction with the word *inquilab* (justice) and *tabdeeli* (change) for the people who have suffered at the hands of the corrupt leadership are emotionally charged words which are used to create the desire for a new Pakistan. Imran Khan's rhetoric of 'Naya' Pakistan echoes the implications of the Urdu word *Naya* that was used by Pakistan's national poet, Allama Iqbal in projecting the idea of a separate homeland for the Muslim population where they will be guaranteed freedom and equality (Afzaal, Naqvi and Raees, 2022). The establishment of a democratic society in Iqbal's vision is reflected in the rhetoric by Khan's articulation of the desire for change (*tabdeeli)* and the creation of a truly democratic society, signifying a departure from the past of misery and inequality towards the vision and aspiration for an equitable, unified and harmonious society. The removal of incompetent incumbent leadership referred to mostly the two dynastic political parties, the PML-N and the PPP. Imran Khan, the leader of PTI blamed the incumbent governments of PML-N and the PPP as "equally responsible for difficulties the people suffered" (Correspondent, 2013)[D]. The new political party's mantra offers a rational and logical argumentation with references to emotionally charged rhetoric referring to voting out the dynastic families in the next election.

Examples of emotional rhetoric underpinning the desire for true democracy to take root can be seen from the usage of terms and phrases such as "inquilab" (Correspondent, 2013)[ET], "Safar-e-Inqilab-e-Pakistan" (Report, 2013)[ET](a journey towards justice and accountability for Pakistan), "tsunami" (Ali, 2013)[D] (the revolution which will take place with swarms of people voting for new leadership, sweeping the incompetent incumbent leaders out of power), "waiting for upcoming May 11 for the last 17 years" (Report, 2013)[N] – the period of incompetent, corrupt and insincere leadership which has caused degradation and hampered the livelihood of the ordinary citizens and the emphasis

on the need of the hour to take back control of the citizens right to choose. The elite rhetoric of desire evoked a sense of community, a belonging to the desire for the "Naya Pakistan - One Pakistan" (Malik, 2018)[N] (a new socio-political order based on equality, social justice, accountability and pluralism). It is through making the incumbent leaders accountable and exercising their right to vote for Imran Khan, the saviour of democracy, that the consolidation of a new Pakistan can take place. Most of the rhetoric emphasised the word 'change' and 'new' Pakistan as can be seen from the examples below:

We will bring out the real change if the people elect us. I assure you that PTI is going to make a new Pakistan (Khan, 2013)[D].

May 11 is not merely a polling day rather it is a day of change destiny of the country and fate of people (Report, 2013)[N].

People want change. They want a change in the system, not just a change of faces (Report, 2013)[D].

Even within this narrative, a distinction between us (those favouring democracy) and them (incumbent dynastic leaders) is significant. The incompetent incumbent leaders evoke the horrific scenario of the waning of democracy. The reference to dynastic families, and corrupt leaders intensifies the democratic desire and the fantasy of a new Pakistan by ridding these leaders. The rhetoric of accountability and the rule of law formed the crux of the rhetoric of change.

Two developments in the political sphere fed into the rhetoric of change and the desire for a new Pakistan surrounding the 2013 and 2018 electoral years: (i) the role of youth in elections; and (ii) the rise of fringe parties. With regards to the former, the desire for a true democracy and the creation of a new Pakistan was an effective rhetoric for mobilisation for the youth (Ali, 2013)[D], many of whom voted for the first time. The latter aspect, the rise of fringe parties put forth the idea of "march for democracy" (Report, 2013)[D] in perspective. An emphasis on the ideals of an inclusive and impartial government, freedom of law, religion, and equality for all, as envisioned by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan (Jinnah, 1947). The incompetency and corruption of the previous leadership become part of the political conversation. Similarly, the rise of fringe parties such as Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) (Roohan, 2021) and alternative sources of information dissemination (Ali, 2013)[ET] influenced the type of political narratives that dominated the election landscape. Whereas PTI was the harbinger of introducing the idea of a new Pakistan, the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT)

and TLP bolstered the power of *dharnas* (a non-violent sit-in protest) to reinforce the power the citizens had in regaining control by exercising their right to vote for sincere leadership which can put the country on the road to transformation and progress.

The transformation in technology and media has influenced how information is consumed within the political domain of Pakistan. Like many other countries, Pakistan is also witnessing a transformation in the media landscape with the advent of social media and the priority placed on private decision-making.

These developments highlight the specificity of the rhetorical situation in which the desire for a new socio-political order, a new Pakistan is articulated. It not only alludes to the entrenchment of a different system but also the effectiveness is premised upon certain actors. The focus is on gaining the trust of the audience, the youth, many of those voting for the first time in the elections. The political argumentation features the removal of incumbents, those who cannot be trusted with the welfare of the citizens. Examples of this are seen from the leader of PTI who is targeting the youth to place their trust in him because he is a new entrant in politics, fighting for the people of Pakistan who have been ignored at the expense of power-hungry incumbents.

May 11th will be the end of the obsolete system and the sun of new Pakistan will rise [...] start a golden era [...] completely change Pakistan according to the dreams of the masses (Report, 2013)[N].

The affective strategy within this account is provoking the identification with the notion of change, specifically about the incumbent leadership as well as seeking trust with those who are the outsiders in this election. The entry of new political parties, and fringe parties bring to the fore the means of capturing desire. This can be summed up in this quote: "Ads for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf Imran Khan - looking to make a breakthrough at the May 11 polls - offer voters a "new Pakistan" with his PTI party symbol, a cricket bat, swiping away corruption and propelling the country into the future" (AFP, 2013)[ET]. The narrative around change exemplifies the intertwining of logos with pathos aimed at inducing affect and belief by making the citizens part of the whole experience. The constitution of true democracy is through the removal of untrustworthy dynastic and incompetent leaders to pave the path for the citizen's welfare to take precedence. This can be summarised in the quote by the PTI leader, Imran Khan in one of his election rallies:

Seize the moment of change. You, the people, have to decide if you want to carry on as it is or bring about a change (Awan, 2013)[N].

The success of such affective rhetoric is visible from the gains the party made in the 2013 election, as being the third largest party in the parliament (of Pakistan, 2013). On the one hand, post-truth rhetoric mobilised the youth to partake in changing the course of the country and voting for the entrenchment of a true democracy and sincere leaders whereby incompetent leaders do not compromise the welfare of citizens. On the other hand, the discourse on democracy becomes stagnant. There was a transition from one elected government to another between 2008-2013, therefore, the citizen's right to elect a representative is not dishonoured necessarily. Those voting for the PML-N party are exercising their right to vote for sincere leadership according to them. This also highlights the notion of shared experiences and the antagonistic realities being created by political narratives whereby the perception of reality is understood through one's positionality within the narrative. However, 2013 began as a foundation year where the post-truth discourse on democracy was not limited to the removal of incumbent leaders but an emphasis on what true democracy could represent for the Pakistani people, the results of which we see during the 2018 election campaign and the PTI coming into power.

6.3   Post-truth Discourse and a 'new' Pakistan in 2018

Although Pakistan experienced a "second consecutive transition from one elected government to another was being made, a significant milestone indeed in the country's rocky democratic political journey" (Hussain, 2018)[D], the narrative on democracy hinges on the risks of incompetent incumbent leaders in derailing from the consolidation of democracy. The weakening of democratic rule, disregard for the welfare of the public, and the lack and incompetency of incumbent leaders are prominently discussed. A crucial difference with this election has to do with corruption cases filed against the incumbent PML-N leadership which won the 2013 election. This was subsequently followed by the disqualification of the sitting Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif. This context further accentuated the logic underpinning the rhetoric of change for a new Pakistan.

The desire is being constructed upon the degradation of the social and economic aspects of the citizen's quality of life. The most prominent narrative was advocated by the chairperson of PTI, Imran Khan who demanded that the incumbent Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif resign amid corruption charges and being an autocratic leader:

Our struggle is not just 'Go Nawaz Go' [. . .] it is 'Go System Go' [...] the current system of the country thrived on corruption and nepotism. Everybody will be equal in Naya Pakistan (Report,

2014)[N].

The PTI chairman accused Mr Sharif and Mr Zardari were putting up a *noora-kushti* (tug-of-war) against each other to deceive the people (PPI, 2013)[N].

It was successive *dharnas* by the PTI over the results of the 2013 elections (Javid, 2018)[D] which set the premise of struggling for democratisation as the basis of electoral campaigning for 2018. Imran Khan appealed to the public by advocating for a sustained struggle and illuminating that the role of elected leaders is not to attain power for personal gains but to deliver on promises and serve the citizens. The emphasis was placed on "rule of law and accountability as being two important pillars of a liberal democracy" (Hussain, 2018)[D], an aspect which had been disregarded by the PML-N government elected in 2013. Imran Khan's rhetoric in election speeches aimed to induce a sense of belonging regarding the loss of the meaning of their vote, and how that meaning can be reclaimed under his leadership which prioritises the citizens over personal gains:

We'll bring back the looted money of these corrupt and greedy rulers from abroad and spend it for the welfare of the people, who are even deprived of health and education services due to their corruption (Khan, 2013)[D].

The former rulers gave nothing to the masses but embarrassment, poverty and unemployment (Mustafa, 2013)[N].

Those who had damaged the system could not make it better (INP, 2013)[N].

[...] the PML-N's disregard for real political work will darken democracy's prospects (Rehman, 2018)[D].

The discourse presents a logical argumentation on what true democracy could entail under PTI's leadership. The rhetoric of change is based on advocating for welfare schemes to improve the livelihood of the citizens and assuring them that PTI will be the guarantors for the public's benefit. In addition to logic, emotional rhetoric takes centre stage. Appeals of correcting the system and the disadvantaged status quo which have caused the suffering of the citizenry are woven into the narrative of true democracy. Emotional rhetoric emerged with references to the failures of the incompetent incumbent leaders. Some of the examples in the text are listed below:

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The rulers had also miserably failed to launch any welfare project for poverty-stricken masses. [...] incumbent governments had failed to deal with militancy and restore peace (Report, 2013)[N].

The country cannot afford another spell of democracy by incompetent leaders politically and economically [...] incumbent rulers have proved themselves the biggest obstacle in making Pakistan a real democratic country (PPI, 2013)[N].

The context in which a narrative is constructed becomes important. The references to a degenerate society riddled with poverty, unemployment, corruption, and deprivation of health and education are indicators of the impeding circumstances impacting the livelihood of the individual. The desire for redemption is structured around the promise of a better and new tomorrow - "to make Pakistan great again" (Almeida, 2018)[D]. It is the absence of an opportunity which could improve their livelihood; a void which keeps the individual unfulfilled, dissatisfied, and frustrated. But it is also the inability to entirely achieve the desire which sustains the desire.

The fantasy of democracy operates to bring forth a closure, "promising fullness once an obstacle is overcome – the beatific dimension of fantasy" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). In the case of democracy, this represents the desire for true democracy that ranges from restoring democracy to removing corrupt politicians, to consolidating democracy. The fantasy works in two ways: a) it creates a sense of yearning; this yearning is a multitude: choosing freely, and independently, redemption from the degenerate status quo, regaining control to serve their interests; and b) it emphasises the sense of belonging, a shared experience. In parallel, the horrific dimension refers to the sustenance of a status quo with the continuation of the aspirational desire of the "obstacle proves insurmountable" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). The obstacle refers to the inability of the desire for a democracy being unable to take root, either because of the internal obstacle (the enemy within) or because of external obstacles. External obstacles include interference of the military in politics, corrupt leaders, and their incompetency, which have resulted in the degradation of the livelihood of the individual. Internal obstacles include conservative cultural ideals which are intertwined with religious values that are in contrast to some of the values that democracy espouses.

The discourse on democracy and democratisation in 2018 focused on the desire for the entrenchment of freedoms and prioritising citizens' welfare by removing incompetent and corrupt politicians, eradicating dynastic and patronage politics and having free and fair elections. It brought to the limelight what a 'new' Pakistan could look like under Imran Khan's leadership.

7   Conclusion

The foundations of liberal democracy are hinged on truth, and post-truth is labelled as a threat to these very foundations. Instead of dichotomising truth and post-truth, I break away from the tradition of associating post-truth with the decline of democracy. Instead, I introduce a re-conceptualisation of post-truth as political discourse and develop an analytical framework to identify post-truth narratives in textual data. I examine the interplay of rhetorical attributes, political context, emotions, and citizens' positionality within the political narratives. It combines both cognitive and emotional attributes whereby we understand the creation of desire and the means to capture the desire.

In applying it to the case of Pakistan, I find that post-truth discourses act as a precursor to democratisation, where the rhetoric on change and a new Pakistan acted as a positive force in mobilising citizens. Democracy entails a variety of dimensions such as elected representation, participation, liberal freedoms, and free and fair elections among many others (Dahl, 2020). In the case of Pakistan, the rhetoric of democracy focuses on honouring citizens' right of choice and holding elected representatives accountable. Whereas we see an increase in the Electoral Democracy Index in 2008, there is a stagnation between 2013 and 2018 in Pakistan which raises the question about the effectiveness and longevity of post-truth discourses. Despite the stagnation, the fact that PTI was able to come into power using the post-truth rhetoric of a 'new' Pakistan demonstrates the effectiveness of post-truth rhetoric as a mobilising strategy. A quote sums this up succinctly: [...] democracy and autocracy will fight it out in Islamabad to determine the destiny of a new Pakistan [...] no one will gift you freedom on a silver platter. You'll have to snatch it through a sustained struggle (Mansoor, 2014)[D].

There are two insights to be gained from this. First, in newly emerging democracies, the rhetoric of change associated with the desire for democratisation can be a precursor for democratic transitions. Post-truth discourses can be positive and negative depending on how the rhetoric is constructed and citizens' shared experiences. Second, episodes of democratic backsliding cannot be conflated with post-truth. The crisis of democracy has to be re-evaluated from a rhetorical point of view.

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Appendix
Talking Post-Truth: Elite Rhetoric on Democracy in Pakistan

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Appendix A: Pakistan Timeline 2007-2018

Year	Month	Event
2007	October-November	General Pervez Musharraf (seized power in a military coup in 1999 and declared himself President while remaining head of the army in 2001, followed by winning another five years in office in a controversial referendum in 2002) won presidential elections which is challenged by the Supreme Court. Musharraf declares an emergency rule, dismisses the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and appoints a new Chief which confirms his re-election. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif return from exile.
2007	December	Benazir Bhutto, leader of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) assassinated at a political rally during the election campaign
2008	February-March	National Elections held on 18 February 2008. Coalition government between Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).
2008	August-Spetmeber	President Musharraf resigns amid impeachment proceedings against him. Nawaz Sharif, leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) pulls out of coalition government. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MPs elect Asif Ali Zardari as the new President (the widower of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto).
2011	October	A series of terrorist attacks take place. Imran Khan, leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) introduces the Naya Pakistan (new Pakistan) resolution at the start of his election campaign for 2013.
2012	September-November	Extremist violence increases: blasphemy cases; Malala Yousafzai is shot by Taliban; sectarian violence.
2013	January- March	A series of terrorist attacks take place. Imran Khan introduces the Naya Pakistan (new Pakistan) resolution at the start of his election campaign for 2013.
2013	May-June	National Elections held on 11 May 2013. Nawaz Sharif is elected the Prime Minister. Imran Khan's party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) is the second largest party by popular vote nationally.
2017	July	Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is disqualified by the Supreme Court over corruption charges, is convicted and given a jail sentence.
2017	November	Tehreek-e-Labaik, an Islamist party led by Khadim Hussain Rizvi, staged protests in Islamabad over minor changes in the oath required by parliamentarians over belief in the finality of the Prophet Muhammad and demanded the resignation of the Federal Minister of Law and Justice whom they held responsible. The minister resigned.
2018	May	The twenty-fifth amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan was approved by the Parliament of Pakistan and the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP): merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).
2018	July-August	National Elections held on 25th July 2018. Imran Khan, leader of Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) party is elected the Prime Minister.

A1. Pakistan Timeline: Selected Events between 2007-2018

Appendix B: Newspaper Count

Year	Dawn	The Nation	Express Tribune
2008	31	0	0
2013	355	268	226
2018	134	94	101
	520	362	327
TOTAL = 1209			
Time frame: 1 year upper-limit			

Year	Dawn	The Nation	Express Tribune
2008	17	0	0
2013	266	259	153
2018	90	60	82
	373	319	235
TOTAL = 927			
Time frame: 3 months before the National Election date			

Table B.1 Total Newspaper Count

Appendix C: Codebook

The steps in the data collection are as follows:

1. Newspaper Selection: 3 English newspapers have been randomly chosen: Dawn, The Nation, The Express Tribune.

2. News Selection: A total of 1209 news articles were selected during the three national elections of 2008, 2013 and 2018.

   a The focus was on identifying the prominent issues and incidents around which the political debate was structured in 2008, 2013, and 2018.

   b Another focus was on identifying political issues that were referred to in the election speeches by prominent leaders of major parties as covered by the newspaper. The selection of leaders of political parties for the analysis is based on the proportion of representation of 10 per cent or more of each party in the National Assembly which is directly elected by the citizens in the 2008, 2013 and 2018 governments. This representation is also mirrored in the Senate (listed in Table C1). [1]

The first reading of newspapers by the author and the research assistant resulted in identifying three broad topic domains: (1) Politics, (2) Socio-Economic Affairs, and (3) International Relations. There were a total of 1,635 references to these issues. The second reading of the newspapers was undertaken by the author. In this round, I identified specific issues within these topic domains and coded the newspapers in NVivo. The codebook is listed in Table C2.

1. Politics: elections, route to power, military interference, democratic transition

2. Socio-economic Affairs: patriarchy, human rights, terrorism, economic affairs

3. International relations: Pakistan's foreign affairs

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[1]The prominent political parties are chosen based on their proportion in both the national and provincial assemblies. The Government of Pakistan is a federal government established by the Constitution of Pakistan as the governing authority of the four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) as a parliamentary democratic republic. The legislative branch of the government known as the parliament constitutes two houses: the National Assembly (NA) and the Senate. The NA which is the lower house has 342 members, out of which 272 are elected directly by the people, and 70 seats are reserved for women and minorities. The Senate, which is the upper house, has 104 senators who are elected indirectly by the members of provincial assemblies for a six-year term. The political candidates whose political speeches are chosen for analysis are the prominent figureheads of each party. Since the party structures vary, different labels have been used to refer to these leaders – president, chairperson, leaders in the National Assembly and the Senate, however, the commonality among all these leaders is their prominence as the face that citizens associate a party with.

Table C1. Benazir Bhutto is an ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan (1988-90 and 1993-1996) and has been associated as the prominent figurehead of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). However, the change in leadership names for the same party in 2013 and 2018 is due to the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2008 whilst she was campaigning. Therefore, for the analysis of electoral speeches, the names of leadership changed after 2008, despite Benazir continuing to be a prominent leadership figure to date for the party.

Year	Political Party	NA Seats	Vote %	Party Leadership
2018	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	156	31.82	Imran Khan
	Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N)	55	24.35	Nawaz Sharif Shehbaz Sharif
	Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	55	13.03	Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Asif Ali Zardari
2013	Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N)	126	32.77	Nawaz Sharif Shehbaz Sharif
	Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	33	15.83	Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Asif Ali Zardari
	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	28	16.92	Imran Khan
2008	Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	91	30.79	Benazir Bhutto
	Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N)	69	19.65	Nawaz Sharif Shehbaz Sharif
	Pakistan Tehrek-E-Insaf (PTI) boycotted elections in 2008	-	-	Imran Khan

Table C1. Proportion of Representation of Major Political Parties in the National Assembly (NA) and Party Leadership

First Reading		Second Reading		
Topic Domain	Prominent Issues	Sub-Issues	Sub-Issue References	Main Theme
Politics	Elections	Electoral campaign promises	ANP	Democracy and Democratisation
			BNP electoral campaign promise	
			Class	
			JI electoral campaign promises	
			JUI-Fazl electoral campaign	
			MQM electoral campaign promises	
			PML-N electoral campaign promises	
			PPP electoral campaign promises	
			PTI electoral campaign promises and rhetoric	
			- change	
			- corrupt politicians	
			- merit	
			- youth	
		Fringe Parties	Tahirul Qadri rhetoric - protests and demands	
			TLP	
		PML-N future	aliens'	
			Dawn leaks	
			Honour the vote - voter role	
			Nawaz and military	
			Panama case	
			Shahbaz Sharif and campaigning	
		PPP future	PPP strategy	
		Politician's and political parties criticism or character assassination	Criticism of Tahir ul Qadri	
			Foul language	
			JUI-Fazl criticism	
			MQM criticism	
			PML-N criticism	
			PPP criticism	
			PTI criticism	
		Incumbent govt incompetency or lack of fulfilment of promises	Country's economy = Strength of country	
		Media and narrative	Alternate facts	
			Electoral slogans and manifesto	
			Social media and elections	
			Songs and narratives	
			Rhetoric of change	
	Route to Power	Power		
		Dynastic politics		
		Establishment		
		Patronage politics	Biraderi	
			Electable	
			Electoral Alliances	
			- Party defection and turncoats	
		Political Polarisation		
		Social Movements	Populism	
			PTM	
	Democratic Transition	Restoration of democracy	Accountability and democracy	
			Democratic consolidation	
			Free and fair elections	
			- Delimitation	
			- Election boycott	
			- Poll rigging	
			- Security	
			- Voter turnout	
			- Youth and elections	
			Free judiciary	
			- Judiciary role (Suo moto or accountability)	
			Freedom	
			Liberal vs. democratic forces	
			Proportional representative democracy	
	Military Interference	Military coup - Musharraf		
		Praises and criticisms for the military		
Socio-Economic Affairs	Patriarchy	Patriarchal norms	Liberal democracy, sharia and women's rights	Socio-Economic Affairs
			Relationship between women and state	
			Women and media narrative	
	Human rights	Minorities	Ethnic tensions	
			Shia vote bank	
			Transgender community	
	Terrorism	Electoral violence		
		Lal Masjid		
		State sponsored terrorism		
		Support for religious fundamentalism		
	Economic Affairs	Differential treatment of provinces	Baluchistan	
			FATA	
			GB and Kashmir	
			KPK	
			South Punjab province	
International Relations	Pakistan's Foreign Affairs	External influence in Pakistan's affairs		Pakistan's Foreign Affairs
		Foreign advice necessary for Pakistan's survival		
		Improving America's image amongst Pakistani masses		
		Misperceptions about Pakistan		
		Negative repercussions of external or foreign advice taken by Pak govt		
		Pakistan's identity	Islamic ideology and Pakistan identity	
			Pakistan-India Peace process	
			Religion and politics	

Table C2. Codebook

A non-post-truth descriptive note example

An example of a descriptive note which does not illicit post-truth attributes in newspaper reporting is on gender and patriarchy. The theme of patriarchal norms in Pakistani newspaper reporting can be most visibly seen in political participation, which refers to either the lack of women's representation in politics or restrictions on women participating in elections. Although patriarchy presents itself as an entrenched dilemma in Pakistani society which requires structural reforms to be eliminated, the political discourse surrounding patriarchy is negligible in newspaper reporting and during election campaigns which further sustains the problem. The problem is also sustained by political parties who are failing to mobilise women and excluding them from their manifestos. Some examples of these patriarchal norms are visible in the following newspaper articles on political participation:

In 2013, women in parts of at least eight constituencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were barred from casting votes. (Survey, 2018)[D]

For decades, not a single woman in this dusty village surrounded by wheat fields and orange trees has voted. And they aren't likely to in the May 11 elections either. The village's men have spoken. It's the will of my husband, said one woman, Fatima Shamshad. This is the decision of all the families. (Report, 2018)[D]

Local elders and tribesmen didn't allow women to cast vote at combined polling stations in Torghar. Our traditions and culture don't allow us to send women to polling stations and that is why women didn't cast vote like the past, said a local man, who attended a jirga. (Report, 2013)[D]

Parties have to realise that if for no other reason, it is in their electoral interest to mobilise these citizens to vote. (Report, 2013)[D]
The political narrative surrounding women's political participation refers to patriarchal norms but is limiting in the articulation of a desire and the means to capture the desire.

Appendix D: Newspaper Articles Cited

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