

Critically Analyzing the Social Media Images Portraying Imran Khan as an Alternate of Jinnah

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Abstract: *This paper claims that the study of political images and efforts of politicians and their supporters to create the public image of politicians is moving towards more interdisciplinary endeavors. In this respect, our purpose is to investigate the changing patterns of political communication, by briefly showing the discursive features of unique Jinnah- Imran images. The paper analyzes the unique discursive strategy to portray the positive image of the politicians by creating an emotional cue. This research paper presents the concepts of political impression management and perception politics and discusses that perception politics which actually is the modernization of politics can be perceived as a trend toward commercialization, globalization, and a visual culture in which mass media and social media in particular play an important role. The researchers have used the methodology of critical discourse analysis and uncover the discursive features of the unique Jinnah- Imran political images. They conclude that such dramatic discursive strategies are used to create the desired images of politicians by making people emotional and these strategies have nothing to do with any logical elements.*

Keywords: *Social Media, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Imran Khan, Image, Critical Analysis*

I. Introduction

Political personality image—a distinct and unambiguous profile conveyed to voters—is of vital importance. Furthermore, political marketing experts stress that candidates must be aware of their self-presentation in order to be successful. These two ideas create a strong tie between the domains of political impression management and political marketing. De Landtsheer (2008) in his research article creates a bridge between perception politics, political impression management and political marketing. He further argues that perception politics which actually is the modernization of politics can be perceived as a trend toward commercialization, globalization, and a visual culture in which mass media and social media in particular play an important role. The advancement in the modernization of politics is resulted into new dynamics in political communication in which dramatization of politics takes place. Mainly this trend is responsible for turning politics into perception politics. Perception is defined as the process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret the input from their senses to give meaning and order to the world around them (George and Jones 2011). The Perception is the place where vision and sensation merge to produce embodied meaning. De Landtsheer (2008) stated that perception politics encourages voters to form intuitive impressions of political candidates based on certain cues such as language, style, appearance, characteristics, and nonverbal behavior instead of well considered opinions based on arguments (p.220). This dramatic trend magnifies the role and importance of style, appearance, and personality, thereby turning politics into perception politics. According to the “elaboration likelihood model” of Petty and Cacioppo (1986), information processing has two routes, the peripheral route (cues) and the central route (arguments). Due to the modern trend of dramatization in political image management the discourse producers are abundantly following the peripheral route. Furthermore, this peripheral route emphasizes the “emotive factor” and turns the focus from rational arguments to emotional

cues (Marcus, 2002, 2003). Voter preferences are strongly influenced by the emotions. Multiple studies reveal that the role of emotions is very strong in both political behavior and voter preferences (De Vries and De Landtsheer, 2005). Wattenberg (1987) emphasizes that almost one third of voters have strong emotional feelings toward political candidates even though they know almost nothing about them. Research by Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (1994) concluded that people tend to vote with their hearts rather than with their minds (Falkowski and Wojciech, 1999).

Political consultants are extremely aware of and are highly engaged in the new dramatic political impression management trends. The political discourse creators can be considered the manager of this overall impression management process. Politicians, political parties, consultants, and supporters co-create these images and impressions of the political personalities focusing on several aspects of political communication: from the verbal message, appearance characteristics, perceived personality traits to the several emotional cues attached to the personality of the politicians. The present research is basically an effort to explore the emotional cues which can be called the new dramatic trends in the field of image management of politicians by analyzing ideologically the Jinnah-Imran images circulating on Pakistani social media.

Last two year in Pakistan had been of high political turmoil as Imran Khan's government was ousted in 2022 and this regime change stormed the social media with different images depicting Imran Khan as a national hero. The most interesting images appeared during this phase hence setting new dramatic trends in the field of political image management which are highly significant and worth reading. These interesting and dramatic images can be called Jinnah-Imran Images due to the unique and emotional blend of the impressions of two political leaderships. It looks an intentional effort to create an emotional cue keeping in mind the purpose of image/ impression management of Imran Khan. As far as Jinnah-Imran images are concerned, the image makers have formed and tried to legitimize the affective discursive practices that were not previously in the mainstream of that culture. The present research tests the hypothesis that Jinnah-Imran images with the help of propagating different emotional ideologies are trying to manage the image of Imran Khan as the true alternate of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. By influencing the perception of people, turning it to a peripheral route (cues) these images are basically an effort to form intuitive impression of the targeted political personality.

This research adopts a discourse analytical perspective to examine the ideologies which are propagated to create the strong emotional feelings among people to strengthen the portrayal of Imran Khan as an alternative of Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Discourse and discursive practices are mainly used to turn the perception of the people. The relationship between the semiosis and emotions can be explored with the help of analyzing discursive practices. Wetherell et al. (2015) argue for an investigation of 'affective-discursive practices' exploring the relations between semiosis and feeling, to identify 'patterned forms of human activity articulating, mobilising and organising affect and discourse as a central part of the practice' (p.57). Social and cultural movements in contemporary society exist as discourses, as well as in extra-discursive trends that run parallel to these (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 2005:4)

2- Literature Review

Image building and management are crucial to a successful political campaign today. Political personalities must ensure that their image is properly managed to produce positive impressions. Due to the growth of social media, politicians need to keep their image positive. Political image management is a type of influence that an

individual or group of individuals applies to public information about themselves through presentation methods and media manipulation. Political activists use ideologies and the shared belief system of people to construct and reconstruct the political vision of voters. Thus, based on various ideologies and mythical beliefs, images of politicians and opinions about them are deliberately created for the intended purposes. The production and distribution of ideologically loaded images is part of their social media strategy to create a desired political vision among people. The linguists and discourse analysts use these discourses and uncover the strategies of impression management by implying different theories and methodologies. The following reviews examine the related researches on how ideologically charged images are used in the image constructions of politicians.

Campbell, H.A. et al. (2018) explores the relationship between religion and politics through the memetic discourse circulating during the 2016 presidential election. This study uses 150 Internet memes of political candidates to discuss a key issue of religious discourse and a case study of memes that focused primarily on then presidential candidate Donald Trump. They discuss religion as a means to interpret politics and political figures rooted in nationalist ideology. They analyzed memes that invoke the idea of civil religion. Civil religion is an idea related to religion where religious beliefs and practices are combined with a political perspective and religious values are mixed with political ideologies. The analysis is done using the God Talk method. God Talk refers to certain ways of analyzing language; when language and rhetoric are combined with religion and politics in the public sphere. God Talk represents the techniques used by politicians and religious figures alike to connect religion with politics and justify its intersection. They conclude that the politicization of religious subjects in memes emphasizes the natural expression of the political figure of faith or is used as a means to strengthen the credibility of the political candidate as a religious person. They use two forms of God Talk that can be used as communication strategies: making politics religious and politicizing religion. Both forms are recognized in the results of this study. They examine the role of religious and political selves in shaping and reshaping the image of politicians during the 2016 US presidential election using God Talk techniques. Their research is limited to the 2016 US presidential election, and instead of a multimodal critical discourse analysis method, they analyze self-discourse through God Talk.

Similarly, Chagas, V. and others (2019) discuss political election memes on Twitter used in the 2014 elections in Brazil. They did a content analysis of memes circulating on Twitter during the election. The study under discussion is a hypothesis-driven study. The hypothesis posits that memes function as a mixture of advertising and political payments, forming true election thermometers designed to indicate the political performance of the candidate in question, far and near. Their main goal in this study is to create a taxonomic matrix to help researchers interested in dealing with memes more objectively. They conclude with a methodological proposal for online self-research, presenting preliminary research results for discussion. The results of the study lead to an important conclusion related to user-generated political humor. There are at least two ways to laugh at a politician. The first is if he is very important, in this case, fans and detractors enter the battle to secure the right to satirize. Another way a politician makes himself the target of jokes is defamation. The study also concerns the construction of the image of politicians using memes, but the memes were collected only from Twitter and the target period was also very specific. They do a content analysis of the selected memes, classifying the memes as persuasive, popular action memes and public discourse memes.

Ross and Rivers (2017) analyzed the visual discursive properties of political memes related to two 2016

presidential candidates, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, using a discourse analytic perspective. They used Van Leeuwen's (2007) framework to analyze the legitimizing discourse in relation to how they delegitimize. They focused on how memes are used to delegitimize a candidate and create a negative image of a political figure such as a presidential candidate. They conclude that (illegitimate) strategies of authorization, moral judgment, rationalization and mythopoeia are evident in political selves. The study examines the construction of the image of political leaders through the use of memes, but is limited to only two specific candidates in the 2016 US presidential election. Semotiuk and Shevchenko (2023) conducted a study on the image of Ukrainian President Zelensky in political cartoons and memes. The research is interdisciplinary and based on political humor. First, the theoretical aspects, functions and elements of political humor and political satire, the main characteristics and types of cartoons and memes are described. The second part conducts a corpus analysis of 198 political cartoons and 1,121 memes from March 2019 to December 2020 using computational content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. This was a hypothesis-driven study of the interdependence of social context and subversive/beneficial humor in the construction of Zelensky's image. The researchers' hypothesis about the interdependence of the social context and subversive/profitable humor in the construction of Zelensky's image is confirmed at the end of the study. The research deals with the construction of selves and the image of political leaders, but is limited to a specific politician in a specific region of the world.

All the above mentioned researches are on memes and cartoon images used in the impression management of politicians particularly in political campaigns. The data of the present research is unique in the sense that these images are political and used for the impression management of a particular politician but do not fall into the category of memes and cartoons. This is a unique technique in which blended features of the past and present politicians are presented to create a comparative standard between two personalities, among which one is standardized and the other is trying to reach at the set standards.

III. Hypothesis and Research Questions

The following hypothesis and research questions have been tested and answered in the present research. Hypothesis: Jinnah-Imran images with the help of propagating different emotional ideologies are trying to manage the image of Imran Khan as the true alternate of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Research Questions:

- Q. 1 How imran khan is being portrayed as an alternate of Jinnah?
- Q. 2 What semiotic choices are used to create this identity?
- Q. 3 What ideologies are being disseminated through this comparison?

IV. Methodology

Semiotic resources have potential to make meaning through metaphorical association. Machin (2007) argues that metaphorical association can be called experiential associations. Associations that are based on our experiences of life are actually metaphorical association which exists in our mind carrying effective meaning potential. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) believe that our concrete experiences play a key part in metaphor. Further Machin (2007) suggests that the same experiential associations are found in gestures, actions, music, colours and people. Metaphorical association is a significant feature of the inventories and patterns in discursive practices. Complex combinations and a range of associations are used to create the multiple effects to connote more specific and more complex ideologies. In the field of political impression management these metaphorical associations can be used to turn the politics into the perception politics. A range of associations can be used in different combinations to transport particular meanings in order to create just the required kind of message.

In political visual compositions, designers use different semiotic resources to connote nationalist discourses that allow them, therefore, to define reality in a particular way. These semiotic resources are highly loaded with metaphorical associations. These metaphorical associations may have their roots in cultural traditions and historical events. Billig (1995) has pointed out, the continual mundane use of an array of signs associated with nation and nationalism has the effect of making these things seem like common sense. He further argues when people wave a flag they are waving not just a piece of cloth or a simple indicator of an arbitrary geographical area but a set of discourses about what nation is. Similarly in Pakistan when people hang the picture of Quaid-e-Azam at their homes and offices, they are not just hanging a picture but a complete discourse about Quaid's struggle and sacrifices to form and build the country. Similarly the same is taught in schools through the mass media, particularly through sports, where we learn to celebrate the victories of our athletes or footballers, or where we are informed about the national soldiers, 'our heroes', who serve us dealing with evil others. All these practices co-create experiential associations and emotional associations which after turning into metaphorical associations becomes a significant feature of semiotic resources and discursive practices. Machin (2007) argues that the task for the linguist, or semiotician, is to reveal the system of choices and possibilities for combinations that govern the making of arrangements. To reveal the semiotic resources and the meaning potential carrying by these, the researchers have drawn upon model for the analysis of Jinnah-Imran images from Machin (2007) model of semiotic discourse analysis. Machin (2007) distinguishes between the two layers of meaning in images:

Denotation: The first layer of meaning or what that image documents is called denotation. This is the literal meaning.

Connotation: What ideas and values we associate with the image is called the second layer of meaning or connotation. This is the hidden meaning as well.

Machin (2007) also introduced a number of elements and styles of representation that are particular carriers of connotation. These are some of the building blocks of discourses. Machin (2007) states what an image connotes may, in some contexts, be a matter of free association. But where image-makers need to get a specific idea across, they will rely on established connotators, carriers of connotations, which they feel confident their target audiences will understand.

Carriers of connotation:

Participants: Participants present in the image with the combination of poses and objects may connote meanings and provide meaning potential.

Poses: According to Machin a comprehensive dictionary of poses exists in our mind which carries meanings or meaning potential. These poses often carry connotations which are based on certain associations.

Objects: Certain objects present in the image with the combination of participants and poses may connote meanings and provide meaning potential.

Setting: The spaces and settings present in the images can also be given certain arbitrary associations based on cultures and conventions to provide meaning potential.

Machin (2007) Taxonomy of Social Actor Representation

The researchers employed Machin (2007) theory of social actor representation particularly about 'gaze' and 'agency and action'.

Gaze: Gaze determines to what extent viewers are encouraged to engage with the participants present in the picture.

Agency and Action: Machin (2007) argues about this tool given by Van Leeuwen's (1996) that we analyze agency in the images (who does what) and action (what gets done). This is an approach given by Van Leeuwen's (1996) that draws on the functional semiotic theory of Halliday (1985). Through this approach, texts could be analyzed to show how people were represented as behaving, i.e. who was shown as being active and who as passive. In order to analyze through process of agency and action, Halliday gave the terms 'actor',

‘goal’, ‘process’ and ‘circumstance. In the present research the researcher used the same agency and action approach to unfold some of the aspects of visual meanings.

The above mentioned categories are used by the researchers to investigate the specific ideologies, propagated by Jinnah-Imran images to turn the perception of the people via peripheral route.

V. Data Collection

The data for the present study is collected from different social media sites like pinterest, instagram, facebook and twitter. The selected images are available on Google for downloading. The search engine, Google was used as the data source. The convenient/available sampling technique out of the non-probability sampling techniques was utilized. An ‘Imran-Quaid’ image was the search term which generated myriad of images out of which we selected four for the analysis.

VI. Data Analysis

Machin (2007) stated that choices in visual communication are equally ideological. Ideologically the Jinnah-Imran images present on Pakistani social media are highly loaded with themes of positive impression management in politics. Therefore, it is beneficial to keep in mind that all the images are a kind of portrait, not a camera click and are actively trying to convince the observer to think Imran Khan as a true alternative of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan—whether overtly or subtly. As the analysis provides an additional insight into whatever the signs used are signifying on a deeper level.



Image 1- Downloaded from Google Images

Multimodal Analysis of Image 1

Image 1 is a blend of facial features of Quaid and Imran Khan. At the denotative level it looks just an intentional effort of matching the facial features of two personalities and it denotes an effort to create a resemblance at physical level. If we observe the picture at deeper level it carries a heavy connotative meaning potential in it. The image is of one person but carrying the reflection of two, features are similar but separately distinguishable at a time. The most important thing in the picture is the gaze of image. Machin (2007) argues that images through gaze define their relationship to the viewer.

Usually the gaze of the image is used to engage the viewers, in the present image gaze of the image has a magical effect, and not only it is engaging the people but fascinating them with its double characteristics. The object is single but the sensation lies in gaze is double. Through the gaze the image is maintaining a direct

contact with the viewers but the interesting thing is that the gaze has the dual reflection when we concentrate on the left eye of the image it is the gaze of Imran Khan and when we concentrate on the right eye it looks so that Quaid-e-Azam is trying to encourage the people to be engaged. Machin (2007) states that gaze determines to what extent viewers are encouraged to engage with the participants present in the picture. Single image having the features of two through its gaze is trying to demand something to public. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) believe that images can realise two image acts 'offer' and 'demand'. So when the image put some demand to do something to the viewer, the image can be called the demand image. It asks something in an imaginary relationship. Machin (2007) states that the kind of demand, or the mood of address, will be determined by other factors. The imaginary emotional relationship of Pakistani Public with Quaid-e-Azam is very strong and the image maker has tried to use that relationship to turn the politics into perception politics. He has created an emotional cue to change the opinion of the public and to give it a peripheral way to drag it toward the desired direction. The right gaze symbolically demands the public to be with me while the left gaze reinforces the same idea. This is how it connotes that being with Imran Khan actually mean to be with Quaid because both are similar to each other. The facial features are similar so is the demand of the gaze. Everyone can distinguish the features of two persons in the image but overall number of participants is only one in the image. The image is a very unique effort to connote the idea that both the leaders are not only similar in facial features but there is a strong similarity present in their agenda for public welfare. The only difference between these two is the difference of being alive and dead. The image depicts connotatively, the dead person is the savior of the nation and the alive one has the strong similarities with the dead one, then why don't you choose the alive one as the alternative of the dead. The black and white composition of images is also very significant in conveying required ideas. Machin (2007) writes that symbolic use of colour is significant, where it has the associations that were important. If we go through the way of metaphorical associations, black and white composition of an image relates it to a dreamy appearance. Machin (2007) further argues that it is the kind of effect that can still be found in interior design books and television programmes. This is a dramatic technique to pictureize the dreams of the characters in black and white. The picture under analysis appears like a dream and the gaze of the image demands the public to fulfill the dream of the image maker.



Image 2. Downloaded from Google Images

Multimodal Analysis of Image 2

Image 2 is a portrait, not a camera click. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stated that the portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. The portraits are

shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. (p.3)

According to the classification of the portraits this is a constructionist portrait and a constructionist Portraiture involves a photographer creating or directing a moment with their subject(s). The photographer directs their subject to pose in specific way that conveys the meaning or feeling that the photographer is attempting to achieve. Constructionist Portraiture is the most recent form of portrait photography. It revolves around photographers directing and creating an imaginary moment with their props through different poses (kobra, 2021). As far as the poses of both the participants in the image are concerned these connote a heavy set of values and are meaning potential. They are significant in creating a peripheral path (cue) to direct the perception of the people into the desired direction. Panofsky (1970) states to understand the meanings in paintings and realised that objects, animals, people and even postures were used to symbolise particular people, values and behaviors. These postures are arbitrary and become conventions with the passage of time. Putting hand on one's shoulder is a posture that connotes the idea of offering friendship, showing confidence, transferring opinion and providing help. The metaphorical associations prove that this posture is the symbol of complete trust and mutual understanding between two people in different cultures across the globe. The sitting style and gaze of Imran Khan indicate that he is thinking about a matter and the style of Quaid indicates that he comes from past (coming from the backside) and tap Imran Khan on his shoulder, as tapping someone on his shoulder in most of the culture is the indication of giving strength and showing trust. This technique of turning the perception of people is dramatic trend in political communication. It happens exactly in dramatizations of the events that some dead person from past comes and transfers his/ her strength, power and wisdom to an alive one.



Image 3- Downloaded from Google Images

Multimodal Analysis of Image 3

Image 3 is a dramatic meeting between two people. The gestures, settings, colors and props all contributes to create a dramatic event. . Machin (2007) argues that it is the kind of effect that can still be found in interior design books and television programmes. Mostly in television programs and dramas it happens so that a person from past comes to meet a person in present and usually he/ she comes to give his/ her opinion, to transfer his/ her wisdom and mostly to solve a problem. The dressing of both the participants is official and it connotes that the matter they are going to discuss is also official and serious. The participant who came from past is no doubt saviour of Pakistani nation and obviously to whom he is going to transfer his wisdom will be the true well wisher of Pakistan and Pakistani nation. The hand shaking gesture and the smile on both the faces indicate their mutual trust and understanding. An old model car is used as a prop in picture to connote the idea of Quaid's coming from the past to meet Imran Khan. The black and white color scheme of the image associates

it to a dream; blur surroundings give it a quality of timelessness. Timelessness also indicates the spirituality. If we go deep into the spiritual thoughts and beliefs of Pakistani people we come to know that they believe in spiritual and timeless relations with dead people. The same cultural disbelief of the people is used by the image makers to exploit the emotions of Pakistani people (emotional cue). The whole dramatic event is connoting the idea of mutual understanding and giving a message to Pakistani nation that if your Quaid trusts in Imran Khan then you must do the same.



Image 4- Downloaded from Google Images

Image 4

Image 4 is again a meeting between Imran and Quaid but looks informal. The settings and smile on both the faces indicate that meeting is informal rather than formal. Props and color scheme collectively work to create a calm and peaceful environment. Machin (2007) suggests that the props therefore transport meanings that connote a whole way of life. He further quotes the example of white coffee cup as a prop. He states that the white coffee cup suggests cosmopolitanism, of business conducted over coffee. No doubt Coffee and coffee cup have a huge meaning potential. It connotes meetings on serious matters, meetings between two people of equal rank and also meetings to create understanding and a complete harmony. Coffee cup in combination with smile creates the effect of successful dialogues and happy ending. The smiling faces are always happy faces and culturally associated with peace and mutual understanding.

VII. Conclusion

In politics impression management discourses are generated to build the images of the political leaders among the general public. Wodak (2015) states that by critically examining the discourses used by political parties in their self-representations on media, we can reach a deeper understanding of the way ideological positions are generated and spread in broad sectors of society. The present study has focused on the use of charismatic personalities, and dramatic discursive techniques to attract media attention and appeal to particular sectors of the population.

By using the critical discourse analysis, the researchers analyzed the political images circulating on Pakistani social media to discover the discursive strategies which are used to portray Imran Khan as true alternative of Jinnah. Through analysis the hypothesis has been proved and it is clear that the target pictures are basically an effort to portray Imran Khan as true alternative of Jinnah. However despite of any logical argument the political persuasion in the target images is only based on an emotive aspect of communication. The frequent use of imaginary situations (dramatic strategies) and emotionally charged dreamy images are used to provoke an emotional response. The study generally concludes that this would be a useful line to pursue, particularly

since recent research into emotions in politics from outside discourse studies. e.g. Wagner (2014) and Weber (2013) has underlined the importance of the affective/emotional dimension in conditioning people's political choices.

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