[**Trending political talk**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1624224/trending-political-talk)

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WATCHING political talk shows during the short, short Eid break, it struck me that our political analyses are also like fashion fads. Everyone sticks to the same themes and the same analyses — let’s blame the ratings system — till a major development, and everyone together takes a 180-degree turn. So it was when the Pakistan Democratic Movement came together last year. It was the time when the long kurtas were in. Lon and longer, everyone feverishly followed suit.

And so did we — from, roughly, October to December. We couldn’t get over the crowds at the PDM jalsas. Each show was a good, strong show. And it meant only one thing: it was not a good sign for the government. Fazlur Rehman always had the street power but now the inqilabi avatar of the PML-N also meant that Punjab uth khara hua hai (Punjab has also risen). Like the rest, they were now tired of the rigging in elections (few remembered ironically that exactly the same thing was said when the 2014 dharna happened). Also, the people were suffering because of the inflation and mismanagement of the economy. The ‘experiment’ had gone wrong and even the script writers were rethinking their plans. This ‘rethink’ is like the heavy embroidery on the lawn suits, which is a constant, regardless of shirt lengths or any other fad; it’s been ongoing since 2018.

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Another constant was the panic of the government. What else could explain the pakkar dhakkar (rounding up) before the Multan jalsa? Had it kept its cool, the jalsa would have begun and ended in a day but as usual the PTI acted first and thought later. The only bit of originality — akin to adding a plain, solid-coloured pants rather than the flowery ones offered by the manufacturer — was to blame Usman Buzdar for the clampdown, arguing that Imran Khan hadn’t ordered or approved it.

But come December and the Lahore jalsa and the shirt lengths went up a bit. The fad was changing. As did our analyses. The numbers game had now turned against the PDM. And it turned out that the less-than-impressive numbers in Lahore and elsewhere were because the people weren’t tired enough or oppressed enough by the inflation. And hence, the ‘anger’ wasn’t enough to push the government out but there was still much joy (and concern from the critics) about the PPP-PML-N alliance. Maryam Nawaz’s trip to Garhi Khuda Bakhsh and her speech there had some in such a tizzy that they even believed Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari’s talk of resignations. There were hushed conversations about how Nawaz Sharif and Maryam had BBZ in their corner, and how Asif Zardari couldn’t get him to listen.

But then the shirts became short once 2021 arrived. The PPP made its reservations about the resignations public and the PDM faltered. It was forced to postpone the long march indefinitely. And now those who were supporting the long shirts and celebrating the PDM in October now sported the shorter lengths and we-always-knew-PDM-was-doomed-to-fail analysis.

However, the new trend had a bit of a hiccup. The Senate election and the unexpected victory of Yousuf Raza Gilani led to a bit of a let’s-wear-all-kinds-of-lengths. Short and long, everything goes. So, it was a bit of IK-in-trouble — especially as the Jahangir Khan Tareen group had also made its appearance — till the vote of confidence happened. And some bits of PPP being in the magical position of having won over the establishment (which would allow it to win over the PDM too). But the latter trend didn’t last long. Like the short-lived reincarnation of the dhoti shalwar (some mistakes are best not repeated).

But IK-is-in-trouble continues. It’s like the excessive embroidery on all things lawn that refuses to die out. Year in and year out, short or long, daywear or evening wear, the embellishments are here to stay. Thus the PTI’s bumbling, as well as the hot water it lands the government in, is a safe analysis. It’s obvious enough. These days, as PDM’s threat to the government doesn’t offer much for the talk waves — the JKT group, Buzdar and then smaller miscalculations such as the live address to the ambassadors are enough to keep the trend going.

But then, the opposition is never out of style for too long either. And for a bit of a zara hatt ke, or slight different, trend, such as a jacket and undershirt instead of a simple shirt, we turn to the significance of Shehbaz Sharif’s release. None of the interpretations are new as such but they just provide a bit of a break from predicting doom and gloom for the PTI. And hence, someone confidently reports on (yet) another fresh round of talks between the first Noon family and the establishment while another speaks of the family cold war. Both make for good, lasting trends, which never go out of style — like red lipstick.

And thus all of us are convinced that SS is trying to fly to London to take a message to his brother — why he doesn’t use a pigeon is beyond me — and Maryam and her uncle are at loggerheads and the rest of the party is united but also exhausted of the fight with the powers that be. Add in a contrasting colour in the use of dupatta by discussing the chances of whether it will be Maryam or her uncle who will be the next prime minister and little else is needed to complete the analysis. After all, it has already been decided that the PTI trend is here only till the next election.

But in all this talk on our talk shows, there is very little to say about the PPP and its prospects beyond Sindh, this election or the next. The party will retain Sindh for sure, and similarly the party will remain in the control of Zardari, whose decision-making will be based on everything but popular politics. There is little room for change here, it seems. It’s like the sari; the glory days of which as the garment of choice in Pakistan have long gone and there is little hope for a revival, whatever any fashion expert may say.

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