**What should we call them?**

[**Saad Rasool**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/saad-rasool)

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This week, Ayaz Sadiq, former Speaker of Pakistan’s National Assembly and a Nawaz Sharif loyalist, made an unsolicited statement on the floor of the Parliament, concerning his version of what happened between India and Pakistan in February of 2019. Speaking in response to a speech by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, the former Speaker alleged (without any basis in reported facts) that Pakistan released Indian pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan, during threat of an attack from India. Motivated by partisan hackery, Ayaz Sadiq also claimed that the Pakistani Prime Minister and military personnel were ‘trembling’ (in fear), as they decided to release Abhinandan, in order to avoid an imminent attack by Indian forces that night.

This assertion of Ayaz Sadiq, narrated as a personal account of someone who was in the Joint-Parliamentary security briefing in February of 2019, has damaged Pakistan. It has undermined the victory of Pakistan Airforce. It has undercut the ‘readiness’ stance of our Armed Forces. And, adding insult to injury, it has helped India in getting some ‘face-saving’ in a conflict that India Air Force lost in broad daylight.

[Azerbaijan destroys Armenian military convoy](https://nation.com.pk/02-Nov-2020/azerbaijan-destroys-armenian-military-convoy)

In the aftermath of this statement by Ayaz Sadiq, the Indian media went into a frenzy. Here was a senior Pakistani politician—who had held key positions in the State machinery—that was alleging that Pakistan (and its security establishment) had cowered under threat of India attack. Christmas had come early for the Indian media. And none other than PML(N) had played the jingles.

As media domestic pressure mounted on Ayaz Sadiq, he tried to ‘spin’ his statement as something else altogether. He rehashed it as one that was targeting Shah Mehmood and Imran Khan alone. He claimed that it was not directed towards the armed forces, or their leadership. But even as Ayaz Sadiq (and his party) rushed to ‘spin’ this statement, he did not retract it. Nor did he apologise for it.

Just as importantly, none of the members of PML(N), or its leadership, frowned upon this statement, or distanced themselves from it. In fact, many saw it as an ‘extension’ of Nawaz Sharif’s viewpoint, which he has been articulating during his Altaf-Hussain-esque addresses.

[Palestine records 6 new deaths from coronavirus](https://nation.com.pk/01-Nov-2020/palestine-records-6-new-deaths-from-coronavirus)

While on the point, it is also important to note that none of the other members of PDM, who share a common stage with Ayaz Sadiq, condemned his statement. After all, he had ‘punched’ the security establishment of Pakistan. And isn’t that what PDM stands for? Hasn’t the PDM already declared their ‘fight’ is not with Imran Khan or the PTI? That, instead, their struggle is against ‘powers’ that brought Imran to political office. The same ‘powers’ that shot down Indian planes. The same powers that apprehended Kulboshan Yadev.

Be that as it may, Ayaz Sadiq’s statement has resulted in much hue and cry by PTI and government officials. Some have gone as far as to call him a ‘ghaddar’. Others have (sensibly) stopped just short of it. But, burnt by the abysmal episodes of a ‘ghaddari’ case registered in Lahore, and by the botched action against Capt. Sadfar in Karachi, the government of Pakistan has not yet articulated what (if anything at all) will they do regarding this speech by Ayaz Sadiq. The likes of Shehbaz Gill, even Fawad Chaudhry, have issued fiery statements condemning Ayaz Sadiq; but they have not elaborated as to what remedial action the government intends to take.

[Linking my statement about govt with armed forces is not appropriate: Ayaz Sadiq](https://nation.com.pk/01-Nov-2020/linking-my-statement-about-govt-with-armed-forces-is-not-appropriate-ayaz-sadiq)

In the same breath, it is also important to point out that this is not the first time (in recent past) that PML(N) leadership, or its allies, have undermined Pakistan’s national security narrative. This saga started with Nawaz Sharif’s infamous ‘Dawn leaks’ episode, which the Army (ostensibly) swallowed in the larger national interest. A repeat assault was then made by Nawaz Sharif during an interview in Multan, when he claimed that Pakistan had been involved in cross-border terrorism in India. And, conveniently, Nawaz Sharif’s statement was issued just in time for the Indian counsel to quote it during Kulboshan Yadav proceedings before the ICJ. Then, Nawaz Sharif upped the ante further, alleging that Pakistani establishment ‘stole’ American missiles (from Balochistan) to make their own. Then, in Gujranwala, he made specific allegations against the Army Chief. Then in Quetta against the Army Chief and the DG ISI. And all the while, every speech, every statement of Nawaz Sharif, in this regard, was flashed as breaking news across the Indian media. And then finally, this episode of Ayaz Sadiq has served as icing on the Indian cake.

[Over 2,000 new COVID-19 cases reported in Turkey](https://nation.com.pk/01-Nov-2020/over-2-000-new-covid-19-cases-reported-in-turkey)

So, is Nawaz Sharif a ‘ghaddar’? Are his party members, towing their Quaid’s line, ghaddars? Well, that’s hard to say. Especially because Pakistan has no consensus on what would constitute ‘ghaddari’. Under article 6 of the Constitution, anyone who “abrogates or subverts or suspends or holds in abeyance” the Constitution of Pakistan, or “attempts or conspires” to do the same is “guilty of high treason.” Under this constitutional provision, Pervez Musharraf had committed ‘high treason’ or was a ‘ghaddari’. But Nawaz Sharif is not. Nor is Altaf Hussain, by the way, when he proclaimed ‘Pakistan murdabad’. In fact, if Kulboshan Yadav had been a Pakistani citizen, he would also not be a ‘ghaddar’ under the Constitution. That is, if ‘ghaddari’ is ‘treason’. Because only someone who abrogates the constitution, or attempts to do so, is a ‘ghaddar’. And Yadev never did any such thing.

[Turkey quake death toll hits 62](https://nation.com.pk/01-Nov-2020/turkey-quake-death-toll-hits-62)

So, we should not call Nawaz Sharif or Ayaz Sadiq a ‘ghaddar’. We should not call anyone that—except for Musharraf, of course. Because the State should not be in the business of giving out ‘ghaddari’ certificates. Except to Musharraf, of course.

So what should we call Nawaz Sharif and Ayaz Sadiq then? ‘Patriotic Pakistanis’? Perhaps. But then we would also have to call all of Indian media, and Modi’s government, ‘patriotic Pakistanis’ too. Because all these characters agree on their narrative and actions concerning Pakistan.

So what should we call people who are spewing well thought-out venom against the institutions and integrity of Pakistan? The answer is less than simple. Their rhetoric is couched in phrases that appeal to the masses. They are ‘democrats’. They believe in the power of ‘vote ko izzat do’. They are people who believe in ‘freedom of speech’. They are parties that believe in correcting the ‘civil-military imbalance’. And all of these are worthy democratic goals. And easy to sell to media empires that miss the gold-rush of our past.

[Biden's Foreign Policy Aide opposes F-35s sale to UAE, says only Israel should have them](https://nation.com.pk/01-Nov-2020/biden-s-foreign-policy-aide-opposes-f-35s-sale-to-uae-says-only-israel-should-have-them)

The PTI government—weak as it is—will probably not be able to do much about Ayaz Sadiq. Just as they were not able to do anything about Nawaz Sharif, or about Owais Noorani, or Capt. Safdar. And the rest of us, who still believe in some semblance of sanctity for the ‘national interest’, will have no choice but to hold our tongue, and make peace with this new brand of democratic patriotism.

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