

**VALENCE POPULISM IN PAKISTAN: MAKING SENSE OF IMRAN  
KHAN's IDEOLOGICAL CLUELESSNESS**

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## Abstract

Imran Khan and his party *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* (Pakistan Movement for Justice) (PTI) came into power following the 2018 parliamentary general elections on the back of robust populist rhetoric focusing on anti-corruption, morality, governance reforms and demonizing of the previous ruling elite of the country. Expanding on the populism literature and by employing the Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Historical Approach, the study tries to make sense of Khan's populist discourse in comparison to the similar populism elsewhere. The study places it into a 'valence' populism category studied in the context of Central and Eastern European political parties' context. It also tries to look into the specific case of Pakistan in comparison to other valence populist parties in the world and tries to identify the roots of such populist discourse in Pakistan by looking into the historical context and differentiates them from other valence parties around the world. Finally, it outlines the reasons why a leader's ideological transition on the political spectrum is not pronounced in a democracy like Pakistan as compared to elsewhere.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>Word</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	PTI
Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz	PMLN
Pakistan Peoples Party	PPP
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	K.P.
United States	U.S.
Critical Discourse Analysis	CDA
Discourse Historical Approach	DHA
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	CPEC

## Introduction

Despite it being a trending topic in the contemporary political science research, populist parties and leaders are still considered as 'outsiders' or 'challengers'.<sup>1</sup> However, the political events over the past decade and a half inform us that these populist political parties are integrated into the national systems of numerous countries (especially in Europe), while populist leaders are emerging in other places, for example, Donald Trump in the United States (U.S.), Narendra Modi in India, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey among others. "The mapping of various ideational variations of populist parties and leaders represents a critical step in understanding their effect on the construction of political conflict."<sup>2</sup>

While the populist political parties or the leaders have been traditionally categorized into right-wing or left-wing and sometimes centrist, scholars have argued for another category: valence populists. Along with the 'populist radical right,' the right-wing populist grouping includes 'national-conservative populists,'<sup>3</sup> and the 'neoliberal populists.'<sup>4</sup> In comparison, the parties in the left-wing populist group are the ones that co-opt various forms of socialism with populism. These parties include 'social populists'<sup>5</sup> and 'national-social populists.'<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, there are centrist populists, the examples of which could be found in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. However, they fall closest to the category of valence populists.<sup>7</sup> These populists "offer little more than 'valence considerations' and hence, do not fall in the right or left categories, nor exclusionary or inclusionary, as they 'defy positional definition altogether'." "These principal

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<sup>1</sup> See, Mattia Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties and Party Systems in Europe: From State-of-the-Art to the Application of a Novel Classification Scheme to 66 Parties in 33 Countries," *Government and Opposition* 55, no. 2 (2020): 1-21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Rafał Pankowski et al., "Radical nationalism in Poland: From theory to practice," *RIGHT-WING IN EUROPE* 157 (2013): 162

<sup>4</sup> See, Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Vol. 22, no. 8, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> See, Mudde, "Populist radical right", 1167-1186

<sup>6</sup> See, Luke March, *Radical left parties in Europe*. Routledge, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 3

focus of these parties exercising valence politics<sup>8</sup> remains on non-positional social and political issues,"<sup>9</sup> for example, fighting corruption, governance reforms, transparency, and moral integrity while presenting themselves as ones from the ordinary people. The conception of valence populism falls closer to the 'centrist' populist parties<sup>10</sup>. However, the difference is that the former (centrist) terminology "directly or indirectly refers to the ideological or geometric center of the party system."<sup>11</sup> However, the valence populists do sometimes adopt particular positions. Nevertheless, an unadulterated conception of populism still shapes their position on social and policy issues, and are "therefore flexible, free-floating and, often, inconsistent." "Valence populists thus subscribe to a 'pure' version of populism, meaning that they are neither right-wing nor left-wing, neither exclusionary nor exclusionary."<sup>1213</sup>

After establishing the valence image of populists and theorizing the populism debate across different regions of the world, the study taps into the case of Imran Khan, the current Prime Minister of Pakistan, his political party *Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf* (Pakistan Justice Party) (PTI) and argues that Khan presents an ideal case of valence populist whose ideological shifts on the political spectrum have been helped by the valence image.

## Research Aim:

The study would argue that the non-ideological nature of valence populists helps them move on the ideological spectrum by inundating people with the non-ideological populist rhetoric

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<sup>8</sup> See, Luigi Curini, *Corruption, ideology, and populism: The rise of valence political campaigning*, Springer, 2017

<sup>9</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 3

<sup>10</sup> See, Ben Stanley, "Populism in central and Eastern Europe," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, (2017): 140-158; and Seán Hanley et al., "Economy, corruption or floating voters? Explaining the breakthroughs of anti-establishment reform parties in eastern Europe," *Party Politics* 22, no. 4 (2016): 522-533.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Ucen, "Centrist populism as a new competitive and mobilization strategy in Slovak politics," *Party government in Slovakia: Experience and perspectives*, (2004): 47

<sup>12</sup> Marco Tarchi, "Italy: the promised land of populism?," *Contemporary Italian Politics* 7, no. 3 (2015): 273-285.

<sup>13</sup> Andrea Ceron et al., "e-Campaigning in the 2014 European elections: The emphasis on valence issues in a two-dimensional multiparty system." *Party Politics* 24, no. 2 (2018): 105-117.

of anti-corruption, transparency, and democratic reforms, among others. They are unlikely to take a hard-ideological stance on issues where ideological leaning matters, hence moving along the ideological spectrum to benefit their brand of politics.

This contribution will try to further the concept of valence populism by bringing in the compelling case of Pakistan. Almost all the political parties categorized in the valence category (in the subsequent section on valence populism) fall in the Central and Eastern European region with a common link in communist past. These centrist and valence populist parties in the region emerged during and after the transition period following the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Such a shared link is absent in the case of Pakistan, and therefore it requires a glance into its past. The almost 30-year history of dictatorships in the country and the politics of corruption in the 1990s where four governments were derailed on the pretext of corruption to eventually make way for another dictatorship provide that missing link of reliance on the non-ideological positions in the case of Pakistan. This study target to find out how the PTI populism fits into the scholarly debate on the subject around the world. Therefore, the case of Pakistan not only further explores the theory of valence populism, but also adds to it from the aspect of peculiar authoritarian political past.

The study will focus on the case of the current ruling party *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* (Pakistan Justice Party) (PTI) and its chairperson and incumbent Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, and intends to explain the PTI's ideological shifts under the garb of populist politics, and will attempt to make sense of why such shifts are not more pronounced in under-nourished democracies like Pakistan as compared to the Western democracies.



# Chapter I: The Current State of Populism Research

## 1.1 Populism in Theory

Populism remains one of the essentially contested concepts<sup>14</sup>, given that the scholars even contest the usefulness of the concept. Traditionally, there have been a few influential approaches to studying populism: the (original) discursive approach by Ernesto Laclau<sup>15</sup>, the organizational approach by Kurt Weyland<sup>16</sup>, and the performative approach by Pierre Ostiguy's<sup>17</sup>. However, recently, more and more scholars across the globe have started using the ideational approach<sup>18</sup> to deal with the subject of populism as it moved from Latin America after the turn of the century and into the Western developed democracies. Moreover, the versatility<sup>19</sup> of the ideational approach, as compared to the other approaches, accommodates the use of quantitative as well as qualitative methods. Using the ideational approach, Mudde defines the ideology of populism as "one that views society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous but antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which contends that politics should be an expression of the people's general will<sup>20</sup>." <sup>21</sup> While populists may have different socioeconomic interests, this is not because of class, but because of morality. Mudde further argues that "the people's essence is their purity: they are 'authentic,' while the elite are the opposite: corrupt, because they are not

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<sup>14</sup> Cas Mudde, "An ideational approach," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of populism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2017): 27; Mudde and Kaltwasser. *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> See, Ernesto Laclau, "Populism: What's in a Name," in Francisco Panizza (ed.), *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, Verso, New York, (2005): 48, and Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and ideology in Marxist theory: Capitalism, fascism, populism*, Verso Trade, New York, (2012)

<sup>16</sup> See, Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics," *Comparative politics* (2001)

<sup>17</sup> See, Pierre Ostiguy, "Populism, Democracy, and Representation: Multidimensional Concepts and Regime Types in comparative politics," (In conference) *University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame* (2001), and Pierre Ostiguy et al., "A socio-cultural approach," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2017): 74-96.

<sup>18</sup> See, Mudde, "An ideational approach", 27-47

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Mudde et al., *Populism*, 16

<sup>21</sup> Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, 39 (2004): 542

authentic."<sup>22</sup> Although the scholars argue that "the people" is a construction, Mudde argues that its use has three meanings: "the people are sovereign, as commoners, and as a nation." Furthermore, all these different uses are connected to another feature: "political power, socioeconomic status, and nationality, respectively due to which it is rare to find scenarios where only one mentioned the meaning of people is used."<sup>23</sup>

The thin ideology of populism "in practice is to be found with established, 'thick or thin' ideologies."<sup>24</sup> It being thin centered explains why it is easily malleable. "Thin or thin-centered ideologies do not possess the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency as 'thick' or 'full' ideologies, such as socialism or liberalism."<sup>25</sup> Instead, they exhibit "a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts."<sup>26</sup> Whereas "populist's common-sense solutions follow the general will of all the people, the elite's proposed solutions are representations of special interests."<sup>27</sup> The ideational approach to populism considers the people as homogeneous. Hence, "every call for policies that benefit specific groups, even if it is to remove existing inequalities, is denounced as 'special interest politics.'"

On the other hand, the elite is portrayed as the manifestation of special interests. In theory, "populism is primarily juxtaposed to liberal democracy rather than to democracy per se or any other variant of democracy. Empirically, the most relevant populist actors rally within a liberal democratic framework."<sup>28</sup> Which particular form populism ends up adopting is related to the social

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<sup>22</sup> Mudde, "An ideational approach," 30

<sup>23</sup> Mudde et al., *Populism*, 9

<sup>24</sup> See Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, 39 (2004), pp. 542–563, and Catherine Fieschi, 'Introduction', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9 (2004), pp. 235–240.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Michael Freeden, "Is nationalism a distinct ideology?," *Political Studies*, 46(4), (1998): 750

<sup>27</sup> See Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist"

<sup>28</sup> Mudde and Kaltwasser. *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2017: 2

grievances that are dominant in the context in which it operates. Populists detect and politicize these grievances to their advantage.

## 1.2 Populism Across the World

For a significant part of the populism studies, the focus has remained on the Latin America with the continuing and ubiquitous populist tradition as compared to the rest of the world and the different waves and subtypes of populism witnessed there since the 1930s, i.e., classical (1930s and 1940s), neoliberal (1990s) and radical (1990s and 2000s).<sup>29</sup> Scholars mostly applied the traditional approaches, mainly Laclau's discursive approach, to study populism in Latin America. However, as the phenomenon expanded to almost all other parts of the world and became more relevant in academic studies over the past few decades, scholars have employed different approaches<sup>30</sup> to studying the varying nature of populism in these regions. While populists across the globe employ the same discourse, the ideology of populism is "extremely heterogenous"<sup>31</sup> political phenomenon."<sup>32</sup>

The ever-increasing socioeconomic inequalities in relatively longer democratic periods explain why the ideology of populism triumphed in Latin America. While the concentration of

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<sup>29</sup> Carlos De la Torre, "Populism in Latin America," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2017): 195

<sup>30</sup> While comparing populism in various regions across the world, one finds intrinsic differences on how the phenomena has developed. For example, while it has remained connected to the socio-economic aspect in Latin America, the case is different in Europe where it derives more on the xenophobia and Euroscepticism. Similarly, in India, there was a leftist socialist populism in the 1960s led by then prime minister Indira Gandhi, and the current right-wing Hindutva populism which uses religion in the us vs them debate. Moreover, the cases in Eastern Europe are relatively scarce but the ones that have existed do not fit any other examples around the world. For more distinctions, see the regional debate in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (2017)

<sup>31</sup> The Australasian region has the clearest populist tradition. The right-wing populist parties in New Zealand and Australia emerged in the 1990s, following a very similar pattern in the Western Europe at that time. The 1997 Asian economic crisis provided impetus to the emergence of populism in Southeast Asia, resulting in an abrupt end to the rise of the Asian Tigers. The populist leaders exploited the widespread dissatisfaction with the now discredited old leaders and policies, by combining nationalism and populism and attacking the neoliberal "globalization". In the case of Africa, populism has been relatively rare, since most of the countries are still authoritarian or at best highly-flawed democracies. In the case of the Middle East, populism became relevant in the region in the twenty-first century, with the exceptions of Muammar Gaddafi (Libya) and Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt). Even in democracies like Israel and Turkey, it has become a characteristic of both ruling and opposition parties. While Arab Spring was not populist per se, populist rhetoric was central to the mobilization of many of its participants. For more on populism across the globe, See, Cas Mudde and C.R. Kaltwasser, *Populism: A very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2017): 21-41.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 21

power with elite appeals the populist discourse, the periodic recognition of relatively free and fair elections provides a forum for voters where they can channel their dissatisfaction with the state of affairs, which also explains why populist parties in Latin America garner so much support: "they promise a government in which people rule themselves instead of being ruled by the oligarchy."<sup>33</sup>

The U.S. populism also differs from elsewhere in the world in "institutional and historical aspects."<sup>34</sup> Institutionally, the U.S. constitution constrains and fragments political expression. Instead, "the political candidates in the U.S. express populism in their discourse to a greater or lesser degree, and within social movements,"<sup>35</sup> or as Grattan has argued, "in extra-institutional formations such as economic cooperatives."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, populism in Europe provides another peculiar picture of the phenomena, where it exists in the form of populist parties, both new and established, which became a feature of European politics in the 1990s "in response to frustrations over the effects of both older and newer transformations of European politics and society, such as European integration and immigration."<sup>37</sup> Across the continent, various radical populist parties emerged, combining the ideology with authoritarianism and nativism. The current xenophobic nature of populism in Europe derives from the combination with nativism: "a specific conception of the nation, which relies on an ethnic and chauvinistic definition of the people."<sup>38</sup> "Often this multitude of political parties have been insurgent forces, but over time some of these have moved into being established parts of their respective party systems."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 27-28

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Lowndes, "Populism in the United States," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of populism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2017): 232-247.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> See, Laura Grattan, *Populism's power: Radical grassroots democracy in America*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2016).

<sup>37</sup> Mudde et al., *Populism*, 34

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> See, Paul Taggart, "Populism in Western Europe," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2017).

The post-communism period nurtured populist sentiments, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. These feelings were especially strong in the first elections after the fall of communism, and the 'broad umbrella parties' represented "the people" against the elite of the Communist Party. As the post-communist societies transitioned, some populist actors tried to exploit the growing political dissatisfaction with a discourse of "stolen revolution" and rallied for a "real" revolution to get rid of the corrupt elite post-communism.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.3 Valence Populism

Individual populist actors tend to be left or right, conservative or progressive, and religious or secular depending on the context and region. However, there is another category, where the populist leaders or the political parties tend not to take hard political or economic stances and instead stick to the non-ideological issues in their political rhetoric: practicing valence politics. These types of populist leaders and political parties fall closest to the centrist populist parties that mainly emerged in Central and Eastern Europe following the transitional period and hopping on the "stolen revolution" bandwagon.

Barisione presents and develops 'valence image' as the essential trait of such a populist leader falling in the valence category. "A 'valence image'," according to Barisione, "denotes all those leadership-related perceived attributes, which are both personal and politically relevant, as they allow inferences and estimations about the style and quality of a candidate's performance as a political leader."<sup>41</sup> This valence image is ideologically vague and malleable, rather than just personal or political. "More importantly, it is made up of elements which strictly pertain to the vocabulary of leadership: from such traits as effectiveness or trustworthiness, to the classical

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<sup>40</sup> Mudde et al., *Populism*, 36-37

<sup>41</sup> See, Mauro Barisione, "Valence image and the standardisation of democratic political leadership," *Leadership* 5, no. 1 (2009): 41-60.

ingredient of 'vision'.<sup>42</sup> It is mainly consensual, avoiding the creation of divisions among the electorate.

Zulianello has categorized the European populist political parties into right-wing, left-wing, and the third category of valence populism. Along with the 'populist radical right,' the right-wing populist grouping includes 'national-conservative populists,'<sup>43</sup> and the 'neoliberal populists.'<sup>44</sup> In contrast, the parties in the left-wing populist group are the ones that co-opt various forms of socialism with populism. These parties include 'social populists'<sup>45</sup> and 'national-social populists.'<sup>46</sup> Zulianello introduces the third category of valence populism<sup>47</sup>. This category of valence populism falls closest to the centrist populist parties, the examples of which could be found in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>48</sup> These populists "offer little more than 'valence considerations' and hence, do not fall in the right or left categories, nor exclusionary or inclusionary, as they 'defy positional definition altogether'".<sup>49</sup> The principal focus of these parties exercising valence politics<sup>50</sup> remains on non-positional social and political issues,<sup>51</sup> for example, fighting corruption, governance reforms, transparency, and moral integrity, while presenting themselves as ones from the common people.

The conception of valence populism falls closer to the 'centrist' populist parties<sup>52</sup>. The difference is that the former (centrist) terminology "directly or indirectly refers to the ideological

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<sup>42</sup> Barisione, "Valence image", 55

<sup>43</sup> Rafał Pankowski et al., "Radical nationalism in Poland: From theory to practice," *RIGHT-WING IN EUROPE* 157 (2013): 162.

<sup>44</sup> See, Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe*, Vol. 22, no. 8, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (2007).

<sup>45</sup> See, Mudde, "Populist radical right", 1167-1186

<sup>46</sup> See, Luke March, *Radical left parties in Europe*. Routledge, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 3

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth M. Roberts, "Left, right, and the populist structuring of political competition," in C. de la Torre (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, Routledge, Abingdon (2018).

<sup>50</sup> See, Curini, *Corruption, ideology, and populism*, Springer, 2017

<sup>51</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 3

<sup>52</sup> See, Ben Stanley, "Populism in central and Eastern Europe," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (2017): 140-158, and Seán Hanley et al., "Economy, corruption or floating voters? Explaining the breakthroughs of anti-establishment reform parties in eastern Europe," *Party Politics* 22, no. 4 (2016): 522-533.

or geometric center of the party system."<sup>53</sup> While the non-positional social and policy stances distinguish valence populists from others, the valence populists do sometimes adopt particular positions. However, an unadulterated conception of populism still shapes their position on social and policy issues, and are "therefore flexible, free-floating and, often, inconsistent."<sup>54</sup> "Valence populists thus subscribe to a 'pure' version of populism, meaning that they are neither right-wing nor left-wing, neither exclusionary nor exclusionary."<sup>55</sup><sup>56</sup>

The phenomenon of valence populism has so far been only studied in the context of European politics. The parties fitting the definition include Human Shield (Z.Z.) and Bridge of Independent Lists (MOST) in Croatia, ANO 2011 in the Czech Republic, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) in Bulgaria, Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy, Lithuanian Centre Party (LCP) in Lithuania, Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OL'aNO) in Slovakia, List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ) in Slovenia, and All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland' (B.A.) in Ukraine.<sup>57</sup> Except for M5S in Italy, all the parties fall in Central and Eastern Europe. One possible explanation is the rise of centrist populist parties following the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>58</sup> Most of these parties emerged on the back of dissatisfaction among the masses in these post-communist states with the political elite of that time and exploited the bandwagon of "stolen-revolution" and called for a new "real" revolution. In contrast, scholars peg the emergence of M5S in Italy to the crisis of representation in the country.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See, Ucen, "Centrist populism," 47

<sup>54</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 3

<sup>55</sup> Marco Tarchi, "Italy: the promised land of populism?", *Contemporary Italian Politics* 7, no. 3 (2015): 273-285.

<sup>56</sup> Andrea Ceron et al., "e-Campaigning in the 2014 European elections: The emphasis on valence issues in a two-dimensional multiparty system." *Party Politics* 24, no. 2 (2018): 105-117.

<sup>57</sup> See Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 4-6

<sup>58</sup> See, Ben Stanley, "Populism in Central and Eastern Europe," in Kaltwasser et al. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2017): 140-160.

<sup>59</sup> See, Liza Lanzzone et al., "Riding the populist web: contextualizing the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy," *Politics and Governance*, (2015).

## Chapter II: Case Selection and Methodology

### 2.1 Valence Populism and the Case of Pakistan

In the 73 years of its existence as a sovereign state, Pakistan has spent the majority of its time under military dictatorships, with intermittent truncated periods of democratic rule. In those under-nourished democratic periods, Pakistan has witnessed two distinct phases of populism in the country. The first one was during the late 1960s and 1970s, where Zulfikar Ali Bhutto<sup>60</sup> made use of the socialist populism.<sup>61</sup> He formed his political party: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and included other elements such as religion to further his brand of politics, but the ideological positioning remained center to the left. His populism exploited the narrative of corruption and dissatisfaction of the people with the then-dictator General Ayub Khan to propagate a populist-left brand of politics. Bhutto was elected as the first democratic prime minister of Pakistan and ruled till 1977 before a military general overthrew him.

The second phase of populism in Pakistan, however, presents an ideological cluelessness and inclines towards the term valence populism, as discussed above. The entire politics of Imran Khan, the current prime minister of Pakistan, has focused on demonizing the ruling elite as corrupt, transparency, governance reforms, social justice, and moral integrity. The last parliamentary elections in 2018 in Pakistan marked the second successful completion of five years of uninterrupted democratic rule and a transition of power, without a military coup. Khan's PTI came into power on the back of populist rhetoric amid what several scholars have called perceived military support, which was evident from limited electioneering space for the opposition parties as

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<sup>60</sup> See, Arif Hasan, "The roots of elite alienation," *Economic and Political Weekly* (2002): 4550-4553.

<sup>61</sup> See, Mudde, "Populist radical right", 1167-1186.



well as politically motivated cases against the opposition leaders.<sup>62</sup> While the PTI was founded in 1996, it only emerged as a significant player in Pakistani politics fifteen years later from 2010 onwards as Khan embarked on a countrywide campaign, with alleged backing of the establishment, to woo the people against the 'corrupt leadership' of the country. The campaign was partially successful as in 2013, the PTI managed third-highest representation in the National Assembly, the lower house of the country's Parliament while gaining a simple majority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K.P.) province and formed a government with coalition partners. Khan continued his populist rhetoric even after the elections and took to the streets to protest the election results, terming them as a stolen mandate and calling for electoral reforms and held a 126-days long sit-in in the capital. This followed the anti-corruption rhetoric against the then incumbent PMLN's remaining term as the PTI capitalized on the Panama Scandal to propagate an already charged narrative to the masses and held several political rallies to woo the masses against the ruling leadership.

Zulianello's conception of valence populism becomes helpful in understanding the particular nature of this populist government. The whole rhetoric of PTI leading up to the 2013 elections and during the whole term of PMLN (2013-2018) ranged from democratic reforms to arresting the corrupt and improving transparency. Furthermore, the PTI also saw an opportunity in co-opting the military-establishment when the latter's relations with the PMLN deteriorated over several foreign policy and domestic issues. Since assuming power in the federal government in 2018, the PTI has continued to propagate the populist rhetoric by blaming all the issues on previous leaderships and also framing politically motivated cases against the opposition.

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<sup>62</sup> See, Aqil Shah, 'Pakistan: voting under military tutelage', *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 1 (2019): 128-142; Aqil Shah, 'Pakistan in 2018: Theft of an Election', *Asian Survey* 59, no. 1 (2019): 98-107.

While the phenomena of valence populism in the context of Eastern and Central European countries can see a common link in the communist past and the reliance of the centrist political parties on the dissatisfaction regarding the government affairs during and after the transition period in the 1990s and 2000s, Pakistan lacks that shared link. Instead, the history of approximately thirty years of dictatorship and PTI's co-optation of the country's military provides the missing link here. In the past, all the democratic governments were toppled by the dictators on the pretext of prevalent corruption, the crisis of governance, and demonizing the politicians as evil. The major examples of these can be witnessed in the 1990s when four democratically elected governments were derailed by the military establishment, which eventually resulted in the third military coup in the country in 1999. The PTI's adoption of this valence rhetoric of corruption among other non-ideological aspects can be traced back to these similar tactics employed by the military dictatorships. Moreover, the perceived military support of the PTI in the lead up to the 2018 elections also bolsters the argument.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.2 Research Methodology

With a focus on discourse<sup>64</sup> and populism, the study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)<sup>65</sup> and Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)<sup>66</sup> methods to analyze the speeches of Imran Khan and his party's manifesto. These approaches have been widely used in populism studies, and this study also utilizes the methods to extract vital information needed to answer the research

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<sup>63</sup> See, Shah, 'Pakistan: voting under military tutelage', 128

<sup>64</sup> See, Ruth Wodak, Majid Khosravi-Nik, and Brigitte Mral, eds. *Right-wing populism in Europe: Politics and discourse*. A&C Black, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> See, Linda A. Wood and Rolf O. Kroger, *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text*, Sage, 2000: 3-33; Ruth Wodak, and Michael Meyer, eds. *Methods of critical discourse studies*. Sage, 2015; Ruth Wodak, and Michal Krzyzanowski. *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Norman Fairclough, "Discourse and power," in *Language and power*, London: Longman (1989).

<sup>66</sup> See, Ruth Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach" in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds. *Methods of critical discourse studies*. Sage, 2015

question. The purpose of choosing a qualitative method is to analyze the themes and patterns from the speeches and texts to ascertain a pattern and establish the findings to support the research aim.

For this purpose, ten different speeches of Imran Khan were chosen for discourse analysis. Moreover, the PTI's party manifesto was also analyzed to establish the claims made in the document as compared to the performance of the PTI government since coming into power at the center in Pakistan. Besides, the scarcity of quantitative data on measuring populism, especially in the case of Pakistan where hardly any significant work has been done on populism in general and Imran Khan in particular, makes the use of qualitative method necessary. Hence, the analysis of populist rhetoric and the type of populism can only be done by analyzing Khan's speeches and party documents and comparing them to the decisions taken by the PTI in seven years of its government (two at the center and seven in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K.P.)).

The peculiar nature of populism in Pakistan is discussed in the previous sections, and a detailed analysis of speeches and texts follows using the CDA and DHA methodology. More speeches could have been analyzed, but due to the time and word-limit constraints of the study, the sample was reduced to the most relevant speeches. Although most of these speeches are available on YouTube and Dailymotion, among other video-hosting platforms, the content is still limited. For example, the dozens of speeches that were delivered at the 2014 *dharna* (Azadi March) are not all available online due to a ban on YouTube in the country from 2012 till 2016. Therefore, the newspaper articles were also used to access the transcripts of some of the relevant speeches. The speeches were deliberately chosen across different years, i.e., 2011-2018, to get a holistic understanding of Khan's politics since emerging as a significant force to challenge the mainstream established parties till finally winning the elections in 2018 and becoming the prime minister of the country. A consistent mechanism was devised to breakdown the context, clarities, and situation

of each speech to ensure the extraction of relevant information from each speech and to see whether the findings are generalizable or not. The analysis employs a mixture of Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach and Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. A detailed discussion of the findings from the discourse analysis follows to establish the argument according to the research aim. The empirical analysis will primarily look at discourse employed by Imran Khan, mainly keeping in view the non-positional issues as discussed earlier in the valence populism section to establish whether he fits into the definition of a valence populist. Secondly, the establishing of the previous point will provide a ground on Khan's ideological cluelessness in politics. Finally, the discussion will go towards the link that provides impetus to such valence politics in the country and allows movement across the spectrum relatively easily.

## Chapter III: Empirical Analysis

Using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), the study will analyze the following speeches and texts to support the hypotheses. The selected speeches from PTI's 2014 *dharna* (protest) and four speeches from the 2016 Pakistan *Ehtesab* (Accountability) March were analyzed together, keeping in view the similarity of speeches at the same event and condition by the same person.

### List of Speeches and Policy Documents:

1. Imran Khan's speech at Minar-e-Pakistan (National Monument of Pakistan)

On October 31, 2011, Imran Khan addressed a gathering of approximately a hundred-thousand people – termed by many as the breakout moment for Khan at the national level.

2. Selection of 2014 *dharna* (protest) speeches from Islamabad

In 2014, following a continuous war of words with the opposition and allegations of irregularities in 2013 general elections, Imran Khan led a protest movement (*Azadi March*) to the capital, asking for several reforms and the resignation of the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The protest started on August 14, 2014 (Independence Day of the country), and continued till December 17, 2014. Khan addressed the supporters in dozens of speeches, and a few selected ones will be analyzed here.

3. Pakistan Ehtesab March 2016

Following the exposure of Panama Papers in 2016, the PTI announced a series of protest rallies across Pakistan to mount pressure on the incumbent PMLN government, focusing on the anti-corruption rhetoric and an investigation against the then incumbent prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Imran Khan addressed four rallies in different cities, culminating in a massive rally in Lahore towards the end of the year.

#### 4. Victory speech, 2018

Imran Khan addressed the nation in a live televised address on July 26, 2018, soon after it emerged that his party (PTI) was in a leading position to form a government with the help of some allies.

#### 5. 2018 PTI Party Manifesto

The study will analyze selected parts of the PTI's latest manifesto, primarily focusing on the subjects directly related to the valence populism, such as corruption and governance.

### 3.1 Analysis of Speeches and Policy Documents

#### 3.1.1 Speech Analysis

##### *Speech 1: Minar-e-Pakistan (National Monument of Pakistan) Rally Speech – October 31, 2011<sup>67</sup>*

Up until the October 31, 2011 rally in Lahore, Imran Khan and his party Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) were hardly considered as a significant force in the political spectrum of the country. In that context, a gathering of over a hundred thousand people in the provincial capital of Punjab province changed the political scene overnight. There was a general political vacuum as the country had returned to democracy only three years ago in 2008 after almost a decade of dictatorship. In this scenario, where the government of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was at odds with the military-establishment, PTI emerged as the alternative party to the two mainstream parties: PPP and PMLN. Allegedly backed by the establishment and championing the mantra of anti-corruption and good governance, Khan launched his political tirade in a series of political rallies towards the end of the first democratic term since the dictatorship of Musharraf in 2008.

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<sup>67</sup> The speech can be accessed online here: <https://bit.ly/2OLyRAE>; and the transcript is available here: <https://bit.ly/2ZT0vCp>

The October 31, 2011 speech chosen for analysis establishes this mantra employed by Khan over the next few years till the 2013 general elections.

Questions	Clarities	Situation
Who?	Chairperson <i>Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf</i> (Pakistan Movement for Justice) (PTI)	Election rally at Minar-e-Pakistan (Pakistan's national tower in Lahore)
On what occasion?	General political rally to launch the political movement	The political movement capitalized on the poor civil-military relations and the crisis of governance at that time
Where?	Minar-e-Pakistan Ground, Lahore	Minar-e-Pakistan is the national monument of Pakistan. Pakistan Resolution was passed at the place of the monument in 1940, which subsequently led to an independent country in 1947.
When?	Sunday, October 31, 2011	Although the Election Commission laws of Pakistan state that the electioneering can be done during the interim government period, but most political parties tend to start political campaigns a year in advance.
To whom?	Explicit  Implicit	Address to the supporters of the party Members of the then government lead by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and another rival party Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PMLN)

Via Media	Mass media of transmission	Orally delivered speech to the attendees of the rally as well as live telecasted to the general public through over 25 private news channels
Purpose	Electioneering and asking the politicians to declare their assets and threatening to a civil disobedience movement.	The speech was delivered at a political gathering to make a show of power in the traditional stronghold of PMLN (the provincial government of Punjab province)
Form	Speech	Long speech ( <i>loud, repetitive and metaphorical</i> )
About	To gather political capital, warning the political opponents of declaring their wealth and cleanse the system of corruption.	The speech is an address to the masses to make a show of power by numbers. This speech was effectively the start of PTI's election campaign for 2013 polls.
Rhetorical Genre	Speech	Deliberative speech speaking about outcomes and intending to generate support for the given action and policy.

#### Speech Analysis:

Imran Khan's approximately 50-min long speech is laden with metaphors and rhetorical statements. Being a former cricketer, he tends to use cricket references. Due to the popularity of the game in the country, he made sure to use references such as "inswinger will dismiss both the players" – referring to the two main opposition political parties: PPP, PMLN that their time is over and it was the turn of "honest and godsend politicians"; "you will not be able to buy the umpires this time around" – referring to alleged corruption in elections with the help of the election commission. Other than the cricket metaphors, the most used words were "change," "naya (new) Pakistan," "tsunami (of people)," and his comparisons with the founding fathers of the country:



Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal. The location of the speech, Minar-e-Pakistan (The National Monument of Pakistan), further added to the significance of bringing up the founding father of the country as Jinnah had presented the Pakistan Resolution in 1940. Khan has modeled his entire political campaign as him being the true follower of the founding fathers and called to form a *naya* (new) Pakistan. Other than blaming all ills in the country on the two other mainstream political parties: PMLN and PPP, the speech directly "otherizes" the followers of these political parties, terming them as ignorant and presenting himself and PTI as the only viable option for the country. Khan uses words such as "*patwari*" (village accountant)<sup>68</sup> in a derogatory sense for the followers of the PMLN while terming the then President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari as a coward and a "goon of the U.S."

Using the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), the findings show that Khan's speech is a manifestation of Pakistani rulers using "constructive and discursive macro strategies"<sup>69</sup> to form a narrative about the Pakistani identity, by associating himself with the founding father of the nation, while maintaining a belligerent hostility towards 'the other' (the PMLN and PPP). However, in the case of Pakistan, the problem only exacerbates as the state struggling to form a consensus on its own national identity is pegged against 'the other.' Contrary to the perceived outlook of the speech, which was intended to force the politicians to declare their assets and decreasing corruption, the fifty-minute long address varies from demonizing other political parties as the scourge of the country and presenting PTI and Khan himself as the messiah. The most repeated word used is "*tabdeeli* (change)"; the promised change, which, according to him, will come with him coming to power. Wodak's socio-diagnostic critique<sup>70</sup> helps understand the context which is

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<sup>68</sup> *Patwari* maintains the land ownership records in designated localities and undertakes the collection of land taxes

<sup>69</sup> Ruth Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies*, Sage publishers (2002): 71-72.

<sup>70</sup> Wodak "Discourse-historical approach", *Methods*, 65

concerned with "demystifying the possibly persuasive or 'manipulative' character of discursive practices."<sup>71</sup> Given the context, when Khan was emerging as a significant political player in the country mainstream scene, the empty language of blaming politicians as the reason of all the ills facing the country – a tactic employed by the dictators in their almost three-decade intermittent rule in the country – played well with the masses, as it did when the dictators used the same stance during their regimes. DHA informs us that a combination of "constructive and destructive strategies"<sup>72</sup> is employed where the continuous demonizing and the otherizing of past politicians and especially those belonging to the PPP and PMLN is used to shape the opinion of the public. Jalal defines this penchant of the Pakistani state to morph history according to conventional imaging as "projecting the 'us' as the positive self in creative imaginings and 'them' as the negative other."<sup>73</sup> While doing so, Khan manages to create a binary between the 'wretched politicians' and the 'evil elite' who have stored all their wealth in foreign accounts. In all this, Khan stays away from criticizing the military's misadventures in toppling the democratic set-ups, while also presenting himself as the true leader that the nation needs. His calls for civil disobedience in case the government fails to meet his demands further represent the populist rhetoric and demonstrates the "destructive macro strategy."<sup>74</sup>

Throughout the speech, Khan uses religious references such as being the blessed one and examples from Prophet Muhammad's life to present himself as a godsend, ticking the definition of a messiah in the minds of the masses. He presents himself as the righteous leaders as compared to the 'evils' Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif. This can be seen from the lens of "preservative or

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Wodak and Meyer, *Methods*, 71-72

<sup>73</sup> Ayesha Jalal, 'Conjuring Pakistan: History as official imagining', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 1, 1995, 73

<sup>74</sup> Wodak and Meyer, *Methods*, 71-72

justificatory" strategy to conserve the Muslim identity – touted as the reason for the formation of Pakistan and the only element joining the whole nation together. Especially on the topic of War on Terror, Khan brings up the Muslim identity and vows to never use the country's military "against its own citizens" – even against the terrorist outfits. Khan also uses the preservative strategy to discuss the Kashmir issue by pegging the Muslim identity of Kashmiris against the Hindutva ideology. The destructive strategy is finally employed, "aiming at the destruction of any other narrative that is not compatible with Khan's views. For example, despite the available information regarding the harms of the use of coal as an energy source, Khan terms the opponents of coal energy as enemy and evils. According to him, coal power is the solution to the country's power issues despite dangerously rising air pollution levels in the region. Moreover, in the same breath, he terms Pakistan as a rich country whose wealth (allegedly USD 100 billion) has been stored out of the country. Finally, he addresses the people and terms his followers as the rebellious against the system and the government. Wodak's transformative strategy<sup>75</sup> can help explain this from the point of changing the identities.

*Speech II: Selected 2014 Islamabad Dharna (protest) Speeches<sup>76</sup>*

In 2014, following a continuous war of words with the opposition and allegations of irregularities in 2013 general elections, Imran Khan led a protest movement (*Azadi March*) to the capital, asking for several reforms and the resignation of the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The protest started on August 14, 2014 (Independence Day of the country), and continued till December 17, 2014. Khan addressed the supporters in dozens of speeches, and a few selected ones will be analyzed here. The purpose of analyzing a number of these speeches together is the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Imran Khan delivered dozens of speeches in the 126-day long protest in Islamabad. Most of the speeches are available online on YouTube and Dailymotion.

similarity of the situation they happened. The protest lasted for approximately four months, and Khan addressed the participants almost regularly.

Questions	Clarities	Situation
Who?	Chairperson <i>Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf</i> (Pakistan Movement for Justice) (PTI), Member National Assembly	Protest sit-in in the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, following a range of allegations of corruption and malpractices in the general elections of 2013
On what occasion?	Protest sit-in termed as <i>Azadi March</i> (Freedom March)	PTI, led by Imran Khan, held an almost four-month-long sit-in in the capital to protest against the alleged irregularities in the 2013 polls. During the sit-in, Khan delivered several threatening speeches against the government and even called for a civil-disobedience movement against the government.
Where?	Democracy Square (D-Chowk), Islamabad, Pakistan	D-Chowk has been a popular spot in the capital near the Parliament and other top government offices, which has seen various protests in the past.
When?	August 14, 2014 – December 17, 2014	The march began from Lahore on August 14, 2014, finally reaching Islamabad. The protest continued till December 17, 2014, when it was abruptly called off after a terrorist attack in the northern city of Peshawar.

To whom?	Explicit  Implicit	Address to the supporters of the party. Members of the then government of PMLN, led by Nawaz Sharif, judiciary and Election Commission of Pakistan.
Via Media	Mass media of transmission	Orally delivered speeches to the attendees of the march and then sit-in as well as live telecast to the general public through news channels and social media.
Purpose	Seeking ouster of incumbent PMLN government and the resignation of Prime Minister; Electoral reforms; Anti-corruption reforms; Re-conduct of elections	The speeches at the Islamabad sit-in mainly targeted the PMLN and its leader Nawaz Sharif for alleged vote fraud and demanded an inquiry as well as reforms followed by a snap election.
Form	Speeches	Long speeches ( <i>loud, repetitive and metaphorical</i> )
About	Alleged vote fraud in 2013 elections; demands for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's resignation and a snap election	The speeches at the march usually repeated the same content of demands and goals.
Rhetorical Genre	Speeches	Deliberative speeches, constituting a repetition of demands and specific anti-government rhetoric and intending to generate public support against the incumbent government.

### Speech Analysis:

The speeches at the 2014 protests were laden with similar rhetorical elements, as seen previously as well. While the whole point of these protests was to force the government to conduct an inquiry into four electoral constituencies, Khan mostly diverged to criticizing the other political

parties, mainly the PMLN (who came into power following the 2013 general elections). Khan continuously brought up the issue of corruption in elections and continued to link it to the alleged corruption of the PMLN and PPP without citing any proof. He criticized the Metrobus Transit systems and Lahore and Islamabad, especially throughout his speeches. At the same time, he continued to present himself as the messiah, the one who is out there to get every corrupt politician in the country. The otherization and demonization of anyone who did not support his views and party continued throughout the speeches while he also incited the followers to civil disobedience and attacking the government buildings, which resulted in dozens getting injured.

The most used pronoun in Khan's speeches was "I," narrowing down the focus of speeches to himself. This shows the explicit powerplay at work to tell his point of view.<sup>77</sup> In most of his speeches, he uses phrases such as: "Their time is over, they have looted Pakistan as much as they could." Here, they/them is used for corrupt politicians, especially the leadership of the PPP and PMLN, to otherize them as the source of all the evil in the country. He explicitly displays power by portraying the negative image of his opponents. Imran Khan has used the modal verb "will" many times in his speeches to show the degree of affinity<sup>78</sup>. Sometimes, he showed a subjective degree of affinity and sometimes an objective degree of affinity to display explicit and implicit power play in his discourse. As far as the vocabulary is concerned, Khan's speeches during *dharna* were laden with words like "culprit," "fraud," "murderers" to describe the evil elite while describing the ordinary people as "poor people," "unemployed," "powerless" and "minorities." By using these words in his vocabulary, he goes on to establish 'us vs. them' divide, presenting him as

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<sup>77</sup> Fairclough presents his three-dimensional model of CDA in *Language and Power*. The model "is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse, for it views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways through which social and political dominance is exercised in discourse by 'text and talk'." He outlines three dimensions to his CDA model: textual, discursive and societal levels. For more on Fairclough's 3-D model, see, Norman Fairclough, "Discourse and power," in *Language and power*, Longman, London, (1989): 36

<sup>78</sup> See, Norman Fairclough, "Discourse and text: Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis," *Discourse & society* 3, no. 2 (1992): 193-217.

the savior who will always stand with the downtrodden. At a discursive level<sup>79</sup>, the speeches show that Khan has brought the Islamic discourse into the political discourse. While the majority of the *dharna* audience being Muslim does present a logical explanation to appease the masses by openly professing the religious dictums, Khan uses them to incriminate the opposition through his discourse. At the societal level<sup>80</sup>, the order of discourse is to specify the relationship of the instances of social and discursive practice to the orders of discourse it draws upon. In one of his speeches, he first mentioned the government's efforts to shut down K.P. province, and then uses another discourse to blame an opposition leader for disallowing people to come to protests. After that, he threatens Nawaz Sharif that he and his party will shut down the whole country.

*Speech III: Speeches During Pakistan Ehtesab [Accountability] March Rallies 2016<sup>81</sup>*

Following the Panama Leaks scandal in 2016, where the Sharif family also named among the list of foreign nationals and dignitaries, the opposition went on the offensive and called for forming a judicial commission and asking the prime minister to step down to ensure impartial proceedings. After the government's delaying tactics and call for the formation of a parliamentary committee instead of a judicial commission, the PTI announced a series of protest rallies across the country to mount pressure on the government, focusing on the anti-corruption rhetoric and an investigation against the then incumbent prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Imran Khan addressed four rallies in different cities, culminating in a massive rally in Lahore towards the end of the year following which the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the formation of a judicial commission

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Peshawar speech: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4nmraa>, August 7, 2016; Islamabad speech: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4omlld>, August 13, 2016; Jhelum speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wi9f-vRjgys>, August 24, 2016; Lahore Speech: <https://twitter.com/PTIofficial/status/772132590111354881>, September 3, 2016

and tasked the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to proceed with action against the prime minister and his family.

Questions	Clarities	Situation
Who?	Chairperson <i>Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf</i> (Pakistan Movement for Justice) (PTI), Member National Assembly	Multiple rallies in different cities
On what occasion?	Protest rallies against the incumbent prime minister Nawaz Sharif to probe his personal and family's undeclared offshore properties	Protest rallies to push the government and the judiciary for the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the Sharif family's offshore properties after their name appeared in the infamous Panama Leaks.
Where?	Peshawar, Islamabad, Jhelum, Lahore	
When?	August 7, 2016 – September 3, 2016	Peshawar protest: August 7, 2016 Islamabad protest: August 13, 2016 Jhelum protest: August 31, 2016 Lahore protest: September 3, 2016
To whom?	Explicit  Implicit	Address to the supporters of the party Sharif family, especially the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif



Via Media	Mass media of transmission	Orally delivered speeches to the attendees of the rally as well as live telecast to the general public news channels and social media.
Purpose	To demand the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the offshore properties of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and family.	The four speeches across a span of four weeks focused on the Sharif family despite numerous other people from Pakistan being also named in Panama Papers, to gain political mileage as the PTI had been championing the cause of anti-corruption.
Form	Speeches	Long speech ( <i>loud, repetitive and metaphorical</i> )
About	Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's link with offshore accounts and properties unveiled after Panama Leaks and subsequent demands for inquiry through a judicial commission to prosecute him.	The speeches intended to woo the masses against the incumbents on anti-corruption rhetoric.
Rhetorical Genre	Speeches	Deliberative speeches focusing on the Sharif family and demanding the judiciary to take action against the Prime Minister for alleged corruption and hiding his assets.

### Speech Analysis:

The speeches at the 2016 protests were laden with similar rhetorical elements, as seen previously as well. The point of these protests was to force the government and judiciary to initiate proceedings against Nawaz Sharif, and his family's (who were named in Panama Papers) alleged offshore properties through a judicial commission. However, Khan used the moment to further mount pressure on the government by demanding prime minister's resignation, hoping to reignite

his politics after the abrupt end of the 2014 protests. The four speeches in Peshawar, Islamabad, Jhelum, and Lahore surrounded a single agenda of corruption, mainly focusing on the incumbent prime minister. Khan's speeches at these rallies followed a similar format. Firstly, he criticized and launched a diatribe against then-incumbent prime minister, demanding his resignation. Then he brought up the previous rhetoric of all the current and former leaders being corrupt and how the country's economic situation has deteriorated over the years. And then, finally, he presented himself as the solution to all the problems created by the ruling elite.

The use of pronouns "I" and "We" remained high to show his conviction and forming his opinion as a collective of his followers. The use of these pronouns continuously also suggests a power play of words. Khan's sentence structure remains rhetoric and argumentative. He adds unverified numbers and figures to bolster his arguments. For example, while talking about the country's rulers and previous governments, he states that: "These leaders and other corrupt elite have stashed nearly USD 200 billion in Swiss accounts and other tax-havens," and then goes on to connect his argument with the names appearing in the Panama Papers to strengthen his argument. "They have looted the country for years and taken their wealth abroad... When I was your age (addressing the youth at rallies), Pakistan had the highest growth rate in the region, now we are at the last number in the region."

Khan then goes back to cite the founding fathers of the country: "They would have been ashamed of what has come of this country..." Citing references from Quran and Prophet Muhammad, he bolsters his arguments regarding the rulers being "honest" and "truthful" according to the religious edicts to sound more persuasive. Khan further cites the examples of Iceland Prime Minister who resigned amid the Panama controversy and asks Nawaz Sharif to follow suit. Khan amalgamates his speeches with numerous conditional sentences using the predictive methodology.

For example, "if all the wealth of Pakistanis stashed abroad is brought back, Pakistan would not need to seek loans from anywhere... The elite of the country has been taking the wealth of the country. We need to create an environment to increase confidence among people to keep their wealth in the country. Otherwise, we will keep on losing..." Khan continuously employs the phrase "have to" to provoke the audience to action against the incumbent leadership or previous ruling parties.

In all four speeches, Khan brought up his vision – what falls under the societal analysis under Fairclough's model – by repeating valence statements as eradication of corruption, improvement in governance, capturing all the corrupt leaders and evils of the society, taking care of the underprivileged (to seek sympathies), and modeling the *naya* (new) Pakistan on the model welfare state of Medina from 1400 years ago (keeping in view that his audience is Muslim dominated). He continuously cites various cases of Prophet Muhammad and his companions regarding education and justice and general socioeconomic welfare of the people throughout his speeches to portray himself as a true follower of religious teachings. "It is a matter of the future of this country. We need to take action today against this corrupt elite to progress... PTI will hold everyone accountable, even if it is someone from our party... The judiciary has been compromised in the past. Nevertheless, we still trust it to take action against the corrupt and will pursue the cases till the logical end..." While the primary target of these rallies was the incumbent prime minister, Khan continued to digress to other political parties, demonizing everyone who did not agree to his agitational politics and continuously threatened to bring the country to a standstill by locking down the cities. Khan also uses interrogative pronouns – a discourse marker – to connect with the audience. "Why do they run abroad? Why do they take all the money abroad?"

*Speech IV: Victory Speech, 2018 General Elections*<sup>82</sup>

Prime Minister-elect Imran Khan addressed Pakistanis from his private residence in a live-televised address on July 26, 2018, the day after the 2018 parliamentary general elections, soon after it emerged that his party (PTI) was in a leading position to form a government with the help of some allies. PTI won 149 seats in the National Assembly and, with the help of minor parties and independent candidates subsequently formed a coalition government.

Questions	Clarities	Situation
Who?	Chairperson <i>Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf</i> (Pakistan Movement for Justice) (PTI), Member National Assembly (Lower house of the Parliament); Prime Minister-elect of Pakistan	Victory speech a day after 2018 general elections when it emerged that the PTI was in the lead and were in a position to form a coalition government at the center.
On what occasion?	2018 general elections victory speech	2018 parliamentary elections
Where?	Imran Khan's private residence, Bani Gala, Islamabad	
When?	July 26, 2018	The day following the 2018 parliamentary elections.
To whom?	Explicit  Implicit	Address to the nation as well as international audience Threat the opposition of accountability

<sup>82</sup> The video link and full transcript of the speech can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/3eMu3pa>

Via Media	Mass media of transmission	Orally delivered speech broadcasted on the state as well as private and international news channels and social media.
Purpose	To claim victory in 2018 general elections.	Victory speech a day after 2018 general elections when it emerged that the PTI was in the lead and were in a position to form a coalition government at the center. The purpose was to show the political opponents as well as the followers of the party that they had enough numbers in the Parliament to form a government.
Form	Speech	Long speech ( <i>calm, repetitive and metaphorical</i> )
About	2018 general elections; claiming victory	The speech is an address to the nation in general and PTI supporters, in particular, to claim victory as well as to lay out his government's strategy on a wide range of domestic as well as foreign affairs.
Rhetorical Genre	Speech	Recorded speech about election victory speaking about the proposed strategy of his government, action against corruption and reforms of the system.

#### Speech Analysis:

Most repeated words and phrases in the speech	
Words and phrases	Number of repetitions
We	49
I	38
Will	41
Pakistan	29
We will	17
Want to	16
Prophet Muhammad	11

The analysis includes the textual, processing, and social analyses following Fairclough's 3-D model.<sup>83</sup> The textual part focuses on linguistic analysis<sup>84</sup>. The transcript of Imran Khan's first speech following the 2018 parliamentary general elections can be divided into three distinct parts contextually. In the first, Khan addresses his followers and supporters, and thanks for their continuous support to date. The second part includes a focus on the socioeconomic problems faced by Pakistan due to the faulty policies of the previous governments. Lastly, the speech moves to the solutions part and presents PTI's general strategy to tackle the issues both domestically and internationally. Khan's sentence structure is declarative and argumentative. He brings in facts and figures to bolster his argument to make them more progressive. For example, while talking about the previous governments, Khan describes the lifestyles of leaders both in the federal and provincial governments. "Pakistan's Prime Minister has over 500 workers, dozens of cars, of which 33 are bulletproof. Each of these cars cost 50 million rupees... Then there are helicopters and airplanes. The Prime Minister house spans over 1100 canals... Then there are extravagant Governor Houses, Rest Houses, Chief Ministers' Houses. Furthermore, they have hundreds of secretaries..."

Instead of speaking in the third person, Khan's narrative remains the first person. He uses "I" and "we" 38 and 51 times respectfully. While it is evident that he uses "I" for himself, the word "we" is used both for his party PTI as well as when Khan describes his voters as a part of that collective to show a combined approach of formulating the opinion. Some of the most repeated two-word phrases include "we will" (19), "want to" (16), "will be" (13), "I want" (11), and "we

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<sup>83</sup> See, Norman Fairclough and Clive Holes, *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*, Pearson, Harlow, (1995).

<sup>84</sup> This Linguistic analysis focuses on "morphology, semantics and syntax, the sound system and cohesion organizations above the sentence level." For more see, Ibid, 57.

want" (9). Khan makes religious references including from the Quran, Prophet Muhammad, and his companions, the founding fathers of Pakistan to seek authentication and sound more persuasive to the masses and make a strong and successful impact on his audience. He delicately uses discourse markers such as "First of all," "secondly" among others to maintain coherence and retain the audience. He amalgamates the U.S. economic policies and the glorious Islamic past and the examples set by Prophet Muhammad and his companions. He compares these policies to the former Pakistani governments of PPP and PMLN to convince people they have been deliberately misguided and economically murdered by them.

While Khan mostly uses the Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structure; he also makes use of conditional statements. Some of these examples include: "We will have to change our ways, the way we think... We should soften our hearts for the poor, the downtrodden: half of our population who cannot even afford two meals in a day. We cannot feed 45 percent of Pakistan's poor children... Without making a radical change in our approach, we will fail millions of our out of school children. They need our help. If the country's population continues to increase at the current rate and we cannot educate our children, they will fail to make a decent livelihood; if conditions remain so, who will solve the water issue." The phrase "have to" is used to instigate the masses to action to mobilize the desired socioeconomic change.

"The discourse practice has two phases: institutional process and discourse process," according to Fairclough's model.<sup>85</sup> For him, "discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand and discourse, language and text on the other."<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile, the intertextual process "focuses on the borderline text and discourse practices in the analytical

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<sup>85</sup> "The institutional process includes the editorial procedures while the discourse process includes the changes the text goes through in production and consumption." For further details, see, Ibid 58-59.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 60

framework which is looking at the text from the perspective of discourse practice, looking at the traces of the discourse practice in the text."<sup>87</sup> The speech's processing analysis informs that formal and contextual links are employed to enhance the cohesiveness of the body. The interrogative pronouns also work as a discourse marker to grab the attention of the audience as "Why do they run abroad? Where does all the money go? The Speaker National Assembly had a budget of 16 crores rupees; what did they do?" Both links promote "inter-textuality" in the context.

From a social analysis<sup>88</sup> perspective, Khan starts his speech by thanking his supporters for their support throughout thick and thin – resembling any other formal commencement speech. He goes on to present himself as someone whose only pursuit in politics was to rid the country of corrupt leaders and make it a model "Islamic" welfare state. Such a statement is a general assertion a political leader makes to appear sincere. Khan cites numerous references from Islamic thought, as Pakistan has a history of combining religion and politics. He refers to Prophet Muhammad and asserts that he reformed history by establishing a model welfare state of Medina. Furthermore, he references the Quran and cites the translation of verses from there. For example, he cites: "In Quran, God asserts that He would not change the fate of a nation if they are not sincere themselves and do not strive to change for better." He continues to cite various cases of Prophet Muhammad and his companions regarding education and justice and the general socioeconomic welfare of the people. Binding oneself with religion remains one of the aptest approaches in politics in the country, and that is precisely the reason why Khan reviews the teachings of Islam for the general population.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>88</sup> The social analysis of a speech according to Fairclough's model "analyzes the text of the speech in socio-cultural context of communicative events." For more on social analysis, see, Fairclough and Holes, *Critical discourse analysis*, (1995).



Khan then talks about the economic situation of Pakistan and the problems that lay ahead. He then follows it by presenting his tentative plan to address these issues. The prime minister-elect employs examples from history how other nations resolved these issues. He also brings the founding fathers of Pakistan into the argument to repeat their vision and how his vision also aligns with them. Khan also discusses the massive wealth inequality in the country and promises to shift the balance in favor of the poor of the country by increasing economic opportunities. He also argues for merit promotion both in the government jobs as well as in the overall culture of the country. These flurry of statements present Khan's political enthusiasm.

Understanding the lack of tax culture in the country and high practice of tax evasion, Khan uses the Islamic concept of *zakat* (almsgiving) to encourage people to pay taxes as religiously as they pay *zakat*. The Islamic reference is again employed to present Khan as a true follower of God who will protect the taxes – hence indirectly vying for more support of the people. Khan then moves on to discuss the merit and the lack of it in the governmental positions as well as overall in the society. He again invokes an Islamic edict and asserts that the rulers should be *sadiq* (truthful) and *ameen* (ethical). "They can have no conflicts in their motives. The west has these laws." Khan makes a comparison with the Western world to gauge how far behind Pakistan is and to encourage people to make an effort for their own and country's progress. Along with this argument, he also presents himself as honest and truthful to act as a role model.

Khan then moves on to discuss the country's finances and argues that his party will end Pakistan's reliance on external debts for the betterment of the financial health of the country. He argues that PTI will mobilize local resources as much as possible to fulfill the financial needs. Khan then uses emotional statements such as "you need to realize that when these people give us money, they attach conditions to it." These statements laden with emotions serve the purpose of

gaining sympathy for his mission and also tempt people to start paying their taxes. Subsequently, Khan invites turns his attention to the overseas Pakistanis. He requests the overseas community to help their home country and help build the economy by investing as well as bringing their money from abroad to Pakistan to help the country with its forex exchange problems. "For overseas Pakistanis, I have a special message. We are going to work hard to create a good investment environment for you. We want you to move your money to Pakistan and park it in Pakistani banks to help the country address its foreign exchange issues. Send your money through official accounts. We need your help." Khan's belief in the overseas Pakistanis stems from the overwhelming support he got from them in the runup to the general elections. He then moves on to address the underlying social issues in the country: governance reforms, anti-corruption steps, judicial reforms, replication of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K.P.) province police model in Punjab, education and healthcare reforms, construction of dams, civil services reforms, local body systems to devolve power, and climate change. Khan finally comes back to criticizing the opposition parties by using the prediction methodology<sup>89</sup>, asserting that if Pakistan had elected these 'corrupt' leaders once again, the country would not have been able to withstand the situation.

### 3.1.2 Policy Document Analysis

#### *2018 PTI Manifesto<sup>90</sup>*

<b>Most repeated words and phrases in the speech</b>	
<b>Words and phrases</b>	<b>Number of repetitions</b>
We will	284
Pakistan	150
PTI	66
Ensure	74
Policy	42

<sup>89</sup> "Such approaches are employed to assign varying values, usually uncooperative or prejudice" For more on the predictive methodology, see, Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, *The Semiotics of Racism. Approaches in Critical Discourse Analysis*, Passagen Verlag, (2001).

<sup>90</sup> The 2018 PTI Manifesto can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/2CQ2MVH>

Development	40
People	36
Education	33
Climate change	17
CPEC	11

The 2018 general elections PTI manifesto is laden with loud calls of drastic change (*tabdeeli*) with slogans of justice and humanity and sets hugely ambitious goals. The party chairperson Imran Khan promised to root out corruption and make an honorable Pakistan where people from abroad will come to work. The 2018 manifesto built on the 2013 version, which focused on education and health as forms of social justice. The 2018 document proposes to extend PTI's health insurance schemes throughout the country after having a phased launch in K.P.: extending to government employees after launching it for low-income households.

The manifesto makes tall claims by envisioning ten million jobs and five million housing units for people without going much into values the specifics of the targets and plans. It is only backed by the argument that the projects will be financed by curbing corruption and bringing back the ill-gotten wealth by the corrupt elite from abroad. It also vows to revive Pakistan's industries and provide incentives for employment generation without going into details. It also touches the subject of the creation of new provinces, especially the long advocated South Punjab. It also pledges to transform Karachi, the biggest city of the country, as well as the uplifting of Baluchistan province. It further promises to bring experts from abroad to help the government. The document further stresses the need for a green revolution and boasts of PTI's track record in this regard as a statement of intent.

The PTI's manifesto takes on the established PMLN who are famous for their action and delivery model. The PTI's central argument in the manifesto remains the fight against corruption.

Much of the message, as discussed in the speeches' analysis previously, revolves around the ridding of evils that plague the country. PTI also bolsters its argument by claiming credit for the disqualification and subsequent indictment of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Overall, the language of the documents is much measured as compared to the 2013 version, where it made claims such as ending corruption within three months if elected. However, PTI's experience of five years running a provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K.P.) perhaps taught them that some targets are impossible to meet after their government came under criticism for failing to evolve an accountability system and failing to implement some other significant initiatives.

Furthermore, Khan has remained critical of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) since its launch in 2014. The word CPEC appears eleven times in the document. The document raises concerns over the Chinese state companies' monopoly over the projects and lack of job opportunities for the locals. However, it does term the CPEC as a 'golden opportunity' for Pakistan only if more and more localization is achieved in the projects through partnerships and local labor. Moreover, PTI champions sustainable initiatives for economic development to decrease taxation on businesses and also focuses on curbing tax evasion in the country: termed as one of the main problems plaguing the country's progress.

The election manifestos in Pakistan hardly ever present the accurate picture of what will transpire if a party wins the legislative and subsequently gains the executive. Hence, the tall promises in manifestos and speeches have hardly faced any scrutiny over the years. However, these policy documents do play a critical role in developing an understanding of the party's intent.

### 3.2 Findings and Discussion: Establishing the Case of Imran Khan as Valence Populist

As discussed in the previous chapters, these populists "offer little more than 'valence considerations' and hence, do not fall in the right or left categories, nor exclusionary or inclusionary, as they 'defy positional definition altogether'."<sup>91</sup> The principal focus of these parties exercising valence politics<sup>92</sup> remains on non-positional social and political issues,<sup>93</sup> for example, fighting corruption, governance reforms, transparency, and moral integrity, while presenting themselves as ones from the common people.

In the context of Pakistan, the study focused on the case of the current Prime Minister Imran Khan and his political party PTI. The study aimed to look into the populist image of Khan as a valence populist. Secondly, the study tries to look into the reason for the ideological cluelessness of such populists. Furthermore, finally, it tries to find out why cases such as Pakistan are suitable places for the nourishment of such leaders.

#### 3.2.1 Establishing Khan as a Valence Populist

The study argues that the non-ideological nature of valence populists helps them move on the ideological spectrum by inundating people with the non-ideological populist rhetoric of anti-corruption, transparency, and democratic reforms, among others. They are unlikely to take a hard-ideological stance on issues where ideological leaning matters, hence moving along the ideological spectrum to benefit their brand of politics. Their focus remains on non-positional issues.

The analysis of Khan's speeches over approximately eight years shares similar patterns. Many themes are repetitive, and his focus remains on non-positional issues. For example, the first

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<sup>91</sup> Roberts, "Left, right, and the populist structuring of political competition," (2018).

<sup>92</sup> See, Curini, *Corruption, ideology, and populism*, Springer, 2017

<sup>93</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 3

three sets of speeches analyzed center around the alleged corruption of the country's leadership. All of these speeches follow a similar pattern: criticizing the then incumbent and previous leaders of the country as being corrupt, him [Khan] and his party being the only solution to ridding country of all the problems and presenting himself as a messiah by making religious references, and vowing to make a new Pakistan on the model of the seventh-century state of Medina. Being one of the country's most successful cricketer, Khan always employed cricket references in his speeches to woo the masses, a trend that has continued even after Khan came to power in 2018.

The rhetoric in the four speech analyses remains the same – ridding the country of the corrupt leaders and changing the fortunes of the country through his party vision of what he calls *Naya* (New) Pakistan through "change." In the first speech analyzed from 2011, this remains the focus of the whole speech. In 2014 *dharna* speeches, he kept on focusing the same with the additional context that the 2013 elections were rigged, and the then ruling party PMLN came to power through voting fraud. While in 2016, the center-point of the rallies was also again corruption following the Panama Leaks scandal. In all these instances, the demands from Khan almost remained the same on one pretext or another – the resignation of the prime minister and immediate elections.

The 2011 speech, laden with metaphors and rhetorical statements, was a polemic against the country's two mainstream parties PMLN and PPP. Instead of focusing on any particular issue or providing any evidence to his claims against the other party leaders, Khan employs general rhetoric, using religion to bolster his arguments. Another major theme is recalling the founding fathers of Pakistan to portray himself as honest and truthful as them. He, throughout referred to making a new Pakistan that fulfills the ideals of the founding fathers. Another theme is the otherization of everyone who disagrees with Khan's narrative, terming them as the evil in the

country. Similarly, the 2014 *dharna* speeches, whose theme was to pressure the incumbents into election reforms and investigating the alleged corruption in 2013 elections fell into similar template: blaming the PMLN and PPP as corrupt and thieves and presenting himself as the solution. In 2016, protest rallies were conducted in four major cities of Pakistan to force the government and the judiciary for the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the offshore properties of the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Again, all four speeches followed similar patterns. Unproven claims such as "these corrupt leaders have stashed USD 200-300 billion in Swiss accounts" were made throughout.

The 2018 speech after the general election was relatively measured, given the occasion. While most of the cricket metaphors and religious references were there, Khan's words towards the opposition leaders, in general, were relatively measured. One of the possible explanations could be the possible need to contact other smaller parties to form a coalition, and the continuous hostile attitude towards previous governments could have created hurdles in that regard. Subsequently, the coalition government that was formed included a PML faction by the name of PMLQ – which was formed by General Pervez Musharraf in his dictatorial regime from 1999-2008 and included most of the forced defectors from PMLN and other pursuant of power through king's party. Similarly, the other coalition partner was the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) – blamed by Khan himself as being the party full of criminals and its leader being charged with treason. Moreover, most of Khan's cabinet consists of either the personalities who served in Musharraf's cabinet or retired army officers, who serve as Special Assistants to the Prime Minister or as the heads of the state organizations.

This changing of stance against corruption and taking the same old elite of the country on board to form a government with the co-optation of the army perfectly fits into the valence image.

As Zulianello has argued, the position of such populists remains "flexible, free-floating, and often, inconsistent."<sup>94</sup>

### 3.2.2 Where Does Pakistan Fit in the Valence Populism Debate?

After establishing the valence image of Imran Khan and his party PTI, the study looks into the unique nature of Pakistan. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the studies<sup>95</sup> on valence populism have been mainly done in Europe so far. Moreover, almost all the parties categorized<sup>96</sup> as such have mainly risen in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union and later on at the start of the twenty-first century as a reaction to the governing parties' failures. The specificity of the Pakistani case lies in the historical context. Almost all the parties from the countries in Central and Eastern Europe share a communist past. Furthermore, the development in these countries' post-communist era followed a similar reaction from the opposition political parties.

In the case of Pakistan, there is no such common link. However, Pakistan's over three-decade-long history of dictatorships<sup>97</sup> does help in making sense of these populist attitudes. Khan's tactic of focusing on corruption and demonizing the politicians is argued to be inspired by the country's military establishment and the history of decades of authoritarian regimes. Pakistan's first democratically elected Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was dismissed in a military coup in 1977 on charges of corruption and deteriorating law and order situation and later executed on unsubstantiated charges. During the first two dictatorships (1958-1969<sup>98</sup> and 1977-1988)<sup>99</sup>,

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<sup>94</sup> See, Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 1-21

<sup>95</sup> Zulianello, "Varieties of Populist Parties", 1-21

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 4-6

<sup>97</sup> See, Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A modern history*, Hurst, 2009

<sup>98</sup> See, W. M. Dobell, "Ayub Khan as president of Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs* 42, no. 3 (1969)

<sup>99</sup> See Tahir Kamran, "Politics of Elections and Autocracy in Pakistan: Apprising the Electoral Process During Zia ul Haq's Regime," *Journal of Political Studies* 15 (2009)



political parties were partially or fully banned, and politicians were demonized. Democracy was restored in 1988, but the next decade saw the dissolving of four governments under the military establishment's pressure, which eventually resulted in another coup in 1999. Although political parties were allowed to operate in the last dictatorship of Musharraf (1999-2008), most of the political opposition were either jailed or forced to exile. Many were forced to join Musharraf's political party PMLQ to provide legitimacy to the president. One common theme throughout was the nabbing of politicians on corruption charges. Hence the same stance worked for Khan to woo the masses as it worked.

Thus, the current Pakistan regime fits into the puzzle of valence populism. While, as argued earlier, most of these valence populist parties and leaders emerged in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, Pakistan<sup>100</sup> is an aberration as it sided with the U.S. during the cold war. However, the explanation to such a regime lies in the country's dictatorial past and the current nature of the hybrid regime, which again bolsters the military establishment's narrative.

### 3.2.3 Why the Ideological Cluelessness Does Not Become Visible in the Case of Pakistan

Pakistan has always lacked the serious policy discussions and is one of the reasons why the promises made in the party manifestos leading up to the elections are hardly taken seriously as the blueprint of the party's intent if elected to power. This lack of serious discourse in public in general and scholars and experts in particular stems from the absence of neutral institutions and weak democratic institutions. This is one of the primary reasons why leaders such as Khan in Pakistan have it easy while making populist claims in their speeches.

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<sup>100</sup> See, Mariam Mufti et al., eds. *Pakistan's Political Parties: Surviving Between Dictatorship and Democracy*, Georgetown University Press, (2020).

The answer to this all again lies in the country's history marred by dictatorships that continuously abolished the constitution of the country and kept on adding clauses that empowered the executive at the expense of the other branches: legislature and judiciary. Eighth<sup>101</sup> and seventeenth amendments are examples of infamous amendments which empowered the military dictators to bypass the legislature. Although amendments have been made in the recent past to undo these clauses in the constitution, the democratic institutions in the country remain weak.

Moreover, the reason why the ideological leaning of a party leader does not play a significant role in the elections is the country's patronage politics. The vote banks are divided, with most of the voters opting for the option that their family or patronage networks supported irrespective of the ideological leanings. Such an attitude has also allowed the frequent jumping ships between the parties by the political leaders, especially to the "King's party."

Other than establishing PTI and Imran Khan under the definition of valence populism and discussing the case of Pakistan, the study also looks in some of the points that Khan emphasized in his speeches and party manifesto but failed to implement them took an opposite stance on the issue in later stages. Starting with corruption, Pakistan has fallen one point on Transparency International's CPI from 33 in 2018 to 32 in 2019 – indicating a worsening of the situation in that regard. Since 2018, numerous opposition figures were arrested by the country's National Accountability Bureau (NAB) under frivolous charges and were kept in custody without a charge-sheet, raising concerns from various advocates of democracy both locally and abroad. Most of these leaders were later exonerated by the courts, dealing a blow to the government's accountability drive.

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<sup>101</sup> Government of Pakistan, "The Eighth Amendment," *Constitution of Pakistan (1973)*

Secondly, Khan continuously argued in his election campaigns and rallies for renegotiating the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) terms. However, after coming to power, the work on the projects almost stalled for almost two years. After almost two years, the pace of the work on the projects increased as Khan took a backstep on his commitments, and the military-establishment stepped in by forcing the government to appoint a retired lieutenant general to head the CPEC Authority.

Similarly, on education and health, the budget allocations have hardly seen any significant increase. The budget for Higher Education Commission – the authority which oversees the affairs of universities and funds the public institutes – was cut by half in two years. Moreover, the promise of expanding the healthcare insurance system throughout the country also remains unfulfilled.

Moreover, as compared to the general focus of valence populists on non-positional issues such as corruption, transparency, and governance, Khan continuously used religion throughout his campaign and even after coming to power. This again shows that sometimes such populist leaders do take some positions which add to their advantage. Moreover, focusing on religion in a Muslim-dominated conservative country does serve the same purpose. Hence the constant references of modeling *naya* Pakistan on the seventh-century Islamic state of Medina.

## Conclusion

Expanding on the populist literature, the study looked into the various forms of populism across the globe and different approaches employed to study it in academia. With a research aim to study the ideological cluelessness of some populist leaders, the study specifically focused on the valence populism, which has been studied in the context of Central and Eastern Europe in the post-communist regimes in the region. After establishing the valence populism as a potential framework, the study moved to analyze the case of Pakistani populism.

The current ruling party *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* (PTI) and its chairperson and the current Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan came to power on the back of populist rhetoric following the 2018 parliamentary general elections. 2011 saw a sudden rise of Khan on the political scene of the country employing populist rhetoric focusing on anti-corruption, morality and governance reforms and continued up till his election as the prime minister of the country in 2018. The study analyzed various sets of Khan's speeches to find out the themes and discourse he employed and proved his compatibility with valence populism. The study then discussed the specific case of Pakistan in terms of valence populism as compared to Central and Eastern Europe, where the phenomenon has been previously studied. The study identified the differences between the case of Pakistan and the valence political parties of Central and Eastern Europe. While the latter region shared a communist past and transitioned to democracies at almost the same time, and therefore, the emergence of valence populist parties in the region was also synced, Pakistan had a different history. While the Soviet communism did not directly impact it, Pakistan did side with the U.S. in the Cold War. However, the roots of valence populist rhetoric lie in the three-decade-long dictatorships in the country. These dictators sometimes even held elections to seek legitimacy and employed similar populist rhetoric to champion their rule. The inculcation of the demonizing of

politicians transcended generations, and even a return to democracy in the country was not smooth because of these reasons. Therefore, it became an acceptable tool for some parties like Khan's PTI to employ valence populist rhetoric to demonize the previous government by terming them corrupt and immoral.

Lastly, the study focused on the reasons why the ideological cluelessness and a shift on the ideological spectrum by some leaders are not as pronounced as the case of Western democracies. The reasons identified were the undernourished democratic institutions because of the truncated democratic periods in the country. The latest democratic cycle is only 12-year-old with 2018 elections being only the second successive time where a democratically elected government finished its five-year term. Furthermore, it was also argued that the existence of patronage politics in the country also impedes the focus of the citizens on the ideological positioning of the leaders, hence helping leaders such as Khan move on the spectrum relatively easily to their political benefit.

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