

RELIGIOUS INSTRUMENTALIZATION IN THE GENESIS OF PAKISTAN: A BREEDING GROUND FOR POPULISTS

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is one of the two states which appear on the world map as an ideological state. Pakistan's ideology is based on Islamic religion. Religion was instrumentalised by the elites and leaders of the Muslim League to mobilise people for a new independent state for Muslims of the subcontinent. This tactical use of religion for political objectives was intentionally entrenched in the masses of Pakistan, eventually leading to long-lasting implications for the post-partition era. Among many others, one crucial consequence is the emergence of populist leaders in Pakistan. This article assesses Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Imran Khan, and TLP's populist tactics in line with the religious ontological foundations of Pakistan. The article concludes that Bhutto, Khan, and the TLP utilise their rhetoric by appealing to the religious sentiments of ordinary people. Whether it was Bhutto's elusive dream of a great Muslim Ummah, Khan's utopian ideas of forming the State of Madinah, or TLP's prophecy of the finality of prophethood, all leaders instrumentalised religion to nurture their political goals. Finally, the article argues that the instrumentalisation of religion by the founding leaders of Pakistan is the cornerstone of the rise of populist leaders in Pakistan.

Keywords: Islam, Populism, Identity, Rhetoric, Elites, False Consciousness

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has marked a rise in diverse problems in world politics. Climate change, nuclear proliferation, economic insecurity, food shortages, failed states, terrorism, and other related problems create challenges for humanity worldwide. Traditional political parties within nation states fail to protect their citizens from the negative repercussions of these challenges. Therefore, people worldwide are eagerly looking for alternative leaders to overcome these challenges. In this situation, populists portray themselves as Massiah, a solution to all problems of the masses (Barber, 2019). As reactive beings, people rushed towards populists and embraced them as leaders. Therefore, the contemporary era witnessed a surge in populist leadership worldwide. Donald Trump in the USA, Narendra Modi in India, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, Marine Le Pen in France, Viktor Orban in Hungary, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, etc. are few examples of populists

across the globe (Jordan Kyle, 2018). Pakistan is no exception to this global rise in populism.

Populism itself is a thin ideology, and it cannot withstand without the support of any other thick ideology, such as religion (Stanley, 2008). Therefore, populists always have something to persuade the public and maintain their political support base. In Pakistan, populists adhere to Islamism and withhold religion as the most powerful tool to convince the public. Pakistan was formed in the name of Islam, as the Muslim League asserted a separate identity for Muslims based on religion (Islam, 1981). The Muslim League struggle established a foundation for contemporary populists in Pakistan. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is based on Islam and sustaining Pakistan's Islamic identity is crucial for its survival, as it is the only unifying factor for keeping the diverse ethnicities of Pakistan together. However, on the other hand, religious populism is exacerbating extremist tendencies in Pakistan as

populist thrive on this religious foundation of Pakistan. With time, due to the result of many factors, including populist rhetoric as one of the significant factors, Pakistan's society is slipping towards radicalization.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the first populist Prime Minister of Pakistan. A landlord-turned-politician, Bhutto, was equipped with perfect rhetorical skills. He galvanised public support for the illusive dream of Islamic Socialism (Zaidi, *The Triumph of Populism: 1971-1973*, 2017). Imran Khan was a cricketer turned politician and another populist Prime Minister of Pakistan. Khan nurtures a political support base by showing the general public the utopia of Riasat-e-Madina (State of Madinah) (Ihsan Yilmaz Z. A., 2022). Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) is a religious populist party that appeared on the political scene after 2010 and managed to mobilize a significant public in no time (Ihsan Yilmaz & K., 2022). Bhutto, Khan, and the TLP's leadership were able to mobilise people behind illusive dreams and utopias because of the religious identity of Pakistan. This article assumes that religion was strategically inculcated in the masses before the partition of the sub-continent and was constantly nurtured by state institutions in post-partition Pakistan. Populists survive and thrive on this particular aspect of religion, which is implanted in the public.

Literature Review

Populism is a new development in the twenty-first century. Scholars worldwide are working on populism in various ways. In the case of Pakistan, little work has been done on populism and related matters. In Pakistan, populists always withhold religion as a mobilising factor which can be traced back to the pre-partition era. Religion was utilised by the Muslim League to achieve Pakistan, a breeding ground for populists in the contemporary era. Religious instrumentalisation in the genesis of Pakistan and its relationship with populists in the contemporary era is an intriguing phenomenon which has not been explored by existing scholarship. Hundreds of books are produced on Islam and Pakistan. However, the use of religion as a mobilising factor in the creation of Pakistan has not been systematically analysed.

Among the limited scholarship, an article by Yilmaz explored how religious and political leadership in Pakistan consolidate its power base in

Pakistan's politics. The author delves into the state's use of religion to maintain the identity of Pakistan. It is argued that to keep Pakistan united, its religious ontology should be preserved. Therefore, state institutions constantly carry out Islamisation projects (Ihsan Yilmaz K. S., 2021). The authors' arguments are plausible. Pakistan's Islamic identity is crucial for its unity. In Pakistan, Islam is the only unifying factor. In line with Yilmaz and Shakeel's work, this article tends to progress knowledge by exploring the use of religion in the pre-inception struggle for Pakistan and how it acts as a foundation for the rise of populists.

Rastogi explored the genesis of populism in Pakistan by delving into Pakistan's pre-inception political dynamics. He argues that religious populism propelled the struggle for Pakistan. Muslim League leaders construct a narrative of the two-nation theory based on distinct religions. Religious narratives drove Pakistan's struggles. This was a strategic move by Muslim League leaders, as they did not find any other unifying factor in bringing diverse ethnicities together for a single cause. Thus, religion has been integrated into Pakistan's day-to-day politics. After the creation of Pakistan, the use of religion was practiced to keep the people of Pakistan united. Pakistanis' religious sentiments were nourished in multiple ways. Therefore, religion has become an essential force in Pakistan's political arena (Rastogi, 2021). The authors' arguments in this article are convincing. In line with the author's assumptions, this article traces religious populism to Pakistan's pre-inception history. It is assumed that the Muslim League leadership strategically used religion to create Pakistan. Thus, religion has become an essential part of Pakistan's ontology. This article intends to extend the available scientific literature by building on existing scholarships. In the quest, in this article, religious instrumentalisation in Pakistan is linked to the rise of populists in the contemporary era. It is assumed that the discourse employed by contemporary populists resembles that used by Muslim League leaders to create Pakistan.

Research Methodology

This study is purely qualitative and relies on unobservable realities interpreted through qualitative content analysis. Data for the first half

of this paper were extracted from books on the history of Pakistan by renowned authors. Articles from reputed journals and newspapers were primarily consulted in the second half of the research paper. This non-experimental explanatory and analytical research relate religious instrumentalisation in the pre-partition era to the rise of populism in post-partitioned Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

Elite Instrumentalism is the most suitable theoretical framework for this study. In elite instrumentalism, one school of elite theorists argues that elites use and abuse the identities and ideas of the masses through the invention of traditions in the interests of the elites (E. Hobsbawm, 1984). One of the most prominent scholars of this school of thought is Paul Brass, who has explored the political dynamics of the Indian subcontinent. Brass pays special attention to political elitism choices of linguistic, cultural, and religious markers to build political coalitions that favour territorial autonomy (Brass, 1991). Brass's works surround the elite's use and abuse of the masses' identities for political gain. Within this school, a strong band of elite theory holds that elites construct, use, and abuse the national identities of the masses, whose identities are plainly unauthentic. Consequently, the masses' cognitive capacities are seriously challenged and they live in false consciousness (Hobsbawm, 1985).

In line with Elite Instrumentalism, it is assumed that Muslim League leadership in the pre-partition era intentionally constructed the vague and ambiguous identities of Muslims in the subcontinent. A handful of Ali Garh elites used this constructed identity for political motives. Consequently, the Muslims of the subcontinent led to false consciousness regarding their identity, and the urban elites thrived on their false consciousness of their vested political interests. This religious instrumentalism by urban elites and the subsequent construction of a religious identity form a breeding ground for populists in post-partition Pakistan. Akin to the Muslim League leadership, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Imran Khan, and TLP leadership astray mass in Pakistan to false consciousness for their vested political interests. Bhutto's dream of Islamic Socialism was an elitist quest for mass mobilisation. Khan and his utopia of Riasat-e-Madina was a strategic move for enhancing the

public political base. Finally, the TLP and its motive for being the custodian of the finality of prophethood is nothing more than a tool of political mobilisation. In all three cases, political elites use and abuse Pakistan's religious identity for their vested political interests.

Conceptualizing Religious Populism

Religious populism refers to public sentiments based on religion, which disguises every matter in religion and intentionally proposes religious solutions to political issues. Religious populists employ religion as a tool to mobilise the public and enhance their political support base. Therefore, they paint every domestic and international matter in religion. Moreover, religious populists show public religious utopias and ask them for their support in reaching that goal. In this process, religious populists gain political votes and utopia is never achieved. Religious populism galvanises public support for political purposes by using religion as a mobilising factor (Zúquete, 2017).

Elites, Political Islam, and the Genesis of Pakistan

Pakistan appeared on a global scene on 14 August 1947. Unlike other states, Pakistan is an ideological state based on the vague, volatile, and ambiguous ideology of Islam. The ambiguous ideological foundation of Pakistan creates many problems. Apart from many other issues, its genesis as a seedbed for the rise of Populists, particularly Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Imran Khan, which is the primary concern of this paper. Before going towards that particular aspect, it is vital to understand the tactical/strategic use of Islam employed by Muslim League leaders in their struggle for autonomous regions before subcontinent partition.

The demographic features of the Indian subcontinent reveal that Muslims were in the minority in the United Provinces and Bombay, while they were in the majority in provinces such as Punjab, Bengal, Sindh, and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The Muslims of minority areas, a handful of Ali Garh products in most cases, occupied important posts in the government and were from the urban elite class. Naturally, they fear Hindu domination and were insecure about their future positions because of their minority status.

Henceforth, they wage a struggle for an independent region for Muslims, free from Hindu influence (Jaffrelot, 2002). On the contrary, the Muslims of the majority of regions were not inclined to separatist tendencies due to a lack of incentives. Therefore, there was opposition to the question of separation between Muslims in majority and minority areas.

The political elites were aware that their idea of separation could not be materialised until the Muslims of the majority provinces bought their idea of separation. Interestingly, they do not have anything to offer to persuade the vast majority for separation, except capitalising on the religious differences between the two communities – Hindus and Muslims. Accordingly, they decided to mobilise the general mass using Islam, as they did not have anything else to offer. Here, it is worth mentioning that Islam itself is a belief system that is part of all Muslims' everyday lives. When Muslim leaders projected this belief system as an ideology to deny diversity and differences, it became a Political Islam.

Islam thrives on people's emotional and spiritual insecurities, and Political Islam plays upon these insecurities by exploiting them. The history of the Indian subcontinent is full of such examples, in which Muslim leaders exploit the religious beliefs of laypeople. The beginning of political Islam can be accredited to the Hindi-Urdu conflict, which emerged in the 1860s and intensified towards the end of the nineteenth (19th) century. Initially, the conflict was passive, but it gained immense momentum when Muslim leaders began to use emotional religious discourse. The fierceness of the conflict can be credited to Muslim (and Hindu) extremist leaders who did not spoil any opportunity to fuel the fire. Against the backdrop of the Hindu-Urdu conflict, Muslim leaders propagated that Hindu interests were at variance with those of Muslims and that these two communities were intrinsically different from each other. For instance, on 13 May 1900 Nawab Mohsin-ul Mulk said, "... come on, Muslims! Let us make a final attempt with confidence in God's mercy: We have the power to hold the sword in our hands..." (Ahmad Saeed, 2019). Such speeches, full of religious rhetoric, by Muslim leaders polarised society and created an unbridgeable chasm between Hindus and Muslims.

The Construction of "us versus them" and the role of Britishers

With the dawn of the twentieth century, Muslim leaders began to fold every matter religious context. Meanwhile, the Muslim press manifested hostility towards Hindus. In December 1906, the All-India Muslim League (AIML) was created to secure the interests of Muslims. With the formation of the AIML, Muslim leaders vocally asserted the genesis of two nations – Muslims and Hindus. They emphasised that the two communities are still divided in their habits, customs, traditions, race, and religion. Ameer Ali, who is widely accredited with the formation of the London Muslim League, asserted that "the Muslims have common ideals, and by tradition of race and religion form a nationality quite apart from all other people of India" (Ahmad Saeed, 2019). Congress leaders such as Hitavadi denounced Ameer Ali and the company for sowing seeds of dissension between Hindus and Muslims. Muslim League leaders never bother with such allegations and carry out their projects.

The Britishers were always ready to capitalise on the differences between the two communities by alternating favours between them. One of the significant developments in the stripping of Muslims from Hindus was the introduction of the Minto-Morley Reforms in 1909. These reforms granted Indian Muslims the right to separate the electorate (Koss, 1967). Colonial masters sow seeds of communalism (Khan, 2019) through their well-practiced divide-and-rule strategies. After the Minto-Morley Reforms, the electioneering of Indians was limited to wooing their religious brethren and lighting on religious rather than political issues. This provides a seedbed to extremist factions among Muslim (and Hindu) leaders to amplify the dispute between the two communities, and they exploit this opportunity in a Machiavellian manner.

The efforts of Gandhiji and Muhammad Ali Jinnah led to a brief period of unity among the two communities, and they signed the Lucknow Pact in 1916 (Owen, 1972). Unfortunately, this phase lasts very short due to stark opposition from extremist Congress and League leaders. Meanwhile, a group of Muslims started the "Khilafat Movement" against the backdrop of the Ottoman's defeat in World War I. The purpose of the Khilafat Movement was to preserve the symbolic

superiority of the Ottoman Caliph, because Muslim leaders believed that with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, they would lose their honour and prestige (Minault, 1982). Moulana Muhammad Ali, a renowned figure of the Khilafat Movement, articulated the fears of sub-continent Muslims in 1920 by declaring that the caliphate was the most essential institution of the Muslim community throughout the world. He captured the sentiments of their co-religionists by playing on the emotional circumstances of the time. During this movement, another religious group, Jamiat Ulema Hind, actively opposed the British and called them enemies of Islam. The leaders maintained that the British were prejudiced against Islam, and that Muslims should not cooperate with them. Nonetheless, the Khilafat Movement failed but inspired religious scholars to get around politics by discarding their cloistered lives. This began another distinct phase of Indian politics, where more malicious elements became part of it. From then until the partition, religious clerics cleverly used semantics to exploit the religious sentiments of Muslims to strengthen their support base. It is also worth mentioning that the champion of the Pakistan Movement, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, still advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1924, he stated, "The establishment and continuation of foreign rule in India was the direct outcome of disunity among the Hindus and the Muslims" (Ahmad Saeed, 2019).

Muslim League Failure and the Instrumentalization of Religion

Fast forward: In the 1937 General Elections, the Muslim League could only secure 5% of votes. The majority of votes in the majority of Muslim provinces were polled in favour of the Unionists in Punjab, Khudai Khidmatgars, literally means Servants of God (also known as Red Shirts) in North West Frontier Province, Krishak Prooja Party in Bengal, and Sindh United Party in Sindh (Taylor, 2018). This was a significant setback for the Muslim League, and Jinnah's vision of making the Muslim League a premier Muslim entity and sole Muslim organisation was still a distant goal. Therefore, Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders resorted to religion. Muslim League leaders assumed that religious platforms could only regenerate their support bases. Thus, they turned towards decisively exploiting Muslims' religious

sentiments. The Muslim League used Islam as a focus for the evacuation of nationalism, playing on its emotional power to attract the attention of Muslims in the streets. Islam became the lingua franca of the Muslim League (Jaffrelot, 2002).

In Punjab, the Muslim League recruited Ulema and formed alliances with several Pirs. Deobandi Ulema, in particular, were recruited to gain political support by exploiting religious beliefs. One such example is the formation of Jamiat-ul Ulama-I Islam under the leadership of Moulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani in 1945. In Sindh, the Muslim League established itself through the manipulation of Islam. Once, the Muslim League mobilised Muslims around a controversial site called Manzil Garh, a site that the Muslim League wants to be regarded as a mosque. In Bengal, the Muslim League also uses the card of Islamic defense by exacerbating the fears of poor Muslims against Hindu domination. Finally, in NWFP, the Muslim League aligned itself with a few Pirs like the Pir of Nanawaki, and they also equated their political opponents, the Khudai Khidmatgars (due to the red colours of their shirts), with "Godless" Soviets. In this manner, Islam was used to turn voters against Nationalist Muslims.

On account of the Lahore Resolution of 1940, Mr Jinnah, for the first time, spoke vocally about the differences between Hindus and Muslims. In his words, "Hindus and Muslims are made up of two different nations which could not live side by side – since they belong to two different civilizations" (Moore, 1983). This was the turning point in Jinnah's political career and Muslim League struggle. After 1940, Jinnah, once considered the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity, did not spoil any opportunity to amplify the differences between these two communities. Muslim League leaders vocally asserted that Congress was an incarnation of the Hindu menace. Accordingly, they exacerbated the fear of Hindu domination and campaigned for the defense of Islam. The Muslim League leaders allege Congress for its bias towards Hindus and circulate [exaggerated] stories of atrocities against Muslims.

Muslim League equates its struggle for separation with the battle for Islam. In the 1945-46 election campaign, the Muslim League used the "Islam in Danger" slogan to mobilise more Muslims (Ziring, 1997). Eventually, this theme became central to all Muslim League activities. While campaigning for

the 1946 elections, the Muslim League consistently used religious arguments; they employed men of religion (genuine or spurious) for propaganda purposes: Ulemas (doctors of religious law) and, above all, Pirs (Sufi Masters) (Jaffrelot, 2002). Muslim League leaders never doubted the vote-gaining potential of religion and their expectations upheld in elections. Muslim League leaders created a brief phase of unity among Muslims, which led to their victory in Muslim majority provinces of Bengal, Punjab, and Sindh in the 1945-46 elections. Undoubtedly, the Muslim League strategy worked as far as election victory was concerned. However, the conservative interpretation of Islam that the Muslim League leaders employed made it divisive vertically and horizontally, and eventually, the subcontinent was partitioned, and Pakistan was created.

Populism in Post-Portioned Pakistan: PPP, PTI and TLP

The implications of the tactical use of Islam by Muslim League leaders in the pre-portioned era were not limited to that particular era. Instead, it went far beyond, and Islam became an essential norm in Pakistani politics. Akin to the Muslim League's use of Islam as a mobilising force, populists in Pakistan employ similar tactics and rely on Islam for political motives (Rastogi, 2021). Since its inception, many populists in Pakistan have used Islam for their vested interest. The use of Islam is evident in populists' rhetoric, political priorities, constitutional reforms, and other areas. Every politician uses Islam for political gain. However, a few leaders, such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Imran Khan, and the TLP leadership, stood out. Therefore, this article is limited to exploring the strategic use of Islam by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP); Imran Khan, founder of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI); and Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) leaders.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his Islamic Socialism

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, an elite with a feudal background, entered politics in the late 1950s as a cabinet member of the then-military dictator General Ayub Khan. Later, he parted ways with his political master and created his political party in 1967, the Pakistan People's Party. Bhutto's lingua franca was the quest for Islamic Socialism (Zaidi,

The Triumph of Populism: 1971-1973, 2017). Disguised as a reformist populist, Bhutto adopted a people-centred approach and strived to appeal laypeople through the instrumental use of Islamic slogans. He was aware that Pakistanis could be smoothly deceived through Islamic rhetoric. Bhutto's tactical use of Islam to gain political support was akin to the Muslim League instrumentalisation of Islam in the pre-inception era.

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is based on the vague and ambiguous ideology of Islam. The pre-partition struggle was strategically propelled by religion. Owing to the excessive use of religion in the creation of Pakistan, Pakistan's ontology is still debated. Is Pakistan's ontology Islamic or Muslim? This is a debate, with one group advocating the former and the other favouring the latter. Bhutto continues and aids in this ambiguity. He exploited this ambiguity for political gains. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was founded on the slogan, "Islam is our faith, Democracy is our polity, Socialism is our economy, all power to the people" (Shah, 2018). The first phrase of the PPP foundation's slogan is related to Islam, which signifies that Bhutto never doubts the vote gaining potential of Islam.

In the 1970s, during a political campaign, Bhutto formulated left-leaning populism for people against the military and oligarchic elite. Interestingly, Bhutto himself was an elite politically nourished by a military dictator. This was a stark contradiction in his personality. Sooner, he aided his populist tendencies with political Islam. Bhutto enriched his rhetoric with religious slogans that propelled mass mobilisation in his favour. The most pertinent instrumental use of religion in Bhutto's era was the 2nd Constitutional Amendment of 1974 (Farooq, 2019). This amendment declared Ahmadi's as non-Muslim. This amendment, aimed at certain political gains, has far-reaching consequences for Pakistan's society. This laid the foundation for the prosecution and maltreatment of Ahmadis in Pakistan. To date, the repercussions of this amendment have been felt. This amendment draws a line of demarcation between Muslims and non-Muslims, and non-Muslims were lowered to second-class citizens. However, this move was supported by the majority, because Pakistan was formed in the name of Islam.

Bhutto flagrantly and deliberately used religion to whip crowds by praising the merits of Islamic Socialism. He rebaptised Muhammedan equality and drove modernisation in the direction of fundamentalism. Calling Pakistan a Middle Eastern state and an anchor of Muslim states in the Indian Ocean, marking Pakistan's nuclear program as the creation of an Islamic Bomb, equating Pakistan's Army with the Army of Islam, and rapping every political matter quasi-theocratic narrative were a few significant Islamist Populist measures adopted by Bhutto (Zaidi, 2017). Finally, during the 1977 election campaign, Bhutto feared opposition victory. To tackle this growing fear, Bhutto relied on Islam for its political objectives. As religious parties led the opposition alliance, Bhutto proclaimed that the country's law was now a Shariah Law to neutralise the opposition's danger.

Imran Khan and his Riasat-e-Madina

Another intriguing case of populists' use of religion for political motives is Imran Khan, who remained Prime Minister of Pakistan from 2018 to 2022. A cricketer turned politician, Khan, was a hero of the 1992 cricket World Cup. He was a philanthropist accredited to the foundation of the first-ever cancer hospital, Shoukat Khanam. Therefore, Khan obtained a perfect populist foundation for his political career (Neo Sithole, 2023), and he exploited this opportunity in a Machiavellian way.

Imran Khan was from a liberal upper middle class who spent most of his life in Western style. He was known for his lavish lifestyle. However, after entering politics, Khan's personality drastically changed. He sought to rediscover his Islamic heritage (Ihsan Yilmaz K. S., 2021). This transition was pragmatic and instrumental. Soon after entering politics, Khan realised that the only way to survive and thrive in a conservative Islamic society was to embrace Islam, at least rhetorically. He asserted Islamist tendencies to nurture his political career. From being pro-Taliban to the constitutional amendment for Islamising Pakistan, Khan readily used Islam to mobilize the public in his support.

To begin with, Khan's party, PTI, formed a coalition government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) with a hard-line right-wing political party, Jamaat Islami (JI). Further, during the PTI's government in KPK, the curriculum was Islamised.

Quran classes across schools were made mandatory. On the other hand, the KPK government granted 300 Million PKR to Darul Uloom Haqaniya in 2016 and 227 Million PKR in 2018 (Dawn, 2016; News, 2018). This religious institute is well known as a jihadist seminary, which was linked to the murder of Benazir Bhutto. The PTI coalition with a religious hardliner and its financial support to the Jihadist Seminary was politically strategic move and significant part of Khan's Islamism. In 2018, when the PTI formed a National Government, Khan repeatedly praised and advocated for the Taliban – religious extremists. According to Khan, "Pakistan and the US created Taliban by glorifying Jihad ..." (Afzal, 2019). On another occasion in 2022, Khan argues, "Taliban break chains of slavery ... they are fighting Jihad" (Dawn, 2021). Khan's speeches were full of Taliban advocacy, which was another central pillar of Khan's Islamism.

Riasat-e-Madina's rhetoric drove the 2018 election campaign for the PTI. Throughout the election campaign, Khan asserted that embracing the ideal of Islam is the only way forward for Pakistan's progress (Hassan, 2019). Only the rejuvenation of faithful Islam can solve all of Pakistan's problems. Khan's rhetoric was intended for the creation of Islamist civilization. Khan was portraying an Islamist populist Utopia, which was never achieved. Islamic rhetoric was utilised only for public mobilisation. The PTI's quest to implement a Single National Curriculum, formation of the Rehmat-ul-Lilalaameen Authority, and promoting dramas such as *Dirilus Ertugrul* were all Islamist populist moves. Moreover, PTI's intention for the moral reformation of Youth in an Islamic context, the ignition of the Haya debate after the motorway incident, and other Islamised matters were all aimed at public mobilisation. Khan unapologetically condemns Feminism's presence in Pakistan and portrays feminism as a product of Western culture. He even blames women's dresses for rape and other related cases. Briefly, Khan disguises every act and matter in Islam. These measures were both strategic and instrumental. Khan was well aware that Islamic slogans could quickly mobilize Pakistanis, and He rightly achieved his goal.

TLP and its Prophecy of Khatm-e-Nabooat

During the formative phase of Pakistan, religion was used as a unifying factor for the diverse ethnicities of Pakistan, and Pakistan came into being in the ideology of Islam. Therefore, political elites constantly nurture Pakistan's religious ontology. This construction of religious identity and concurrent nourishment forms the perfect foundation for the rise of the TLP. Before 2010, the TLP was virtually non-existent. However, the case of "blasphemous" Asiya Bibi, the subsequent murder of Salman Taseer, and the hanging of Mumtaz Qadri acted as a catalyst for the rise of TLP. After this episode, the TLP diagnosed Pakistan's real problem as defending the honour and finality of the Prophet (PBUH) (Zahid Mehmood, 2022). The quest to protect the honor and finality of the Prophet (PBUH) became a driving force of TLP under the banner of "Labbaik, Ya Rasool Allah." In 2017, the TLP organised a sit-in protest at Faizabad against the presumed constitutional amendment regarding the finality of the prophet (PBUH). The successful protest boosted the TLP's confidence and it entered electoral politics.

The founding father of the TLP, Khadim Hussain Rizvi (late), galvanised massive political support in no time. People from all corners of Pakistan enthusiastically joined TLP. In 2018 elections, the TLP could not obtain significant seats in national and provincial assemblies. However, it affects the electoral bases of other political parties in different provinces (Yousaf, 2018). The TLP emerged as the fifth largest party in Pakistan, scoring around 2.2 million votes in the 2018 general elections (Gallup, 2018). TLP's success was due to Islamist populist rhetoric. The TLP leadership proposes death penalties for blasphemous in public gatherings. Due to the Islamist ontology of Pakistan, the masses can be easily deceived and attracted by religious slogans, which is what the TLP does.

During its political campaign, TLP leadership constructed a narrative of "us versus them." "Us" signifies TLP, which is a defender of Islam and Islamic values, while "them" refers to mainstream political parties that are a threat to Islam and Islamic values. Through the populist construction of "us versus them", TLP securitises the honour of the Prophet (PBUH). As a securitised matter, the TLP mobilises people for the presumed "sacred" religious duty of being the custodians of the finality of the Prophet (PBUH). Mobilising people with

religious slogans is feasible in an ideological state based on Islam. In 2020, the TLP protested the expulsion of the French ambassador because of a reported blasphemy case in France (Hashim, 2020). During the protest, Rizvi questioned Pakistan's ideological basis by arguing that:

"We cannot forgive the enemies of the Prophet (PBUH). While traveling to Islamabad, I wondered whether we could send back the French Ambassador. [Alas] the Muslims living in France can protest, but in the state that was achieved in the name of Islam, the nation is not allowed to protest for the honor of the Prophet. Now, we have to ask a question about the type of leadership we have been led by for the last 72 years. Had Labbaik (TLP) been ruling the country, it would have executed them [blasphemers]."

Rizvi's remarks present a classic example of how Pakistan's identity is being used and abused by political elites to mobilise the public, and how it acts as a breeding ground for the rise of populists in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Populism is a newly emerged phenomenon in international politics which is growing rapidly across nation states. Populism is a thin ideology and always needs another ideology for sustainability. Populists usually withhold complementary ideologies during political campaigns. In Pakistan, populists withhold religion as a support tool in political campaigns. Populists use of religion as a mobilizing factor is primarily linked with Pakistan's ontology which is based on Islam. Islam was instrumentalized by Muslim League leaders during their struggle for Pakistan. Religion was systematically instilled in Pakistan's citizens as their separate identity was constructed on Islam. Well-articulated discourse was used for identity construction. Today, populists in Pakistan feed on the same religion as their followers for political mobilisation.

Bhutto, Khan, and TLP leaders use religion to mobilise followers. Religion is the most effective tool for public mobilisation in Pakistan, as Pakistan's ontology is based on Islam. Populist leaders mobilise political support by appealing to the religious beliefs of citizens. As political elites, populists construct, use, and abuse the identities of common citizens for political gain. Bhutto exploited the identities of his supporters by calling

for illusive Islamic Socialism. He took Islamist measures to appeal to the majority which strengthened his political support base. Khan abuses his followers' identities by laying his utopian project of Riasat-e-Madina. He has sustained his political base through consecutive Islamic measures. TLP leadership has gained impressive public support because of the unparalleled use of religious rhetoric and slogans in political campaigns. TLP leadership forms a well-directed discourse to manage massive public mobilisation in a short time.

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