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### POLITICAL ISLAM AND POPULISM IN PAKISTAN'S POLITICS: A STUDY OF PAKISTAN TAHREEK-I-INSAF'S LEADERSHIP

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#### ABSTRACT

The term "political Islam," is being taken as political idiom rather than as a religious or theological construct to bring people into the fold of moral obligation to achieve political objectives. At the most basic level, adherents of political Islam believe that "Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered." The challenge of political Islam as part of the other factors to the state of Pakistan is a formidable in a sense when state is struggling hard to poise itself as moderate entity in the age of modernity. Pakistan's polity is riddled with ethnic, linguistic, and severe sectarian differences that has posed persistent challenges to the state and its fundamental national identity. This enigma is persistent in the polity of Pakistan and parallel to it acceptance of Islam as *raison d'etre* of the state confounded the situation. So the kind of political Islam, raised in Pakistan, has been used by political ideologues off and on to create a space for their influence. Leadership of PTI in its period of three years and nine months was not exceptional in using the Islam as political idiom to parry the burgeoning pressure of economy and on the other hand charisma of populism was used to put pressure on political opponents to be accepted as justified leadership with unblemished character. The construct of political Islam was irreconcilable to modern democratic values but was used as force of counter-cultural hegemony before partition of subcontinent. The ideological determination of the party was to unite the divergent elements on the basis of new morality and new type of man having populist appeal.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the history of Pakistan every government remained very sensitive to the issue of Islam in the realization of ideological objectives of the state. Having the moral dictate to implement the laws was to ensure the development of egalitarian society with modern outlook. It was a challenge to political leadership that how to construct the state structure under the guidance of Quran & Sunnah and to move ahead with the world without discarding the penetration of modern development. Imran Khan came into power in 2018 with the dream of Naya Pakistan (New Pakistan) and slogans of fighting corruption, bringing reforms and changes that had never before featured in the country's history. Throughout Khan's political career, his political language has been distinctive and his communication style casual. He appeals to the common citizen of Pakistan. Swirling his Tasbeeh (beads) around his fingers almost every time he makes a public appearance, Khan connects with the religious sentiments of the Pakistani nation and appears as an immaculate Muslim. Centering Islam in his governance paradigm remained primary focus of Khan's politics along with his campaign to eradicate the corruption and hold the people accountable who were at the helm of the affairs in the past. Combining a visible Islam with anti-elitist rhetoric, Khan's modus operandi while in government was a maverick and confrontational. His approach was simple in theory but lacked a framework how to construct the new state.

It was a challenge of transformation and reconciliation between the conventional and modern approach or to move paradoxically without implementing the doctrinal law that could endanger the status of religious minorities. Under such compulsions new leadership of Pakistan moved cautiously on the path of legal, economic and social development while attaining the economic prosperity and cultural unity among the people of Pakistan. Later period of 1970s and three quarter of 80s under the Zia witnessed the rise of extremist attitude by the readiness of theological class to argue against the emerging threat of socialism as Afghanistan was invaded by USSR in 1979. Clergy sought some benefits in becoming the partner of state patronage to counter the threat of USSR expansionist design towards warm waters. Foreign aid and funding was poured into Pakistan by Middle East countries and United States of America under their own necessity. Exorbitant charity opened the doors for the mushroom growth of religious seminaries which provided the stuff of peculiar mindset to fight against foreign invasion, and under the force of fatwa of their sect tried to banish all others by declaring them kafir(pagan). Previous years of Pakistan's history is not devoid of influence of religion when Islam used as political idiom to carve out the niche in power corridors. But it was more pronounced in the years of Zia regime to justify his military coup and extended the instrumental role of Islam in all spheres of life by the establish role of some institutions even in politics. Support base was widened to make the forces of opposition weak by declaring them as secular. Zia's period created more schism and sectarian divide in the society by the enforcement of different ordinances. He had also faced resistance but that was not very formidable when Shia sect refused to pay obligatory zakat on their bank accounts. Such shift in behavior had its legacy in the emerging philosophies as propounded by falasfa or clergy. Religiously charged behavior demonstrated itself into different forms of extremism led to

intolerance. Philosophy of Ibn-i-Tammia and of Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahab sought the implementation of puritanical Islam that impinged upon the Muslims to order their lives in accordance to the doctrinal Islam. The seminary of Deobund propagated this kind of philosophy in sub-continent and eulogized the spirit of Shah Ismail Shaheed as martyr of defending the cause of Islam in against the non-Muslims of sub-continent. There were multiple shades and layers of thinking which developed in the phase of liberation from colonial authority and demonstrated in the period of state formation and nation building after 1947 in the new state of Pakistan. Some of the leadership was empathetic toward the moral concerns of religion to declare what is right and what is wrong instead what is good and what is bad. The working of institutions like Board of Talimaat-i-Islami, Islamic Ideological Council and Sharia Court with office of Ombudsman could have an effect of proliferation of sense of translation of ideas as pure to warrant the life against vices. Therefore support of ulama like Shabbir Ahmad Usmani into the fold of politics while ignoring the radical call of those who were not enthusiastic about the creation of nation state on the basis of trans-territorial nationalism. Usmani was invited to Pakistan to give shape to the ideals which were dear to Jinnah. Jinnah's version of Islamic polity was not similar to those who espoused that Pakistan is created in the name of Islam and concept of Muslim polity is to infused into life through cultural shift. It infused the sense of fear among religious minorities in Pakistan as being marginalized second grade citizen of Pakistan.

PTI leadership used the emotive religious phrases as Riasaat-i-Madina and Amr bil Maroof wa Nahi- unil-Munkir to justify the party's stance in public eyes and to win the mass support to sustain its reputation as sole organization without any stigma is able to curtail the influence of other organizations or political parties in Pakistan which looted public money by holding and controlling public office. Similar kind of technique was used by Bhutto also who emotionally charged the masses by his often repeated rhetoric of Mussawat-i-Muhammadi for the completion of socialist agenda of Pakistan Peoples Part. Hassan has good reading of psychological mood of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who appeased the opposition by introducing some measures as amendment of the constitution in 1974 for declaring the Ahymdiya sect as non- Muslim for their refusal to believe in the finality of prophet hood. But the Islamization programmes initiated by Bhutto's government were essentially 'reactive' and undertaken to placate primarily urban groups opposed to his government's economic policies. They aimed at recognizing and restoring some of the symbolic aspects of Islam and sought to expand facilities to enable people to fulfill their religious duties. And in this respect they were logical extensions of the policies enunciated by the previous Pakistani government(1985). The preceding discussion have guided that PTI's leadership followed the same trajectory as has been outlined by the earlier leadership of Pakistan from Jinnah to Bhutto and then Benazir Bhutto to Imran Khan. He might have same kind of motives as the earlier leadership did for their survival in politics by keep intact the mass support to surf well on the crest of popularity, charisma and better utilization of religious idiom. Imran Khan fully projected the role of international powers and powerful institutions in Pakistan's politics in maneuvering reins of power, and therefore he more

often than not used Islam in its broad normative and latitudinarian terms successfully to keep public aware of his just stance in politics. How much he was successful to get this objective materialized while using all related forces for his survival in politics. How far he was capable to translate his charisma into ideational goal of the masses of Pakistan?

### *Discourse of Political Islam and Populism*

It is very pertinent to explain the concepts of political Islam and populism as adjutant part of Pakistan's politics which quite refurbish the understanding about leadership role in mobilizing the masses at the behest of the force of its charisma and by the rhetorical use of Islam. Leadership quality is reflected through character positioning among equals and by eloquent standing differentiate from others which helped to translate the charisma into populism. The explanation of the term 'political Islam' by theorists is more helpful in understanding the question of peoples' choice in election and as source of justification for incumbent political party in the context of Pakistan. The term "political Islam," is being taken as political idiom rather than as a religious or theological construct. At the most basic level, adherents of political Islam believe that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and implemented in some fashion. Power elite in Pakistan was neither avowedly secular but in the ambit of politics of Islam showed considerable accommodation of contrasting religious traditions, sectional interests, ideological world views and imperatives of populist decision making to show that state is ideally Islamic. However, this kind of understanding does get us in explaining the political activity undertaken in the name of Islam by the political leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) after assuming the charge of government in 2018 to declare Pakistan a modern welfare state in the namesake riasat-i-Madina.

A definition of political Islam as provided by the political scientist Guilian Denoex "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives" is also relevant in exploring the phenomenon of political Islam rather than as religious and theological construct (2002). On the other end of this rudder is populism which is very effective to charge the masses for the justified cause. Populism in strictly political terms—as the presence of what some scholars call a charismatic mode of linkage between voters and politicians, and a democratic discourse that relies on the idea of a popular will and a struggle between 'the people' and 'the elite'. The American Heritage Dictionary defines populism as "a political philosophy supporting the rights and power of the people in their struggle against the privileged elite."<sup>1</sup> The label populist is often used to emphasize that these politicians use a rhetoric that aggressively defends the interests of the common man against the privileged elite. The high levels of inequality and sufficiently weak political institutions enable the rich elite (or a subset thereof) to have a disproportionate influence on politics.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=populism>.

The rise of political Islam in Pakistan is attributed to the economic and political deficiencies along with the equivocating use of ideology of Pakistan. It has array of forces to feed it. The factors and the forces responsible for propelling and rise of political Islam are of multiple natures that have needed in-depth inquiry and analysis to depict the real picture of its rise. Parallel to it is another explanation, relevant to this thesis, is the force of counter-cultural hegemony that has ideological determination to unite the divergent elements on the basis of new morality and new type of man. Butko(2004) portrayed Islam as a revolutionary ideology to de-legitimize the ruling elite by presenting the counter-hegemonic narrative. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony fixed in economic determinism but gave primacy to forces of culture which were projected to maintain the hegemonic position of the affluent class. This cultural dialect in south Asia in the context of two civilizations-Islam and Hinduism was more prone to conflict and later culminated into a separate states after British withdrawal. Historical colonial context is helpful in understanding the spread and rise of religiously fanned spirit to counter emerging cultural tendencies which were perceived as threat to the unity of the state. Khan(1999)held similar view about the signaling use of Islam in the polity of Pakistan as an ideology, an instrument to deny diversity and difference. Jalal(1992) also mentioned the speech of Quaid-i-Azam on 11<sup>th</sup> August to demonstrate the real intent of Jinnah about the future of the new state. She has had the view that Jinnah heavily used the idiom of religion as rallying cry and its cynic call was harped to mobilize the masses for the creation of separate homeland for the Muslims of India. Assurance was held to all irrespective of their religious differences that they are equal citizens of the state and religion has nothing to do with the business of the state.

It reflected the real intent of the Jinnah to make Pakistan a progress state. The contention to use Islam as political idiom by the leadership of Pakistan Thereek-i-Insaf more frequently in its tenure of governance from August 2018 to April2022 is focus of acceptance of leadership policies' stances among masses. So the kind of political Islam, raised in Pakistan, has been used by ideologues to create a space for their influence. Ulama(religious clergy) more often than not projected their claim as vanguard of Islamic movement to establish the sacred state under the application of shariah(authority of Quran & Sunnah) and desirous authority in this domain will be parceled out exclusively to them. They have the right to use it as guardian of law. Father of the nation was averse to this idea and therefore repeatedly said that Pakistan would not be a theocratic state. The role of Islam and kind of Islam was the contention between conservative forces and those who having modern outlook without any open debate about its admissibility in state functioning. Before 1947, Muslim League leadership was also been figured out as non-observant of Islamic norms and practices without sufficient knowledge of basic tenets of faith and came under attack of nationalist leadership like Hussain Ahmad Madni and Abul Kalam Azad who were more convinced of territorial nationalism(Faruqi,1963). There was an ensuing struggle between the often-cited clerics and the progressives to set the formation of state-society either on idealistic mode as being practiced in the period of four caliphs or to set it on moderate and normatively accepted patterns as envisioned by the mainstream political leadership. This dialect has posed a challenge to the state that how to

develop a construct by which different versions of political Islam have to be reconciled. In the same vein, writer C,Christine Fair in one of the chapter of the book “The Muslim World after 9/11” presented the challenge of political Islam as part of the other factors to the state of Pakistan. She stated that “Pakistan’s polity is riddled with ethnic, linguistic, and, as we will describe, severe sectarian differences. This complex social mosaic has posed persistent challenges to the state and its fundamental national identity(2004).”

Qasmi(2010) rightly pointed out that what was idealized by the clergy was not the same as promoted and implemented by the power elite whose orientation was moderate and modern. It was an interface between the twin approaches of ‘sacred state admitting human will’ and ‘secular state admitting sacred will’. Leadership of PTI did same as in last seven decades different political parties used Islam as face saving instrument while religio-political parties were keen to pronounce Islam as key element of their manifestoes. In all elections of Pakistan, all political leadership used Islam as rallying and legitimizing force for certain socio-political goals which were part of the plank of their manifestoes. PTI clearly stated in its manifesto that it will turn Pakistan into a welfare state but principles will be of those which are being followed in Scandinavian countries(Dawn,2018). Later in the tenure of government PTI rescinded the reference of European model of welfare state and doggedly purveyed the allegorical reference of riasat-i-madina.

Later any of the political party came into power then its leadership was not indifferent to this slogan and advertently used it to get legitimacy. Islam was tapped into by the power elites which were avowedly remaining secular in their decisions. Similar way Imran Khan challenged the status-quo as maintained by the elite who governed this country last three decades and ensued new trend of politics by mobilizing the youth which was constituting 30 to 40% of total vote of Pakistan in 2018. The politics of elite was revolving around the preservation of their own interests and therefore with conventional outlook run the affairs of the state. Old elite also used Islam for political gains and Imran Khan was not different from them to keep political base intact among the particular segment of the society which is seemingly averse to new ideas in their acceptance. Imran Khan took advantage of his charisma also which worked as populism like ideologues who create link between the leadership and ordinary masses by inducing the sense of deprivation among them due to policies and politics of elite. Imran Khan tried to counter the propaganda of his opponents by his public or media appearance and remained very vocal about their past. His kind of populism is more charismatic that was synergized by ideological force.

### ***Pakistan Tahreek-i-Insaf’s Leadership and Populism & Political Islam***

Islam as faith and philosophy of life underpinned the principles as bases to tune the social order not different what has been practiced in the past but set the tone to construct what is essential to be compatible with modern needs. This objective has made the position of religious clergy acceptable with moralistic approach to counter what was perceived antagonistic to basic conventions of religion. It also generated the counter view of those who were

not aligned with main stream doctrinal thinking. As the process of state-society construction hinged upon the initiatives of elites who were at the helm of the affairs of this build-up in the beginning had to confront the challenge of those who were on the opposite side of the continuum. This opposite side was more conservative and staunch in emphasizing the applied role of Islam in the public life. They considered their role integral to the process to define what is justified within the ambit of sharia, but progressive elite was equally committed to democratic ideals by consistent reference to Islam. Ziring has had the same concerns about the perspectives of elites in the early phase of Pakistan that emphasized on the Islamic republic as stressing the development of secular, constitutional government and society. The essential focus [was] the separation of religion from politics and government (1984). Later as the process of state and society building went on, leadership seemed confused about how does a limit be defined to make the facial expression of Islamic state palatable without losing the sense of progressive state. First three decades of history showed that policy had not been overshadowed by the change of regimes and constructed the image of state as more inclined to demarcate the line between what is temporal and what is theological. After what followed was vigorous pursuit of Islamization in the period of Zia who ruled this country for a period of eleven years with ideational make-up as true believer in Islam than predecessors. Zia recognized this necessity when regime felt that it has no viable program for the fulfillment of public desires other than homilies and sanctimonious exhortations (Toor,2011).

State with different challenges could not parcel out her authority to any group which might lead to confusion further, and therefore people belonging to elite class were made part of nation building. Their considerations with modern outlook were linked to the destiny of Pakistan. Probity of modern democracy worked essentially with the support of ideology to lay down the bases of the structures of the modern state. Nation building and Islam as ideology became important as Ahmad pointed out that “new formulation of Pakistan’s ideology postulated that Islam was not only the ideological basis of the state, but also fundamental to the nation’s very existence(1996).” Ahmad clearly indicated that other than this basis, no other justification was acceptable because that would endanger the existence of Pakistan and identity would also be lost. In the period of Zia, Islam was pronounced forcefully as one of his statement indicated: Pakistan and Islam are the names of one and the same thing and any idea or action contrary to this would mean hitting at the very roots of the ideology, solidarity and integrity of Pakistan (Dawn, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1982). The shift in state building construct was visualized more after the trauma of 1971 and forces like parochial and particularistic operating in the ambit of ethnic, linguistic and regional spheres were argued as antithetical to the ideology of Pakistan and devoid of any legitimacy in an Islamic state. Such symbolism worked well in Pakistan to establish a link between power and ideology for the purpose of socio-political control and mass mobilization in order to politicize the entire society for defined objectives as PTI or its leadership has carved out for itself well. The populism and charisma of PTI leadership did rightly after assuming the charge of the government in 2018. PTI leadership was not very adamant in its commitment to implement what it went out for public consumption in the name of Islamic social order. Its manifesto lacked such

lure but idealized publicly to adhere to such commitments for the retaining of public support and translated it with finesse into electoral victory. PTI leadership relied heavily upon the construct of egalitarian system as Islamic ethos dictate but not were very much enthusiastic about its overbearing character. It seems that legacy of the past was not detached from its functionality which allowed the interplay of competing narratives. Leadership of PTI mixed the ideals of religious experience with political theory without realizing the consequences of such unleashed spirit that alienated the minorities which came under the banner of more liberal party as PPP which enticed the Hindus of Sindh by awarding the ticket to contest on general seat in 2018. Mahesh Kumar Malani contested and won the National Assembly (NA-222) Tharparkar-II seat in southern Sindh province, after defeating 14 candidates. He received 1,06,630 votes while his opponent, Arbab Zakaullah of the Grand Democratic Alliance, garnered 87,251 votes (Dawn, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2018).

Imran Khan during his tenure of government took advantage of his populism and spoke of efficacious manner of conducting the government by putting the opponents behind the bars as they were arrested by NAB (National Accountability Bureau) during their trial in cases of corruption or ousted through judicial process from the public office. Nawaz Sharief as prime minister was removed from his office in 2017 without completing his term of office when joint investigation team as constituted under judicial order to probe into the financial irregularities of house of Sharief to launder money outside Pakistan through offshore companies in panama gate scandal. His way of governance raised the specter of arbitrary government due to excessive use of NAB against political opponents during trial rather to bring the cases to conclusion. It led to politics of hatred and confusion and consequently politicians from both sides involved into bickering and intrigue. Social media trawling and scandalous campaigns were started against each other and even state officials were trapped into the sordid slandering in which video recording and phone tapping were used as blackmailing strategy against them. Case of Arshad Malik, a judge of an accountability court has been example of such blackmailing that later died due to lethal stress of this scandalous campaign. For their political gains, human weaknesses were brought to surface at the cost of moral existence of any human being and it also exposed the weaknesses of state institutions which have to dispense the justice. Such campaign eroded the public confidence in the state institutions with irreparable loss of unifying the nation and ensuring the political stability. Anticorruption drive of Imran Khan was giving a sense that elite of Pakistan in the history has got benefit out of the system which have protected their interests and such system required a surgical change to arrest the trend of moral and financial decline by holding the corrupt accountable. For such purpose, PTI government set up Asset Recovery Unit (ARU) in September 2018 to "provide a forum" for law enforcement agencies, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) and provincial anti-corruption establishments (ACEs) to trace new cases and track all existing cases targeting eventual repatriation of unlawfully acquired offshore assets (Pakistan Today, 30 May 2022). Imran Khan with such zeal and passion could not arrest his own over extended impatient thrust to curtail the powers of



corrupt elites and institutions. His populism brought him face to face with establishment that marred the effectiveness of institutional and democratic values. Imran Khan's actions are being reflected same by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, in a book, titled, "How democracies die" present four key indicators of authoritarian behavior that can be noticed among populist leaders. Following are the four indicators: weak commitment to democratic rules, denial of opponents' legitimacy, encouragement of violence, and readiness to curtail liberties of opponents, including media(Daily Times,6<sup>th</sup> April 2022). Pakistan according to World Justice Report was ranked at 130<sup>th</sup> out of 139 countries on rule of law(World Justice Report, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021) and showed less commitment of PTI government on this front. On the front of holding people accountable and to weed out the corruption, PTI leadership seemingly failed in-spite of extreme drive to arrest the corrupt practices in Pakistan. Transparency International on corruption perception index ranked Pakistan on 31 of the scale which measured the trend from 0 to 100. Zero is more clean and 100 is more corrupt(Transparency International,2020).

Despite the change of government in April 2022 by the vote of no confidence, report of asset recovery unit was published during the tenure of coalition government under the premiership of Shahbaz Sharif which admitted the statistics as good sign of performance of ARU. According to the Cabinet Division's yearbook for 2020-21, which was prepared in May 2022, over Rs334bn was recovered in the last fiscal year(Dawn,30May 2022). This showed that if any charge leveled against anti-corruption drive by opposition parties for grilling the political opponents stands nowhere. It furthered strengthened the Imran Khan's stance about the governing elite that they are corrupt people and by the uneven growth of development have altered the socio-economic equilibrium. Gap between the rich and poor has been widened and therefore he frequently used the reference of riasat-i-madina which is symbol of just society in the period of Prophet(PBUH) without any exploitation. Imran Khan with rosary in his hands adumbrated the references of Muslim history for not to establish the Hukumat-illahiya (Divine government) and Iqamat-i Din(rule of religion) but to portray his credentials that what he is saying against his opponents is correct and justify. Imran Khan used all platforms like United Nations generally assembly in 2019 to address the world community and leadership that Muslims are not terrorist and they react only in response to the action of the western people who under the liberalism flouted the Muslim's religion and ideology. He also clarified the world that Muslims are not extremists in any way as west under Islamophobia had branded them. He has also reflections of east and west in his personality and argued well for the defence of holy cause that "it is important to understand this 'Prophet lives in our hearts' when he is ridiculed and when he is insulted, it hurts(Dawn, September 2019)." On the occasion of the arrest of Tahreek-I Labaik leader, Imran Khan as premier of Pakistan took notice of the hostaging of eleven policemen said that vandalizing act of his supporters make no difference to the country where blasphemous act was committed(Dawn,19<sup>th</sup> April 2021). Imran Khan in an apologetic way asked the people of west that they should also penalize those who spread the message of hate against the Muslims by disrespecting the Holy Prophet in the same way they had outlawed any negative comment against the holocaust(Dawn,19<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

Even though Imran Khan was more pliant towards such religious clergy which often torpedoed the state machinery and exhorted them that their agenda is also mine but there is difference of strategy how to achieve the common objectives. By his uttering it seemed that he encouraged the violent attitude rather to stop it. To appease the Muslims and organizations like Tahreek-i-Labaik and Pakistan Awami Tahreek of Tahir ul Qadri by on its shoulders PTI launched a longest sit-in Islamabad in 2014 against the government of PML(N) which are the claimant of guarantor of protecting the Prophet's dignity, he announced the establishment of Rahmatul-lil-Almeen Authority(Dawn,23<sup>rd</sup> October 2021).

On the other hand he has evoked public sentiments by his popular stature to back his voice by their support to ward off any danger to his authority or rule. Views of analysts were also divided as were the opinion of public which is furnished by the popular appeal of different party leaders in Pakistan. In the period from 2018 to 2022 there is much polarization in the political opinion of the public by such appeals of the party leaders. Imran Khan has also been judged by someone as binary of the same coin. One side took him as demagogue and other side viewed him as messiah. Such kind of appeal has been witnessed across the globe which is placed in right wing corner as Narendra Modi's Bahrtia Janta Party(BJP) of India and Republican president Donald Trump in USA. Imran Khan remained undeterred despite his failure on different fronts of deliverance during his stint in power. People of Pakistan backed him fully and whenever he called, people supported his call irrespective of age, gender and class differences. What matters more for Imran's staunch supporter was the true power of populism and people opted a narrative that no other truth than the truth of their leader(South Asian Voices, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022). Such deadliest following turned the people inflexible for accommodating the views of their opponents. In spite of all this he had to finally accept the power of power brokers and at the time of no confidence motion in the parliament his allies departed and he could not survive. The vote machination in the parliament is different ball game what is being played at the level of mass politics and finally he was removed from the office of premiership in the month of April 2022. Savior trapped to his populism and succumbed to defeat.

## CONCLUSION

In this entire situation, PTI leadership remained moderate in the posture for public consumption as it has big following of youth and middle class. It was successful in maintaining a balance between the ideological concerns of the party and its pragmatic action of doing politics while having the seat of governance. Party and its leadership without realizing the outcome of mixing politics with religion plunged into a sphere of religious frenzy only to charge and mobilize the diehard followers. Without realizing the consequences of such politics, Imran Khan over confidently slurred some critical remarks on persons and institutions which jeopardized the autonomy and sovereign character. In a transitional democracy, across the political spectrum people hold their leader accountable for failed policies. But among Khan's support base, there is knee-jerk opposition to anyone critical of Khan. Under the compulsion of populist appeal it has been found that Imran Khan's supporters

out-rightly shuns and tags anyone disfavoring Imran Khan as a “traitor” regardless of their background or party affiliation. Populism is a precarious and volatile political mode because it leads people to fall prey to charisma and rhetoric and helps powerful people evade accountability, both of which threaten the very core of democracy. By such behavior he showed less flexibility when he brought the politics out side the parliament to settle the issues in the streets. His populism along with religious appeal seemingly turned him into ‘Rex non potest peccare’.

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