



*Sociology & Cultural Research Review (SCRR)*  
 Available Online: <https://scrrjournal.com>  
 Print ISSN: 3007-3103 Online ISSN: 3007-3111  
 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)



## Populist Tendencies and Outcome of General Elections 2018

Asifa Shaukat

M.Phill Scholar

[asifashaukat2020@gmail.com](mailto:asifashaukat2020@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the rise of populist tendencies in Pakistan's political landscape with a special focus on the 2018 General Elections. It explores how populist rhetoric, anti-elite narratives, and charismatic leadership influenced voter perceptions and political outcomes. The paper situates Pakistan's experience within global populist trends, comparing it with movements led by figures such as Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Through a historical and analytical approach, it evaluates how Imran Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), employed populist discourse to mobilize diverse social groups and challenge established political elites. The study concludes that populism, while effective as a mobilizing force, faces structural limitations in governance and policy implementation within Pakistan's fragile democratic system.*

**Keywords:** Populism, Electoral Politics, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Political Communication, Anti-Elite Rhetoric, 2018 General Elections Democracy in Pakistan.

### Introduction

Populism has emerged as one of the defining characteristics of modern global politics, marked by its direct appeal to the common people against perceived corrupt or self-serving elites. Across the world, populist leaders have gained momentum by promising to restore political integrity, economic justice, and national pride. In Pakistan, populism has played a recurring role in shaping the nation's political discourse, influencing not only campaign strategies but also governance patterns. The 2018 General Elections stand as a significant manifestation of this phenomenon. During this period, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), under the leadership of Imran Khan, capitalized on growing public frustration with traditional parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Through slogans like "Naya Pakistan," Khan invoked a populist narrative centered on justice, accountability, and national renewal, presenting himself as a reformist alternative to dynastic politics.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the emergence and consolidation of populist tendencies in Pakistan, with a specific focus on their influence during and after the 2018 elections. It draws analytical connections between global populist movements and Pakistan's local context to understand how emotional and moral appeals have transformed democratic participation. The discussion integrates theoretical insights from political communication, comparative politics, and electoral behavior to explore how populism functions both as a discourse and a political strategy. By tracing the evolution of populist rhetoric and its reception among various social groups, this chapter highlights how populism in Pakistan has redefined voter engagement and reshaped the contours of power within the state's democratic framework.

### Fascism Theory

Fascism is a form of governance in which absolute power is concentrated in the hands of a dictator. Citizens live under strict government supervision and are not permitted to express dissent or opposition. The term *fascism* originates from the Latin word *fascis*, a Roman

symbol of authority consisting of an axe bound in a bundle of wooden rods, representing unity and control. As a political movement, fascism emerged in Europe after the First World War, notably in Italy under Benito Mussolini. It is characterized by extreme nationalism, anti-democratic tendencies, and the subordination of individual rights to the authority of the state. Fascist regimes emphasize a powerful, centralized national government that controls major social and economic activities. Individuals are expected to sacrifice personal freedoms for the collective good of the nation, as defined by the ruling authority.

In a fascist state, all major decisions are made by a single charismatic leader who commands loyalty through propaganda, discipline, and emotional appeal. Fascists seek to regulate capitalism by limiting labor unions, strikes, and protests, while allowing private ownership under state supervision. The government promotes nationalism by uniting citizens against perceived external threats and fostering a sense of collective pride. Fascists believe that stronger nations demonstrate their superiority by conquering weaker ones and that military dominance is essential to state survival. After World War I, calls for national unity and strong leadership enabled the spread of fascism in Europe. Mussolini exploited his charisma and symbolism from ancient Rome to establish a totalitarian dictatorship in Italy. When the Fascist Party marched on Rome in 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III refused to resist, allowing Mussolini to seize power without parliamentary approval and institutionalize fascism as a governing ideology.

#### **Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera**

The fascist movement in Spain, founded by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1933, never gained power, but many of its supporters decided to join Francisco Franco's military dictatorship, which also had many fascist elements. Development of small parties generally pro-Franco had influence in Poland but was unable to depose the country's government. Political and non-Józef Piłsudski regime. Viktor Kosolov's Lapua party nearly conducted a revolution in Finland in 1932, but it was dismissed by republicans with military support. The conservative Miklós Horthy administration in Hungary restricted the Eurofascist party, which was controlled by Ferenc Szálasi, through 1944, after Szálasi was appointed dictator leader during the German occupation. The authoritarian rule of King Carol II in Romania led to the dissolution of the Iron Guard, also called the League for Christian Security, the army of Archangel Michael all for the Fatherland which was headed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Codreanu and a few of his cohorts were captured in 1939 and they were executed when preparing to leave. The Iron Guard elements attempted to restore power in 1940 but were ultimately defeated by Romanian conservatism in February 1941.

#### **Oswald Arnold Mosley**

English politician Oswald Mosley whose full name is Sir Oswald Arnold Mosley, served as the head of the British Union of Fascists from 1932 to 1940 and the Union Movement from 1948 until his death. The group was well-known for propagating anti-Semitic propaganda, organizing protest in East London Jewish neighborhoods and donning Nazi-inspired clothing and symbols. From 1918 to 1931, Mosley represented the people of Canada in the House of Commons, first as a conservative, then an independent, and finally as a Labour party supporter. From 1929 to 1930, he worked in the Ministry of Labour. He aimed to win the established socialist party in 1931 but failed to win re-election to parliament. He established the British Union of Fascists the following year, creating some interest with his own dramatic speeches as well as the publisher of the newspaper, Governor General Rothermere support. In 1943 because of illness, Mosley was freed from prison following the start of World

war two. He began union movement on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1948 representing it as a grouping of 51 organizations, the majority of which were right-wing discussion groups.

### **Vidkun Quisling**

Full name Vidkun Abraham Lauritz Jonson Quisling, the Norwegian army officer who helped the German occupy Norway in world war two gave his name the connotation of a traitor. During 1911 Quisling joined the military and worked as the military agency in Petrograd. Under the guidance of popular Arctic explorer and philanthropist Fredtjof Nansen, he helped with response operations in Russia. Later, he worked for the League of Nations. He maintained British interest only in Norwegian representation in Moscow, where there were no political relations between both the United Kingdom and soviet Russia (1927-1929). During his appointment as Defence Minister in an agricultural government (1931-1933), he became known for order to put an end to a hydropower employees struggle. In order to establish populist fascist Nasjonal samling (National Union) party, which aimed to restrict communism and unionism he resigned from the administration in 1933. However he was never elected to the permanent mission parliament. In a December 1939 meeting with Adolf Hitler, Quisling campaigned for the German victory of Norway. He invaded and occupied the administration that after German invasion in April 1940 and declared himself its leader. He continued to support in the occupation administration and was given the title of Minister President by Reich commissar Joseph Turbon in February 1942, especially given the fact that his government came under strong and general criticism and was removed from power in less than a week. Powerful Norwegian resistance resulted from Quisling struggle to establish National Socialism in the churches, education, and young. For transferring around 1,000 Jews to death in concentration camps, he received responsibility. He was arrested charged with war crimes and other property crimes, and killed after Norway was released in May 1945.

### **Engelbert Dollfuss**

Engelbert Dollfuss, an Austrian politician and Chancellor from 1932 to 1934, dismantled the Austrian Republic and established an autocratic regime inspired by Italian Fascism and Roman Catholic principles. A member of the conservative Christian Social Party, Dollfuss rose through political ranks after serving as Minister of Agriculture and President of the Federal Railways. Confronted with severe economic challenges and political unrest, he dissolved parliament in 1933 and banned opposition parties, forming the Fatherland Front as Austria's only legal political organization. Supported by Benito Mussolini, Dollfuss sought to maintain Austria's independence from Nazi Germany while aligning closely with Italy. His government suppressed socialist uprisings and implemented a corporatist constitution in 1934, transforming Austria into a fascist-style state. However, his authoritarian rule ended abruptly when he was assassinated by Austrian Nazis during a failed coup in July 1934.

### **Emilio Di Bono**

Emilio De Bono was born on March 19, 1866, in Cassano d'Adda, Italy. He joined the Italian army in 1884 as a second lieutenant and gained recognition for his leadership during the Turkish War of 1911. During World War I, he distinguished himself by defeating the Austrians at Gorizia in 1916 and at Grappa in 1918, earning promotion to General in 1920. A strong supporter of Benito Mussolini, De Bono took part in the March on Rome in 1922, which led to the rise of the Fascist regime. He held several key positions, including police commissioner, head of the Fascist militia, and governor of Tripoli. In 1935, he was appointed commander during Italy's invasion of Ethiopia but was later replaced by General Pietro Badoglio. In 1942, De Bono became a State Minister and later participated in the Fascist Grand Council meeting of July 1943, voting against Mussolini. After Mussolini regained power with German

assistance, De Bono was arrested, tried for treason, and executed in 1944 for his opposition to the Fascist leader.

### **Populism**

Populism is a political movement that connects directly with the common people by claiming to represent their true interests against a corrupt or uncaring elite. It often emerges when citizens feel excluded from decision-making processes and believe that only a strong leader can speak on their behalf. Populism appears across the political spectrum — from left-wing movements demanding social equality to right-wing groups promoting nationalism and anti-elitism. Populist leaders are usually charismatic figures who gain popularity by criticizing established institutions and promising to return power to the people.

Populism is both a political philosophy and a strategy through which leaders mobilize mass support by simplifying complex issues into a struggle between the “pure people” and the “corrupt elite.” It challenges traditional parties, parliamentary systems, and intermediary organizations. In practice, populism promotes reform rather than revolution, claiming to protect the common citizen’s rights. The term originated from the “People’s Party” founded in the United States in 1892. Scholars such as Moffitt and Weyland argue that populism functions as a political style where the leader establishes a direct emotional bond with followers, often bypassing institutional structures.

### **Populist leaders around the world:**

From 1990 to the current moment, executive activities have been claimed by 46 populist politicians or political parties in 33 states. Populists achieved their political maximum during this time throughout 2010 and 2014 and once, more in 2018, when 20 populist rulers came into office. This duration has seen a significant increase in populism on a global level. There were four populism leaders around the world in 1990; by 2018, there were 20, a fivefold gain. This includes Pakistan as well as the nations with the most popularity historically Latin America and the regions of Eastern and central Europe.

### **Adolf Hitler**

Adolf Hitler, born on April 20, 1889, in Braunau am Inn, Austria, rose to power as the leader of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazi Party) on July 29, 1921. Despite his poor academic background, his service in World War I made him a devoted nationalist. After Germany’s defeat, he joined the German Workers’ Party in 1919, which later became the Nazi Party. Hitler’s fiery speeches blaming Jews and Marxists for Germany’s economic and political problems attracted mass support. He transformed the Nazi Party into a populist movement that promoted nationalism, anti-Semitism, and the idea of an Aryan master race.

In 1923, Hitler attempted to seize power through the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich but was arrested and imprisoned, during which he wrote *Mein Kampf*. Following his release, he rebuilt the Nazi Party and capitalized on Germany’s economic crisis of 1929. His promises of national revival led the Nazis to win 230 seats in the 1932 Reichstag elections. Appointed Chancellor in 1933, Hitler established a totalitarian regime that controlled all aspects of German life. His policies led to World War II and the Holocaust, during which six million Jews were murdered. Facing defeat, Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945, shortly before Germany’s surrender.

### **Benito Mussolini**

Benito Mussolini was born in Predappio, Italy, in 1883. As a young man, he was rebellious and aggressive, often expelled from school for violent behavior. However, his charisma and oratory skills later transformed him into a powerful public figure. Influenced by Karl Marx, Mussolini became active in socialist movements while working in Switzerland, where he also

faced imprisonment for his political activities. After returning to Italy, he worked as a teacher and journalist before joining the socialist movement. As editor of the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* in 1912, he gained prominence for his radical ideas. However, when World War I began, Mussolini broke with socialism by supporting Italy's participation in the war, arguing that revolution could follow conflict. This stance led to his expulsion from the Socialist Party, but it marked the beginning of his transformation into a nationalist leader (T.E. of E. Britannica, 2022).

After the war, Mussolini used his influence and persuasive speeches to unite disillusioned veterans and nationalists. In 1919, he founded the *Fascist Party (Fasci di Combattimento)*, symbolized by a bundle of rods representing unity and strength. His paramilitary group, the "Blackshirts," attacked socialist offices and crushed labor strikes, gaining control of much of Italy by 1920. In October 1922, Mussolini threatened to march on Rome unless given power. King Victor Emmanuel III appointed him Prime Minister, and by 1925, Mussolini had established a totalitarian regime. He sought to restore Italy's prestige, strengthened ties with the Catholic Church, and was praised by global leaders for his early reforms. However, his aggressive nationalism led to Italy's alliance with Nazi Germany during World War II. Mussolini was captured and executed with his mistress, Clara Petacci, on April 28, 1945, marking the fall of Fascism in Italy.

### **Che Guevara**

Ernesto "Che" Guevara was a prominent communist revolutionary and populist leader during the Cuban Revolution. Born in Rosario, Argentina, on June 14, 1928, he studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires before becoming politically active in Latin America. In 1955, he met Fidel Castro in Mexico and later joined his campaign to overthrow the Batista regime in Cuba. After the revolution's success in 1959, Guevara served as head of the La Cabaña prison, president of the National Bank, and Minister of Industry, helping shift Cuba's trade from the U.S. to the Soviet Union. A symbol of anti-imperialism, he later left Cuba to promote revolution abroad, leading guerrilla movements in Africa and South America. Captured by the Bolivian army with CIA assistance, Guevara was executed on October 9, 1967. His legacy endures as a global icon of socialism, resistance, and populist revolution.

### **Nelson Rulihlahla Mandela (Madiba)**

Nelson Mandela, widely known as *Madiba*, was a Black Nationalist leader and the first Black president of South Africa, serving from 1994 to 1999. Born on July 18, 1918, in Mvezo, South Africa, he dedicated his life to ending racial segregation and injustice under apartheid. After joining the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944, he co-founded its Youth League and became a key figure in the anti-apartheid struggle. His activism led to frequent arrests, including a major treason trial in 1956, though he was acquitted in 1961. In 1964, Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in anti-government activities and spent 27 years in jail, mostly on Robben Island.

Released from prison on February 11, 1990, by President F.W. de Klerk, Mandela became vice president of the ANC and later its president in 1991. Together with De Klerk, he led negotiations that peacefully ended apartheid and paved the way for South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994. Both leaders were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their efforts. As president, Mandela promoted national reconciliation, social justice, and equality. After stepping down in 1999, he founded the Nelson Mandela Foundation and remained a global advocate for peace and human rights until his death on December 5, 2013, in Johannesburg.



**Andrew Jackson**

Populist movements in America had already historically asserted that they speak for the common citizen in them against people conflict with elites, much like in other countries around the world. The founding of the Populist Party in the 1800s and Andrew Jackson administration are seen as the origins of populism in the United States. Since then, it has surfaced in both the united state and some other democracies throughout the world, with various degrees of success. The people president and the first American populist president, Andrew Jackson served as the president from 1829 to 1837. Jackson presidency was highlighted by hostility to long-standing political establishments. He ended government use of the second Bank of the United States, which provided as the country national bank at the time, and called for the repeal of many U.S. Supreme Court rulings saying it is extremely unfortunate that even the powerful and wealthy frequently control governmental actions for their own personal gain.

**Donald Trump**

Donald J. Trump, a Republican businessman and real estate developer, shocked the world by defeating Hillary Clinton in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, winning the Electoral College despite losing the popular vote. His campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," became a hallmark of modern populism, appealing to national pride and anti-establishment sentiment. Trump promised to reverse President Obama's executive actions, reduce government regulations, lower legal immigration, and prevent illegal immigration by constructing a wall along the U.S.–Mexico border. His political agenda was described as nationalist, protectionist, and populist, combining conservative values with strong anti-elite rhetoric.

As president, Trump implemented controversial policies, including family separations at the border and travel bans targeting several Muslim-majority countries. He withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Deal, and other international accords. Domestically, he signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, reshaped the Supreme Court by appointing three justices, and influenced 54 federal appellate judges. Trump faced two impeachments—first in 2019 for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, and again in 2021 for incitement of insurrection—but was acquitted both times. His presidency deepened political divisions and is often viewed as one of the most controversial in U.S. history.

**Populism in Pakistan**

Populism in Pakistan has historically faced significant challenges due to the country's deeply entrenched elite structures and social divisions. Since independence, Pakistan's political system has been dominated by various elites — including the civil-military bureaucracy, feudal landlords, and urban business classes — leaving little space for genuine populist leadership to emerge. Populism, which thrives on anti-elitist sentiment and a direct connection between leaders and ordinary citizens, struggled to gain traction in such a fragmented society. Early populist figures such as A.K. Fazlul Haq, known as *Sher-e-Bengal*, and Maulana Bhashani in East Pakistan mobilized the masses by opposing colonial and feudal powers, setting the foundation for later movements. The rise of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the late 1960s marked the true beginning of populist politics in West Pakistan. His Pakistan People's Party (PPP) introduced the slogan "Roti, Kapra aur Makan" (Bread, Clothing, and Shelter) and championed socialist ideals that appealed to the working class and rural poor.

Bhutto's populism, which he described as "Islamic socialism," aimed to merge social justice with Islamic values. His policies nationalized industries, reformed land ownership, and sought to empower the marginalized. However, his growing authoritarianism and the rise of religious

conservatism turned many against him. The Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), formed by nine religious and political groups, accused Bhutto of corruption and un-Islamic practices, leading to mass protests under the slogan “Nizam-e-Mustafa” (System of the Prophet). The resulting political unrest provided an opening for General Zia-ul-Haq’s military coup on July 5, 1977, which ended Bhutto’s government and ultimately led to his execution in 1979. Despite its turbulent history, populism has remained a recurring force in Pakistan’s politics, resurfacing in different forms under leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Imran Khan, who both sought to connect directly with the public against entrenched elites.

### **Imran Khan and Populism**

Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, born on October 5, 1952, in Lahore, Pakistan, first gained international fame as captain of Pakistan’s national cricket team, leading it to victory in the 1992 Cricket World Cup. After retiring, he shifted from sports to philanthropy, establishing the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital in 1994 and later NamAL University. His growing interest in social justice and national reform inspired him to enter politics. In 1996, Khan founded the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), aiming to challenge political corruption and elitism. Initially, his party struggled to gain traction, but his populist message—centered on justice, equality, and Islamic values—began resonating with Pakistan’s youth and middle class. Through charismatic speeches, anti-elite rhetoric, and nationalist appeal, Khan emerged as the face of modern populism in Pakistan, blending religion, reform, and patriotism.

Khan’s populism became fully evident in his 2018 election campaign, driven by the slogan “*Tabdeeli Aagayi Hai*” (Change Has Come) and promises of a “*Naya Pakistan*” (New Pakistan). He pledged to end corruption, reduce inequality, and treat all citizens equally under the law. His anti-status quo stance, coupled with mass mobilization through social media and public rallies, turned PTI into a nationwide movement. Despite criticism over his ties with the military and his confrontational leadership style, Khan’s message of reform and moral renewal won widespread support, leading PTI to victory in the 2018 general elections. As Prime Minister (2018–2022), Khan’s governance combined Islamic populism with nationalist and welfare-oriented policies, seeking to empower the poor and restore public faith in government.

### **Outcome 2018 elections**

Including the MMA and the less popular partnership all political parties in Sindh have elected representatives alone. At the government level, but not the national level, politicians adjusted their seats. In the National Assembly PTI gained a plurality. The Muslim League (N) is the second-largest political party, but although significant opposition from the dominant elite, it was not given an equal level of competition in the elections and the People Party took third position. But without supporters the PTI won easily in KP and established a government there. In Baluchistan and Punjab, PTI and other political parties established political structure. In Sindh, the People Party gained the majority and established its own administration.

| Political Party                                    | Leader                  | Seats Won<br>(National Assembly) | Vote Share (%) | Political Position              | Remarks                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)</b>              | Imran Khan              | 149                              | 31.8%          | Center-right / Populist         | Formed government; emphasized anti-corruption and “Naya Pakistan.” |
| <b>Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N)</b>      | Shahbaz Sharif          | 82                               | 24.4%          | Center-right / Conservative     | Lost majority; faced corruption allegations and leadership crisis. |
| <b>Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)</b>                | Bilawal Bhutto Zardari  | 54                               | 13.0%          | Center-left / Social democratic | Maintained Sindh base but declined nationally.                     |
| <b>Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)</b>               | Fazlur Rehman           | 15                               | 5.0%           | Right-wing / Religious alliance | Re-emerged with limited success.                                   |
| <b>Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan (MQM-P)</b> | Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui | 7                                | 2.5%           | Center Ethnic (Muhajir-based)   | Lost dominance in Karachi to PTI.                                  |
| <b>Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)</b>               | Jam Kamal Khan          | 5                                | 1.7%           | Regional Centrist               | Formed provincial government in Balochistan.                       |
| <b>Independents</b>                                | —                       | 12                               | 4.0%           | —                               | Many later joined PTI to secure majority in parliament.            |

Unlike traditional parties such as the PML-N and PPP that relied heavily on patronage networks and dynastic leadership, PTI under Imran Khan mobilized voters through a discourse centered on anti-corruption, social justice, and national pride. The use of slogans such as “*Tabdeeli Aayi Hai*” (Change Has Come) and “*Naya Pakistan*” (New Pakistan) provided a unifying narrative that resonated strongly with first-time voters, youth, and women—groups historically marginalized in Pakistan’s electoral politics. A striking feature of PTI’s populism was its ability to frame politics as a moral struggle between the “honest people” and the “corrupt elite.” By presenting himself as an outsider to dynastic politics, Khan successfully differentiated PTI from its rivals and tapped into widespread frustration with status quo governance. The emphasis on religion and national identity further deepened this populist appeal, creating an emotional bond with large segments of the electorate.



**Table: Regional Trends in the 2018 Elections**

| Province/ Region             | Dominant Party          | Key Observations                                                                |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Punjab</b>                | PTI (with independents) | Broke PML-N's dominance; populist slogans resonated with middle class and youth |
| <b>Sindh</b>                 | PPP                     | Retained regional stronghold but failed nationally                              |
| <b>Khyber Pakhtunkhwa</b>    | PTI                     | Re-elected with a clear majority; first time any party retained power in KP     |
| <b>Balochistan</b>           | BAP/PTI coalition       | Rise of regional party (BAP) supported by PTI alliances                         |
| <b>Federal Capital (ICT)</b> | PTI                     | Gained urban vote through anti-elite and anti-corruption rhetoric               |

The 2018 general elections marked a decisive shift in Pakistan's political landscape. PTI's sweeping victory in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and strong gains in Punjab reflected how populist rhetoric penetrated regions once dominated by traditional parties. In contrast, the PPP's reduced influence to Sindh highlighted the decline of older populist legacies rooted in Bhutto's era. Despite opposition claims of electoral irregularities, PTI's near one-third share of the national vote demonstrated the power of populism in shaping voter behavior. The election outcome signified more than a transfer of authority—it represented a transformation of political culture, where calls for “justice,” “accountability,” and “change” became defining features of Pakistan's democratic discourse.

### Conclusion

The analysis of populist tendencies and their influence on political developments shows that populism has emerged as a powerful and recurring theme in both global and Pakistani politics. Historical examples such as Mussolini, Hitler, and Che Guevara demonstrated how populist leaders often rise by appealing directly to public emotions, promising national revival, and challenging entrenched elites. In Pakistan, the roots of populism can be traced from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's socialist-inspired rhetoric of “*Roti, Kapra aur Makan*” to Imran Khan's contemporary vision of “*Naya Pakistan*.” Both leaders used emotional appeals, anti-elitist discourse, and promises of reform to mobilize mass support across diverse social groups.

The 2018 general elections marked a turning point in Pakistan's political culture, transforming populism from a rhetorical strategy into a governing force. PTI's victory demonstrated the growing resonance of populist narratives centered on justice, accountability, and nationalism. Although populism in Pakistan has often been shaped by personal leadership rather than institutional strength, it has undeniably redefined the relationship between citizens and the state. Ultimately, populism has become both a tool for political mobilization and a reflection of public frustration with traditional power structures, indicating a continuing evolution in Pakistan's democratic journey.

### References

- After Trump. (2021). *Donald Trump and the Populist Presidency*. The Atlantic Council.
- B.C. Editors. (2022). *Che Guevara: Revolutionary Leader*. Biography.com.
- Biography. (2014). *Benito Mussolini Biography*. Biography Online.
- Bonikowski, B. (2019). *The Rise of Populism and its Global Implications*. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45(1), 37–55.
- Britannica, E. (2022). *Nelson Mandela: President of South Africa*. Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2021). *Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Record*. CFR Reports.

- E. Britannica. (2022). *Nelson Mandela and the Anti-Apartheid Movement*. Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- Encyclopaedia. (2020). *Benito Mussolini and the Rise of Fascism*. Encyclopaedia of World History.
- Ghazi, A. (2018). *Adolf Hitler: Political Leadership and Totalitarianism*. History Today Journal.
- H.C. Editors. (2019). *Adolf Hitler: From Soldier to Dictator*. History.com.
- H.C. Editors. (2020). *Donald Trump and the 2016 U.S. Elections*. History.com.
- Hassan, S. (2020). *Imran Khan's Populism and Islamic Nationalism in Pakistan*. *Journal of Political Studies*, 27(2), 112–130.
- Khalid, H. (2020b). *Political Campaigns and Populist Discourse in Pakistan's 2018 Elections*. *Pakistan Social Science Review*, 4(1), 55–70.
- Kamran, T. (2017). *The Evolution of Populism in Pakistan: From Bhutto to Khan*. *Asian Affairs*, 48(3), 342–358.
- Longley, R. (2022). *Populism: Definition and Historical Overview*. ThoughtCo.
- Mushfiq, A. (2022). *Early Populism and Political Movements in East and West Pakistan*. *South Asian Studies Review*, 12(4), 214–228.
- Munro, N. (2020). *Understanding Modern Populism: Left and Right Movements*. *Political Quarterly*, 91(3), 321–336.
- Naseer, R. (2020). *Leadership, Populism, and Political Change: The Case of Imran Khan*. *Pakistan Journal of Governance*, 9(2), 88–104.
- Saleem, F. (2020). *Religious Populism and Political Transformation under Bhutto*. *Pakistan Political Science Journal*, 45(1), 67–82.
- Yilmaz, I. (2021). *Authoritarianism, Populism, and Islamization in Pakistan*. *Journal of South Asian Politics*, 10(1), 29–47.