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## **A Comparative Analysis of Populist Regimes in Pakistan and Turkey**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Populist governments are mainly driven by economic setbacks, traditional rivalries with their political opponents and authoritarian political strategies to overcome any potential challenge to their legitimacy. In this context, the government of Imran Khan in Pakistan and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey are two distinct case studies whose regimes have adopted a populist posture in their political practices. This research by focusing on these two case studies, primarily highlights that what happens when populists are in power? Secondly, this paper intends to explain that how populist discourse over shadowed their governance and political communication. Despite the fact that they have large leadership following but their political oratory has failed to build a national resolve for the common masses.*

**Keywords:** *Pakistan, Turkey, Populism, Imran Khan, Tayyip Erdogan, Politics*

### **Introduction**

Populist politics is primarily characterized by intricate and often contrary tendencies. Generally, populism is viewed as a response to emergent economic insecurities and attrition of traditional cultural standards while causing cultural anxiety and threat to identity (Gandesha, 2018, p. 62). The populist movements across the world are largely characterized by grievances of substantial segment of population against indifferent political establishment which often stimulate desire for change while disrupting the status quo<sup>1</sup>.

It has been argued that end of Cold War led to the universalization of liberal democracy, globalization of trade agreements and primarily gave birth to ‘framed democracies’. Populism mostly expended in 1990s as a result of radical right

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<sup>1</sup>A similar feature of populism exists in both in established democracies and hybrid regimes which is imagination of society primarily comprised of two homogenous & polarized bloc. The ‘pure people versus corrupt elite’ is viewed as an essential characterization of antagonistic & inevitably opposed groups. See; Kaliber, A & Kaliber, E. (2019). ‘From De-Europeanisation to Anti-Western Populism: Turkish Foreign Policy in Flux’. *The International Spectator* 2019, VOL. 54, NO. 4, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2019.1668640>. Also see; Mudde, C. 2004. “The Populist Zeitgeist.” *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 542–563.

movement in Europe. In post-Cold War, it was generally believed in the West that partisan conflicts would be resolved by universal rational compromises. However, in the backdrop of 9/11, security crackdowns and legitimized limitations on human rights helped far-right parties to center their discourses on law and order issues with the claims of protecting indigenous people. The advocates of populist movement demands the restoration of rightful order while asserting that political power belongs to the people rather than the state (Fisher, 2017). In the European context, populism is predominantly an outcome of failure of neo-liberal policies and expressed in two dimension of far-right and leftist populism. Both type of populism expounds the same principle of bringing together the people around a political idea while manifesting radically different ‘us’ against ‘them’. The far-right populists<sup>2</sup> are by and large characterized by hatred and indifference while being fearful of foreigners and immigrants. The leftist populists mobilize people for better future while advocating justice and equality (Zabala, 2017).

The populist discourses in politics gradually became a global phenomenon as populist movements emerged in the Africa, the Middle East and the Asia. However, literature on populism lacks the Asian perspective. Most researches on popular discourses and attitudes have usually focused on states where parties or actors have been in the opposition. Such studies present resistance and opposition as the underlying reason of populist tendencies against the ruling establishment. However, this led to overlook the cases such as Pakistan and Turkey where populist political leaders are in power. Populist often used to represent majority against political, economic or cultural elite and pursue their goals by dominating the state. Populists while delineating democracy as the ‘tyranny of majority’ desire to manage their political fights in streets rather than conversing it at the legislative forums of their states.

### **Dynamics of Populists Governments in Turkey and Pakistan**

Governance and political administration plays a vital role in developing an image and narrative of the government within the masses. Popular support for the regime acts as a driving force for the government to legitimize their rule and work freely within the constitutional framework of the state. In addition, political leaders and parties seek support by using populist policies in which leaders opposes the elite and tries to connect with the local masses, who has majority power in terms of their vote. The concept of populism in this regard has mostly being contested among the academic circle. Therefore, for this piece of paper, populist regimes can be referred to that policy preferences of the leader in which leaders tries to get the support from the population by opposing the elite formations and their associated practices in the society. Economic and political deprivation, along with call for social equality are main factors on the basis of which political leaders connect with their voters. For that reason, populist regimes consolidate a rhetoric which defends the concerns of common man against the elite with an aggressive posture (Daron Acemoglu, 2013, p. 771). Political communication is one of the core elements of populism in which

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<sup>2</sup> Swain explicates that right-wing populism in Europe is migration fueled as potential impact of immigrants on European states’ citizens’ interests and security emerges as the key dynamic of populist sentiments. See; Swain, A. Gulf News, November 30, 2020. ‘Trump’s Defeat Will Not End Populism in Europe’ <https://gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/trumps-defeat-will-not-end-populism-in-europe-1.75567557>

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leaders directly target its opponents and appeal an alternate system and systemic change. Use of emotional language which appeals a larger audience is mostly adopted by the populist leaders. In addition, leaders sketch their own narrative as a 'general will' of the people (N.W.Barber, 2019). The critics of populism highlights that how populist deliberately articulates an environment opposing the elite along with building a political momentum through promises and emotional traits. Therefore, populism is mostly based on the element of demagoguery based on the notion of popular sovereignty and an antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite (Stanley, 2008, pp. 95-102). In this perspective, politics in Pakistan has witnessed variant characters including controlled democracy, long years of dictatorship along with opposition movements based on the populist agenda against the government. Traditionally, call against military dictatorship, manifesting religious slogans and reforms along with taking an anti-elite posture are driving populist propensities in Pakistan. In this regard, Imran Khan, who started his political career in 1996 by forming the Pakistan justice party (Pakistan Tehrek e Insaf) belonging to right-wing cadre is one such example in Pakistan which gained popularity and power on the basis of valence populism which has a profound influence on the youth population of Pakistan. In Turkish case, populism is not a recent phenomenon and remained a key feature of their political culture. Unlike Pakistan, the populist propensities always existed evidently in Turkish politics as since the inception of Turkish Republic, ideological clashes and political disagreements remained the prime feature of their political system. Kemalism<sup>3</sup> and political Islam remained two main elements of populist politics with diverse outcomes incorporating different brand of nationalism along with long tradition of extra-parliamentary affairs. Turkish politics for most years were controlled by military in alliance with secular-republican elite who had significant influence over high level judiciary and bureaucracy while determining the direction of political system. The ruling establishment viewed Kurdish separatism and political Islam as potent threats which led to constrain political rights, pressurizing elected governments to resign, restrictions on expression of Kurdish language and religiosity at public institutions. These political divisions among Turkish society provided substantial grounds to Erdogan to construct the identities of 'us versus them' and he elucidated political conflict as a struggle between the conservative masses (the people) and secular-Republic; primarily disengaged from values of people (S. Erdem Aytaç, 2019, p. 98). The gradual and persistent transition from kemalism to post-kemalism under Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; officially abbreviated as AK PARTI) since 2002, along with the tradition of primacy of collective rights embedded in political culture of Turkey paved grounds for charismatic politics of Erdogan and his extra-institutional legitimization. The political regime in Turkey is now defined as 'Erdagonism' primarily comprised of four key dimensions where populism is the political strategy of AK PARTI government while Islamism represented as a political ideology along with electoral authoritarianism, and patrimonialism (Yalmaz, 2018, pp. 1823-1824). In this context, following strands of populism have been identified to explore that how Imran Khan and Tayyip Erdogan practiced populism in which it is observed

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<sup>3</sup> It refers to a political philosophy architected by Ataturk in Turkey on the basis of which Turkey was modernized. Kemalism with its radical overtones focused on secular nationalism and viewed masses as source of legitimacy.

that psychological features of populism tend to be a common and core element in understanding the populist outlook.

### **Political and Valence populism**

This aspect of populism refers to the focus of political parties and leaders on valence issues (mostly non-ideological) including governance related reforms, struggling against corruption and questioning the issues of morality by portraying their opposing groups in a negative connotation while projecting one's own self as part of the ordinary people (Khan, 2020, p. 2). Most of the populist political parties articulates an anti- elite narrative in which they envisaged a systemic and institutional change to bring reforms. In 2011, Imran Khan was able to pull out a huge political gathering in Lahore Minar e Pakistan, which started an altogether new version of PTI politics. Lahore has always been an important constituency in the political landscape of Pakistan. Therefore, pulling out more than one Lakh people was unprecedented and surprising for the sitting government. Following the Lahore jalsa, Khan addressed large crowds in Karachi as well. Pulling huge crowds from Lahore and Karachi were politically symbolic as both are strongholds of PML-N and PPP respectively. In 2011, PPP was heading the federal government and PML-N the provincial government of Punjab (Burki, 2011, pp. 2-8). Then, Pakistan Tehrek Insaf (PTI) emerged as a popular political party in Pakistan in the general elections of 2013 and secured third highest votes in the elections. Khan continued the populist rhetoric even after coming on the opposition benches and staged a 126-day sit-in against the elections results and demanded to outlaw the sitting government. Therefore, this container and street politics enhanced populist tendencies within Khan and his party. Consequently, in 2018 PTI was able win the General elections and formed the government in the center. In addition, their main political language was based on reforming the system in the favor of common people through the accountability of the political elite. Imran Khan, who already have a huge fan following because of his cricket career gained popularity as a political leader. Khan choose an aggressive posture against the opposition and build a strong description against corruption, fixed elections, hereditary politics, and nepotism. In this context, Khan developed a strong repulsion against Pakistan Muslim league (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPP) and Jamait Ulema Islam (JUI). This political outlook of Khan and his political party aiming for change and reforms increased their support before the 2018 elections. Another significant feature of Khan political populism was the degree of acceptability to his politics within the youth. His appeal to include youth in politics to minimize the role of dynastic elements in the political landscape of Pakistan became standard of his political communication. The role of social media in building a political momentum and connectivity was also being extensively used by Khan and his party. His twitter handler became a main source of connectivity and communication between him and his supporters. Here, it is significant to highlight that despite gaining a popular support as a leader and establishing a strong local political support within the voters, Khan consolidated power in the federal government in the aftermath of 2018 general elections through traditional means of political maneuvering which were completely opposite to the political slogans on the basis of which he and his party came in power. Following themes illustrates that how Khan's populist political idealism differed from his practical politics.

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- a) PTI gave party tickets for the general elections of 2018 to most of the former members of PPP and PML-N
- b) Khan formed the government in the center and Punjab in the aftermath of 2018 general elections by gaining support from the independent candidates and regional parties. Currently, PTI has 156 members in the national assembly and 24 members in the ruling elite belongs to other political parties (Latif, 2020). Similarly, PTI formed a coalition in Punjab assembly with PML-Q, to which Khan had been strong critique. Moreover, most of the ministries and cabinet positions were not given to the ideological member of PTI but to the coalition partners. Even in the Senate elections, horse trading and purchase – vote were being observed which completely drifted to the political stance of Khan.
- c) Election engineering played a significant role in the general elections of 2018. The issue of the failure of result transmission system (RTS), and questioning role of establishment remained unaddressed. Independent observers like PILDAT published a report on pre-poll perception parameters in which pre-poll electoral process of 2018 elections was observed to be unfair. In addition to it, the parameter of ‘Perception of Neutrality of Military towards competing political parties and candidates’ got the lowest score of 33.4%, which came under the category of being highly unfair. It was further assessed in the report that if the perception of unfairness in the pre-poll phase continued, it would have the same tendency during the elections (PILDAT, 2018, pp. 5-28). In May 2020, Election commission of Pakistan called for a detailed probe on the working of RTS system in 2018 general elections ([www.thenews.com.pk](http://www.thenews.com.pk), 2020)
- d) Imran Khan has been very vocal and critical about the role of establishment in the politics of Pakistan before coming in power. In this context, Khan’s relationship with establishment and their role in his government formation is parallel to his populist posture of being anti-establishment.

On the other hand, political and valence populism in Turkey can be understood through the politics under AK PARTI party. In first era, Erdogan’s populist discourse was marginal and occasional. In second era, especially in post-2011, when AK PARTI secured landslide victory in parliamentary elections, populism became the main theme of political oratory and policies of Turkish government in domestic and foreign policy domain. The aspect of valence populism was evident in early years of AK PARTI rule as Erdogan initially opted neo-liberal strategies against the status quo of Kemalism. However, during the second tenure of AK PARTI, strong religious overtones were incorporated into political communications while gradually replacing the populist tendencies of secular nationalism. Though valence populism was not completely discarded by Erdogan as this period was also characterized by confrontation between AK PARTI and power elite (military and judicial) while portraying establishment as enemy of democracy and people. He made repeated references to Islamism as an ideology to be practiced in Turkey specifically in post-2016 period. Moreover, Erdogan contemporary populist discourses are largely characterized by anti-western approach and de-Europeanization while focusing more on regional politics and assertive Islamist stances. It has been noted that since the failed attempt of military coup in 2016,

political authoritarianism gradually increased in Turkey. Military coup was largely resisted by the Turkish population to support civilian government in the wake of European Union (EU) membership criteria primarily requiring democratization of state and assertion of civilian control of Turkish military. The two important political developments were apparent in the responses of society and political elite of Turkey to the military coup. First, Turkish people were generally able to differentiate between the Turkish state and government as attacks on state official buildings by military personals were viewed as an assault on Turkish state rather than government. Secondly, political class irrespective of their political and ideological disagreements unanimously exhibited support in favor of AK PARTI government for strengthening elected civilian rule. In Turkish case, upsurge of public as leading actor in politics through their resilient impulses to renounce the established ascendancy of military in 2016 reinforced the authoritarian populist discourse of Erdogan which enabled him to continue emergency for two years.<sup>4</sup> To strengthen Turkey's EU bid, Turkish Parliament helped Erdogan as Prime Minister to pass such laws which made powerful military subject to civilian control. This led to shape an inclusive regime transformation.<sup>5</sup> In the backdrop of referendum on April 16, 2017 in which the 'Yes' campaign won gaining 51.37 percent vote ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), 2017), President Erdogan assumed extensive executive powers on July 9, 2018 by assuming nearly 53 percent votes in the presidential elections ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), 2018). This diminished separation of powers in Turkish political system while empowering President Erdogan to intervene into legal system, to impose emergency in the country and appointing public officials including vice-president and ministers. The expansion of executive control was furthered towards judiciary by undermining the rule of law and human rights as it has been noted that critics of Erdogan government specifically lawyers and human rights defenders used to face threats to their lives and violence (Turkey: The Judicial System in Peril, 2016, p. 19). Erdogan's efforts of silencing his critics caused apprehension regarding Turkish democracy while affecting its relationship with EU and stalling the bid to join the bloc.

### **Critical Cultural populism**

The notion of critical cultural populism not only incorporates the cultural values to understand the voice of the people but also encompasses the factors and cultural shifts which are involved in the development of the dominant figures who present themselves as voice of the people (Littler, 2020). Populist mostly use the language

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<sup>4</sup> In the backdrop of attempt of military coup of 2016, crackdown started against various sections of society as almost 50000 people were detained including Kurdish politicians, journalists, lawyers & academicians. Approximately 150000 public servants were sacked on alleged AK PARTI intimidation. See; Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Turkey's Pugnacious President. October 27, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13746679>. Moreover 1500 civil society organizations & almost 150 media outlets were closed. Patrick Kinglsey, "Erdogan Says He Will Extend His Sweeping Rule Over Turkey," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2017, available at [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/21/world/europe/turkey-erdogan-state-of-emergency.html?ref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2FEurope&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/21/world/europe/turkey-erdogan-state-of-emergency.html?ref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2FEurope&_r=0). 7000 academics were removed from their positions. See;

<sup>5</sup> Almost 1194 articles were issued under the 30 Emergency Executive Decree which resulted 100 amendments. See for detail; Ismet Akça, S. Algül, H. Dinçer, E. Keleşoğlu, & B. A. Özden, 'When the State of Emergency Becomes the Norm: The Impact of Executive Degrees on Turkish Legislation', <https://tr.boell.org/en/2018/03/15/when-state-emergency-becomes-norm> (accessed February 15, 2021).

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of change based on their own rational thinking and character. Traditions, text, belonging, narratives and cognitive character all contributes in shaping a particular culture of response and disposition of leaders, political parties and over all socio-political and economic structure of the state (Boyte, 2012 , pp. 300-301). In this context, Khan's populism bought some new cultural strands in Pakistani politics. Ranging from the inclusion of social media, youth activism to sit-in politics, Khan renewed the political culture and symbolism attached to it. Khan's populism bought positive as well as negative cultural trails within the political-cultural landscape of Pakistan. Positive factors included increasing youth activism and participatory politics along with bringing a popular voice for accountability and transparency within the masses. Moreover, Khan also aimed at bringing service reforms in bureaucracy, police, education and health, which appealed the poor and middle class. Whereas, negative culture included hate speech, political intolerance and an extreme polarization between government and opposition benches. In in turn had a negative impact on the working of parliament and to build consensus on key national issues. In addition, linguistic symbols including *Kaptaan* (Captain), *Naya Pakistan* (New Pakistan), *Tabdeeli* (Change), *Riyast e Madina* (State of Madina) were coined to build a popular narrative. It was also observed that even in the political party songs of PTI, anti-opposition oratory was used, unlike the traditional songs of political parties in which their own political ideology, symbol and leadership is electrified. Despite the fact that Khan in Pakistan used Islamic symbols in his popular rhetoric but no significant efforts made by him to transmute Pakistani society as per his popular assertions. An opposite case emerged in Turkey as initially, Erdogan used to project that he is not intended to impose Islamic values and committed to secularism however supported the right of Turkish population to express openly their religiosity. Though many of his attempted policies and public statements regarding criminalizing adultery, introducing alcohol free zones, opposing gender equality condemning feminists, discouraging birth control and encouraging to multiply Muslim population in Turkey reflected his religious mindset. After establishing a hegemonic position in politics in 2016 and onwards, Erdogan altered his populist strategy while asserting that he represents the oppressed section of Turkish society probably the Muslims. This period also witnessed frequent use of expression of 'people' in media debates especially in pro government and Muslim press (Kaptan, 2020, p. 3986) . The power elite like military and judiciary which previously projected as 'elite against people' had been subdued and were no more relevant to the popular discourse of AK PARTI. This adjusted strategy now targeted critics of government while depicting them as 'other' like opposition left and right-wing parties specifically People's Republican Party (CHP), journalists, academia, intellectuals and some of Western states as well. This provides that AK PARTI's approach of governance is not much different from previous military rules as elections are viewed as only source of legitimacy by representing 'people' while overlooking the participation which enhanced the ability of Turkish government to suppress mass movements, rallies and protest.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> This was evident in the case of government response through brutal use of police force to the Gazi Park protest of 2013 while rejecting the legitimacy of the protest as Erdagon claimed that ballot is the only mode of legitimate participation. See, for instance, Michael Werz, Matt Duss, and Max Hoffman, "Liberal Turkey Speaks—Is Prime Minister Erdoğan Listening?" Center for American Progress, June 4, 2013, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2013/06/04/65225/liberal-turkey-speaks-is-prime-minister-erdogan-listening>.

prospects for political dissent were declined through implementation of Association law, Foundation law, Anti-terror law and many other by-laws as these provision prohibit formation of any organization divergent to characteristics of Turkish Republic, aim to support any community or race, activities contrary to public order and national security (Trends in Turkish Civil Society, 2017). The change of nature of political system in Turkey from parliamentary to presidential system by some means supported Erdogan's populist discourse. The religious and nationalist discourses of Erdogan are largely required to bring together various political constituencies while developing a language and a lucidity to ensure the legitimacy of his rule. This is achieved by incorporating a populist discourse where political and ideological opponents are primarily portrayed as national enemies with irreconcilable and dissenting interests. The populist rhetoric of Erdogan focused different goals in its gradual transformation from populist democracy to populist hegemony. He started from a majoritarian populism and shifted its focus on neo-liberal populist strategies. Lastly he, surfaced grounds for the hegemonic depth<sup>7</sup> by assertion of civilizational superiority on already constructed 'others' by his populist oratory. The authoritarian assertions of AKP in Turkey are also evident by the political suppression of the critics specifically among civil society, media and academia.<sup>8</sup> This led to decline the electoral power of AKP as it lost local election in 2019 in three major cities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. President Erdogan's popular appeal generally stems from his evident association with Islam which is largely reflected from the policies of AKP. His populist politics is deeply rooted in his past experiences of social exclusion of conservative Islam in Turkey (Cagaptay, 2018).

### **Economic populism**

Economy has a direct link with the life of a common man as well as with the growth and development of the state. Economic stability in this regard has a direct relationship with political stability. Economy is a main connector between the people and the state. Consequently, economic policies constitute significant space within statecraft, manifesto of political parties, social movements and in staging a strong opposition against the sitting government. In this context, economic populism is a term which is mostly use to refer excessively expansionist policies based on growth and income distribution without giving any due consideration to risks of income inequality, inflation, external constraints, budget deficit and unemployment (Dall'Acqua, 1991, p. 30). Besides this, leaders in economic populism used the same yardstick of people versus the elite in support of their own economic policies. The issue of relative deprivation at the hands of the elite is the most important psychological trait in economic populism. Therefore, the reinstatement of people's well-being and prosperity is core in economic populism (Mazzoleni, 2020). Imran

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<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of Erdogan's Hegemonic depth Project', See; Yalvac, F & Joseph, J. (2019). Understanding Populist politics in Turkey: A Hegemonic Depth Approach. [Review of International Studies](#) , Volume 45 , Special Issue 5: Special Issue on Populism , December 2019, pp. 786 – 804. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210519000238>

<sup>8</sup> In September 2019, Canan Kaftancıoğlu; a left-wing politician of CHP was sentenced to almost ten years in prison after being charged with various delinquencies, including defamation, provocation of public hatred & violence, propagating "terrorist propaganda," as well as insulting the President Erdogan & Turkish state. See for the further detail; Bellut, D (January 17, 2021) Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan Threatens Rival With Jail. <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-recep-tayyip-erdogan-threatens-rivals-with-jail/a-56252279>



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Khan and his party used economic issues and malpractices as a popular voice, but practically their economic practices after coming in power contrasted with their own previous economic slogans. For example, issues of tax evasion, increasing indirect taxes, fiscal deficit, export distress, cutting government expenditures and undocumented economy continues to be some major unresolved economic issues. The government of Khan in 2018 got a state of economy which needed rigorous macroeconomic stabilization. In this context, unlike his populist rhetoric, Khan took some tough and unpopular economic decision. Furthermore, covid-19 further intensified the economic issues faced at the micro and macro level. This dimension of populism provides an insight that how systemic and situational complexities limits execution of popular mantras. Though, program such as Ehsaas Emergency Cash financial relief program started on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2020 provided an immediate relief to the poor strata. A sum Of 144 billion rupees were distributed in 12 million families in which each family was given 12000 rupees (www.pass.gov.pk, n.d.). This program facilitated the vulnerable part of the society but it did not contribute in the economic cycle of the state.

In addition to it, administrative weaknesses and internal drifts at times creates chaos at the foreign policy front for the populist regime. For instance, Imran Khan excessively emphasized that after coming into power he would not take any foreign loan, but less than a year after coming into power, Khan's government got 6-billion-dollar package from IMF to stabilize the economy. Later, in April 2020, an additional package of 1.4 billion-dollars was sought from IMF (Haqqani, 2020). The economic realities of international relations are far different from the local agenda setting. The populist domestic agenda of new Pakistan and welfare state might appeal to the people of Pakistan but on foreign policy level, a more pragmatic, situational based policies are required to understand the mutual interest and perspectives of other state. For instance, it is being pointed out by critics and observers that speed of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project has been slowed down since 2018 mainly due to the demand of IMF from PTI government to disclose the details of Chinese loans and investment. Things were further aggravated when the Minister of Commerce, Abdul Razak Dawood, signaled the suspension for a year projects in CPEC. Such news created apprehensions within the Chinese administration and eventually army chief had to visit China to clear silk road tensions on a three-day visit in 2018 (www.reuters.com, 2018). Another issue which explicates the deep complexities of national interest and foreign policy is a recent statement given by the foreign minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Quershi related to Saudi Arabia on the issue of demanding an OIC special meeting on Kashmir. He stated that, "It's right, I'm taking a position despite our good ties with Saudi Arabia" (www.dawn.com, 2020). This unusual sharp posture of Pakistan towards Saudi Arabia would have had implications on the 6.2-billion-dollar economic package which Saudi Arabia had bail-out for Pakistan, which include cash, oil and gas supply (www.tribune.com.pk , 2020). In order to dissuade the situation, Chief of Armed Staff, Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of Quershi's statement in August 2020. Such incidents indicate that sometimes popular policies and political slogans are not in align with the realities of statecraft.

In this context, Erdogan populist appeal initially stemmed from the economic stability of first phase of AK PARTI government. From 2002-2007, AK PARTI claimed to be conservative democrats rather than Islamist while emphasizing more

on economic growth of Turkish state followed by democratization reforms, improved foreign relations and became a manufacturing and export power house. However, this initial phase of AK PARTI was much influenced by prospectus of EU membership and helped AK PARTI to consistently secure its electoral triumph in later years. It has also been noted that AK PARTI while using substantial populist appeals to the voters strategically allocated public spending to buy large scale voting<sup>9</sup>. Later, Erdogan's authoritarian approach was not just confined to domestic politics as his uncompromising, ambitious and an assertive foreign policy based on ideological belief of civilizational superiority to project Turkish power abroad substantially effected Turkish economy. In the second phase of AK PARTI rule from 2007-2011, economic and democratization stagnation was observed leading to a deadlock in negotiation with EU. The need for a shift of popular discourse in post 2011 made him broaden his imagined antagonistic front against people by involving some international dynamic as well by referring an international mindset against Turkey (S. Erdem Aytac, 2019, p. 99). The attempted military coup of 2016 reinforced the general perception that Turkish state has threats from domestic and foreign enemies. Erdogan and his nationalist coalition openly accused West for backing the attempt of coup of 2016. This paved grounds for unilateralist practice of foreign policy and preemptive deployment of Turkish hard power beyond its boundaries. Under Erdogan, Turkish military became participant to the conflicts in Syria, Libya and most recently involved indirectly in Nagorno-Karabakh clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia. After Libya, Azeri-Armenian war became key irritation factor in off and on relationship between Turkey and Russia. The Turkish export previously experienced 8.7 % plunge in 2015 and shooting down the Russian fighter jet for allegedly violating Turkish space from Syrian side in November 2015 became a reason for loss of approximately 9-12 billion \$ trade with Russia. Moreover, conflicting stances with Iran and other Middle Eastern states over issue of regime change in Syria caused additional trade losses for Turkey (www.bbc.com, 2020). Turkey in post-2016 period did not have cordial relations with its traditional partners Europe and United States due to an over expressive approach of Erdogan in foreign policy.

In comparison with Khan, Erdagon has been specifically adept in swapping his populist oratory as per his convenience by explicating that 'who is "them" and who is "us" and who is an "enemy" and who is a "friend"'. This often remains helps him to asset his personalistic power and his strategy to overcome Turkey's economic crisis (Balta, 2018). Erdogan's unorthodox strategy of 'growth at all cost' and massive foreign exchange interventions policy by lowering interest rates and stabilization of Lira<sup>10</sup> fueled inflation, depleting currency reserves, balance of

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<sup>9</sup> See for the instances; Çarkoğlu, A., & Aytac, S. E. (2015). Who gets targeted for vote-buying? Evidence from an augmented list experiment in Turkey. *European Political Science Review*, 7(4), 547–566. Castanho Silva, B., Vegetti, F., & Littvay, L. (2017). The elite is up to something: Exploring the relation between populism and belief in conspiracy theories. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23 (4), 423–443. Also See; Aytac, S. E. (2014). Distributive politics in a multiparty system: The conditional cash transfer program in Turkey. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(9), 1211–1237.

<sup>10</sup> Murat Cetinkaya; the Chief of Central Bank was sacked by President Erdagon in July 2019 for resisting his economic policies. The cutting of interest rates led to fastest loan growth rate since 2008 in Turkey. Moreover, Central Bank spent almost 65 billion \$ largely borrowed by domestic banks to stop devaluation of lira. See for the detail; 'Why the Turkish Lira is in Free Fall'. <https://www.dw.com/en/erdagans-credit-binge-fuels-lira-depreciation/a-54524078>

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payment crisis and hiked unemployment. Erdogan's economic policies encouraged individual borrowing and excessive spending on infrastructure projects in Turkey which led to amassed 300\$ billion debts on private sector with no clear vision on how to pay back. These extensive spending policies backed by inflow of cheap credit led to depreciate Lira as much as forty percent against dollar in 2018 while increasing Turkish debt burden.

### Conclusion

It seems that populism in most cases is intoxicating. Despite the claims of populist governments of consolidating democracy & political instability, chaos and violence is gradually increasing under such regimes leading to political decay. The underlying reason is lack of political institutionalization which is a pre-requisite for political development.<sup>11</sup> In both cases of Turkey and Pakistan, political institutionalization and legitimization have been on decline. Imran Khan and President Erdogan's populist politics in Pakistan and Turkey have shaped hyperpolarized politics. Populist vision of both leaders rested on direct connection between the leader and its people while overlooking the need to establish intermediaries while exhibiting personalist power. Khan and Erdogan in line with supremacy of people's will are practicing majoritarian mode of democracy where they believe in link of people and its leaders through legitimacy on number of votes and largely disregard their institutional accountability. In Pakistan, valence aspect of populism seems prominent as despite Khan's populist oratory explicated references to historical Islamic state of Medina, neither his policies are derived from an ideological underpinning nor intended to transform Pakistani state and society through incorporation of certain ideology. Though, in Turkey specifically in post-2016, Erdogan and AK PARTI policies are significantly stemmed from the ideology they endorse and primarily aim to transform Turkish state and society as per their ideological imaginations.

In both states, Khan and President Erdogan used populist rhetoric for mass mobilization. However rather than enhancing the national consensus, their policies widened antagonism among the society, weakened the political class and reduced the room for political disagreement in political communications at institutional, societal levels and social media platforms. However, contrasting to case of Pakistani society which is now deeply divided in the terms of economic disparities, ideological splits, ethnic cleavages, sectarian categorization and most recently emerging extremist divisions of anti-military and pro-military groupings, Turkish society seems too erudite to be exclusively reformed by Erdogan's religious-nationalist program due to existence of a vibrant civil society<sup>12</sup> which is largely missing in Pakistan. Despite much anticipation for the modern Islamic conservatism

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<sup>11</sup> Political institutionalization provides processes & structures; essential for legitimization of a political system. In most developing states, in middle of modernization process, political institutions are often not governed by the rules while lacking to establish order & personal rule of elite becomes more visible. This leads political system to experiences political decay. See for the further details; Huntington, S.P.(1973).Political Orders in Changing Societies, Yale University Press. .

<sup>12</sup> During the past two decades in Turkey, there has been 50 % increase in civil society organizations as almost 130000 organizations exist and 13 % population is member of an association. See; Trends in Turkish Civil Society.(2017).Center for American Progress.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2017/07/10/435475/trends-turkish-civil-society/>

with Erdogan's Ottoman civilizational project by significant number of people, Turkish society does not seem to move towards conservatism however political internal divides are apparent up to an extent of damaging democracy as freedoms are eroded while dissent is criminalized and Turkey significantly seems estranged from the West largely on the bases of its civilizational antagonism. It also seems that in both countries, no clear successors with personality-cult are visible to continue the populist discourse of anti-corruption narrative of Imran Khan and conservative religious-nationalism of Erdogan. However, existing polarization in politics and extreme divides regarding personalistic politics of Khan and Erdagon will continue to sustain for longer period of time in both countries while making democratization process quite challenging.

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