



RESEARCH PAPER**Radicalization Redefined: Pakistan's Democratic Pursuits Under Thick Populist Narratives**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to emphasize on the radicalization of developing extremist ideologies and belief sets in a society as opposed to the liberal convictions, fundamental rights and values under a democratic order. When Radicalization meets populism a birthing of a new order takes place that jeopardizes the liberal democratic order. Populist upsurge appeals to the masses on the mainstream media in order to make marginalized groups feel empowered, only for a radical take on diversity and pluralism. Populists seek to separate democracy and liberalism based on the notion that cultural liberalism is at odds with religion and local customs where underrepresented groups are made to feel that they are puppets in the hands of liberal elites who threaten their way of life by challenging their traditional values, altering demographics, and dislocating them economically so that they can never climb the social ladder. This study utilized a comparative case study method to analyze and synthesize similarities, patterns and differences between Pakistan Awami Tehreek's (PAT) 'Long March 2013' and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's '2021 Pakistan Protests'. The findings indicate a wave of populism that has plunged Pakistan's democratic society. It reflects the by-passing of democratic checkpoints, by people who take to the streets to get their demands addressed in light of public scrutiny, while mainstream political parties do not show concern for the populace. A society without institutional restraints legitimized by organized mobs that takes to the streets to hold the reins of power in their hands is a dangerous idea that spawns in the minds of the citizens creating polarization, uncertainty and fragmentation making governance, a difficult feat.

KEYWORDS Democracy, Extremist, Media, Populism, Populist, Radicalization

Introduction

In the landscape of Pakistan's disruptive democratic pursuits two noticeable challenges loom large, that are Radicalization and Populism raising alarms on the rising concern and increased uncertainty for the country. Pakistani state has repeatedly attempted to build a strong narrative that its democratic system is very inclusive where the decrepit interferences to the democratic system are bygone but these spanning troubles covertly loom in the way of progress. On one hand there is Radicalization as defined by European Union: "Socialization to extremism which manifests itself in terrorism" (Ali S. A., 2020), while on the other end there is Populism, which is a political approach that appeals to the grievances of ordinary people against established elites, minorities and foreigners. Populism is like a divisive line that affirms its followers that they are moralistic and enlightened while deeming the opposition as immoral (Velasco & Bucelli, 2022).

Literature Review

An exploration into the themes of radicalization brings to light a vast array of its variants not constrained to religion, culture or any specific nation state. Radicalization just sparks from any idea that is inconsistent with the mainstream ideology i.e., it doesn't align with the pre-existing norms and rules and doesn't coincide with ongoing practices. Radicalization has proved fatal to many nations and empires even where deviance was strictly a punishable offence for instance the Bolshevik Revolution where the historic tradition of the Imperial rule was destroyed and the mighty Czars were ousted from power. History has witnessed the rise of ideas that merely began as sparks but then transformed into radical ideologies which spread like wildfire. Therefore, radicalization has been ever present since antiquity e.g. the more modern challenge would be the American Tea Party which defied traditional categorizations.

Manifestation of radicalization has been due to unrestrained rules which have been set against the backdrop of dissent. It can be said that at the root of such ideas lies a great deal of marginalization of a disadvantaged community and their neglect that can lead to often disruptions, violence, bloodshed, or even destruction of societies. Consequently, it can be said that radicalization is a process where individuals or groups develop and adopt extreme ideas and take actions that challenge the established legal, political or societal norms (Neumann & Della, 2022). The phenomenon of radicalization is often reaction based, or one may call it acted upon by those who believe that they have been neglected and abused long enough by those in power. Therefore, a rejection of existing institutions is often a result of suppression or oppression of a marginalized people whose needs and demands were ignored by the ruling entity and the aforementioned movements such as the revolt against the Czars or the Magna Carta, lead to the point that radicalization can stem from systemic issues. Reiterating radicalization, it refers to the process where extremist mindsets or ideologies evolve from non-violent to violent movements. It is driven by unequal distribution of wealth, rampant unemployment, and proximity to conflict zones, living below standards of living, widespread poverty, or uncertain socioeconomic conditions. Radicalization occurs as a response to sidelining of underprivileged or marginalized communities, rather than addressing their concerns, they are ignored for years so they form extremist beliefs. The escalation of the process of radicalization is a result of the increasing use of violent methods in pursuit of their targeted goals (Neumann & Della, 2022).

Populism is the manipulation of masses using charismatic appeal by persons who raise to prominent leadership positions through their charming personalities and cunning tactics, thus leading to immense fame and prominence in the mainstream media reducing populism to mere strategic maneuvering rather than a coherent ideology. It is a political stance against the establishment as the populist leaders promote themselves as 'Messiahs' or saviors of the masses to sway people towards the charismatic leaders. People's sentiments and grievances are the cannon provender for populist movements. The main tools populist leaders use to enhance their political clout include the use of humanitarian causes, emotional appeal to the oppressed or aggrieved. Hence popular support is gained via opportunistic tactics and public pleasing. Populist leaders often reduce complex issues into easy placard or appealing slogans to make their goals more prominent and to make the public realize that they are driven by concerns for people. Their goal is often based on the dichotomy of the "the pure people" against "the corrupt elite", consequently dividing the society into two moral divisions status (Mudde, *The populist zeitgeist*, 2004). Populist leaders often prioritize nationalist stances over international cooperation by presenting themselves as the voice of people at the cost of diversity and pluralism. Populism typically involves four key elements: the division of society into moral versus immoral groups,

popular rule, nationalism, and anti-pluralism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Muller, 2016; Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019).

Material and Methods

The aim of this research is to emphasize on radicalization of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs' in a society as opposed to the liberal convictions, fundamental rights and values under a democratic order. When Radicalization meets populism a birthing of a new order takes place that jeopardizes the liberal democratic order. The qualitative approach with comparative case study was utilized to analyze and synthesize similarities, patterns and differences between Pakistan Awami Tehreek's (PAT) 'Long March 2013' and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's '2021 Pakistan Protests'. This study gathered data via newspapers, articles, and other reports on these populist mayhems along with several governmental documents and academic research papers.

Separation of Liberalism and Democracy

It is noteworthy that liberalism and democracy are two distinct concepts merged into one, and it is possible for democracy to exist without liberalism at its core but they are often combined into the term "liberal democracy." On one hand liberalism emphasizes on individual rights, personal autonomy and freedom of speech, and limited intervention from the government, whereas democracy focuses on majority rule and popular sovereignty. Populist leaders exploit this distinction by separating liberalism from democracy to challenge individual rights and minority protections. Their argument is built on the premise that democracy fails to address individual needs in the name of pluralism, thus their "true people" lack basic favors. Populists view democracy as an elitist concept which benefits those in power and is unresponsive to underprivileged people. On the political spectrum populists from the left-wing as well as the right-wing see this critique as valid and threatening to their interests (Kremky, 2020; Zembylas, 2021).

Populism is a Template for Illiberal Democracies

Constitutional liberalism ideally supports liberal democracy, but not all democracies ensure constitutional autonomy. For instance, countries like Pakistan and Iran practice theocracy despite having democratic frameworks, limiting secularism and minority rights (Zakaria, 1997). Illiberal democracies often misuse the concept of "General Will" to justify policies that infringe on individual rights. Fareed Zakaria defines illiberal democracy as: "Democratically elected regimes often reaffirmed through referenda, but routinely ignoring constitutional limits and depriving citizens of basic rights and freedoms. "In illiberal democracies, elected regimes exploit democratic processes to undermine constitutional rights, discriminate against minorities, and centralize power. They often manipulate the judiciary and legislature to consolidate control, implement censorship, and suppress dissent (Eggel & Galvin, 2017). Pakistan, despite being a democracy, exhibits traits of illiberal democracy with media crackdowns, authoritarian use of executive and legislative power, and suppression of political criticism.

Features of Illiberal Democracy

- Charismatic leadership
- Erosion of the rule of law
- Media censorship
- Populist tactics
- Uniform educational curriculum

- Undermining judicial independence

Populist leaders often distort the idea of “General Will” to legitimize their concentration of power. An illiberal democracy is a political system where elections occur and governments are elected through popular vote, but democratic principles are undermined once in power. In essence, while illiberal democracies maintain the form of democracy through elections, they fail to uphold the substantive principles of liberalism, such as protecting individual rights and maintaining checks and balances (Zakaria, 1997). Populism can and often does coexist with illiberal democracies as well. In fact, populist movements and leaders are frequently found in illiberal democracies, where they can amplify and justify the erosion of democratic norms. Here’s how populism relates to illiberal democracies. Populism often thrives in illiberal democracies by exploiting democratic processes to undermine the very principles that protect individual rights and institutional checks and balances.

Populism Taking the Radical Route: Mob Rule

Populism appeals to ordinary people by presenting populist leaders as the sole representatives of a unified group, promising to solve all their problems. Their followers view these leaders as their ultimate advocates, and those who oppose them are seen as enemies. This perception can lead to radicalization. For instance, when populist leaders endorse controversial figures or engage in inflammatory rhetoric, their supporters may adopt radical views, as seen with leaders involved in the destruction of a Hindu temple by JUIF (Siddiqui, 2020). Populist leaders effectively create divisions within society by portraying themselves as champions of the “true people” against the corrupt elite. They emphasize their grievances and accuse the establishment of ignoring their demands. When these demands are unmet, populists may escalate to radical measures (Hetland, 2018). Therefore, Radicalization and Populism are distinct concepts but when populism starts to become extreme it can merge the boundaries between the two. The following is distinctions between extremist ensured by radical ideologies versus extremist Populism:

	Radicalization	Populism
1.	It is the process by which people or groups of people develop ideas and acts which resort to extremism, challenging the existing norms and institutions.	It is a political strategy to gain popular support via addressing the grievances of marginalized groups by charismatic leaders, which are often ignored by the establishment thus creating an anti-establishment narrative.
2.	Adoption of extremist views by individuals or groups as a response to eons of neglect and marginalization.	Use of emotional appeal, and charismatic rhetoric to garner support for complex issues by simplifying them into easy slogans.
3	Deviance from the established norms is on the basis of systemic issues, injustices against communities or marginalization of certain people.	Division of the society is on the basis of moral grounds where the "the pure people" are antagonized by "the corrupt elite".
4	Radicalization process may begin with or without leaders or ideologies pushing for extreme agendas.	Leaders are at the core of populist movements who address public to garner support and to present themselves as messianic persons of saviors.
5	Dissatisfaction with the system, inability to get justice or marginalization is the causes of radicalization.	Populism begins with exploitation of discontent against the existing system to challenge the status quo.
6	Potential for collapse of significant structures in the society of shift in ideological boundaries.	Popular sentiment can become disrupt or transform the political landscape of the society.

Source: The above chart has been drawn by the researcher to understand the difference between Radicalization and extreme forms of Populism.

Populism as a Challenge to Liberal Democratic Order

Populism has been openly challenging liberal democracies around the world with its increasingly radical ideology that is seen as having far reaching impacts on the societies. The detrimental effects are not only limited to anti-establishment ideas but are mounting to include anti-pluralistic and authoritarian tendencies coupled with anti-institutionalism and illiberal policies (Galston, 2018). Populism fosters hegemonic pretensions by creating dichotomous divisions: “Us vs. Them”, which undermines the democratic potential (Otto, 2022). Populist leaders are anti-institutionalists who advocate for “people’s sovereignty” over institutional authority, openly undermining the rule of law by rejecting national institutions like the court and legislature. They believe that democratic majority can disrupt the legal framework of a liberal democracy (Velasco & Bucelli, 2022). In the case of Pakistan, Tehreek e Labbaik (TLP) Pakistan’s leader Khadim Hussain Rizvi led protests against the Supreme Court's verdict in the Asia Bibi case in 2017 (Alam, 2018).

Populism rejects the notion of diversity as per its agenda of dividing the public into “true people” versus “corrupt elite” creates disunity and discontent in liberal democracies for the sakes of gaining more political clout, they easily dismiss pluralism. For populist leaders, morality is their high ground which isn’t shared by their political opponents who are then marketed as corrupt and morally bankrupt in their rallies. This gives in to a very rigid structural policy of not engaging with diverse point of views (Kremky, 2020). Populism often results in consolidation of the leader’s power under the pretense of empowerment of people and support of independent agencies which can lead to authoritarianism, where leaders consolidate power under the guise of empowering the people and supporting independent institutions. The rhetoric of populist leaders frequently masks a desire for totalitarian control (Palmer, 2019). Populism is more likely a nationalist ideology as it prioritizes national interests over international cooperation. Populists are often promoting their personal interests under the label of national interests. Therefore, populists have more isolationist policies which can impact the international relations of the said democracy with the world. It would be seen in this paper where TLP’s stance prioritized nationalistic goals over broader international partnerships under their populist rhetoric.

Radicalization, Populism and Democracy

The below given chart is showing the difference and connections between radicalization and populism, stressing that both the expressions are not directly connected but their impressions on the societies are comparable. Basically Populism is not threatening at first but after reaching at a certain societal level it has potential to convert into a radical idea. Pakistan has always struggled for a consolidated democracy with an ample of numerous demanding challenges. These challenges of Pakistan are precarious but there is another facet of radical populism that is troubling for the democracy of Pakistan. The effect of pluralism of democracy is multifaceted and delinquent constructive.

Effect of Populism on Democracy			Effects of Radicalization on Democracy		
1.	Positive	Amplifies voices that are often ignored, promotes political participation and engagement	1.	Detrimental	Leads to increased polarization, weakened institutions, and challenges to civil liberties
2.	Negative	Posing risks to democratic institutions, can lead to erosion of democratic values and institutions	2.	Undermines democratic values	Can lead to a rejection of democratic values and principles, such as tolerance and respect for minority rights

3.	Divisiveness	Fosters division and polarization between groups, undermining social cohesion	3.	Encourages violence	Can lead to the use of violence or intimidation to achieve political goals, undermining democratic norms
5.	Undermines pluralism	Fosters a sense of "us vs. them" mentality, undermining the representation of diverse voices	5.	Erodes social cohesion	Fosters division and hostility between groups, undermining social cohesion and national identity
6.	Erodes trust in institutions	Can lead to decreased trust in government, media, and other institutions	6.	Threatens democracy's legitimacy	Can lead to a crisis of legitimacy for democratic institutions, undermining faith in democracy
7.	Overemphasis on personality	Fosters a focus on individual personalities rather than policy issues, undermining the democratic process	7.	Disregards human rights	Can lead to the disregard or violation of human rights, particularly for marginalized groups
8.	Ignoring expertise	Disregards expert opinions and evidence-based decision-making, leading to poor policy decisions	8.	Fosters a culture of fear	Creates a culture of fear and intimidation, stifling free speech and dissenting voices
9.	Manipulation of media	Can lead to manipulation of media coverage to support populist agenda	9.	Undermines rule of law	Can lead to the erosion of the rule of law, as radicalized individuals or groups may ignore or disregard legal norms
10.	Unaccountable governance	Can lead to unaccountable governance, as populist leaders may ignore or disregard accountability mechanisms	10.	Encourages online radicalization	Can lead to the spread of radical ideologies through online platforms, potentially radicalizing more individuals
11.	Nationalism and isolationism	Fosters a sense of national exceptionalism and isolationism, potentially harming international relations and cooperation	11.	Destabilizes political institutions	Can lead to the destabilization of political institutions, potentially leading to political instability or even collapse

Populist Appeal in Pakistan

In Pakistan, Populist leaders have presented themselves as saviors of the public, championing for their rights against the backdrop of a very corrupt elite and a rigid establishment against a rigged system that can only offer them further socio-economic disparity, rather than justice. The following list is the summary of potential grounds of populist appeal in Pakistan:

No.	Populist grounds of appeal in Pakistan	
1.	Heroes against the Establishment	Populist leaders have posited themselves as the true representatives of people and champions of human rights against a country ridden with political and military elites.
2.	Promise of a booming economy	Populist leaders take vows to eradicate poverty and bridge the gap of income disparity by employment of equitable policies, job creation and social welfare schemes that inculcate wealth redistribution for a prosperous economy
3.	Nationalist Rhetoric and Patriotic spirits	Patriotism is the bond resulting from nationalist sentiment shared by Pakistani public and often exploited by populists frequenting its usage in their rhetoric to garner support e.g. the Anti-Western Rhetoric.
4.	Mayhem against Corruption	Pakistan's power houses have been devoid of true accountability, and populists often champion themselves by promising to launch anti-corruption mayhems or introduce systematic changes to bring about accountability by exploiting the public frustration that comes with political figures bypassing the legal system to rid themselves of any accountability measures.
5.	Appealing to the religious sentiment	Pakistan has had a religiously charged population since its inception, and often leveraged religious scholars and leaders by granting them immunity in the name of upholding Islamic values. Thus, whenever any anti-Islamic rhetoric is promoted, it

becomes a valid ground for populist appeal to those religious masses.

Using their charisma, populist leaders mobilize support through street protests and national movements, demanding policies that reflect their collective agenda. When governments fail to address these demands, radical actions can follow. In Pakistan, protests led by PAT, TLP, and PTI have targeted the government over corruption, blasphemy, and systemic dysfunction. For example, Khadim Hussain Rizvi's provocative statements led to radical protests and attacks on government institutions (Yilmaz & Saleem, 2021).

The Dharna Havoc

A "dharna" is a kind of sit-in protest at a designated area to pressurize the government to make decisions and policies in the favor of the demonstrators. Protestors usually target strategic areas which results in disrupted governmental activities. Many times, Islamabad Capital Territory has become the focal point for the protestors. Many parties and populist groups like PAT and TLP, organized dharnas in Islamabad to articulate their demands by exerting pressure. These protests often upset daily life activities and the process of governance. Instead of contributing positively to Pakistan's democratic process, these protests mostly serve the interests of a party or a group leader solely.

Inqalabi March Announced By Pakistan Awami Tehreek

Unsettling Coalition: The Duo's Inqalabi March

On August 10, 2014, Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, the leader of Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), launched the "Inqalabi March" to protest against the federal government as well as the Punjab provincial government. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) also abetted PAT and dogged multiple strategies and approaches to topple down the then government.

PTI's Stance: Led by Imran Khan, PTI's "Azadi March" demanded accountability for the alleged fraud in the general elections of 2013. PTI also urged for electoral reforms. Imran Khan gave fair warning to the government that if the demands of PTI were not met, it would go for a gigantic march towards the Parliament with millions of supporters, and will confront the government directly (Gohar, Sarwat, & Farman, 2022).

PAT's Stance: PAT's "Inqalabi March," headed by Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, endorsed a comprehensive agenda of political and systemic modifications. PAT demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the Chief Minister of Punjab. To fulfil the objectives, it mobilized huge support against the government.

Although both parties wanted the resignation of key government officials and had a mutual objective of protesting against the status quo, but there was not any formal settlement between PTI and PAT about their tactics or particular demands. Though aims were same but their methods differed, as PTI was more focused on electoral reforms while PAT was advocating extensive range of political reforms.

The March Fueled by Model Town Incident:

The PAT protests were prompted due to the "Model Town incident", on June 17, 2014. In this tragic event, Punjab police, without notifying MQI or Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri,

intruded PAT's secretariat in Lahore, and removed the barriers outside the secretariat. PAT supporters retaliated the Punjab police. Resultantly, police tried to suppress them by using tear gas and ammunition. This appalling event led to 14 deaths and hundreds were injured. (Khan, 2018).

On August 11, 2014, PAT, in supervision of Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, announced the "Inqalabi March", which began in Model Town, Lahore. The aim was to seek justice for the victims of Model Town incident. They urged for the resignations of Punjab Chief Minister, Shahbaz Sharif and Law Minister of Punjab, Rana Sanaullah (Gohar, Sarwat, & Farman, 2022; Ullah, Ahmad, & Azim, 2020). Imran Khan also collaborated in this march and PTI's protest was named as "Tsunami March". Though the intention was to organize a peaceful demonstration but the protest escalated into violence. Dr. Qadri admonished his supporters that he would kill those who will return without completing the task. (Khan R., 2014). Section 144 was enforced in the area of Model Town, to suppress the protests against government. The government blocked PAT's routes with the help of containers, and made it mandatory for all to ask for the permission before entering into the capital. The PAT leaders and supporters ignored the warnings of government. The then interior minister, Ch. Nisar Ali Khan, censured the protest and declared it unconstitutional. (Ghauri, 2014).

March towards Red Zone Area:

Supporters of both PTI and PAT were involved in the demonstrations against government, and called for stop paying electricity bills. To intensify the pressure on the government, both parties deliberated the marches towards the Red Zone. It resulted in emergency in ICT but the government instructed the police for adopting a protective stance.

Regardless of the assurances of nonviolent protests, the demonstrators attempted to encroach the Prime Minister's office and the Parliament, leading to the demolition of the property. Police vehicles were set on fire by these protestors. In reprisal, Islamabad police used tear gas to scatter the protestors. The situation got worse when the protesters trespassed the Pakistan Television (PTV) office, sabotaging the equipment and menacing the reporters. The military interceded to cope up the crisis, while the judiciary mediated between the government and the opposition. Many dissenters, involved in the Parliament attack, were arrested, Both PAT and PTI leaders claimed that they are not responsible for the violence (Hassan, 2022).

Calling off the Dharna by PAT

In October, PAT ended the sit-in in Islamabad, proclaiming that their 77-day protest had effectively aroused the nation. PAT leader, Tahir-ul-Qadri called it as a "Revolutionary Journey", and announced that the protest will be extended to other regions of the country (Haider I., 2014).

Damages incurred during the PAT's Protests (in coalition with PTI):

Security and Resource Diversion: During the PTI and PAT protests, Pakistan encountered serious challenges like extremism, terrorism and energy crisis. At that time, the government was trying to counter terrorism in North Waziristan via operation Zarb-e-Azam. The extensive demonstrations in Islamabad sidetracked the resources and the military deployment, which affected badly the government's ability to tackle the security conundrums. This resulted in augmented terrorist activities and noteworthy casualties, along with the APS attack of 2014 in the country (Mamoon, Abbas, & Javed, 2017).

Educational Disruption: Educational institutions in Islamabad remained closed during the protests because of instability and chaos in the capital city. Schools remained shut till August 31, disrupting academic activities and adversely impacting the educational environment.

Economic Impact: The protests resulted in considerable economic mutilation, aggravating Pakistan's debt crisis. Economic loss was predicted between 500 to 800 million rupees, with some estimations suggesting that the total economic loss exceeded \$6 billion due to these protests (Mamoon, Abbas, & Javed, 2017).

Cancellation of Investment: The protests caused the cancellation of a planned visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Pakistan. It was supposed to bring \$34 billion of investment in Pakistan. The civil turbulence prompted the postponement of this inordinate visit, depriving Pakistan of momentous economic support (Haider, 2014).

International Relations and Financial Strain: Moreover, the dharna of 2014, destabilized Pakistan, and it resulted in strained relationships with international financial institutions. Imran Khan publicly precluded the debt obligations from the PML-N government and encouraged foreign funds via informal channels. Additionally, the Maldives President annulled his proposed visit to Pakistan (Mamoon & Abbas, 2017).

Emergence of TLP

The Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) movement arose in 2015, in reaction to the execution of Mumtaz Qadri. Qadri assassinated the then Punjab Governor, Salman Taseer over blasphemy accusations. Taseer had supported Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, accused of blasphemy. This ignited Mumtaz Qadri and he shot the governor, saying he is a blasphemer. The government hanged Mumtaz Qadri for killing the governor. He was a bareilvi and follower of Sunni Islam. His execution exasperated the followers of Sunni Islam. Khadim Hussain Rizvi, a Sunni religious scholar, set up TLP during Qadri's funeral (Janjua, 2021). TLP is a far-right religious political party. It gained much popularity through its distinctive social mobilization maneuvers, and became a noteworthy political force. It can be seen in the results of 2018 elections, in which TLP emerged as the fifth-largest political party, challenging the PML-N (Rias, 2021; Jafri & Abbasi, 2018).

A sequence of protests orchestrated by TLP on the French Controversy

In 2021, Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) organized extensive protests and nationwide strikes in the country. It was the reaction towards the publication of caricatures of Prophet Muhammad PBUH in France. The French teacher, Samuel Paty displayed the caricatures of Prophet PBUH in the class, and was killed by a Muslim refugee named Abdullah, on October 16, 2020. On his killing, the president of France, Emmanuel Macron, defended those caricatures as freedom of expression (Gupta & Lough, 2020). This statement by French president outraged the TLP's supporters as they called it as a blasphemous action. For them it was an attack on Islam and respect of Holy Prophet PBUH. In January 2021, they started protests and demanded the government to cut off all diplomatic ties with France and dismiss the French ambassador. The government of Pakistan agreed to consider the demands of TLP and set a four-month deadline. On April 11, 2021, Saad Hussain Rizvi, who was leading TLP, called for nationwide rallies in order to coerce the government to fulfil their demands. The government arrested Rizvi on April 12 under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, and put a ban on TLP (Qarar, 2021). This action of the government further enflamed widespread unrest among the TLP supporters. Instead of ending the protests, the party demonstrated across the country. It resulted in two deaths

and many people got injured (Gobal, 2021). On April 15, the government of Punjab officially banned TLP, and ordered Rizvi to hand over his passport and made it mandatory for him that before holding any future meetings, he will notify the authorities. Prime Minister, Imran Khan vindicated the ban on TLP as the protests organized by the party resulted in many disruptive activities such as road blockades, and fierce confrontations with the police (Syed, 2021). TLP was forced to end its protests (Qarar, 2021). Before ending the protests, there were 4 demands of TLP.

Four Demands of TLP:

- Dismissal of the French ambassador and his whole team.
- Release of Saad Hussain Rizvi, the party Chairman of TLP.
- Immunity to TLP supporters for the damages caused and not to be charged under 'Anti-Terrorist Act 1997'.
- Release of the party activists and cancellation of FIRs against them. (Gabol, 2021)

Negotiations

It resulted in three rounds of negotiations between the government and the senior leadership of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP). In the first round of talks, TLP agreed to cut off the nationwide protests. During the second round, the government promised that it will discuss the matter of eviction of the French ambassador in the Parliament, though it later elucidated that it would not allow the ambassador's removal. The government also committed to lift the ban on TLP and to release Saad Rizvi along with other party activists. Nonetheless, in the third and final round of talks, the government rebuffed to dismiss the interior minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad or release any more TLP workers. Consequently, TLP instigated a three-day protest in Lahore and demanded the government to release Saad Hussain Rizvi (Mehmood, 2021).

Protests for the release of Saad Rizvi

In October 2021, the Lahore High Court (LHC) gave orders to release Saad Rizvi, who had been arrested since April 11, 2021. However, the government of Punjab challenged the decision of LHC in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The government claimed that the legal requirements of high court were not fully met. The Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the LHC's decision. (Ali, 2021).

Due to the extension of Saad Rizvi's imprisonment on October 22, 2021, Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) launched protests in the country, to pressurize the government to release TLP's leader. The demonstrators confronted with the police and these hot-headed protests saw death of four police officers. As per reports, hundreds of police officers got injured during these hostilities (Raza, 2021). The police tried to repress the dissenters by using tear gas and the government even deferred mobile services in Lahore to take control of the situation. To stop the inflow of protesters in Islamabad, the government blocked main roads and deployed paramilitary forces there. Finally, on November 18, 2021, the government acknowledged the demands of the protesters and Saad Rizvi was released from Kot Lakhpat Jail. The ban on TLP was also lifted (Rasheed, 2021).

Damages caused during TLP's protests in 2021:

- **Revenue Loss:** Special Assistant of CM Punjab addressed that due to TLP's protests started from 2017, Pakistan faced loss of 35 billion rupees. Due to these protests, many

roads were blocked and it halted the stable supply of goods. (TLP protests since 2017 caused Rs35bn loss: SACM, 2021)

- **Casualties:** Due to the clashes between the protestors and the security forces, 4 police personnel died and many were injured during these demonstrations (TLP protests since 2017 caused Rs35bn loss: SACM, 2021)
- **Damaging Diplomatic Ties:** These protests resulted in feeble security situation in Pakistan, owing to which several countries suspended their flights to Pakistan. This led to a noteworthy drop in tourism and significant decrease in revenue of the country.
- **Infringements of the rights of citizens:** Many human rights organizations condemned how the government handled the situation. The use of force against the protestors was criticized as it violated citizen's rights. In order to investigate the matter, the government announced to make an inquiry commission and assured to provide compensation to the affected persons and the business community.
- **Transportation halt and consequential backlog:** Transportation and commerce got disrupted because of blockage of many roads and highways. Transportation and commerce companies faced delay in transportation of goods, additional costs to be paid and significant loss in the revenue.
- **Impediment to movement in daily life:** The chaos in several cities led to the curfew in the conflict prone regions and military was deployed in those areas. It halted the daily life activities of common people. People from other cities and abroad faced inconvenience in travelling.
- **Detrimental effect on country's reputation:** The use of force by the government and the police against the TLP protestors damaged the country's image internationally. It also brought criticism from human rights organizations.

PAT's Long March 2013-2014 and TLP's 2021 Protests

	Pakistan Awami Tehreek	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan
Date of formation	25 th May, 1989	1 st August, 2015
Founder	Tahir-ul-Qadri	Khadim Hussain Rizvi
Form of Protests	<p>2013 Long March</p> <p>a. Electoral Reforms</p> <p>b. Boycotted the Elections</p> <p>2014 Long March</p> <p>a. To seek justice for Martyrs of Model Town Tragedy (17th June, 2014)</p> <p>b. To send the Govt home in violation of Article 62, 63 & 208</p> <p>c. COAS intervene & FIR was registered (on 9 influential political figures)</p>	<p>2021 Protests</p> <p>a. TLP struggled to compel Pakistan's government to cease all relations with France.</p> <p>b. They claimed that France had disrespected Holy Prophet PBUH, thus committed blasphemy.</p> <p>c. The structural weakness of this claim was that the France had an abundance of Muslims living there (In 2009, about 4.5 million Muslims were living in France). Cutting ties with France would be assumed as cutting ties with that Muslim community including expatriates of Pakistan, ending operations with G8, and a possible cost of economic sanctions.</p>
Motive	To pressurize the government	To pressurize the government to deport French Ambassador
Political Channel	Sit-in	Long March
Bypass	The existing Government	The existing Government

Show of Strength	Followers and opposition party	alliance with	Followers
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Discussion

The “long March” of Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) IN 2014 caused substantial political and social consequences. PAT used human shields and barricades to force the government. The government negotiated with PAT and the political profile of the latter raised. However, this disruption became cause of broader challenges such as, economic losses and haggard social dynamics. The Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) was also launched high-profile protests to gain political influence as well as international recognition. Despite their efforts, the parties failed to achieve their primary goals as these protests brought about substantial property mutilation and economic loss in the country. To frontward their itinerary’s both parties used protest as a major strategy. This approach was reinforced by widespread media coverage, and the public pressure on the government was intensified. The infrastructure also got damaged during these violent demonstrations. Moreover, it gave rise to the political instability and uncertainty. There were repeated clashes between the strikers and security forces. It strained law enforcement resources and diverted the attention from grave issues of the country such as, terrorism.

The PAT and TLP protests demonstrated the fashion of radical populism in the country, where political objectives were chased via mass mobilization and encounters with the country’s law enforcement personnel and not through the democratic processes. It undermined the efficacy of democratic institutions and created the environment of political polarization and volatility. This radical populism revealed during protests destabilized the governance and eroded democratic norms in the country.

Conclusion

The case of Pakistan highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between populism, radicalization, and democracy. By acknowledging the positive and negative consequences of populism and addressing the root causes of radicalization, it is possible to promote a more stable and inclusive democracy in Pakistan. In nutshell, the large-scale protests of PAT and TLP in order to advance their political agendas resulted in far-reaching repercussions. The pernicious impact of radical populism on the national stability can be seen in resulting economic loss, halted public services, large-scale political instability, and attrition of democratic processes. These events emphasize the need for more practical democratic approaches towards political engagement. Moreover, the study showed the trend of radicalization and populism in Pakistan. The political parties, once in power, often shift their focus from public welfare to their personal interests. It led to the marginalization of various groups and the disregarded sections of the population would react in a way that suits these radical-populist leaders.

Recommendations

- The educational curriculum must be revised and the content promoting jihad should be removed. It should be ensured that the curriculum includes perspectives on minority rights and it must flourish critical thinking. This will enable students to have tolerant political views and foster reverent debate within the educational institutions.
- The government should consider the grumbles of marginalized communities on priority basis. The government should review its past policies and learn lessons from it. Those policies of government fueled radical populism instead of bringing peace.

- Media outlets should play positive role. It should help the diverse communities of Pakistan to highlight their challenges by expressing through media. It would prevent radicalization when the grievances expressed through media will be heard and addressed peacefully. It could be similar to the approach taken by the Pashtun Tahafaz Movement (PTM).
- Political parties should take the responsibility to ensure the representation of minority and marginalized communities and to bring their issues at national level in order to sort them out. The government should address the concerns of these communities and fulfil their legitimate demands.
- The protests that target the foreign ambassadors have severe implications on economic and diplomatic relations with other countries. It impacts negatively the international prestige of the country. Religious parties should take into consideration the diplomatic and economic repercussions of their actions, on the country.
- Radicalization and extremism can be avoided if the government tackles the socioeconomic issues like poverty, inequality etc. by implementing all-inclusive economic policies, promoting job incentives and reducing income disparity.
- As a democratic state, Pakistan should respect the democratic norms. Equitable and inclusive policies should be implemented by keeping into consideration all segments of the society.

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