

Columbia University
School of International and Public Affairs

At the Crossroads of Contested Representations :

The 'Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf' in Pakistan's Politics

a research paper by
B. Zeynab Ali

05/04/2011

Course Title: Islam in South Asian Politics

Introduction:

Pakistan is currently faced with virulent socio-religious polarization that ultimately manifests itself across the political spectrum. The 'radical' right-wing religious forces are vehemently competing with so called 'liberal' elements for decisive representation.¹ These two contested positions do not seem to reflect the aspirations of the majority of ordinary people of Pakistan, who do not support religious fundamentalism or espouse overly secular, liberal values but have not found a 'definitive voice' or a 'representative space' in the political or public sphere.²

In this context it is particularly interesting to study the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI), one of the 'emerging' political parties in Pakistan which reflects such mainstream concerns. Significantly a prominent feature on its agenda is the aim to 'bridge the polarized divide' in the Pakistani society.³ The PTI describes itself as a Centrist party with no professed affiliations with the religious right-wing or the liberal groups in Pakistan. At times the PTI agenda overlaps with one group or the other, but since it does not wholly endorse the positions of either camps it is looked down upon by both the liberal elite and the right-wing groups. This is a dilemma that the PTI faces when it seeks representation in the public sphere, which is dominated by these two factions.

This paper seeks to study the PTI's current place in the religiously polarized sphere of Pakistan politics and how it navigates its way through the current political scene. It will also take into view how both the liberal and the religious right-wing camps and the society perceive PTI. It also aims to explore how the PTI intends to address and rectify the dilemma of growing polarization in the Pakistani society. The PTI describes itself as a 'broad based socio-political movement', therefore this paper aims to study it as such. It will also discuss the PTI's particular vision for the place of religion in Pakistan politics and analyze to what extent their agenda resonates with the goals and expectations of the general public. It tries to identify the disadvantages and constraints PTI faces in order to create space for its Centrist agenda in the national discourse. It also studies how this

¹ Ejaz Haider. 'Where is the Centre?'. Basil Nabi Malik. 'Will the Moderates Ever Stand Up?', ET

² Eqbal Ahmed in *Making Enemies*.1997 also Interview with Dr. Riffat Hassan. Newline.2004

³ Interviews with Imran Khan. *Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf*, also the PTI Constitution.

agenda differs from other Centrist parties. Ultimately the paper tries to assess whether the new 'emerging centers of influence' in Pakistan will allow Centrist aspirations, such as those of PTI, to be articulated in the polarized scenario.

A Brief Background on *Pakistan Tehreek-i -Insaaf*:

The PTI is described as an 'upcoming' but 'untested' political party, which has not found success in electoral representation in the country as yet. Infact it has yet to move beyond what may be called a 'pressure group status' in the political system.⁴ PTI describes itself as not merely being a political party but a 'broad based social movement' that 'embraces the interests of all Pakistanis'.⁵ The PTI was formed in 1996 as 'a movement for justice', aimed against the 'corrupt ruling elite' on the initiative of Imran Khan, a former cricketer and one of the leading philanthropists in Pakistan.⁶ PTI contested its first elections in 1997, failing to win any seats and then again in 2002 with the party winning 0.8% of the popular vote with 1 out of 272 seats in the Parliament. It did not participate in the Feb, 2008 elections which it cited as being 'illegitimate'. It has participated fully as a party in one election yet, so it believes that it has not had the opportunity to test it's mettle in the realm of political representation. There is some evidence of increasing public support for the party as the PTI has come out in second place in many by-polls in different locations recently.⁷

The party comprises of a diverse membership, with members from different ethnic groups, social classes, minority sects holding prominent leadership positions. Presently the PTI maintains chapters in all five provinces of Pakistan with a large part of it's membership coming from the urban areas. The PTI's Women's Wing and the Insaaf Student's Federation, which is the official student wing of PTI, are among the predominantly active organs of the PTI. The party condemns 'power politics' and

⁴ PTI official website. www.insaf.org.pk, News Night with Syed Talat Hussain. April, 2011

⁵ PTI Ideology, www.insaf.org.

⁶ The Imran Khan Foundation. <http://imrankhanfoundation.org>

⁷ PTI official website. www.insaf.org.pk

describes its primary objective as being the 'initiation of reform' in the existing system, rather than 'coming into power'.⁸

The party's slogan '*Insaaf, Insaniyat, Khuddari*', or 'Justice, Humanity and Self-Esteem' encapsulates its philosophy of seeing Pakistan as a 'an egalitarian modern Islamic welfare state' and a 'genuine democracy with a rule of law, an independent judiciary and economic system' which upholds the fundamental rights of 'all citizens regardless of caste, creed and religion'. The PTI believes in 'Islamic socialism' and harbors a vision of 'a shared ethos' which can bring together its diverse social classes, linguistic, regional and religious groups. The PTI describes itself as committed to 'political stability' through 'credible democracy, transparency in government and accountability of leadership'. According to the PTI, 'the concentration of power in the hand of a corrupt ruling elite has disrupted the spirit of federalism causing a sense of deprivation amongst the federating units which has resulted, in narrow parochialism, ethnicity and division among the people which threatens 'the integrity and solidarity of Pakistan'.⁹

The Issue of Polarization and PTI's vision of Islam in Pakistan.

An overview of recent events reveals a 'divided' and 'deeply confused' sociopolitical milieu of today's Pakistan.¹⁰ The political discourse in Pakistan seems bitterly divided along numerous, cross-cutting cleavages in which religion has again and again proven to be the primary fault line. Islam has clearly played a decisive role in defining the political trajectory of the country.¹¹

However it was a correlation between religious and political factors that fused to create the current state of affairs in Pakistan. In many ways the origins of this current schism can be traced back to the 1958-1969 period when the advent of modernization, combined with the secularization of society, divided Pakistani society into 'a secular,

⁸ Interviews with Imran Khan.

⁹ PTI Manifesto AP Report, <http://tribune.com.pk//imran-khan-vows-to-make-Pakistan-a-welfare-state>

¹⁰ Ejaz Haider. '*Where is the Centre?*'. Express Tribune. also Faisal Siddiqi. *The Great Divide*. Dawn

¹¹ Mohammad Waseem. *Politics and the State in Pakistan*. 1998. and Shirin Sadeghi. Huffington Post.

Westernized ruling class and the mass of people living according to time-honored Indo-Islamic traditions'. Each group adhered to its own cultural, social, and political outlook, which resulted in alienation between the rulers and the masses.¹² Some aspects of this polarization can be explained in the context of the 'High Islam' vs. 'Low Islam' debate, where 'Low Islam' is associated with the masses and the rule oriented 'High Islam' has always been associated with the religious orthodoxy and the urban ruling elite. In Pakistan's case, as is the case in all post-colonial Muslim states, most social and political institutions that sustained the traditional Islamic life in the past have disintegrated and the institutional make up of the contemporary urban institutions and the Muslim bourgeoisie bears 'an imprint of considerable secularization'. The secular elite continued to use 'High Islam' to validate themselves and elevated the puritanical clergy to a superficial, symbolic prominence.¹³

While the 'secular elite' were supported surreptitiously by the West, the religious right elements were cultivated and consolidated by ardent Saudi backing to counter the increasing secular influence.¹⁴ Ironically though both factions have exploited each other for dubious gains, the rivalry between the two has culminated in the present scenario of political polarization. Many experts believe that if the current polarized tension and the 'climate of social insecurity' continues to exist it will eventually 'culminate in revolution' and the 'collapse of the social order' in Pakistan.¹⁵

To add to this conflict in the wake of the 'war on terror', the current thrust of this polarization has become such that one can either be considered to be pro-Islam and anti-America (liberal) or pro-America and anti-Islam (right-wing). Being 'liberal' indicates in general terms that 'one has pro-Western tendencies and finds any mention of Islam abhorrent' while being a religious conservative means one is aggressively 'anti-Western and a follower of some puritan interpretation of Islam'.¹⁶ The 'liberals' stand up for 'everything except Pakistan', while the 'radical Right-wing' wants to 'fight an

¹² Vali Nasr. *The Vanguard of the Islamic revolution :the Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*. University of California Press.

¹³ Nasim A. Jawed. *Islam's Political Culture*. UTP.1999. also Interview with Dr. Mohammad Waseem.

¹⁴ Zia Mian and Iftikhar Ahmad. *Making Enemies, Creating Conflict: Pakistan's Crises of State Society*.

¹⁵ Eqbal Ahmed in *Making Enemies* .& Rasul Bux Rais, '*The Pakistani Spirit*'. Express Tribune.

¹⁶ News Night with Talat Hussain, also Basil Nabi Malik. '*Will the Moderates Ever Stand Up?*', ET

Armageddon and have Pakistan become 'an isolated, pariah state'.¹⁷ To add to this any dissent to both of these camps is admonished decisively and instantly labeled as 'un-Islamic' by the right wing and considered 'pro-jihadist' by the liberals.

The PTI does not believe in such 'simplistic binary characterizations' and wants to overcome them. One of the central aspects of the PTI's agenda is that it wants to create 'a middle ground which provides a breathing space for ordinary people' and does not demand an affiliation with any camps. In many ways the PTI considers both the 'liberals' and the radical religious groups to be 'appropriating Islam for their own benefits and purposes'. The 'liberals' look down on Islam and use the argument that the Islamic fundamentalism is spreading across Pakistan to present the specter of 'Talibanization of Pakistan' to banish Islam from the public discourse, while the fundamentalists, use religious dogma for political purposes to undercut rivals and demand unwilling submission from the public.¹⁸ The PTI believes that while 'Islam remains the bedrock of Pakistan's foundations', religion should not be used to 'whip up passions to create fear in society'.¹⁹

This unusual vantage point in the polarized debate is reflected manifestly in PTI's political outlook. For instance earlier in 2006 the PTI rejected both the *Protection of Women's Rights Bill* which was championed by the liberal sections of the society and the *Hasba Bill* that was enforced by the right wing factions. The PTI declared both the bills to have been adopted with 'ulterior motives'- the former to divide opposition parties the latter to establish a parallel judicial system.²⁰ By its rejection of the Women's Protection Bill along with the religious groups, the PTI was labeled as being 'anti-women's rights with pro-Taliban views'.²¹ At the same time the PTI invoked the ire of right-wing groups when it condemned their actions in the NWFP and described the *Hasba Bill* passed by

¹⁷ Ejaz Haider. 'Where is the Centre?'. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/121297/where-is-the-centre/>

¹⁸ Interviews with Imran Khan

¹⁹ PTI Ideology. www.insaf.org.pk

²⁰ Interviews with Imran Khan

²¹ Najam Sethi. *Editorial*. The Friday Times and Nadeem F. Paracha. *The Froth of Khan*. Dawn.

the then NWFP MMA government as 'a controversial law' which would 'weaken institutions in the name of Islam'.²²

In the same way the PTI's stand on the current 'Blasphemy law' controversy mirrors its particular Centrist view on Islam in Pakistani politics. The PTI terms the misuse of 'Blasphemy law' (Section 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code) to unfairly target minorities, as being against the spirit of Islam and Constitution of Pakistan. The liberal groups seek the removal of the law while the conservative religious groups refuse to consider any amendment to the Law. The PTI did not join the *Tahafuz-e -Namoos-e-Resalat* forum and yet did not condemn it like other liberal groups. The PTI has refrained from making judgments about 'whether it is a good law or a bad one' and contends that it does not have a problem with the Blasphemy Law itself but with its implementation. According to the PTI 'the teachings of Islam are very clear on standards of justice being equal for Muslims and non-Muslims' and therefore it actively seeks to amend the Law and introduce safeguards against its misuse, which it believes are exacerbating religious intolerance in the country.²³

Given this the PTI is simultaneously labelled as a 'right of Center' party and a 'left of Center party with semi-jihadist tendencies', depending on the affiliation of those identifying it. The PTI agenda has been described as being 'riddled with contradictions' and characterized by 'muddle-headed spirituality'. The PTI Chairman is often described as a 'terrorist without a beard' and his admirers called 'jeaned jihadis', essentially suggesting that he appeals to the sensibilities of 'religiously inclined youth with a modern twist'.²⁴ Critics believe that PTI has 'recycled the prevailing discourse populist appeal', by engaging in 'empty sloganeering against America to gain relatively cheap political support'. Various critics in Pakistan consider the PTI to be propagating 'half-baked ideas' to the public and being 'caught in a no man's land, satisfying neither liberals nor conservatives'.²⁵ Because of 'self-inflicted follies' and its 'unwillingness to

²² Interviews with Imran Khan

²³ Interview with AM Shahid Zulfiqar.

²⁴ Nadeem F. Paracha. *The Froth of Khan*. Dawn and Raza Habib. *The Problem with Imran Khan's politics*. ET.

²⁵ Najam Sethi. *Editorial* .The Friday Times.

balance idealism and pragmatism' the PTI's political future is considered to 'ultimately remain bleak'.²⁶

The Dilemma of Representation and PTI's 'Islamic Political Orientation':

The dilemma of identifying the PTI's 'confused' place in the socio-political spectrum can be understood in the context of typologies of 'contemporary Islamic political orientations' which make a distinction between '*traditionalism*', '*secularism*' and '*modernism*'. Islamic '*traditionalism*' can be seen as an orientation that wants to revive the 'original or pristine' view of Islam and wants to rebuild or conserve what it considers to be the 'authentic' Islamic tradition. Islamic '*secularism*' is another orientation that 'wants to cast aside or at least benignly ignore Islam's political teachings'. Muslim 'secularists' aim to preserve and expand already existing secular institutions, frequently employing Western ideologies as a counterweight to Islamic tradition. The Muslim '*modernists*' however seek to accomplish their goal of reforming the Muslim society by taking a middle of the path approach of 'reforming the existing system' through 'intellectual discourse, modern education and legal reform that is based in Islam'.²⁷

In Pakistan's current context then the '*traditional*' orientation correlates manifestly with the right wing groups, as does the position of the secularist Islam with the so called '*liberals*'. Given these characterizations it is easy to also define the predominant nature of the Pakistan government or in other words the 'ruling establishment' as being a 'Muslim secularist entity' which 'does not seek a true separation of state and religion' but often 'uses state resources and institutions to weaken religious institutions and maintain the dominance of the state institutions over religion'.²⁸ Such governments achieve domination 'either through the co-option of the religious establishment or radically restrictive laws', and in Pakistan's case it has clearly been the former strategy.

²⁶ Khaled Ahmed. *Desperately Seeking Liberal Fascist*, Saleem H Ali. *The Imran Khan Factor*. Express Tribune.

²⁷ Nasim A. Jawed. *Islam's Political Culture*. University of Texas Press. 1998. 129-168.

²⁸ Ibid.

While the traditional and secular categories overshadow the current religious orientations in Pakistan's public discourse, it is interesting to note that the PTI's religious orientation falls into the third category that of 'Islamic modernism'. Islamic modernism is characterized by its advocacy of a 'liberal outlook in the interpretation of Islam's message'. In this sense this orientation has also been described as '*Islamic liberalism*' which pursues 'liberal values to seek general Islamic goals of justice and equality'. It emphasizes the importance of 'social justice, supports the ideas associated with Islamic socialism and recognizes the importance of liberal democratic institutions'.²⁹ The PTI ideology clearly reflects this 'Muslim modernist' approach which believes that 'liberal democratic institutions can provide the ideal conditions to meet Islamic goals'.³⁰

Currently eclipsed by the two dominant orientations, Muslim modernism plays a significant role in the background of polarized circumstances as the 'prime synthesizer of the old and new' and 'Islamic liberalism' that drives it represents the desire and efforts of many Muslims to achieve a rapprochement between Islam and modernity that is 'spiritually satisfying as well as politically workable'.³¹ This orientation is significant in the PTI context because it mirrors the PTI agenda in Pakistan to bridge the polarized divide. Clearly however the 'Islamic liberalism' does not coincide with the orientation that is called 'liberal' in Pakistan and this causes a conflict between the views of the 'liberal' elements and the PTI.

Liberalism in Pakistan:

In this context it is instructive to study what liberalism actually stands for in Pakistan. In many ways the term liberal seems to be a 'misnomer' in Pakistan where 'liberalism' is not really a reflection of a 'political philosophy', but of 'personal choices of morality'. As a liberal, one is 'seen as standing for personal hedonism', not more complex freedoms and principles of law and equity.³² More often than not the 'liberals' in

²⁹ Nasim A. Jawed. *Islam's Political Culture*. University of Texas Press. 1998 . 129-168

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid.

³² Riffat Hassan. *Dawn* 2002., and Basil Nabi Malik. '*Will the Moderates Ever Stand Up?*', ET

Pakistan, who demand 'liberal secular institutions', are perceived as 'secularists',³³ a characterization that is generally not readily acceptable to the general public. In the public perception then 'liberalism' has somewhat become synonymous with 'libertinism' and 'Western values' that the so called 'liberals' openly espouse.³⁴ In fact this has been pointed out that one reason why so many people in Pakistan today try to avoid the label of 'moderate' or 'liberal' is the perception of having been 'sold out on their religion to the West and it's suffocating terminology'.³⁵ The PTI itself describes this ruling elite as 'inept, corrupt selfish politicians, feudals, civil and military bureaucrats and other vested interests who have plundered Pakistan and have brought it to the brink of disaster'.³⁶

The Pakistani 'liberals' espouse the Leftist liberal values of 'free speech' and 'rule of law', but do not seem to want to instill the economic and democratic mechanisms to ensure them or practice the egalitarian values such as the distribution of power and wealth which underline liberalism in the literal sense.³⁷ Liberalism is also considered to be 'elitism' which has come to be associated with the 'landed elite' or the 'ruling elite' who enjoy unprecedented levels of wealth and education, but have 'never considered it their responsibility as the best educated and most privileged in society to contribute to its development'.³⁸ In this sense the term 'liberal' is also predominantly associated with the entity that is called the 'Establishment' in Pakistan.³⁹

Many 'liberal' commentators in the West describe the liberals in Pakistan as the 'US-backed politico-military elite who are at loggerheads with the common citizens of the country' and characterize the current polarization within the country as a 'divide between the majority of the people of Pakistan and their corrupt, uncaring rulers'. These Westernized elite unabashedly support and further Western imperial agenda in Pakistan, so much so that analysts have described them as 'Native Orientalists' who seek to serve their imperial masters and consequently ensure their self-preservation at the

³³ Najam Sethi. *Editorials*. The Friday Times. <http://najamsethi.com/ns/the-friday-times-editorialsarticles/>

³⁴ Omer Z Meer. *Reality Check, The Left is the New Right*. Express Tribune.

³⁵ Tariq Ramadan. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*. Feb, 2010.

³⁶ PTI Constitution.

³⁷ Interviews with Imran Khan. also Basil Nabi Malik. *'Will the Moderates Ever Stand Up?'*, ET.

³⁸ Interviews with Imran Khan. also Mohammad Waseem. *Politics and the State in Pakistan*. 1998

³⁹ Mohammad Waseem. *Politics and the State in Pakistan*. 1998

top.⁴⁰ These liberals have 'routinely excoriated the patriots who have opposed Pakistan's surrender to US-Zionist demands, as naïve sentimentalists unaware of the tough demands of realpolitik' and believe that Pakistan 'can save itself only through eager prostration before the demands of foreign powers'.⁴¹ The PTI also endorses the view of those liberals who claim that the right wing faction's 'deep hostility to the US and this elite has less to do with religion, but more to do with the knowledge that the US has backed this elite since time immemorial and vice versa'.⁴²

Given the post-9/11 scenario and the ensuing 'enlightened moderation' discourse, the 'liberals' also describe themselves as 'moderates', reflecting 'western labels' of 'alternatives to fundamentalism'.⁴³ While in literal terms liberalism does symbolize moderation, in Pakistan however 'moderation' seems to have become another form of extremism with the liberals vehemently pursuing a 'radical' agenda.⁴⁴ Historically, the liberal faction in Pakistan has also shown itself to be 'inflexible and uncompromising' in its political stance and thereby contributing further to more polarization in the society with their policies. In comparison the 'religious right' has made more compromises and has been 'more sensitive to the changes in the structure of Pakistani society' than the ruling elite, a fact that does not reflect positively on the liberals.⁴⁵

In a sense then the PTI seeks to 'redefine liberalism in Pakistan'. Infact the PTI considers this to be an important step in addressing the problem of polarization in the country. By initiating a debate on the nature of liberalism it intends to present a 'meaningful, progressive alternative form of liberalism to people, based on actual liberal ideas and which does not require adherence to the secular or traditional dichotomies'.⁴⁶

PTI's differences with 'Liberals':

⁴⁰ M. Shahid Alam. *The Native Orientalists at the Daily Times...* CounterPunch. Dec 2009.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Tariq Ali. *The Duel*. Scribner.2008 also Eqbal Ahmed in Z. M et al *'Making Enemies, Creating Conflict'*

⁴³ Tariq Ali. *The Duel*. Scribner. 2008 and Basil Nabi Malik. 'Will the Moderates Ever Stand Up?', ET

⁴⁴ Riffat Hassan. *Dawn*.2002. also Najam Sethi. *Editorials*. The Friday Times.

⁴⁵ Vali Nasr. *The Vanguard of the Islamic revolution :the Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*. University of California Press

⁴⁶ Interview with Imran Khan.

The PTI compares the so-called liberals to fundamentalists 'who try to tell you how to live your life' and who are 'afraid of Islam'. It The PTI points out that on the one hand, these liberals 'object to conservative *fatwas* by local clergy' but on the other, they 'welcome diktats from foreign sources that fit into their liberal agendas'. The PTI describes this as 'a political and ideological surrender to Western interests' and also 'as an admission of defeat' showing that the liberal's own framework is 'non-representative and illegitimate'.⁴⁷

Opposition to the US War on Terror and Use of Military Force:

One of the greatest issues that the PTI disagrees with the liberal ruling establishment in it's support of the US led 'war on terror'. The PTI categorically stands against it, largely because it believes that this war's 'objectives cannot be achieved militarily and instead results in the loss of innocent lives'. The PTI emphasizes that is 'not anti-US' but is against the US intervention in Pakistan's national politics and violation of it's national sanctity in the form of drone attacks etc. The PTI considers the US intervention to be the primary reason for rising extremism in Pakistan because it has come to be seen as a war against Islam.⁴⁸ The PTI believes that these so-called liberals are actually encouraging extremism in this country by supporting the US intervention and are keeping quiet about the injustices meted out by the US drone strikes in the tribal areas. ⁴⁹ It is also derided by the liberals because it does not support military operations by the Pakistan Army in the tribal areas and elsewhere, and seeks to 'engage in a meaningful dialogue' with the Taliban to put an end to the threat of terrorism.

Women's rights and the Protection of Women's Rights Bill Controversy :

Another reason the PTI has irked the liberals is because it did not support the Protection of Women's Rights Bill in 2006 and was condemned for having a radical agenda and for collaborating with the right wing groups to thwart women's rights. The PTI termed the Bill be 'just an eyewash by General Musharraf to please the West' and asserted that it was aimed at dividing the opposition parties of the time. The PTI also

⁴⁷ Interviews with Imran Khan.

⁴⁸ Interviews with Imran Khan . also Interviews with AM Shahid Zulfiqar

⁴⁹ Ibid.

contended that this Bill was hardly a debate on women's rights and that the epicenter of the discussion was 'not what would be in the best interest of Pakistani women, but whether the Hudood Ordinance and its modification was Islamically-sanctioned or not'.⁵⁰

To add to this controversy the liberal groups also blame PTI for being pro-Taliban for not openly condemning the very controversial video of a Swat girl being flogged by the Taliban. Although the PTI spoke out against the incident, it claims that it 'reserved its judgment on the authenticity of the video before condemning it publicly'. Apart from this controversy, the President of the PTI Women's Wing points out that 'PTI is the only political party that comes out to demonstrate for women's rights along with the civil society' and has taken a forceful stand on every women's right issue in the last fifteen years.⁵¹

The PTI's differences with the right-wing Islamist groups:

The PTI envisions Pakistan as an 'egalitarian modern Islamic welfare state' which is 'progressive, democratic and people oriented' in nature.⁵² This vision of Islam in Pakistan politics is a significant departure from the rigid, puritanical views of the right-wing Islamist groups. However more often than not the PTI has been characterized as a 'pro-Taliban', 'semi-jihadist' organization with 'overly right-wing tendencies'. The liberal groups also ostracize the PTI for its 'open collaboration with right-wing groups and supporting their agenda with its anti-Western rhetoric'. The PTI alliance with groups like the Jamaat Islami in the All Parties Democratic Movement, which the PTI described as 'a political alliance with a political objective to remove President Musharraf', have been seen as indication of its own radical agenda.⁵³

PTI's concerns overlap with the right-wing groups over political issues such as American interference in Pakistan politics etc, it points out, but its interests also diverge

⁵⁰ Interviews with Imran Khan . also Interviews with AM Shahid Zulfiqar

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² PTI Constitution.

⁵³ Najam Sethi. *Editorials*. Friday Times. also Raza Habib. The Problem with Imran Khan's politics. ET

significantly from the religious right on central issues like sectarian violence, terrorism, women's rights, etc. The PTI does not support the 'literalist interpretations' of Islam upheld by these groups nor does it agree with 'the imposition of *Shariah* laws at gunpoint'.⁵⁴ The PTI also vehemently resists the 'theo-ideological framework of Islamization employed by the religious parties in collaboration with their bureaucratic and military patrons for political purposes'. It believes that by patronizing the religious right groups and sanctioning the 'sacralization of politics' the ruling establishment has produced a political climate where efforts at Islamization have 'only served as a framework for dividing the country and pitting its diverse people against each other'. According to the PTI ideology when religion is pushed explicitly into politics it becomes 'a currency of power', when anyone can use religion to garner support and undercut rivals.⁵⁵

The PTI does not also agree with the religious right wings 'narrow outlook' on Pakistani politics solely as a struggle between Islam and 'Western imposed secularized democracy'. It considers the Islam vs. West narrative to be 'unrealistic'. The PTI also believes that by moving the public conversation away from 'one rooted in individual right of Muslims to one that is based on allegations of Western conspiracies against Islam', the religious right has also contributed to 'a wider Pakistani political culture of victimhood that habitually shirks responsibility for dealing honestly and effectively with the country's own problems'. The PTI also recognizes that these radical groups remain marginalized in the political system largely because they do not have popular support with the public which 'refuses to be indoctrinated' by their propaganda blitzkrieg.⁵⁶

On its part the PTI maintains a 'pragmatist' religious policy which acknowledges that religion will always be a part of Pakistan politics. It notes that the fact that 'every government in power has appropriated Islamic symbols in politics' attests the incomparable influence of Islam on the life and thought of Pakistanis, as even 'secularism' has been presented with a veneer of Islamization'. But it also believes that

⁵⁴ Interviews with Imran Khan, also Interviews with AM Shahid Zulfiqar

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the conviction of upholding Islamic principles should not be equated to the imposition of a puritan Islamic state as envisioned by the Islamist forces.⁵⁷

Extremism and Intolerance:

One of the central concerns about the right-wing radicals that the PTI takes issue with is the ideology of extremism which perpetrates intolerance in the society. The PTI categorically condemns the elements in the right-wing who 'preach hatred and divisiveness while indulging in brutal savagery to further their aims' and also consider the increasingly shrill proclamations of religiosity from these groups to be extremely hypocritical 'when people of all religions are being killed mercilessly' in the country. The PTI does not support or relate to the 'obscurantist Islamic jingoism' purported by the groups who believe that 'murderers should be celebrated, that minorities must live in perpetual fear and that personal freedoms accounts to nothing'.⁵⁸

The PTI ideology specifically addresses the root causes of religious extremism, which it believes are 'injustice, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy' because it believes that 'those who lack political capital, such as large land holdings, modern education, industry, family connections, are more likely to use religion and use it virulently'. For the PTI the real cause of extremism is the 'growing income gap between the rich and the poor, the failure of the current leadership to address the economic concerns of the people and visible corruption by the ruling elite' which frustrates the people. Because it believes that the only long term solution to extremism is education, it aims to bring about 'an education revolution' by focusing on primary education and literacy, introducing a uniform curriculum, teacher training and gradually increasing the budget outlays on education from the current 1.5% to 5.0% of GDP within 5 years.⁵⁹

Women's rights:

The PTI's stance on women's rights is another great departure from the fundamentalist right-wing ideology. The PTI believes that the fundamentalists and the religious right advocates a tremendously 'obscurantist' and 'restrictive' view of women's

⁵⁷ Interviews with Imran Khan, also Interviews with AM Shahid Zulfiqar

⁵⁸ Interviews with Imran Khan

⁵⁹ Ibid.

rights rejects the 'self-appointed role' of these group in defining the rights of women. It challenges and questions the validity of interpretations and measures that these groups apply to curtail women's rights in the name of Islam.⁶⁰

The PTI also disagrees with the right-wing viewpoint which considers the struggle for women's rights as 'a western conspiracy' and which seeks to explain the problems facing women in Pakistan as 'a result of the creeping penetration of Western influence', and 'routinely downplays the abuses against women'.⁶¹ The PTI also terms the right-wing groups' relationship to women as being contradictory, as it has been based more on responding opportunistically to various political developments than on strict adherence to its Islamist doctrine. It claims that 'these groups recognize the political utility of bringing women into the political sphere and whenever it suits their purposes, of finding a place for them within their religious ideology and political activities'.⁶²

Reflecting its stance on the other issues, the PTI's stands in the center of the debate on women's rights which reflects the divergent worldviews between the religious political parties, on the one hand, and the liberal groups on the other, where any opinion opposed to such fundamentalist views invites an immediate and vitriolic response from the religious right, who accuse others of being 'westernized, alienated, and un-Islamic'. Inversely in the liberal viewpoint any mention of Islamic values is automatically considered to be 'regressive, backward and fundamentalist, pro-Taliban'.⁶³

PTI agenda and 'Ideological resonance' with Public Aspirations:

Given the above analysis it seems clear that the PTI is standing at a crossroads where it is seeking to define its place in the polarized political spectrum and find a representative space for its viewpoint. The PTI describes itself as a broad based social movement, so it is instructive to study its situation as such. This can be understood to some extent in terms of 'frame resonance' in social movement theory where a 'frame'

⁶⁰ Interview with Fauzia Kasuri.

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Interviews with Imran Khan

⁶³ Interviews with Imran Khan. also Interviews with AM Shahid Zulfiqar.

represents an 'interpretative schemata' which provides a framework for 'making sense' of events and experiences by interpreting 'causation, evaluating situations, and offering proscriptive remedies'.⁶⁴

The 'novelty' of the frame lies not so much in the 'originality or newness of its ideational elements', but in the manner in which they are 'plied together and articulated', such that 'a new angle of vision, vantage point or interpretation is provided'.⁶⁵ In this sense then the PTI seems to be offering a new 'frame' for identification in Pakistan with its own interpretation of the current scenario, which departs significantly from the already 'existing frames'. In terms of religious orientation the PTI ideology reflects a 'modernist' outlook that has an inclination for 'Islamic liberalism', a standpoint that is not reflected elsewhere in the political spectrum in Pakistan. Its Centrist political ideology distinguishes it from other mainstream parties with its 'ability to withstand pressures from the right-wing groups as well as the liberals and remain consistently committed to its principles'.⁶⁶

According to the 'frame theory' social mobilization is only possible when there is 'frame alignment' between individuals and movements 'interpretive orientations', where the greater the 'frame resonance' the greater is the effectiveness of a movement. That is the movement's schemata must resonate with an individual's own interpretive framework to facilitate participation. Furthermore this 'alignment' is contingent not only upon 'conformity with religious and cultural narratives, symbols, and identities' but the reputation of the frame 'articulator' and the 'consistency of the frame'. Social movement research thus indicates that 'the greater the credibility of the frame articulator, the greater his or her success at persuading others'.⁶⁷

Judging by this criterion then in the PTI's case the 'frame articulator' would be the PTI Chairman Imran Khan whose 'credibility' has been considered 'beyond doubt and beyond question' even by those who consider his political stance to be 'questionable'.

⁶⁴ Benford and Snow. *Framing Process and Social Movements*. Annual Review of Sociology 2000: 619-622

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Adil Najam. 'Imran, Me and Democracy'. ATP also News Night with Talat Hussain.

⁶⁷ Benford and Snow. *Framing Process and Social Movements*. Annual Review of Sociology 2000: 619-622

Indeed, his philanthropic activities have earned him respect from even his detractors who find it 'impossible to cast aspersions about his integrity and financial honesty'.⁶⁸ Critics who have described him as being 'a little self-righteous' and 'somewhat politically naive' have also described him as being 'fiercely independent of external pressures', 'consistently principled' and 'completely committed'. Some scholars have even claimed that, 'Much more than whatever he adds to Pakistan politics is what he adds to Pakistan's self perception - a belief that we can help ourselves and if we were only to commit ourselves to the right causes, we can rise to great heights'.⁶⁹

If in sociological terms movements are deemed 'successful' when their projected 'frames' align with the 'frames' of the participants, then it appears that the PTI concerns coincide significantly with the public interests. However, if success is equated with electoral achievement then as a political entity PTI has obviously not been 'successful'. In this sense it can be maintained that the PTI's lack of success in electoral representation is not based on a lack of resonance with the public aspirations as can be seen from the survey of public opinion below.

An Overview of Public Opinion:

If surveys of public opinion are a reliable criterion of reflecting general inclinations, then an overview of the public opinion in terms of resonance with the PTI agenda reveals a significant 'alignment' with the 'frame' presented by the PTI.

A study of public opinion in Pakistan reveals that a majority of Pakistanis do not espouse secularist tendencies and see Islam as 'encompassing the personal as well as the civic'. According to a survey two thirds (74%) of all Pakistanis want an 'Islamic polity' or in other words they want Islam to play a role in the functions of the state and believe that Islam and democracy are very compatible.⁷⁰ When asked about Islam's desired role in the civic order, 63% described it as a complete way of life. Another survey shows that

⁶⁸ Najam Sethi. *Editorials*. Friday Times , Nadeem F. Paracha. *The Froth of Khan*. Dawn , and <http://www.imrankhanfoundation.org/2010/12/07/imran-raises-1million-for-floods-relief-in-four-days>

⁶⁹Adil Najam. *Imran Khan, Me and Democracy and Get Well, Imran*. ATP. & Raza Habib. *The Problem with Imran Khan's politics*.

⁷⁰ <http://www.gallup.com.pk/Polls/3-6-09.pdf>

almost two third of all Pakistanis (64%) use religion as a reference point in their everyday life.⁷¹ A majority of the Pakistanis (46%) also look up towards religion as the 'most important thing in their lives' in another survey, ranking 'practicing religion' as number one on a ten point scale.⁷² Further examination of the Pakistani public opinion shows that it also decisively condemns extremism. Various analysts consider Pakistan to be currently represented by a mostly young, sophisticated, and upwardly mobile population that 'aspires to the ideals of democracy and rule of law' and overwhelmingly reject extremism.⁷³ Reflecting this a majority (72%) Pakistanis disagree with the fundamentalist right-wing ideology and consider extremist groups like the Taliban/Al-Qaeda to be a negative influence on the region, while only 4% support it.⁷⁴

In terms of recent concerns on the PTI agenda like opposition to US drone attacks in Pakistan, the war on terror in general and taking the initiative to conduct dialogue with the Taliban, general public inclinations reveals further resonance. According to a recent survey, 68% Pakistanis oppose drone attacks by the United States against Taliban and al-Qaeda targets in Pakistan. Infact 59% Pakistanis consider US to be the biggest threat to Pakistan, followed by 18% who consider India, 11% Taliban a threat.⁷⁵ Nearly half of Pakistanis (58%) did not believe the U.S. missile strikes are effective. Nearly a third of Pakistanis (33%) said cooperation on the war on terrorism has mostly benefited the United States.⁷⁶ In another poll, nearly two out of three (83%) people said they opposed any collaboration with the U.S.-led coalition on the 'war on terror'. With regards to initiating a dialogue with the Taliban, significantly (56%) people favored a dialogue and some form of a 'peace agreement'.⁷⁷

⁷¹ <http://www.gallup.com.pk/pollshow.php?id=2011-01-06>

⁷² <http://www.gallup.com.pk/Polls/13-5-09.pdf>

⁷³ Anatol Lieven. *Pakistan a Hard Country*.2011 also Fasih Ahmed. *Newsweek* Pakistan.

⁷⁴ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/126602/taliban-increasingly-unpopular-pakistan.aspx>

⁷⁵ Gallup Pakistan <http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2009/08/2009888238994769.html>

⁷⁶ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/113584/opinion-briefing-uspakistan-policy.aspx>

⁷⁷ <http://www.gallup.com.pk/Polls/24-5-08.pdf> , also Anatol Lieven. *Pakistan a Hard Country*. 2011

Aside from these surveys, even general public discourse seems to point towards a general perception that a dialogue with the Taliban and other such extremist groups would be 'a meaningful way of resolving the current crisis of extremism'.⁷⁸ Further more in line with the PTI standpoint on economic independence, the public opinion shows that a majority of Pakistanis oppose the current Establishment's policy of using foreign aid for sustenance. A recent poll conducted by Gallup Pakistan shows that almost three fourth of all Pakistanis (74%) believe that Pakistan can survive without taking loan from IMF as opposed to 25%, who say taking loan is essential for Pakistan's survival.⁷⁹ Also PTI's stance as the only political party to protest against the rising inflation in the country seem to be in sync with the 68% of general public's perception who believe this issue affects their lives tremendously.⁸⁰

These statistics reflect on the fact that many policies being followed and initiated by the current mainstream political leadership do not reflect the aspirations of the people.⁸¹ Consequently the public does not place much trust in its leaders and the level of disconnect between the political leaders and the people can also be assessed through a survey of public opinion. When asked about political leaders, 62% of the respondents in a poll described them as dishonest, 51% thought that they wielded too much power and responsibility, 49% believed that they were unethical. 45% of the people rated them as incompetent and 46% were of the view that they tend to respond to pressure from people more powerful than themselves.⁸²

These statistics also go on to show that the mainstream public opinion stands at the Center of the polarized debate in Pakistan. To judge by using the criterion of 'political orientation in Islam', the aspirations of a large majority of Pakistanis fall within the category of 'modernist' tendencies like the PTI, differing from the traditionalist and the secularist outlooks which dominate the political discourse in Pakistan,⁸³ because the public in Pakistan shows an inclination towards considerable religiosity while

⁷⁸ Anatol Lieven. *Pakistan a Hard Country* & Saleem. H. Ali. *The Islamic Republic of Talibanistan*. FP.

⁷⁹ <http://www.gallup.com.pk/pollshow.php?id=2011-01-21>

⁸⁰ <http://www.gallup.com.pk/pollshow.php?id=2009-07-09>

⁸¹ Citizens for Democracy. <http://citizensfordemocracy.wordpress.org>. also Teeth Maestro blog.

⁸² <http://www.gallup.com.pk/StatePolitics>.

⁸³ Interview with Dr. Riffat Hassan. Newsline.2004 & Nasim A. Jawed. *Islam's Political Culture*. UT Press.

upholding progressive ideals. It is also worthy to note that these inclinations also differ significantly from the 'Muslim secularist' standpoint that has largely characterized the ruling Establishment.

An analysis of the above data shows correlation between the public and the PTI standpoint in terms of religious orientation, social justice, as well as Western interference in Pakistan, among other factors. This is not to predict, however, that such resonance will automatically translate into electoral success for PTI. In many ways however the PTI agenda has been strangely ahead of it's time in reflecting the public sentiment. The PTI advocated a dialogue with Taliban instead of a military assault, but its advice was castigated until recently when the public as well as the international opinion itself began looking for a reconciliation. The PTI was indignantly opposing US interference and drone attacks in Pakistan much before the recent outburst in the aftermath of the infamous Raymond Davis case, but only found a voice when public furor took up the cause. Much before the lawyers movement of 2007-2008 also, the PTI was urging for judicial independence but the cause never found a platform until the civil society took it up.

From the above analysis it becomes evident then that the PTI's fate remains intertwined with that of the public. While PTI agenda resonates with public desire, it has only found expression successfully whenever the public has come forward to articulate it's own aspirations. In many ways then the PTI can be seen as a microcosm of the larger society in terms of it's position and place in this polarized religious debate. It faces the same dilemmas and constraints felt by the society and is aided by the same factors that assist the society.

Dilemmas and Constraints faced by PTI :

The constraints that the PTI faces are mirrored by those of the Pakistani people. Certain factors have not allowed an 'accepting, progressive, truly moderate version of Islam to flourish in Pakistan' and these are the same factors that the PTI confronts in it's bid for public representation. In this sense 'historical precedent' in Pakistan stands in the

way of articulation of public interest since such a vision of Islam has never been allowed to be expressed manifestly, even though it resonates with the public aspirations.⁸⁴

In effect the facade of 'High Islam' upheld by the secular elite has always dominated the 'Low Islam' of the masses. The form of Islam implemented through the system of governance imposed by the ruling elite and driven by political motives, has also been classified as 'elitist-political Islamism'.⁸⁵ Such elitism has generally identified itself with what it considers as 'an ally of convenience' in the shape of a particular variant of Islamism that it thinks is malleable. In this way this elitist-political Islam fostered radicalization through the devices of governance frameworks which have consorted with rightist religious movements in the hope of sustaining themselves, but in the process doomed the country to violence.⁸⁶

Consequently the Centrist outlook upheld by the public has not been able to be articulated through its elected representatives given the level of disconnect with the political leadership.⁸⁷ Also the liberal 'Muslim secularist' orientation of the successive elected governments and the 'Muslim modernist' nature of the public aspirations creates a 'power struggle' in which the ruling elite always appear to have an upper hand. The religious aspirations of the public which look up to 'democratic institutions to provide the ideal conditions in meeting Islamic goals', stand in contrast to those of the liberal, secularist ruling Establishment. ⁸⁸

The status quo that has been maintained by the ruling Establishment in Pakistan has continued to thrive because it make sure that it's policies favor those who are in power in such a way that they continue to stay in power. Not only that the ruling elite has no qualms about dominates the electoral process by indulging in illegitimate practices such as poll rigging, nepotism, bribery and use of force to ensure that it retains it's position at the top.⁸⁹ These elites have been characterized as 'predatory' and 'without conscience'.

⁸⁴Eqbal Ahmed in *Creating Conflict*, 1997,Dr. Mohammad Waseem.*Politics and the State in Pakistan*.1989

⁸⁵ Mosharraf Zaidi. *Elites Hegemonic Rule*. Dawn.

⁸⁶Eqbal Ahmed in *Creating Conflict*, 1997, also Mosharraf Zaidi. *Elites Hegemonic Rule*. Dawn.

⁸⁷ <http://www.gallup.com.pk/StatePolitics.php>

⁸⁸ Eqbal Ahmed in *Creating Conflict*, 1997. also Nasim A. Jawed. *Islam's Political Culture*. UTP.1999.

⁸⁹ Ijaz Shafi Gilani. *How Elections are Stolen and the Will of the People is Defeated*. Gallup Pakistan.

The PTI describes this as 'political terrorism', where 'people are not forced but coerced into voting in a particular way, through the most violent means'.⁹⁰

Among other factors the parliamentary system of government in Pakistan presents the public, and consequently the PTI, with a disadvantage because it allows influential individuals and the feudal class to prevail over the local vote bank and consequently dominate representation in the parliament since 60% of Pakistan consists of rural areas.⁹¹ One of the biggest problem in the country is that the political leadership comes only from the Establishment and has never been representative of the people. In this regard the PTI seems to be the only political party whose leadership has not been nominated or supported by the ruling Establishment and which seems impervious to the pressure exerted by the Establishment. Hence the party's excessive conflict of interest with the ruling elite.⁹²

Conclusion:

The infusion of religion into the public sphere has persistently led to immense trouble in Pakistan. But it is becoming stifling for those who are religious at heart but have no 'devious schemes of staging a religious coup to practice their faith with freedom' to live without the realization that they will be written off as fundamentalists.⁹³ From the PTI perspective, this holds true specifically because as seen above it has been constantly ostracized for voicing the need to integrate Islam pragmatically into the system of governance. The position that the PTI represents has been resented and rejected by many in Pakistan, who seem to be somewhat threatened by its stated conviction of constructing a paradigm of governance within the framework of normative Islam.

While the people of Pakistan have a strong Muslim identity and their faith is very important to them, they also aspire to be a part of the 'modern' world through acquiring

⁹⁰ Interview with Imran Khan.

⁹¹ Dr. Mohammad Waseem *Politics and the State in Pakistan*, also Interviews with AM Shahid Zulfiqar.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Interviews with Imran Khan, also Fariha Aziz. *Newslines*. April 2011.

education, awareness of contemporary values, and the means to live what the Greeks called 'the good life'. In other words, they want both *din* (religion) and *dunya* (the world).⁹⁴ It is a matter of utmost gravity then that in Pakistan the discourse on Islam has been hijacked by 'religious extremists' on the one hand and on the other by another group of 'liberal extremists'.⁹⁵ Many scholars now considered it vitally important to broaden the discourse on Islam to include a third option which would lead to the creation of a new discourse or an alternative paradigm which is grounded in the ethical principles of Islam and relates to the beliefs as well as the aspirations of middle-of-the-road Pakistanis. In this context in contemporary Pakistan then, these scholars believe that this paradigm of Islamic modernism, that reflects in the PTI standpoints, is the only one that is likely to be accepted or actualized, because it is based on religious principles respected by masses of people and is not seen as a foreign imposition.⁹⁶

The ruling elite's monopolization of power and its inability to make compromises or incorporate the progressive religious inclinations of the people, have continued to perpetuate a polarized political sphere in Pakistan. Currently however the 'power structures' in Pakistan are undergoing a change and consequently the roles of the country's 'institutional pillars' are also shifting, and power is no longer as 'centralized' and monopolized as it used to be. In this context the judiciary, the media and vocal civil society groups have emerged as a 'new source of influence' which are immensely responsive to public concerns.⁹⁷ Such changes in the power-distribution pattern are making it increasingly harder for elements within the ruling elite to propagate and protect its own interests with utter disregard of the opinion on the street.⁹⁸

Therefore more and more civic actors, including the PTI, are concentrating on advocacy through the judiciary and the media. For instance the PTI has recently taken up the issue of the reconstitution of the Election Commission with the Supreme Court of

⁹⁴ Interview with Dr. Riffat Hassan. Newline. 2004

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Katherine Allawala. *Laying down the Law in Pakistan*. Foreign Affairs. & Interview with Dr. Waseem

⁹⁸ News Night with Talat Hussain, May 25 Interview with Dr. Mohammed Waseem.

Pakistan. An impartial judiciary has presented the PTI with a neutral platform to highlight discrepancies in the Establishment's functions such the confirmed existence of millions of 'bogus votes' in the Election Commissions voters' lists, which were used to hold the 2008 general elections.

Many analysts believe that while the people's will has been thwarted from being represented in the polarized public sphere until recently, it has been 'thriving in the private and societal spheres'.⁹⁹ The media along with the emerging sources of influence have 'empowered' these private and societal spheres for the public to be able to raise its voice. The media acts as a conduit for the public opinion, expressing and mediating citizen's concerns. Infact it is the only medium in Pakistan which brings the citizens concerns to the public sphere and is being seen as a new center of power which may facilitate 'democracy and its substance'.¹⁰⁰ In this context the media presents the PTI and other such groups with a 'neutral avenue of expression'. The media recognizes that the PTI's Centrist stance provides an 'alternative viewpoint' to the current polarized debate, by providing a 'consistent balance' between religiosity and progressive ideals.¹⁰¹

The PTI also seems to have benefitted to a significant extent recently from the new media tools like Facebook, You Tube and Twitter. As a consistent conduit for reaching out to the public, the PTI members have on many occasions taken recourse to using these social networking applications to get their message across, as was witnessed during the PTI's recent rallies in Peshawer and Karachi. ¹⁰²These networks also provide a very public platform for the PTI members to raise their concerns and engage in meaningful discussions about PTI policy.¹⁰³ In this context it seems evident that to further enhance its social outreach the PTI must critically explore such new media platforms as a means for social benefit and construct systemic strategies to allow it to propagate information through this social media space. The PTI Youth Wing or the ISF, who seem to have taken on the initiative to tap into the vast potential of the new media tools through social networking, are likely to play a crucial role in this regard.

⁹⁹ Rasul Buksh Rais. *The Pakistani Spirit*. Express Tribune.

¹⁰⁰ Pakistan Report, New American Media. Oct.2008. News Night with Talat Hussain. April 25, 2011

¹⁰¹ Interviews with Imran Khan. also Kashif Abbasi. Off The Record. April 25,2011

¹⁰² PTI Official Profile - Facebook.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

However, the public space afforded to the PTI by the mainstream and social media can only go so far in facilitating its Centrist agenda. From the above analysis it seems clear that in many ways the PTI's concerns are tied with those of the public and will be realized meaningfully only if the people are able to find a voice through an invigorated public sphere. Given the current socio-political awakening in Pakistan, it does appear that Centrist parties like the PTI can meaningfully represent the public aspirations.

In this context PTI success relies on the extent to which it can help energize the public discourse by assisting it to 'grow stronger with social activism and vigilance'¹⁰⁴ and overthrowing a system that has 'castrated them over the last six decades'.¹⁰⁵ In the meantime PTI also needs to consistently prove itself as a viable political option in the current scenario by ensuring that its agenda remains relevant to the public concerns. Only time will tell if the PTI will be able to purposefully articulate its Centrist ideals. Its simultaneous appeal to tradition and modernity may however well prove to be a way for the PTI to bridge the widening political gap between the traditional and the secular, and help preserve the Centrist discourse in Pakistan when the policies of the ruling establishment are pushing it increasingly to the brink of crisis.

¹⁰⁴ Rasul Buksh Rais. *The Pakistani Spirit*. Express Tribune

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Imran Khan

Bibliography:

Interviews:

- Interview with Imran Khan. Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf. (PTI)
- Interview with Fauzia Kasuri. President of PTI Women's Wing.
- Interview with Air Marshal (R) Shahid Zulfiqar. Vice President PTI, former Secretary General.

Books :

- Anatol Lieven. *Pakistan: a Hard Country*. Public Affairs. 2011
- Mohammad Waseem. *Politics and the State in Pakistan*. Progressive Publishers. 1989.
- Nasim A. Jawed. *Islam's Political Culture: Religion and Politics in Pre-divided Pakistan*. University of Texas Press. 1999.
- Tariq Ali. *The Duel*. Scribner. 2008.
- Vali Nasr. *The Vanguard of the Islamic revolution :the Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*. University of California Press. 1994.
- Zia Mian and Iftikhar Ahmad. *Making Enemies, Creating Conflict: Pakistan's Crises of State and Society*. Mashal Publishers. 1997.

Articles and Resources:

- The official website of *Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf*. <http://www.insaf.pk>
- The *Imran Khan Foundation* website.
(<http://imrankhanfoundation.org/2010/12/07/imran-khan-raised-nearly-1-million-for-flood-relief-in-4-days/>)
- The PTI Official Profile- Facebook. (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/PTIOfficial>)
- Adil Najam. *Imran, Me and Democracy, also Get Well, Imran*. All Things Pakistan, (www.pakistaniat.org)
- AP Report. *Imran slams hero's welcome for Qadri* . Express Tribune.
(<http://tribune.com.pk/story/101277/imran-khan-links-blasphemy-laws-to-war-on-terror/>)
- AP Report. *Imran Khan vows to make Pakistan a Welfare State*. Express Tribune.
(<http://tribune.com.pk/story/66935/imran-khan-vows-to-make-pakistan-a-welfare-state/>)

- Basil Nabi Malik. *Will the Moderates Ever Stand Up?* . Express Tribune. (<http://tribune.com.pk/story/128166/will-the-moderates-ever-stand-up/>)
- *Citizens for Democracy Forum.*(<http://citizensfordemocracy.wordpress.com/>)
- Ejaz Haider. *'Where is the Centre?'* Express Tribune. (<http://tribune.com.pk/story/121297/where-is-the-centre/>)
- Faisal Siddiqi. *The Great Divide.* Dawn. (<http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/14/the-great-divide.html>)
- Farieha Aziz. *In These Reactionary Times, There Are Few Second Chances.* Newsline. April 2011.(<http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2011/04/>)
- Fasih Ahmed. *Pakistan is the Bravest Nation.* Newsweek Pakistan. (<http://www.newsweek.com/2010/09/16/despite-crises-pakistan-is-the-bravest-nation.html>)
- Gallup Pakistan database .(<http://www.gallup.com.pk/>)
- Ijaz Shafi Gilani. *How Elections are Stolen and the Will of the People is Defeated.* Gallup Pakistan. (<http://www.gallup.com.pk/Gilani/History%20of%20Electoral%20Rigging%20in%20Pakistan%201970-2008.pdf>)
- Interview with Dr.Riffat Hassan. *Newsline.* December, 2004. (<http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2004/12/interview-dr-riffat-hassan/>)
- Katherine Allawala. *Laying down the Law in Pakistan.* Foreign Affairs. (<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66429/kathryn-allawala/laying-down-the-law-in-pakistan>)
- Khaled Ahmed. *Desperately Seeking Liberal Fascist.* Express Tribune. (<http://tribune.com.pk/story/114581/desperately-seeking-liberal-fascist/>)
- Mosharraf Zaidi. *Elites Hegemonic Rule.* Dawn. (<http://www.dawn.com/2011/04/11/elites-hegemonic-role.html>)
- M. Shahid Alam, *The Native Orientalists at Daily Times: The Groveling of Pakistani Elites.* CounterPunch. December,2009 . (<http://www.counterpunch.org/shahid12022009.html>)
- Nadeem F. Paracha . *The Froth of Khan.* Dawn. (<http://blog.dawn.com/2010/01/28/the-froth-of-khan/>)
- Najam Sethi. *Editorials.* The Friday Times. (<http://najamsethi.com/ns/the-friday-times-editorialsarticles/>)

- News Night With Talat Hussain. April 26th, 2011.
- News Night With Talat Hussain. April 25, 2011.
- Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, April 26th 2011
- Omer Zaheer Meer. *Reality Check, Left is the New Right*. Express Tribune.
(<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/357/reality-check-left-is-the-new-right/>)
- Pakistan Report. *Pakistan's Vibrant Media Ensures Accountability*. New America Media.
Oct 10, 2008

(http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=56)
- Rasul Buksh Rais. *The Pakistani Spirit*. Express Tribune. March, 2011
(<http://tribune.com.pk/story/132047/the-pakistani-spirit/>)
- Raza Habib. *The Problem with Imran Khan's politics*. Express Tribune.
(<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/1577/the-problem-with-imran-khans-politics/>)
- Riffat Hasan, "*My struggle to help Muslims regain their God-given rights*", Dawn,
2002. (www.dawn.com)
- Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. " *Framing Process and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment*." Annual Review of Sociology. 2000.
- Saleem H Ali. *The Islamic Republic of Talibanistan*. Foreign Policy Magazine.
(http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/25/the_islamic_republic_of_talibanistan)
- Saleem H Ali . *The Imran Khan Factor*. Express Tribune.
(<http://tribune.com.pk/story/121730/the-imran-khan-factor/>)
- Shirin Sadeghi. *What Really Killed Pakistan*. The Huffington Post.
(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shirin-sadeghi/what-really-killed-pakistan_b_805926.html)
- Tariq Ramadan, "*Good Muslim Bad Muslim*", February 2010.
(<http://www.tariqramadan.com/Good-Muslim-Bad-Muslim.html>)
- Teeth Maestro Blog. *Silence Means More Blood*. March, 14 2011.
(<http://teeth.com.pk/blog/2011/03/14/silence-means-more-bld>)