



# History and the Future of the Hybrid Party Politics in Neoliberal Age: A Case of Pakistan

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## **Abstract**

*The causes of rising populism and collapse of the left-right ideological paradigms termed “death of ideology” is important development on election canvas. This trend in recent decades has been described as hybrid party politics. The neo-liberal discourse in hybrid regime shape party politics with free market values, issues of inequality, denial of social justice, and crises of freedom are rampant. Consequently, hybrid party politics perpetuate systemic deprivation and chronic punishment to marginalized sections. The fast penetration of neoliberal and populist elements quickly fused into multi-layered public pedagogy. The common political discourse propounds for quick solutions to seek legitimacy with expanding corporate power constantly. The socioeconomic inequalities consequence of expanding neo-liberal values in all spheres like education and electoral practices have recently started crucially influencing urban socio-political environment that shape populist narratives in electoral arena.*

*Neoliberal-populists leadership promote free market policies that push forward neoliberal populist rhetoric across political parties of different shades. The combination of neo-liberalism and populism thrives on subjects who perceive it solution to their problems. Thus, fast penetrating market-centric subjectivities consider alternative*

*subjectivities outside perimeters of social dignity therefore political inclusiveness becomes subject to connection with power. The educative public pedagogy has been at the base of rising populism unfolding hybrid party politics.*

**Keywords:** rising populism, politics in Pakistan

## **Introduction**

From Brexit to the election of Donald Trump populist rhetoric have gained momentum in many diverse countries, including Poland, Hungary, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Finland, France, Italy, Germany, Pakistan and even India (Inglehart, R. F., & Norris, P. (2016). This progression culminated in Pakistan with Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek i Insaaf (PTI) winning the crucial parliamentary elections in 2018 thus finally entering into populist governmental coalition. Similarly, the eventual victory of PTI by a narrow margin has radically changed political landscape in Pakistan party politics. The scope of evidence allows us to examine vote choices in a way that has previously not been possible to analyze this new political polarization (Alvarez, A. E. (2006).

In order to unfold causes of rising populism and collapse of the left-right paradigm (Shivji, I. G. (2003) is important development on election canvas recently witnessed in hybrid democracy like Pakistan. It includes socioeconomic variables, the life history of a political populist leader and a wide range of subjective information of large population such as life satisfaction ideals, interpersonal trust over institutions and various dimensions of political ideology (Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2013). Especially the case of Imran Khan, a cricket star turned philanthropist who successfully established a cancer hospital in a country that is being projected as evidence of honest personality. Indeed the fast penetration of neoliberal and populist elements quickly fused into multi-layered public discourse in order to legitimize the expansion of corporate power (Boggs, C. (2001) is at the root. Additionally, the socioeconomic inequality as consequence of expanding neo-liberal values in all spheres recently influenced urban socio-political environment that shape populist narratives.

We might understand this phenomenon better by applying Neo-Gramscian critical semiotic (Jessop, B. O. B. (2004) analysis of speeches, news texts and legislative statements on specific economic programs and recent emergence of rhetoric like ‘change’ in many parts of world. Actually, Neo-Gramscian underpinnings illustrate how a distinctive neoliberal-populist discourse articulates signs/symbols or both as ‘the American people (Chilton, P. (2017)’ or ‘Changing status quo (Chilton, P. (2017)’ with signs of market individualism, and further connects these signs to the neoliberal policy framework. Neo-Gramscian contends how specific constellation of social forces, that state and the dominant ideational configuration tend to sustain socio-political order. This process leads to a political project of rolling back economic, social welfare, political and legal protections guaranteed to individuals by state. This policy also leads to large tax cuts on big corporate businesses under the rubric of large investment and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) promotion. It is referred to identify these features of neo liberal policies in the incumbent government of PTI, where the party and its leaders make similar promises around ensuring neo-liberal consumerism alongside market based individualism. The ambitious electoral slogan that promised ten million jobs to jobless urban or semi-urban youth and fast migration towards urban centers drastically increase housing demands therefore promise of five million houses are pertinent references (Veiga, F. J., Veiga, L. G., & Morozumi, A. (2017). Neoliberal populism is a paradigmatic instance of what Stuart Hall has termed the ‘trans-coding’ of distinct semantic elements to form a new hegemonic discourse.

### **Neo-liberal Norms and Rise of Populism**

Neoliberal-populist narrative promote free market policies that push people through processes to enforce neoliberal populist agenda. However, this combination of neo liberalism and populism thrives on hybrid party politics with promises of quick solutions. However, those who are deemed unable or unwilling to inhabit market-centric subjectivities remain outside the perimeters of social dignity (Guardino, M. (2018) and wider political acceptance thus excluded, consequently. There are processes that have created obstacles on imagining any type of life choices outside it. Whereas politically

robust opposition to the neoliberal project in countries like Pakistan is now distant illusion (Sivan, E. (2000) due to amalgamation of neoliberal project with rising tide of political populism. Moreover, mainstreaming of liberal ideology construct large urban subjectivities in a way that describes its opponents as “anti-statists (Wright, V. (1990)”. Therefore, economic and social welfare policy preferences in the light of neoliberal-populist discourse makes it more difficult to articulate democratic values and practices. It becomes real difficult for democrats to project the state as a mechanism through which greater economic equality and substantive democracy could be visualized and vitalized (Giroux, H. (2014).

Neo-Liberalism is a kind of fundamental revolutionary development in thought and science (in economics sense) to reinstate liberal ethos (Chopra, R. (2003). It rectifies and exalts the supremacy of what is called the financial markets. Thus, going back to radical form of capitalism, with the law of expansion of profit, is an unrestrained capitalism without hiding. However, it is justified as constraints of economic efficiency in the beginning of modern forms of dominance shown as market research, such as 'business administration' as techniques of manipulation (Chopra, R. (2003).

The neoliberal populist discourse signifies the appropriate historical roots of a public discourse (Giroux, H. A. (2004) with deep anchors in popular common sense (Pickering, S. (2001). The neoliberal populist discourse continues to embed in official policy discourse in all types of democracies and hybrid regimes alike. The political influence of neoliberal-populist discourse deepening its effect through cultural resonance might explain the persistence of the neoliberal project in advanced democracy like USA and hybrid regime Pakistan alike (Guardino, M. (2018). Hybrid party politics is becoming popular in fast penetrating neo liberal age.

The political landscape of Pakistan shows that the corporate capitalist (Giroux, H. A. (2005) fairytale of neo-liberalism has not been facing any potent challenge in Pakistan so far. The rapid growth of professional urban middle class (Pow, C. P. (2009) resorting on private education, health and many other civic provisions are clear signs of rising trends of capital expansion with

neo-liberal tones. However, the wider forces of discontent are also visible in challenging this trend but in unorganized pockets. The noticeable challenge all over the world in pockets by labor organizers, students, community activists, intellectuals, and factions reluctant to accept democratic system be bought and sold by international political institutions, multinational corporations and institutions of hybrid regimes. However, politicians with attributes of capitalist orientations tend to willingly align themselves with multinational, corporate interests for multiple gains. This has assumed populist political base of historical block formation that remains triumphant.

The important aspect is that hybrid regime constructs the subjectivities of individuals and groups in a way that turn them completely blind to the fact that democracy has been bought and sold by multinational corporations, international political institutions, institutions of hybrid regimes and big trans-national capitalists (Howard, P. N. (2005). Consequently, socio-economic marginalization and forced exclusion disappoint large masses of subordinate groups who cannot reap any possible reward from such electocratic political system. Such people find themselves forced to assume characteristics that make populist rhetoric acceptably attractive. Whereas, wide educative public pedagogy have been at the base of sharp rise in populism that unfolds nature of hybrid party politics.

Besides this, incessant attacks on democracy, public good and non-commodified values are widespread in public sphere, which generate even negative feelings among excluded masses about democracy.

The international custodian of neo-liberal order WTO (World Trade Organization) and IMF (Hendriks, C. M., & Carson, L. (2008) (International Monetary Fund) manage and transfer wealth from the poor and less developed nations to the rich and wealthy nations as promoter/defender of capitalism. Thus quasi-peripheral nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America have grown into client states of wealthy and affluent nations of the global north. So international financial institutions' loan programs to the client states have produced various dislocations in the fields of "social welfare

programs such as education, health care and laws establishing labor standards” (Giroux, H. A. 2005). This is dominant global policy vigorously pursued for the last three decades under the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) in many third world countries with more or less similar debt problems. These debt problems result into political marginalization of large numbers of population on the one hand and ever increasing social and economic inequalities on the other. The situation prepares suitable ground for possible rise of any populist rhetoric at the commencement of periodical elections. Thus relationship of power and politics has led to fading social obligations unraveling in the upward mobility through money. The mobility acquired by the people with capital investment and money, explains disconnection of power from obligations. Thus such requirement of investment unfolds the new unprecedented disconnection of power from its obligations (Gane, N. (2001) like duties towards employees, freedom from work to contribute for the community. So, the disconnection of the responsibilities as consequences of neo-liberal policies is strategic gain giving new upward mobility to free-floating unbound capital (Bauman, Z. (2013). Thus this outcome may be understood as emerging hybrid party politics in ever expanding neo-liberal age.

The fast erosion of welfare state has gone hand-in-hand with the emergence of consumerist corporate culture. Consequently, state extends its control to punish all people under privileged by the social benefits of class, color and gender (Cole and Ohanian, (1999). Within the discourse of neo-liberalism, democracy becomes synonymous with free markets, while issues of equality, racial justice, and freedom are stripped of substance. The systemic deprivation and chronic punishment has been excruciating large subordinate masses. Thus individual misfortune is now viewed as either excessive or in need of radical containment even under the democracy itself.

The cherished and genuine spaces for democratic learning, debate, and dialogue such as schools, newspapers, popular culture, television networks, and other public spheres are either underfunded, eliminated, privatized, or subject to corporate ownership. Under the aggressive politics and culture of neo-

liberalism, society is increasingly mobilized for the production of violence against the poor, immigrants, dissenters, and others marginalized because of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, and color. At the heart of neo-liberalism is a new form of politics in the United States and similar trends are witnessed in hybrid regimes like Pakistan. It exhibits a politics in which radical exclusion of marginalized population is the order of the day, in which the primary questions are no longer asked concerning equality, justice, or freedom. However, the survival of the fittest culture ridden with fear, surveillance, and economic deprivation is the core policy objective. This is a kind of philosophy of politics that conceals its remnants of power in rhetoric of populism, staged through public sphere. Susan George points out in her book seemingly defines "neoliberal democracy" that "Who has a right to live or does not (George, S. (1999))".

Neo-liberalism is not a technical, neutral, economic debate/discourse that can be determined with the accuracy of a statistical formula or upheld by an appeal to the rules of a presumably unquestionable science that easily leaves its own history behind. Nor is it a model of economic prudence that offers the best "route to optimum efficiency, rapid economic growth and innovation, and rising prosperity for all who are willing to work hard and take advantage of available opportunities" (Kotz, D. M. (2003)). On the contrary, neo-liberalism is an ideology that subordinates the democratic politics to the rapacious laws of a market economy rapidly penetrating into all aspects of social life which dictates values of only market-driven society.

Therefore, it's an economic and indirectly cultural theory based on socially constructed philosophy that needs to be completely visible and critically shaken away from the control of power. The current power exercise over most of the powerful institutions of national and global life are point of reference. In this way electoral politics has been field of large population desires and needs manufacturing under neo-liberal onslaught. As such, neo-liberalism makes it difficult for many people either to imagine a notion of individual and social agency necessary for reclaiming a substantive democracy. The desire of social agency to hypothesize the cultural,

economic, and political circumstances required for a sustainable public sphere with public institutions, spaces, and goods cherished as part of democratic effort. This democratic global public sphere could only be guarantee for achieving downward distribution of wealth, resources, and power.

Neo-liberalism has indeed become a broad-based political and cultural movement designed to obliterate public concerns and liquidate even the thin pretensions of welfare state, and turn politics into an exclusively market-driven project (Leys, C. (2003). This swift transformation of electoral politics in hybrid regimes shaped party politics more detrimental to democratic ideals. Thus neo-liberalism does more detrimental effect on agency by orienting with oft repeated "the informing principle of politics (Giroux, H. A. (2005)" while assigning wealth and resources to the most fortunate/privileged by virtue/integrity of their class, social position, and control/power. Therefore, it results in supporting political culture and electoral pedagogical practices into social universe and cultural landscape of public sphere that promotes tacitly particular sentiment of authoritarianism. In turn authoritarianism sets in motion combined with religion and market fundamentalism and anti-terrorism laws that are selectively invoked to suspend civil liberties (Giroux, H. A. (2005). while assigning resources and wealth by the virtue of class and social position. Therefore, it results into political culture with electoral pedagogy into social universe/public sphere tacitly promoting particular sentiment of authoritarianism. In turn authoritarianism sets in motion combined with religion and market norms and anti-terrorist laws that are selectively invoked to suspend civil liberties (Giroux, H. A. (2005). It further incarcerates vulnerable populations that provide political capital to security forces to destroy potential spaces for democratic accountability (Giroux, S. S. (2006). In recent times missing persons and extra-judicial disappearances and confinement of people in different parts of state may be appropriate references in hybrid regime of Pakistan. Resultantly the cultural politics and form of economic domination, neo-liberalism tells a very limited story about cycles of dialectics of populism. Therefore the situation favorably ushers hybrid party politics with dialectical outcome. Thus, it is antithetical to nurture democratic identities, values and struggle for



public spaces and institutions as a consequence of dialectical suppression that grows widely. Because it has no ethical language for recognizing politics outside the realm of the market or controlling market excesses. Therefore, challenging the underlying tenets of growing authoritarianism which is bolstered by the pretense of religious piety (Giroux, H. A. (2006). Thus as a consequence, the authoritarian hybrid regimes further entrench market ethos to strengthen growing hybrid party politics.

### **Authoritarian Political Culture and Hybrid Party Politics**

There was a time when single party rule defined authoritarian regime but it is not accepted any longer that single party state is the only solution to maintaining a stable authoritarian regime. The single party politics and authoritarian correlation is not necessary one (Huntington, S. and Henry (1970). Because, now multiple political parties competing against each other for power these days. This factor is becoming a defining characteristic of political regimes in general and authoritarian hybrid democracies in particular.

Although the single party rule appears easy solution but it is not much attractive to hegemonic power ambitions as hegemonic leadership confronts criticism and resistance internationally and domestically if they employ single party rule formula to establish their hegemonic power. However, the hegemonic power that directly takes power these days in traditional societies in which competitive or semi-competitive regimes are perceived as having failed by specific segments of society, may resort to a single party rule. Generally, right wing hegemonic leaders find little chance to build single party regime because these leaders lack persuasive abilities to gain support of masses and civilian elite. Similarly, the left wing hegemonic leaders also face difficulties in justifying single party socialist regime. Pakistan's hegemonic leader (General Musharraf) obviously recognized constraining factors in achieving single party formula in the early part of his rule. However, the world pressure particularly from the United States forced him in directing Pakistani politics as United States supported General Musharraf with economic aid (Saikal, A. (2009) for his military cooperation against war on terror. However, a single party formula was not acceptable to the United States.

The second limitation was domestic in which the hegemonic leader found little possibility of creating consensus over a single party due to political polarization in the country. Thus placement of country in hybrid democracy through freedom index was another political expediency for a democratic façade to avoid sliding into totalitarian rank. Therefore, Pakistan's former General Musharraf built façade of democracy to consolidate his rule and initially held local body elections followed by a general election in which multiple parties took part. Under this scheme the hegemonic leadership sets up a multi-party competition to build a stable and dominant party that can make competitors ineffective in organizing potential political opposition to regime.

Since this arrangement allows multi-party electoral competition, thus it looks like a democratic form of party politics. However the instruments of electoral rule (Schedler, A. (2002) manipulation and the exercise of coercion work as effective ways to exclude opposition parties from important decision making about election conduct. Thus, it becomes convenient for hegemonic leaders to protect and promote self-centered interest (Diamond, L. (2002) at the expense of wider political unity.

Under this formula, the dominant party is created and pushed with the tacit maneuvering of coercive power (Reuter and Ora John. (2010). Its dominance has been endorsed through regular periodical elections. The hegemonic leadership favors secretly selected party from competing parties. It helps specific party to persuade the large sections of public through multiple forms of media and opinion leaders that the party leadership is only viable political option that could steer country prosperous, unified, and powerful and protect it from external threats (Rockwell, R., & Janus, N. (2002). The last general election may be pertinent reference of Pakistan Tehreek i Insaf (PTI) which secured electoral gains. On the other the hegemonic leaders, it is consensus that if a party bags strong mass base to get electoral dominance for an extended period of time, it is then hegemonic party (Sartori, G. (2005). If it does not attain this characteristic then it is a fluid dominant party that continually consolidates hegemonic control of covert leaders. Here it is strategic to distinguish between fluid and hegemonic dominant party.

Because for an authoritarian rule these changes are likely to become institutionalized when newly created dominant party turns into hegemonic party and could undermine hegemonic position of hegemonic leaders.

### **Political Exchange and Hybrid Party Politics (Evidences)**

The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) and Pakistan Tehreek i Insaf (PTI) of Pakistan in the last two elections depict that party politics is never consolidated on participatory lines. The covert hegemonic leaders strive for control over political processes to push political elite of multi-parties in dialectical unity. The covert hegemonic leadership exercise control over 'old school' politicians to perpetuate their domination by facilitating political party with ambitions to become hegemonic party yet initially molded as fluid dominant party. The policy preferences in both governments have exhibited the unflinching hegemonic control over major policy decisions. The economic corporate interests of hegemonic power are at the core of various decisions on budgetary allocation.

Even in case of South Korea military leaders conveniently adopted hegemonic party formula to legitimize their perpetual stay in power beyond two years military rule. To this end some segments of civilian population covertly prepared strategy of setting up a party in which retired military officers would enter civilian politics at the conclusion of junta rule. Colonel Kim Jong (Kim, Y. H. (1992) had devised comprehensive plan for this party with tacit consent of General Park Chung-Hee during the military rule. Resultantly, Park-Kim secret cooperation led to the implementation of hegemonic party formula. They trained one thousand odd civilian elites who were organized to become founding members and supporters of this junta funded party. The enactment of new electoral rules and institutional arrangement was second important strategy to set up hegemonic party. Thousands of "old school politicians (Kim, Y. H. (1992)" were expelled from political scene in order to facilitate this party.

This Park-Kim military hegemonic party formula indicates the limitations of military leaders for party enterprise. Democratic Republican Party (DRP) in 1963 was junta party in the South Korea.

It could not translate idea of setting up hegemonic party rule into a political reality. The resurgence of old school politician started to challenge DRP's dominance. The military officers began started to oppose General Park on military's partisan role. The subsequent exclusion of many military officers who criticized military's role, General Park and his loyal military officers shed their uniform and joined DRP to express their reservations proactively (Trinkunas, H. A. (2011).

The presidential elections in 1963 returned them in power but DRP began to function like fluid dominant party. The party gathered members of almost more than 1.5 million at peak but hardly translated hegemonic aspirations into reality. The dramatic defeat of party in 1971 was substantial evidence of limitations of military leaders at political engineering. The decline of electoral dominance of DRP could be understood through internal party dynamics which restricted party to become hegemonic party. Constantly diminishing influence of DRP Secretariat over the party policies and dependence of the party upon bureaucracy resulted in the lack of autonomy to an increasingly autocratic leader. Besides the desire of President Park and other leaders to maintain political dominance was challenged by opposition politicians in the early 1970's (Son, H. K. (1989). The abrupt change in the form of Yoshin reforms led to a personalized control through palace coup.

The new constitutional spectrum and institutions for prolonged political dominance diminished the role of the party in the political decision making. The recent institutionalizing of judicial activism (Sherry, S. (1984) erodes political initiative and decision making power of ruling political party like earlier "Pakistan Peoples Party" (PPP) and then "Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz" (PMLN). Where political parties are excluded from policy decision making. In South Korean case rubber stamp Electoral College called National Conference for Unification (Lee, H. K. (1974) introduced indirect elections upon Korean people. The conference members were nominated without participation of political parties. One third members of parliament were handpicked by president himself. Thus ineffective position of the political parties in assembly reduced their political influence in important decision making. Therefore,

political parties could no longer select the president of the country through electoral process. However the sudden assassination of President Park in Korean case left political vacuum which was filled by new generation of military leaders those dismantled Democratic Republican Party (DRP) and ended fluid dominant party. The result of such events leads to hybridization of party politics and jeopardize Democratic Party politics.

### **Conclusion**

The hybrid nature of party politics has been triggering rise in populism and collapse of the left-right ideological paradigms termed “death of ideology”. It is important development on electoral canvas in recent decades. In such consequence liberal ideology has been constructing large urban subjectivities by declaring its opponents as “anti-statists. As a result, hybrid party politics is becoming dominant form of politics in fast growing neo-liberal age. The hybrid regime tend to construct the individuals’ and groups’ subjectivities to turn them completely blind to the fact that democracy has been bought and sold under the garb of catchy competing parties’ rhetoric. The populist discourse has been emerging out of these circumstances where income inequalities and deprivations are widespread. Therefore, it signifies that appropriate historical roots of a public discourse come from deep popular common sense of subordinate masses. Thus the combination of neo liberalism and populism as marriage of convenience further push hybrid party politics with promises of quick solutions as corner stone of recently expanding electoral populism. Thus fast penetrating market-centric subjectivities consider alternative subjectivities outside perimeters of any alternative socio-political discourse, therefore, political inclusiveness becomes subject to connection with higher knots of power.

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108	 Pakistan	4.25	6.08	5.71	2.22	2.50	4.71	Hybrid regime	Asia	Score: ▲ 0.08 Rank: ▲ 4
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