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<https://islamicreligious.com/index.php/Journal/index>Print ISSN: [3006-1296](#) Online ISSN: [3006-130X](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**General Elections 2018 in Pakistan: Contestants, Campaigns, and the Rise of Populist Politics****Sidra Zahir**

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asifashaukat2020@gmail.com**Abstract**

This chapter examines the dynamics of the 2018 General Elections in Pakistan, focusing on the major political contestants, their manifestos, and campaign strategies. The study highlights how electoral competition was shaped by populist rhetoric and shifting public expectations. Five mainstream political parties Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) were analyzed with reference to their organizational structures, promises, and electoral mobilization methods. The chapter finds that PTI's populist appeal, built around themes of anti-corruption, justice, and welfare, redefined the national political discourse and resonated deeply with youth and middle-class voters. In contrast, the campaigns of PML-N and PPP relied heavily on legacy politics, regional patronage, and development narratives. The analysis reveals that campaign effectiveness was closely tied to social media engagement, leadership image, and issue-based communication rather than traditional vote-bank politics alone. Overall, this chapter concludes that the 2018 General Elections marked a turning point in Pakistan's political landscape by reinforcing populist strategies as central to electoral success. The interplay of digital mobilization, charismatic leadership, and anti-elite sentiment reshaped the nature of political competition and contributed significantly to PTI's electoral victory.

Keywords: General Elections 2018, Populism, Political Campaigns, PTI, PML-N, PPP, MQM, MMA, Pakistan Politics.

1. Introduction

Elections represent one of the most significant pillars of democracy, providing citizens the right to choose their representatives and influence the direction of governance. In Pakistan, electoral politics has long been characterized by shifting alliances, charismatic leadership, and competing populist narratives. The General Elections of 2018 marked a crucial turning point in the country's political evolution, introducing new forms of campaigning and voter mobilization, particularly through social media and mass rallies.

This chapter explores the major contestants of the 2018 General Elections and examines how their manifestos and campaigns reflected broader populist tendencies. Political parties such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) were at the forefront of the electoral contest. Each party sought to appeal to the electorate through distinct ideological, social, and regional narratives.

The election was conducted in a politically polarized environment, shaped by public disillusionment with traditional elites and growing demands for accountability, transparency, and reform. PTI, under the leadership of Imran Khan, positioned itself as the voice of the common citizen and champion of anti-corruption, contrasting its populist message with the established political order represented by PML-N and PPP.

This introduction sets the stage for a detailed analysis of the parties' manifestos and campaigns, highlighting how populist appeals, media engagement, and leadership charisma influenced voter behavior. The chapter aims to show that the 2018 elections were not merely a contest for power but a reflection of changing political consciousness and the rise of populist politics in Pakistan.

2. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

Imran Khan, a renowned Pakistani cricketer and national hero, founded the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in 1996. As captain of the national team, he led Pakistan to its first-ever Cricket World Cup victory against England in 1992, earning immense respect and popularity. His philanthropic work further strengthened his public image as a compassionate leader. In memory of his mother, who passed away from cancer in 1985, Khan established the **Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre**, which opened in Lahore on December 29, 1994. The hospital was built to provide free cancer treatment to the underprivileged and has since expanded to Peshawar and Karachi. His commitment to education led to the founding of **Namal College**, a non-profit institution aimed at offering quality higher education to rural students. Khan's humanitarian initiatives attracted both national and international attention; among his supporters was Princess Diana, who attended a fundraising event for his projects.

When Khan entered politics, he was widely regarded as an honest, patriotic, and empathetic figure who understood the challenges faced by ordinary Pakistanis. However, PTI struggled in its early years, failing to win any seats in the 1997 elections due to the dominance of established parties rooted in feudal and *biradari* (clan-based) politics. Khan refused to align with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), choosing instead to maintain PTI's independent stance. The party secured its first National Assembly seat in 2002 from Mianwali and boycotted the 2008 elections in protest against corruption. PTI emerged as a major political force in the 2013 elections, winning over 7.5 million votes and forming the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Even its critics

acknowledged the party's governance reforms in KP, particularly improvements in education, policing, and administrative transparency.

2.1 PTI Manifesto

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) presented a detailed manifesto outlining its vision for establishing an Islamic welfare state based on the principles of justice, equality, and accountability. The main points of the manifesto are as follows:

1. **Islamic Welfare State:**

To build a welfare-oriented Islamic state ensuring social justice, honesty, and accountability in governance.

2. **Independent Accountability Institutions:**

Strengthen the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) by granting it full autonomy and eliminating tax amnesty and voluntary resignation schemes to curb corruption.

3. **Administrative**

Reforms:

Introduce a fully computerized system of legal, ownership, and administrative records to ensure transparency and efficiency.

4. **Local Government Empowerment:**

Extend the KP model of local governance nationwide, transferring social programs and decision-making power to local authorities.

5. **Development of Tribal Areas:**

Integrate the ex-FATA region into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ensure equitable resource distribution, and conduct local body elections in the merged areas.

6. **Judicial Reforms:**

Resolve civil court cases within one year, establish special youth correctional institutions, and modernize prisons to focus on rehabilitation.

7. **Women's Empowerment:**

Strengthen laws protecting women's rights, establish special courts to handle cases of violence against women, and improve shelters (*Darul Aman*). Enforce gender equality in government employment.

8. **Social Welfare Expansion:**

Enhance the effectiveness of the Workers Welfare Fund (WWF), Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), Zakat Fund, and Bait-ul-Mal.

9. **Economic Reforms:**

Grant autonomy to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), expand the formal economy, and create **10 million new jobs** within five years.

10. **Water and Infrastructure Development:**

Accelerate the construction of small dams and large projects such as the Diamer-Bhasha Dam. Ensure access to safe drinking water and introduce rainwater harvesting systems, especially in Karachi.

11. **Healthcare Reforms:**

Expand the *Sehat Insaf Card* (Health Justice Program) nationwide and strengthen the Lady Health Worker Program for maternal and child healthcare.

12. **Educational Reforms:**

Establish partnerships with the private sector, provide financial incentives for teachers in rural areas, promote girls' education, and integrate literacy and numeracy into madrasa curricula.

13. **Environmental Policy:**

Implement a national green policy, promote environmental education, enforce plastic reduction laws, and expand the "**10 Billion Tree Tsunami**" campaign.

14. **Foreign Policy and Governance:**

Reform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by creating a dedicated division for international relations and a high-level advisory commission under the Prime Minister.

15. **National Security:**

Establish a National Security Organization (NSO) to coordinate internal and external security policies comprehensively.

16. **New Province Creation:**

Establish a new province in **southern Punjab** to ensure better governance and resource distribution.

17. **Overseas Pakistanis' Rights:**

Guarantee voting rights and political representation for Pakistanis living abroad.

18. **Tourism Development:**

Create four new tourist destinations per year for five years to boost economic growth and global recognition. Anti-Corruption Measures:

19. Form a **special task force** to prevent corruption and ensure accountability across all institutions.

2.2 PTI Campaigns

Imran Khan, the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), officially launched his 2018 General Election campaign from his hometown, Mianwali, emphasizing that it was the city where his political journey began. Addressing a large gathering, Khan declared that true national transformation would only be possible if PTI came to power. His campaign schedule was extensive and strategically designed to cover all regions of Pakistan within a short time. Between 7 and 23 July 2018, Imran Khan conducted a series of rallies and public meetings across the country: Jhelum, Gujrat, Haripur, Abbottabad, inner Sindh, Rahim Yar Khan, Gujranwala, Kasur, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Mardan, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Bannu, Multan, Lahore, Karachi, and finally Islamabad. His campaign concluded on 23 July 2018 with a massive public gathering in Islamabad, described by many as a decisive and historic moment for PTI (I. Khan, 2018).

During his speeches, Khan pledged to strengthen national institutions, eradicate corruption, and generate employment opportunities for

Pakistan's youth. He promised reforms in taxation, agriculture, and education, envisioning a "New Pakistan" that would be self-reliant, transparent, and welfare-oriented. Khan criticized the ruling elites, particularly the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership, accusing them of corruption and economic mismanagement. He highlighted Pakistan's growing foreign debt, which, according to him, had risen from 13 trillion rupees in 2013 to 27 trillion by 2018. Khan accused Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, and Ishaq Dar of amassing wealth illegally and misusing public resources, including allegedly spending billions on media propaganda. In his closing remarks, Khan reaffirmed PTI's commitment to accountability, justice, and economic reform as the foundation for building a strong, independent Pakistan.

3. Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N)

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif emerged as the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), one of the most influential political parties in Pakistan. The PML-N was formed in April 1992 after President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed Nawaz Sharif's government. It soon gained prominence as the only major political force capable of challenging the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) while maintaining a network of smaller allied groups. Over time, the party expanded its support base and became a central player in national politics. Its political trajectory, however, was closely tied to its strained relationship with the military establishment. The party's anti-establishment stance led to internal divisions, resulting in the creation of the pro-military faction, the PML-Q. Nawaz Sharif himself was initially selected by General Zia-ul-Haq, yet his later defiance of the status quo marked his shift toward independent politics. The PML-N distinguished itself from other factions by achieving significant electoral victories, winning two out of four general elections held after the restoration of democracy in 1988. The 1997 elections, in particular, gave the PML-N a two-thirds majority in Parliament, allowing Nawaz Sharif to lead one of the most powerful civilian governments since the 1970.

3.1 PML-N Manifesto

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) [PML-N] outlined the following key points in its 2018 election manifesto, focusing on economic development, institutional reform, and social welfare:

- 1. Economic Growth and Stability:**

Increase Pakistan's annual growth rate and reduce the national budget deficit.

- 2. Productivity Development:**

Establish standard productivity programs and socio-economic zones to encourage industrial and agricultural growth.

- 3. Utilization of CPEC Projects:**

Maximize the benefits of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to promote trade, investment, and infrastructure development.

- 4. Employment Generation:**

- Create between 100,000 and 200,000 new jobs, while expanding educational and training opportunities.
5. **Support for Farmers:**
Introduce special concession packages for farmers to improve agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.
 6. **Expansion of the IT Economy:**
Increase the IT sector's contribution from \$3.1 billion to \$10 billion, and establish technology parks nationwide.
 7. **Technical Training:**
Provide technical education and vocational training to three million people across the country.
 8. **Educational Assistance:**
Offer financial support to students through employer-based funding schemes to enhance access to education.
 9. **Energy Development:**
Produce 15,000 megawatts of additional electricity by 2025, with 5,000–7,000 megawatts generated through Thar coal and hydroelectric projects.
 10. **Microfinance and Business Growth:**
Expand small business loans, promote microfinance and mobile banking, and strengthen the pension and mutual fund markets.
 11. **Capital Market Development:**
Establish new capital and bond markets to meet trade and investment needs and promote financial literacy.
 12. **Poverty Alleviation:**
Extend existing poverty reduction programs evenly across all provinces to ensure equitable welfare support.
 13. **Entrepreneurship Promotion:**
Establish incubation centers and Common Facility Centers (CFCs) in towns to encourage small-scale business development.
 14. **Support for Persons with Disabilities:**
Provide loans and financial assistance to at least two million people with disabilities or special needs.
 15. **Vocational Institutes:**
Build 5,000 new vocational training centers across all provinces.
 16. **Youth Empowerment:**
Increase youth participation in democratic processes and leadership roles.
 17. **Sports Development:**
Improve sports infrastructure by constructing 250 new stadiums and 50 AstroTurf grounds, and establishing sports academies nationwide.
 18. **Educational Reforms:**
Eradicate illiteracy, enhance teaching standards, and develop a comprehensive post-secondary education and vocational training system.
 19. **Local Governance and Democracy:**

Ensure independent local governments under Article 140A of the Constitution, and promote democratic participation at all levels.

20. Representation for Minorities:

Allocate 5% of seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies for non-Muslims to strengthen inclusivity.

21. Provincial Reorganization:

Support the creation of a new province for improved administrative efficiency and equitable development.

22. Acceleration of CPEC Economic Zones:

Expedite the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) planned under CPEC to boost industrial output and employment.

PML-N Campaigns

In June 2018, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) [PML-N] began its election campaign from Karachi with a meeting of the minority community chaired by Shahbaz Sharif, where he emphasized that Nawaz Sharif was the first national leader to participate in religious festivals of minority groups and that PML-N had consistently safeguarded minority rights. Nawaz Sharif and other party leaders, including Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif, held several rallies across the country, such as in Muzaffarabad, Lahore, Sahiwal, and Mardan, spreading the slogan “Vote Ko Izzat Do” (Respect the Vote), which became central to the party’s campaign. Nawaz Sharif criticized Imran Khan for failing to fulfill promises in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and urged voters to strengthen democracy by voting for PML-N. Throughout its campaign, the party highlighted its previous achievements in governance, particularly in national security, infrastructure, and energy development. It credited its administration with launching Operation Zarb-e-Azb, combating terrorism, restoring peace in Karachi, expanding the motorway network, and increasing power generation capacity by 11,000 MW—raising the national grid’s total to 29,000 MW. The PML-N also emphasized the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of Quaid-e-Azam’s vision for a prosperous Pakistan. The party’s message revolved around democratic continuity, strong governance, and national progress, asserting that only PML-N possessed the experience and capability to lead Pakistan toward modern development and stability in the 2018 general elections.

4. Pakistan People’s Party (PPP)

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), founded by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in Lahore in November 1967, quickly emerged as one of Pakistan’s most influential political forces. Guided by the principles of Islam, democracy, and socialism, the party sought to eliminate class distinctions and promote social equality through democratic governance. The PPP’s populist ideology empowered the working class, raised awareness of civil rights, and transformed Pakistan’s political culture (G. News, 2018b). Under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, the PPP won the 1988 general elections, making her the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan, though her government was dismissed in 1990 by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on charges of corruption and mismanagement. The party regained power

in 1993 but was again dissolved amid tensions between Prime Minister Bhutto and President Farooq Leghari, and it suffered defeat in the 1997 elections at the hands of the PML-N (Pro Ahsan ur Rahim, 2008). Despite political setbacks, the PPP remained active, contesting the 2002 elections under the banner of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) led by Makhdoom Amin Fahim, securing 62 National Assembly seats with over 7.3 million votes (Baxter, 2004). During the political unrest of 2007, following Pervez Musharraf's emergency rule, Benazir Bhutto returned from exile to lead her party's campaign for the 2008 general elections, but she was tragically assassinated on December 27, 2007, in Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh, sparking nationwide protests and international condemnation (Dawn, 2007). Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, subsequently released her will, naming him political executor and appointing their son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, as her successor. Following her death, the elections were postponed to February 18, 2008, allowing the PPP to reorganize. Rooted in Bhutto's legacy, the PPP has continued to champion democracy, social justice, and national unity, remaining a central force in Pakistan's political landscape.

4.1 PPP Manifesto

Following are the key points of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) manifesto for the 2018 General Elections under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari:

1. **Strengthening Parliament:**
Reinforce the power of Parliament and other governmental institutions to ensure effective governance and a balanced democratic structure.
2. **Institutional Cooperation:**
Increase cooperation and coordination among all national institutions to promote unity and good governance.
3. **Democratic Foundations:**
Strengthen Pakistan's democratic framework to safeguard civilian supremacy and political stability.
4. **Poverty Eradication:**
Launch a national campaign to eliminate poverty and improve living standards for underprivileged communities.
5. **Youth Empowerment:**
Provide young people with access to quality education, vocational training, and employment opportunities.
6. **Democratization:**
Promote extensive democratization across all levels of government and society to ensure inclusive participation.
7. **National Reforms:**
Implement wide-ranging economic and social reforms to modernize the state and empower citizens.
8. **Economic Independence:**

- Achieve economic self-reliance by encouraging domestic production, reducing foreign dependency, and ensuring sustainable growth.
9. **Global Standing:**
Enhance Pakistan's stature in the international community through diplomacy, peace, and cooperation.
 10. **Kashmir Resolution:**
Work toward a peaceful and just solution to the Kashmir issue in line with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.
 11. **Provincial Reorganization:**
Advocate for the creation of a separate province in South Punjab to ensure equitable distribution of resources.
 12. **Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities:**
Actively integrate persons with special needs into society by providing equal rights and participation opportunities.
 13. **Labor Rights Protection:**
Safeguard trade union activities and workers' rights to ensure fair labor conditions and social justice.
 14. **National Unity:**
Promote peace, tolerance, and interfaith harmony among all religious and ethnic groups.
 15. **Democratic Accountability:**
Support strong and transparent institutions that uphold justice, accountability, and good governance.

PPP Campaigns

During the 2018 general election campaign, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), launched his campaign from Lyari, Karachi, where he was warmly received by enthusiastic crowds chanting, "*Na Mir ka, Na Pir ka, vote hai Tirka.*" Seeking to regain the support lost in the 2013 elections, Bilawal embarked on a campaign journey that began in Thatta, the historic city of Sindh, and extended through Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Zardari, 2018). Addressing large gatherings, Bilawal vowed to continue the mission of his mother, Benazir Bhutto, by upholding her vision of democracy, equality, and social justice. He urged citizens to support PPP's efforts for national development and reaffirmed his commitment to fulfilling "Bibi's promise" to the people of Pakistan. Speaking in Urdu, he emphasized that carrying forward his mother's legacy was the greatest honor of his life.

5. Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) was founded on March 18, 1984, in Karachi as a political party representing the Urdu-speaking Muhajir community. Initially formed as the All Pakistan Muhajir Students Organization (APMSO) by Altaf Hussain, it transformed from a student movement into a powerful urban political force. The MQM emerged during rising ethnic and linguistic tensions in Sindh, especially after Sindhi was declared the province's official language in 1972.

Government job quotas of 40% for urban and 60% for rural areas further deepened Muhajir resentment. The party condemned these policies as discriminatory toward the educated urban population. Over time, MQM gained strong support in Karachi and Hyderabad, advocating for the social, economic, and political rights of Muhajirs. Analysts suggest that General Zia-ul-Haq indirectly encouraged its rise to reduce the PPP's influence in Sindh. Despite controversy, MQM became a defining political force, giving urban Sindh's middle class a distinct political identity.

5.1 MQM Manifesto

The key points of the **Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)** manifesto are as follows:

1. **Decentralization of Power:**
Delegate authority to strengthen local governments and ensure efficient administration.
2. **Administrative Reforms:**
Create a new management division and transform traditional governance into participatory democracy.
3. **Financial Transparency:**
Prevent money laundering, promote accountability, and set realistic national financial goals.
4. **Public Access to Services**
Guarantee citizens easy access to essential facilities and government programs.
5. **Law and Justice Reform:**
Introduce major reforms in the judiciary and investigation systems to ensure justice and accountability.
6. **Police Modernization:**
Reform and strengthen the police force to improve public safety and service delivery.
7. **Abolition of Feudalism:**
Eliminate the outdated feudal system to promote equality and social justice.
8. **Smart City Initiative:**
Develop "smart cities" in all major urban areas, supported by modern technology and infrastructure.
9. **E-Governance:**
Make government programs, resources, and services accessible online for transparency and efficiency.
10. **Coastal Protection:**
Safeguard Pakistan's coastlines and marine resources through sustainable management policies.
11. **Karachi Urban Reform:**
Propose dissolving Karachi's six administrative districts and establishing a unified, automated urban governance system.

MQM Campaigns

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) officially launched its 2018 election campaign in Karachi, with party chairman Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui announcing at the Bahadurabad headquarters that the MQM aimed to secure a majority in Sindh, including Karachi. He reaffirmed the party's commitment to non-violence and inclusive politics, emphasizing that the MQM now represents not only Urdu-speaking Muhajirs but also people from diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (PILDAT, 2018). The party's leadership, including Amir Khan, Dr. Farooq Sattar, and other senior members, participated actively in the campaign. Despite internal disagreements, Dr. Farooq Sattar confirmed his participation in the elections, contesting from NA-245 and NA-247, and emphasized unity within the party ranks. MQM leaders reiterated their dedication to democratic participation, urban development, and the political empowerment of Karachi's citizens.

6. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) was an alliance of six major religious parties formed ahead of the 2002 general elections. The coalition united various Islamic groups that agreed to set aside sectarian differences to pursue shared political goals. Its key members included Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) led by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) under Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-S) headed by Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (JAH), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), and the Islami Tehreek-e-Pakistan. The alliance gained significant religious support across Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, emerging as a strong political force advocating for the implementation of Islamic principles in governance.

6.1 MMA Manifesto:

1. **Free and Fair Elections:**
Implement **electoral reforms** and adopt **proportional representation** for transparent elections.
2. **Rule of Law:**
Guarantee the **independence of the judiciary** and uphold the rule of law and fundamental rights.
3. **Provincial Autonomy:**
Ensure real **constitutional autonomy** for provinces and address the grievances of **Balochistan** and **FATA**.
4. **Social Welfare:**
Guarantee **food, housing, healthcare, education, and employment** for all citizens.
5. **Economic Self-Reliance:**
Avoid foreign loans by promoting **self-reliance**, fighting corruption, and increasing exports and remittances.
6. **Islamic Economic System:**
Abolish the **interest-based system** in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, and promote a fair tax culture.

7. **Fiscal** **Responsibility:**
Reduce non-development expenditures by **30%** and adopt austerity measures to prevent misuse of resources.
8. **Foreign** **Policy:**
Pursue an **independent and dignified foreign policy**, supporting the struggles of **Kashmir** and **Palestine**, and maintaining strong ties with **China** and **CPEC**.
9. **Energy** **Infrastructure:**
Build **new dams** and promote **hydropower, nuclear, solar, and wind energy** for sustainable development.
10. **Agricultural** **Development:**
Launch the **Green Pakistan Scheme** to modernize agriculture and establish development centers for farmers.
11. **Education** **Reforms:**
Achieve **100% literacy** within five years by providing **free and compulsory education** up to matric level.
12. **Health** **Sector:**
Double the **health budget** to improve access to medical facilities across the country.
13. **Minority** **Rights:**
Protect the **lives, property, and places of worship** of religious minorities.
14. **Youth** **Sports:**
Provide **100% employment or unemployment allowance** for youth and establish separate **sports camps** for women and students.

Campaign

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) launched its election campaign for the 2018 general elections with a strong emphasis on anti-corruption, Islamic governance, and national unity. In Balochistan, Provincial President Maulana Noorullah and central leaders like Maulana Abdul Haq Hashmi and Liaquat Baloch highlighted the alliance's commitment to transparent elections and fighting corruption, while forming a provincial cabinet to strengthen organizational coordination. In Karachi, local president Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman led rallies, criticizing the long-standing parties for failing to resolve urban issues and urging citizens to vote for MMA's vision of a just and Islamic system. Similarly, Rashid Mehmood Soomro in Sindh and Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa campaigned on promises to restore Friday as the weekly holiday, ensure swift justice, promote Islamization, and support global Muslim causes such as Kashmir and Palestine.

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of major political parties in Pakistan—PTI, PML-N, PPP, MQM, and MMA—reveals both ideological diversity and overlapping objectives aimed at national progress. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan, emphasized an Islamic welfare state, anti-corruption reforms, and social justice, focusing on transparency,

accountability, and institutional strengthening. In contrast, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) prioritized economic growth, infrastructure development, and industrial expansion, portraying itself as a party of modernization and continuity. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), with its populist and socialist roots, advocated democracy, social equality, and rights of marginalized groups, maintaining its legacy of people-oriented politics. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), originally representing the Muhajir community, focused on urban governance, decentralization of power, and empowerment of local governments to ensure equal participation. Meanwhile, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) represented a coalition of religious parties that promoted Islamic governance, moral integrity, and self-reliance while rejecting Western influence in policymaking. Despite their ideological differences, these parties share certain manifesto goals, such as improving education, strengthening relations with China through CPEC, resolving the Kashmir issue, and combating corruption. Thus, while PTI and MMA align on anti-corruption and Islamic values, PML-N and PPP converge on economic development and social welfare, and MQM complements these with urban empowerment—together reflecting Pakistan's multi-dimensional political spectrum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative study of Pakistan's major political parties—PTI, PML-N, PPP, MQM, and MMA—highlights the diverse yet interconnected nature of the country's political landscape. Each party has contributed uniquely to Pakistan's democratic evolution and socio-economic development. PTI emerged as a reformist force focused on eradicating corruption and establishing an Islamic welfare state; PML-N concentrated on infrastructure, industrialization, and economic stability; PPP upheld democratic values, social justice, and empowerment of the poor; MQM advocated for urban representation and decentralization of authority; while MMA emphasized Islamic governance and moral accountability. Despite ideological differences, all parties shared a vision of a prosperous, independent, and equitable Pakistan. Their manifestos converged on key national priorities such as education, employment, transparency, and strengthening foreign relations, particularly through projects like CPEC. Collectively, these parties represent the evolving aspirations of the Pakistani people toward democracy, good governance, and national unity.

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