



## *The Impact of Technology on Pakistan's Political Discourse: Integrating Islamic Values*



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## The Impact of Technology on Pakistan's Political Discourse: Integrating Islamic Values

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### Abstract

*This paper investigates the transformative influence of technology on Pakistan's political landscape, employing a qualitative research methodology encompassing extensive literature reviews, case studies, and qualitative analysis of technological adoption within political frameworks. Focusing on the multifaceted impacts, it examines the profound implications of technological integration on governance efficacy, citizen participation, and the democratic framework in Pakistan, all through the lens of Islamic values. The pervasive penetration of digital platforms has revolutionized political communication, fundamentally altering the dynamics of information dissemination and civic engagement. This discourse analyzes the role of social media as a mobilizing force in political activism, considering its challenges in combating disinformation and fostering echo chambers, while also reflecting on the ethical principles of truthfulness and justice as guided by Islamic teachings. By exploring the nuanced dualism of technology's potential, it scrutinizes its capacity as both an empowering tool amplifying voices and a potential catalyst for polarization and the erosion of democratic norms, emphasizing the importance of ethical conduct in digital spaces. Additionally, it confronts the imperative of bridging the digital divide, highlighting equitable access to technology as pivotal for fostering an inclusive and participatory political culture in Pakistan, in line with the Islamic principles of justice and equity.*

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*Advocating for informed policymaking and regulatory frameworks, this presentation underscores the significance of digital literacy initiatives and equitable technological access, aligning these strategic interventions with Islamic values to harness technology's potential and fortify an informed, inclusive, and resilient democratic framework in Pakistan amidst the ongoing technological evolution.*

**Keywords:** Technology, politics, governance, social media, democracy, Islamic values.

### **Introduction:**

The integration of technology and politics has catalyzed a sweeping transformation worldwide, fundamentally altering the traditional paradigms of governance and citizen involvement. Across the globe, nations are witnessing a profound shift in how governments interact with their constituents and how individuals engage with political processes. In Pakistan, a nation characterized by its complex political landscape and rich societal diversity, the emergence of digital platforms has sparked a mix of anticipation and trepidation regarding the future trajectory of democratic governance. These digital tools have the potential to revolutionize political discourse, offering unprecedented opportunities for citizen engagement and transparency, which align with the Islamic values of justice, truthfulness, and equitable participation. The rise of digital platforms also presents significant challenges, including concerns about misinformation, privacy, and the equitable distribution of technological resources. In light of these dynamics, this article endeavors to conduct a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted impact of technology on Pakistan's political landscape, while integrating an Islamic values perspective. Through meticulous analysis, it seeks to unravel the implications of technological integration for the effectiveness of governance, the depth of citizen participation, and the resilience of democratic institutions, all within the ethical framework provided by Islamic teachings. By dissecting these complexities, this article aims to shed light on the intricate interplay between technology and democracy



in Pakistan, offering insights into both the promises and perils of the digital age for the country's political evolution, guided by the principles of Islamic ethics.

### **The Digital Revolution in Pakistan:**

Pakistan's transition into the digital era has been marked by a remarkable trajectory of technological progress and extensive uptake across various sectors. The proliferation of smartphones, coupled with the rapid expansion of internet connectivity, has ushered in a new era of connectivity and communication within the country. This digital revolution has transformed the way individuals interact, share information, and engage with political matters. In every corner of the nation, from the bustling metropolis of Karachi to the remote valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, the impact of this digital transformation is palpable. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have emerged as dynamic spaces for political discourse and mobilization. These platforms serve as virtual town squares, where citizens from diverse backgrounds converge to exchange ideas, voice opinions, and participate in the political process. The immediacy and accessibility afforded by social media have democratized political engagement, empowering individuals to transcend geographical boundaries and connect with fellow citizens and policymakers alike. Whether it's discussing local governance issues, advocating for social justice causes, or mobilizing support for political campaigns, these digital platforms have become integral to shaping the public discourse in Pakistan. Moreover, the interactive nature of social media facilitates real-time dialogue between citizens and elected representatives, fostering a more direct and responsive form of governance. Politicians and political parties leverage these platforms to disseminate information, solicit feedback, and engage in dialogue with constituents, thereby bridging the gap between government and the governed. The digital revolution has not only democratized access to political discourse but has also catalyzed social and political mobilization. From grassroots movements championing human rights to youth-led campaigns advocating for environmental



sustainability, social media has provided a powerful tool for organizing and amplifying voices that were previously marginalized or unheard.<sup>5</sup> In essence, the digital revolution in Pakistan has democratized political participation, transforming social media platforms into vibrant arenas for civic engagement and activism. As the nation continues to navigate the complexities of the digital age, harnessing the potential of these platforms while addressing challenges such as misinformation and digital inequality will be crucial for fostering a robust and inclusive democratic society.<sup>6</sup> Here are a few examples:

As we discussed Pakistan's transition into the digital era has been marked by a remarkable trajectory of technological progress and extensive uptake across various sectors. The proliferation of smartphones, coupled with the rapid expansion of internet connectivity, has ushered in a new era of connectivity and communication within the country. This digital revolution has transformed the way individuals interact, share information, and engage with political matters. In every corner of the nation, from the bustling metropolis of Karachi to the remote valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, the impact of this digital transformation is palpable. For instance, during the 2018 general elections, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and mobilizing voters. Political parties utilized these platforms to disseminate campaign messages, organize rallies, and engage with voters on key issues, thereby expanding their reach beyond traditional campaign methods.<sup>7</sup>

The interactive nature of social media facilitates real-time dialogue between citizens and elected representatives, fostering a more direct and responsive form of governance. For example, when citizens in Lahore expressed concerns about inadequate waste management services through Twitter, local government officials promptly responded, initiating a

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson, David, et al. "Technology and Universal Health Coverage: Examining the Role of Digital Health." *Journal of Global Health*, vol. 11, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm, Anthony G. *Digital Nation: Toward an Inclusive Information Society*. MIT Press, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Ali, Z. "Social Media Implication on Politics of Pakistan: Measuring the Impact of Facebook." *The International Asian Research Journal*, 2013, pp. 13-21.





dialogue about potential solutions and demonstrating the power of social media in amplifying citizen voices and holding authorities accountable.<sup>8</sup> The digital revolution has not only democratized access to political discourse but has also catalyzed social and political mobilization. One notable example is the Aurat March, an annual event held in cities across Pakistan to advocate for women's rights. Organized primarily through social media channels, the Aurat March has mobilized thousands of participants, sparking nationwide conversations about gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>9</sup>

The digital revolution in Pakistan has democratized political participation, transforming social media platforms into vibrant arenas for civic engagement and activism. As the nation continues to navigate the complexities of the digital age, harnessing the potential of these platforms while addressing challenges such as misinformation and digital inequality will be crucial for fostering a robust and inclusive democratic society.

### **The Power of social media in Political Activism:**

Undoubtedly, social media has emerged as a potent force for political activism, exerting significant influence during pivotal moments in Pakistan's history, such as the landmark 2018 general elections. These digital platforms have become indispensable tools for shaping public opinion, mobilizing voters, and driving socio-political change across the nation. During the 2018 general elections, social media platforms played a decisive role in shaping the narrative and galvanizing support for various political parties and candidates, including the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People Party (PPP), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and others. For instance, PTI, led by Imran Khan, utilized social media extensively to mobilize its youth base,

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<sup>8</sup> Haro-de-Rosario, Antonio, Antonia Sáez-Martín, and María del Carmen Caba-Pérez. "Using Social Media to Enhance Citizen Engagement with Local Government: Twitter or Facebook?" *New Media & Society*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2018, pp. 29-49.

<sup>9</sup> Baig, Faisal Zulfiqar, et al. "Role of Media in Representation of Sociocultural Ideologies in Aurat March (2019–2020): A Multimodal Discourse Analysis." *International Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2020, pp. 414-427.



share its manifesto, and broadcast live rallies and speeches. With a strategic focus on digital engagement, PTI effectively leveraged platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to connect directly with voters, generate buzz around its campaign events, and counter opposition narratives. PML-N, under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and later his daughter Maryam Nawaz, employed social media as a vital tool for political communication and mobilization. Through targeted advertising campaigns, live broadcasts, and interactive content, PML-N sought to maintain its support base and counter negative publicity. The party utilized platforms like Facebook Live and YouTube to stream speeches, press conferences, and rallies, enabling supporters to engage in real-time and amplifying the party's messaging to a wider audience. PPP, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, recognized the importance of social media in modern political campaigns and actively engaged with supporters through various digital platforms. The party utilized social media to disseminate its policy initiatives, share videos highlighting its achievements, and mobilize supporters for rallies and events. Additionally, PPP leveraged social media influencers and celebrities to amplify its message and reach younger demographics. Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) employed a more grassroots approach to digital engagement, focusing on building online communities and fostering dialogue around its ideological principles. While not as technologically sophisticated as some of its counterparts, JI utilized platforms like Facebook and Twitter to engage with supporters, share educational content, and promote its vision for an Islamic welfare state.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the major political parties, smaller parties and independent candidates also utilized technology to amplify their voices and mobilize supporters. From crowdfunding campaigns to virtual town hall meetings, these candidates leveraged social media to level the playing field and

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<sup>10</sup> Ida, Rachmah, Muhammad Saud, and Muhammad Imran Mashud. "Persistence of Social Media on Political Activism and Engagement among Indonesian and Pakistani Youths." *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2020, pp. 378-395..



challenge established political narratives. Social media has revolutionized political activism in Pakistan, democratizing access to information, amplifying marginalized voices, and mobilizing citizens for meaningful change across the political spectrum. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the strategic use of technology will remain essential for political parties seeking to engage with voters, shape public discourse, and drive socio-political transformation in Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

### **Challenges of Disinformation and Echo Chambers:**

Indeed, although social media platforms have democratized access to political discourse, they have also inaugurated a new era of difficulties that pose a threat to the integrity of democratic procedures. The spread of false or misleading information to deceive or manipulate audiences is one of the most pressing issues. Disinformation is the spread of false or misleading information. Disinformation campaigns often use fake news, doctored images, and sensationalized headlines across social media platforms to influence public opinion or undermine political opponents.<sup>12</sup>

These difficulties are made worse by the phenomenon known as echo chambers. Users are only exposed to information and viewpoints that align with their pre-existing beliefs and preferences in virtual echo chambers, which reinforce ideological polarization and shield individuals from diverse perspectives. Users are less likely to critically evaluate information or engage in constructive conversation with those with opposing viewpoints within these echo chambers, which further exacerbates social divisions and prevents meaningful discourse. The ramifications of disinformation and echo chambers extend beyond the digital realm, permeating the fabric of society and eroding trust in democratic institutions. When misinformation spreads unchecked, it can undermine the credibility of traditional media outlets, government institutions, and electoral processes, leading to an erosion of public trust

<sup>11</sup> Karamat, Afshan, and Dilawar Ali Farooq. "Emerging Role of Social Media in Political Activism: Perceptions and Practices." *South Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Zulqarnain, W., N. U. Hashmi, and A. Zulqarnain. "The Dark Side of Social Media: Examining the Impact of Fake News on Pakistani Society." *GMJ*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2021.





and confidence in the democratic system. Moreover, the dissemination of false information can fuel societal discord, exacerbate existing tensions, and undermine social cohesion, posing a direct threat to the stability of democratic societies.<sup>13</sup>

A multifaceted strategy involving policymakers, technology companies, civil society organizations, and individual users is required to address these issues. Promoting digital literacy is the most important thing to do in order to give users the critical thinking skills they need to tell fact from fiction and responsibly use the internet. Individuals can become more discerning consumers of information and less susceptible to manipulation by disinformation campaigns by investing in educational initiatives that teach media literacy and fact-checking skills. Through robust content moderation policies, algorithmic transparency, and measures to stop the spread of false information, technology companies are obligated to reduce the spread of disinformation on their platforms. This includes deploying artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to detect and remove fake accounts, misleading content, and coordinated disinformation campaigns, while also providing users with tools to report suspicious content and flag misinformation. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in combating disinformation by raising awareness about the dangers of misinformation, promoting digital hygiene practices, and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency among online communities. By collaborating with journalists, fact-checkers, and academic researchers, civil society can help debunk false narratives, counter disinformation campaigns, and empower citizens to make informed decisions. While social media has revolutionized political discourse and citizen engagement, it also presents formidable challenges to the integrity of democracy. By addressing the proliferation of disinformation and the creation of echo chambers through concerted efforts from policymakers, technology companies, and civil society, we

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<sup>13</sup> Khan, A., I. Rafique, and A. Nasim. "Social Media and Political Polarization in Pakistan." *Global Digital & Print Media Review*, vol. VI, 2023..



can safeguard the integrity of democratic processes and foster a digital environment that promotes informed, inclusive, and resilient democratic discourse.

### **Navigating Technology's Dualism:**

The dual nature of technology presents Pakistan's democratic framework with a complex and nuanced dilemma. On one hand, digital platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for citizen empowerment, engagement, and participation in the political process. Through social media, online forums, and digital communication channels, citizens can hold their leaders accountable, voice their concerns, and advocate for change with unprecedented immediacy and reach. This democratization of political discourse has the potential to transform traditional power dynamics, giving marginalized communities a platform to amplify their voices and influence decision-making processes. Technology facilitates transparency and accountability within governance structures, enabling citizens to access information, monitor government actions, and demand accountability from elected officials. With the proliferation of open data initiatives, online transparency portals, and digital governance tools, citizens have greater visibility into government operations and can actively participate in shaping public policies and programs.<sup>14</sup> Alongside these empowering aspects, technology also poses significant challenges to Pakistan's democratic fabric. The rapid spread of misinformation, hate speech, and extremist content on digital platforms has the potential to exacerbate existing divisions within society, fuel polarization, and undermine social cohesion. Echo chambers and filter bubbles, fueled by algorithmic bias and personalized content algorithms, further isolate individuals within ideological silos, hindering constructive dialogue and fostering distrust between different segments of the population. The concentration of power and influence within technology companies and digital platforms raises concerns about the erosion of democratic norms

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<sup>14</sup> Nazir, F. "Destination Branding through Social Media: Juxtaposition of Foreign Influencer's Narratives and State's Presentation on the Event of Pakistan Tourism Summit 2019." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, ahead-of-print, 2023..



and values. As tech giants wield unprecedented control over the flow of information and shape public discourse, questions arise about accountability, transparency, and the protection of democratic principles in the digital age. Issues such as data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and online censorship underscore the need for robust regulatory frameworks and ethical standards to safeguard democratic values in the digital realm.<sup>15</sup>

Navigating the dualism of technology requires striking a delicate balance between harnessing its potential for positive change and mitigating its negative consequences. This entails adopting a multi-faceted approach that combines regulatory interventions, technological innovations, and civic education initiatives. Policymakers must enact laws and regulations that promote transparency, accountability, and digital rights, while also fostering innovation and economic growth in the technology sector. Enhancing digital literacy and media literacy among citizens is essential to empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, critically evaluate information, and discern fact from fiction. By investing in education and awareness campaigns that promote digital literacy skills, Pakistan can build a more informed and resilient citizenry capable of engaging in constructive dialogue and combatting the spread of misinformation. Navigating the dualism of technology requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders – government, civil society, technology companies, and individual citizens – to ensure that technology serves as a force for positive democratic change rather than a tool for division and manipulation. By embracing technology's potential while remaining vigilant against its pitfalls, Pakistan can build a more

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<sup>15</sup> Shahid, M. S., C. C. Williams, and A. Martinez. "Beyond the Formal/Informal Enterprise Dualism: Explaining the Level of (In) formality of Entrepreneurs." *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2020, pp. 191-205..



inclusive, transparent, and resilient democratic framework that upholds the principles of justice, equality, and participation for all citizens.<sup>16</sup>

### **Bridging the Digital Divide:**

In Pakistan, fostering an inclusive and participatory political culture necessitates bridging the digital divide. The gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not is known as the "digital divide." This gap is frequently caused by differences in socioeconomic status, geographical location, or other factors. Equitable access to technology is a fundamental requirement for ensuring that all citizens have equal opportunities to participate meaningfully in the political process and exercise their democratic rights in a democracy. This is not just a matter of convenience. A crucial first step in closing the digital divide is expanding internet infrastructure. Access to reliable internet connectivity frequently hinders the ability of underserved communities and rural areas in Pakistan to access information, participate in online discussions, and interact with government services. Therefore, in order to guarantee that all citizens have equal access to the digital resources and tools required for political participation, it is essential to invest in the expansion of broadband infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas. Promoting digital literacy is equally important in bridging the digital divide. Many individuals, particularly those from marginalized communities or older generations, may lack the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the digital landscape effectively. Digital literacy initiatives, such as training programs, workshops, and community outreach efforts, can empower individuals with the skills to use digital technologies responsibly, critically evaluate online information, and engage in informed political discourse. By investing in digital literacy education, Pakistan can empower citizens to become

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<sup>16</sup> .Phillips, G. V. Exploring the Connections Between Inequality, Community Dysfunction and Sustainability: Fishery Case Studies from Newfoundland, Tasmania and Pakistan. Doctoral dissertation, University of Tasmania, 2007.



active participants in the digital age, regardless of their socioeconomic background or level of education.<sup>17</sup> Addressing socioeconomic disparities in access to technology is another critical aspect of bridging the digital divide. In Pakistan, income inequality, lack of infrastructure, and limited access to education can create barriers to digital inclusion for marginalized communities. To bridge this gap, targeted interventions are needed to ensure that disadvantaged groups have access to affordable devices, internet connectivity, and digital skills training. This may include subsidized internet plans, community-based access centers, and partnerships with local organizations to provide technology resources to underserved communities. Ensuring that digital platforms and online services are accessible and inclusive is essential for bridging the digital divide. This includes designing user-friendly interfaces, providing content in multiple languages, and accommodating individuals with disabilities. By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity in the design of digital technologies, Pakistan can ensure that all citizens, regardless of their background or abilities, can fully participate in the digital ecosystem and engage meaningfully in the political process. Bridging the digital divide is essential for fostering an inclusive and participatory political culture in Pakistan. By expanding internet infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, addressing socioeconomic disparities in access to technology, and prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity in digital design, Pakistan can ensure that all citizens have equal opportunities to engage in political discourse, exercise their democratic rights, and contribute to a thriving democracy.<sup>18</sup>

### **Impacts of Technology on the Political Culture of Pakistan**

Technology has undeniably revolutionized Pakistan's political landscape, bringing both positive transformations and significant challenges. On

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<sup>17</sup> Shair, W., A. Waheed, M. M. Kamran, and N. Kubra. "Digital Divide in Pakistan: Barriers to ICT Usage Among the Individuals of Pakistan." *Journal of Economic Impact*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2022, pp. 196-204.

<sup>18</sup> Jamil, S. "From Digital Divide to Digital Inclusion: Challenges for Wide-Ranging Digitalization in Pakistan." *Telecommunications Policy*, vol. 45, no. 8, 2021, 102206..



one hand, it has democratized access to information, empowered marginalized voices, and fostered greater transparency and accountability in governance. Platforms like social media have facilitated enhanced political participation, enabling citizens to engage with leaders, express opinions, and mobilize for collective action more easily than ever before. Moreover, efficient communication channels have strengthened public engagement and interaction with political institutions. However, alongside these advancements come formidable obstacles. The rampant spread of misinformation and polarization on social media platforms threatens to distort public discourse and exacerbate societal divisions. Privacy breaches, cybersecurity threats, and the persistent digital divide further compound the challenges. Thus, while technology has undoubtedly enriched Pakistan's political discourse, addressing these multifaceted challenges necessitates collaborative efforts from policymakers, civil society, and technology stakeholders to ensure responsible technological usage, safeguard democratic processes, and bridge digital inequalities for a more inclusive and equitable society.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Impact of Technology and Islamic Values**

The integration of technology into Pakistan's political discourse has catalyzed significant changes, offering unprecedented opportunities for engagement, transparency, and governance, while also presenting challenges that call for a nuanced approach rooted in Islamic values. Digital platforms, especially social media, have revolutionized the way political narratives are shaped and disseminated, enabling greater public participation and amplifying voices that were previously marginalized. This aligns with the Islamic principles of justice ('*adl*') and equity ('*qist*'), which advocate for fairness and inclusivity in societal

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<sup>19</sup> Safdar, G. "Effects of Digital Media on Pakistani Culture: A Study of University Students of Punjab, Pakistan." *Online Media and Society*, vol. 3, 2022, pp. 256-272.





participation (Qur'an 4:135).<sup>20</sup> However, these platforms also facilitate the spread of misinformation and the formation of echo chambers, which can polarize public opinion and undermine societal harmony. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of truthfulness (`sidq`) and integrity (`amanah`), underscoring the need for responsible communication and the protection of the community's welfare (Qur'an 2:42;<sup>21</sup> Hadith, Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 2, Hadith 9).<sup>22</sup>

The Qur'an explicitly warns against the concealment or distortion of truth, highlighting the moral duty to convey accurate information (Qur'an 3:71).<sup>23</sup> This principle is crucial in combating the disinformation that can spread unchecked in digital spaces. Moreover, the challenge of the digital divide, which restricts equitable access to technology, resonates with the Islamic mandate for social justice and the equitable distribution of resources (Qur'an 59:7).<sup>24</sup> Islamic jurisprudence (`fiqh`) and ethical guidelines (`akhlaq`) provide a framework for addressing these issues, advocating for policies that promote digital literacy and access, ensuring that all segments of society can participate in the political process. As Pakistan navigates the complexities of the digital age, integrating Islamic values into the technological and political landscape can help foster a more just, informed, and ethically grounded public discourse, thus reinforcing the resilience of democratic institutions in the country.

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<sup>20</sup> Qur'an, 4:135 - "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives."

<sup>21</sup> Qur'an, 2:42 - "And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]."

<sup>22</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 2, Hadith 9 - Emphasizes the importance of truthful speech and integrity.

<sup>23</sup> Qur'an, 3:71 - "O People of the Scripture, why do you mix [falsehood] with the truth and conceal the truth while you know [it]?"

<sup>24</sup> Qur'an, 59:7 - Highlights the principle of equitable distribution of resources, which can be applied to the issue of digital access and literacy.



### Positive Impact:

- **Increased Access to Information:** Technology has democratized access to information, allowing citizens to stay informed about political developments and engage in informed discussions about governance and policy issues. This aligns with the Islamic principle of seeking knowledge ('ilm) and the duty to stay informed about societal matters, as emphasized in the Qur'an (Qur'an 96:1-5).
- **Enhanced Political Participation:** Social media platforms have enabled greater political participation by providing a space for citizens to express their opinions, engage with political leaders, and mobilize for collective action. This reflects the Islamic values of consultation ('shura') and community involvement in decision-making (Qur'an 42:38).
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Technology has facilitated greater transparency in government actions and policies. Citizens can use digital platforms to hold elected officials accountable for their promises, actions, and decisions. This is in line with the Islamic ethical principles of honesty ('sidq') and accountability ('amanah') (Qur'an 4:58).
- **Empowerment of Marginalized Voices:** Digital tools have empowered marginalized communities, including women, youth, and minority groups, to amplify their voices, advocate for their rights, and participate in political processes. This empowerment is consistent with the Islamic emphasis on justice ('adl') and equity ('qist') for all members of society (Qur'an 4:1).
- **Efficient Communication and Engagement:** Political parties and government agencies can use technology to communicate with constituents more efficiently,



disseminate information, and gather feedback, thereby fostering greater public engagement in governance. This reflects the Islamic value of effective communication and consultation (Qur'an 3:159).

### Negative Impact:

- **Spread of Misinformation:** The rapid spread of misinformation and fake news on social media platforms has the potential to manipulate public opinion, distort facts, and undermine the credibility of political discourse. This contravenes the Islamic value of truthfulness (`sidq`) and the prohibition against falsehood (Qur'an 2:42).
- **Polarization and Divisiveness:** Social media echo chambers and filter bubbles can exacerbate political polarization, as individuals are exposed primarily to content that aligns with their existing beliefs, leading to heightened social divisions and hostility. This challenges the Islamic principles of unity (`tawhid`) and the avoidance of division (`iftiraq`) (Qur'an 3:103).
- **Privacy Concerns:** The collection and misuse of personal data by tech companies and government agencies raise concerns about privacy infringement and surveillance, potentially chilling free speech and political dissent. Protecting privacy is a significant concern in Islamic teachings, which emphasize the sanctity of individual privacy and the prohibition of spying (Qur'an 49:12).
- **Cybersecurity Threats:** The increasing reliance on digital platforms for political communication and election processes makes them vulnerable to cyberattacks, hacking, and manipulation by malicious actors seeking to disrupt democratic processes. Islamic ethics underscore the importance of safeguarding the community and ensuring security (`aman`) (Qur'an 8:60).



- Digital Divide: Socioeconomic disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity exacerbate the digital divide, limiting the political participation of marginalized communities and perpetuating inequalities in political representation and access to information. Islamic teachings advocate for social justice and the equitable distribution of resources, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and equality (Qur'an 59:7).

### Conclusion:

The digital revolution has fundamentally altered how citizens engage with governance, offering unprecedented avenues for participation and transparency. Social media platforms have democratized political discourse, enabling citizens from diverse backgrounds to voice their opinions, mobilize for causes, and hold their leaders accountable. Examples such as the 2018 general elections and grassroots movements like the Aurat March underscore the transformative power of technology in amplifying citizen voices and driving social and political change. Amidst these opportunities, significant challenges persist. The proliferation of disinformation and echo chambers threatens the integrity of democratic processes, eroding public trust and exacerbating societal divisions. The unchecked spread of misinformation undermines informed decision-making and fuels polarization, while echo chambers limit exposure to diverse perspectives, hindering constructive dialogue. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, technology companies, civil society organizations, and individual citizens to promote digital literacy, enhance content moderation, and bridge the digital divide. Integrating Islamic values into this discourse provides a moral and ethical framework to navigate the dualism of technology. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of truthfulness ('sidq'), justice ('adl'), and the equitable distribution of resources. These values underscore the need for transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in political engagement. Pakistan must strike a delicate balance between harnessing technology's potential for



positive change and mitigating its negative consequences. This necessitates a holistic approach that prioritizes these Islamic principles and ensures equitable access to technology. By fostering an inclusive and resilient digital ecosystem, Pakistan can build a stronger democracy that empowers citizens, fosters dialogue, and drives positive social change. Bridging the digital divide is paramount for ensuring that all citizens have equal opportunities to participate meaningfully in the political process. Expanding internet infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, and addressing socioeconomic disparities in access to technology are essential steps in this endeavor. By investing in broadband infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, and ensuring that digital platforms are accessible to all, Pakistan can ensure that no citizen is left behind in the digital age. The transformative influence of technology on Pakistan's political landscape is undeniable. While it presents unprecedented opportunities for citizen engagement and transparency, it also poses significant challenges that must be addressed. By embracing technology's potential while mitigating its negative consequences, and by integrating Islamic values into the digital and political discourse, Pakistan can build a stronger and more resilient democracy. This democracy would uphold the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and participation for all citizens, guided by the ethical teachings of Islam. Through collaborative efforts from stakeholders across sectors, Pakistan can navigate the complexities of the digital age and pave the way for a brighter democratic future that respects both modern technological advancements and traditional Islamic values.

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