Changes in the Mindset of People in Pakistan about their Democratic System since the Regime Change

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to share the details related to the political situation after the regime change in Pakistan at the start of this year. After that, we have determined how this change impacted the citizens of Pakistan and what changes in the dynamics of their political thinking occurred. The researchers working on this research area are using 'Qualitative Research.' The Data for the research was taken from news sites, blogs, and social media; then, it was presented descriptively. The study in this paper makes us aware of the silent revolution in the way of thinking of the people of Pakistan and how they communicate their opinions with the government. This paper will only be limited to the extent to which each aspect of the change is being clearly described; it will also look at the possible solutions for resolving issues suggested by the people and how they should be implemented, and finally, what positive impact this regime change has had on people's thinking.

1. Introduction

Since Pakistan's Independence in 1947, there have been many ups and downs. People have seen things that happened domestically, like martial law from the military [20]. Then they took over the government on four different occasions, which started with General Ayub, then General Yahya, and after its General Zia, and finally, the last time by General Musharraf. These Military rules had an impact on the political environment and also on the social environment of the country. Also another crucial event that happened domestically was the partition of East Pakistan when the country was divided into two parts, and East Pakistan became Bangladesh [21]. And even different series of events happened domestically, like the assassination of the mainstream leaders, Liaquat Ali Khan, General Zia, and Benazir Bhutto. Or the things that happened internationally, like a military conflict with the neighbouring country India and, as a result, four different wars were fought with India in 1948, 1965, 1971, and 1999. And also, significant events happened in another neighbouring country, Afghanistan, like the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 [22], which started the Afghan jihad. After it ended, civil war started in the country, which continued into the '90s. And then, after 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan [23], and the war on terror started, which continued till 2021. So, in short, a lot has been going on inside and outside of Pakistan, which in some way has left its mark on Pakistan society as a whole. For this reason, it is difficult to understand what is going on in Pakistan and, how things are being done, and why their administrative system is operated in a certain way. Finding the answer to those questions is very difficult without having a detailed understanding of Pakistan's history because of the different events that happened previously. They all mixed and matched together to mold the country's system to work in a certain way. It, therefore, seems unjustified when some researchers, just based on the current situation, create an opinion about the country without digging down to the truth behind it. Because there were so many things happening around the leaders at the time, they created a policy that best suited the current situation, which prioritized survival, as mentioned in the above examples, related to international policy in the eastern front with India or the western front with Afghanistan. So many threats to the country have made people insecure, and that is why they made the security of the country the highest priority. All policies started to evolve around security, either actions taken domestically or internationally, in terms of deals or trade, etc., and this is the reason that Pakistan became a security state. But the main event to change the security dynamics of the country was when Pakistan became a Nuclear-Armed State [24]. This made people relax, finally, because it gave them a sense of security. But after that, the change in the direction of the country's policy, which should have come, didn't happen, and, due to this, so many problems started to come, which people didn't realize at the time, and started to grow and grow. People are starting to have clarity on it, slowly, but it is still not very crystal clear to them. Then, an event happened on 9th April 2022: a regime change in the country, and a popular leader, Imran Khan, was removed from power. this event was a watershed in the minds of the people and gave them a clear picture of the problems with the current democratic system in the country and why it is not delivering according to the people's expectations. This made it clear to the people that Pakistan has to stop using a survival mentality and needs to focus on more than just security, especially after becoming a nuclear state. But they also understood that we hadn't moved on from this thinking because the Establishment doesn't want to give up their power, which is causing the current turmoil. It is for this reason, then, that

people started to mobilize all over the country, and they constantly, through different ways like social media trends or campaigns, protests, public gatherings, and elections, etc., are giving very obvious signs that they want to change the direction of the country, and that now, people's welfare should be the highest priority. Which increased the country's political instability, and since then, the economy has been on hold due to a lack of trust in the new coalition government. So, investors are stopping their investments, and also, people are taking their money out. Even foreign investors who are not affiliated with any party are also stopping their investment because the government is very unstable; they are a 13 parties coalition right now; if any party backs off, the government will lose the majority, and the government will collapse. The only way toward stability is a fresh election, but the government doesn't want to go for an election because they know they will lose the election from Imran Khan. This is a summary of what is going on in Pakistan currently. So, in the further part of the article, we will highlight the key changes in the mindset of the people in Pakistan about the democratic system in the country and give details of it and what people see for the country as the way forward.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Democracy

There are various varieties of democracies; parliamentary democracy is a form of governance in which voters choose representatives for a legislative assembly that passes laws and makes policy (Samuels, D., & Vargas, T. R. (2023)). The people are expressly represented in this parliament. A prime minister is chosen by the other members of the parliamentary legislature in a parliamentary democracy after being first elected as a member of the legislature. The Prime Minister is still a member of the legislature, however. The Prime Minister participates in the enactment of laws because the legislative branch is responsible for doing so. To draft and pass this legislation, the prime minister works closely with other members of the legislature (Lozano, M., Atkinson, M., & Mou, H. (2023)). The head of state in a presidential democracy is known as the President, and they are chosen by the people to head a branch of government that is distinct from the legislative branch. We still have a legislative in our presidential democracy, but there is also a president (Bandau, F. (2023)). Since he is not a member of the legislature, his relationship with them is closer than it would be if he were the prime minister. The president must first approve or veto any laws that the legislature seeks to pass before they become law. The legislative branch is open to the President's suggestions, but ultimately, it is up to him to approve any laws that are written (Uncetabarrenechea, J., & Filibi, I. (2023)).

2.2. Regime

A regime is a body established by governments that has agreed-upon norms and distinct substantive and geographic boundaries. A geographical adjective, such as international, national, or urban, is frequently used to introduce the concept of a regime (Dimitrova, A., Triki, D., & Valentino, A. (2022)). This adjective can refer to any number of substantive remits, including development, environment, labor, trade, and so forth. A more thorough definition outlines the processes by which

institutions are created. The focus is on the ideas, conventions, guidelines, and processes for making decisions around which individual actors' (often governments') expectations coalesce and become institutionalized (San, S. (2022)).

2.3. Establishment

The term "Establishment" refers to a powerful elite or group that rules over a society or institution. A restricted social group that chooses its own members may be a part of it, as well as institutionalized elite organizations. Any relatively limited class or group of people with the ability to wield control might be referred to as The Establishment (Pinto, J. H. M. (2019)). In contrast, anyone who does not identify with The Establishment may be referred to as an outsider in sociological jargon (as opposed to an "insider"). The legitimacy of establishments is questioned by anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment ideology, which perceives their impact on society as being undemocratic.

2.4. Deep State

A system of government known as a profound state is formed of networks of power that may be hidden and illegal and operate independently of a state's political leadership in order to further its own agenda and objectives. The phrase has overwhelmingly negative implications when used in everyday speech. The term's spectrum of potential applications is comparable to that of the shadow government. An earlier and related phrase is "state within a state." In the past, it referred to a clearly defined organization that sought to operate independently. Now, the deep state is more often used to describe a covert organization that aims to influence the public state (Nehring, C. (2022)). Rogue elements within state institutions, such as the military or public authority, like the police, secret police, administrative agencies, and government bureaucracy. And intelligence services are potential sources for deep-state organizations.

2.5. Welfare State

According to the principles of equal opportunity, equitable wealth distribution, and public responsibility for citizens who are unable to access the bare necessities for a good life, a welfare state is a system of government in which the state (or a well-established network of social institutions) protects and promotes the economic and social well-being of its citizens (Parth, A.-M., & Vlandas, T. (2022)).

2.6. Security State

A security state uses security as a focal point to bring together various state institutions. As civilian institutions wrestle with their perceived objectives through the lens of state security, such a technique may cause numerous difficulties. Such a state also experiences the narrow margin of security syndrome, which results from its demographic mediocrity, insufficient geographic depth, and inferior conventional force (Grewal, I., Kaur, D., & Sabherwal, S. (2022).). Even though it means devoting resources from other areas, it forces its security apparatus to reinforce itself. Any parity

condition has a built-in destabilizer that upsets the equilibrium and allows security to take complete control. The security apparatus keeps an eye on the state's other organs' development mechanisms and prevents them from deteriorating too far.
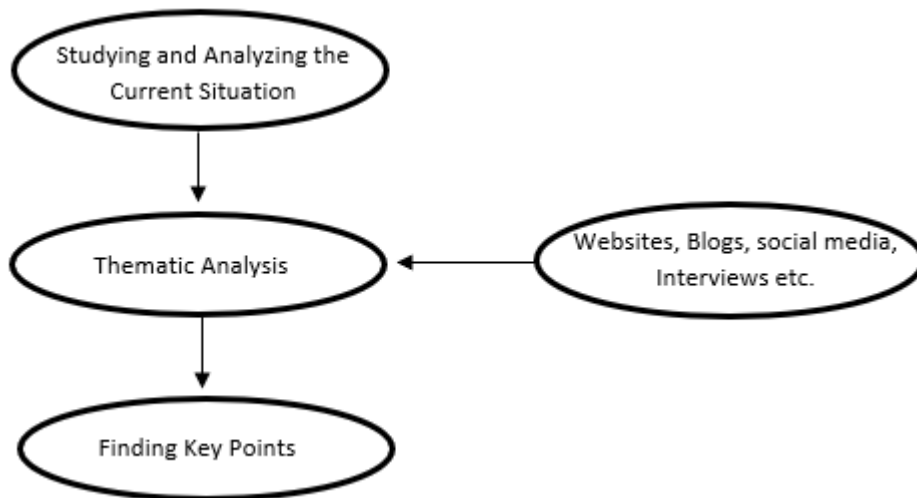
3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

When examining the progression of public sentiment towards the democratic system in Pakistan subsequent to a change in regime, one can acquire valuable insights by analyzing data obtained from reputable article databases, such as Scopus and Google Scholar. Academics and scholars frequently employ these platforms as valuable resources for accessing a wide range of scholarly articles, studies, and analyses. These resources collectively contribute to the development of a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter at hand. Through the strategic utilization of specific keywords and meticulous application of filters, such as "changes in mindset," "democratic system," and "regime change," adept researchers are able to navigate an extensive array of information effectively. This enables them to discern and analyze noteworthy transformations in public attitudes, political discourse, and societal perspectives. The utilization of these databases is crucial for researchers as they play a vital role in facilitating the exploration of subtle patterns, analyzing the complexities of evolving perspectives, and ultimately illuminating the intricate dynamics that form the foundation of Pakistan's democratic landscape following a change in regime.
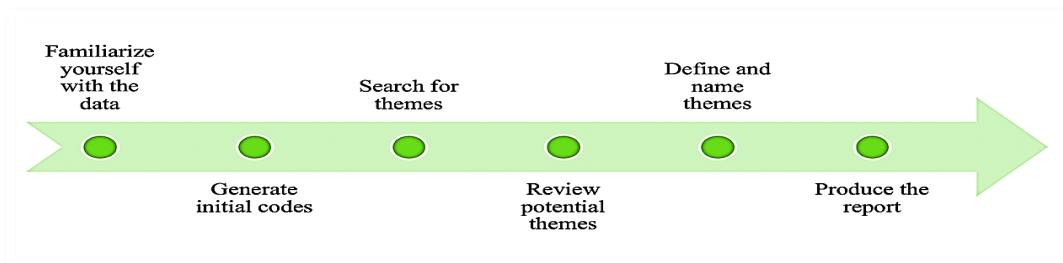
3.2. Data Analysis

This study employed a Thematic analysis method on the current situation of Pakistan to analyze the data and information for successfully finding and then clearly describing the impact of regime change on the people. Using the method above, textual information can be understood and interpreted. We analyzed the data and materials after going through the initial rounds of the procedure. To study, we used a few methods for searching and comprehending the information's pattern.

Figure 1: Framework evaluation for Creating Strategy. Source: Authors' compilation

As mentioned, the obtained data were processed through 'thematic analysis' [1]. This analysis form was utilized to classify the procedures as below: (1) read and get familiar with the data, (2) create the category code for the easy understanding of data, (3) gather category code and turn it into a theme (4) making the themes coherent (5) comprehensive analysis of the themes (6) conclusive description of the results.
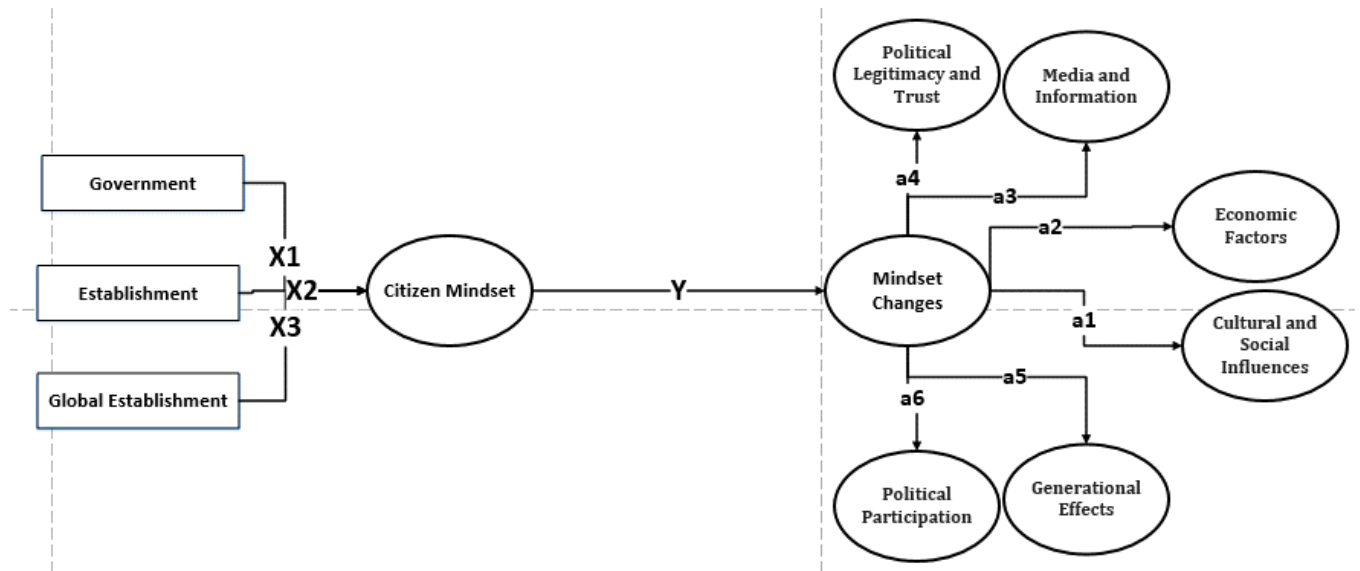
Figure 2: Describes the step-by-step flow of Thematic Analysis. Source: Authors' compilation

This analysis helped the researchers find and present closer-to-reality things. Also, for the Literature review, we have used the in-direct citation. We have used the grounded theory approach of the research method.

3.3.   Theoretical Framework

Figure 3: Describes Theoretical Framework. Source: Authors' compilation

4. Discussion of Findings

After the regime change when Imran Khan was ousted from power, many revolutionary changes were observed in the political mindset of the people of Pakistan in terms of how they perceived the political activities in the country. They became more aware and critical of the democratic practices in the country. The following are a few of the many things that happened which have transformed the dynamics of country politics.

4.1.   From Individualism to Collectivism

Previously, the election process was all about the individual benefits of each citizen, so they always thought about what benefits they would get personally, as a citizen, by voting for a particular candidate in the election or they would vote for the specific candidate because the candidate is their friend or relative or from their clan, tribe, ethnicity, etc., which is also linked to the focus on personal benefits. After all, if the candidate close to them won, they could get excellent benefits out of it. So, the thinking of the voters was narrow and isolated, and they didn't have a vision of which candidate was better in terms of competence or what value addition the candidate from their area would bring to the betterment of the country. But after the regime change, the first time, the citizens changed their approach to voting. They have started to move towards collectivism instead of individualism, which means they are now aiming to select the candidate who is overall better for the country as a whole instead of being good for them personally or only suitable for the area where they live. This way of thinking really brought about change in the country. People now realize that betterment only has a top-down effect; therefore, on power, better people should come to rule no matter which tribe, ethnicity, or clan they belong to; the only criteria for selecting the candidate is how competent they are in running the country and if their efforts are successful then the effect will eventually come

down from state level to cities and areas, and finally its benefits will reach to each individual citizen. We have seen so many examples of it in different by-elections conducted after regime changes, like one held on 16th October 2022, where Imran Khan contested seven different constituencies and won all of the seats, despite openly saying that after winning, "I would not go the assembly, I am contesting to show what people of Pakistan want right now and whom they want to rule the country." And citizens have shown through many election results that they want to change as a whole for everyone in the country, not some short-term benefits just for their personal fulfillment. That is why, for the first time, it is very clear to the people all over the country that we need progress for all, not just for ourselves. It is important for them to make sure they vote for the candidates who belong to the party that makes sure of the completion of that vision; that is the reason they collectively vote and campaign to vote based on this direction of vision.

4.2.   From State-Centric to People-Centric

In the past, people have gone through so many situations which were difficult to handle. However, still, people endured the pain with the motivation that they had to sacrifice and go through this painful time because they had to do it for the betterment of the country and save the State. If they don't sacrifice right now, then the state will get weak, and the existence of the state will be in danger. But, with time, people started to realize after the regime change that this way of thinking was only being used as a tool to control people, so people should not ask questions and ask for clarification from them on the true intention behind why this suffering was advocated. Every time the power dynamics were changed in the country, and any turmoil in the country was caused, then it was presented as a Step taken in the interest of the state. But many times, it was done based on the personal interests of a few individuals, and to stop people from looking more deeply into issues, they would make it known that going against any decisions made would be going against the State. So, after the Regime Change, people got a clear understanding that what was being done in the country was not in their interests, and previously, many steps were taken that were influenced by similar interests of a few people rather than state interest. People also had doubts previously, but they were not very clear and never got to the conclusion. These regime changes clearly showed them the facts. Now, people have started to question and have clarity about an approach to improve the country. This was a move from 'state-centric' to 'citizen-centric' thinking, in which decisions are made in the interest of the citizen. However, in some cases, still, citizens still have to put their interests behind them and work for the State-Interest. In it, though, there is a benefit for citizens that they will get in the long run. With this regime change, when people are asked the question of why it happened, they haven't received a logical answer; instead, they get the same line of response: that it is done in the interest of the state; therefore, people now have a clear vision that every step taken at the national level should be critically analysed, and the core of any decision should be 'people-centric,' which means the interest of the citizens should be given the highest value. Now, a 'state-centric' approach as an answer to everything will not be accepted mindlessly, as has been the case in the past.

4.3.   Criticizing the Role of Establishment in Politics

As mentioned above, people started to question the State policy and measures taken by them after the regime change. One of the essential things that were unusual and had never happened before in history is that they started to question and criticize the role of the establishment in politics and in a democratic system. So, previously the establishment had been trusted by the people, and they believed that what steps are taken at the national level are the steps that are in the interest of the citizens and also the state, so people usually unthinkingly followed the decisions and never analysed and critically observed the intention behind any decision. Therefore, in the past, similar regime changes have happened, and people, due to trust in the establishment and also the government, which was removed, also had corruption charges with very low moral standing; that is the reason that people usually took the side of the establishment and supported their actions and decisions. But this time, when regime change happened, people started to ask questions about the solid reason behind it because there were no corruption charges against Imran Khan, and he had the popularity amongst the people. When people didn't get any solid answer, then people started to criticize the establishment for making such a decision and removing the popular leader from power. It was the first time that people had come outside to protest and criticize the Establishment in favour of any political leader. This triggered a change in the mindset of the people in Pakistan, which really changed the direction of the country. Here, to give clarity on why the establishment has a significant influence on the democratic system of Pakistan, you have to understand the history of Pakistan. So I will look at a few points in more depth so readers can get a better understanding of it;

4.3.1.   A constant threat on the borders

One reason for this is that, since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has had a constant threat from neighbouring countries from the Eastern and also Western Front and with India. Pakistan had a military conflict with India, which really made people insecure because India had a higher number of military personnel than Pakistan. So, People started to think that with a strong army, their survival as a country would be easier. As a result, the army, as an institution, got more support in terms of finances and morals from people, and all policies were made with Security as a primary focus. That is the reason the military establishment has been given more attention to national policies.

4.3.2.   Absence of Strong Political Leadership

Another reason is the absence of Strong political leadership after the independence in Pakistan because most of the prominent leaders who played a significant role in the struggle for independence either died before the independence, like Allama Iqbal, Maulana M.A Jauhar, etc., or died after a few years of Independence like Founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam and first Prime minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali khan, etc., both died within four years after independence. This created a vacuum to fill, and as we discussed above, the importance of the military is already being increased due to the security situation. Therefore, in that way, the Military also started to fill that gap, and they slowly got control over political matters as well as security matters.

4.3.3. Strategic Interest of Global Regime

A further reason for this is the strategic interest of global superpowers in Pakistan due to Pakistan's strategic geographical location. The 1950s was the era of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union; both wanted to increase their influence globally, and Pakistan was surrounded on three sides by the socialist states of India, China, and Afghanistan. Pakistan is very much near to Soviet Union borders, so they wanted to have Pakistan on their side in order to have an ally. Also, from it, they could monitor the Socialist republics and especially the Soviet Union. So, with the absence of strong political leadership, as mentioned above, they turn towards the military for discussions, and also, they find ease because the military doesn't need people's consent; they are not bound to parliament to give answers to the opposition. That is why the military also gains importance from global regimes and the military. In return, they get all the necessary weapons and hardware for security.

4.3.4. Military Governments

Finally, all these things paved the way for the military to come into power and control the government, which happened after ten years of independence in 1958. The first martial law is being implemented in the country. After that, three other times, different army chiefs of the military came to power. These military governments left a lasting effect on the political system of Pakistan, and now it is very difficult to decrease this influence.

4.4. Participation in the Election Process

With the regime change, people also realized how important it is for people to use the power of the vote in the elections and defeat the system that wants to control them and take the right to choose the leaders from them. That is why voter participation in the last eight months has increased in all by-elections, so people use voting to show their dislike and distrust of the current government. That is a reason why, in the last eight months, Imran Khan won 75% of the by-elections, which is a clear indication of the people's voice and also the realization of people's power to vote. Despite so many attempts to influence the election process like the study of PATTAN, which is a non-profit organization that has been keeping an eye on and studying Pakistani elections since 1997. As a result, their investigation indicates that there are already 163 methods for rigging elections in the current voting system. With so many turnarounds of people in voting, even with the rigging, they could not win elections. People also communicated to the establishment through votes what they wanted and how they wanted the country to be run.

4.5. Using Social Media for Awareness and Campaigns

Social media platforms were one of the impactful mediums of this new era of technology. This really revolutionized and changed the way people connect and get information about each other, it also indulges a large number of users who were just getting connected with the internet on and off, and even the new users who don't ever use the internet, are also becoming a part of it and using it actively thanks to the social media attraction. This is one of the biggest successes of social media that it has given access to everyone and made it very easy for them to join it and start to connect and interact

with others. Therefore, as time passed, people got more involved in it and started using it for public awareness and campaigning for a positive impact. All people now have a voice and a communication mode to express their thoughts on any issue related to the government. So, through this way, people are able to create trends, which is a form of digital social movement, and with many people involved in it, they are able to make an impact on the government. Like when former Prime Minister Imran Khan's government was removed, we saw a robust social movement in cyberspace that turned around the political dynamics for him in the country. Not only did he become more popular through a public support campaign in cyberspace, but also, after his ban on electronic media then, people rushed to the social media channel to listen to what he was saying. In that process, some new records of the social media world were created. First, the Anti-Government Trend in support of Imran Khan, which is 'Imported Hakumat Namanzoor,' has become the most significant Twitter trend in world history. The Twitter binder analysed that approximately 106,433,419 tweets used this hashtag and still continue.

Figure 4: Defines the Twitter Binder Analysis of Particular Trend. Source: Twitter

Secondly, when Imran Khan went online on Twitter, it also created a world record that more than 150K people joined that space to listen to him, which is a significant achievement because previously, no one achieved even 50K people in space. So, despite there being a ban on him from electronic media, people transferred to social media and listened to him.

Figure 5: Defines the Stats of the Twitter Space Users Who Joined. Source: Twitter

So overall, the structural conduciveness approach of structural strain theory in a social movement is running in the country's cyberspace in his support, and still, it is intact. As an implication, a large number of people have started to move from electronic media to social media, which decreased the electronic media viewers and increased the social media viewers and also the credibility of electronic media is challenged due to the impression that the government is controlling them and whereas the credibility of social media increased because the government can't control it.

4.6. From Security State to Welfare State

We discussed above, the reasons why Pakistan placed more importance on the Military , due to the outside threats, since independence and with the military taking over the government. Pakistan turned into a security state, which was not by choice but due to the circumstances of that time. But with time Pakistan very much controlled security and made defence stronger and especially after 1998 when Pakistan Became the nuclear-armed state. This meant the chances of a conventional war were minimized. Then Pakistan should have slowly moved from a security state mindset where you are not a country with the military but instead military with the country, but we all know giving up power. Authority is not very easy for any individual or institution, which is why even though the military is not in power, its influence is still present in democracy. Therefore, this regime change became a watershed in the mind of the people. It encouraged them to push for Pakistan as a country to have the mindset of a social welfare state. Now, we no longer need to be a security state, and now the improvement of people's quality of life should now be the priority, and the biggest focus should be on the welfare of people, in terms of education and health.

4.7. Balancing the Power and Responsibility

Lastly, this regime change really made clear how the proper democratic system, as a result of elections, still could not function properly because of the disbalance between power and responsibility, which means there is still a hybrid system in place where the government is like a

dummy. It is controlled from behind by the establishment. So, all failures and incompetence are being blamed on the government while the people in the back (the 'Deep State') are enjoying power, and no one is talking and knowing about them. But with this regime change, there is a wide range of consensus and awareness that this has to be stopped, that responsibility for every action, and also the power and authority to run government and act should lie in one place: with the government. So, once and for all, the hybrid control of the government needs to stop.

4.8. Need for New Social Contract

Finally, People in Pakistan have finally reached the conclusion that there has to be a new social contract between citizens and the government about how, in the future, things will go on in the country. What will be the responsibility of each stakeholder, and what will the boundaries be, on which they will operate. So, a proper power-sharing framework needs to be decided, which gives the rights to the people and also clears the constitutional responsibility of any institution, whether it is a government or an Establishment, and a strong Democratic system needs to be motivated and should become the centre of this agreement.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on this research, we have summarized the overall impact and changes in the society of Pakistan after the regime change in the country. So, through protests, public gatherings, and social media posts and trends, people have understood the situation by critically analysing it, and they have channelized their anger through the political activities, especially by the Voting in Elections. People have understood the power of voting, and they have successfully practiced it and conveyed their voices to the people in power about what they want and how they want their country to be run. Therefore, right now, the awareness is entirely spread all over the country, and there is a consensus among people that they need a solid political and democratic system in the country; without it, their survival and betterment are not possible, and there should be a new Social Contract between citizens and the Establishment. That is the reason that equal power-sharing will be required, so that, once and for all, people will be free to choose their leaders, and each institution will work within the boundaries which are being set in the constitution for them.

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