

Competing Narratives, Contested Power: Examining Military-Civilian Relations in Pakistan through CDA

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Abstract

This research analyzed the ways in which media coverage contributes to the dynamics of the military–civilian relationship in Pakistan, with emphasis on how the media affects public opinion and the development of democracy. The goal of the study, therefore, is to analyze how the military, civilian politicians, and the media use language to create and manage power relations. Emphasizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology, the study employs Foucauldian power-knowledge and Gramscian hegemony to examine the construction and circulation of military storytelling. The method employed in this research includes traditional media content analysis, political speeches, online social media analysis, and in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders. Data analysis entails using CDA to determine the discursive motifs, discursive tactics, and the struggle of power. This paper illustrates that traditional media facilitates the positive representation of the military as a defender institution and social media both encourage and destabilize the narrative, sometimes by disseminating fake news and encourage the formation of echo chambers. Thus, the study enriches the conclusions on how media and social media impact military-civilian relations and democratic processes in Pakistan, along with the role of language and discourse in preserving and challenging power dynamics. The findings of the study present specific implications for media analysts and scholars involved in the examination of media power and democracy.

Keywords: media narratives, Military-Civilian relations, Critical Discourse Analysis, power-knowledge, hegemony, Misinformation, Social Media, Pakistan

Introduction

This paper aims at analyzing how civil-military relations in Pakistan have played tense and dynamic game of power dynamics, subordination and defiance. This is not only a foundation of the political schema of the nation under consideration but is also a manifestation of societal conflict for power, representation, and/storytelling. In this regard, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can provide a proactive theoretical model to analyze the discursive practices which characterize this relationship and in turn are characterized by the dynamics of power related to language and discourses. The epistemological framework of this study was CDA, which conceptualizes language use as social practice through which social relations are realized and recreated. We must recognize that, as Norman Fairclough and other critics and Teun A. van Dijk have suggested, discourse is a powerful field where relations of power are both reflected and played out. In the case of Pakistan the military has been dominant in politics and society for many decades and thus discourse becomes the key site for either reproducing this dominance or for democratic struggle. Military insertions affects many part of the livelihood, this include military portraying itself as the protector of national sovereignty, economic and politic domains. This paper explores how such narratives are constructed promoted, and challenged in different media platforms especially the roles of traditional and social media.

Pakistan seems to have experienced a period of military dictatorship interspersed with democracy; it has had a history of civilian and military interactions. This peculiar feature has played an important role in the political, economic, and social evolution of the country (Siddiq, 2018). Pakistan's armed forces have had a dominant place in determining the political destiny of the country since its creation in 1947. They have over the years interfered with the civilian government for several reasons including but not limited to alleged security threats, economic decline, and political unrest (Khan, 2020). These interventions have mostly been encouraged by factions of society that view the military as a provider of order and structure (Ahmed, 2015). But, military interferences in politics have also been one of the major concerns and complaints of the people. According to critics, military has delayed progressive democracy, suppressed civil liberties and even encouraged penchant corruption. Some authors argue that the military's primary concern primarily stemmed from economic and political gains which overshadowed the best interest of the country (Zaidi, 2016). The interaction between the military and the civilian authorities has been further

distorted by the geography and threats in the country. This means that Pakistan had to be a player in the region due to its location between Afghanistan and India, and the military has historically been called upon to deal with outside threats. This has helped in shaping the military's image to be perceived as a force that is relevant to the defense of the nation, thus strengthening the army power within the political framework (Siddiqi, 2018). Some changes have been made in an attempt to increase the checks and balance mechanisms to the current system and demilitarize the country. However, it has not been easy to achieve this task due to the military's strong power and influence and the nation's continued insecurity. It is crucial to comprehend the history and entangled relationships between the military and civilians in Pakistan as a way of explaining Pakistan politics and its transformation to democracy.

The conventional media in Pakistan has been blamed for its contribution towards portraying the image of the military as the only shield of the nation, this narrative has been infused into Pakistan's post-colonial thought process. Censorship, self-regulation and propaganda in the mainstream media work in consort to marginalize or ridicule the dissidents hence perpetuating military hegemony in political affairs. While official sources dominate traditional media, social media appears to be more diverse and less regulated allowing for the presence of the oppositional and other voices. However, this freedom is double-edged: on one hand, it makes it easier to disseminate diverse views including emancipatory ones, on the other hand, it facilitates creation of fake news and enclosetment in procedurized bubbles, which distorts formation of informed opinion.

Scope of the Study

This research will analyze the rival historiographical accounts and the shifting power relations that defined military civil relations in Pakistan. Looking at the discourse used by military, civilian politicians and the media, the study will investigate how language has been employed to create knowledge, challenge knowledge within the Pakistani social formation in the context of negotiating the role of military in Pakistan society, the extent to which military interventions are legitimate, and the power relation between military and civil society. Although some historical background of the military civil relation will be discussed in the research, the study will mainly be on the modern period with reference to the recent changes and trend in the political system of the country in question. The effect of external stimuli in relation to military-civilian relations will also be given due consideration in the study, more so with reference to geopolitics and economic concerns. Still, it is worthwhile to discuss the methodological drawbacks of this research. Because the topic itself is quite broad and there is much information available about this issue, perhaps it is impossible to give an assessment of all the nuances of the described relationship in Pakistan. Besides, the study will utilize only secondary data that will be in the form of official documents, media reports, and other literatures. These sources are useful to some extent, but what is found in them may not present a comprehensive account of military-civilian relations from all viewpoints.

Problem Statement

The first defining fact that causes confusion and hinders the comprehension of Pakistan's political structure is the fact that the relations between the military and civilians are elaborate and nuanced. The complex and frequently conflicting power relations that underpin these interactions have produced an uncertainty in these regards: what the military's social purpose is, is the military justified in intervening in politics, who is the military accountable to? This research aims to address the following problem: In what ways have different stories and struggles for domination shaped knowledge and ways of knowing military-civilian relations in Pakistan? Consequently, through the analysis of the language used in military, civilian politicians and media texts, this paper aims at elucidating how language has been applied to build and motivate different perceptions of these relations. In addition, the study will discuss the implications of both these competing narratives for democracy, stability and development of Pakistan. Through recognizing the causes of the continuing conflict and problems in military-civilian relations in this study, policy improvements can be made and some contribution towards democratization and in the bid of civilian dictatorship in the country.

Research Questions

This research seeks to address several critical questions and in this regard, the following research questions are developed:

1. What discursive strategies are embedded the key themes and counter-narratives emerging on social media regarding the military in Pakistan?
2. How are narratives surrounding the military constructed and disseminated through traditional media in Pakistan?
3. How does the military's *control over key societal structures influence public discourse and democratic consolidation in Pakistan?*
4. To what extent are social media platforms contributing to misinformation and echo chambers surrounding the military in Pakistan?

Hence, it is anticipated through these questions that the study would be able to provide a small amount of new knowledge regarding the manner and extent to which discourse is constituted and enacts power relations in Pakistan. And that is why this work can be important it can explain how the military as an institution maintains its power over civilians and it does not even seem to bother to wield it very often, at least not overtly. Therefore, the present research contributes to the discourse studies and, in particular, the political communication to contribute to the enhanced understanding of a postcolonial state, in which military overtones are both powerful and vulnerable. Besides, this research some policy implication to the policymakers, media activists, and civil society organization that is part of the struggle against authoritarianism in Pakistan.

Hence, it can be suggested that in order to understand the dynamics driving the socio-political relations in Pakistan the general objective of investigating the discursive construction of military-civilian relations is deemed essential. As such, by employing CDA as the frame of analysis, the research serves the purpose of the critical narrative analysis that would help reveal the strategic and discursive moves that bolster the positioning of the military as the dominant institution in the state and society

and would bring to the fore the discursive processes that can help to decentralize the militarized logic of society. The conclusions that may be made from the outcome of this study may assist in the symbolic war in an attempt of who has the right to tell the story of Pakistan today and in the future in order to understand the direction that Pakistan is most likely to take in its struggle in its endeavor for attaining democracy.

Literature Review

There is a lot of literature on the military-civilian relations in Pakistan and it ranges from political science, media analysis, sociology, and other disciplines. Reading this stream of literature paints a less clear picture in terms of how the military influences Pakistan, particularly when dealing with civilians and the media and public sphere. To deconstruct power relations in relation to Pakistani society and the military, in this literature review, I include some of the most influential works in these fields and explore the discourses and media that constructed the military.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory this research seeks to understand the discursive struggles and contentions through which power relation between military and civilians in Pakistan have been constructed. CDA is a useful analytical framework that discusses and challenges constructing power and identity and other social relations in relation to language and discourses as employed by different actors (Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1998). CDA pays special attention to the social and political aspect of language and considers language as a resource for creating and maintaining the social relations. As a result, the purpose of this study is to analyze military, civilian politicians' and the media's discourse to identify how they have utilized language to justify their actions and processes, influence the public's attitudes, and support or subvert power relations (Fairclough, 2003).

In particular, this research will apply the Foucauldian 'power-knowledge' framework to examine how the military has sought to navigate its power and knowledge in the given context. Foucault noted a dissent with the conventional wisdom: power is not just oppression, but is also a form of production – of knowledge and discourse (Foucault, 1980). This study will seek to understand how knowledge has been generated regarding the military and its activities through its published documents and the ways it has been utilized in justifying its activities and operations. Further, this research will utilize hegemony as developed by Gramsci to determine how the military has been Influence through agreement rather than the force. According to Gramsci, the ruling classes perpetuate their rule through propagation of ideologies that give the rule a moral backing (Gramsci, 1971). In this research, the militarization of ideologies to justify the military's role in state security and stability will be examined to find out how it influenced common society to accept the military rule and the demolition of democracy.

The Military's Role in Pakistani Politics

Military intervention in Pakistan's politics has been a focus of study for policy analysts for over three decades. Many theorist like Ayesha Jalal (1990) and Stephen P. Cohen (2004) have written about the proactive participation of the military in the governance of Pakistan and in instances of what the military perceives as an abdication of power by civilian rulers. Such work as Jalal's for example, explores the antecedent of military dominance in early days of Pakistan's independence where military assumed the role of protecting the nascent state which it has again and again been performing—directly through coups and indirectly through influence on governance. In addition to this, Cohen's work explains how the military has been able to perpetuate its dominance over other groups typical of states: they control state resources, and they portray a united and well-disciplined force compared to what is perhaps a fragmented society. More recent work, from Aqil Shah (2014) for example, offers an exploration of military coup and its relations of military retrenchment or consolidation of its power over civilians. To Shah however, it is not just brute force, but persuasion that enhances and maintains the military's influence and this they achieve through control over other agents of historical memory such as media and education. It is because of this perspective that discourse has been seen to play a critical role in the maintenance of military dominance, an area of focus in this research.

Media and Military Dominance

Media in maintaining and subverting militarization in Pakistan is a core area of research interest which defines another category. Other literatures such as Zafar Iqbal, 2011, and Shakil Ahmed, 2017 have showed how mechanism such as the television and the newspaper has been used by the military to disseminate its favorable messages. From Iqbal's work one can also deduce the various strategies that media outlet use to respond to the military expectations, more often than not resulting to exclusion of dissident voices. Ahmed's study builds upon the Machiavellian manner in which both the military and the media owners end up into an especially advantageous situation where the two would want to keep the other happy, thus making the so much cherished watchdog role of the media a rather difficult proposition.

However, social networking sites can be considered as the territory where counter-voicing can take place to contest the military's discursive authority. Researches such as Saif Shahin and others have noted that social media platforms; especially Twitter and Facebook afford activists, journalists and ordinary citizens to post their criticisms of the military and write about it. Yet this freedom they have is not indefinite in their operation. It has also social media surveillance, cyber troops and information warfare to counter capability to silence critics and propagate it's own narratives as noted by Nazish Brohi (2020). One of the primary concerns of the present research is the capacity of social media both for subversion and domination.

Discourse, Power, and Critical Discourse Analysis

Since the purpose of this study will be to analyze the military-civilian relation in Pakistan, it is important to employ a theoretical framework that would enable the researcher to do so. As Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1993) have elaborated, CDA emergently out that the discourse is a place of power and means to exercise power. Discourse offers dominant groups ways

of framing social issues that determine the social norms and values and perceptions of the society hence put under powering the voices of dissent.

In Fairclough's works, focus is given to the reciprocal socio-cultural construction of practices and on the way practice is constructed societally. The case of Pakistan permits to conduct an analysis of how in discursive practices the military's hegemony over the civil governance is articulated, on the one hand, and how these specific discursive practices impact on the construction of the military as power, on the other. This is where such concepts as ideological discourse by Van Dijk come into relevance, given the ways in which they underline the ways in which language can be used to socially construct power relations as predestined or irreversible.

Military organizations generally focus on security features and issues of patriotism, these being the primary reasons why Pakistan's military is always interfering with civil affairs. This discourse is propagated through the mass media and supported at all levels of education, political and religious speeches, and advertisement campaigns on social media. The military's option to fully manage such narratives is one of the reasons the military continues to assert influence over the society; due to the fact that whatever narratives or discourses are formed influence the society hence enable the military to remain dominant.

But CDA also offers methods for the detection and analysis of the strategies that are used to maintain dominant discourses. This aspect of CDA is especially important for identifying the ways in which the hegemonic discourse is challenged and the militarization of civil – military relations is debated on social media. Through such counter-discourses this study aims to reveal how civil society actors, journalists and the general public resist the military discursive power and democracy and good governance agenda.

The Significance of Discourse in Understanding Military-Civilian Relations

Discourse is central to both the reproduction of and resistance to the power of military in Pakistan as identified by authors reviewed in this study. Thus, through the regulation of 'the story' told in society, the military may legitimize itself while simultaneously excluding other forms of politics. However, the expand of social networking has created new elements to this equation which are opportunities to resist and challenges to the amplifiers.

This research extends prior literature in employing the procedures of CDA to a close examination of the existing media discourses related to the role of the military in Pakistan as well as to the relations between the military and civilians in the country. It seeks to advance our knowledge of how power works through language and how media – both mainstream and social – are established as fields of power within the constant war between military and civilian power. By so doing, this research not only contributes to the theoretical development of the analysis of discourse and power, but also offers practical suggestions as to how the quest for democratic governance can be pursued amidst set back that originates from the military hegemonic authoritative culture.

Methodology

This work uses a qualitative research approach and the principal method used in this research is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA as a communicative theory gives an effective method of analyzing the roles of language, discursive power as well as other social structures.

Data Collection

The subject of this research involves text data from various textual artifacts inclusive of newspapers, television news programs, online news portals and social media. It also includes the political discussion; speeches, policies and other statements from political, military officials and other representatives. Furthermore, the study uses data collected from social media platforms, posts, comments, shares, and such with a focus on articulation of opinions on mutual military civilian relations.

Data Analysis

The data that is gathered in the current research is then analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, which is carried out in several phases. First of all, the presence of certain themes, discourses and additional patterns of language use are searched for in the textual data. This is succeeded by internal discourse analysis, in which the power relations and ideological presuppositions are studied in detail. The analysis is then discussed in light of the existing socio-political structure of Pakistan so that the result of the analysis is does make sense. Last, the findings are discussed to contribute to the formulation of a coherent, encompassing view on the research questions, concerning the interactions involved.

Limitations of the Study

On the whole, this research gives a clear idea on the competing narratives and contested power relations of military-civilian relations in Pakistan; however, it has certain limitations. First of all, the data collection of the study is mainly based on secondary sources like newspapers, journals, magazines, government publications, official statements, and internet sources. Although much valuable information can be obtained from these sources their potentiality does not encompass the entire spectrum of the perceptions and experiences of military-civilian relationship. Also measuring the availability and access to information such as sensitive and classified data is also a challenge in the conduct of the study. Secondly, while the research is based on the analysis of discourse and narratives, these in turn may reveal how power is mobilized and negotiated. But we must understand that language is only an instrumental means of social practice and therefore, though important, it is not a decisive factor of social condition. Of course there are other elements that militate in favor or against military-civilian relations; these could include economic conditions, geopolitical changes, and social trends. Last but not the least, this research is subjected to time bound and scoped research bias. Although it gives the necessary information about the political stakes, gender roles and

changes of the contenders within the given time-span, it lacks certain aspects of the continuous processes and crises in the military-civilian relationship in Pakista

Analysis and Discussion

The Analytical part of this research study builds on the complexity of the relationship between military and civilians in Pakistan through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach enables valid focus on the conflicting discourses that define and embody the military-civilian struggle for influence. In conducting the study, the research employs discourse analysis in an attempt to analyze the content of the media, political speeches, and social interactions with a view of identifying ideologies, power relations, and socio-political backgrounds that underpin these narratives. Thus, by illustrating the discursive construction and contestation of power in language, this section will be able to give a broad perspective of the strategies that have manifested in the political context of Pakistan.

Media Representations of the Military in Pakistan: A CDA Perspective

The media has a significant part in the creation and relaying of stories about the military in Pakistan. From this lens, it would be possible to identify the ways in which different media organizations construct the armed forces which would also highlight the power relations and the epistemology of these representations.

Table 1 Media Framing of the Military

Media Frame	Examples	Sources
Protector and Savior	"The military, the last line of defense against external threats" (Dawn News, 2023)	Khan, 2018; Hamid, 2015; Ali, 2012
	"Guardians of the nation" (The Nation, 2022)	
	"Selfless sacrifices for the country" (Geo News, 2021)	
Downplaying Negatives	Limited coverage of military courts-martial; Omission of human rights abuse allegations	Siddiqui, 2016; Malik, 2014
	Focus on military achievements without critical analysis	

A number of specific linguistic features are identified in the media texts as consistently used by various forms of the media to build the image of the military as heroic and necessary to the society. Phrases like 'steel fortress' 'guardian of the nation' continue to depict the picture of an impenetrable and altruistic military (Ali, 2012). This narrative is usually backed up by patriotic socialization and language, thereby justifying the role of the military in politics and the society (Khan, 2018). However, there are also counter-narratives that give a different concept of this picture. Certain Television media houses and some break neck freelance journalists have compiled proofs about the military in human rights abuses, mass looting and vote rigging business (Siddiqui, 2016). Delineating the counter narration in the CDA studies of such, it helps to understand how the prevailing discourse is countered and the militaries' power misuse is brought to limelight.

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion

Social media has significantly revolutionized the media through new channels of communication and spreading news and ideas. Insofar as the civil-military dynamics in Pakistan is concerned, social media platforms have become influential for the military as much as for civilians.

Table 2 Key Social Media Trends

Social Media Trend	Impact on Public Opinion	Sources
Pro-military Narratives	Reinforces dominant discourse, builds support for military	Ahmed, 2019
Critical Voices	Challenges military narrative, demands transparency	Raza, 2020
Misinformation	Creates confusion, erodes trust	Hussain, 2017
Echo Chambers	Reinforces existing beliefs, hinders dialogue	Ali, 2012

The use of social media has been effective in cultivating the positive image of military in Pakistan and sustain people's support (Ahmed, 2019). On the other hand, there is also a flip side of social media which has made civilians and the opposition groups to challenge the information produced by the Military. Nonetheless, the use of social media as a tool for sharing information has been marred with; fake news, propaganda and spread of misinformation (Hussain, 2017).

The Role of Influencers and Celebrities in Shaping Public Opinion

Cultural norms and preference in Military and Civilian relation in Pakistan is largely influenced by social media influencers and celebrities. Pakistani celebrities dance to the tunes of military:

Being celebrities they also actively support the agendas of the Pakistan military, and thus reproduce the discourse on how the military is the savior of Pakistan. It means it strengthens existing prejudices and justifies the military's actions which might be already present in the public mind (2018).

Table 3 The Influence of Social Media Figures

Role	Impact	Sources
Supportive Influencers	Reinforce pro-military narratives, increase public support	Khan, 2018; Ahmed, 2019
Critical Influencers	Challenge military narratives, promote accountability	Siddiqui, 2016; Malik, 2014
Credibility Concerns	Mixed motivations, possible manipulation by powerful actors	Malik, 2014

On the other hand, some of the influencers are also against the military politicized and military dominated society as some have used their influencers to advocate against this situation and to foster people's sentiments toward demanding accountability and transparency (Siddiqui 2016).

Challenges and Opportunities Posed by Social Media for Democratic Governance

Social media has the potential to enhance democratic governance by fostering citizen participation, transparency, and accountability. However, it also presents significant challenges that can undermine democratic principles.

Table 4 Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media

Aspect	Impact	Sources
Citizen Participation	Increases engagement in political discourse	Bennett & Segerberg, 2012
Transparency	Governments can promote transparency by disseminating information directly	O'Neill, 2016
Misinformation and Disinformation	Erodes trust in institutions, exacerbates polarization	Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017
Digital Divide	Limits the benefits of social media for marginalized groups	Van Dijk, 2006

Social sites have also been described as a force in political activism where citizens stage demonstrations and demand governance accountability. Nevertheless, the growth of fake news and fake opinions shared on social networks may be considered as a major threat to the democratize discussion Boom (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

Discussion

Coming to the discussion part of this particular study, the analysis has elaborated on the complex relationship between the media-texts, the social media interactions, and the military's role in framing the discourses in Pakistan. Based on the synthesis of the results, the subsequent part explores the ways in which the conventional media and social networks generate the specific perceptions of the military and subsequently affect democracy. By revealing various narrators and discursive strategies and the general effects of media framing and misleading information the discussion seeks to deconstruct the multifaceted effects of these narratives on societies' perceptions and political stability. By analyzing the examples of the reinforcement or subversion of military power by media, and social media's echo chambers and misinformation, this section aims at presenting the general picture of what is happening today and its implications for the Pakistani democracy.

Conversation about the military in Pakistan on social media is very Meta, very combative, and must involve power discourses over the broader Pakistani society. These strategies exist in a context of a polarity of support and counter support in which both sides employ certain language and rhetoric to push for their programs.

Pro-Military Narratives: Glorification and Nationalism

Plato like other Greek philosophers employed glorification and triumphant nationalism with patronizing pride as counterparts of the culture of his time. Promilitary discourses are the dominant type of discursive tactics on social media, and they are based on the strategies of glorification and appeals to nationalist discourse. These sort of stories come out aligned with the traditional media's representations wherein the military is portrayed as the 'protector' and 'guardian' of the nation, which upholds the notion of the militaries' necessity in safeguarding the sovereignty and security of Pakistan. Even adjectives like the military as the 'steel fortress' of the nation are used put the population into a patriotic mode. In this way, this strategy successively binds the military to patriotism and nationalism, which hampers the voices that are trying to combat the military power and authority, calling them as anti-patriotic and disloyal (Ahmed, 2019).

Besides, there is an optimistic tone toward the military, which is enhanced by the effective use of references to images and symbols. Actions of soldiers, the flag, and humanitarian missions are often posted to support the myth of the military as a non-profit organization with the people's interest in mind. Unlike other objects, these representations are semiotic or symbolic in nature and help in an important way of establishing an affective relationship between the military and the general public.

Continued engagement in such social media serves to desensitize the public and hence makes the military acceptable within both the social and political dimensions of society which in turn maintains, supports, and even justifies the military impact on politics.

Counter-Narratives: Irony, Satire, and Direct Accusations

A comic strip as a vehicle to translate the concept of irony, satires and direct accusations. On the other hand, counter-narratives on social media use rhetorical techniques with a view of unpacking the glamorous image of the military. These two voices often employ irony, satire and plain assault to argue the negative characteristics of militaries on the Pakistan's political and social fabric. For instance, social media activists and critics alert people on issues like human rights violation, corruption in the economic sector, and military influence in democracy. Thus, highlighting these problems, they problematize the military's systemic dominance in society and destabilize the discursive construction of a militarized politics-of-compassion.

That is why irony and satire are especially effective in these counter-narratives. They enable critics to reverse the propaganda by parodying the inconsistencies in the representation of the military. For instance, whereas the military function may be to be seen to be acting as a protector of the nation, there may be counter-stories showing how this civilizing role is achieved by violating civil liberties and civilian authority. Memes and parody videos become real critiques more easily as they are engaged with by audiences on social media platforms (Raza, 2020). Of course, direct accusations and revelations are also somewhat crucial in responding to the propaganda. Through social media, messages contrary to those which are sanctioned by the authority spread very quickly, for example, messages on military interference in election frauds, economic domination and oppression of the opposition. These strategies seek to ensure that the military is kept on check by following civilized ways that will enable the public to see that the military operates legally. They became popular counter-narratives precisely because of the arguments from evidence and because of leaking documents or an eyewitness who tells a different story, thereby making it much more difficult for the military to completely dismantle them.

The Discursive Battle on Social Media: A Reflection of Broader Societal Struggles

The discursive nature which is evident from the facebook post regarding the military is not just a matter of rhetoric on the web; it is an extension of those social conflicts of power competence and authority in the context of Pakistan. The pro-military narratives, therefore, are as synthesizing as the anti-thesis as they deliver the exact message of nationalism and security in order to keep things as they are with the military being the know-all institution. On the other hand, the counter-narratives which are part of the long-standing conflict between police forces and civilians seek to challenge the existing regime of police power by promoting increased democratization and civilian control over the forces of law enforcement.

This rhetorical struggle can be seen as an expression of a broader struggle in Pakistani society, as various constituencies attempt to frame the military. This struggle now takes place in social media: a platform that is largely democratic in its structure. Social media, on the same note, is not easily regulated by the state as traditional media is with regard to its sources being more diverse. But this also entails that the discourse is much polarized and people are trapped in their bubbles of belief, only amplifying each other's views and making critical discussion difficult. Furthermore, the military participation as users and sometimes even as promoters of explicit state-oriented view in social media presents another layer of the discussable construction. Alternatively, by getting involved in the discussion with the public, the military aims to offer its vision of events and to neutralize adversaries on the issue. This active engagement in the social media platform could thus be explained in the need to control the narrative in order to remain relevant and have more power.

In conclusion, the analyzed discursive strategies on social media concerning the military in Pakistan are inevitably linked to the ongoing reforms and Turkey's power struggle and discussions about governance. Pro-military narratives promote and empower, and employ elements of sensationalism and nationalism to do so; counter-narratives employ irony, satire, and outright identification of injustice. This has led to the creation of what is evidently a highly polarized discursive field that seems to encapsulate the more general conflict in Pakistani society. It is for this reason that as the social media environment constantly transforms, it will continue being a playing field where these two narratives will be part of the shaping force of the country's politics.

Cultural and official stories of the military in Pakistan are produced and reported through formal traditional media employing numerous paradigmatic framing and selective media reporting methodologies to sustain the hegemonic status of the military in society. This process is particularly closely connected with the general socio-political picture of Pakistan, in which the military has long been one of the main dominators of the country's power. As a tool of communication, traditional media's main function is to guarantee and prolong this role and to ensure the public has a favorable attitude to such a role.

Strategic Framing and the Construction of a Heroic Military

The traditional media's second way of configuring the military is by strategic framing; in which the military is presented as an invincible and essential body in society. This is made manifest by drawing specific uses of language and other symbolic imagery that can be farmed to instill pride, reverence and trust in the military. The words like 'steel fortress', 'guardians of the nation' and 'selfless sacrifices' are used in news reportage, editorial commentaries, and op-eds to construct the military as the only capable defender of the nation (Ali, 2012). These linguistic choices are not simply semantic – they have substantial ideological implications, for they help to support a discourse which articulates and sanctions an ever-enlarging remit for the military in both the political and the social arenas.

This positive framing is further enhanced by the cultivation of a selective perception towards the military and its role and productivity in the facet of national security. In their turn, traditional media tend to focus on counter-terrorism operations, the actions of the military in natural disasters and peacekeeping missions as the proofs of the necessity of military actions for

the sake of the country's security and stability. In this way, the media consolidates a story of the military being a force that does not operate for personal gain, but for the benefit of the society as a whole. They not only help to promote the military and raise the prominence of the military in the society but also work to exclude other viewpoints that can challenge the military.

Selective Reporting and the Marginalization of Critical Voices

The same media in Pakistan is very efficient in building positive narratives around military; they are equally efficient in erasing or ignoring any aspect of military that can be perceived negatively. This selective reporting is an essential function of the media in managing perception and in particular the image of the military since most of the incidents are portrayed in ways that do not bring the military in a bad light or invite criticism. Example; reporting on military courts-martial, human rights abuse claims, or cases of military interference in politics is either restricted or in some cases not reported at all in many of the mainstream media houses (Siddiqui, 2016; Malik, 2014). Whenever such issues arise, they are always presented in such a manner that their effects are made appear insignificant or when they are detrimental they are passed off as measures that have to be taken for the sake of security of the nation.

Such a reporting pattern suggests that the media supports the stand of the military and feeds the public with a biased radicalized information. While traditional media emphasizes the positives of the military actions and plays down on the negatives, this boosts the image of the military legitimizing its actions. This practice of selective reporting not only influences the perception of people but also acts politically to prevent the emergence of other stories and the opposition that would question the hegemony of the military in Bangladeshi society. Therefore the public perception of the military is shaped by the stories that the traditional media considers to give focus to hence giving a skewed view of the military's role in governance and society.

Dominance of the National Security and Stability Narratives

Concerning the components of the building and spreading of military narratives with the help of traditional media outlets, special attention should be paid to the appeals to national security and stability. When in Pakistan, issues of security threats are on the lips of people and this is where the media builds a story and makes the military sensitive to issues of national security a narrative that most people would buy. TV and newspapers often present its missions as being instrumental in combating threats which may be internal or external: terrorism, for instance, political instabilities, or even invasions from other countries. They are able to base their intervention on security and stability measures in an effort to explain why the military interferes with political, economic as well as social facets of governance. In this manner, traditional media continues the portrayal of the military as the only force that can protect the nation from these threats and thus strengthens the position that penetration of the military in society is not only permissible but necessary. By doing so, this kind of narrative neutralizes military action and casts its activities as being unpolitical and thus solely motivated in terms of their necessity and the protection of a nation rather than any specific power.

Traditional Media as a Tool of Power

The traditional media's work in the storing of military within Pakistan as a monolith that is foundational to the state further makes a strong argument about how media functions a power tool that maintains power relations to regimes. Where the military has historically held an immensely strong influence over the state as well as over the society, the construction of the military by the media is not just the portrayal of reality, but the actual construction of the reality, which constantly establishes and reinforces the position of the military as the ultimate and legitimate authority in all spheres of life. The media and the military are often aligned through direct and indirect pressures, direct pressures which include censorship and indirect pressures which include self-censorship as well as the political economy of media ownership.

In particular, the position of these narratives within the traditional media also poses questions about power and democratic policing within Pakistan. In doing so the media helps fuel the ascendancy of Military power so that even critics of the military are forcefully silenced with such a depiction of the military and its actions. Moreover, this dynamic does not only prevent democratic consolidation but also limits the ability for genuine and substantive public debate and accountability.

Therefore, concluded that crafting and circulating military narratives through traditional media in Pakistan is a highly planned and controlled task that provides legitimacy to the armed forces. In this context, the traditional media continues to have an active influence on the public to make positive changes on the military and ensure current organizational stability. This process shows that the media serves as an instrument of power and, with the military, reflects the interests of the dominant social group. In this regard, there is a need for any attempt to perceive the military in Pakistan from a critical stance to examine how traditional media fosters such genre narratives and the ramifications for democracy and governance.

This research identifies that military has hegemonic power over important structures of the society in Pakistan, which shapes the public sphere and remains a major impediment to democracy in the country. This sort of control, which is present in political, economic and media structures, does more than simply tell a certain story about the military's role – it also actively seeks to suppress negative accounts and other types of discourse in favor of democracy. This smothering of the military on these institutions leads to a dynamic whereby the military is constantly asserting and enforcing its power even as it fetters the development of democracy.

Impact on Political Organization and Leadership

The deep-rooted military influence on the politics of Pakistan is one of the most profound aspects by which the military adapts itself to meddle in the politics of the country and resist the growth and establishment of a strong democracy. The military has always been involved in the politics of Pakistan and has seized direct control of the government several times through coups, and has indirect control during civilian governments. Such an engagement in politics is always defended by the military and

promulgated by traditional media in often, in military historiography, as maintaining security, stability and, indeed, the final arbiter of the nation state. In effectively situating itself as an indispensable actor which can only be tamed by participating in the political processes, the military inevitably limits the democracy and civilian control.

This extends also to emergence of military influence in the electoral process wherein the military interferes in the process in order to determine who will be in power; it distorts the sovereignty of the democratic governance institutions. Some of the critical opinions that depict the military as a threat to the free election process undermine the democratic process of governance through its influence to subvert its message as it was seen in the recent removal of a government elected by the people but could not enjoy the full mandate as expected. This cycle is further strengthened by interaction of the military with media especially traditional media where it is able to set the tone and limit the coverage of military excesses in the process of politics (Siddiqui, 2016; Malik, 2014).

Economic Power and its Effect on Communication

This control over the important economic facilities remains another essential element that determine the character of discursive practices and the state of democracy in Pakistan. With the military being in possession of large business enterprises, industries and vast tracks of land, its economic influence overshadows that of the civilian regime, if not dominate it. Closely related to this economic power, the military has been able to influence the political and the media to serve the interests of the military. The economic clout of the military allows it to shape the distribution of resources to the advantage of the regime and monopolize the capability to patronize or repress those that may potentially pose a threat to the regime or its allies, ranging from media houses, civil society organizations, and politicians, among others. They generate a political economy environment that buries any opposition or criticism, and tilts the political environment in favor of the military. This economic dominance is the reason why depictions of the military such as in traditional media that present the military as a force that is involved in nation building is prevalent. This 'war narrative' that depicts the military as the harbinger of order and progress masks the anti-democratic nature of its economic machinations which further centralizes power in an organization not directly answerable to the people.

Media and information control

Perhaps the most conspicuous of these is the ability of the military to control the access of the media to power. Traditional media is the primary source of information for the public and through its channels, the information related to the role of the military is disseminated. It is, therefore, not surprising that the military has a hand in the media content either through direct ownership or through censorship and manipulation of the media in a bid to present the military in a good light.

These powers of information control are exercised out-rightly and subtly. Directly, the military continues to meddle in censoring the media especially on topics that involve human rights violations or political interferences and at the same time advancing themes that portray the triumphs of the Pakistan military and its importance in national security. Behind the scenes, the military has the means of controlling advertising and other financial flows, thus guaranteeing that companies with appropriate messages are allowed to broadcast while those delivering unfavorable information are denied the opportunity. Such a manipulation of information leads to a situation that the dissenting voices are silenced while the audiences are offered only a limited and polished picture of reality.

Through the Military, manipulation of media it becomes difficult for the public to gain an unrestrictive access to different opinion and at the same time compels Journalist and media houses to be cautious of what they report or air. Intimidation and threats both seen and unseen push journalist into not covering issues that may be deemed as politically wrong or critical of the armed forces. This culture of self-censorship goes further to limit freedom of speech and close down any attempts by the populace to come up with different stories that can challenge the dominant ones. **Implications for Democratic**

Consolidation

Military dominion in important social institutions of Pakistan has consequences for democracy. The military controls these strategic assets, political, economic and media institutions and thus closes the window to democracy. The army's control over these framework does not merely skewed the story in ways that continues to rationalize its dictation but also erode the tenets of democracy in the process.

Of all the implications that come from the nature that has been described above, the most visible one is the loss of the public's confidence in democratic institutions. However, when military decides for itself that it can disregard civil authority, can unseat electoral governments when it feels like it, then electoral governments' regime is put into doubt. This lack of legitimacy undermines the functions of the democratic institutions and reduces the people's interest in the political process. This could over time give rise to a general losing of faith in the system of democracy, where citizens feel that the political processes cannot be executed without the intervention of the military.

Moreover, through this military interference with economic and media related structures, the social and political inequalities work against the process of democratic consolidation. The concentration of power and resources in the military signals a continuity of a system of misrepresentation of people's wishes and aspirations—the desire for democracy remains alive but suppressed. This has the effect of negating the pluralism and political inclusion which are core characteristics of the democratic system and thus steering the chances for any other viewpoint to be aired and for real political contestation.

Thus, it is to conclude that Pakistan military's control over the vital civil institutions plays a major role in determining the Pakistani public discourse and seriously threaten the democratic development of the Pakistani state. Through political, economic, and media power, the military can present to society how it frames society and keep justifying why it maintains its

power while discrediting any competing narratives. This control not only prejudices the democratic institutions but also continues to generate injustice and marginalization which are a great threat to the principles asserted by the democracy. That is why, as long as the military is meddling in Pakistan's affairs, the opportunities for the further development of democracy in the country will be somewhat limited.

A study of Pakistani social media also confirms that users of social media sites are largely involved in giving out misleading information and enhancing the presence of the echo chamber, especially where the military is concerned. The above platforms may bring people together, offer opportunities for free speech and expression as well as sharing ideas: Indeed, they also encourage the sharing of fake news, Generate online atmospheres where like-minded people engage each other, and provide them with no exposure to counter-argument This relationship has significant consequences for the process of public debate and the perception of the military as a whole in Pakistan.

The Spread of Misinformation

Social media is always in the center of attention due to the fast sharing of information which is usually spread without much check. Misinformation in relation to the military in Pakistan can be of many hats such as: high inflating achievements of the military, fabrication of threats to the security of the country and /or false allegations against the military, among others. With this rationale, these falsehoods are usually spread by users with ulterior motives to either support or malign the image of the military. One can imagine the velocity and the extent to which this information penetrates the online space in platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, or WhatsApp, which make it notoriously hard to 'undo' or 'unspin,' thus resulting in grand public misperceptions.

The problem of false information sharing on social media also poses an essential problem of developing an alternative reality. For instance, a work of a fictional nature related to military participation in a major national event is likely to spread like wildfire, mainly if it fits the existing stereotypical views or fears. This phenomenon was manifest in the circulation of gossips on military instalments' function on political actions or decisions or the military's involvement in the economic crisis; in formation of perception where misinformation not only forms opinion but constructs politics (Hussain, 2017). The problem arises where once a particular falsehood has been spread, it stays embarrassingly resident in the collective consciousness even after an apostle of truth has discredited it.

Echo Chambers and Reinforcement of Biases

Social media is also full of echo chambers, which reinforce the problem of false information. They occur when users mainly engage with content and other users, whose perspectives conform to their own, so that new information dilutes contrary opinions. Still, in reference to the military of Pakistan, it is learned that echo chambers can actually work to strengthen 'for' military opinions as well as 'against' military opinions depending upon the internal environment of these groups.

For that, for example, in the pro-military bubbles, military-related narratives focused on preserving the country's security are shared frequently, and their questioning is exceptional. Members of these groups are generally exposed to content that will only portray military in a good light and sometimes post mere propaganda and hearsay of victories. Such paradigm lock-in reinforces the program's narrative that challenges or counter-narrative will not be entertained and thus creating a barrier to change. Likewise, in anti-military polarized bubbles, content that concerns the military in unfavorable manner, and often containing false or exaggerated information, is legitimized: narrowing the populace's view of the military's role in the society to strictly negative.

Such echo chambers have repercussions as follows: They increase the probability of creating the so-called 'echo chambers,' where people are not inclined to reevaluate their attitude or expose themselves to different opinions. This in turn does not only limit or completely eliminate the prospects of rational and healthy discourse in society but also creates more rift within that society to the extent that it becomes harder to find middle ground on important issues of national importance. In the case of Pakistan as the military's influence is a topic of great controversy, one can easily observe that the usage of social media results in an increasing polarization of the audience, with both sides becoming more radicalized.

Impact on Public Discourse and Democratic Governance

Misinformation and the formation of echo chambers in Pakistan's social media space likewise have repercussions for not only public debate but also for the country's democratic institutions. When lies are spread and there is no counter to the algorithms of echo chambers, the public discourse is impoverished and the public becomes less educated and more divided. This environment is especially painful to democracy, in which rationality with policy formulation and free speech constitute an important premise.

Similarly, the prevalence of fake news and people's isolation into their respective bubbles reduces the reliability of social media as a platform that promotes citizens' engagement in issues of transparency and accountability. Despite the fact that these platforms are capable of exposing powerful and authoritative institutions like the military, they cannot function to the optimum effective if the information is lying within them and/or distorted due to a particular group or groups' self-serving interest. This is likely to diminish the impact of social media in enhancing democratic governance by bringing on board an informed public. All things considered, misinformation and the reinforcement of echo chambers surrounding the military are aided by social media platforms in Pakistan. These dynamics do not only skew the perception of the public but also deepen polarization which negatively impacts on the advancement of public debate and liberal democracy. To respond to these challenges, the public has

to increase the level of media literacy, use fact-checking possibilities and engage in communication across the communities. If there aren't radical changes through campaigns such as these, the vices of social media on dialogue and democracy will continue in Pakistan.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study show that there are many factors that have influenced military-civilian relations in Pakistan. First and foremost, the military as a benevolent knight that defends the population is a dominant narrative in the media; second, the insufficiency of negative portrayals of the military can also be seen as an example of the 'power-over' approach. The military has a paradigm focused on the concept of stability in the country and may justify its operations, while civilians abide by the rules of democracy. In this case, social media has enhanced the ongoing debates on the role of the military in society and provided a platform for voices that support and oppose the military. However, it becomes challenging for the public discourse as fake news circulates while people form closed groups where similar opinions prevail. Militarization does not stop only at the authorities but also involves economic and institutional dominance.

Table 5 Summary of Key Findings

Key Finding			Description
Media Constructs	Military as	Protector	Media often portrays military positively, downplaying negative aspects.
Military Discourse	Emphasizes	Security	Military justifies its role by emphasizing national security and stability.
Social Media	Amplifies	Contestation	Social media provides a platform for both pro-military and critical voices.
Economic and Institutional Power			Military's economic and institutional control reinforces its political power.
Civil Society as a Countervailing Force			Civil society challenges military dominance but faces significant constraints.

Table 5 provides the summary of key findings and displayed a reality that benefits of media-Military relations were reshaping the military-civilian relations through social media and economic and Institutional Power over Civil Society in Pakistan. The media has a way of portraying the military as embracer or protector, thus negating the negative experiences of the individuals that are in the military. This is supported by the military's own rhetoric which appeals to issues of national security and stability as reasons for militarization. It becomes apparent as a twofold phenomenon – at once, disseminating the militaristic discourse and simultaneously giving voice to the critical opinions as to the military-civilian relations' contentious nature. It is even more unbearable that the advancement of the military in the country's economy and institution makes the civil political authority almost difficult to manage. Nevertheless, civil society is always present as a balancing factor trying to rise against the military domination but working under very much limited freedom or space available. These findings point towards the continuous militarization of Pakistan's political arena through military and civil actions, including linguistic and discursive ones.

In this regard, the study findings correlate well with the theoretical underpinnings advanced under the CDA framework based especially on Foucault's power-knowledge and Gramsci's hegemony constructs. CDA following Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (1998) assist in elucidating how language and discourse construct and perpetuate relations of power and social subjectivity. In this research, CDA has been used to analyze the communicative practices used by the military, civilian politicians and the media in constructing power relations. The hegemonic discourse apparent within traditional media is that the military is a knight in shining armor which again fits into the CDA aim of identifying how language constructs power relations. Such language as "the guardian of the nation," the portrayal of military as suffering and deserving a due recognition cloaks the manipulative language necessary to maintain the authority and a positive image. This tale resonates with Foucauldian theory of power relations that does not only involve repression but also the production of truths and knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Military explicitly explains its activities as necessary for protection and maintaining order in a country reveals how it creates and circulates the knowledge's that legitimate its power. Furthermore, the observations made in the study demonstrate the effectiveness of Gramsci's hegemony where the military has been able to popularize ideas that are embraced by the people without the use of force (Gramsci, 1971). In this regard, the military has not only justified its power and large input into politics, economy, and society by linking it with the necessity for stability and safety of the nation but also gaining a moral and ideological reason for its domination, using Gramsci's idea of hegemony. Such a hegemonic strategy is illustrated by media control, censorship, negatively spun information, and the denial or omission of negative aspects that would contribute to the military's control of the government and the suppression of democracy. On the other hand, social media leads to contestation and fragmentation as a social media architectural element. It enhances both appreciation and criticism and serves as a counter-narrative which undermines some of the constructed narratives by the military. However, this platform also creates echo chambers and the distribution of fake news thus distorting public dialogue and democratic processes. This is in line with Foucauldian understanding about how power relations are continuously constructed and struggled over discursively. In conclusion, the congruencies between the study's findings observed with CDA, Foucauldian power-knowledge, and Gramscian hegemony frameworks demonstrate how language, power, and ideologies contour military-civilian relations in Pakistan. The study shows how the military controls language and media narratives, the nature of social media, and how they further perpetuate its dominance in the society.

Conclusion

The civilian-military relations in Pakistan are complex and put up a complex puzzle in the process of democracy build-up. This papers shows how media constructions, political debates, and online media performances configure and articulate these intricate relations. As the role of the military in politics is still strong, the reinforcement of the opposition to its influence might be the dawn of change. However, the sustained domination of primeval discourses, as well as the ability of the military to monopolize sources of income and institutions, poses powerful and a conflicting challenge to democratize. Thus, this research offers an effective investigation into a set of military-related narratives in Pakistan, including those in the traditional and new media, and discusses the outcomes in terms of the discourse and democratization process. Thus, the objectives of the study included discovering the use and role of media and social media in influencing perceptions about the military as well as the process of democracy. Some of the findings include the fact that; mainstream media has a positive representation of the military whereby they are presented as protectors of the society while in social media there are both positive and negative representation of the military with diffusion of both accurate and inaccurate information and presence of echo chambers. CDA theories were applied to uncover the political and social dynamics inherent in expressionist and postmodern approaches to the text. Various media content, political speeches, and phrases on social media were undertook and scrutinized and through CDA to determine the theme and discursive approach. The work enriches the concept of Sociological Imaginary which was under focus in the present investigation with regards to the nature of media that keep the military regime intact and how misinformation and the polarization hinder research work. Some suggestions for future research include the following: (a) Conducting surveys or experiments to study the effects of media literacy campaigns on people's perceptions; (b) Investigating the new media outlets in relation to the formation of discourse; (c) Investigating the effectiveness of fact-checking to counteract the effects of misinformation. This research also suggests that there is a continuous need to closely analyze the existing narratives circulating in media and their impact on democratic government in Pakistan

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