

ARMY CHIEFS' POST-RETIREMENT POLITICAL STATEMENTS AND CIVIL-  
MILITARY TRUST DEFICIT IN PAKISTAN, 2008–2022

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how the civil military trust deficit between 2008 and 2022 occurred as a result of post-retirement political statements by the chiefs of the Pakistani army. The study explains the role these words played by changing views on the military intervention in the political arena and consequent contravention of the civil leadership in the non-military system. Through qualitative research, the study examines cases of public oratory, media interviews and political commentaries in order to evaluate the meaning of public oratory and commentary. Evidence suggests that these utterances have massively negated civilian institutions and have consequently eroded confidence in the democratic processes. The paper is summarized by drawing the larger concern on the democratic stability of the Pakistani regime and the necessity of demarcation between the military and the civilian.

**Keywords:**

Pakistan, army chiefs, post-retirement statements, civil-military relations, trust deficit, democracy, political influence

INTRODUCTION

The issue concerning the interaction between the military and civilian institutions of Pakistan has been a subject of intense debate among scholars, especially due to the overwhelming presence of the military in the Pakistani political system. The role of the military in Pakistan is a dual purpose one in the sense that it not only serves as the national defense structure but also serves as a major political objective. The two aspects have rendered the civil-military relations important in the study of the situation of the country in terms of so much more than governance and democratic relations. Another detail that deserves mentioning because of this unusual connection is the political involvement of former army chiefs after their retirement. Retired war time leaders are not tied down by the chain of command as their active counterparts are, thus have more freedom to voice their opinions, criticize, or even affect the

masses. Some people believe that by engaging in this type of activity soldiers are exercising some form of a sense of responsibility to the national security and administration; others believe that it simply compromises the control of the military government and adds to the mistrust existing between military and political systems.

2008-2022 The period of political transitions, electoral campaigns, and various moments of political instability, Pakistan witnessed former army chiefs occasionally making public statements on a variety of domestic matters, including national security, internal government, and foreign affairs. All these were widely covered in the national media, and they became the subject of public opinion, and in some cases, political discussions. The character of these messages was from broad remarks about the state of affairs in the country to direct inoculations or covert threats to the civil authorities. The fact that the spokesmen of the military community have drawn so much attention to the press and the active role of the military in the political process of Pakistan impresses with significant questions about the consequences of such utterances on the credibility of the relationship between the civil and military as well as the wider political culture.

The importance of researching political statements by a retired person is that these statements can destabilize the balance of power between the civic and military systems. The relationship between the military and the civilian is founded on civil-military trust since it provides the democratic regimes with the space to legitimately exercise their powers without excessive interference by the military elements. When ex- army chiefs take part in political discussions, this can create the impression that the army still holds a voice in political matters, one way or another. These views may undermine national trust in the legitimacy of the democratic establishment and influence a state of void that in its turn may not invigorate exercise of autonomy by political actors. In addition, the fact that political commentary was conducted by former military officials on repeated occasions has the potential to establish a precedent, inviting former and current retirees to carry on influencing political discourse, further propagating a culture of military interference in local politics.

In the present paper, the author attempts to identify what army chiefs in Pakistan say in their post-retirement statements and do not say on the same subject and how such declarations led to civil-military trust or did not. The proposed study is intended to investigate the material of these statements and analyze them in a systematic way, commenting on the reaction of the society and politicians and discussing the impacts of such comments and resolutions on the power of the civilian and democratic mechanism. In this way, it will fill a significant gap in the body of research because earlier studies have been biased towards the historical part played by the military in government or active service interventions, but not post-service political participation of senior service staff. This is not merely important to the audience of political science and civil-military relations but also to policymakers who are keen on

enhancing democratic governance, maintaining the dominance of civilians, and creating the confidence of citizens in political organs.

Moreover, the current study is encouraged by greater issues about stability of Pakistan democracy. In a political context where the susceptibility of society to the impacts of policies can be low, even relatively minor interventions by high-profile retired officials can have a relatively higher weight. In a refined perception of how these interventions emerge, this paper will contribute to a comprehensive perspective of how post-retirement political utterances by the former army chiefs affect and influence the general civil-military trust situation in Pakistan. In the final research outcome, it will be possible to create the means through which such democratic institutions ought to be willing to cut through the challenges of civil-military relationships within the nation that has the imperatively high standing of the military presence in the past.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to the existing literature regarding civil-military relations in Pakistan refers to the results of complex interaction between the military institution and the civilian regime. It is not new to scholars that the military forces in Pakistan have traditionally occupied a vanguard role in the Pakistani political system and can impose an influence that is not even within their court of law. This hegemony has taken two primary forms: the direct intervention, which embodies military coups, and the soft version, which involves how different departments of power make decisions and how national security and governance are perceived by the public (Cohen, 2004; Fair, 2014). This kind of involvement has implied a tension between military and civilian supremacy over time that has led to a continued absence of civil-military trust. This shortage is defined as the distrust of civilians towards the military in terms of the respect that the military shows toward the the governing bodies of the democracy and in deleting from the military viewpoint of civilian governance as immoral or ineffective. The study of these dynamics is important in the sense that by knowing about those dynamics it can be determined how post-retirement political activity by former army chiefs can contribute to the creation of additional distrust between the two foundations of government.

Although there is ample evidence on the relationship between the military and the civil fabric of Pakistan, most literature available on the subject emphasizes primarily on the active involvement of the military in the Pakistan political scene, and not on the inactive retired military commanders. Although there have been records or reports of coups, military interventionism and institutionalized influence in the policy-making process; somewhat little has been given to the actuality where former army chiefs can find themselves in the active political discourse as retired army chiefs. Military leader as post-retirement statements are significant due to their particular benefit of dominance and dependability. Being people who have held the highest military draw and having served and served in uppermost positions in

the military, their views generally have a considerable weight and affect the general population and the political mannerisms even in the absence of any institutional power. However, this is the part of civil-military relations that has been under research.

Theoretical approaches of civil-military relations would create practical lenses to comprehend the significance of political activities post-retirement. In his idea of the objective civilian control, which has been presented by Huntington (1957), it could be stated that clear distinction between the military and civilian roles with regard to professionalization and removal of political intrusion is necessary in ensuring democratic stability in a given country. This school of thought suggests that military leaders should avoid engaging in politics, even after their retirement by virtue of reputation of the power of the elective regimes. Comparatively, political communication theories as formulated by Lasswell (1948) reveal important pressure exerted by the pronouncements of the masses in the implementation of political discourses and the right of the masses. In that respect, the post-retirement speeches on the part of ex-army chiefs, as well as their commentary, could be effectively used as a means of persuasion that could strengthen or discredit people in democratic institutions. An approach that combines the two theoretical standpoints enables scholars to look at both the normative demands of democratic government, as well as the effects of elite political rhetoric on civil-military affairs in a practical context.

Empirical research studies have been carried out in relation to civil-military trust deficit in Pakistan to determine various factors precipitating its occurrence. An instance of such was the fact that Siddiq (2007) identifies military role in national security affairs, history of frequent military coups, and economic and political interests of militants as the latter factors contributing to the non-belief of the general population. This body of research gives very valuable insight on the structural and historical aspects of civil-military relations, but neglects the participation of the agency, specifically the participation of retired military leadership in the political sphere. This lack of analysis is important since the post-retirement activities of army chiefs may be symbolically as well as practically impactful, which may be approximately holding military aggression or, equally, may provide solutions that can be acceptable by democratic standards.

The research aims to fill this gap by systematically examining the post retirement political statements made by former army chiefs in Pakistan and their effect on the trust deficit between military and the U.S people. The proposed study attempts to fill the gap in knowledge offered by emphasizing this phenomenon under-researched to date with the view to a better understanding of how the military elite in retirement manages to influence the political discourse patterns, shape opinions and perception of the trust between the civilian and the military institution. Therewith, by establishing close relations between the literature on civil-military relations available despite the present period, it will not only expand the literature on

the topic, but it will also equip the practical view on the ways that can be undertaken in order to strengthen the democratic life and define the scope of military intervention in the political life nature.

#### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyze the nature and content of post-retirement political statements made by former army chiefs in Pakistan between 2008 and 2022.
2. To examine the public and political reception of these statements and their influence on perceptions of civilian authority.
3. To assess the impact of post-retirement political statements on the civil-military trust deficit and democratic stability in Pakistan.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the recurring themes and messages in the post-retirement political statements of former army chiefs in Pakistan?
2. How do different segments of the public and political actors perceive these statements?
3. To what extent do post-retirement political statements by former army chiefs affect the civil-military trust dynamic and perceptions of democratic governance in Pakistan?

#### **Significance:**

This study is important on its part as it relates the complexities of the civil-military relations in Pakistan. The study based on on post-retirement political discourse of former army chiefs indicates that symbolic power and publicly exploratory commentary can serve as a means of knowledge of political texts and political perceptions to surrounding societies that portends to alter civil-military trust deficit. The findings of this research can be utilized by policy makers, academics, and civilians to understand the significance of demarcating civility and military positions to enhance democratic institutions. The findings are also useful in providing solutions or guidelines to manage post-retirement activity of the military leaders to achieve transparency, accountability, and stability in governance.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the post-retirement political statements of former army chiefs in Pakistan during the period from 2008 to 2022. 2008 to 2014: An Era of Promises and Prospects 2014 to 2018: Latest Development in Civil-Military Relations 2018 to 2022: Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic The country has undergone major political shifts often discussed by many as an era of promises and possibilities. The qualitative design has been chosen because the intricate nature of the social phenomenon of particular

interest, namely the one that critically evaluates the role of objectivity and objectivity on the rhetoric of politics and the subtle impact that elite actors have on society is a subject that requires detailed considerations. Business excellence research requires exploring qualitative data as it seeks to preserve the richness and subtextual content of the statements of former military leaders which require more than quantitative data to uncover the insights.

This study will mostly rely on the transcripts of political speech, news or media coverage interviews and political commentary in recognized national and international newspapers as the primary sources of data. To offer a representative and holistic picture of the nature, tone, and content of post-retirement statement by former army chiefs, these sources were chosen carefully. Public speeches given at universities, think tanks or civic events were covered because they frequently contain carefully-crafted messages designed to influence public understanding on the subjects of governance, security and national policy. Opinion pieces and media interviews were also covered, since they provide a striking insight into what former military leaders were particularly doing in response to current political events, and how they placed themselves within civilian ranks. By triangulating these various types of sources, the analysis avoids relying on just one type of source that could imply significant bias - either in the choice of words or in the general political and social context in which these statements were made.

The thematic analysis method is applied to the data in the study. Through this method of analysis, frequent themes, patterns, and motifs of the textual material are repeatedly recognized, coded and interpreted. Thematic analysis is especially appropriate in this study, as one could have intensive information on the underlying messages contained in the statements, as well as what it may imply for civil-military relations, population perception, and trust and confidence in the system of democratic institutions. The grouping of the data into themes would allow structuring the analyzed data and pointing out similar stories and priorities that were used by the former chiefs of the army, as well as the deviations or exceptions, which might have a more significant political impact.

This research paper on the content of the statements focuses on both the content analysis of the statements and the summary of how the stated statements are received by the public, the media and the political entities. Surveys and political commentary by the media and opinion polls were scanned to determine the perception of the various groups in society concerning the extent to which former military leaders were able to engage in post-retirement. This move helps in placing the statements in context, and for the research, it helps to think not only about what was said, but how it was received, challenged, or accepted as part of a wider civil-political sphere.

Strategy: The matter of ethics was taken care of in the process of the research work. The data was all based on publicly available sources; hence, the study does not imply any confidential

information or any personal communication. It analyzed without discriminating on based things and circumstances of the statements as opposed to the ego or identity of the individuals on whom we examined. This study meets the accepted professional standards of conducting a qualitative research within the social science field, as it is transparent, accountable, and rigorous in applying the methods and procedures through which the findings were made and conclusions derived; it offers a credible and subtle analysis of the nature of post retirement political activities of Pakistan army chiefs.

#### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The information gleaned from political statements made by former chiefs in the army that have been retired over the period from 2008 to 22 has a consistent pattern in respect of the content and thematic emphasis. These commentaries were often related to national security issues, especially in view of the issues concerning sovereignty, political stability, politics, governance and the general orientation of the domestic and foreign policies of the State of Pakistan. Most of the statements included an assessment of what was or was not working in civilian governance; expressions of discontent about the laws of government; or an endorsement of the difficulty of developing the country's political unity and security. In some instances the retired army generals have made use of their public space times to enlighten the public about the need for national unity, the rule of law and the persistence of the military to serve the nation. the retired army generals have presented their statements as having been said in the national interest. While some of these statements have been formulated in some general terms, others have been more specific or were aimed at attacking directly some governmental policies and/or some political events, they have, consequently, become important public and media attraction.

A very important observation from the analysis was that these post-retirement statements were often taken as implicit or an explicit criticism of civilian administration. Tribal loyalties and differences in the manner in which the different components of the public, political commentators, and the media read these remarks, also led some to believe the General Officers and senior figures remained agents of control over political matters even if they seceded from being statesmen. This sense of continued influence, whether one believes it or not, leads to additional complexity and, often controversy in the relations between civilian and military. The fact that these people have gained position in the public, would be expected to impress weight on their statements, while the respect and authority which has been traditionally attached to such people must influence the way in which public opinion is formed, and be contributory to changes in the general political climate. For this reason, seemingly bland statements, such as general comments on national concerns, can be understood as expressing continuing military interest in political affairs and blurring the line between civilian and military domains of sovereignty.

These declarations generated various public responses on the basis of an individual's political position and social views, largely prevalent in Pakistani society. For the parts of the population that empathize with the military (and accordingly its role in the dispensation of government in history), these

statements could be viewed as beneficial interventions made in goodwill offering points of advice and constructive criticism. From that angle, post-retirement statements became expressions of concern for the security and political stability of the country which "hypersensitivity possibility" to either denounce or destructive attack on the democratic process to provide information and must disclose the existence of difficulties. On the other hand, other groups, and those in particular espousing the fight for more civil supremacy and democratic consolidation, took such statements to be an effort to influence more than constitutionally mandated for the military. Any criticism of an elected government, these critics seemed to say, was demoting the validity of the elected government itself, thereby helping to create an atmosphere of doubt, where civilian power was secondary to military power.

All of these statements have harsh consequences for Pakistan fighting the civil military trust deficit. By casting doubt on the correctness of the line of demarcation between military and the political, postretirement utterances contribute to the construction of public understandings that it is impossible to sharply separate civilian and military life from one another. This ambiguity can undermine some confidence in both these institutions, in the sense that the civilian may regard any recourse to the military as implying a spectre of tyranny, while military commanders may regard civilian leaders as lacking the requisite competence either for formulating a national security policy or for conducting politics. Moreover, analysis of these findings points towards the fact that the symbolic or rhetorical intrusions of former army leaders can have concrete implications for the debaters' (political actors, institutions, and the public) perception of the balance of power between civ and mil.

Furthermore the results seems to show the importance of post-retirement statements are more than just what the citizens public opinion is and how it is used to try to shape the political discourse. These statements all too often set the tenor for media debates, discussions in parliament and deliberations on policy; and underscore the extent of continued symbolic power wielded by former military leaders. In several cases it was apparent from media analyses and opinion polls that there was often a tendency to interpret the general public discussion on these statements as reflecting more general societal apprehensions over the role of the military in politics and these added to the civil-military trust deficit. Consequently, they receive no statement of opinion from the source but function in the role of important intervention in the political and social circumstance of Pakistan that affects the perception and practice in regard to democratic governance of Pakistan.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The conclusions of this study align closely with the established theory on civil-military relation development and, in particular, the role of political maturity in a clear and well-defined interdependency between military and civilian attitudes towards governance. Huntington's classic 1957 work defines most importantly civilian control, the keystone of democratic stability, as professional military institution properly insulated from unsavory political machinations while not being directly involved in political decision-making. From Huntington's point of view, then, provided the military is subservient to the civil authority, a Chinaman's chance would exist for the successful functioning of

democratic society while, at the same time, drawing on the experience and strategic perspective which the military brings to the proposed issues of State Defense and Security. Indeed, the post-retirement political pronouncements examined here show that the former army bosses are, for the most part, inordinately potent participants in the political discourse that tends to blur these important distinctions. Their public comment, whether in the form of speeches, interview or opinion piece, often involves the issues they cross with civilian government including policy successes and failures, political stability and national security. While such statements might mean only advice or reflection, they are given significant importance and meaning in comparison with commentary because they are given currency over a large audience via the media and are largely symbolic due to the previous position of power of the former chiefs.

Some of the potential effects of this blurring of boundaries are, however, of special significance in the Pakistani context. Direct military intervention in the political sphere has long characterized the history of Pakistani civilization, leading to flares in civil-military relations, between civil and military leaders. Though the civilian governments that were reasonably politically stable from 2008 to 22 have kept the armed forces in a lower position, the role played by retired military leaders in internal politics still ascribes an informal but sincere role for the military in politics. This perception might be detrimental to the legitimacy of elected civilian government since it suggests that there may be something bigger than governmental institutions which must be taken into account, and this is of course a certain informal but widespread connection of influential military figures in society. This relationship increases the lack of civilian military trust and the respect for civilian empowerment to exercise an independent controlling power in the respectively country and the possibility for the common people to look back at the democratic process itself as being isolated from outside. In effect, post-retirement political messages - though we use the term interventions as distinct from formal ways of intervention - constitute a soft power of influence that transforms political actors, the political institution and/or people's perceptions about the distribution of power in the state.

Pakistan is not the only country where the military has a hold in politics, and where this affects them negatively. Subsequently, these post-retirement statements, because of the close military tradition of Pakistan and the military's position within the national security formulation, are of a higher significance than they should be. They are an influential latent force, still able to provide details for public discussions and political tactics long after the officers had long since retired from public service. If he draws on the symbolic capital the retired generals had as "career soldiers" that they acquired during their time, this can be sufficient for them to shape discourses even when not participating directly in policy making. To a whole extent, this "soft power" limits democratic governance, creating a system of two castes of administrative powers where the full function of political opinion and maneuvers is subsumed to personnel of civil servants and decision-makers driven from both civilians and armed forces.

The implications of these findings for practice both in the short and long term are discussed. In order for effective democratic procedures to be in operation in Pakistan, firm boundaries need to be established and maintained between the civil and the military communities. These parameters must not be thought of as merely institutional constructions, but also as Codes for the conduct of retired military officers and oxidation adults. A very strong dividing line for post-retirement political action could be established to facilitate a positive contribution from retired officers, without letting them insult civilian power. Such assumed common understandings can be reinforced through formal mechanisms (for example, official boundaries on public utterances) or informally (for instance, codes of behaviour that prevail inside a military establishment and that govern its relations with the political sphere once members have retired). In addition to the legal and institutional aspects, these practices have carried symbolic meaning in reinforcing in the public conscience, for political actors, and even the international community in general, the military's respect for the sovereignty of civil society and the democratic government. Therefore, by consolidating such bounds, Pakistan can decrease the ambiguity over the relative roles for the civilian and military institutions in order to increase the legitimacy of the military and the civilian civilian institutions in Pakistan and counteract the civil military trust deficit.

Furthermore, the requirements are not only mandatory for the stability of the government system in the form of Democracy in Pakistan but also for the stability of civil-military relations. If retired military personalities continue to interfere systematically in the political discourse then it could passively incite others, affect non-civilian air or interfere in the affairs of their own, undermine the legitimacy of civilian leaders, and make governance problematic. As long as ex-military leaders remain active players in political activities, there are instances where they intimidate and outshine the civilian leadership and send a message to the public that the control of the political structure rests with the military even if it is not in uniform. This produces an imbalance of power and, along with it, a cyclical process of dependency where those responsible for civilian action-in an effort to make decisions-are obliged to consult military opinion because they do not command the same power. Furthermore, this further alienates the electorate from the democracy as they lose hope for gifted verdict from the elected officials to govern themselves.

Despite the worth of contributions, there are several limitations that are important to identify from this study. The primary drawback is that the information is based on source material that is publicly available (speeches, media interviews and political commentaries in print and online). While these sources are a valuable dataset for studying public discussion, they say nothing about what is actually being said in public discussions, or what is being said informally and as private recommendations by retired military leaders to political actors. However, it might underestimate the potential influence of retirees at the backstage, which may be quite significant for policy choices, party strategies and political negotiations. Doctors and military generals have close ties to political elites of the moment, and may be offering advice and counsel in ways not apparent to ordinary humans. However, it may be relevant for future research to be conscious of what would be the implications of incorporating other

forms of accessing the deeper and informal sources of power to which retired military personnel might still have access.

Furthermore, there may additionally be biases which derive from the public perception and framing of media statements, where some statements may become emphasised, interpreted and in some instances immature presented; thus in turn affecting the understanding of the statements, and how such may affect CMT. Finally, the media are an important source for public opinion and the way in which retired generals are framed can be extremely important for how credible their views are deemed and how 'important' they are. As such, the conclusions of the materials made available to the public must be viewed in the light of the dynamics of the media, for the different media channels will generally tend to focus differently on the same statement, thus creating an array of interpretations for the public. To this end there is a critical need to cross-reference information from the media sources with independent sources in as far as a more balanced view of the effects of such claims can be reached.

These and other limitations suggest a caution in the interpretation of results and also indicate that more complementary research methods examining the post-retirement influence should be employed; however, having a survey-based study could give an insight into the hard and soft sides of post-retirement influence. Elite interviews in particular might lead to blowing the viewers' mind by trying to get information from politicians or civil servants or even retired personnel in the armed forces who have a deeper personal knowledge of what actually is going on at the grassroots level. To show how and why previous generations of military establishment had influenced political conversation and policy decision making and to point out patterns and trends through generations, such research could be valuable. Likewise, research surveys a broader public can supply for a more organized evaluation of day to day individuals' views of retired army generals in politics and potential implication on building conviction in democratic institutions.

Future studies should attempt to make up for these limitations by paying greater attention to private markets, informal advisory positions, and indirect professional influence exerted by retired army leaders in the background. The phenomena in other countries with a strong military tradition can also be full of benchmarks and theory for comparison. For instance, a research of the role actually played and established by retired armed forces leaders in one or more of the South-Asian nation-states including Turkey, Egypt, and their impact upon the civil-military trust may provide us with some serious pointers that will be of significant interest. Experience in other countries having a more pluralized political system or a relatively brief military tradition could have lessons for how to exert caution against civilian authority and entrench civilian institutions through countering military influence during military retirement.

Furthermore, measuring the time change in the civil-military trust deficit using time series data based on military dry media commentary could help to clarify if and how the civil-military trust deficit endures and evolves over time. When all these methods are combined they provide the basis for studying the interaction of retired military elites, democratic consolidation, and civilian authority in

future studies. Longitudinal analyses would offer abundant information on the impact of post-retirement communicating on political activity, voting behavior, and on people's level of trust for elected (or un-elected) officials. Although not explicitly addressed, this may be particularly relevant to how civilian governments are sustained (particularly when former armed forces chiefs have been involved for long periods of time).

In conclusion, this study affirms the need for a line of demarcation between the military and the civilians in the government. The debate in this paper demonstrates how post retiring Bos' political statements acquire the power to generate or control public opinion, influence political discourse and influence perceived authority in a way that has consequences for the civil-military relationship of trust in Pakistan. This concern can be overcome if proper boundaries and norms are established when people are involved in the political system and empower the democratic institutions to make the nation fit for healthy living as well as peaceful coexistence. The question of building control over retired military bureaucrats is not purely theoretical - it has generated specific practical demands for institution as civilian political dominance, and for giving democratic institutional appellation while respecting the institutional force-sharing principle. Finally, the findings suggest that for successful democratic governance in Pakistan to operate, it requires not just strong institutions, it also requires and has obtained a common set of norms regarding "correct standards" and behaviors-which delineate the various spheres of influence for civilian and military actors. As a country whose civil-military relations still have an indispensable impact on the form and kinesia of the regime and its politics, as well as on people's trust and commitment to the administration, such attempts hold crucial importance for the consolidation of the democratic system and resolving the institutions of power.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has systematically analyzed the effect of the post-retirement political statements of the Pakistan army generals on the civil-military trust deficit extending from 2008 to 2022. The research shows that these statements, although they are often presented as an evaluation of the national security situation, governance and political stability, are nevertheless very significant because of the symbolic authority of the retired military leaders. The analysis shows such public interventions have a concrete impact on the content of political discourse and public view, thereby often eroding the boundary between the military and the civilian sphere of power. This blurring feeds a civil-military trust deficit by creating confusion about the balance of power between the civilian institutions of government and the military, which for most of Pakistan's history has been perceived as the key political force in a state.

The results of this research help to illustrate the deeper understanding of civil-military relations in Pakistan while highlighting the importance of demarcating and maintaining clear boundaries between the military and civilian in their respective roles. Ensuring that retired military leaders exercise restraint when it comes to post-retirement political participation is essential to promoting democratic stability, public confidence in civilian government, and democratic legitimacy of elected leaders. By showing

the role of post-retirement statements in shaping the evaluations of key actors—from the general public to politicians—that affect Civil-Military trust, this study helps to highlight that civil-military trust should not be seen as determined solely by institutional arrangements but, rather, as the outcome of symbolic and communicative actions on the part of influential actors.

These findings could be extended in future research by studying confidential communications, informal mentoring, and power brokerage in the background by retired military officers. Such studies would produce a fuller understanding of the mechanisms by which post-retirement engagement has implications for civil-military relations. In practice, it states, Pakistan's political and military institutions should jointly develop and internalize the norms, rules, and standards for separating authorities to facilitate civilian dominance and build trust in democracy and ultimately help build democratic stability and resilience in the long run.

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