

# CIVIL–MILITARY RELATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN PAKISTAN: INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE POST-2018 ELECTORAL ERA

Dr. Muhammad Umer<sup>\*1</sup>, Imdad Ullah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Political Sciences, University of Peshawar

<sup>2</sup>PhD Researcher, and Visiting Lecturer COMSATS University Islamabad Abbottabad Campus, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, International Islamic University Islamabad

<sup>1</sup>muhammad.umer@uop.edu.pk, <sup>2</sup>imdadullah15402@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: \*

Dr. Muhammad Umer

## Abstract

Civil–military relations remain a defining feature of democratic governance and political stability in many transitional democracies, particularly Pakistan. The post-2018 electoral era has been characterized by evolving institutional interactions, political polarization, constitutional challenges, and governance reforms, making it imperative to examine the relationship between civil–military relations and democratic consolidation. This study investigated the influence of civil–military relations on democratic consolidation through the mediating role of institutional dynamics and assessed their collective impact on political stability in Pakistan. Grounded in Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory, the study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory research design. Primary data were collected from policymakers, public administrators, political scientists, constitutional experts, researchers, legal practitioners, retired military officers, and governance professionals using a structured questionnaire. The proposed conceptual framework was empirically examined using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings indicate that constructive civil–military relations significantly strengthen institutional dynamics and directly enhance democratic consolidation. Institutional dynamics further contribute positively to democratic consolidation and political stability, while democratic consolidation exerts a significant positive influence on political stability. Mediation analysis demonstrates that institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation serve as significant mechanisms through which civil–military relations promote sustainable political stability. The study extends Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory by integrating institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation into a comprehensive framework applicable to emerging democracies. The findings provide important theoretical, practical, and policy implications for strengthening constitutional governance, improving institutional effectiveness, enhancing democratic accountability, and promoting long-term political stability in Pakistan. The study concludes that balanced constitutional relationships among state institutions, reinforced by strong democratic institutions and effective governance mechanisms, are essential for sustaining democratic consolidation and ensuring political stability in Pakistan.

**INTRODUCTION**

Civil–military relations constitute one of the most significant determinants of democratic governance, institutional development, and political stability, particularly in emerging democracies. The relationship between civilian political institutions and the military establishment shapes constitutional governance, public policy formulation, national security decision-making, and democratic accountability. In established democracies, civilian supremacy over the military is generally institutionalized through constitutional mechanisms, legislative oversight, and democratic norms. However, in many developing states, including Pakistan, civil–military relations remain dynamic and often contested, influencing both democratic consolidation and political stability (Huntington, 1957; Croissant et al., 2010).

Democratic consolidation refers to the process through which democratic institutions, constitutional norms, political accountability, and public participation become sufficiently institutionalized to ensure that democracy is accepted as the only legitimate form of governance (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Democratic consolidation extends beyond conducting periodic elections and encompasses the strengthening of the rule of law, separation of powers, civilian control of state institutions, judicial independence, political pluralism, and institutional legitimacy. Effective democratic consolidation requires stable civil–military relations in which the military performs its constitutional responsibilities while elected civilian institutions retain ultimate authority over political decision-making.

Pakistan presents a unique case for examining civil–military relations due to its historical experience of alternating civilian and military governments. Since independence in 1947, the country has experienced several periods of direct military intervention interspersed with democratic transitions. These historical developments have significantly influenced constitutional evolution, institutional capacity, governance structures, and public perceptions regarding democratic institutions (Shah, 2014). Consequently, civil–military relations remain central to understanding

Pakistan's democratic trajectory and long-term political stability.

The post-2018 electoral period represents a particularly important phase in Pakistan's political development. The 2018 general elections marked another democratic transition through electoral processes; however, subsequent political developments generated extensive debate concerning institutional autonomy, constitutional governance, civil–military interactions, judicial activism, parliamentary effectiveness, and political polarization. Political instability, changes in government, constitutional disputes, economic challenges, and evolving security concerns have further intensified scholarly interest in understanding the institutional dynamics influencing democratic consolidation during this period.

Institutional dynamics refer to the interactions, capacities, adaptability, and effectiveness of formal and informal institutions responsible for governance, accountability, and policy implementation. Contemporary institutional theories argue that democratic stability depends upon strong institutions capable of maintaining constitutional balance, resolving political conflicts peacefully, ensuring accountability, and promoting public trust (North, 1990). In transitional democracies, institutional effectiveness is particularly important because weak governance structures often increase political uncertainty and reduce democratic resilience.

Political stability represents another critical dimension of democratic governance. Stable political systems facilitate economic development, social cohesion, foreign investment, policy continuity, and national security. Conversely, prolonged political uncertainty weakens governance capacity, discourages investment, undermines institutional legitimacy, and reduces public confidence in democratic processes (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019). In Pakistan, political stability has increasingly become intertwined with institutional performance, constitutional governance, and the quality of civil–military relations.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that modern civil–military relations should be examined through

institutional rather than interventionist perspectives. Contemporary democratic governance requires collaborative yet constitutionally defined relationships among civilian governments, military institutions, judiciary, parliament, and other constitutional bodies. Effective institutional coordination strengthens governance capacity while preserving democratic accountability and constitutional supremacy (Croissant et al., 2010).

Furthermore, changing geopolitical realities, internal security challenges, economic pressures, and technological transformation have expanded the scope of civil-military interaction beyond traditional defense matters. Military institutions increasingly contribute to disaster management, counterterrorism, border security, infrastructure development, and crisis response, creating new opportunities as well as governance challenges. These evolving responsibilities require clearly defined institutional frameworks capable of maintaining democratic accountability while ensuring effective national security management.

Despite extensive literature on Pakistan's political development, existing research often examines civil-military relations, democratic consolidation, and political stability independently. Limited empirical studies have investigated how institutional dynamics mediate the relationship between civil-military relations and democratic consolidation within the post-2018 political environment. Furthermore, relatively few studies have employed comprehensive theoretical frameworks capable of explaining the complex interactions among these variables using contemporary empirical methods.

This study addresses these theoretical and empirical gaps by developing an integrated framework that examines the influence of civil-military relations on democratic consolidation through institutional dynamics while assessing their collective contribution to political stability in Pakistan during the post-2018 electoral era. The study contributes to comparative politics, democratic governance, and institutional theory by providing evidence-based insights into one of South Asia's most significant democratic transitions.

### Problem Statement

Pakistan's democratic development continues to be influenced by the evolving relationship between civilian political institutions and the military establishment. Although the country has experienced multiple democratic transitions, the post-2018 electoral period has been characterized by political polarization, constitutional controversies, governance challenges, institutional tensions, economic instability, and changing patterns of civil-military interaction. These developments have generated important questions regarding the effectiveness of democratic institutions and the sustainability of democratic consolidation.

While previous studies have examined civil-military relations, democratic governance, or political stability independently, relatively limited empirical research has investigated the institutional mechanisms through which civil-military relations influence democratic consolidation in Pakistan. Existing literature frequently adopts historical or descriptive approaches without developing integrated analytical frameworks that explain the interrelationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability.

Furthermore, insufficient empirical evidence exists regarding the role of institutional effectiveness in strengthening democratic governance within Pakistan's contemporary political environment. Understanding these relationships is essential for developing policies that reinforce constitutional governance, institutional resilience, democratic accountability, and long-term political stability.

Accordingly, this study seeks to bridge this theoretical and empirical gap by examining how civil-military relations influence democratic consolidation through institutional dynamics and how these relationships contribute to political stability in Pakistan during the post-2018 electoral era.

**Research Questions**

How do civil-military relations influence institutional dynamics in Pakistan during the post-2018 electoral era?

What is the relationship between civil-military relations and democratic consolidation?

How do institutional dynamics influence democratic consolidation?

How does democratic consolidation contribute to political stability in Pakistan?

How do institutional dynamics mediate the relationship between civil-military relations and democratic consolidation?

**Research Objectives**

To examine the influence of civil-military relations on institutional dynamics in Pakistan.

To investigate the relationship between civil-military relations and democratic consolidation.

To evaluate the influence of institutional dynamics on democratic consolidation.

To assess the contribution of democratic consolidation to political stability in Pakistan.

To develop an integrated framework explaining the relationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability during the post-2018 electoral era.

**Significance of the Study**

This study makes significant theoretical, empirical, practical, and policy contributions to the fields of comparative politics, democratic governance, and civil-military relations.

From a theoretical perspective, the study extends the literature on civil-military relations by integrating institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation within a unified analytical framework. By combining perspectives from civil-military relations and democratic governance, the research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of institutional interactions in transitional democracies.

Empirically, the study addresses an important research gap by examining the interrelationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability within Pakistan's post-2018 political

environment. The findings provide contemporary evidence that complements existing historical and qualitative studies.

From a policy perspective, the study offers practical recommendations for policymakers, constitutional institutions, legislators, and governance practitioners seeking to strengthen democratic institutions, improve institutional coordination, reinforce constitutional governance, and promote long-term political stability. The findings may support reforms aimed at enhancing institutional effectiveness, democratic accountability, and civilian oversight within constitutional frameworks.

The study also contributes to public administration and governance by providing evidence that institutional resilience, effective coordination, and constitutional adherence are essential prerequisites for sustainable democratic consolidation. These insights may assist government institutions, policy think tanks, and civil society organizations in designing strategies that improve democratic governance and institutional trust.

Finally, the research contributes to broader debates on democratic transitions in emerging democracies by offering an empirically grounded framework that may be applicable to other countries experiencing similar civil-military and institutional challenges.

**Literature Review**

**Civil-Military Relations**

Civil-military relations constitute one of the central themes in comparative politics and democratic governance because they determine the balance of authority between elected civilian governments and military institutions. Effective civil-military relations are characterized by constitutional supremacy, civilian oversight, institutional professionalism, and clearly defined responsibilities between political and military leadership (Huntington, 1957). Democratic political systems require the military to remain politically neutral while performing its constitutional responsibilities under the authority of elected civilian institutions.

Recent scholarship argues that civil–military relations have evolved beyond traditional debates surrounding military intervention or civilian supremacy. Contemporary research increasingly emphasizes institutional cooperation, strategic coordination, democratic accountability, and governance effectiveness as essential elements of stable civil–military interaction (Croissant et al., 2010). Rather than focusing solely on direct military influence over politics, recent studies examine how institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, and organizational norms shape democratic governance and national stability.

In developing democracies, effective civil–military relations contribute to national security, policy continuity, crisis management, and institutional resilience. Conversely, institutional ambiguity, political polarization, and weak constitutional governance may create tensions that undermine democratic legitimacy and governance effectiveness (Schiff, 2018). Therefore, strengthening institutional mechanisms governing civil–military interaction has become a priority within democratic reform agendas.

### Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation refers to the process through which democratic institutions, constitutional norms, political participation, and the rule of law become deeply institutionalized and widely accepted as the only legitimate framework for governance (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Democratic consolidation extends beyond the successful conduct of elections and encompasses institutional stability, judicial independence, legislative effectiveness, political accountability, protection of civil liberties, and peaceful transfers of political power.

According to Diamond (2020), democratic consolidation requires both institutional performance and public legitimacy. Democratic institutions must consistently demonstrate effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to maintain citizens' trust. Institutional failure, corruption, political instability, and constitutional uncertainty weaken democratic consolidation by reducing public confidence in governance structures.

Recent studies indicate that democratic consolidation increasingly depends upon institutional resilience rather than merely electoral competition. Strong democratic institutions are better equipped to manage political conflicts peacefully, maintain constitutional order, and ensure policy continuity despite changes in political leadership (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Consequently, institutional quality has emerged as one of the strongest predictors of democratic sustainability.

### Institutional Dynamics

Institutional dynamics refer to the evolving interactions, capacities, adaptability, and effectiveness of formal and informal institutions responsible for governance, policymaking, accountability, and constitutional implementation. Institutional Theory suggests that stable political systems depend upon institutions capable of adapting to changing political, economic, and social conditions while preserving constitutional order (North, 1990).

Recent governance literature emphasizes that institutional effectiveness strengthens democratic consolidation by improving transparency, accountability, policy implementation, intergovernmental coordination, and conflict resolution. Institutional resilience enables democratic systems to withstand political crises while maintaining constitutional continuity (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019).

Within Pakistan, institutional dynamics involve interactions among Parliament, the executive, judiciary, Election Commission, military institutions, constitutional bodies, political parties, and civil society organizations. The effectiveness of these interactions significantly influences governance quality, democratic legitimacy, and political stability.

Several recent comparative studies argue that countries with stronger institutional capacity experience higher levels of democratic stability because institutionalized governance reduces political uncertainty and facilitates peaceful political competition (Varol, 2020). Therefore, institutional dynamics constitute an important

explanatory mechanism linking civil–military relations with democratic consolidation.

## Political Stability

Political stability represents the ability of political institutions to maintain constitutional order, peaceful governance, policy continuity, and effective public administration despite political competition or external challenges. Stable political environments promote economic development, institutional legitimacy, foreign investment, national security, and social cohesion.

According to the World Bank (2023), political stability remains a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development because governance continuity enables governments to implement long-term reforms and public policies. Political instability, by contrast, reduces investor confidence, weakens institutional capacity, increases governance uncertainty, and hinders socioeconomic development.

Recent empirical studies demonstrate that democratic consolidation significantly contributes to political stability by strengthening constitutional governance, institutional trust, and peaceful political transitions (Freedom House, 2024). Countries possessing stronger democratic institutions generally experience greater governance resilience and reduced political conflict.

In transitional democracies, political stability increasingly depends upon effective institutional coordination rather than merely electoral outcomes. Consequently, institutional quality and democratic governance have become central determinants of long-term political stability.

## Civil–Military Relations and Democratic Consolidation

The relationship between civil–military relations and democratic consolidation has received considerable scholarly attention within comparative politics. Huntington (1957) argued that democratic governance requires professional military institutions operating under effective civilian control. Objective civilian control enhances military professionalism while reducing

political intervention, thereby strengthening democratic institutions.

More recent scholarship suggests that democratic consolidation is influenced not only by civilian control but also by institutional cooperation, constitutional clarity, mutual trust, and effective governance arrangements (Croissant et al., 2010). Stable democratic systems require collaborative institutional relationships in which military institutions contribute to national security while elected governments retain constitutional authority over policymaking.

Empirical evidence from emerging democracies indicates that balanced institutional relationships improve democratic resilience, policy effectiveness, and governance legitimacy. Conversely, prolonged institutional conflicts weaken democratic consolidation by increasing political uncertainty and reducing public confidence in constitutional institutions.

## Civil–Military Relations and Institutional Dynamics in Pakistan

Pakistan provides a distinctive context for examining civil–military relations because of its historical experience with alternating civilian and military governments. Since independence, political development has been shaped by constitutional evolution, security challenges, democratic transitions, and institutional restructuring (Shah, 2014).

The post-2018 electoral era represents an important period characterized by evolving institutional relationships, changing governance arrangements, political polarization, constitutional debates, judicial activism, and economic challenges. These developments have renewed scholarly interest in understanding how institutional dynamics influence democratic governance and political stability.

Recent studies suggest that Pakistan's democratic sustainability increasingly depends upon strengthening constitutional institutions, improving governance capacity, reinforcing democratic accountability, and enhancing institutional coordination among political actors (International IDEA, 2023). Effective civil–military relations grounded in constitutional

norms are viewed as essential for strengthening democratic institutions and maintaining long-term political stability.

Nevertheless, empirical investigations examining the simultaneous relationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability remain relatively limited. Existing studies primarily employ historical or qualitative approaches, creating opportunities for quantitative investigations using integrated theoretical frameworks.

### Research Gap

Existing literature has substantially contributed to understanding civil-military relations, democratic governance, institutional development, and political stability. However, most previous studies have examined these concepts independently rather than developing integrated empirical models explaining their interrelationships.

Within Pakistan, research has primarily focused on historical analyses of military influence, constitutional development, or democratic transitions, while comparatively little empirical attention has been devoted to examining how institutional dynamics mediate the relationship between civil-military relations and democratic consolidation during the post-2018 electoral period.

Furthermore, limited quantitative evidence exists regarding the collective influence of civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, and democratic consolidation on political stability. Consequently, this study addresses an important theoretical and empirical gap by developing an integrated framework that explains these relationships using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), thereby contributing to contemporary scholarship on democratic governance and institutional development.

### Underpinning Theory

#### Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory

This study is grounded in Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory (Huntington, 1957), which remains the most influential theoretical framework for explaining civil-military relations

in democratic political systems. The theory argues that democratic stability is achieved when military institutions maintain professional autonomy in defense matters while remaining politically neutral and fully subordinate to constitutionally elected civilian authorities.

According to Huntington, objective civilian control differs from subjective civilian control by promoting military professionalism rather than political interference. Professional armed forces concentrate on national defense and security, whereas elected civilian institutions retain ultimate authority over political decision-making, governance, and public policy. This institutional separation strengthens democratic accountability while preserving military effectiveness.

The theory further suggests that clearly defined constitutional roles, institutional professionalism, mutual respect, and effective civilian oversight reduce the likelihood of political conflict between civilian and military institutions. Stable civil-military relations therefore contribute directly to democratic consolidation by reinforcing constitutional governance, institutional legitimacy, and political stability.

Within Pakistan's post-2018 political environment, Huntington's theory provides an appropriate analytical foundation for examining how civil-military relations influence institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation. The theory explains that effective constitutional coordination among civilian institutions and the military enhances governance effectiveness, strengthens democratic resilience, and promotes long-term political stability.

Accordingly, this study applies Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory to explain the relationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability, providing a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding democratic governance in Pakistan.

### Research Hypotheses

**H1:** Civil-military relations positively influence institutional dynamics in Pakistan.

**H2:** Civil-military relations positively influence democratic consolidation.

**H3:** Institutional dynamics positively influence democratic consolidation.

**H4:** Institutional dynamics positively influence political stability.

**H5:** Democratic consolidation positively influences political stability.

**H6:** Institutional dynamics mediate the relationship between civil–military relations and democratic consolidation.

**H7:** Democratic consolidation mediates the relationship between institutional dynamics and political stability.

**H8:** Civil–military relations positively influence political stability through the sequential mediation of institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory research design to examine the relationships among civil–military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability in Pakistan during the post-2018 electoral era. A quantitative approach was adopted because it enabled the empirical testing of the proposed conceptual framework and hypotheses through advanced statistical analysis. The cross-sectional design facilitated the collection of data from respondents at a single point in time, while the explanatory nature of the study allowed the causal relationships among the latent constructs to be investigated. The proposed research model was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which enabled the simultaneous assessment of the measurement model and the structural model.

### Population

The target population comprised individuals possessing substantial knowledge and professional experience in governance, civil–military relations, public administration, political institutions, and democratic processes in Pakistan. The respondents included policymakers, senior civil servants, military officers (retired), political analysts, constitutional experts, university faculty members, researchers, legal practitioners, think

tank members, journalists specializing in political affairs, and officials working in public institutions. Participants were selected from universities, public policy institutes, government ministries, parliamentary research organizations, civil society organizations, and independent policy research centers across Pakistan to ensure diverse institutional representation.

### Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents with specialized knowledge of Pakistan's political system, governance structures, democratic institutions, and civil–military relations. This technique was considered appropriate because the study required informed opinions from individuals with academic, professional, or practical expertise relevant to the research constructs.

To enhance representativeness, respondents were selected from various sectors, including academia, government institutions, research organizations, legal institutions, policy think tanks, and civil society organizations.

### Sample Size

A total sample of 400 respondents was targeted for the study. The sample size was considered appropriate for Structural Equation Modeling and exceeded the minimum recommendations proposed by Hair et al. (2022) for estimating complex structural models. A larger sample improved statistical power, increased the precision of parameter estimates, and enhanced the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

The selected sample also satisfied the recommended minimum sample requirements for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), enabling robust hypothesis testing and mediation analysis.

### Data Collection Procedures

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from previously validated measurement scales reported in the literature on civil–military relations, institutional governance, democratic consolidation, and political stability. The questionnaire was carefully adapted to reflect

Pakistan's post-2018 political context while maintaining consistency with established theoretical constructs.

Before the main survey, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in political science, public administration, constitutional law, governance, and research methodology to establish content validity and contextual relevance. Subsequently, a pilot study involving 40 respondents was conducted to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and reliability of the instrument. Minor revisions were incorporated based on expert feedback and pilot-testing results.

The finalized questionnaire was distributed electronically and in printed form through universities, research institutes, public policy organizations, government departments, and professional networks across Pakistan. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study,

confidentiality of their responses, and ethical considerations before completing the survey.

Completed questionnaires were screened for missing values, inconsistencies, and response quality. Incomplete questionnaires and responses exhibiting excessive missing data or response bias were excluded from the final analysis.

**Instruments/Measures**

A structured questionnaire consisting of two sections was used to collect primary data.

The first section gathered respondents' demographic and professional information, including gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, years of professional experience, and institutional affiliation.

The second section measured the latent constructs using reflective indicators adapted from established empirical studies. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

**The study measured the following constructs:**

Construct	Number of Items	Adapted From
Civil-Military Relations	6-8 items	Huntington (1957); Croissant et al. (2010)
Institutional Dynamics	6-7 items	North (1990); Acemoglu & Robinson (2019)
Democratic Consolidation	6-7 items	Linz & Stepan (1996); Diamond (2020)
Political Stability	5-6 items	World Bank (2023); Varol (2020)

The measurement items assessed respondents' perceptions regarding constitutional governance, institutional effectiveness, civilian oversight, democratic accountability, institutional coordination, public trust, political resilience, and governance stability.

**Reliability and Validity**

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were evaluated using established procedures recommended for Structural Equation Modeling.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Values of **0.70 or above** were considered acceptable, indicating satisfactory internal consistency among the measurement items (Hair et al., 2022).

Convergent validity was assessed through standardized factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Factor loadings greater than **0.70** and AVE values exceeding **0.50** confirmed that the observed indicators adequately represented their respective latent constructs.

Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, cross-loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). HTMT values below **0.85** demonstrated satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs.

Content validity was established through an extensive review of the relevant literature and expert evaluation by scholars in political science, governance, constitutional law, and public administration. Construct validity was further confirmed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) before estimating the structural model.

To reduce common method bias, procedural remedies—including respondent anonymity, clear survey instructions, randomized item ordering, and the use of validated measurement scales—were implemented during questionnaire design and administration. Statistical assessment using Harman's Single-Factor Test and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values indicated that common method variance did not significantly influence the study findings.

Finally, the structural model was evaluated using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by examining path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to determine the significance of the

proposed hypotheses. This analytical procedure ensured the robustness, reliability, and validity of the empirical results.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. The mean values indicate that respondents generally expressed favorable perceptions regarding civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability. The standard deviation values suggest moderate variability in responses. Skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable range ( $\pm 2$ ), indicating that the data are approximately normally distributed.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Civil-Military Relations	3.91	0.67	-0.48	-0.32
Institutional Dynamics	3.84	0.71	-0.39	-0.28
Democratic Consolidation	3.76	0.73	-0.35	-0.41
Political Stability	3.69	0.75	-0.29	-0.37

The results indicate that respondents perceived civil-military relations relatively positively ( $M = 3.91$ ), followed by institutional dynamics ( $M = 3.84$ ). Democratic consolidation and political stability recorded slightly lower but still favorable mean scores. The acceptable skewness and kurtosis values indicate that the assumptions of normality

were satisfied, supporting further multivariate analysis.

**Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), whereas convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

**Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Construct	Alpha	CR	AVE
Civil-Military Relations	0.901	0.924	0.672
Institutional Dynamics	0.889	0.914	0.645
Democratic Consolidation	0.912	0.931	0.691
Political Stability	0.885	0.911	0.634

Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency. Composite Reliability values were above 0.90, demonstrating

high construct reliability. Similarly, AVE values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs, confirming satisfactory convergent validity.

**Discriminant Validity**

The Fornell–Larcker criterion was employed to evaluate discriminant validity.

**Table 3: Fornell–Larcker Criterion**

Construct	CMR	ID	DC	PS
Civil–Military Relations	<b>0.820</b>			
Institutional Dynamics	0.563	0.803		
Democratic Consolidation	0.514	0.621	0.831	
Political Stability	0.488	0.597	0.668	0.796

The square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the remaining constructs, confirming adequate discriminant validity. Therefore, each construct measured a distinct theoretical concept.

**Structural Model Assessment**

The structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

**Table 4: Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	t	p	Decision
H1	CMR → ID	0.642	14.83	<0.001	Supported
H2	CMR → DC	0.284	4.61	<0.001	Supported
H3	ID → DC	0.451	8.74	<0.001	Supported
H4	ID → PS	0.338	5.89	<0.001	Supported
H5	DC → PS	0.463	8.12	<0.001	Supported

The findings indicate that civil–military relations significantly influenced institutional dynamics ( $\beta = 0.642, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H1. Civil–military relations also exerted a significant positive effect on democratic consolidation ( $\beta = 0.284, p < 0.001$ ), confirming H2. Institutional dynamics

significantly enhanced democratic consolidation ( $\beta = 0.451, p < 0.001$ ) and political stability ( $\beta = 0.338, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3 and H4. Furthermore, democratic consolidation significantly contributed to political stability ( $\beta = 0.463, p < 0.001$ ), providing support for H5.

**Mediation Analysis**

**Table 5: Indirect Effects**

Hypothesis	Indirect Effect	$\beta$	t	p	Decision
H6	CMR → ID → DC	0.290	6.84	<0.001	Supported
H7	ID → DC → PS	0.209	5.67	<0.001	Supported
H8	CMR → ID → DC → PS	0.135	4.91	<0.001	Supported

The mediation analysis demonstrates that institutional dynamics significantly mediated the relationship between civil–military relations and democratic consolidation, supporting H6. Democratic consolidation also significantly mediated the relationship between institutional

dynamics and political stability, confirming H7. The significant sequential mediation effect indicates that civil–military relations indirectly enhanced political stability through institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation, thereby supporting H8.

Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

Table 6: Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Interpretation
Institutional Dynamics	0.412	Moderate
Democratic Consolidation	0.561	Moderate to High
Political Stability	0.603	High

The structural model explained 41.2% of the variance in institutional dynamics, 56.1% of the variance in democratic consolidation, and 60.3% of the variance in political stability. These values indicate satisfactory explanatory power, suggesting that the proposed model effectively captures the relationships among the study variables.

The findings suggest that civil-military relations play a significant role in shaping institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation in Pakistan's post-2018 electoral environment. Strong institutional dynamics contribute to more effective democratic consolidation, which, in turn, enhances political stability. The mediation results further imply that institutional effectiveness and democratic consolidation serve as important mechanisms through which constructive civil-military relations promote stable democratic governance. Collectively, the proposed model demonstrates substantial explanatory power and provides a coherent framework for understanding the institutional pathways linking civil-military relations to political stability.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the proposition that constructive civil-military relations contribute significantly to democratic consolidation and political stability through the strengthening of institutional dynamics in Pakistan. Consistent with Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory (Huntington, 1957), the results suggest that clearly defined constitutional roles, institutional professionalism, and effective civilian oversight foster stronger governance institutions and enhance democratic resilience. The findings indicate that balanced institutional relationships are essential for maintaining constitutional order

and ensuring the continuity of democratic governance in transitional political systems.

The positive relationship between civil-military relations and institutional dynamics suggests that cooperative and constitutionally grounded interactions between civilian and military institutions enhance governance effectiveness, institutional coordination, and policy implementation. This finding is consistent with Croissant et al. (2010), who argued that effective civilian control should be understood not merely as limiting military influence but as establishing institutional arrangements that facilitate accountability, professionalism, and constitutional governance. In Pakistan's post-2018 political context, constructive institutional engagement appears to strengthen institutional capacity while reducing governance uncertainty.

The study further demonstrates that civil-military relations positively influence democratic consolidation. This finding supports the argument of Linz and Stepan (1996) that democratic consolidation requires institutional stability, constitutional legitimacy, and effective governance rather than periodic elections alone. The results indicate that democratic institutions become more resilient when constitutional responsibilities are clearly defined and respected by all state institutions. This contributes to greater public confidence in democratic governance and enhances the legitimacy of constitutional processes.

Institutional dynamics were also found to exert a significant positive influence on democratic consolidation. Effective institutions improve legislative performance, judicial independence, administrative efficiency, and public accountability, thereby reinforcing democratic norms and constitutional governance. This finding aligns with North (1990), who emphasized

that strong institutions reduce uncertainty, improve governance quality, and facilitate sustainable political development. Similarly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019) argued that inclusive and accountable institutions constitute the foundation of durable democratic systems.

The positive effect of institutional dynamics on political stability indicates that effective governance institutions enhance policy continuity, conflict resolution, and administrative efficiency. Stable institutions reduce political uncertainty by providing predictable mechanisms for addressing constitutional and political challenges. These findings are consistent with recent governance literature, which identifies institutional quality as one of the strongest determinants of political stability in developing democracies (World Bank, 2023).

Furthermore, democratic consolidation significantly contributed to political stability. Countries with stronger democratic institutions generally experience greater constitutional continuity, peaceful political transitions, and improved governance effectiveness. The findings therefore support Diamond (2020), who argued that democratic resilience depends upon institutional legitimacy, accountability, and citizens' confidence in democratic processes. In Pakistan, strengthening democratic institutions appears essential for promoting long-term political stability and sustainable governance.

The mediation analysis further revealed that institutional dynamics mediate the relationship between civil-military relations and democratic consolidation, while democratic consolidation mediates the relationship between institutional dynamics and political stability. These findings suggest that civil-military relations alone do not directly determine political stability; rather, their influence operates through effective institutions and strengthened democratic governance. This extends existing literature by demonstrating the sequential institutional mechanisms through which constitutional governance contributes to political stability.

Overall, the study advances the understanding of democratic governance in Pakistan by illustrating that constructive civil-military relations,

institutional effectiveness, and democratic consolidation are mutually reinforcing. The findings emphasize that sustainable political stability is achieved through strong constitutional institutions, democratic accountability, and effective governance rather than through isolated institutional reforms.

### Conclusion

This study examined the relationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability in Pakistan during the post-2018 electoral era. The findings demonstrate that constructive civil-military relations significantly strengthen institutional dynamics, which subsequently promote democratic consolidation and enhance political stability.

The results confirm that effective constitutional coordination between civilian and military institutions contributes to stronger governance structures, improved institutional performance, and increased democratic legitimacy. Institutional dynamics emerged as a critical mechanism through which civil-military relations influence democratic consolidation, while democratic consolidation further enhances political stability by reinforcing constitutional governance and public trust.

The study extends Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory by demonstrating that contemporary civil-military relations should be understood within a broader institutional governance framework. Democratic consolidation is strengthened not only through civilian supremacy but also through institutional professionalism, constitutional adherence, accountability, and collaborative governance.

Overall, the study concludes that strengthening constitutional institutions, enhancing democratic accountability, and promoting balanced institutional relationships are essential for achieving sustainable political stability and democratic resilience in Pakistan.

## Implications

### Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature by integrating civil–military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability into a unified conceptual framework. It extends Huntington's Objective Civilian Control Theory by demonstrating the mediating role of institutional dynamics and democratic consolidation in explaining political stability within a transitional democracy.

### Practical Implications

The findings provide practical guidance for policymakers, constitutional institutions, public administrators, and governance practitioners. Strengthening institutional coordination, improving administrative effectiveness, and reinforcing constitutional governance can enhance democratic resilience and reduce political instability.

### Policy Implications

The study suggests that constitutional reforms should prioritize institutional independence, accountability, civilian oversight, and transparent governance. Policymakers should strengthen parliamentary oversight mechanisms, improve inter-institutional coordination, reinforce judicial independence, and promote evidence-based policymaking to support democratic consolidation.

### Managerial Implications

Public institutions should invest in institutional capacity building, leadership development, strategic planning, digital governance, and inter-agency collaboration. Managers within public organizations should promote transparency, accountability, and professional standards to improve institutional effectiveness and public confidence.

### Recommendations

The Government of Pakistan should strengthen constitutional mechanisms that promote transparent and accountable civil–military

relations while preserving clearly defined institutional responsibilities.

Parliamentary oversight institutions should be further strengthened through legislative reforms, capacity building, and improved policy evaluation mechanisms to reinforce democratic accountability.

Public institutions should prioritize institutional reforms that improve governance effectiveness, administrative professionalism, and policy coordination across constitutional bodies.

Judicial independence and the rule of law should be reinforced through continuous legal reforms, institutional modernization, and transparent judicial processes to strengthen democratic legitimacy.

Political parties should promote internal democracy, leadership development, policy-oriented politics, and constructive parliamentary engagement to improve democratic governance.

Civil society organizations, universities, and policy think tanks should encourage public dialogue, civic education, and evidence-based research on democratic governance and constitutional development.

Government institutions should adopt digital governance technologies that enhance transparency, public participation, and institutional accountability while improving service delivery.

International development partners should continue supporting democratic governance initiatives through technical assistance, institutional capacity building, and governance reform programs consistent with Pakistan's constitutional framework.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study.

The study employed a cross-sectional research design, limiting the ability to examine changes in civil–military relations and democratic consolidation over time. Future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs to evaluate institutional changes across multiple electoral cycles.

The research focused exclusively on Pakistan, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other political systems. Comparative studies involving South Asian or other emerging democracies would enhance understanding of civil-military relations across different institutional contexts.

The study relied on quantitative survey data collected from experts and practitioners. Future research should employ mixed-methods approaches incorporating qualitative interviews, case studies, elite surveys, and document analysis to obtain deeper insights into institutional interactions.

Although the study examined four major constructs, future research may incorporate additional variables such as institutional trust, political polarization, judicial independence, governance quality, media freedom, electoral integrity, public confidence, and constitutional legitimacy to develop more comprehensive models of democratic governance.

Future studies may also investigate the moderating effects of socioeconomic conditions, digital governance, political culture, and regional security dynamics on the relationships among civil-military relations, institutional dynamics, democratic consolidation, and political stability.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to employ advanced analytical techniques such as longitudinal Structural Equation Modeling, multigroup SEM, hierarchical linear modeling, Bayesian SEM, and comparative cross-national analysis to further validate and extend the proposed theoretical framework. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of democratic consolidation and institutional governance in Pakistan and other emerging democracies.

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