

MEDIA COVERAGE AND PUBLIC TRUST IN THE PAKISTANI MILITARY: LINKING MEDIA AGENDA TO PUBLIC PERCEPTION

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Abstract

The public trust in the military is influenced by personal protection, perception of the military as saviors, pro-democratic orientation, and international security dynamics. The Pakistan military's active involvement in internal politics and direct international dealings with Afghanistan, India, the United States, and Gulf countries has complicated public trust in the institution, highlighting its influential yet controversial role. The present study has been designed to explore the media-public relationship on the matters relating to the military. A mixed-method approach was employed, involving a content analysis of two leading news channels *ARY* and *Geo News* over four months. The primetime talk shows were selected through a systematic sampling technique focusing on two significant events - the Army Chief's appointment and the May 9th violent protest supporting the ex-prime minister during the pre- and post-periods of these events. A survey is conducted on the viewers of these channels to trace out the public agenda and public trust in the military. The results reveal significant differences in media coverage and audience perspectives, aligning with their preferred channels. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical data on the interplay between media representation and public trust in the military.

Keywords: Media Agenda, Public Agenda, Cable Channels, Public Trust, Military As Saviors, Pro-Democratic, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Because it demonstrates the military's commitment to civilian rule and its perceived role in defending national interests, public trust in the armed forces is essential to a healthy democracy. In Pakistan, where the military has always had a big influence on both domestic and foreign affairs, this connection is especially complicated. Although civilian control is theoretically important for the consolidation of democracy, there is currently no practical evidence to support this idea, and current analytical frameworks frequently fail to capture the complexities involved (Shain & Linz, 1995. p. 67). Greater public trust makes it more probable for an army with more influence to effectively legitimize its political interventions, making it simpler to get involved in politics (Demirel 2004; Duman & Tsarouhas 2006). As a result, trust broadens the military's sphere of influence and fosters

popular respect for the armed services, increasing the likelihood that it will intervene politically.

These studies show that the general public and the elites in the USA and Japan do not always uphold the norms of democracy and legal processes, particularly regarding civilian command of the armed forces. Golby et al. (2016), for instance, note that a significant portion of US citizens appear to agree with the notion that a military officer should defy direct commands from civilian political authority if the officer believes the directive is unwise. Even while the erosion of civilian authority has recently received much attention in the USA, overt military subordination to civilian authorities—which may be seen as a fundamental breach of civilian control—is rarely seen.

Public trust in the military is influenced by several factors, including the perception of personal protection, the view of the military as saviors, pro-democratic orientation, and the impact of international security dynamics. These themes are deeply rooted in political science and sociology literature, which explore how institutional trust is formed and maintained in non-democratic settings (Easton, 1965; Levi & Stoker, 2000). Understanding these factors is essential for assessing how public confidence in the military shapes and is shaped by broader political processes and the role of media in highlighting the successes and failures of the Pakistan military. Pakistan's transition to democracy has been turbulent, marked by sporadic military control and hybrid governance that combine civil and military authority.

Due to these factors, a distinct political environment has emerged where the military impacts both internal and global affairs in addition to its usual defense functions. The military's involvement in key international relations, particularly with Afghanistan, India, the United States, and Gulf countries, has further complicated public perceptions and trust in the military (Ali & Shah, 2021). The present study aims to measure and highlight the role of media in shaping public trust in the military, focusing on two significant recent events in Pakistan: the appointment of the Army Chief and the May 9th, 2023 violent protest against the military. Public trust in Pakistan has been significantly impacted by the military's direct and indirect engagement in politics (Cohen, 2004, p.9).

Media outlets, which frequently spread divisive ideas based on partisanship, have a significant impact on public opinion in Pakistan (Zafar, 2019). How various media outlets cover military and political events can influence public perception in a variety of ways. For instance, viewers' trust in the military is influenced by the many narratives that media outlets like *ARY* and *Geo News* frequently present regarding military involvement in politics (Khan, 2018).

Public trust, media attention, and the military have a complex and dependent relationship. Public trust in Pakistan is greatly impacted by media coverage since the military has always played a significant part in politics. A thorough examination of media and public opinion is necessary to comprehend these processes, which highlights the need for additional empirical research to delve deeper into these connections.

RESEARCH GAP

There is a lot of research on how the media shapes public opinion and institutional trust, but there is still a lot that needs to be understood about how media coverage specifically affects public trust in the military in Pakistan's particular political and socioeconomic environment. Prior research has examined the impact of media on Western democracies and certain post-authoritarian societies.

However, little is known about the dynamic relationship between media portrayal and public confidence in the military in a nation like Pakistan that has a history of military involvement in politics. Moreover, there is a dearth of empirical research analyzing how various media narratives from outlets like as *ARY News* and *Geo News* influence public opinion during significant military operations.

This study aims to fill this gap by employing a mixed-method approach, including content analysis of media coverage and surveys of viewers, to provide a nuanced understanding of how media agendas influence public trust in the military in Pakistan. This research will contribute to the broader discourse on media effects, institutional trust, and democratic consolidation in transitional societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the end of the eighteenth century, it was uncommon to witness the convergence of three elements that were necessary preconditions for the development of powerful public opinion: 1) the significant advancement in public education generally; 2) the growth of the middle classes and the ensuing increase in population mobility; and 3) the development of mass media (Vlachova, 2003).

According to the Propaganda Model, major media outlets are forced to provide unwavering support to "first-class organizations" without compromise (Chomsky, 1997, p 18). Many information sources influence public perceptions, often in quite predictable ways. Golby et al. (2018) discovered that public opinion is impacted when the public has previously been subjected to a discourse about military accomplishment and legitimacy (p.4-19). When the armed services publicly declare their support or opposition to particular governance problems, such as military adventures abroad, budgets, or military expenditures, opinions align even more with the authorities (Kim, 2014).

In Europe in the post-Cold War era, there has been a commensurate decline in faith in other institutions, including the police, the church, and supranational organizations, with a rise in trust in the military forces. The lack of civilian-military experience, particularly in all-volunteer recruitment, media criticism of the military, the communication gap between the military and civil society, and incidents of military corruption and scandals could all contribute to public cynicism toward the military.

Traditional political awareness variables (like those about organizing coups, changing regimes, and quelling protests) must be taken into account to fully reveal the military's influence on public opinion (Malešič & Garb, 2018).

Tehseem *et al.*, (2020) examined newspaper headlines about the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. They used the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to analyze different newspapers' language choices and ideologies. Their study emphasized how language use changed common beliefs and viewpoints, focusing on the role newspapers played in influencing public opinion using dramatic language. The results then differ depending on the nation in terms of military trust. These post-authoritarian societies offer interesting similarities, such as low public support (Solar, 2022).

In Brazil, support for democracy is favorably connected with military confidence, whereas in Chile, it is adversely correlated with military confidence (Solar, 2022). His study further says that confidence in the armed forces is statistically substantial and supports military action when crime rates are rising.

People who support the armed services are more inclined to support the military's efforts to combat crime in both Brazil and Chile. According to Tiargan-Orr and Eran-Jona (2016), the public view of trust in the military is deemed to be "not uniform." We are aware that several things may erode public confidence in the military, such as knowledge of and lack of interest in security issues and the armed services, and—above all—general dissatisfaction with political processes (Garb, 2015).

However, other characteristics, such as institutional integrity and dependability, have been demonstrated to boost public confidence in the military (Birsen, 2010). By promising awards and career advancements, populist politicians can sway the military's opinion or influence in political matters.

Considering the public's support for the military, politicians may thus pledge institutional and financial resources to the armed forces as well as strict national security measures. Solar (2022) referred to the results of the European Values Study (1990) which looked at 34 European countries' levels of faith in their military forces throughout the 1990s. According to these studies, the average person's level of trust in the military increased from 46% in 1990 to 55% in 2000.

One of the reasons for the military's increased credibility is that it has assumed increasingly diplomatic responsibilities for which it was not previously accountable, such as upholding ties with non-governmental organizations, international bodies, local churches, and communities (Caforio, 2008).

Since the Pakistani army has been fighting terrorism for the past 25 years, the public has supported it greatly; but, because of the army's engagement in politics, many people are now renouncing their absolute support. But yet has some significant roles, such as managing financing for the military, decision-making in national financial affairs, defense plans, and international relations the military has taken hold and is busy countering terrorism at national and international levels.

Moreover, Pakistan is among the leading nations that consistently deploy its armed forces to maintain international peace. The public views the army as a last resort for issues ranging from floods and earthquakes to war, peacekeeping, law enforcement, terrorism, disasters, and intelligence services. These activities also raise the level of trust among the general public.

The Role of Media

The media greatly influences the public's perception of and confidence in governmental institutions, particularly the military. Research has indicated that public opinion can be greatly impacted by how the media portrays a subject (Moy *et al.*, 1999). For example, favorable media coverage can increase trust, while unfavorable coverage might decrease it. According to Statista (2021), the worldwide media and entertainment business is expected to reach a value of \$2.6 trillion by 2026, with a growth in the use of digital media and the popularity of streaming services. The market was valued at \$2.1 trillion in 2020.

Brosius & Kepplinger's study about the role and function of agenda-setting in television news in West Germany was conducted in 1990. They surveyed and enquired about 16 issues in their study however television news media during its coverage influenced four issues - defense, energy supply, environmental protection, and European politics. The researchers found a strong relationship between TV news programs and public priorities about the issue.

However, the effects may vary depending on exposure, individual's interest, and environmental situation (Werner & Tankard, 1997). Pakistani media especially cable news channels gave extensive and live coverage to some national issues like restoration of judiciary, law and order, war-on-terror, national reconciliation ordinance, democratic process, corruption, Pak-US relations, energy crisis, etc. during the last three years (Raza, 2019).

According to Mezzera and Sial (2010), Pakistan's military governments have greatly hindered the development and freedom of the media. They further say that expressed the opinion that, unfortunately, the current power structure proved to be resilient to certain alternative and dissident voices. As a result, it gradually neutralized these voices and made sure that the Pakistani media would always have a consistent, non-critical viewpoint regarding the military (Mezzera & Sial, 2010). While it's important to examine how the media covers everyday incidents, it's even more important to examine how they cover conflicts and military operations (Ishaq *et al.*, 2020).

People may see the armed forces differently depending on whether they view them as an institution or as the government in countries where the military has historically held political power. According to an empirical study, transitional governments' heavily politicized military organizations negatively impact the standard of governance (Tusalem, 2014). Pakistan is a unique country as far as the independence and growth of democratic institutions are concerned.

The public evaluates and compares the performance of military and democratic regimes. The public's decades-long faith in the military has grown in Pakistan as a result of internal security threats, counterterrorism operations, and border tensions with India and Afghanistan. However, there are several reasons why people may be cynical about the military: a lack of civilian-military experience, media criticism of the military; a communication gap between the military and civil society; and incidents of military corruption and scandals (Malešič & Garb, 2018).

Since the 1990s, there have been several military coups and coup attempts in Latin America. This has partly been caused by the military's increased influence on social and political life, as well as the inability of political coalitions to seize and hold onto power and influence national policy (Diamont, 2015, p. 31).

Support for the armed forces is connected with social support for military coups in the event of high levels of corruption and crimes. In Pakistan, the public has faith in the military as a professional and honest institution which normally, shows the untrustworthiness of other institutions. The public's acceptance of the military as a superior alternative in every coup was entirely a result of the media portraying civilian institutions, particularly the parliament, as dishonest and incompetent.

The complex phenomena of public trust in the military are impacted by several factors, such as perceived competency, honesty, and alignment with national values (Karlin, 2017). But the military's engagement in politics, violations of human rights, or failures during times of crisis can erode public confidence. Because of the military's involvement in defence and national security, research shows that public trust in it is typically higher than that of other state institutions (Caforio, 2003).

Media Representation and Public Trust in Military

Military rulers used the media to legitimize their highhandedness and un-democratic deeds and even pro-democratic governments were also used to advance their agenda with the help of media to regularize their wrongdoings, however, the media and public in democratic regimes have enjoyed their best time (Raza, 2019). The US media regularly presented the wars from the viewpoints of the Pentagon and the White House (Lee, 2004).

It was also noted that the way the media portrays military operations is heavily influenced by the policies of the Pentagon and the American administration. The media reported on the supremacy of US military power and maintained the status quo, giving civilian victims of armed conflict and the destruction of their property little consideration (Rahman, 2007).

The Pentagon and White House perspectives were widely used by US media to report on the wars (Lee, 2004). It was also noted that the way the media portrays military operations is heavily influenced by the policies of the US administration and the Pentagon.

While reporting on the superiority of US military might and upholding dominant ideologies, it gave civilian victims of armed conflict, asset destruction, and casualties during armed operations, as well as later victims of conflict, very little consideration (Rahman, 2007).

The way the military is portrayed in the media may either strengthen or weaken popular confidence. On the other hand, negative or critical framing that draws attention to problems like failure or corruption can erode trust (Robinson, 2001).

Svolik (2012) was of the view that public trust is weakened when the military interferes in politics, particularly in nations with a history of military takeovers or authoritarian governments. The military is typically viewed in these situations as a potential danger to democratic rule as well as a stabilizing force (p. 53-78). Based on the literature review on the media-public relationship with special reference to public trust in the military, the following research hypotheses have been posed

Hypotheses:

H1: ARY News may highlight the military's failures, disputes, or constitutional violations that contribute to low levels of public trust in the military.

H1a: The opinion of the ARY News audiences may also be inclined to the channel's stance.

H2: Geo News covers and highlights the military's professionalism, competence, and pro-democratic orientation that contribute to higher levels of public trust in the military.

H2a: The audience of Geo News may be inclined to the channel's stance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda-Setting Theory:

In research on the 1968 presidential election known as "the Chapel Hill study", Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw formally formulated agenda-setting theory. McCombs and Shaw found a significant relationship between the top election issue as perceived by one hundred Chapel Hill citizens and the subject that the local news media focused on (Rosler, 2017).

McCombs and Shaw assess how much the media influences public opinion by contrasting the importance of news content concerns with popular views. According to the hypothesis, media also has a significant impact on audiences by forming their opinions rather than letting them think for themselves. In other words, if a news story is reported on often and in a prominent way, viewers will consider it to be more significant.

The study applies Agenda-Setting and Framing Theories to explore the relationship between media coverage and public perception of the military. According to the Agenda-Setting Theory, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public priorities by highlighting specific issues. This is evident in the data where 100 news stories from ARY News and

Geo News were selected to analyze their impact on 200 viewers' trust in the military. The frequency and emphasis on military failures, controversies, and positive portrayals across ARY News and Geo News shape the viewers' perceptions. The varying levels of trust and mistrust among the viewers are influenced by how prominently these issues are featured in the news stories.

Framing Theory

According to framing theory, audiences' perceptions and attitudes are shaped by the media's presentation of information in a certain context, which affects how they interpret it. The media creates a narrative by highlighting some aspects of a problem and downplaying others, which shapes public perception and opinion. This theory emphasizes how the media can influence people's thoughts as well as what to think about. For example, how political events are framed can have a big impact on how the public feels and behaves (Entman, 1993, p.51-58). How news stories are presented—whether focusing on military failures, accountability, or depicting the military as pro-democracy or anti-democracy—affects how viewers interpret and respond to these issues.

The study found significant differences in trust levels between viewers of ARY News and Geo News, indicating that the framing of military-related stories directly influences public trust. The application of these theories demonstrates that the media not only sets the agenda by selecting which military issues to cover but also frames these issues in ways that significantly affect public trust in the military.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study explores the relationship between the media agenda and public agenda on two significant military issues: The May 9th, 2023, violent protest and the appointment of the Army Chief. The aim was to gauge public trust in the military. The study involved content analysis of news stories and talk shows from ARY News and Geo News, along with a survey of viewers. The most common measure of the salience of issues on the media agenda is the number of news stories about each issue in the media over some time. There are more complicated measures, but simple frequency counts work very well (McCombs, 2014).

Data Collection

The content analysis focused on prime-time talk shows from leading news channels ARY News and Geo News. Specifically, the programs "*Aj Shahzaib Khanzada ke Sath*" and "*Report Card*" from Geo News, and "*The Reporters*" and "*Off the Record*" from ARY News were selected. The analysis covered the peak periods of the May 9th incident and the Army Chief appointment, specifically from February 2023 to May 2023. A total of 100 talk shows were collected, with 25 relevant episodes from each of the four programs during the specified period. The talk shows were chosen based on their popularity and relevance to the issues being studied. A survey was conducted with 400 viewers, 200 each from

ARY News and Geo News separately. The survey took place in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Content Analysis: The news articles and talk shows were coded for themes about military failures, conflicts, and positive portrayals as part of the content analysis process. It was observed how frequently and how strongly these patterns appeared.

Survey Data: The survey data were analyzed to assess the impact of media coverage on public trust in the military. To prevent conflicts of interest, participants were chosen through purposive sampling, with care taken to ensure that no one was a member of the armed forces. The survey instrument was tested in pilot research with 20 participants, and the results showed reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of .85.6. A section of the study asked viewers about their impressions of military trust, taking into account how the media covered the events of May 9th, 2023, and the appointment of the Army Chief.

Data Analysis:

Content Analysis: The news articles and talk shows were coded for themes about military failures, controversies, and favorable portrayals. It was remarked how frequently and how strongly these themes appeared. Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between media coverage and public perceptions with special reference to public trust in the military. This methodology provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how media coverage of military-related issues influences public trust in the military. By combining content analysis of popular news programs with survey data from viewers, the study aimed to elucidate the role of media in shaping public perceptions.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Percentage Coverage of Specific Issues by News Channels

Issues	ARY News		Geo News	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Military failures	16	7.7%	10	4.8%
May 9 th Incident	19	9.1%	23	11%
Military in politics	20	9.6%	08	3.8%
Lack of military accountability	14	6.7%	05	2.4%
Army chief appointment	17	8.1%	13	6.2%
Security Protection	04	1.9%	10	4.8%
Military as pro-democracy	05	2.4%	21	10%
Military as anti-democracy	15	7.2%	04	1.9%
Military as nation savior	14	6.7%	31	14.8%
Total	124	100%	125	100%

The table shows the distribution of issues ARY News and Geo News viewers raised regarding the military. ARY News viewers most frequently discuss military interference in politics (9.6%) and the May 9th incident (9.1%), while Geo News viewers most often mention the military as the nation's savior (14.8%) and the May 9th incident (11%). This

indicates that while both viewer groups are concerned about the May 9th incident, *ARY News* viewers focus more on political interference and *Geo News* viewers highlight the military's role as the nation's savior.

Table 2: Factors Contributing to Low Trust in the Military by Viewers

	<i>Geo News</i>		<i>ARY News</i>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Military failures	12	5.7%	26	13%
May 9th incident	30	14.4%	32	16%
Military interference in politics	41	19.6%	27	13.5%
Lack of militarys' accountability	84	40.2%	14	7%
Army chief appointment	4	1.9%	23	11.5%
Security Protection	6	2.9%	10	5%
Military as pro-democracy	8	3.8%	3	1.5%
Military as anti-democracy	4	1.9%	36	18%
Military as nation saviour	11	5.3%	29	14.5%
Total	200	95.7	200	100

Geo News viewers cite the lack of military accountability (40.2%) and military interference in politics (19.6%) as the main factors contributing to their low trust in the military. *ARY News* viewers highlight the May 9th incident, military failures, and viewing the military as anti-democracy as significant factors. *ARY News* viewers see the May 9th incident, the military as an anti-democracy and military failures as the main factors of the low public trust in the military. Overall, *Geo News* focuses more on the lack of accountability, while *ARY News* highlights specific incidents and a more critical view of the military's role in politics.

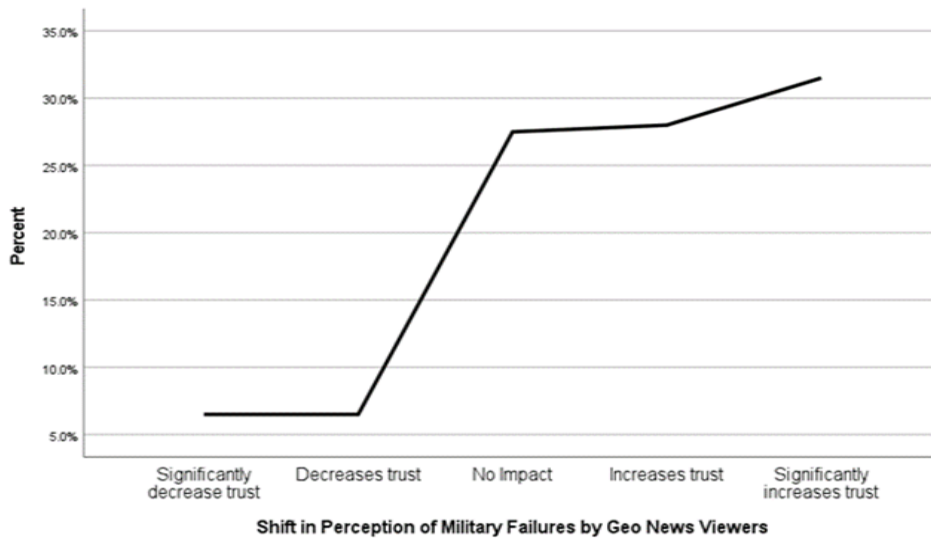
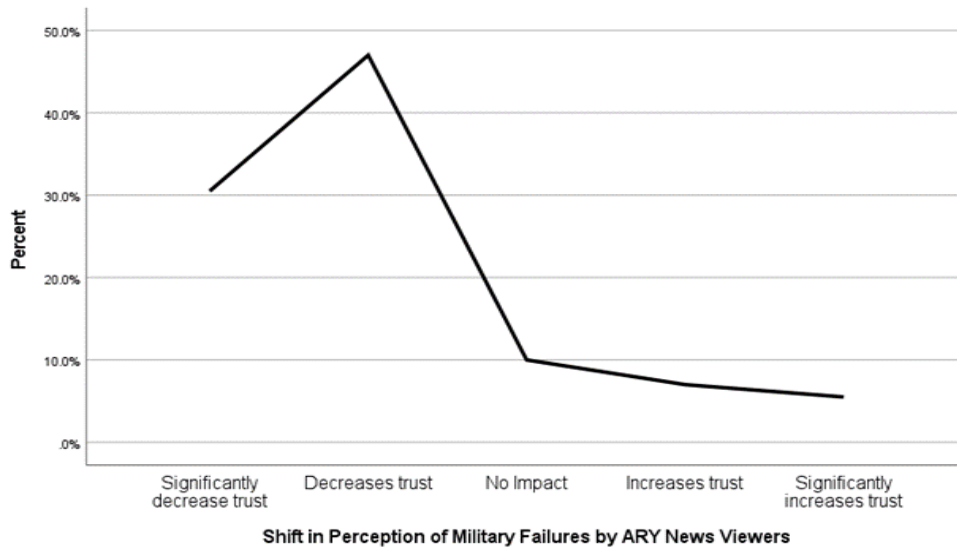


Fig 1: Shift in Perception of Military Failures by Geo News Viewers

The graph illustrates the shift in perception of military failures among *Geo News* viewers. It shows that a notable percentage of viewers either have no impact on their trust (around 25%) or experience an increase in trust (up to 30%), indicating that *Geo News* coverage can positively influence viewers' trust despite reporting on military failures.



Graph 2: Shift in Perception of Military Failures by ARY News Viewers

The graph shows that a significant portion of *ARY News* viewers (around 47%) experience a decrease in trust due to military failures, with a smaller percentage seeing no impact or an increase in trust. This indicates that *ARY News* coverage of military failures tends to negatively influence viewers' trust in the military.

Table 3: Correlation Between Channels Stance and Viewers Endorsement on 9th May Events

		Channels' Stance	Endorsement by Viewers
ARY News' Endorsement of the May 9 th Incident	Pearson Correlation	1	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	101	101
Endorsement of May 9 th by Viewers of ARY News	Pearson Correlation	.348**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	101	200
Endorsement of May 9 th by Viewers of Geo News	Pearson Correlation	1	-.305**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.002
	N	200	100
Geo News' Opinion and Endorsement of the May 9 th Incident	Pearson Correlation	-.305**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows a significant positive correlation ($r = .348, p < .001$) between *ARY News*' opinion and endorsement of the May 9th incident and the endorsement of the incident by *ARY News* viewers. This suggests that viewers' opinions on the incident are moderately influenced by *ARY News*' stance. The Pearson Correlation coefficient between "*Geo News*' Opinion and Endorsement of the May 9th Incident" and "Endorsement of 9th May by Viewers of *Geo News* is -0.305 . The table indicates a statistically significant weak negative correlation between *Geo News*' endorsement of the May 9th incident and the endorsement by its viewers.

Table 4: Viewers Endorsement of the Army Chief Appointment

	<i>ARY News</i>		<i>Geo News</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Oppose	80	38.3%	24	12%
Oppose	70	33.5%	20	10%
Neutral	10	4.8%	26	13%
Endorse	26	12.4%	92	46%
Strongly endorse	14	6.7%	38	19%
Total	200	100	200	100%

The table compares the viewers' stances on the May 9th incident between *ARY News* and *Geo News*. Among *ARY News* viewers, 71.8% (Strongly Oppose and Oppose combined) are against the incident, while only 19.1% endorse or strongly endorse it. In contrast, 65% of *Geo News* viewers (Endorse and Strongly Endorse combined) support the incident, with only 22% opposing it.

Table 5: Correlation between Channel Opinion and Viewers' Endorsement on Army Chief Appointment

Correlations			
		Viewers' Opinion	Channels Opinion
Geo News Viewers' Endorsement of Army Chief Appointment	Pearson Correlation	1	.735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Geo News' Opinion Endorsement of Army Chief Appointment	Pearson Correlation	.735**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	200
ARY viewers' Endorsement of Army Chief Appointment	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	100	100
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
ARY News' Endorsement of Army Chief Appointment	N	200	100
	Pearson Correlation	.294**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows a Pearson correlation of 0.735 between *Geo News*' endorsement of the Army Chief appointment and its viewers' endorsement, indicating a strong positive relationship. The p-value is 0.000, making this correlation statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that *Geo News*' stance on the Army Chief's appointment significantly influences its viewers' opinions. The table shows a Pearson correlation of 0.294 between *ARY News*' endorsement of the Army Chief appointment and its viewers' endorsement, indicating a weak positive relationship. The p-value is 0.003, making this correlation statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that while *ARY News*' stance on the Army Chief appointment has some influence on its viewers' opinions, the effect is relatively modest.

Table 6: Viewers' Opinion on the Military's Pro-Democracy Stance

	<i>ARY News</i>		<i>Geo News</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely anti-democracy	27	17.9%	17	11.3%
Anti-democracy	85	56.3%	8	5.3%
Neutral	8	5.3%	9	6.3%
Pro-democracy	18	11.9%	47	31.1%
Extremely Pro-democracy	12	7.9%	69	45.7%
Total	200	100%	200	100%

The table shows the distribution of viewers' attitudes towards democracy for *ARY News* and *Geo News*. A majority of *ARY News* viewers (74.2%) hold anti-democracy views, whereas most *Geo News* viewers (76.8%) hold pro-democracy views as far as the role of the military is concerned. This indicates a stark contrast in the democratic attitudes of viewers from these two news channels.

Table 7: Correlation Between Channels and Viewers on Military Accountability

Correlations			
		Viewers Opinion	Channels Stance
ARY News Viewers	Pearson Correlation	1	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	100
ARY News Stance	Pearson Correlation	.555**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100
Geo News Viewers	Pearson Correlation	1	.339**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	200	100
Geo News Stance	Pearson Correlation	.339**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	200	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows a significant positive correlation ($r = .555$, $p < .001$) between *ARY News* viewers' opinions and *ARY News*' stance. This indicates that viewers' opinions are moderately influenced by *ARY News*' position on issues. The table shows a significant

positive correlation ($r = .339$, $p = .001$) between *Geo News* viewers' opinions and *Geo News*' stance. This suggests that there is a moderate influence of *Geo News*' position on the opinions of its viewers.

Table 8: Correlation between Tone of Channels and Viewers Opinions on Military Failures

Correlations			
		Viewers Opinion	Channels Tone
Opinion of Geo News Viewers on Military Failures	Pearson Correlation	1	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	101
Tone of Discussion by Geo News	Pearson Correlation	.472**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101
Opinion of ARY News Viewers on Military Failures	Pearson Correlation	1	.575**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	100
Tone of Discussion by ARY News	Pearson Correlation	.575**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows significant positive correlations between viewers' opinions on military failures and the tone of discussion by both *Geo News* and *ARY News*. For *Geo News*, the correlation is moderate ($r = .472$, $p < .001$), while for *ARY News*, the correlation is stronger ($r = .575$, $p < .001$).

Table 9: Correlation between Channel Coverage and Viewers Opinion on the Use of Budget by Military

		Viewers Opinion	Channels Stance
ARY News' Viewers Opinion on Budget Allocated to Military	Pearson Correlation	1	.491**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	101
ARY News' Presentation of Budget Allocated to Military	Pearson Correlation	.491**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101
Geo News' Viewers Opinion on Budget Allocated to Military	Pearson Correlation	1	.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	200	101
Geo News' Presentation of Budget Allocated to Military	Pearson Correlation	.290**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	101	101

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows significant positive correlations between viewers' opinions on the budget allocated to the military and the respective channels' stance. For *ARY News*, the correlation is stronger ($r = .491$, $p < .001$) compared to *Geo News* ($r = .290$, $p < .003$), indicating a more pronounced influence of *ARY News* on its viewers' opinions regarding

military budget allocation. Both correlations suggest that the way these channels present the budget allocation to the military significantly affects their viewers' perceptions, with *ARY News* having a greater impact than *Geo News*.

Table 10: Perception of the Military as a Nations Savior by Viewers

	One-Sample Test					
	Test Value = 0					
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Lower					Upper	
ARY News Viewers' Perception of the Military as Nations Saviors	24.967	199	.000	2.08500	1.9203	2.2497
Geo News Viewers' Perception of the Military as Nations Saviors	38.743	199	.000	3.57500	3.3930	3.7570

The one-sample test shows that both *ARY News* and *Geo News* viewers significantly perceive the military as nations' saviors, with mean differences of 2.085 for *ARY News* and 3.575 for *Geo News*, both significant at $p < .001$. This indicates that *Geo News* viewers perceive the military more strongly as nations' saviours than *ARY News* viewers.

DISCUSSION

First, militaries that enjoy greater public support are more likely to thwart transitions and interfere in other areas- such as freedom of expression or human rights. Second, societies that accept militaristic cultures are less likely to push for democracy (Huntington, 1957). Public support for army-controlled transitions is potentially impacting democratization in North Africa. Professionalism Portrayal: Media coverage that showcases the professionalism and discipline of military personnel, including their adherence to rules of engagement, respect for human rights, and commitment to ethical conduct, fosters trust in the military as a professional institution dedicated to upholding standards of excellence (Higate & Nick, 2009).

Sadly, military rulers quickly began to meddle in the fledgling democracy, which had a substantial impact on the development of the media (Mezzer & Sial, 2010).

As indicated in Table 1, On the distribution of issues raised by *ARY News* and *Geo News* viewers regarding the military, the outcome highlights how each viewer group's perspectives differ based on their news source's stance. This examination reveals significant variations in how viewers of the two news channels discuss and perceive military topics. *ARY News* viewers most frequently discuss military interference in politics (9.6%) and the May 9th incident (9.1%).

Conversely, *Geo News* viewers primarily mention the military as the nation's savior (14.8%) and the May 9th incident (11%). This indicates a shared concern over the May 9th incident, though *ARY News* viewers are more focused on political interference, while *Geo News* viewers emphasize the military's role as the nation's savior (Livingstone & Todd, 2007).

On the issue of factors responsible for low public trust in the military, *Geo News* viewers cite the lack of military accountability (40.2%) and military interference in politics (19.6%) as the primary reasons. *ARY News* viewers, on the other hand, highlight the May 9th incident, military failures, and the perception of the military as anti-democratic. *Geo News* viewers are more concerned with accountability issues, whereas *ARY News* viewers focus on specific incidents and critique the military's political role (Table 2). Meernik and Roosa (2005) discuss various factors affecting military professionalism, including accountability and political interference, and how these factors influence public trust in military institutions.

The shift in perception of military failures among *Geo News* viewers shows that a notable percentage either have no impact on their trust (around 25%) or experience an increase in trust (up to 30%), indicating that *Geo News* coverage can positively influence viewers' trust despite reporting on military failures. In contrast, a significant portion of *ARY News* viewers (around 47%) experience a decrease in trust due to military failures, with a smaller percentage seeing no impact or an increase in trust. This indicates that *ARY News* coverage of military failures tends to negatively influence viewers' trust in the military (Graph 1 & 2). Pew Research Center report on Trust in Government 1958-2019, provides insights into trends in public trust in government institutions, including the military, based on survey data over several decades. It examines factors contributing to changes in public trust, including media coverage and public perceptions.

The table reveals a significant positive correlation ($r = .348$, $p < .001$) between *ARY News*' stance on the May 9th incident and its viewers' endorsement, indicating that *ARY News* moderately influences its audience's opinions on the event. Conversely, the Pearson Correlation coefficient for *Geo News* (-0.305) indicates a statistically significant weak negative correlation between *Geo News*' endorsement of the incident and its viewers' endorsement. This suggests that *Geo News*' stance might dissuade viewers from supporting the incident. The contrasting correlations highlight how different news channels can distinctly shape public opinion through their editorial stances (Table 3).

For *Geo News*, a Pearson correlation of .735 ($p < .001$) between its endorsement of the Army Chief appointment and viewers' opinions signifies a strong positive relationship, implying substantial influence on viewers' opinions. The Pearson correlation between *ARY News*' endorsement of the Army Chief appointment and its viewers' endorsement is .294 ($p = .003$), indicating a weak positive relationship. This suggests that while *ARY News*' stance does influence viewers' opinions, the effect is relatively modest (Table 4 & 5). The strong positive correlation between *Geo News*' endorsement of the Army Chief appointment and its viewers' opinions indicates that *Geo News* significantly influences its audience's views on this issue. In contrast, *ARY News* shows a weaker positive correlation, suggesting that while *ARY News* does affect its viewers' opinions on the Army Chief appointment, its influence is relatively modest. The stark difference in the level of influence between the two news channels highlights the varying impact of media endorsements on public opinion. There are various factors affecting military

professionalism, including accountability and political interference, and how these factors influence public trust in military institutions (Meernik & Roosa (2005).

The distribution of viewers' attitudes towards democracy reveals a significant divergence between *ARY News* and *Geo News* audiences. A majority of *ARY News* viewers (74.2%) hold anti-democracy views regarding the military's role, suggesting that the channel's coverage may promote skepticism towards democratic governance. In contrast, most *Geo News* viewers (76.8%) support pro-democracy views, indicating that *Geo News* likely endorses narratives favoring democratic principles (Table 6). This stark contrast underscores how media channels can shape public opinion and highlights the powerful role of news outlets in influencing their audience's political attitudes and perceptions of the military's role in governance (McComb & Shaw, 1972). Viewers of *ARY News* tend to hold predominantly anti-democracy views regarding the military's role, while viewers of *Geo News* lean towards pro-democracy perspectives, illustrating divergent public perceptions and attitudes towards military involvement in governance across these channels. Media coverage often reflects varying stances on military involvement in governance, sometimes exhibiting anti-democratic narratives while occasionally presenting pro-democracy perspectives, reflecting nuanced and sometimes contradictory portrayals influenced by editorial biases and political dynamics (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2007).

A significant positive correlation ($r = .555$, $p < .001$) exists between *ARY News* viewers' opinions and *ARY News*' stance, indicating moderate influence. Similarly, a positive correlation ($r = .339$, $p = .001$) between *Geo News* viewers' opinions and *Geo News*' stance suggests the moderate influence of the channel's position on viewers' opinions (Table 7). The agenda-setting theory, explains how media can influence the salience of issues among the public. While it may not directly provide the specific correlation mentioned, it forms the basis for understanding how media influence can shape public opinion, including the relationship between news content and viewer attitudes (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The strong positive associations suggest that viewers' perceptions of military failures are significantly influenced by the discussion tenor of both *Geo News* and *ARY News*. The moderate influence of *Geo News* implies that viewers' perceptions are partially shaped by its tone. By comparison, it can be observed that *ARY News* has a greater impact on audience opinions due to its tone. This emphasizes how influential media tone is in influencing public perceptions of military effectiveness (Table 8). The way that news is presented and framed can have a big impact on how the public perceives an incident or issue by emphasizing some parts and downplaying others (Entman, 1993, p.51-58). The relationship between the role of media channels and public faith in the military can be thoroughly investigated via the prism of agenda-setting theory. According to this hypothesis, the media can influence public opinion by emphasizing particular topics and presenting them in particular ways. The example of *News* and *Geo News* viewers provides a powerful example of this relationship.

The high positive correlations observed between viewers' perspectives on military budget distribution and the positions advocated by the various channels demonstrate the significant influence that media portrayal has on public opinion. There is a stronger correlation ($r = .491$, $p < .001$) between *ARY News* and *Geo News* than there is between *Geo News* ($r = .290$, $p < .003$), suggesting that *ARY News* has a bigger impact on viewers' opinions. This discrepancy suggests that the way *ARY News* presents military budget difficulties to its viewers is more compelling or relatable (Table 9). The results show how important it is for the media to shape public opinion on financial issues of national security and how different news organizations have differing degrees of influence over their audience. By highlighting particular interpretations and points of view, framing particular topics in particular ways can change public perception and influence the understanding and opinions of the audience (Iyengar, 1991, p.11-17).

According to the one-sample test, viewers of *Geo News* and *ARY News* both strongly believe that the military will save the country, *Geo News* viewers have this belief. The greater mean difference for *Geo News* (3.575) over *ARY News* (2.085) indicates that viewers of *Geo News* are more supportive of the military's role. This implies that by highlighting how media narratives shape public opinion, *Geo News* may be more successful in promoting a positive perception of the military. In a 1993 study, Altheide and Robert highlight the impact of media on public opinion by analyzing how media framing and narratives may impact people's perceptions and attitudes toward political and military institutions. The agenda-setting theory suggests how different media organizations select what to cover and what to leave, so setting the public agenda. This create fear and panic among audiences as *ARY News* prioritize to disputes over politics and military activity. *Geo News*, on the other hand, promoted a more trustworthy stance that is mostly based on the issues of accountability and military protective role. *ARY News* misrepresented the military in a negative tone which had a crucial impact on the viewers while *Geo News*, though, impartial tone helped to improve the military's reputation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, research on how the media shapes public opinion of the military sheds light on the tactics used by media outlets to frame and create agendas to sway the opinions of their viewers. The viewpoints of viewers and the positions taken by *ARY* and *Geo News* have been found to have high positive connections, which suggests that media coverage can influence public opinion. *ARY News* has the ability to sway viewers' perceptions by fostering animosity towards the military's involvement in politics and the economy because of its growing association with a number of issues, including military mismanagement and budget allocation, anti-democratic sentiment, political meddling, and military failures. In contrast, *Geo News* has a gentler effect and promotes a more favorable view of the military in all its aspects, even if it still has a significant impact. *Geo News* emphasizes the military's protective role and obligations, while *ARY News*' focus on military involvement and political criticism steers its viewers towards anti-democratic viewpoints. This dynamic is seen by the disparities in trust levels; viewers of *Geo News*

display a more positive opinion of the military, while those of ARY News exhibit higher scepticism. Understanding this influence is crucial to understanding the broader dynamics of public opinion, the media, and political discourse in contemporary society.

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