

PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL HISTORY, 5TH+ GENERATION & ITS IMPACT ON NATIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC SECURITY OF PAKISTAN: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The convergence of Pakistan's political history and "5th+ Generation" of its citizens in context of socio-economic security of the country, the 5th generation born after 2000 and highlights how shift in demography influences Pakistan's national security. Present study adopted theoretical perspectives based on; (a) Youth Bulge Theory, (b) Political Socialisation Theory; and (c) Critical Security Studies, to scrutinize structural, historical, and socio-political dynamics critically shaping the youth-state relations. Thus, paper emphasises that the 5th+ generation holds possible potential to become a transformative combination for socio-economic governance and development of the country. However, existing political legacies and fragile governance practices risk turning this asset into a security liability. Hence, a conceptual model is presented in this paper that correlate political evolution, demographic pressures and security outcomes offering a framework for reimagining national security policy through the mechanism/s of state-youth partnership/s in youth majority provinces of Pakistan.

Keywords: *Pakistan Youth Bulge, 5th Generation, Political Socialization, Critical Security Studies, Socio-Economic Governance*

Introduction

Generational shift in demographic structure is not merely a statistical reality for any developing nation but a fundamental constituent of national security related to socio-political and economic development.

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Pakistan comprises more than 64% of citizens under the age of 30¹, situating youth as a driving force in shaping the future trajectories of the country. However, "5th+ Generation" of Pakistan born in 2000 or 21st century is emerging in a context of political disillusionment. *The 5th+ generation refers to the generation born after the year 2000, currently aged 15–35, who are the first digital natives in Pakistan's history.*" At the very same time Pakistan's political history has been marked by recurring patterns of centralised governance, episodic institutional effectiveness, and uneven socio-economic development.

This study integrates these major theoretical perspectives; (a) Youth Bulge Theory, (b) Political Socialisation Theory, and (c) Critical Security Studies. Current paper develops a multidimensional analytical lens to examine how Pakistan's political history and demographic changes intersect with questions of national socio-economic security of the country. Significance of this current study lies in its argument that convergence of rapidly expanding youth population with legacies of fragile institutions, conflicting policies with local needs, politicisation of national development, underperforming bureaucratic governance and electoral deficit generates both substantial risks as well as unprecedented opportunities for the country's stability and resilience.

Earlier scholarship has extensively paid attention to relationship between youth demographics and societal stability. One of the most influential contributions in this discipline is the work of Heinsohn's Youth Bulge Theory, which theorises that societies with large youth population predominantly young males are more prone to societal instability when economic and political structures fail to integrate them into productive roles.² The surplus youth left without opportunities for employment, education, civic participation are more likely to be drawn into unrest, violence, and radical movements. Building on this foundation, Guner examined the link between 5th generations and rise of terrorism emphasizing that the unmet aspirations among young males can heightens the risk of radicalisation.³ Moreover, Urdal offered empirical support by examining the relationship between large sample of 5th generation and political unrest in diverse contexts.⁴

¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017: Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan* (Islamabad: UNDP Pakistan, 2018), 3-15.

² Madiha Afzal, *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society, and the State* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2018).

³ Zahid Shahab Ahmed, "Youth and Democratic Citizenship in Pakistan: Examining the Civic-Education Divide," *Journal of Youth Studies* 23, no. 3 (2020): 344–62.

⁴ Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

Goldstone augmented discussion by combining 5th generation with poor economic performance and weak institutes.⁵ Cincotta's research focused on the connection between structure of adolescent population and the frequency of civic conflicts.⁶ In a different but synergistic manner, Arnett suggested theory of emerging adulthood, stressing on social dynamics of youth identity realisation.⁷

Despite these important contributions to the field, the current paper identified a critical gap that no scholarship has yet combined frameworks to examine Pakistan's 5th+ generation specifically within the country's national security discussion. Therefore, there is absence of integrated approach in context of Pakistan's 5th generation and emphasises on the need for a more comprehensive analysis that links demographic shift, political, and national security dimensions of the country.

In order to address existing gap, current study critically reviews and integrates existing literature, case examples, and theoretical contributions to develop a conceptual framework for youth - state interaction in Pakistan. This current study widens the scope of security studies and establishes how youth marginalization, governance breakdowns, shifts in demography, systemic governance failures should be viewed as interrelated challenges rather than an isolated issue/s.

The framework offered in this study is applicable for scholars, policy analysts and decision makers aiming to re-conceptualise the state's national security beyond traditional security paradigms. It accentuates how youth involvement in participatory governance and responsive institutions are not merely a development concerns however foundational to enduring national resilience. Hence, theoretical ground-work can guide future research and inform inclusive policy dialogues in youth-majority state such as in Pakistan.

Research Questions

To address the identified gap in the existing literature regarding the 5th+generation's role in Pakistan's security framework, this study investigates the following questions: How has Pakistan's political history shaped the political socialization and institutional trust of the 5th+ generation? To what extent does the current "5th generation" in Pakistan

⁵ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469–80.

⁶ Masooda Bano, *The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions in the Madrassas of Pakistan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012)

⁷ Pinar Bilgin, "The Politics of Studying Securitization? The Copenhagen School in Turkey," *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (2011): 399–412.

serve as either a driver of socio-economic development or a potential threat to national security? How can a youth-responsive security governance framework mitigate risks of radicalization and promote national resilience?

Pakistan's Generations and Historic Political Continuity

Pakistan has one of the world's youngest youth population emerged within a context of political legacies such as; institutional fragility, politicised socio-economic and security environment linking demography with national stability in Pakistan's governance framework. In this context, study argues that Pakistan's political history shapes the experiences, expectations, and democratic trajectories of its fifth+ generation, with direct implications for governing national security.

Therefore, it is necessary to recognise the rise of Pakistan's fifth+ generation and subsequent ones that requires a careful and historically grounded exploration of prior political cohorts. Since each generational shift occurred in a distinctively exceptional political, social, and economic contexts. However, certain institutional patterns persisted predominantly those related to the public sector governance.

(1947-1971) 1st generation of Pakistan came of age in the outcome of subcontinent's partition⁸ in august 1947. Partition marked by traumatic legacies, freedom struggles, mass human displacement, communal violence and earlier inter-generational sufferings that resulted from British-Colonial governance rule in the region.⁹ The nascent Pakistan faced challenges of state development efforts, as well as issues of building institutional legitimacy.¹⁰ This era was characterised by both hope and described with generational trauma, as political leadership struggled to consolidate authority amid regional disintegration and refugee crises.¹¹ However, early centralized practices and deficiency to integrate diverse voices set a pattern for exclusionary governance model in nascent Pakistan.

⁸ iet Nguyen and Susan Wolcott, "Anticipating Independence, No Premonition of Partition. The Lessons of Bank Branch Expansion on the Indian Subcontinent, 1939 to 1946," Yale Economics, accessed November 30, 2025, https://economics.yale.edu/sites/default/files/premonition_yale_ada-ns.pdf.

⁹ Harjyot Kaur and Pooja Jaggi, "Intergenerational Trauma in the Context of the 1947 India-Pakistan Partition," *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* [Corrected Journal Title] 68, no. 10 (2023).

¹⁰ J. I. Wani, "Public Order and Popular Protest in Colonial India: Remembering Jallianwala Bagh Massacre after a Century," *Cambridge Open Engage* (2020).

¹¹ Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

(1971-1988) the 2nd generation matured under the influential political administration of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as well as sixth head of state president Zia-ul-Haq¹² and within this duration the government promoted a robust ideological framework focused on national and Islamic unity. These policies were aimed to enhance civic cohesion, but often limited dissent, and introduced changes in public and legal institutional systems that narrowed the participation in development decision making¹³. Thus, tendencies towards politicization were reinforced and left a significant influence on youth's political socialization.

(1988-1999) the 3rd generation witnessed a revolving-door democratic period characterized by alternating governments and electoral competition between Benazir Bhutto (1988 - 1999 & 1993 - 1996) and Nawaz Sharif (1990 - 1993 & 1997 - 1999) each led Pakistan to transitional democratic governance. Even with this formal return to democracy issues of institutional conflicts¹⁴, political instability, and incompetent political leadership as well as inept bureaucratic structures continued to be major problems for third generational youth. As frequent power struggle, corruption allegations, ineffective governance hindered the public services and civic inclusion in citizen development processes thus went through period of democratic decline and weakened the faith on democratic processes.

(1999-2008) the 4th generation was raised during hybrid regimes and rapidly changing media landscapes. During this period President Pervez Musharraf placed a strong emphasis on state-led modernization and economic-liberalisation, yet also restricted youth inclusion in broader decision making of national development plan. However, due to the evolution in digital technologies and expansion of private media outlets created greater political awareness, yet accompanied by increased surveillance and monitoring¹⁵. The youth of this age often had to balance being more articulate and knowledgeable within a constricted civic spaces.

And (2000-2025) the 5th+ generation born and grew up after 2000 inherited these complex legacies as this cohort are digital natives, exposed to trends globally as well as locally to Pakistan and becoming increasingly aware of their national diversity and values, development rights, as well as

¹² Shahid Javed Burki, "Politics of Economic Decisionmaking during the Bhutto Period," *Asian Survey* 14, no. 12 (1974): 1126-40.

¹³ Shahid Javed Burki, "Politics of Economic Decisionmaking during the Bhutto Period."

¹⁴ M. A. Sajid, "View of Institutional Confrontation and Political Instability," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2025): 34-42.

¹⁵ Fareeha Faisal and Ahmad Raza Jafri, "Corruption as a Source of Failure of Good Governance and Management in Pakistan: Proposed Remedial Measures," *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society* 30, no. 1 (2017): 44-54.

economic demands. However, this cohort face growing structural challenges i.e., rising economic inequality, unemployment, environmental degradation, and limited opportunities in participatory development, quality education and employment, peace and security etc. Despite having potential, many young people encounter structural hurdles in country's socio-economic development, and governance related decision-making. These constraints are particularly acute in under-resourced regions and among marginalized communities in various parts of the country.¹⁶

Notably, this 5th generation is not isolated, it's domestic, economic, political and development needs are shaped by accumulated effects of previous generation's 'experiences' and continuing institutional determinants that constitute the state-youth (citizen) relationship hence, it includes, centralised decision making, weak local governance, out dated bureaucratic structures and socio-economically weak mechanisms of representation of youth. Consequently, the 5th generation future outlook of civil infrastructure is likely to be shaped by complex interplay of aspirations and disillusionment, and these include demands for improved socio-economic development, enhanced peace and security, expanded employment opportunities, and structural forms of national participatory processes that remain responsive to the evolving needs of future generations.¹⁷

State-Youth Relations and National Security of Pakistan – Governance Gap

In context of national political history of Pakistan the political legacies acts as a deeply embedded influence, continuously shaping the modes of state – citizen governance, civic expectations, and youth engagement as these historical legacies intersect deeply with national security of Pakistan when viewed through the evolving relationship between the state and its 5th generation. National security in Pakistan has traditionally been framed through a militaristic and state-centric lens which often side-lines dimensions of youth security i.e., secure and peaceful national environment, secure job opportunities, unified social and economic development, access to modern development and education, provision of 5^{th+} generational services infrastructure, financial empowerment of citizens and increase in buying power, ease of access to citizen's basic needs. However, the lived experiences of the 5th generation marked by exclusion and absence of participatory processes, economic

¹⁶ Jack A. Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change can Lead to Violent Conflict," *Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 1 (2002): 3–21.

¹⁷ S. Akbar Zaidi and Matthew McCartney, eds., *New Perspectives on Pakistan's Political Economy: State, Class and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 15–28.

uncertainty, and social marginalization require a rethinking of what constitutes security in the contemporary context of Pakistan's development future?¹⁸

5th generation of 15-35 socially excluded from institutional politics, development, decision making, and disproportionately victimized by economic stagnation, unresponsive bureaucracy find it difficult to see their aspirations reflected in existing citizen's governance frameworks. As this sense of distancing deepens it catalyses alternative forms of mobilisation. For instance, ethnic campaigns suggest 5th generation is active socio-political cohort grounded in demands for dignity and seeking meaningful participation in their own socio-economic reforms and development within existing civic order.¹⁹ Such behavioural demonstration extend beyond generational characteristics and instead originates from established out dated public sector governance approaches and political cultural contexts that are losing influence on 5th generations.

Moreover, in an era, of digital realm political engagement and digital empowerment has emerged as a central space as it simultaneously enables political expressions and social creativity while exposing youth to misinformation, online extremism, and digital surveillance. These dynamics add further complexity to the national security environment, underscoring dual nature of platforms as both are instruments of participation and mechanism of oversight.²⁰

It is imperative for scholars, policy or decision makers to recognise youth-sensitive needs within national security governance framework with a focus on sustainable and equitable service provision, civic empowerment. A secure national future may likely to emerge when state actively engages its 5th generation as active contributors to stability and national development by recognising socio-economic concerns.

Theoretical Framework

Youth Bulge Theory

This theory argues that nation-states with youth-dominated demographics, if marginalised within economic and political structures are increasingly vulnerable to face social instability and political volatility. It

¹⁸ M. A. Ahmed, M. A. Nawaz, and M. S. Iqbal, "Political Socialization and Voting Behavior: The Mediating Role of Political Participation," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 40, no. 1 (2020): 49-63.

¹⁹ S. Akbar Zaidi and Matthew McCartney, eds., *New Perspectives on Pakistan's Political Economy: State, Class and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1-25.

²⁰ M. Malik and S. Malik, "Digital Propaganda and Political Manipulation: An Analysis of Social Media's Role in Pakistani Politics," *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2020): 112-125.

also suggests that when the demographic weight of young people in a society exceeds 20% of the adult population particularly young males who are unemployed and economically marginalised the risk of internal instability and probability of social unrest increases significantly.²¹

Scholars such as Urdal have reinforced this idea by empirically linking large youth cohorts with increased risk of political violence, particularly in societies with weak institutions and limited economic opportunities.²² Goldstone argues that 5th generations increase the likelihood of political upheaval, especially when paired with stagnant job markets and poor educational infrastructure.²³ Additionally, Cincotta et al. extended the theory by arguing that high proportions of youth are correlated with poor governance indicators and fragile state institutions, reinforcing the argument that demographic pressures can stress political systems that are already vulnerable.²⁴

In the context of Pakistan, where more than 64% of the population is under the age of 30 is especially prominent and in this vein this paper argues that in Pakistan, the country's public governing organisations have historically struggled at times failed to develop/provide inclusive, transparent, and efficient governing institutions capable of address the socio economic needs of its youth cohorts.

The governing apparatus laden by inefficiencies of civil services, malpractices, and elite patronage networks, have hindered the state's ability to ensure, equitable access to public services such as community development, education, health, and employment opportunities for the critical 5th generation. Public service institutions are often underfunded or highly politicised and reliant on outdated development approaches²⁵ while weak labour market linkages have failed to generate sufficient opportunities for rapidly urbanizing youth population.

Civic representation for 5th generation remains limited and often symbolic with policy making structures lacking genuine participation

²¹ Madiha Afzal, *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society, and the State* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2018)

²² Zahid Shahab Ahmed, "Youth and Democratic Citizenship in Pakistan: Examining the Civic-Education Divide," *Journal of Youth Studies* 23, no. 3 (2020): 344–62.

²³ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469–80.

²⁴ Masooda Bano, *The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions in the Madrassas of Pakistan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012)

²⁵ Sulman Naeem Mirza, "Stakeholder Participation in Local Healthcare Governance and Development under UN SDG-3: Strategies for Decentralized Coordination, and Role Definition: Lessons from Pakistan," *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 9, no. 1 (2025): 70–86.

mechanisms. Platforms for 5th generational youth empowerment such as; vocational training centres are highly politicised whereas; civic innovation hubs, socio-economic incubations centres for developing youth behaviour are not even conceptualised deepening young people's perception of social exclusion in existing citizen governance practices.

As several studies have noted disillusionment with state structures, coupled with unemployment and poor governance has led to youth's mobilisation in protests, extremism as well as oppositional movements.²⁶ This reality illustrates how Pakistan exemplifies the risks outlined by Youth Bulge Theory. The demographic challenge is not merely a matter of numbers but of public institute's civic capacity to govern the 5th generational youth to create meaningful 5th generational civic opportunities and pathways required to escalate national development. Moreover, without sustained investments in youth cohort's skill development, education, welfare, security and peace, and societal engagement the youth dissatisfaction may continue to threaten long term social development, and national peace and security.

In Pakistan, the disillusionment of young people with governing structures, high unemployment rates, and poor governance, incompetent civil services have been cited as contributing factors to youth involvement in protests, extremism, as well as other alternative to political/non-political mobilization.²⁷ Moreover, in this vein, the phenomenon of educated but underemployed and socially excluded youth turning to ideological movements, as this paper observed in various regions of the country, illustrates how demographic and political variables interact to create societal insecurity within a country.

In addition, the psychological impact of social exclusion and unemployment on youth identity should not be underestimated. The 5th generation becomes not only a material issue of numbers and jobs but a deeply social and emotional matter. Researcher noted in emerging adulthood, that age group is shaped by identity exploration and instability²⁸ where institutions fail to allow this exploratory construct the outcome maybe exclusion, resentment, and extremism. For Pakistan 5th generational youth, the gap between expectations from public sector governance infrastructure is fuelled by global digital connectivity whereas; awareness and local lived experience amplifies dissatisfaction within a given contextual settings.

²⁶ Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

²⁷ Adnan Khan, "The Political Habitus of Pakistani Youth: State, Education and the Imagination of Citizenship," *Asian Affairs* 51, no. 1 (2020): 57–75.

²⁸ Pinar Bilgin, "The Politics of Studying Securitization? The Copenhagen School in Turkey," *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (2011): 399–412.

Thus, Youth Bulge Theory offers a structural explanation for the sources of instability but also highlights the pressing need for inclusive responsive practical modalities and policy designs. Addressing 5th generation related challenges and calls for sustained, long term, investment in health, education, skill development, civic empowerment across social, economic, political and security domains. Hence, Pakistan's demographic challenge is not merely about numbers but revolves around the socio-political capacity of governance to channelize volatile cohort of population into a transformative source of country's development, resilience, and innovation, by investing in youth development, creating innovative participatory processes, country can mitigate the risks outlined by Youth Bulge Theory and effectively integrate its demographic advantage toward national cohesion, stability and long term development.

Political Socialization Theory

Youth inherit political attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural norms through primary and secondary socializing agents such as family, educational institutions, religious authorities, peer groups, mass media, and increasingly, digital and social platforms.²⁹ Political learning begins in early childhood and continues throughout adolescence and early adulthood, shaping civic orientations, institutional trust, and political participation. Scholars have emphasised that effectiveness and coherence of socializing agents are often influenced by legacies of political instability, centralization of governing power, and institutional weaknesses.³⁰

Political socialization is influenced by both formal and informal institutional networks reflecting complex political history. Public institutions may serve as vibrant incubations of national development and unified politics in hatching the civic leadership. And as a result such avenues offer constructive civic learning of given context. Simultaneously the internet and social media emerged as a leading informal political socialisation arena exposing youth of 5th generation to varied realities, political viewpoints hence, cultivating engagement in alternative civic discussions.

However, the national governing ambivalence toward youth cohort's participation between symbolic inclusion and surveillance contributes to mixed political messages and uneven socio-political progress among the youth generation. This theory assists in explaining

²⁹ A. Khan et al., "Infrastructure Project Governance: An Analysis of Public Sector Project in Northern Pakistan," *Journal of Governance and Innovation* (2018); T. H. Khan, H. A. Khan, and M. A. Wariach, "Governance Challenges in Public Sector: An Analysis of Governance and Efficiency Issues in Public Sector Institutions in Pakistan," *Journal of Governance* (2014)

³⁰ Kofi Annan Foundation, *Youth, Climate, and Peace: Case Study from Balochistan, Pakistan* (Geneva: Kofi Annan Foundation, 2024)

how Pakistan's generational cohorts of youth internalise, negotiates, and reinterprets democratic/political and development norms in a fragmented and often contradictory contexts. For instance, official curricula from primary through secondary promote a state-centric, country-first narrative, whereas; alternative spaces such as; university academic curriculum/platforms and online activism offer avenues for ethnic contestation and articulation of pluralistic identities within Pakistan.

Furthermore, the absence of structured civic education and student incubation unions under redefined parameters, and practices across national to local levels may impair democratic leadership habitus formation. And in terms of political socialisation this gap weakens institutional channels through which 5th generations develop civic norms, leadership capacities, participatory governance skills to address scarcity of national leadership at multiple levels of the country i.e. (local, provincial, and national) as a result may transform democratic leadership and renew the participatory processes governing country's 5th generation's skilfully, as such practices have positive impact on societal development as well as reactionary politics in others.

For Pakistan, this theory underscores how structural limitations such as inconsistencies in political messaging, underinvestment in citizen development, civic education, and restrictive civic space can weaken development and democratic culture and reduce youth engagement in formal governance processes i.e. (leadership, politics, socio-economic development) etc.³¹ In sum, Political Socialization Theory provides critical insight into how the political attitudes of Pakistan's youth are formed, challenged, and reimaged within a contested and evolving civic landscape.

Critical Security Studies

CSS offers a paradigm shift to rethink security by moving beyond conventional military focused definitions and instead emphasising on a more extensive, multi-dimensional comprehensive conceptualisation of threats, encompassing societal, economic, environmental, and political insecurities.³² Fundamentally this approach highlights the process of "securitization" a discursive act where political actors frame certain issues

³¹ A. R. Malik and N. Malik, "Digital Youth and Political Expression in Pakistan: Social media and Democratic Practices," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 40, no. 2 (2020): 89–104. ; S. Naeem, "UN SDG 3 and Context-specific Effects of Stakeholder Engagement on Health Care Service Delivery and Policy Implementation: A Local Government Health Sector Case Study in Pakistan's Complex Governing Structure," *International Journal of Science and Research Archive* 13, no. 2 (2024): 757–76.

³² Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015).

as existential threats and thus legitimise extra-ordinary measures.³³ Instead of viewing security as entirely state survival and control of territory, the Critical Security Studies (CSS) bring to fore the need for the human security, contending that threats to identity, social fabric and economic order are equally central.³⁴ Therefore, this study offers intersection of marginalization of 5th generation. CSS can serve as a lens to interrogate how contemporary threats are shaped not just by external forces, but by internal social dynamics, inequalities, and exclusionary practices of multi-tiered formal governance i.e. (National, Provincial, and Local) failures.

Moreover, a UNDP and UNICEF-backed report shows that Pakistani youth, when empowered through innovation programs and inclusion strategies, contribute constructively to social resilience and development. In the context of Pakistan, CSS serves as a powerful analytical tool for examining the treatment of youth issues. As analysis of Pakistan Internal Security Policy II (2018-2023) reveals implementation gaps.³⁵ In this analytical context, youth are not only defined as demographic category but are recognized as a politically consequential and socially vulnerable population.

The lack of 5th generation institutional capacity encompassing security and peace building mechanisms, equitable access to essential public services i.e., health, water and sanitation infrastructure, meaningful political inclusion, and comprehensive youth development policies reflects a deeper structural neglect, highlighting the need to integrate youth security in the national development and security discourses, rather viewing youth-related concerns as secondary issues in socio - economic development.

Therefore, the realities of youth unemployment pressures, limited political inclusion, educational and development disparities remain unaddressed by conventional security paradigms, which continue to prioritize external security challenges over domestic governance vulnerabilities. This marginalisation not only undermines and diminishes public trust on the institutions, but also reinforces patterns of exclusion, civic disengagement, and social fragmentation, especially among the 5th generation as this constitutes a substantial share of Pakistan's demographic profile.

³³ "Pakistan's National Internal Security Policies from 2014 to 2022: Gaps, Challenges, and Prospects," ResearchGate, accessed July 21, 2025, <https://www.researchgate.net>.

³⁴ A. Z. Shaikh and U. L. Shah, "Public Service Delivery and E-governance: The Case of Pakistan," *International Journal for Infonomics* (2016)

³⁵ Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021)

Pakistan's security discourse continues to be dominated by concerns over geopolitical threats and internal militancy, thus leaving minimal governance capacity and policy space to address growing socio-economic inequalities and development grievances of its young citizen's that underpin sustainable solutions to problems facing the nation. As CSS theorists contend, that such narrow security framing can overlook the snowballing effects of structural inequality, societal exclusion, and disengagement, especially amongst demographic youth cohorts. Studies emphasise that unless human insecurities are addressed states cannot sustainably achieve sustainable order.³⁶

In the context of Pakistan, CSS underscores the need for a multidimensional security framework one that encapsulates the social experiences of peripheral groups and disadvantaged communities, particularly the 5th generation into policy development as it advocates for a participatory governance. In doing so, CSS offers not just a critical assessment of prevailing security narratives, but a framework for developing a more equitable, youth responsive approach to collective resilience. This approach emphasises on the security of young communities over narrow interests, and advocates for distributive justice, and people-centred development strategies. By recognising youth critical to nations socio-economic and security cohesion, CSS scholars and policymakers can reconceptualise security framework around the social realities of youth cohort.

Theoretical Synthesis and Conceptual Model

Current study introduces a "Youth - Responsive Security Governance Framework" embedding Pakistan's 5th+ cohort within the intersection of inherited political legacies and structures, shift in demographic pressure, and dynamically evolving security discourse.

Proposed framework integrates three conceptual components i.e. Pakistan's political legacies, 5th generation and security outcomes analysed in light of Critical Security studies perspective.

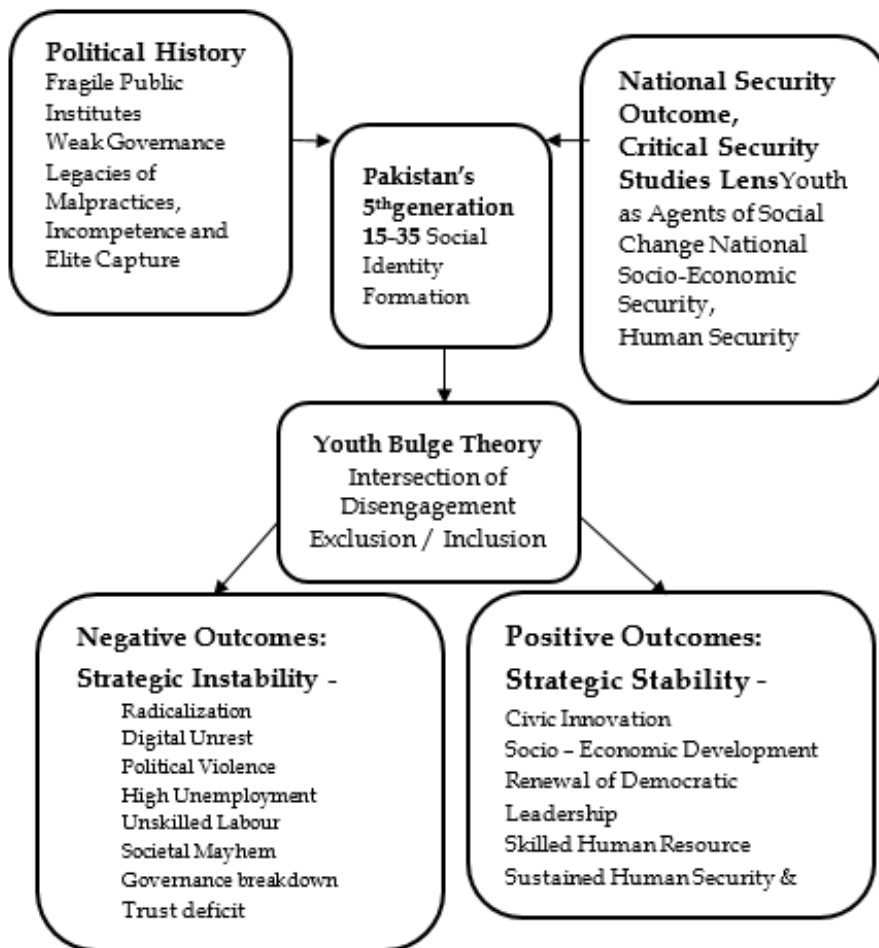
The below depiction illustrates patterns of historical traumas and authoritarianism, elite capture, and weak public sector development have profoundly shaped youth political socialization and these legacies have contributed to alienation, mistrust, and a sense of exclusion among younger generations from citizen governance rather than fostering participatory and inclusive norms. Political socialization under conditions of elite dominance reproduces a cycle leading to youth marginalization

³⁶ S. K. A. Shah, N. Ali, and Z. Ali, "Declining Employee Performance in Public Sector Organizations: An Etiological Study of Public Sector Organizations in Pakistan," *Journal for Studies in Management and Planning* (2015);

from formal political processes, limiting citizen's stakes in continuity of national development.

Figure 1: Amalgamation of Political History, 5th generation and Critical Security Study: An Integrative Youth - Security Model

Youth – Responsive Security Governance Model



Source: (S.N, Mirza, 2026)

Scholars³⁷ have validated that the large youth cohorts particularly, unemployed, economically marginalised and politically divided under

³⁷ Madiha Afzal, *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society, and the State* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2018) ; Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ:

weaker citizen governance can become volatile actors, and susceptible to political radicalisation. It occurs when political alienation intersects with structural dynamics described by 'Youth Bulge Theory,' hence risks of insatiability intensify. In Pakistan, the inability of state institutions to provide equitable opportunities for employment, education and civic participation heightens the potential for civic unrest, ranging from street protests to more organised forms of criminal or oppositional mobilisation especially where two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30, the demographic pressures becomes even more critical.

The aforementioned proposed "Youth-Responsive Security Governance Model" treats critical security studies as a subset in a contemporary setting of Pakistan in a post "Hybrid Warfare". As existing conception is insufficient for a state whose demographic structure is overwhelmingly youthful and long term strategic stability is intertwined with social, economic, political and psychological conditions of its younger population. Therefore, current paper also reconceptualises national security governance through human-centred governance based approach where 5th generations are viewed as active stakeholders in peace building, social resilience, development and national integration. This means that governance structure consisting government ministries, labour markets, educational institutions, digital regulators and local governance structures all become relevant actors in the broader success of national security governance.

From this perspective, this paper conceptualise security as "an integrative institutional framework in which state secures long term stability, resilience, sovereignty by safeguarding, empowering and productively engaging 5th generations as a core pillar of national cohesion, social order and strategic continuity". It recognises addressing of internal vulnerabilities rooted in demographic pressure, governance deficit, and development disparities within a regional context.

Furthermore, proposed model outlines spectrum of possible outcomes; at one end youth exclusion and marginalisation may fuel political radicalisation, digital unrest, and violence, high unemployment and unskilled labour can create societal mayhem. And at the other end youth engagement/inclusion in development or decision making can stimulate empowerment, civic innovation, an economic progress and consolidate democratic breakdowns. Fill public leadership gaps and provide skilled human resources contributing in sustained security and peace.

The 5th generation of Pakistan thus stands at a pivotal crossroads whether this demographic transition evolves into an asset or a liability

may depends on state response to youth aspirations. Therefore, current synthesis redefines security into creation of opportunities, participatory developments that transform 5th generations from a perceived risk of instability into a national resource.

State Response and Generational Outcomes

The ultimate security trajectory of Pakistan is not determined by the sheer size of the 5th generation, but by the qualitative nature of the state's interaction with this cohort. By synthesizing the historical data and theoretical insights presented, this study argues that national security now exists at a crossroads, where the outcome is strictly contingent upon whether governance adapts to youth-centric expectations or remains tethered to legacy structures.

The Path towards Strategic Stability

Achieving stability requires a fundamental pivot toward the tenets of Critical Security Studies. In this scenario, the state views the demographic weight of the 5th generation as a primary strategic asset rather than a management problem.

- **Institutional Reciprocity:** When the youth's expectations for digital autonomy and legislative inclusion are met with decentralized, participatory governance, the result is a reconstruction of institutional trust.
- **Empirical Indicators of Success:** This path is marked by high civic engagement, a reduction in the "brain drain" phenomenon, and the actualization of the demographic dividend through youth-responsive economic policies.
- **Security Implication:** The state builds internal resilience, creating a social contract that is robust enough to withstand both domestic polarization and external hybrid threats.

The Risk of Strategic Instability

Conversely, a reliance on outdated bureaucratic structures and exclusionary political legacies, remnants of the "Elite Capture" identified in earlier periods, will almost certainly drive the 5th generation toward alienation.

Response Gap: When structural demands for transparency and employment are met with state-centric control or institutional indifference, it creates a vacuum filled by disillusionment.

Empirical Indicators of Failure: This trajectory is measured by systemic unemployment, a surge in digital radicalization, and the fracturing of political socialization.

Security Implication: The "Youth Bulge" shifts from a potential dividend to a catalyst for systemic instability, where unmet aspirations fuel civil unrest and internal security vacuums.

Conclusion

This paper explores evolving dynamics between Pakistan's 5th generation and the country's national security architecture through theoretically grounded lens. In contemporary settings of Pakistan, this study proposed a 'youth - responsive security governance model' and attempted to reconceptualise governing of national security not merely as a function of territorial sovereignty and external defence but it is a multi-dimensional process intrinsically linked with internal and external strategic depth. Hence, drawing on 'Youth Bulge Theory, Political Socialisation Theory, and Critical Security Studies', study provides layered understanding of how youth demographics, political history and state structures interact in shaping strategic stability.

Study also categorically highlights Pakistan's traditional political landscape of security rooted in elite-centric governance narratives have largely undermine the socio-economic and development aspirations of its youth cohorts i.e., 1st generation to 5th generation of Pakistan. This oversight is not merely a developmental shortfall but it also constitutes a critical vulnerability exposing a governance gap within the national security governance framework as the 5th generation is coming of age in a context marked by rising regional instability, socio-economic - development inequality.

In a political sphere constricted or absence of civic spaces for social learning and communal understanding as competing political narratives often heightens channels of expressions which can either reinforce or destabilise the social order depending on the degree of their inclusion hence, making youth subjects of coercive security policy. As historically centralised political legacies of authoritarianism continued to shape how 5th generation perceive the state and their role within it. This has produced a generation that is simultaneously globally aware rich in civic potential and burdened by systemic pressures and barriers to participate in socio-economic development of the state.

Critical Security Studies lens strongly emphasises on sustainable security, as it requires more than cultivation of trust, and demands the creation of equitable access to participation and development and strategically incorporate marginalised voices in decision making. Hence, the contribution of this study lies in its integration of demographic and political theories to construct a aforementioned conceptual model for analysing state youth relations in Pakistan by situating 5th generation as an active demographic statistic that encapsulate transformative force with the potential to redefine state - society relations. And in realising the

potential it requires fundamental shift in policy and discourse one that views youth not as a risk to be managed, but establish state – youth partnership in building a demographically secure, and socio - economically resilient Pakistan.

In sum, Pakistan national security defence depends on not only strategic policies but on how effectively state engages with its most populous and dynamic cohorts. A security paradigm that falls short to centre youth inclusion in participatory development. The road to national resilience lies in reimagining security through the eyes of those who will inherit and shape its future direction. Therefore, there is a requirement of youth development paradigm for sustainable outcomes.

Future Research Gaps and Directions

Current study advances a theoretical framework to understand underlying logical relationship between youth demographics and national security contextual to Pakistan. However, several promising avenues remain for future research. And such identified directions are critical not only for validating and refining of the theoretical insights provided in this study but also for bridging the governance gap between conceptual discourse and application of practical policy:

Empirical Validation of Theoretical Frameworks

The proposed integration of Youth Bulge Theory, Political Socialization, and Critical Security Studies lens, can empirically test using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups with 5th generation across urban and rural Pakistan could help determine validity of assumptions regarding alienation, agency, and identity construction in context of Pakistan.

Youth Political Behaviour and Digital Spaces

Given 5th generation's immersion in digital ecosystems, future research studies could explore how social media platforms are instrumentally shaping political attitudes, fostering mobilization, and influencing youth engagement. Future research studies might examine digital echo chambers, the role of influencers, misinformation, and surveillance practices within Pakistan's online spaces.

Regional and Local Case Studies

In-depth case studies on youth-led political movements or activism on regional/provincial dynamics in light of 5th generations can provide context-specific insights. Such studies would also allow for intersectional analyses of youth-state relations.

Comparative Studies across States

Comparative research between Pakistan and similar legacies, demographic pressures, or governance structures could help determine youth oriented security discourse.

Youth in National Security Policymaking

Little is known about role of 5th generation in formal policymaking bodies related to security or national development. Future research could analyse and identify inclusion mechanisms such as; youth councils or advisory groups from national to local level and their effectiveness.

Institutional Responsiveness and Trust

Studies could examine the impact of state institutions (education, law enforcement, employment programs) on shaping youth trust and legitimacy perceptions? How do failures in public service delivery affect youth allegiance to the state institutions? And what institutional interventions can strengthen civic trust and resilience.

Youth and Migration Aspirations

Given the rising brain drain and youth migration trends observed in Pakistan, future work could analyse how the desire to leave Pakistan reflects a form of disengagement from the national or domestic order? This line of inquiry could explore migration as a national developmental issue.

