

**THE YOUTH FACTOR:
THE NEW DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND
THE IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY**

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18 January 2003

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Middle East, already rent by a complex set of problems-- dictatorial and failing regimes, political violence, warfare, growing Islamist opposition, terrorist activity and growing hostility toward the US-- faces an additional and less well-known problem that bids to exacerbate most present negative trends -- demographics. The rates of population growth across most of the region are either still expanding, such as in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, or have yet to shrink from a high growth rate. Indeed, in Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco, the population growth rate will not likely decrease until 2025, in Iraq, it likely will not decrease even by 2050. Of the major states, only Iran and Turkey show any clear signs of coping with the problem of ever bigger and younger populations.

The rapid population growth is such that youths under the age of 24 now make up 50%-65% of the population of the Middle East. This places immense strains on the entire infrastructure of the state, especially on educational services, which are already poor and declining in quality, and creates greater dissatisfaction among the most volatile element of society. Social services need to be expanded as well to meet the growing population, but most states have been failing to meet the challenge. The slack is then usually taken up by Islamist organizations that are able to provide many of these services and gain increased support from the population. States likewise cannot employ the growing number of university graduates, heightening overall unemployment, also a volatile force.

The great question for most Middle Eastern societies is who will be able to politically mobilize this youth cohort most successfully: the state, or other political forces, primarily Islamist? What attitudes will the youthful cohort have toward the West in particular, building on an already serious deterioration of views of the US in the region? Will a Western model serve as a point of attraction, or will it be nationalist and Islamist forces that are equally suspicious of American intentions and policies?

The existence of a relatively large youth cohort within the population of Middle Eastern societies serves to exacerbate nearly all dimensions of its political, social and economic problems. It is youth that often translates broader social problems into an explosive and radicalizing mixture. Particular states that seem to offer particularly threatening demographic scenarios include Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iraq.

Barring dramatic change in the US approach to the Middle East, continuation of present trends will almost surely lead to new generations becoming socialized into an attitude of hostility to the US and its policies. This increasingly youthful population may be destined to translate such feelings into political expression and even violent action. Indicators are that the US probably will not succeed in the foreseeable future in capturing the imagination of most youth sufficiently to overcome anti-US feeling at the political level or for offering the West as a plausible and attainable alternative model as a path for future development. Attitudes for resentment will also grow toward most regimes in the area. This creates an incredibly destabilizing mix, which could express itself in greater levels of terrorism, violence, and underlying instability, over a time of generations.

US Policies to Mitigate the Demographic Challenge

- Liberalization of Middle Eastern societies is perhaps the single most urgent task in averting the negative effects of this demographic shift. All other problems are in some way linked with the problems of authoritarian governance today. Liberalization entails not just promotion of elections, but also other underlying institutions: open media, rule of law, answerable governance, non-official government organizations, representative parliaments that serve as forums for debate of citizens' views and challenge to rulers, more open economies, and the emergence of robust civil societies.
- The US must also be prepared for the likelihood that the empowerment of this youth cohort, even through democratization, will initially open the gates to public articulation of much pent-up anti-American hostility that will have to run its course for some years, depending on the society in question. Populist leaders will often seek to exploit popular nationalism. Dealing with democracies is invariably more complex and frustrating than dealing with autocracies, as states which deal with the US have long since learned. But once the pressure has been released, citizens will enter the phase of hard thinking about what it is they really want and need--something dictatorships have spared them of until today.
- For youth, vastly improved education is a critical necessity. It is not necessary to oversee or combat religious education -- and not all of it is undesirable or backward. The main task is to provide far more secular schools and support better broadly based education for the youth of the region, especially at the elementary and secondary levels that affect most of the population. In a free competition, the religious schools will decline in influence and support when the public is able to avail itself of quality secular state education. Female education is of course essential. At the same time, it must be recognized up front that education can also lead to higher political expectations and demands on the part of a student population who will challenge more aggressively the weaknesses and failures of the state and its leaders. Education does not promote stability in the short term but is essential to longer-term state competence and stable societies. The US can do vastly more to assist in Middle East education, both in expanding access to education in the US and expanding the presence of American universities in the region, which have a extraordinary rate of success. Limitation of birthrates in these developing societies is another key to helping relieve heavy pressures upon the resources of the state and affecting future stability.
- The US must do more to harness its own ideals -- freedom, liberty, non-discrimination, rule of law, human rights, civil liberties, justice, equality, equal opportunity -- into its foreign policies and public diplomacy, especially in the Middle East. At present these values are admired by most Muslims -- who also see them as conspicuously absent in US policies abroad. Fifty years ago, at the time of the collapse of the British Empire, the US was the most widely admired society in the world among Middle Easterners. Today it is probably the most hated. US idealism could powerfully harness the idealism of youth around the world if its security and military policies were augmented by values that go beyond the current routine lip service. These goals are easily stated but much more complex to apply. Nonetheless efforts must be taken to do so if the present collision

course with the Muslim world -- Usama bin Ladin's greatest aspiration -- is to be averted.

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"Place the young at the head of the insurgent masses; you do not know what strength is latent in those young bands, what magic influence the voices of the young have on the crowd; you will find in them a host of apostles for the new religion. But youth lives on movement, grows great in enthusiasm and faith. Consecrate them with a lofty mission; inflame them with emulation and praise; spread through their ranks the word of fire, the word of inspiration; speak to them of country, of glory, of power, of great memories."¹

I. Introduction

The Islamic world has one of the highest proportions in the world of young people among the general population. This phenomenon in demographic terms is sometimes described as a "youth bulge," that is, the age group (or cohort) of youth is far more numerous than for all other age groups combined. States with high proportions of youth under age 24 include: Yemen at 65.3%, Saudi Arabia at 62.3%, Iraq at 61.7%, Pakistan at 61%, Iran at 59.3%, and Algeria at 56.5%. This demographic profile in particular has major implications for the future of societies of the Middle East, their politics, economic and social life. Basically, a large youth cohort intensifies and exacerbates most existing problems of these societies. In particular, it places major new strains on the social infrastructure including educational facilities, social services, housing, and employment needs, which, unmet, lead to predictable social instability, volatility, and radicalization. This paper examines the nature of the youth bulge, its implications for the economic, political and social future of regimes in the region, and the impact these realities can have upon American interests and policies.

The Statistical Picture

The demographic experience of massive population growth within the developing world as a whole is historically unprecedented: the conditions that brought it about with such rapidity--new medicines, improved hygiene, new medical procedures and technology--burst upon the developing world quite suddenly--sometimes over one generation--whereas such changes

¹ From a speech of Italian nationalist Guisepppe Mazzini, quoted in Herbert Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World," Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 10. Issue 3, April 1968, quoting from Frederick Hertz, Nationality in History and Politics (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1944., p. 388.

came only slowly in Western Europe. Many states of Europe furthermore enjoyed opportunities for emigration of excess youthful labor and administrative skills to the colonies from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.² These outlets are vastly more limited for Middle Eastern youth today. The multiple impacts of this youth bulge upon existing conditions and regimes have serious implications for US interests and policy.

The demographic profile of the distribution of age groups across the population in the Middle East demonstrates that the region possesses a youth population that is second only to Sub-Saharan Africa in its size relative to the rest of the population. By way of comparison, the most recent UN statistics show that whereas the percentage of the population under age fifteen in Western Europe is only 16.9%, in South America it is 30.3%; and in West Asia (the greater Middle East excluding North Africa) it is as high as 35.1% This figure is surpassed only by Sub-Saharan Africa at 46.9%. If we raise the age bracket to include all those 24 years and under, that age cohort in almost all Middle East countries is between 50-65% of the total population -- an astonishingly young population.³

[INSERT GRAPHIC -- <http://www.csis.org/mideast/stable/2f.html>]

These high youth figures in the developing world are not uniform across all developing countries, even within the Middle East. The reasons for differences *among* developing countries in their age profiles involve more complex local factors. But in broadest terms, within the group of developing nations, Southeast Asia and Latin America show a lower rate of fertility, while the Middle East demonstrates higher fertility rates, along with Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America.⁴

The Middle East is of course a quite diverse region and no statistical generalizations immediately fit all countries, despite the existence of a youth bulge of varying magnitudes. The population of the *Arab* world is now at about 280 million, approximately equal to the US; it makes up about 5% of the total world's population, a percentage that has doubled over the past fifty years. The rates of growth also dramatically differ: The United Arab Emirates has seen its population grow 36 times in that same period, while that of Lebanon only 2.4 times.⁵

In terms of actual birth rates figures vary sharply as well: the UNDP report divides the Arab world into three rough categories:

- Four countries of quite diverse natures with relatively *low fertility rates* of less than three live births per woman: Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Tunisia.
- Nine countries with *3-5 births* per woman: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, and the UAE. Note that these countries present a range of strikingly

² Moller, op. cit., p. 251.

³ United Nations 1998 Demographic Handbook, New York, 2000.

⁴ [Brian Nichiporuk of RAND Corporation, remarks at a lecture on demography and national security at the Working Group of the Conflict Prevention Project, Woodrow Wilson Center, 20 September 2002.

⁵ UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2002, pp. 36-37.

diversity, including some of both the richest and poorest countries of the world, in quite different locations.

- The remaining nine Arab countries have birth rates of *over five* per woman. These range from impoverished Yemen at the top of the list with 7.6 births, to wealthy Saudi Arabia.⁶

Even the dimensions of the youth bulge vary widely, with the age cohort of under 15 year-olds ranging from 26% in the UAE to 50% in Yemen.⁷ Robert Kaplan points out that while the top ten states with the highest youth bulge profile are in sub-Saharan Africa, the next five are in the Middle East: Yemen, Gaza, the West Bank of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, with maybe Egypt as the sixth.⁸

Age Structures

The population profiles in the form of graphics as shown in this study vary considerably. The two main models are those that show high population growth as a "bulge," a blip on the growth profile. The existence of a youth "bulge" suggests that the demographic problem is on its way to gradual resolution, that is, a high rate of population growth has begun to tail off, leaving a bulge in the profile of that generation that will work its way through the life process.

More disturbing than the phenomenon of a "bulge" is the profile of states such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan. These countries simply show continued population growth until 2050. This suggests that the demands of a growing population will not have even begun to tail off, or have barely stabilized, for the next half century, placing continuing serious long term strain on the state infrastructure and society.

[**Insert Graphics**

IISS graphics from Strategic Survey,

Also see CSIS Demographic Study for graphics <http://www.csis.org/mideast/stable/2f.html>

ALSO DEMOGRAPHIC GRAPHICS FROM FOLLOWING SITES,

ALGERIA - <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=AG&out=s&yymax=250>

IRAN- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=IR&out=s&yymax=250>

IRAQ-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=IZ&out=s&yymax=250>

PAKISTAN- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=PK&out=s&yymax=250>

⁶ UNDP p. 36.

⁷ UNDP, P. 36.

⁸ Robert Kaplan remarks at a lecture on demography and national security at Woodrow Wilson Center, 20 September 2002.

SAUDI ARABIA-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=SA&out=s&ymax=250>

YEMEN-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=YM&out=s&ymax=250>

MOROCCO-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=MO&out=s&ymax=250>

JORDAN -- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=JO&out=s&ymax=250>

INDONESIA-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=ID&out=s&ymax=250>

EGYPT-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=EG&out=s&ymax=250>

JAPAN-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=JA&out=s&ymax=250>

GERMANY-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=GM&out=s&ymax=250>

CHINA-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=CH&out=s&ymax=250>

INDIA-- <http://blue.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbpyrs.pl?cty=IN&out=s&ymax=250>]

A “youth bulge” by definition is obviously not static: the age of the youth bulge as it passes through the pipeline of life naturally grows progressively older, affecting society and its needs and planning quite differently at each stage of its aging process. In other words, when the demographic bulge is young it initially posits clear requirements for education and social management of a volatile age requiring economically "unproductive" drawdown of state funds. Later that same group places demands on the economic and social infrastructure with heightened requirements for employment, housing and social services. And as the youth bulge cohort itself enters the childbearing age, even if the birthrate itself remains static absolute births will go up until the cohort passes beyond the childbearing age. At a still later age the bulge creates requirements for the management of the needs of senior populations.⁹ Thus there is an "echo" effect of the bulge that passes on to the next generation that will itself be disproportionately larger due to its greater numbers, all other things being equal. Finally, the conditions that produced the bulge are not static either: the region witnesses *overall declining fertility* on the one hand, but *rising life expectancy* at birth on the other, partially canceling each other out. And, as noted above, when the population surge has not even

⁹ Moller, op. cit., p. 250.

begun to show signs of serious tailing off, the challenge to states, regimes and societies are even greater.

Demographers in the UNDP Report differ on prognostications of actual future population growth, and offer two different scenarios based on different growth assumptions for the Arab world by 2020. In the first scenario (constant fertility rates at the current level) the population of the Arab world hits a high of 459 million. The second scenario, more plausible and based on UN-calculations factoring in shifting birth and death rates, the population reaches only 410 million.¹⁰ In either case, these prognoses suggest that some aspects of the youth bulge problem will ease within the next generation or two, but not for states for whom population growth has not yet reached the "bulge" stage of starting to tail off. Whether population growth has reached the level of bulge or not, it is nonetheless capable of inflicting serious problems upon the socio-political order of the region in the period of the next 20-40 years.

¹⁰ UNDP p. 37.

II. A Youthful Population: Benefit or Hindrance?

The existence of a large youthful population in and of itself represents a "neutral" value; that is, it can be socially and economically either beneficial or harmful. The UNDP Report points out clearly that these demographic profiles,

"...Present both challenges and opportunities for Arab countries ... and can be either a demographic gift or a demographic curse, depending on whether countries can use the human potential represented by their populations well enough to satisfy people's aspirations for a fulfilling life. For example, a large, rapidly growing population can be an engine of material development and human welfare when other factors conducive to economic growth -- such as high levels of investment and appropriate types of technological know-how -- are present. Absent such factors, however, it can be a force for immiseration as more and more people pursue limited resources and jobs."¹¹

Unfortunately, the broader economic and social indicators at work in the Muslim world make it quite clear that the requisite conditions that could beneficially absorb and gainfully employ a growing population are simply not present; this reality turns a growing population into an overall net complication and hindrance. Furthermore, "most societies throughout history have been too poor in capital resources, too rigid and monopolistic in their social structure, and too limited in their educational facilities to avail themselves of these human potentials, a fact which still holds true of most societies today. . . . Unfortunately, underdeveloped societies produce underdeveloped personalities, both intellectually and emotionally."¹²

In the Middle Ages, for example, in the period of rapid population growth following the passing of the Black Death, those European states that were able to profitably engage their growing youth population -- in particular to engage their energies in overseas exploration, such as Spain and England-- suffered little political dislocation. Those that did not, such as Germany, underwent the Reformation movement, in which youthful participation figured highly in this period of political, social and intellectual turmoil.¹³

The implications of the term "youth bulge" thus far transcend the immediate statistical impact of the changing demography. The very term itself is laden with social and psychological implications.

Concepts of Youth and Adolescence

Quantitative demographic imbalance of a youth population is one thing, but the *qualitative nature* of a large adolescent population is a distinct and equally important factor. The very concept of adolescence is in reality a quite modern one -- in most of the world, teenagers were "invented" only in the twentieth century.

¹¹ UNDP p. 38.

¹² Moller, op. cit., p. 256.

¹³ [Moller, pp. 238-239.]

In traditional societies everywhere there was no parallel concept of a floating youth population. In the unchanging verities of traditional rural and agricultural life one's position throughout life was determined at birth and the individual basically moved from being a child to an adult at puberty. Adolescents rarely enjoyed separate social, cultural or economic status for long, except for perhaps a period of extended coming of age ceremonies. Even here, the youth cohort fitted into a sharply defined and controlled social category, unlike the much looser social category of "teenagers" today, in which the quest for identity is an individual issue and not at all structured through long-established and rigid rites of passage. It is the relatively unstructured and uncontrolled aspects of modern Western youth culture that make it so volatile and so prone to social pathologies. These are largely absent in traditional societies where adolescents, if recognized as such, are part of the same overall rigid social order and not existing outside structures of social control and observation.

Most sociologists agree that the modern Western concept of teenagers was invented came into being primarily through the powerful force of mass public education. It is education that takes youth away from the eternal patterns of agricultural life. The educational process literally removes adolescents from the home, in both urban and rural environments, and places them in a new physical location and into a society that is made up almost exclusively of their own age peers. Parental authority and tradition is diminished, and the influence of peers grows. Youths encounter new ideas from sources other than parental, views that often challenge those of their parents or other figures of authority.

Growing urbanization intensifies this experience when youth comes into contact with a vastly greater variety of personalities, situations and experiences that sharply and differentially affect the developmental process. For the first time a distinctive youth "culture" emerges that bonds adolescents into groups that in part now define themselves in contradistinction to their parents. This is not to suggest that rebellion against parents is widespread and automatic. But parental ties become more tenuous and parental generational views can easily come to be regarded as quite different, "old-fashioned," possibly "out of touch" with their children's world, even if the culture demands that parents still receive obligatory respect.

Youth is not the same the world over. Indeed the Western concept of "teenager" is only slowly creeping into the social realities of the developing world, still far from the life-styles of Western youth. Affluence as well as political and social freedoms and the weakening power of tradition and social strictures afford Western youth far greater latitude in expressing their individuality in manifold respects. Nonetheless, these Western patterns are not just the product of Western society; they also reflect the realities of economic development that in turn impacts traditional social structure. This suggests that something comparable to an international youth culture is gradually infiltrating the entire world, even if at varying rates and with different characteristics. But the changes are ongoing.

In the contemporary conditions of the *developing world*, technology also affects the development of each specific youth culture. Films, television, and videocassettes are now broadly available, remorselessly projecting the lifestyles and preoccupations of international youth from various parts of the developing world. Music and clothing styles are usually the chief vehicles physically capturing generational differences, symbols of even more important statements about outlook. Youth is then no longer linked only to its own distinctive locally

formed youth culture, but is open to certain options of association with an international "class" of youth with multiple shared values. These new values in the developing world often may be honored primarily on the surface or exist primarily as sets of attitudes, even if they cannot always be acted upon as profoundly as among their western cultural mentors.¹⁴

Thus, whatever the statistics demonstrate about a youth bulge, it is essential to recognize the powerful *qualitative* forces that are at work upon those same quantitative realities. Youth in the developing world is increasingly exposed to a variety of Western ideas about what youth means, even as their societies undergo constant, dramatic, and even destabilizing change.

¹⁴ John C. Caldwell, Pat Caldwell, Bruce K. Caldwell, and Indarani Pieris, "The Construction of Adolescence in a Changing World: Implications for Sexuality, Reproduction, and Marriage," Studies in Family Planning, Volume 29, Number 2, June 1998.

III. The Muslim Context of the Youth Bulge

What is the political, social, economic and cultural context of a youth bulge, particularly in the Middle East setting? The context sharply affects its varying impact on different countries. Some key cultural questions immediately merit consideration.

Are Muslim countries pro-natal?

There is nothing inherent in Islam *per se* that particularly predisposes it to strong positions on the desirability of high or low birthrates. Unlike Roman Catholicism, Islam has no theological grounds for opposing contraception. Islam has no problem with birth control in itself as long as it does not encourage recreational sex outside of wedlock. Islam, in distinction to certain strains of Christian thought, basically has no problem with the reality of sexuality but emphasizes the necessity of its expression within the licit relationship of marriage. (Islamic fundamentalists often do have anxieties over sexuality, however, as it affects the role and freedom of women within Muslim society--a trend found in some other religious traditions as well.)

All other things being equal, however, the default attitude of most clerics would be to support natalism as encouraging the growth of the Islamic community. The decision on whether to support birth control measures is more a political and social issue than a theological one. But since Islam places great emphasis on the welfare of the community as a whole, support for or against a policy of natalism can differ from society to society according to society's needs and conditions--as with the natal policies of many non-Muslim societies as well.

Leading demographer Nicholas Eberstadt points out that even the Muslim world itself is hardly monolithic in its thinking about natal policies. He points out that Western fears of an "ongoing fertility surge" among Muslims are misplaced since in a number of places in the Muslim world birthrates today are dropping rapidly. He claims that North Africa's fertility rate has dropped by half compared to 20 years ago, Iran's has dropped by two-thirds, while Tunisia and Lebanon are the "first Muslim-majority countries with sub-replacement fertilities."¹⁵

If Islam as a religion offers little guidance on issues of natalism, what position does political Islam take? Again, the situation is determined by domestic conditions, both political and economic. Typically, in states where Muslim minorities feel under political and cultural pressure from non-Muslim majorities, fertility is not only high, but is encouraged by most Islamist politicians. Where the Muslim population faces, or believes it faces a demographic threat from the non-Muslim majority population -- often seen as oppressing the Muslim community, there are equally strong incentives for high birthrates. Here a form of "bedroom war" is under way.

The *Palestinians* are a classic case in point. Palestinians have long sought to ensure that their community not be on the losing side of demographic trends vis-à-vis the Israeli population,

¹⁵ Nicholas Eberstadt, citing the US Census Bureau's figures in "Fanatics and Fertility," Forbes Magazine, November 12 2001, p. 28.

especially after increased Jewish immigration into Israel from Russia. Palestinians are no less urbanized than the Jews of Israel, but the birth rate among Palestinians is much higher than that of the Jewish population. The Palestinian incentive for high birth rates has been intense and Islamists, among others, have strongly favored high birthrates almost as a "patriotic duty" of the Muslim community.

Bosnian Muslims face the same dilemma as a threatened minority. Likewise, the Muslim *Uyghurs* of western China perceive deadly threat from the massive immigration of Han Chinese into their homeland of Xinjiang and maintain a vastly higher birthrate than the Han population, especially in the countryside. The same is generally true for other Muslim minorities as well, such as in India, Tatarstan, or the Philippines. High population growth is the first weapon against an existentialist population threat from a dominant non-Muslim majority. Islamists invariably take up the cause, but from a nationalist, and not a theological perspective. Religion is a factor here only in drawing lines of distinction between communities.

Pro- or anti-natal policies need not be driven by purely existential concerns. The case of *Iran* is an interesting and significant case where the clergy has actually switched policies dramatically in accordance with need. The Shah in 1965 introduced programs of family planning, a policy that was quickly reversed after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, reflecting "social traditionalism" as well as the psychological and demographic pressures produced by a long and devastating war with Iraq. With the end of the war, and aided by higher levels of female education and economic hardship that encouraged greater birth control, the clerics reversed course and called for a sharp decline in the birth rate. The result was one of the fastest drops in fertility rates (figures vary) in the developing world yet seen.¹⁶ On the other hand, the Islamists have been generally pro-natal in Egypt.¹⁷

In general, Islamists do tend to be more traditionalist in outlook, and philosophically disinclined towards heavy state intervention or anything that smacks of a "Western-imposed program." They are not opposed in principle to traditional early marriage, a key target of politicians seeking to reduce birthrates. Thus, here too, there are cultural rather than theological grounds for some Islamist pro-natal positions. When other issues involving the welfare of the community are brought into play, Islamists are quite flexible on the issue.

¹⁶ Alan Richards and John Waterbury, A Political Economy of the Middle East, second edition, Boulder, Westview, 1998, p. 87.

¹⁷ Richards, p. 86.

IV. Impact on Social Issues

The Youth Bulge and Gender Issues

An increase in population obviously increases the number of females born as well as males. Historically the position of women in the Muslim world-- and to a considerable extent in much of the rest of the developing world as well -- has created barriers to equal opportunities for education or public participation of women in society more broadly. Muslim societies have been among the most traditionalist in this regard. But the emergence of a youth bulge affects the position of women in different ways.

First, few Middle Eastern societies possess the capacity to provide sufficient and timely expansion of infrastructural support to accommodate a youth bulge. In the intensified competition for limited public resources females are not likely to receive equal treatment. If schools cannot educate all, girls are highly likely to be given lesser priority. Job markets already unable to provide employment even to all males who seek it, are even more limited in providing employment opportunities for women. Indeed, one of the reasons Islamists have opposed women in the workplace is not only linked to a "traditional" view of the role of women, but to the general fear of displacement of male breadwinners in a society already hard put to employ all the men. Such an argument can have broad resonance even with those not necessarily opposed in principle to female employment.

Yet the forces of modernization are also changing views among the younger generation that constitutes the current youth bulge. In a period of dropping incomes across most of the Middle East, many younger Muslims now recognize the importance of educated wives as potential contributors to family income-- a recognition that begins to compete with traditional views that the role of the woman is in the home. According to an NFO World Group Study women are already playing an increasing role in becoming family breadwinners: In Kuwait women contributed 24.7% of family income, Egyptian women 22.1%, and even in Saudi Arabia 10.4%. Thus, generational differences in the youth bulge may be in the process of bringing about significant if gradual cultural change.¹⁸

It is important to note, furthermore, that the young male population consistently outnumbers the female population by over 1% in virtually all Muslim countries. This is due either to better care being given to boys, or even to abortion by choice if the fetus is determined to be a girl--a key problem in China where numbers of children per family are severely limited in draconian fashion. In the Gulf Arab states, the proportion of males is far higher due to the presence of a large South Asian "guest worker" force that is largely male and largely in the Gulf without family. While this force is large, it is also somewhat restrained in its behavior due to its vulnerability to instant deportation for involvement in any kind of disorders, and its ethnic and linguistic differences which tend to prevent it from closely identifying with local issues. Nonetheless, if the situation in the Gulf were to move toward instability in the future, this large floating male worker population could conceivably add to local destabilization.

¹⁸ Cited by Hassan M. Fattah, "The Middle East Baby Boom," 15 December 2002, HassanFattah.com.

The following population pyramid for Kuwait demonstrates graphically how the male-female imbalance is growing, typical of most Gulf states. Note, however, that the large population of guest workers from South and Southeast Asia, as well as the Middle East, mainly produce the imbalance. It is largely male and has extremely limited social interaction much with native Gulfis.

[Insert US Census Population Pyramid for Kuwait]

Impact of Differing Fertility Rates among Social Groups

As populations grow, not all social elements grow at the same rate. Of particular concern is the impact of faster growth rates among specific ethnic or religious groups that then impact upon society. In Lebanon, for example, the Muslim birthrate has traditionally been higher than the Christian birthrate has been. Lebanese Shi'a, the biggest single sectarian group in the country, have consistently had the highest rate of all. At the same time, Christian outmigration is significant over the past several decades due to multiple factors such as the long civil war from 1976-1991, closer Christian identification with the West, and Christian relatives abroad that facilitate outmigration. In Bahrain, the Shi'a represent the majority of the population, but have been largely excluded from significant voice in society or governance. Their birthrate is notably higher than that of the ruling Sunni minority. This, in part, reflects the goal of maintaining clear demographic preponderance, in order to strengthen the community in the struggle against domination by the ruling Sunni minority. On the other hand, the minority Christian Copts in Egypt have lower birthrates than Muslims, and their weight in Egyptian society is diminishing, particularly with Coptic outmigration.

Thus, as Muslim birthrates grow, or the Muslim youth bulge becomes more prominent, social and political tensions grow; shifting demographics seem to favor one group's power over another.

V. The Impact of the Youth Bulge on State Resources

However efficient a society or an economy might be, a youth bulge in any country represents a net drain on the immediate finances and short-term productivity of society. The rapid growth of population poses challenges at multiple levels of state infrastructure, among them education, water, jobs, housing, and social services. In other words, youth is by definition "economically unproductive" in the short-term and imposes greater strain upon the infrastructure of society. Funds are diverted to meet the social needs of youth, especially education and medicine, which could otherwise go to meet the needs of the working adult population and to more productive channels of economic activity. Obviously, an investment in education cannot ultimately be considered an unproductive diversion of resources since it will usually produce a payoff when the youth cohort reaches working age and begins to constitute a trained and educated workforce. But until that time, states that are concerned with meeting economic discontent among the broader adult population and with fulfilling certain national goals will be frustrated by temporary diversion of resources to educational infrastructures.¹⁹

The Youth Bulge and Education

The existence of a youth bulge within the educational system has immediate economic implications that exact negative social and political consequences. The level of illiteracy among adults -- a key source of underdevelopment-- in the Arab world dropped from 60% to 43% between 1980 and the mid-1990s. Yet Arab illiteracy is still higher than the international average and even above that of the average of developing countries. The majority are female.²⁰

[INSERT TABLES IN UNDP --FUTURE OF ARAB WORLD REPORT
<http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/Chapter4.pdf>

1. Illiteracy rate in Arab world on comparative basis p. 52
 Illiteracy rates by Gender p 52
2. relative total Expenditure on Education - p. 54]

But despite overall gains, the UNDP reports that the "Arab world has been unable to absorb new generations of Arab citizens. . . with an apparent bias against females" even when compared with the developing world as a whole.²¹ It is difficult to know how much these problems stem from lack of attention, or simply an insufficiency of resources (perhaps the same thing) to meet educational needs. The bottom line is that education needs for growing numbers of Muslims youths are not being met.

The World Bank estimates that ten million children in the Arab world between the ages of 6 and 15 are out of school; Egypt, Morocco and Yemen together constitute 70% of those figures, suggesting that other Arab countries do at least somewhat better in this regard.

¹⁹ Moller, op. cit., p., 249-250.]

²⁰ UNDP Report, p. 51.

²¹ UNDP, p. 52.

But, if current trends persist, the numbers of children out of school rise by 40% by 2015. In higher education the Arab World and Pakistan register only a 9% participation in higher education compared to 60% in industrialized countries.²²

The also holds at progressively higher levels of education. The President of the American University of Beirut, John Waterbury, reports that over the past twenty five years university enrollment has trebled across the Middle East, of which three quarters are in non-scientific and non-technical fields, and “most are enrolled in vast mills of the production of government employees. Unemployment rates for those between 15 and 25 years of age, the range in which most high school and university graduates are concentrated, are over 40 percent for the entire regions. Disguised unemployment is considerably higher.”²³

The problems reflect not only lack of infrastructure, but also poor *quality* of education. Many of the education systems in the Muslim world are failing to provide the education necessary for the advancement of society overall and serve to perpetuate the growing gap in development between the West and the Muslim world. Waterbury describes most educational institutions as “overcrowded and underproductive. They are overwhelmed by the rapid growth of school-age populations and undermined by sluggish economic growth, which has led to a collapse of public finance, badly strained budgets, and steadily eroding educational standards.”²⁴ Students within these educational systems fall short of global standards in literacy rates, as well as in mathematical and scientific achievements. More ominously, World Bank figures show that as even as the number of teachers rise to meet the growing education demands, the quality of their education has fallen. In Morocco, Egypt and Jordan, for example, even though the number of teachers has doubled over the past decade, the number of those possessing university degrees has dropped by 15%-30%. The overall ratio of teachers to pupils is furthermore low. The growing youth cohort will simply exacerbate these problems, suggesting that general levels of education, unless checked by dramatic policy intervention, will simply continue to fall for the next few decades. Students are failing to meet basic levels of required skills.²⁵

Lower levels of education and skills immediately translate into a less productive workforce that impacts negatively upon the economy and offers little attraction to potential foreign investors. This hampers the prospects for these economies to integrate into the global economy along any other lines than the extraction of natural resource commodities.

The existence of a youth bulge within the educational system also has immediate political implications, particularly in the realm of secondary education. In Middle Eastern society secondary schools represent one of the key traditional centers of political dissidence and unrest, and a training ground for dissenting politics in early adolescence. Instructors are a key source of these attitudes, themselves often young, from lower middle class backgrounds,

²² These figures are drawn from the Scope Paper of the Education and Employment Foundation of the Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, November 2002.

²³ John Waterbury, "Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institutions," *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2003, p. 62.

²⁴ Waterbury, p. 62.

²⁵ Brookings Scope Paper, op. cit., p. 11.

unable to rise further into circles of the elite, and nurturing grudges about the limiting nature of the system.

Islamist groups have made a deliberate strategy to make inroads through the education system. In Kuwait, for example, they sought to place members as teachers over the last decade. Secondary schools have long been key recruiting grounds for Islamist movements and the inculcation of Islamist attitudes and world outlook.²⁶ Indeed, the explosion of madrassahs in Pakistan (where in two decades they went from around numbering in the hundreds to the thousands, is a prime example of this aspect. The underlying phenomenon, from Pakistan to Egypt is that budgetary weakness have led to increasing state dependency on private education that largely falls into the hands of Islamist religious organizations, who have both the funding and the interest to assume the challenge.²⁷

Indeed, in many authoritarian Middle Eastern societies there are strict regulations against congregation in public places lest it take political form and lead to political action and demonstrations. Yet educational institutions are the only places where, even in highly authoritarian systems, students must congregate and talk as part of the educational process. Although security officials (especially at university lectures) usually closely monitor these institutions, the mere fact of congregation in one place can lead to expressions of discontent and dissent among students. Any expansion of the numbers of secondary and university age students is certain to encourage opportunities for development and expression of political dissent. Secondary schools as much as universities are battlegrounds for political influence between the state and other political forces, especially Islamists who have long had special interest in the influential power of secondary education.²⁸

Universities offer similar recruiting grounds for diverse political forces, especially where leadership of student unions (where legal and open) is highly contested among rival political forces. Indeed student elections are often one of the few rough indicators of political power among competing political forces when the political order itself bans overt political activity by political movements. Elections to student union leadership, as have taken place in Egypt and Palestine for example, can be highly indicative of broader national sentiment not otherwise permitting in expression.

But universities are also indirectly associated with other forms of discontent. First is the question of availability of university education at all. In many Middle Eastern countries there are simply not enough universities available to meet demand. When admission to university level education is denied, doors close on opportunities for social and economic advancement, with volatile results. Saudi Arabia, for example, offers university openings for no more than one-fifth of its of university-age applicants, creating much social tension over the issue.²⁹ Similar situations exist elsewhere and obviously are intensified by the youth bulge. Under such conditions, schools (or madrassahs) fill in the gap not met by state schools, often at little or no cost to parents. Yet, even where the madrassah curriculum need not be at all radical, its heavy concentration upon a theological curriculum at the cost of more

²⁶ Richards, p. 129.

²⁷ Waterbury, p. 63. The mis-prioritization of state funds is another reason.

²⁸ Richards, p. 129.

²⁹ Waterbury, p. 62. Also corroborated in author's discussions with educators in Saudi Arabia in May 2002.

"practical" or contemporary subjects has immediate impact upon society. Such knowledge carries little market value, thereby ultimately contributing to unemployment through the production of unskilled graduates. This is apart from any indoctrination into religious outlooks that may possess an anti-state, anti-western, or simply anti-progress character.

The second volatile aspect of expanded university education is the incapacity of most Middle Eastern societies to absorb university graduates into jobs seen as *commensurate* with their education. This long-term problem has been especially noteworthy in Egypt where former President Gamal Abdul Nasser committed himself to government jobs for all university graduates. This commitment broke down fairly quickly and constitutes a source of much discontent in Egypt. While unemployment in general is obviously a problem in these societies, unemployment among university graduates is often much more problematic, since they have the education to articulate grievances and to advance sophisticated political arguments against the regime. The profile of 9/11 terrorists such as Muhammad 'Atta points up the role of unemployed and dissatisfied *university graduates* in terrorist activity. Youth bulge obviously intensifies all these negative trends.

Youth Bulge and Unemployment

Political economists Richards and Waterbury point out that in most countries of the world the proportion of unemployed is higher among youth than among older workers. Yet, in the West, some unemployment among youth can be characterized as "voluntary unemployment" -- the absence of financial pressure on youth (compared to older workers) to find or hold a job, and a youthful willingness to change jobs. However, in the Middle East, high levels of unemployment among youth are more closely linked to lower levels of education, to education that bears no relationship to the professional needs of the economy, or to job markets made rigid and inflexible by statist economies and restricted private sectors.³⁰ A CSIS study reported that "direct and disguised unemployment of youth averages 25% to 40%, with little improvement in sight."³¹ Youth is furthermore more likely to protest vocally against conditions of unemployment and to drift towards more radical political expression of grievance than mature workers with more to lose are.

While economists debate sources of unemployment in various states, one key thesis--possibly counter-intuitive--is that unemployment actually hits hardest the *relatively educated* in many developing societies. In other words, illiterate or barely educated individuals find more productive labor opportunities than those with secondary education usually do.³² One reason is that those with some degree of education are less willing to settle for 'donkey-work' and are more driven to seek white-collar employment. The uneducated can slip into the interstices of a subsistence street economy more readily perhaps than the partially educated. Given the generally weak levels of private enterprise in so much of the Middle East, the state has usually been the main source of white-collar jobs. But in recent decades few states have been able to provide jobs for university graduates for example, which has meant a strong rise

³⁰ Richards and Waterbury, p. 135-136.

³¹ Center for Strategic International Studies, "Stability and Instability in the Middle East: Economics, Demography, Energy, Security; highlights on website <http://www.csis.org/mideast/stable/2f.html>

³² Richards, p. 136.

in unemployment. Obviously those unemployed who possess some education are more likely sources of political action and social disorder than the uneducated.

Unemployment is also affected by questions of population *movement*: The Gulf in particular has been typified by large-scale population immigration of foreign "guest" workers, while Lebanon has actually seen considerable emigration. The greatest proportion of guest workers in the Gulf is made up of South and Southeast Asian citizens, who absorb jobs that could be performed by local workers or Arabs from states that suffer from high populations and unemployment rates. This factor has direct impact on youth that seeks employment opportunities that may be declining. Indeed, the presence of guest workers in the Gulf to perform jobs judged "menial" (even though often quasi-professional) has sometimes intensified the unemployment problems of the local population and serves to intensify youth dissatisfaction. The Shi'a of Bahrain, for example, even though they constitute the majority of the population, have been objects of discrimination for a very long time. They often complain that jobs they could perform have been given to South Asian guest workers because the Sunni minority ruling structure perceives the foreign workers as more politically supine and willing to work for cheaper wages.³³ Thus even here, state policies can serve to exacerbate existing demographic realities.

³³ Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp. 137-138.

VI. Youth and Radicalism

There may also be a case of direct connection between radicalism and youth. Research indicates that in high fertility states, where unemployment is high and radical political movements exist, large cohorts of youth from 18-24 years of age will be most directly affected by unemployment and will turn to radical political remedies.³⁴ As we noted earlier, at this particular stage of political history in the Middle East it is Islamic fundamentalism that is currently the main vehicle of radicalism. (In earlier eras it might have been Arab nationalism or Marxism-Leninism, or its combination that provided a radical analysis of existing social grievances.) Furthermore, the present generation not only faces harsher socio-economic conditions, but also is being socialized in a more radical regional environment overall, one characterized by the power of radical Islamic ideologies and heightened political violence and growing anti-Americanism.³⁵ These values thus become the formative elements of a new and dispossessed generation, auguring badly for the future.

Direct correlations between the demographics of youth and violence are difficult to draw since multiple variables are present and interact in different ways under differing conditions of societies. Nonetheless, "age composition must be considered as a major coefficient in the incidence of violent behavior."³⁶ For example, research looking as far back as the ancient Greek wars has found a strong match between the frequency of violent outbreaks, ranging from wars to terrorism, and the ratio of a society's young male population to its more mature segments.³⁷ Once the ratio grows past having roughly 40 post-adolescent young men for every 100 older male, violent conflict tends to ensue inside society.

One of the explanation for why youth are more drawn towards radicalism and violence derives directly from the very state of childhood; that is, youth are not as psychologically or physically capable of understanding the consequences of their actions as adults. Youth tend to have what is known as an "underdeveloped death concept." That is, they are generally not psychologically capable of weighing in realistic terms all the possible consequences of their actions.³⁸ The underlying physical basis may be that the brain's prefrontal lobe, which some scientists speculate plays a crucial role in inhibiting inappropriate behavior, does not reach its full development until as late as the age of 20.³⁹

Indeed, specific statistical evidence exists that "everywhere in the Western world males between 15 and 29 years of age commit more crimes against property and more homicides than the older population."⁴⁰ There is little reason to believe that these same characteristics do not apply at least as fully to the developing world. Furthermore, research shows that

³⁴ Brian Nichiporuk, *The Security Dynamics of Demographic Factors*, RAND Document Number MR-1088-WFHF/RF/DLPP/A, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 40.

³⁵ [Scope Paper, p. 13]

³⁶ Moller, op. cit., p. 255.

³⁷ Christian Mesquida, and Neil I Warner. "Male Age Composition and Severity of Conflicts." *Politics and Life Sciences*, vol. 18, no. 2 (September, 1999): p. 181-89; Richard Morin, "Boy Trouble," *Washington Post*, June 24, 2001; "Natural Born Killers," *Profiles*, May 1999. www.yorku.ca. India, Pakistan and certain African states are presently at great risk if this demographics of conflict theory holds true.

³⁸ -114, M. Fraser, *Children in Conflict* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1974)

³⁹ Jessica Reaves, "Should the Law Treat Kids and Adults Differently, *Time*, May 17, 2001.

⁴⁰ Moller, p. 257.

psychopathic behavior is specific to youth. "... All manifestations of this personality disorder -- from "wild oats" behavior, excessive self-assertion and pugnacity to criminal acts -- are predominantly related with youth."⁴¹ When there is a rise in illegitimacy or larger size of families, violence also tends to be higher.

Conditions that typify the pathologies of Western societies may not be fully reflected in Muslim societies, but much evidence would have to be adduced to prove that there are not growing similarities. Yet it would appear evident that the character of Islamic societies within the developing world tend to exert considerable discipline over behavior within their societies, at least as affects family ties and personal morality in any public laxity of behavior (discussed more below.) Yet dissolute behavior is one thing, while a predilection for political violence is another, especially when radical conditions often tend to spawn radical behavior in response.

When it comes to the Middle East, it is quite evident that terrorism, and especially suicide operations, are a phenomenon closely associated with youth. Youths are risk-takers by definition. Youthful involvement in terrorism is simply the extreme end of the broader phenomenon of youthful attraction to radicalism more generally. The young have far less to lose, are less patient, less cautious, and are more susceptible to overdrawn and simplistic radical analyses of existing social problems, their source and solution.

A particular socially destabilizing character is that of the so-called "lumpen elements," groups made up of the rootless. This "lumpen" youth class is often referred to in North Africa as "hittistes" -- an Arabic/ French amalgam meaning literally "wallers" (those standing with their backs to the wall), the street idlers with nothing to do. This class is deeply discontent and volatile, the stuff of riots, violence and radicalism and has helped swell the ranks of the violent Islamists in Algeria for over a decade.

The lumpen are those youths without hope, deeply impoverished, and without social legitimacy, who may be given to random violence or looting when the opportunity presents itself. Prominent among these elements are the young or even very young, such as street urchins, who are willing to take risks that even older students will avoid.⁴² In short, the impoverished elements of urban life pose potentially serious problems of latent violence in which the role of youth is prominent. A small portion of these groups is particularly ripe for recruitment for local suicide operations, although lumpen elements are far less suitable for more sophisticated international terrorist organizations, such as al-Qa'ida, that generally draw on more educated and sophisticated middle class youth.

A final distinction remains to be drawn between the role of youth in the West as opposed to the developing world. In the West, youths fairly rapidly come to be absorbed into the political and social patterns of the more stable adult population, whereas in the developing world, the adult population itself is undergoing political and social ferment that cannot exert a calming effect upon youths.⁴³ And in societies that may be fragmented through the processes of development and urbanization, "the purpose and direction that young people

⁴¹ Moller, p. 257.

⁴² Richards, p. 267.

⁴³ Moller, p. 258.

find in movements of rebellion helps many to overcome the insecurity and hopelessness of a futile existence. The feeling of being able to cope with hardship and danger, the enjoyment of comradeship, and the acceptance of their peers is basic to a sense of identity in the young. Even belonging to an anti-social and destructive movement can have salutary effect on the personality formation of a boy or girl, especially in times of social dislocation."⁴⁴

Who Can Best Mobilize Youth?

Most youth groups almost by definition tend to be impatient, idealistic, rebellious and anti-establishment. How different will youth be in the Muslim world? Their societies are generally more traditional and conservative, and probably impose greater social constraint than in the West. Political controls too, are obviously greater. But at the same time the grounds for dissatisfaction and the pressures of grievances about conditions much exceed those of the West. There are simply more grounds for taking violent action. But the key political and social question then becomes the following: who will try to exploit this discontent, mobilize the spirit of rebelliousness, and against what targets will youth end up channeling it?

All authoritarian regimes are mindful of the power of youth -- its energy, idealism, activism, and demand for quick results. Virtually every such regime --from Hitler, Stalin and Mao to authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world today-- have sought to mobilize youth early on to channel their energies, preempt them from drifting towards possible rival power centers, and to fortify the regime itself. Youth organizations such as the Soviet Komsomol were a regular channel for the identification and cultivation of future communist party leadership. Any state has at its disposal broad resources that can facilitate recruitment of youth, including financial and other inducements to join state-or party-sponsored movements and organizations. The state likewise can close off alternative avenues of personal and professional development, forcing all ambitious youth to follow in state-approved channels for upward mobility. Indeed, truly totalitarian regimes such as the former Soviet Union and China were fully able to repress any alternative political or social magnets that potentially could rival the state.

In the Muslim world there are few truly totalitarian regimes-- only Saddam Hussein's Baghdad would fully qualify. It has sought to mobilize and organize Iraqi youth through political indoctrination programs such as the Ashbal Saddam and the Futuwah movement.⁴⁵ The vast majority of other regimes is merely authoritarian to one degree or another and possess certain carrots and sticks by which to attract youth leadership, but they cannot exert absolute control over society.

As a result, we find that many states like Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, the Gulf States, Jordan and Morocco -- all quasi-democratic to one extent or another -- will sometimes permit the existence of political parties that rival the government party --albeit under heavy restrictions- - or at least permit them to contest for leadership within civil society for control of professional trade and student unions. In many Muslim societies, alternative political movements seek to compete for power against the regime such as communists, nationalists and Islamists. But few possess the power to truly threaten the state. Thus, youth is often

⁴⁴ Moller, p. 259.

⁴⁵ P.W. Singer, "Facing Saddam's Child Soldiers" Saban Center Iraq Memo #9, January 8, 2003 ⁴⁵

denied much choice by way of meaningful alternative channels for expression of dissent or criticism. Some elements of ambitious youth therefore take the path of least resistance and pursue their careerist ambitions via government-approved channels of advancement. A minority of strongly motivated idealistic youth turns to the political opposition -- legal, quasi-legal, and illegal -- with all the risks that entails.

The UNDP conducted an interesting series of polls in an effort to determine the key issues on the minds of youth compared to an older generation. For younger people, the highest registered concern was for educational opportunities (25%), followed by health care (15%), the environment (13%), political participation (8%), and distribution of income and wealth (6%). Young women were significantly nearly twice as concerned as men for job opportunities. These series of youth concerns are in sharp contrast to the older generation, which overwhelmingly rated as its primary concern job opportunities at 45%, educational opportunities at 23% and political participation at 5%. It is clear that political participation matters much more to the younger generation.

[Insert Graphs

UNDP Report <<http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/Chapter2.pdf>> , p. 30. Also insert graphs on p. 30-- on youth concerns.]

A lower rate of concern for job opportunities may reflect the fact that youth has not yet had to tangle seriously with the serious demands of finding a job and supporting a family. Yet job opportunity in the end is the key to establishing an independent life, the ability to marry and find housing.

The Islamist Bid for Youth Leadership

No single explanation can suffice to treat the role played by Islam in Muslim societies; its role is multiple and many-faceted: it can contribute to stability as readily as to instability. It is customary in recent decades to think of Islam as a potentially radicalizing factor in society and politics, especially when radical movements target youth for purposes of political violence. This phenomenon is evident. But it is important to remember that most movements of political Islam are not violent and not even necessarily radical in terms of an agenda for action. Those with narrower or more intolerant views, such as Wahhabi or many *salafi* movements, may inculcate youth with intolerant views that are socially undesirable, but few actually espouse violence within their societies and the austere and narrow message they preach need not all necessarily lead to violence. But if society is moving toward violent confrontations in general, those with narrow or zealous views can more easily be recruited into violent acts.

Conversely, in situations of deteriorating urban social infrastructures and the emergence of anarchy, Islam can often provide a vital source of social "glue," a set of values that preserves the social order even under badly unraveling social orders, as Robert Kaplan witnessed in numerous West African countries.⁴⁶ When tribal or clan groups come into violent opposition with each other, Islam can transcend these conflicts to provide an overarching set of broader values that condemns tribal parochialism. In Afghan society for example, Islamic holy men traditionally played roles of conciliators or mediators among warring tribes and clans, since

⁴⁶ Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," Atlantic Monthly, February, 1994.

their religious authority rested on a higher plane of loyalties that enjoyed universal respect. Under conditions of anarchy and the loss of traditional values -- often the heart of the problem under rapidly urbanizing conditions -- Islam can provide a vital moral order and authority necessary to social cohesion, even when the state's authority is weakening, delegitimized, or absent.

The social programs of many Islamist organizations, as in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan, Morocco and other places, can provide vital social services that the state can no longer supply. This extends not only to broader community services such as free clinics, legal advice, or food services, but also to youth concerns. This includes providing subsidized or free housing in the big city for rural or poor students who have come to the city for education but have nowhere to stay and no moral or psychological guidance in their lives under harsh conditions. Many Islamist organizations also provide free or inexpensive tutoring for students and extra-curricular activities as well as programs designed to provide a structure to students' lives otherwise adrift in rough or harsh city life. Under some conditions Islamist organizations provide free Islamic education at a boarding school for children who might have no other access to education. (These institutions are sometimes referred to as "*madrasas*" -- schools -- but the term actually more correctly applies to theological faculties of higher learning.)

Clearly there are trade-offs involved in this process. While religious schooling need not necessarily be narrow and strictly religiously-focused as has been the case in many Afghan-Pakistani madrasas, but under any circumstances such social and educational programs and assistance have the effect of socializing youth in an Islamist direction, even where not radical. Such experiences strengthen the impact of Islamist movements in society and place the Islamists in an advantageous position in serving as a vehicle of protest. The effect of Islam as a faith is typically to provide a moral and social norm that tends to stabilize societies, denounce chaos, anarchy, crime, social immorality and casual violence. For example, while statistics are hard to come by, the UN tends to believe, for example, that AIDS is much less prevalent among Muslim than non-Muslim populations due to the greater social conservatism on sexual and drug matters.⁴⁷ Except for the extremist Islamist movements that represent the fringe of the overall movement, Islam as a whole represents values that transcend the local and the tribal and works towards social integration and discourages social collapse. Islamists will readily countenance violence, however, if they perceive the Muslim community as struggling against a repressive non-Muslim regime.

Nonetheless, politics is the art of contained struggle and all political groups including Islamists exploit politics, often to quite self-serving and parochial ends. Radical Islamists often do create fissures within Muslim society, apart from advocating hard-line policies against non-Muslim enemies. While these radical activities gain the headlines, the overall thrust of Islamic values is to work to assuage and not intensify struggles within Muslim society.

Today, it is the Islamists who tend to dominate the political opposition in most of the Muslim world. This is frequently due to the banning in some states of all meaningful political parties, enabling the Islamists to prevail by default since they can operate through

⁴⁷ United Nations 1998 Demographic Handbook, New York, 2000.

their deep grass roots affiliations linked to neighborhood mosques and social programs that other parties lack. Political Islam, in all its immense variety and diversity, builds its power on the basis of sharp and pointed critique of existing regimes, its strong Muslim identity at a time when Islam is perceived to be under assault from the West (even before 9/11), its often valuable social services for the masses, and its disposition of financial contributions from wealthy pious businessmen. Islamists have also long worked to develop a following among youth through development of youth-oriented social programs.

It is not surprising then, that the Islamists generally stand the best chance of recruiting disgruntled and angry youth within societies that permit any kind of alternative political activity. (A marked exception is when the Islamists themselves take state power, as in Iran, leading eventually to quite the opposite phenomenon: a youthful rejection of Islamism as being no more than the control device of a highly conservative entrenched elite. Iran too, through its own violent anti-American revolution, has in effect largely purged itself of its anger at the US at the popular level while the quest of the revolution for true self-determination independent of US power has largely been fulfilled. The Iranian experience and the role of the Islamists there are thus now the opposite of what we encounter in most of the rest of the Muslim world where the Islamists are out of power and self-determination from American control has not been ostensibly been yet achieved.)

Competing Attractions of a Western vs. Islamic Orientation

There is a seeming paradox here. Why should youth be attracted to a politico-religious cause when religion is traditionally viewed in most of the world as a force of conservatism and social control rather than freedom and permissiveness? The austerities of many Islamist movements would not seem exactly designed to meet the needs of restless youth. The glitter, attraction and appeal of Western youth culture might arguably seem a more natural draw with its unabashed self-expression, rebellion, hedonism and liberated sexuality. If the youth cohort is to remain the largest social force in the Middle East for some decades to come, we must try to capture the dynamic by which a lot of youth seem to turn to Islamism rather than Western political values or even forms of diversion in their lives.

Indeed, there is something of a paradox here because in fact Western *political* values in the abstract -- freedom, human rights, tolerance, opportunity for all, human dignity, the ability to dump bad leadership--are admired, to the extent they are known. Even many American products are appreciated. But even if the US model of American *domestic* life is appreciated, the American messenger has become distrusted or even hated as seemingly betraying its own domestic values in its intrusive style and policies. It was characterized in a 2002 Gallup poll in nine Muslim countries as "ruthless, aggressive, conceited, arrogant, easily provoked, biased."⁴⁸

Sadly, the reality is that the West, especially the US, is currently an object of intense dislike in most segments of the Muslim world, especially after 9/11 and the subsequent US "Global War Against Terrorism." "A Gallup poll of February 2002, for instance, reported a "widespread unfavorable opinion of the US in the Muslim world - 53% - with less than half

⁴⁸ Cited by John Waterbury in "Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institutions," Foreign Affairs, January-February 2003, p. 58-59.

of that - 22% - holding a positive opinion. Views in Pakistan--a key US ally in the war on terrorism-- [as well as] Iran and Saudi Arabia are the most negative.”⁴⁹

The reasons have been heavily analyzed in the press, but can be summarized as: anger at the strongly pro-Israeli bent of the Bush administration, anger at the suffering of the Palestinians and seeming US unwillingness to seriously resolve the issue, at the intrusive nature of the Global War Against Terrorism and its primarily Muslim focus, US support for many friendly authoritarian regimes across the region, a perceived arrogance on the part of the US, an anger at Muslims own impotence and the impotence and cravenness of their rulers in the face of US power, a wealth of historical grievances, US double standards, and the whole panoply of traditional resentments that exist between haves and have-nots of the world. Western political values, while widely admired as practiced within the US, are not seen to inform US foreign policy in any meaningful way in the Muslim world. A Zogby International poll demonstrates some of this ambivalence. The polling data reports the results of polling in five key Arab states in the spring of 2002, highlighting for example that there is

- 71% favorable rating for American science and technology in Saudi Arabia.
- 58% favorable rating for America's democracy and freedom in Kuwait.
- American-made products are viewed favorably by majorities in all five Arab states polled.
- American education receives high grades in all countries. Most notably Lebanon with an 81% favorable rating.
- A positive finding for America, is that the young (18- to 29-year-olds) are substantially more positive toward American products, people, and values than other age groups.”

At the same time “the survey found more than 90 percent of those polled in each country gave an "unfavorable" rating for U.S. policy toward the Arab nations and toward the Palestinians. In each nation, the "Palestinian issue" is viewed as "the most" or "a very important" issue facing the Arab world today.”⁵⁰ Thus, American domestic values and accomplishments are admired, especially by more informed younger people, but the politics are a source of alienation. Deep suspicion exists about US motivations at every level, whereby almost any message the US would like to deliver is now perceived as suspect. All of these attitudes are currently more intense in the Middle East than they have been at any time before. Under these circumstances, the likelihood that the Western or US "model" will exert great power of attraction upon Middle Eastern youth is highly limited.

A Gallup Poll conducted at the end of 2001 indicated that young people in nine predominantly Muslim countries have a 10% more favorable rating for the U.S. than does the older generation on issues of appreciation of US music and films, and a belief that the US treats its own citizens equally. There were broad differences among these countries even on this issue: for example, in the production of enjoyable films and music 83% of Turkish

⁴⁹ Gallup Poll, Cited in BBC on line, 27 February 2002.

⁵⁰ “US Must Be Viewed as Honest Broker,” Zogby International Website, <<http://www.zogby.com/soundbites/ReadClips.dbm?ID=4782>>

youth agreed, whereas only 23% in Pakistan and 8% in Iran agreed. On political issues, youth and older generation views differed little, and differed primarily from country to country, but still were generally low. Thirty percent in Lebanon felt the US treated its citizens equally; only 12% in Iran. On issues of fairness and American sympathy for Muslim causes, the rankings were universally low compared to cultural features.

- “Less than a quarter of young people in each of the polled countries say Western nations care about poor nations (ranging from 6% in Morocco to 23% in Indonesia.
- Only 2% of young people in Morocco say Western nations support Arab/Muslim causes, compared with a high of 13% who express that view in Indonesia.
- Finally, only 1% of young people in both Kuwait and Morocco, and a maximum of 13% in Saudi Arabia, say Western nations are fair in their stances toward Arab/Muslim countries.”⁵¹

We find here too the dichotomy between positive views of many aspects of American life, but not of its foreign policy. Significantly, education, suggesting greater knowledge of the world, tended to slightly increase favorable views of Western societies.

What can be said about the power of attraction of the Western model, which often entices youth elsewhere around the world? First, it is primarily the youth of the upper classes who are exposed most to the glitter of Western youth culture (apart from fast foods) and that have the wherewithal to enjoy it -- to buy Western-style clothes, live in a milieu where such clothes are accepted, and buy music and other media entertainment devices that grant them access to Western youth culture. MTV, for example, would not be routinely available to most youth unless they had access to satellite TV. It is usually only wealthy and privileged youth that have the opportunity to travel to the West and to engage in contact with Western youth, either in education abroad, or at American universities abroad such as in Istanbul, Cairo and Beirut. Lower middle class and lower class youth lack most of these opportunities. Such diversions and pleasures are seen to be available only to an small minority that is close to the ruling elite, indeed an elite that is often perceived as the instrument of the misery of the deprived. The gap between haves and have-nots among youth is deep and a source of much frustration in the Muslim world. Thus, some level of the politics of resentment is at work here indicating that we are tapping into elements of class friction.

Not all of youth fervor and drive is directed towards advancement within the political order and the power structure. The vast majority of youth exists outside of the elite and is simply trying to get on with finding a job and getting a life.

Within these classes there is a strong reverse psychology at work, particularly on sexual matters. There can be little doubt that the barriers to casual contact between the sexes outside of the family in the Muslim world lead to considerable degree of sexual frustration among youth with few other outlets. When the seeming libertinism and sexual freedom of Western life -- often portrayed in an exaggerated manner in Western films and TV programs

⁵¹ David W. Moore, “Poll of Nine Islamic Countries: Generation Gap in Attitudes Toward the West,” Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing, March 19, 2002.

-- is not attainable by most Muslim youth, resentment and anger can lead to a kind of puritanism. This plays out in an ascetic rejection of the impurity of the West and its culture as opposed to the values of Islam. One study of individual terrorist profiles found that among the many characteristics that might typify followers of terrorist organizations, typically they are usually "single, sexually-inhibited young men." It suggested that the combination of social barriers between the sexes and the lack of outlet for sexual drives can contribute, if not predictably to the terrorist personality, to at least an embrace of austerity and puritanism and a higher level of violent behavior.⁵²

Frustration also turns into political anger when youths lack the money to afford housing where housing is scarce and hence cannot afford to marry. Islamist organizations are well aware of this corrosive phenomenon and have instituted programs to help facilitate earlier marriages for young people, by holding mass weddings at minimal cost, calling for vastly reduced dowry requirements and working to make cheap housing available for youth. There is no puritanism here: Islam has no inherent problems with sex as long as it is within the bounds of legal marriage. But the state of course takes the blame for the barriers to finding jobs, getting an income, and having available housing. Most of these factors figured prominently, for example, in youth support for the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria in the late 1980s before the Front's victory in the fateful elections of 1992.

Furthermore, the religious *activism* of Islamism in the Muslim world is not politically conservative at all: it calls for change to a status quo that is broadly hated. Much of the youthful spirit of rebellion against the status quo can be readily harnessed by Islamist movements, both violent and non-violent. They provide a channel for expression of discontent, blessed and legitimized by a powerful religious tradition that incorporates nationalist impulses as well. It is noteworthy that Islamism serves as a vehicle of protest everywhere *except where it is in power*, such as in Iran and Sudan. It is the *status quo* that is the major target of anger.

Islamists gain support from youth and can turn them against the West in another way as well if they wish. Ironically, most of the authoritarian rulers of the Middle East are identified with the West, especially America. They are perceived to be supported in power by the US to meet American objectives. The West as "secular praises such rulers" yet secularism on the ground in most of the Middle East is seen to embody authoritarianism, corrupt elites, and repression of Islamist forces. Youths who hate the status quo find it easy to transfer their anger to a US that is often seen as a key prop of the hated status quo.

Thus, in a putative competition for the attention of youth between an alluring, liberal Western model life-style and the rigor of Islamist movements, Americans may be disappointed to find that the allure of the West has vastly less drawing power than we would hope in changing political views in the Middle East. Calculations that the Bush administration's new office of public diplomacy could change the hearts and minds of Arab youth by offering them Radio Sawa ("Together") with American pop music and tidbits of news about America have been disappointing. They still do not deal with the real issues at hand and the basic sources of anti-American attitudes. The harsh reality seems to be that

⁵² Salman Akhtar, "The Psychodynamic Dimension of Terrorism," in Coline Covington et al., Terrorism and War, London, H. Karnic Books Ltd, 2002, p. 91.

under present international circumstances, precious little of the new youth cohort finds much possibility of changing the current entrenched autocratic political order in the direction of liberalism, openness and democratization. At the same time, it feels anger toward the US as it advances its policies in the region. It therefore turns instead to the most widespread and native form of reformist, anti-establishment and anti-Western feeling today in the various Islamist movements. That vehicle in past decades has been Arab nationalism or Marxism-Leninism, but today it happens to be political Islam, all expressing much the same anger and aspirations.

Given the present complexion of politics, economics, and society in the Muslim world, it is hard to be optimistic about the likely direction of current youth dissatisfaction and the beneficiaries of these grievances. Only two conditions are likely to change this present array of forces away from support to Islamists and in favor of Western interests. First, if Islamists come to power, by whatever means, and fail to improve conditions, or turn out to equally much oppress the population, then they will have been deeply discredited "just like all the other politicians" and their magical luster will have vanished. Second, if regimes liberalize sufficiently to permit multiple political parties to emerge on the political scene, then the Islamists will no longer enjoy their near monopoly of opposition politics granted to them by regimes that have long stifled all alternative forms of political expression. Under such conditions, competing attractions may emerge that can draw youthful enthusiasm and support away from the Islamist opposition of default. However, even if the Islamists fail or are discredited in the near future, anti-Western grievances will not disappear and will search out new vehicles-- perhaps a return to radical nationalism or even a new leftism. Islamism here is more the vehicle of the discontents than the cause.

VII. Demography and War

Apart from politics, values and attitudes, demographic factors also can significantly affect the shape of future wars in the region as well as war-fighting capabilities of governments. States with low growth-rates such as in Europe have fewer youth to field for military purposes. More importantly, the demographic profile of these Western states portrays the opposite of what we see in the Middle East: a "gray" bulge. That is, a higher proportion of the population in their later years who require costly social security and medical support, burdens that are harder to meet when the tax-paying youth cohort is relatively small. For states with high population growth the problem is the converse, the state must absorb an expanded youth cohort.

Here in the developing world, the state will typically seek to siphon off much of the youth cohort into the military as a way of diminishing unemployment pressures. In many developing states, the military has been a traditional avenue of socialization and inculcation of youth into the national ideology -- especially in multi-ethnic states, and where large parts of military manpower are used to serve the internal security requirements of the state as militia.⁵³ Possessing such large standing militaries, many of these states might be tempted to use them to threaten neighbors, even if they are qualitatively underfunded and lack high-tech weaponry. The Iran-Iraq war was just such a war, fought primarily between non-elite troops. Iran in particular threw large numbers of its youth bulge into the anti-Iraqi front, often poorly trained and serving mostly as cannon-fodder with high casualties.

While the West enjoys a vast technological superiority over such qualitatively low armies, demographic factors also affect the likely nature of the battlefield with important consequences. As growing populations stimulate higher rates of urbanization, the expansion of urban conglomerations increases the likelihood that urban environments will be the scene of warfare, especially low-intensity warfare. The proportion of urbanized population (variously defined), for example, has now attained 44% in Egypt, 50.3% in Morocco, 61.3% in Iran, 65.1% in Turkey and Iraq 76.8%.⁵⁴ Urban warfare is a great equalizer between forces of dissimilar technological capabilities, and presents extremely risky challenges to the US military as was witnessed in the US peacekeeping effort in Mogadishu, Somalia. (It is ironic and perhaps not widely known that the Pentagon acronym MOUT -- Military Operations in Urban Terrain -- happens phonetically to mean "death" in Arabic.) Operations involving regime change -- the reestablishment of new governments -- takes place almost entirely within an urban context.

In general terms, "the absolute size of a population is probably less important than its composition, level of growth, location of the population, its age and ethnic distribution."⁵⁵ Nonetheless, even raw population differentials can create significant impact in warfare under

⁵³ Brian Nichiporuk, The Security Dynamics of Demographic Factors, RAND Document Number MR-1088-WFHF/RF/DLPF/A, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 29.

⁵⁴ United Nations 1998 Demographic Handbook, New York, 2000. Figure on Iraq is from UN online: <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup1999/WUP99CH4.pdf>

⁵⁵ Brian Nichiporuk of RAND Corporation, remarks at a lecture on demography and national security at Brookings Institution Middle East working group, 20 September 2002.

three particular conditions with direct strategic implications. First, the perception of a rapidly shifting demographic change: one state's population growing much more rapidly than another's in a contiguous state, or region within a state (such as a growing Muslim Bosnian population challenging Serbian domination of Bosnia.) Under such conditions the population will feel directly threatened by the potential ability of the more populous state to intimidate or even overwhelm the other.⁵⁶ In the Middle East, Israel has long enjoyed vastly greater technological superiority on the battlefield, but its small population makes it highly vulnerable if technology does not rapidly overwhelm its potential opponents. Where states are more evenly matched technologically, differential population numbers become more threatening. This includes the Iranian population threat to Iraq over time; the burgeoning Palestinian population to Israel; Iran and Iraq to the very small Persian Gulf states; Egypt to Libya; or the fast-growing Central Asian states to a shrinking Russian population. When ground operations -- as opposed to air or naval operations -- are the primary form of warfare, as is usual in Middle East warfare not involving Israel, then the size of the army will favor the state possessing demographic strength.

When a youth bulge dramatizes growing populations, the state with the burgeoning population creates anxieties for other states where there are harsh regional competitions for limited resources. In the Middle East this is especially true in the growing shortage of water, presaging "water wars" in the future that may transcend "oil wars" in importance and urgency. Here a differentially growing population presents a distinctive "threat" to its neighbors even before military operations because the demographic pressures of one population will intensify predictable demands for contested resources.⁵⁷

The term "youth deficit" expresses the mirror image of "youth bulge" in which the youth cohort is low, relative to the graying population. Apart from the implications of a declining tax-paying young cohort needed to support the growing and expensive needs of an aging cohort, countries suffering from youth deficits face other socio-economic conditions as well. The smaller youth cohort cannot meet the labor requirements of such societies, typified by Western and Eastern Europe. This, thereby, requires immigrant labor if the work force is not to shrink with serious economic consequences.⁵⁸ Implications for the Middle East emerge when Muslims make up significant portions of the new immigrant populations of the West. It is in this arena that the growing power of ethnic diasporas exerts significant political impact upon the host state. This is clearly evident already in the US, playing out in the struggles between diaspora populations for voice over US foreign policy. These include Jewish versus Muslim communities, struggles among the Greek-Turkish-Armenian diasporas, or among Latinos on Cuban policy.

The political implications of a growing Muslim immigrant community is twofold: first, the statistically marginal, but strategically significant impact of those Muslims with strong loyalties to certain Middle East states or causes that could result in violence or terrorism. More broadly, a larger Muslim representation among the overall population will direct

⁵⁶ Brian Nichiporuk, *The Security Dynamics of Demographic Factors*, RAND Document Number MR-1088-WFHF/RF/DLPF/A, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 30.

⁵⁷ Nichiporuk, p. 38.

⁵⁸ The CIA on Youth Deficits, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 16, Issue 4, December 1990, p. 807.

greater attention to Middle Eastern issues, just as other minorities direct attention to their own regions of origin.

VIII. Easing of the Youth Bulge

With each generation the youth bulge will be dropping in nearly all Middle East states (with Yemen virtually the sole exception.) But this drop will come only slowly.

The following table demonstrates how the percentage of the youth cohort aged 24 years and below drops over the next three decades in the following key states.⁵⁹

State	2000	2020	2030
Egypt	55.7	32.5	28.1
Turkey	50.4	39.2	35.7
Iran	59.3	42.4	38.9
Pakistan	61.0	56.2	51.4
S. Arabia	62.3	56.1	52.1
Iraq	61.7	53.9	47.2
Yemen	65.3	68.4	65.7
Algeria	56.5	40.9	37.4
Indonesia	50.7	39.5	36.4
Morocco	55.1	43.4	38.4

These figures are nonetheless high and suggests that even if some demographic relief emerges within thirty years or so, thirty years is a long time and the impact on politics and society over this duration may make them difficult years indeed.

Possibilities for Relief

The evidence as presented in this study offers very little by way of hope for quick relief from the sets of problems that confront most Muslim societies. The youth bulge will indeed eventually evolve through the aging process into a "middle-age bulge" which will significantly lessen its political and social volatility. But, as the study makes clear, it is not the bulge alone which matters, but the specific conditions under which it is emerging that is

⁵⁹ Source: World Population Prospects, The 2000 Revision, Vol. 1, Comprehensive Tables, United Nations, New York, 2001. These figures cited above are based reflect only the medium population projections; higher and lower figures, depending upon methodology used, are also available in the UN report.

most important. We are entering arguably a period of the greatest tensions between the US and the Muslim world, and a time when the Muslim world feels under exceptional pressure and hence assumes a generally more radical outlook.

This marked deterioration in Muslim views toward the US nonetheless focuses primarily on US policies. The ambivalence noted earlier --an admiration for many aspects of American political values accompanied by deep anger at US policies -- is accompanied by a recognition that the world is changing, a realization brought home by younger generation's access to international media, dramatizing the gap between ways of life in the Middle East and in the West. Many of the youth bulge generation do favor modernization and progress, movement toward a better life.⁶⁰ Greater willingness to have females contribute to the family income, mentioned above, also betokens shifting views. Many teachers report a higher degree of interest among elementary students in the world around them compared to earlier generations. University of Hawai'i demographer Gary Fuller suggests that the youth bulge can also strengthen the process of democratization and liberalization.⁶¹

It would appear critically important then, that US policies not create such a negative impact in the region as to overwhelm many of the positive trends toward modernization and progress that may accompany this youth bulge. But the issue hardly depends upon the US alone. If regional regimes themselves, through harsh, restrictive and incompetent policies continue to alienate and embitter the new generation, then the youth bulge will largely invoke negative aspects of heightened frustration and instability.

⁶⁰ Fattah, op. cit. p. 2

⁶¹ Fattah, p. 5.

IX. Implications for US Policy

The existence of a relatively large youth cohort within the population of Middle Eastern societies serves to exacerbate nearly all dimensions of the region's political, social and economic problems. It is youth that often translates broader social problems into an explosive and radicalizing mixture.

While large youthful populations need not necessarily exert a net adverse affect on society, unfortunately most Middle East societies do not seem to be positioned to employ or benefit from the additional population resources. This bodes to turn the demographics of the youth bulge into a net drag on resources rather than a plus to economic and social development. Clearly of course, it is not raw population figures alone that will be the determining factor in determining the stability of various Middle Eastern states. Other factors -- economic and social conditions, quality of governance, ethnic or religious divisions, external impact-- will serve to determine just how stable these societies will be.

Factors that are susceptible to exacerbation of its problems through demographic youth bulge naturally differ from society to society. *Yemen*, with considerable religious divisions within its Muslim population and its poor economy and high degree of tribalism, is likely be quite volatile. Indeed it has already been the scene of some al-Qa'ida activity. *Pakistan* too, with its high youth cohort only slowly dropping, internal religious and ethnic divisions, and regional geopolitical tensions, is high on the list for trouble. *Egypt*, conversely, shows dramatic drop in managing its population growth -- in a state that has historically exercised strong social control and an ability to curb dissension. On the other hand, *Saudi Arabia* shows high youth cohorts, dropping very slowly, with a quite unpredictable political future, but one probably marked by rising economic and social problems and an unpopular ruling family. *Iran* shows dramatic movement toward population control with the high youth bulge in the five to twenty-four age range dropping sharply in the next two decades, reducing somewhat the social pressures on the state as the birth rate levels out. Yet high political expectations in Iran and a highly volatile and mobile political order will still be affected by social demands even as the youth bulge moves on into the 30-44 year cohort at the end of the next two decades.

Iraq may be where the youth bulge and US interests collide most seriously. Iraq's burgeoning fertility is so great that its "bulge" does not yet show serious signs of relief in its growing population -- even by 2025. Given the prospects of US-imposed regime change, the massive political and social changes in the country that will emerge therefrom, population pressures from a large youth cohort can only complicate the problems of transition, release of intense pent-up pressures, and heightened expectations. Only if the consequences of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the inauguration of serious long term reform and liberalization lead to dramatic improvement in Iraqi life will there be a chance for marked change in attitudes toward America.

Barring dramatic change in the US approach to the Middle East, continuation of the present trends will almost surely lead to new generations becoming socialized into an attitude of hostility to the US and its policies. The certain increase in the size of an increasingly youthful

Arab population may be destined to translate such feelings into expression and even action. As long as the Global War Against Terrorism remains the centerpiece of US foreign policy, US policies in the Middle East will be viewed as hostile to Islam and a source of regional discontent and anger. Policy must avoid the danger that the war against terrorism displaces attention and even funding away from programs designed to treat deeper political, social and economic issues.

Barring dramatic shift in the nature of governance in the Middle East, youth is likely to grow more hostile towards existing regimes in most countries where citizens cannot remove unpopular leadership and policies or feel they lack significant control over their lives and ability to change the status quo. Yet, given the complex nature of many of the existing political, social and economic problems of the Middle East almost any leadership there, even a newly enfranchised and imaginative one, will be severely taxed to meet public needs and expectations.

Should more democratic governance emerge in many countries in the Middle East -- as it has clearly in Turkey over the past two decades -- many popularly elected governments may find themselves losing public support as deeply entrenched problems demonstrate that they are not amenable to rapid amelioration. Their internal situations may come to resemble the rapid ideological fluctuations that characterize many Latin American states on their way to deeper democratization and reform. Large youth cohorts will again serve as footsoldiers for movements with more radical approaches to states, and will generally function in an anti-state capacity. Only a few successful regimes may succeed in capturing the imagination of youth and mobilize them towards state goals.

The great question for most Middle Eastern societies is who will be able to politically mobilize youth most successfully: the state, or other political forces, primarily Islamist? What attitudes will the youthful cohort have toward the West in particular, building on an already serious deterioration of views of the US in the region? Will a Western model serve as a point of attraction, or will it be nationalist and Islamist forces that are equally suspicious of American intentions and policies? Indicators are that the US probably will not succeed in the foreseeable future in capturing the imagination of most youth sufficiently to overcome anti-US feeling at the political level or for offering the West as a plausible and attainable alternative model as a path for future development.

Suggested US Policies to Mitigate

- Liberalization of Middle Eastern societies is perhaps the single most urgent task to help ensure that the impending demographic challenge of ever-youthful populations does not manifest itself in instability and violence. All other problems are in some way linked with the problems of authoritarian governance today. The underlying need in the Middle East is for the fostering of liberal, democratic institutions. Liberalization entails open media, rule of law, answerable governance, non-official government organizations, representative parliaments that serve as forums for debate of citizens' views and challenge to rulers, more open economies, and the emergence of robust civil societies. The US government, in conjunction with regional partners, must work to expand these institutions in the region, as means for channeling youth discontent.

- The US must also be prepared for the outcome that the empowerment of this youth cohort, even in democratization will initially open the gates to public articulation of much pent-up anti-American hostility that will have to run its course for some years, depending on the society in question. Populist leaders will often seek to exploit popular nationalism. Dealing with democracies is invariably more complex and frustrating than dealing with autocracies, as states which deal with the US have long since learned. But once the pressure has been released, citizens will enter the phase of hard thinking about what it is they really want and need--something dictatorships have spared them of until today.
- For youth, vastly improved education is a critical necessity that the US should support. It is not necessary to oversee or combat religious education -- and not all of it is undesirable or backward. The main task is to provide far more secular schools and support better broadly-based education for the youth of the region, especially at the elementary and secondary levels that affect most of the population. In a free competition, the religious schools will decline in influence and support when the public is able to avail itself of quality secular state education. Female education is of course essential. At the same time, it must be recognized up front that education can also lead to higher political expectations and demands on the part of a student population who will challenge more aggressively the weaknesses and failures of the state and its leaders. Education does not promote stability in the short term but is essential to longer-term state competence and stable societies. The US can do vastly more to assist in Middle East education both in increasing access to education in the US, including by expanding scholarship programs and solving visa concerns, and expanding the presence of American university programs in the region that have a extraordinary rate of success.
- Limitation of birthrates in these developing societies will help to relieve pressures upon the resources of the state. Many Muslim states do not challenge this idea in principle, and might welcome assistance. It is in the US interest to help.
- The US must do more to harness its own ideals -- freedom, liberty, non-discrimination, rule of law, human rights, civil liberties, justice, equality, equal opportunity -- into its foreign policies and public diplomacy, especially in the Middle East. At present, these values are admired by most Muslims -- who also see them as conspicuously absent in US policies abroad. Fifty years ago, at the time of the collapse of the British Empire, the US was the most widely admired society in the world among Middle Easterners. Today it is the most hated. US idealism could powerfully harness the idealism of youth around the world if its security and military policies were augmented by values that go beyond the current routine lip service. These goals are easily stated but much more complex to apply. Nonetheless efforts must be taken to do so if the present collision course with the Muslim world -- Usama bin Ladin's greatest aspiration -- is to be averted.

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