The Demographics of Political Violence: Youth Bulges, Insecurity, and Conflict

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‘Too Poor for Peace?’

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World Youth Population

![Graph showing the world youth population over time.]
Armed Conflict by Region 1946-2006
The Location of Armed Conflict, 2006

Youth Bulges

• The opportunity perspective
  – Low opportunity cost
  – Relative cohort size
  – Economic growth
  – Education
Youth Bulges

• The grievance perspective
  – Unemployment
  – Education
  – Democracy
  – Urbanization
Youth and Conflict: An Empirical Analysis

Age composition and political violence 1950–2000

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<th>Armed conflict onset</th>
<th>Terrorism</th>
<th>Riots and violent demonstrations</th>
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<td>Youth bulges</td>
<td>Higher risk</td>
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<td>YB * Economic growth</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>Higher risk</td>
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<td>YB * Dependency ratio</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
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Qualifications

- No threshold values
- Robust for low-intensity conflict, not wars
- Demography is not destiny
- Governments hold the key
- Challenges: the evidence base is limited; lack of competent government
The Future of Youth Bulges

- Fertility and youth bulges decline universally
- As fertility declines, a demographic window of opportunity opens
- The realization of this opportunity is not given
- Many countries and regions will face a significant demographic challenge for decades to come
Palestine
Afghanistan

Youth Bulges vs. Dependancy Ratio over the years.
Future Research and Policy Priorities

- Youth and education
- Urban youth populations
- Youth and governance
- Assessments of youth programs