A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence

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Defining armed conflict

- Incompatibility over government/territory
- Armed force
- At least two organized parties
- One is the government of a state
- Minimum 25 battle-related deaths per year

Uppsala/PRIO conflict data (Gleditsch et al., 2002)
Number of armed conflicts by type, 1946 - 2010

- Extrasystemic
- Interstate
- Internationalised intrastate
- Intrastate
World youth population 1950-2050

Issue of measurement

Age structure by different definitions (2000)
Youth bulges in world regions, 2010-2050
Youth bulges and political violence

• The opportunity perspective
  – *Low opportunity cost*
  – *Relative cohort size*
  – *Education*

• The grievance perspective
  – *Unemployment*
  – *Education*
  – *Urbanization*
General findings

- Large youth bulges increase the risk of smaller conflicts
- Particularly in the context of economic hardship
- Many countries and regions will continue to face significant demographic challenges

Qualifications:
- No deterministic relationship
- Youth bulges are declining globally
- Youth bulges are also a major resource
  - *Demographic dividend*
  - *Contingent on human capital, labor market*

Youth, education and conflict

- Education increases economic opportunities
- Contingent on the labor market situation
- Concerns over rapid expansion
- Concerns over relevance, quality

Findings (global study of 120 countries)
- Provision of secondary education reduces conflict
  - Conditions the effect of youth bulges
- Rapid expansions in education not generally conflictual
- Gender parity in education beneficial

Demographic dividend – geriatric peace?

- Increases in the working-age population are positively associated with economic growth

- Lower education and health care expenditures, increased savings

- Early studies did not separate between ‘early-transition’ and ‘window-of-opportunity’ countries

- Dramatic shift in the age structure 1950-2050

- By 2050 only SSA has young adult shares above 25%

- How will these future changes affect conflict risk?
Youth bulges and support ratio, Iran

The graph illustrates the trend of youth bulges and support ratio over time in Iran. The blue line represents the youth bulge, while the red line represents the support ratio. The data is plotted from 1950 to 2050, with specific emphasis on the years 1995 and 2005 due to significant changes in the trends.
Youth bulges and support ratio, Yemen
Demographic dividend – geriatric peace?

- Global study 1950-2007 separated into three pop growth (0-14) segments
  - Early-transition countries: strong youth bulge-conflict effect
  - Window of opportunity countries: no effect

- Conflict risk projections:
  - Substantial risk reductions in SSA and MENA by 2050
Conclusions, challenges, gaps

• Continued demographic challenges: SSA, MENA, Asia

• Many countries are well situated for a demographic (peace) dividend
  – *Human capital concerns*
  – *Labor market situation*

• Expansions in education is taking place on a significant scale
  – *Relevance, quality (gaps)*

• Vast youth unemployment challenges
  – *Limited monitoring (major data gap)*

• Limited systematic knowledge about urban youth