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A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence

Presentation to the United Nations expert group meeting on adolescents, youth and development

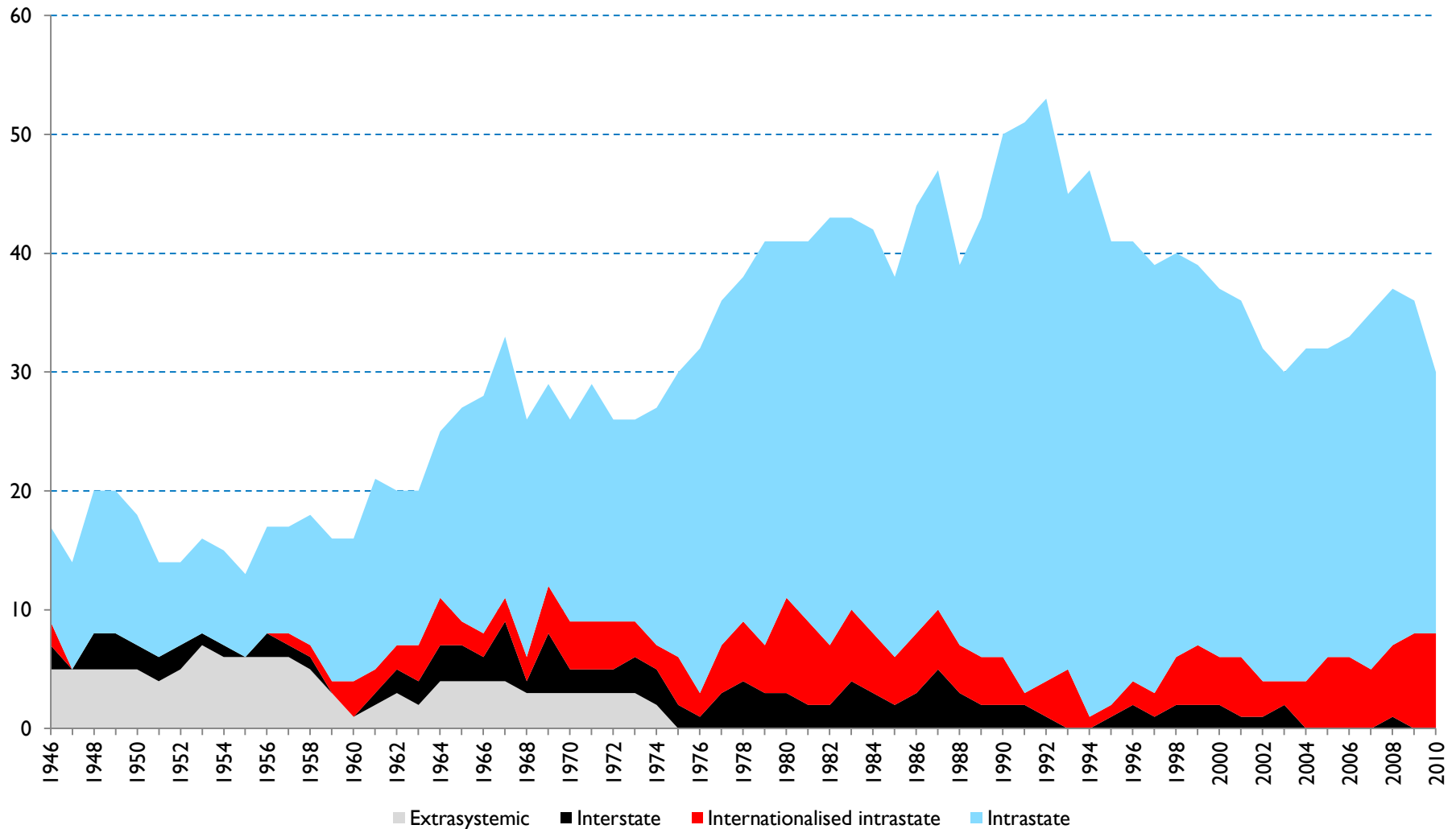
New York, 21-22 July, 2011

Defining armed conflict

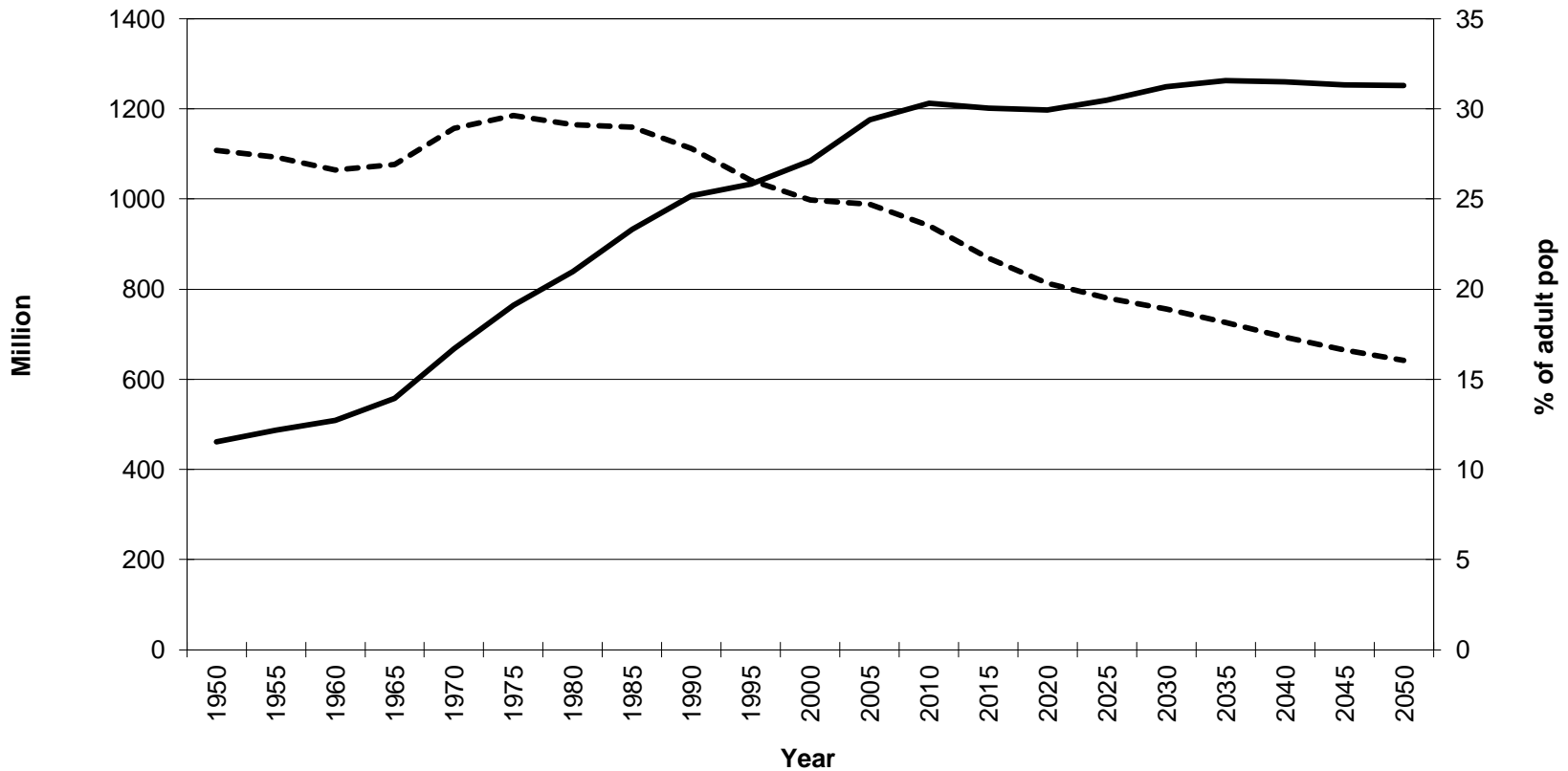
- Incompatibility over government/territory
- Armed force
- At least two organized parties
- One is the government of a state
- Minimum 25 battle-related deaths per year

Uppsala/PRIO conflict data (Gleditsch et al., 2002)

Number of armed conflicts by type, 1946 - 2010

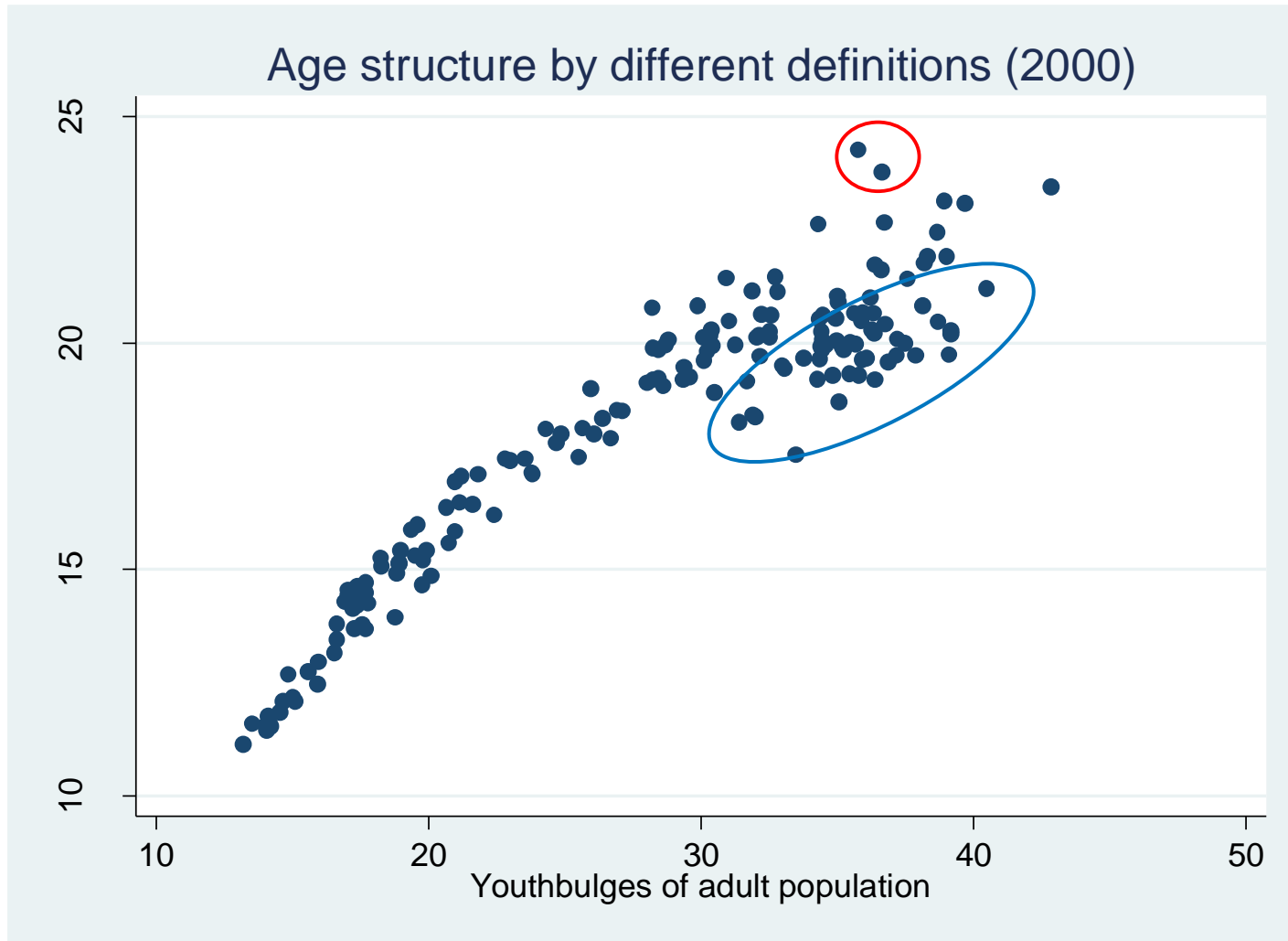


World youth population 1950-2050

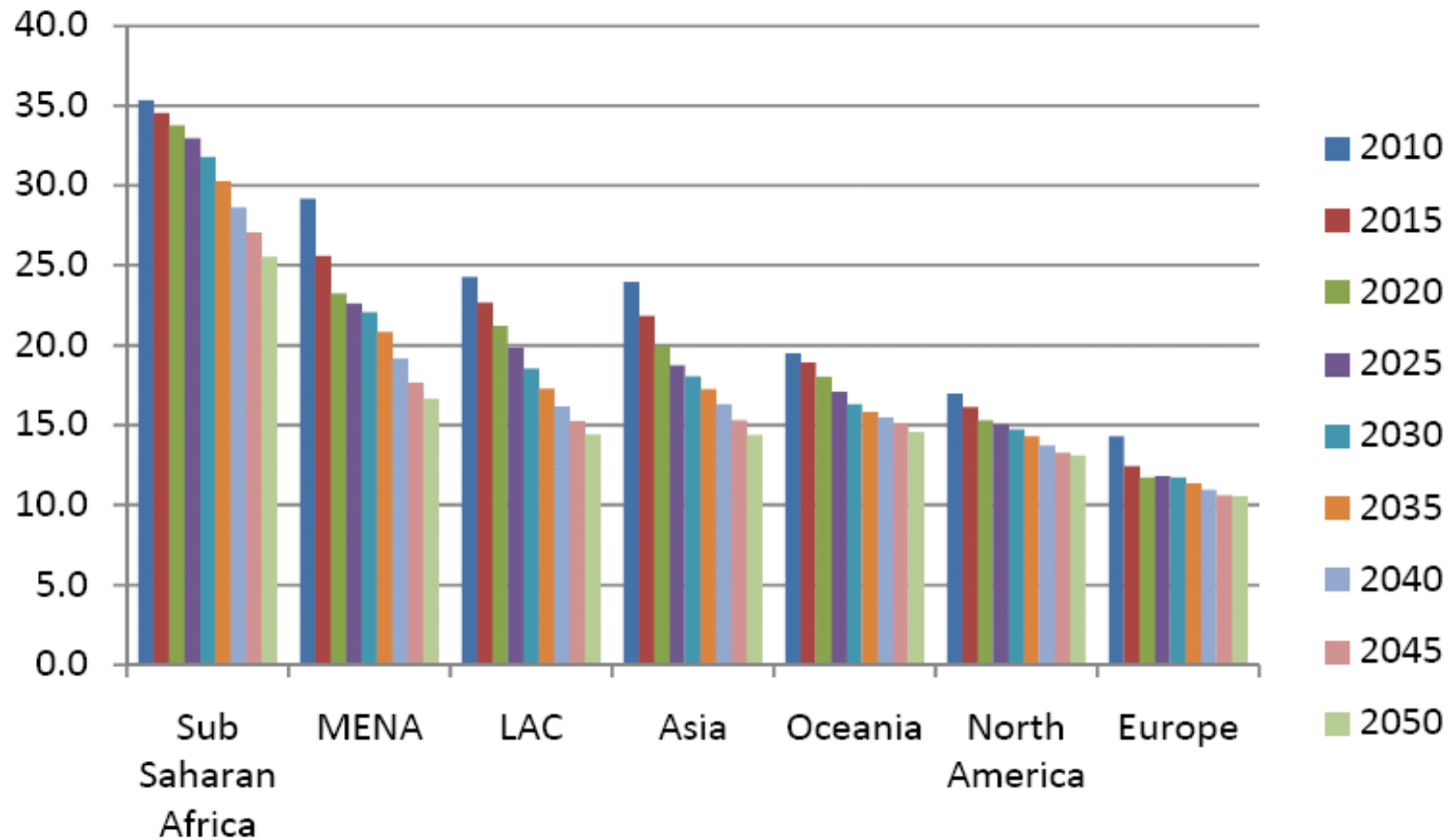


Source: United Nations Population Division (2011). Youth bulges: % aged 15-24 of adult population (15+)

Issue of measurement



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

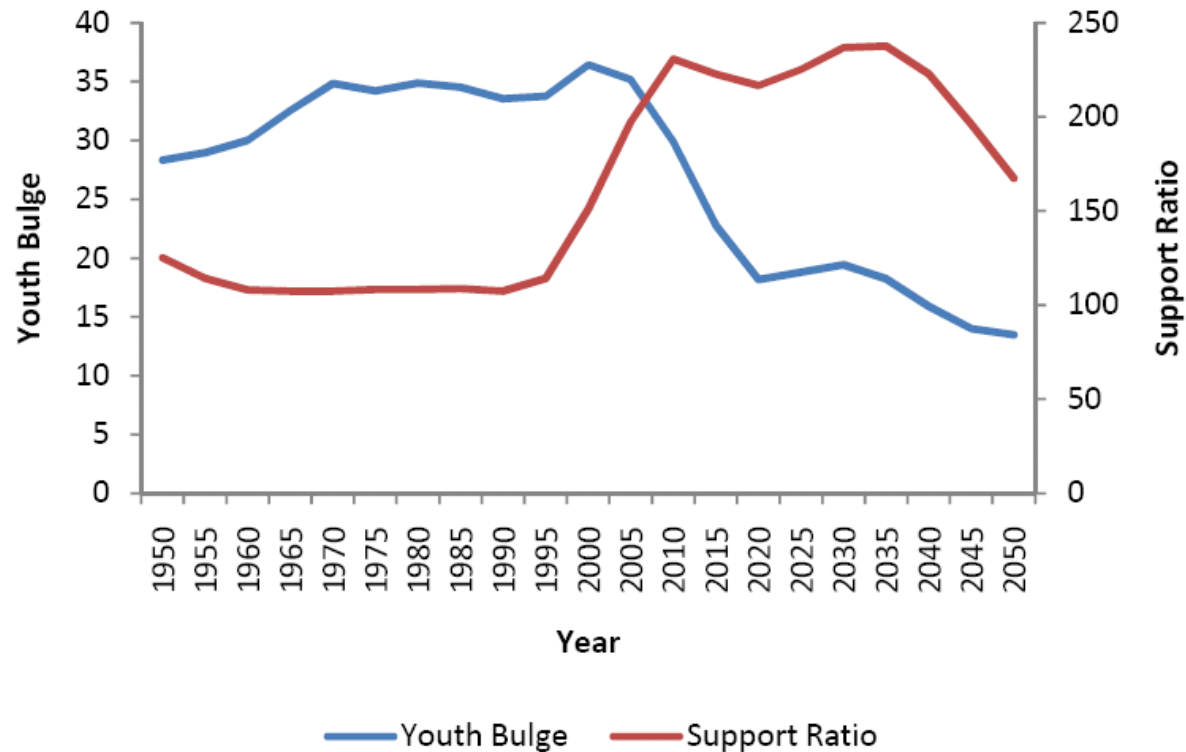
Findings (global study of 120 countries)

- Provision of secondary education reduces conflict
 - *Conditions the effect of youth bulges*
- Rapid expansions in education not generally conflictual
- Gender parity in education beneficial

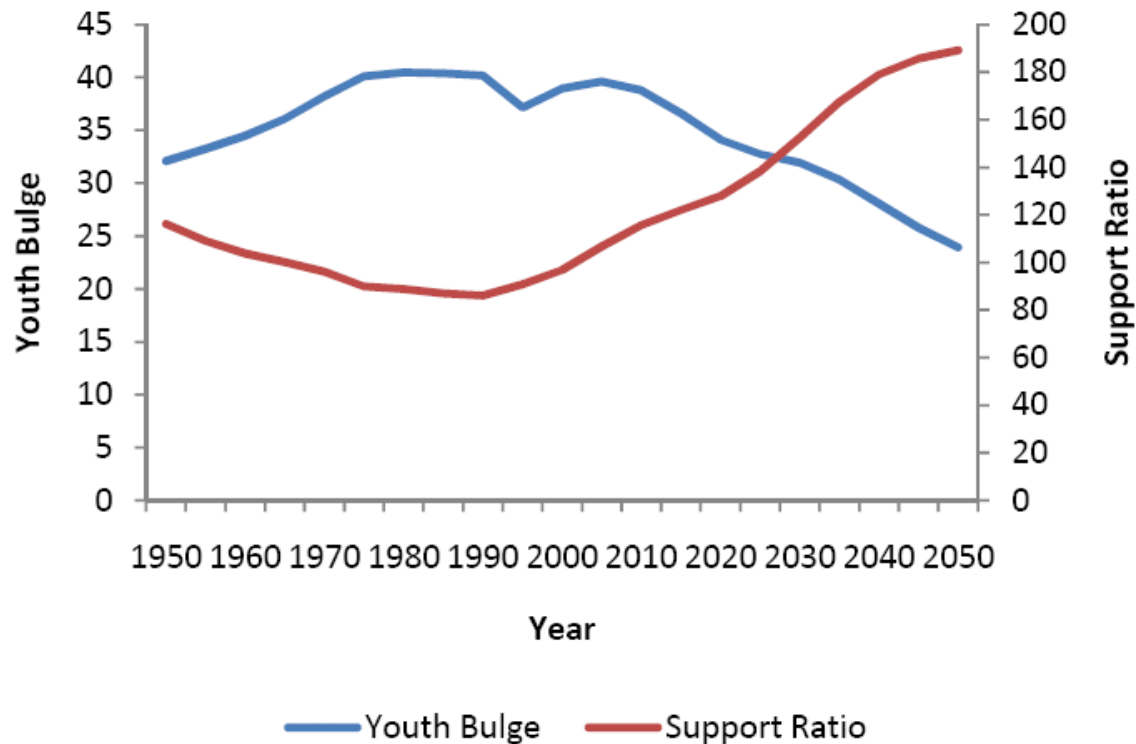
Demographic dividend – geriatric peace?

- 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



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