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

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Graham E. Fuller is a former Vice-chairman of the National Intelligence Council at CIA in charge of long-range forecasting. He served twelve years at RAND Corporation as a Senior Political Scientist, and spent 17 years living abroad as a Foreign Service Officer, mostly in Muslim countries. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the Islamic World. His writings have appeared in *Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Orbis* and *The National Interest*. His latest book, *The Future of Political Islam,* will be published by Palgrave/MacMillan in March 2003.

Note from the Project Convenors

The *Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World* is designed to respond to some of the most difficult challenges that the U.S. will face in the coming years, most particularly how to prosecute the continuing war on global terrorism while still promoting positive relations with Muslim states and communities. A key part of the Project is the production of *Analysis Papers* that investigate critical issues in American policy towards the Islamic world. A special focus of this series is on exploring long-term trends that confront U.S. policy-makers and the possible strategies and options they could adopt.

One of the most amazing statistics in Middle Eastern affairs is the fact that youths make up between 50–65% of the populations in the region. This presents an incredible context for the future, one of great instability, but also potential opportunity. With the U.S. now set to administer post-Saddam Iraq, a country where 61% of the population is under the age of 24, this issue is more salient than ever.

As such, we are pleased to present "The Youth Factor: The New Demographics of the Middle East and the Implications for U.S. Policy." One of the most experienced and astute analysts of American policy and the Muslim world, Graham Fuller explores this oft-discussed, but little understood issue: the crucial role of demographics in shaping regional policy and politics. We appreciate his contribution to the Project's work and certainly are proud to share his analysis with the wider public.

We are grateful for the generosity of the MacArthur Foundation, the Government of Qatar, the Ford Foundation, the Education and Employment Foundation, the United States Institute of Peace, Haim Saban, and the Brookings Institution for their support of the Project's activities. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Ellen McHugh and Sean Shecter for their support of the Project's publications.

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Executive Summary

The Middle East region is rent by a complex set of problems. These challenges include dictatorial and failing regimes, lack of socio-economic progress in the last generations, political violence, warfare, growing Islamist opposition, and terrorist activity. However, it now faces a less well-known, but perhaps even more difficult predicament: 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 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.

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 that are already poor and declining in quality, and creates greater dissatisfaction among the most volatile elements 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? The attitudes that this youthful cohort will have toward the West is a particular concern, given an already serious deterioration of views of the U.S.

Barring dramatic change in the U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. probably will not succeed in the foreseeable future in capturing the imagination of most youth sufficiently to overcome anti-U.S. 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 articulate itself in greater levels of terrorism, violence, and underlying instability, enduring over a period of generations.

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 of representation and participation.

- The U.S. 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. It will have to run its course for some years, depending on the society in question. Nonetheless, 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 Arab youth, access to vastly improved education is a critical necessity. The main task is to provide far more secular schools and support an improvement in basic education, 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. The U.S. can also do vastly more to assist in Middle East higher education, both in expanding access to higher education in the U.S. and expanding the presence of American universities within the region, who have a extraordinary rate of success.

- 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.

- 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 American interest to help. Improved health care and education for women and children will also facilitate management of this problem.

- The U.S. 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 U.S. policies abroad. American idealism holds the capacity to once again powerfully harness the idealism of youth around the world, but only if its security and military policies are augmented by values that go beyond the current routine lip service.

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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]

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1 From a speech of Italian nationalist Guiseppe 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.

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 has major implications for the future of societies of the Middle East, their politics, economic and social life. Essentially, 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 analysis 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. Comparatively, such changes came only slowly in Western Europe. Many states of Europe furthermore enjoyed opportunities for the 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 American interests and policy towards the region.

The population of the Arab world is now at about 280 million, approximately equal to the U.S.; it makes up about 5% of the total world's population, a percentage that has doubled over the past fifty years. Within this population, the Middle East possesses a youth segment 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 the percentage of the population under age fifteen in Western Europe is only 16.9%. In South America, it is 30.3%. In the greater Middle East, 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]

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2 Moller, op. cit., p. 251.
3 United Nations, *1998 Demographic Handbook,* New York, 2000.

Total Population Aged 15–24 in the years 2000, 2010, and 2050[4]
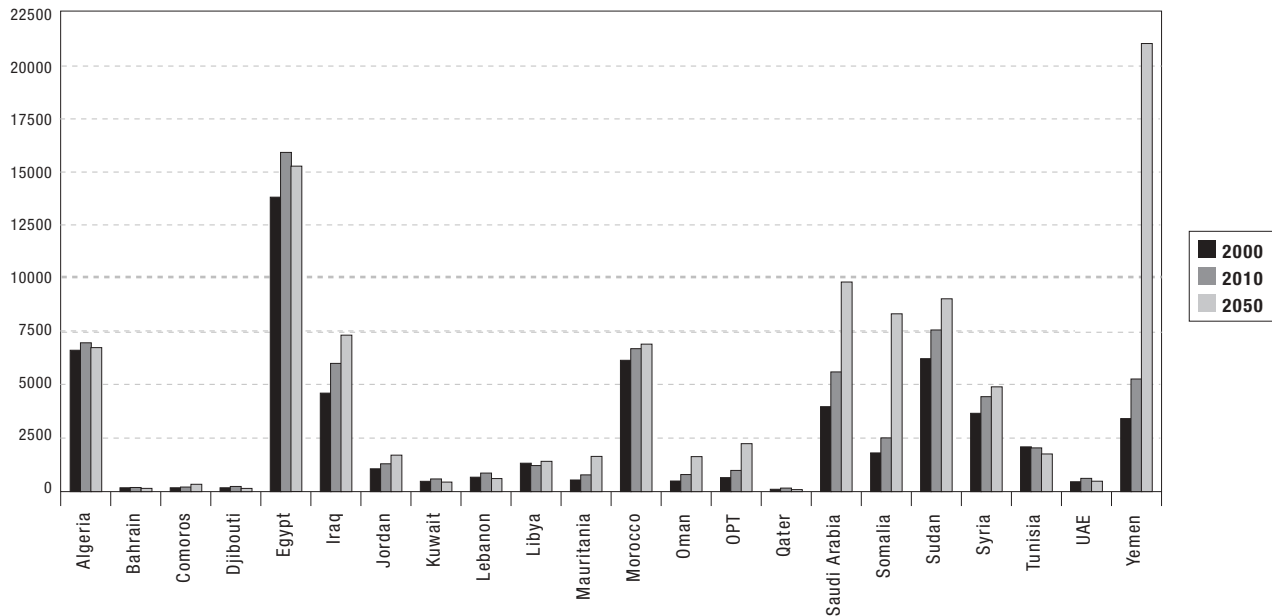
The Middle East is of course a quite diverse region and no statistical generalizations immediately fit all countries, despite the existence of a youth bulge of varying magnitudes. For example, the rates of growth dramatically differ. The United Arab Emirates has seen its population grow 36 times over the last fifty years, while that of Lebanon only 2.4 times.[5] In terms of actual birth rates figures vary sharply as well. There are three rough categories within the Arab world:

- Four countries of quite diverse natures have relatively low to moderate fertility rates of less than three live births per woman: Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

- Nine countries have moderate to high rates, 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 diversity, including some of both the richest and poorest countries of the world, in quite different locations.

- The remaining nine Arab countries have very high 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] A recent UNICEF report portrays these figures in dramatic terms:

By mid-century in 2050, certain Arab countries may experience a truly dramatic population explosion, thus shifting the population centers in the Arab World. By 2050, four countries will likely continue to makeup more than half of the Arab World. Instead of all four of them being in Africa—Egypt, Sudan, Algeria and Morocco—two will be on the Arabian Peninsula—Yemen and Saudi Arabia—and only two in Africa—Egypt and Sudan. By 2050, Egypt will almost certainly remain the largest Arab country with

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4 The graphic was prepared for UNICEF's 'State of the Arab Child' report by the Amr Group www.amr-group.com
5 UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002,* New York, 2002, pp. 36-37.
6 UNDP, p. 36.
7 UNDP, p. 36.

16% of the population of the Arab World and an estimated 114 million people. Yemen will likely have become the second largest Arab country with 102 million. Sudan will likely be the third largest Arab country with 63 million and Saudi Arabia will likely be the fourth largest Arab country with 60 million.[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, Somalia, Iraq, and Pakistan. These countries show continued and truly astounding population growth into the next half century.[9] 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.

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.

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.[10] 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.

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 410 million.[11] 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.

8 UNICEF Report, "The State of the Arab Child," Amman, 2002, p. 14.

9 As UNICEF reports, "In Yemen the youth population is expected to grow from 3.3 million in 2000 to 21 million in 2050. In Somalia the youth population is expected to grow from 1.7 million in 2000 to 8.3 million in 2050. In Saudi Arabia the youth population is expected to grow from 3.9 million in 2000 to 9.8 million in 2050. In the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territories] the youth population is expected to grow from 596,000 in 2000 to 2.2 million in 2050. And in Oman, the youth population is expected to grow from 491,000 in 2000 to 2.2 million in 2050." UNICEF Report, "The State of the Arab Child," Amman, 2002, p. 14.
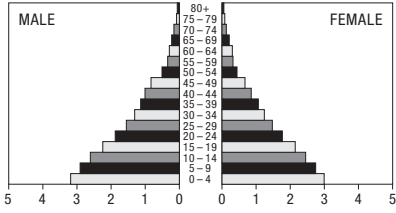
10 Moller, op. cit., p. 250.

11 UNDP, p. 37.

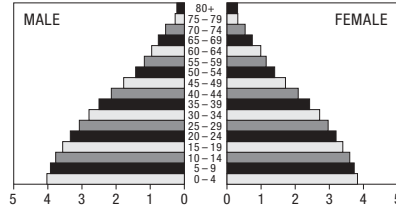## Projected Population Pyramids of Key States[12] (Population in Millions)
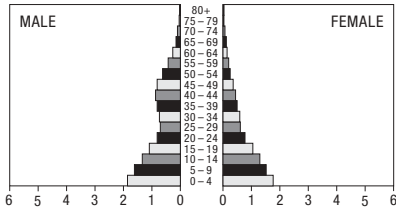
Yemen: 2000
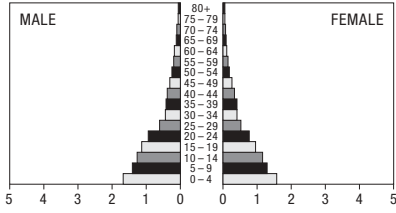
Yemen: 2025

Yemen: 2050

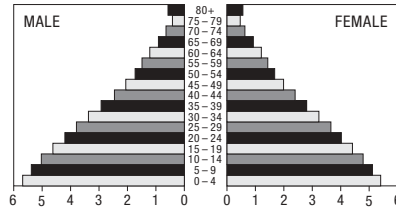### Saudi Arabia: 2000
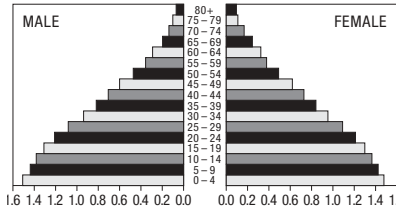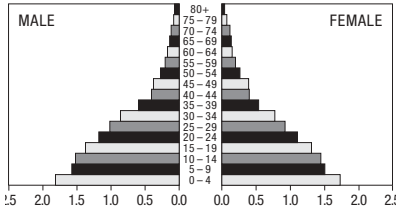

Saudi Arabia: 2025
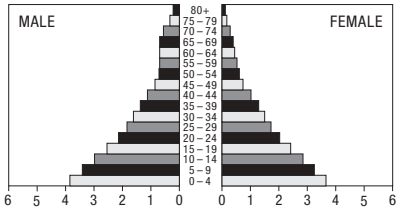
Saudi Arabia: 2050

Somalia: 2000
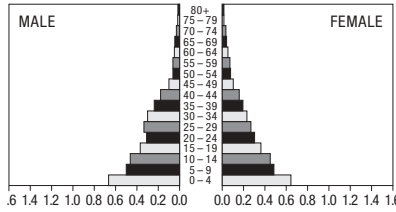
Somalia: 2025
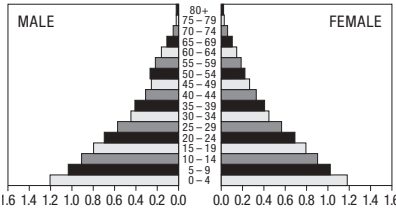
Somalia: 2050
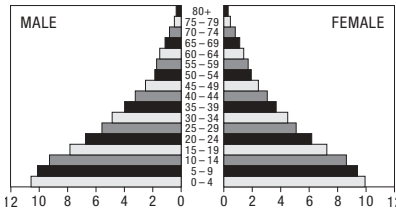

Iraq: 2000

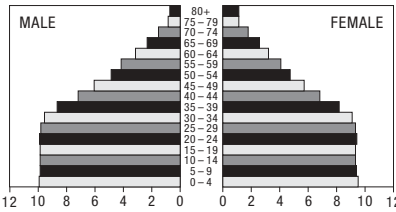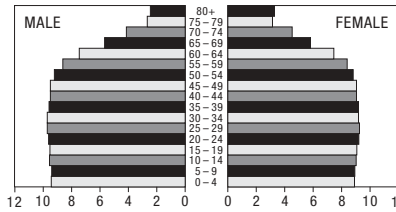### Iraq: 2025
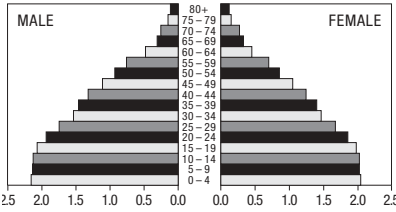
Iraq: 2050
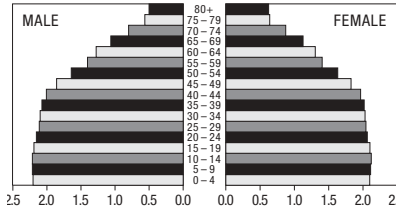
Pakistan: 2000

Pakistan: 2025

Pakistan: 2050

12 Graphics from U.S. Census Bureau, International Database.

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."[13]

Unfortunately, the broader economic and social indicators at work in much of the Islamic 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."[14]

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 engage their growing youth population profitably—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 a period of political, social and intellectual turmoil.

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.

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13 UNDP, p. 38.
14 Moller, op. cit., p. 256.

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.

In traditional societies there was no parallel concept of a floating youth population. In the unchanging verities of 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.

This is 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 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. These views 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. However, parental ties become more tenuous. Elder generational views can easily come to be regarded as quite different, "old-fashioned," possibly "out of touch" with their children's new world, even if the culture demands that parents still receive obligatory respect.

It is important, thus, to note that 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 lifestyles 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. 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.[15]

Thus, whatever the statistics demonstrate about a youth bulge in the Middle East, 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.

15 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.

Age Specific Fertility Rates, ages 15–19[16]
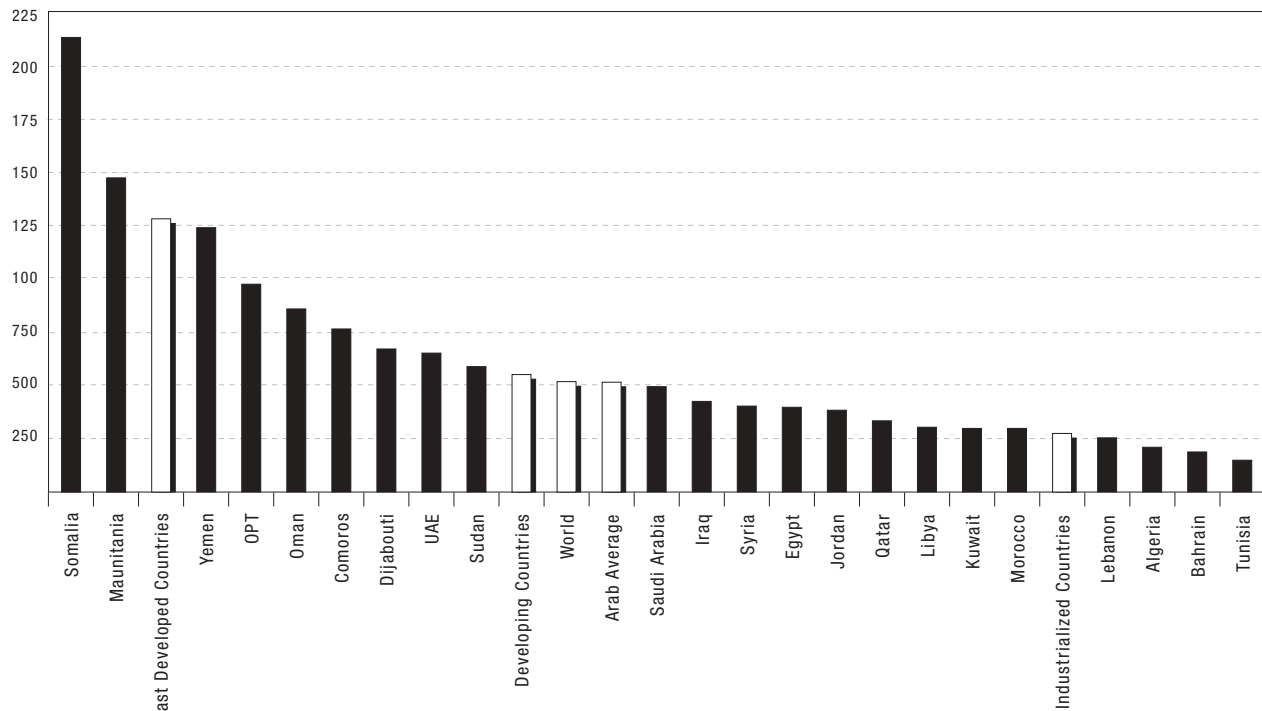
16 The graphic was prepared for UNICEF's 'State of the Arab Child' by the Amr Group www.amr-group.com

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 the religion of 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. Likewise, Islam, in distinction to certain strains of Christian thought, basically has no problem with the reality of sexuality. Rather, it emphasizes the necessity of its expression within the licit relationship of marriage (Some 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 Muslim 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.

As leading demographer Nicholas Eberstadt points out, the Islamic world itself is hardly monolithic in its thinking about natal policies. In a number of places, 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."[17]

It is important to note that despite often high rates of birth in the Muslim world, the cultural conservatism of the Arab world, for instance, contributes to a lower fertility rate among younger Muslim females. "Average age-specific fertility for adolescent girls aged 15–19 in the Arab Countries is at 51 per thousand, significantly lower than the Developing Countries Average of 55. ... This means that the average Arab female child aged 15–19 is less liable to enter into pregnancy than her peers around the world."[18] (See chart on previous page.)

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17 Nicholas Eberstadt, citing the US Census Bureau's figures in "Fanatics and Fertility," *Forbes Magazine,* November 12, 2001, p. 28.
18 UNICEF Report, "The State of the Arab Child," Amman, 2002, p. 11.

Are Islamists Pro-Natal?

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, what some call "bedroom wars" are also under way.

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. For example, Palestinians have long sought to ensure that their community not be on the losing side of demographic trends vis-à-vis the Israeli population, 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.

Pro- or anti-natal policies need not be driven by purely existential concerns, though. The case of Iran is an interesting and significant case, where the clergy has actually switched policies dramatically in accordance with need. In 1965, the Shah introduced programs of family planning. This policy 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 again at the end of the 1980s and called for a sharp decline in the birth rate. The result was one of the fastest drops in fertility rates in the developing world yet seen.[19] On the other hand, the Islamists have been generally pro-natal in Egypt.[20]

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.

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19 Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East,* second edition, (Boulder, Westview, 1998), p. 87.
20 Richards, p. 86.

IV. Demographics' 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. However, 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.
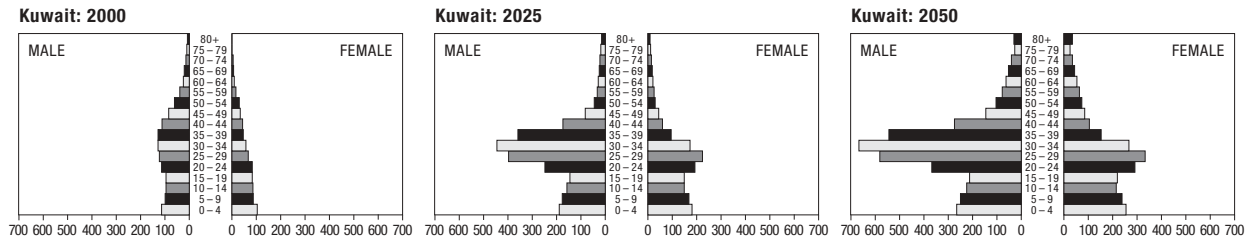
Such an argument can have broad resonance even with those not necessarily opposed in principle to female employment.

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 across the region. 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.[21]

It is important to note, 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

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

Population Pyramids for Kuwait[22]   (Population in Thousands)

Kuwait: 2000

MALE   FEMALE

700 600 500 400 300 200 100 0   0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700

Kuwait: 2025

MALE   FEMALE

700 600 500 400 300 200 100 0   0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700

Kuwait: 2050

MALE   FEMALE

700 600 500 400 300 200 100 0   0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700

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 without family. While this force is large, it is also somewhat restrained in its behavior, due to its vulnerability to instant deportation for any involvement in 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.

The population pyramids (above) 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 with native Gulfis.

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 impacts 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.

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22 Graphic from U.S. Census Bureau, International Database.

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. However, 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.[23]

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.[24]

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. Net primary school enrolment, at 78% for boys and 69% for girls, lags behind the world average of 83% and 80% respectively and the developing countries average of 82% and 78%. This occurs even while the gross national income of the Arab world is on the average higher than the average of developing countries. "Gross secondary school enrollment in the Arab Countries averages 58% for boys and 48% for girls," somewhere between the average of developing countries
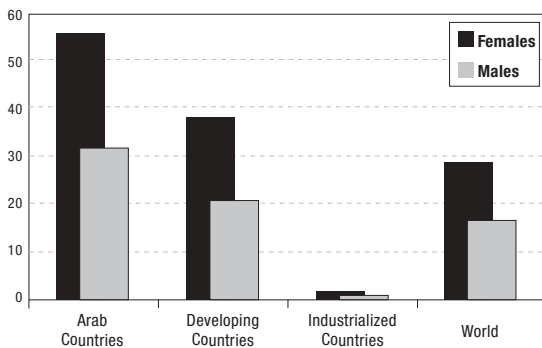

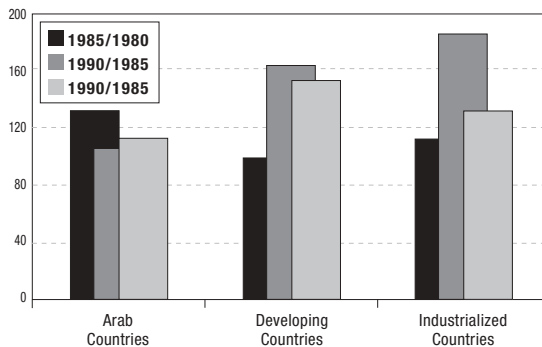23 Moller, op. cit., p. 249-250.
24 UNDP, p. 51.

Illiteracy Rate (%) in Arab countries and selected world regions, 1980 and 1995 [25]
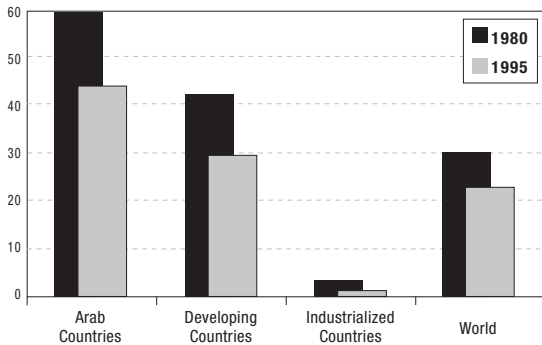
Illiteracy Rate (%), by gender, in Arab countries and selected world regions, 1995 [26]

Relative total expenditure on education (at current prices) of Arab countries and selected world groupings, 1980–1995 [27]

and the world average.[28] These figures mean that, by World Bank estimates, 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. If current trends persist, the numbers of children out of school will rise by 40% by 2015.

This also holds at progressively higher levels of education. In higher education, the Arab World and Pakistan register only a 9% participation in higher education compared to 60% in industrialized countries.[29] Those that are enrolled are often in unproductive areas. 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. However, three quarters are in non-scientific and non-technical fields. "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."[30]

These 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."[31]

25 Graphic from "The Arab Human Development Report 2002" co-sponsored by the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and the Arab Fund for Economic & Social Development.
26 ibid.
27 ibid.
28 UNICEF, "The State of the Arab Child," Amman, 2002, p. 13.
29 These figures are drawn from Omer Taspinar and P.W. Singer, "Scope Paper on Economic and Educational Opportunity," Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, Washington DC, November 2002.
30 John Waterbury, "Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institutions," *Foreign Affairs,* January-February 2003, p. 62.
31 Waterbury, p. 62.

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 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%. Furthermore, the overall ratio of teachers to pupils is 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.[32]

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 that the extraction of natural resource commodities.

EDUCATION AND INSTABILITY

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

Secondary schools have long been key recruiting grounds for Islamist movements and the inculcation of Islamist attitudes and world outlook.[33] The underlying phenomenon in a number of Muslim states, is that budgetary weakness has 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.[34] 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.

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. In contrast, educational institutions are the places where, even in highly authoritarian systems, students must congregate and talk as part of the educational process. Although security officials usually closely monitor these institutions (especially at university lectures), 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 age students is certain to encourage opportunities for development and expression of political dissent. Secondary schools can become 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.[35]

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 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 permitted in expression.

32 Taspinar and Singer, op. cit., p. 11.
33 Richards, op. cit., p. 129.
34 Waterbury, op. cit., p. 63.
35 Richards, p. 129.

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.[36] Similar situations exist elsewhere and obviously are intensified by the youth bulge. Under such conditions, religious schools often 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 "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 high unemployment in general is obviously a concern 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. A youth bulge obviously intensifies all these negative trends.

YOUTH BULGE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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.[37] One study reported that "direct and disguised unemployment of youth averages 25% to 40%, with little improvement in sight."[38] 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 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.[39] 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

36 Waterbury, p. 62. Also corroborated in author's discussions with educators in Saudi Arabia in May 2002.
37 Richards and Waterbury, p. 135-136.
38 Center for Strategic International Studies, "Stability and Instability in the Middle East: Economics, Demography, Energy, Security," 1997, available at http://www.csis.org/mideast/stable/2f.html
39 Richards, p. 136.

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. However, in recent decades few states have been able to provide jobs for university graduates, which has meant a strong rise 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 who seek 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.[40] Thus, even here, state policies can serve to exacerbate existing demographic realities.

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40 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.[41] 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.[42] 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."[43] 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.[44]

One of the explanations 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.[45] 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.[46]

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41 Brian Nichiporuk, *The Security Dynamics of Demographic Factors,* RAND Document Number MR-1088-WFHF/RF/DLPF/A, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 40.
42 Taspinar and Singer, op. cit., p. 13.
43 Moller, op. cit., p. 255.
44 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.
45 M. Fraser, *Children in Conflict,* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1974).
46 Jessica Reaves, "Should the Law Treat Kids and Adults Differently, *Time,* May 17, 2001.

Indeed, specific statistical evidence exists that "every-where in the Western world males between 15 and 29 years of age commit more crimes against property and more homicides than the older population."[47] 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 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."[48] 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. However, 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. 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. Youthful involvement in terrorism is simply the extreme end of the broader phenomenon of youthful attraction to radicalism more generally. The source of radicalism often stems from a desire and impatience for justice, and the willingness to take action to try to achieve it. In societies where justice is patently absent, the stimulus to radicalized action is high. In addition, youth 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. 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.[49] 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. It has helped swell the ranks of the violent Islamists in Algeria for over a decade.

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

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47 Moller, op. cit., p. 257.
48 ibid.
49 Richards, p. 267.

calming effect upon youths.[50] In societies that may be fragmented through the processes of development and urbanization, "the purpose and direction that young people 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."[51]

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50 Moller, op. cit., p. 258.
51 Moller, op. cit., p. 259.

VII. Who Can Best Mobilize Youth?

Most youth groups in the West, 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. However, at the same time, the grounds for dissatisfaction and the pressures of grievances far exceed those of the West. There are simply more grounds for taking violent action. 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 their energy?

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 examples of truly totalitarian regimes—only Saddam Hussein's Baghdad would fully qualify. It sought to mobilize and organize Iraqi youth through political indoctrination programs such as the Ashbal Saddam and the Futuwah movement.[52] The vast majority of other regimes are 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, they at least permit them to contest for leadership within civil society for control of professional trade and student unions. In many Muslim societies,

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

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, the youth are often 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 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.

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. However, 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. However, 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 described in numerous West African countries.[53] 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 condemn tribal parochialism. In Afghan society, for example, Islamic holy men traditionally played roles of conciliators or mediators among warring tribes and clans, since 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

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

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.

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, such social and educational programs and assistance do 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.[54] Except for the extremist Islamists 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 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 the 9/11 attacks and response), 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 U.S. at the popular level while the quest of the revolution for true self-determination independent of American power has largely been fulfilled. The Iranian experience and the role of the

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54 United Nations, *1998 Demographic Handbook,* New York, 2000.

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 ostensibly not 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.

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. Nevertheless, even if the U.S. 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."[55]

Sadly, the reality is that the West, especially the U.S., is currently an object of intense dislike in most segments of the Muslim world, especially after 9/11 and the subsequent "Global War Against Terrorism." A Gallup poll of February 2002, for instance, reported a "widespread unfavorable opinion of the U.S. in the Muslim world—53%—with less than half of that—22%—holding a positive opinion. Views in Pakistan— a key American ally in the war on terrorism—[as well as] Iran and Saudi Arabia are the most negative."[56]

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 U.S. unwillingness to seriously resolve the issue, at the intrusive nature of the Global War Against Terrorism and its primarily Muslim focus, American support for many friendly authoritarian regimes across the region, a perceived arrogance on the part of the U.S., an anger at Muslims own impotence and the impotence and cravenness of their rulers in the face of U.S. power, a wealth of historical grievances, U.S. 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 U.S., are not seen to inform American foreign policy in any meaningful way in the Muslim world. A Zogby International poll demonstrates some of this ambivalence. The 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.

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55 Cited by John Waterbury in "Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institutions," *Foreign Affairs,* January-February 2003, p. 58-59.
56 Gallup Poll, Cited in BBC on line, 27 February 2002.

- 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, though, "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."[57] 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 American motivations at every level, whereby almost any message the U.S. 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 American "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 American music and films, and a belief that the U.S. 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 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 U.S. 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.[58]

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.

In the spring of 2002 when the author traveled for three weeks lecturing in the Gulf states he was told on several occasions by prominent local individuals who had studied in the U.S. during the 1960s that they had watched a whole generation of American youth become radicalized from images of Vietnam on the TV screen—the formative experience of the generation. They said they feared that their own children were being similarly radicalized in the present era with images of American-produced tanks and aircraft being utilized by Israelis against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. They pointed out that it was their teenage children who were pressing their parents to observe a boycott of American goods of all kinds, abandoning McDonalds and other American fast foods and products in the name of Muslim solidarity against the U.S. One might hope that such experiences are only transient and that later events in the region will serve to turn such attitudes toward America around. The full effect of the war with Iraq is not yet known, but the present focus on civilian casualties in the Arab media appears to exacerbate all these problems.

57 "US Must Be Viewed as Honest Broker," Zogby International Website, <http://www.zogby.com/soundbites/ReadClips.dbm?ID=4782>
58 David W. Moore, "Poll of Nine Islamic Countries: Generation Gap in Attitudes Toward the West," *Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing,* March 19, 2002.

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 Arab 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 exist 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. 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.[59]

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. 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 thus 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

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

America. They are perceived to be supported in power by the U.S. 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 U.S. 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 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 U.S. 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 griev-ances. 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. Iran is a potential example of this. 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 sup-port 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.

VIII. FURTHER IMPLICATIONS: WAR AND EMIGRATION

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.

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.[60] 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.

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. Growing populations stimulate higher rates of urbanization. The expansion of urban conglomerations then 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 in Iraq 76.8%.[61]

The implication of this is that military operations may become more difficult, despite power advantages. Urban warfare is a great equalizer between forces of dissimilar technological capabilities, and presents extremely risky challenges to the U.S. military as was witnessed in the U.S. peacekeeping effort in Mogadishu, Somalia (It is ironic and perhaps not

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60 Brian Nichiporuk, *The Security Dynamics of Demographic Factors,* RAND Document Number MR-1088-WFHF/RF/DLPF/A, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 29.
61 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.

Growth Rate of Urbanized Population 2000-2005 [62]
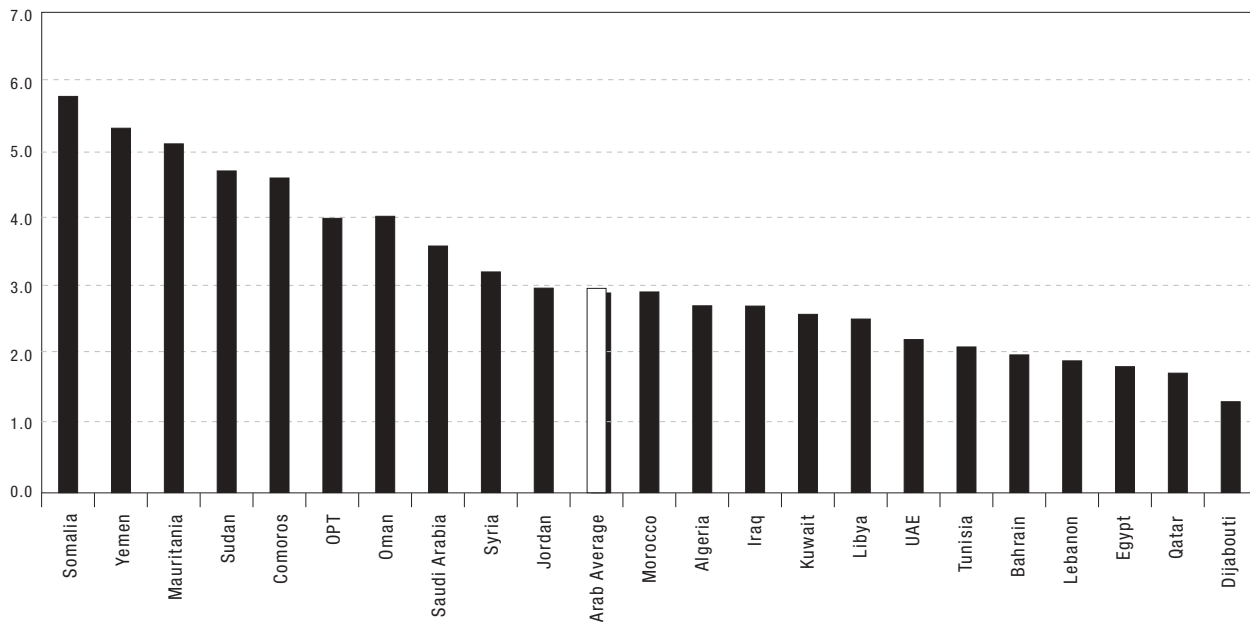
widely known that the Pentagon acronym MOUT—Military Operations in Urban Terrain—happens phonetically to mean "death" in Arabic.). Operations involving regime change, the reestablishment of new governments, will take place almost entirely within an urban context.

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."[63] Nonetheless, even raw population differentials can create significant impact in warfare under 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.[64]

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.

62 The graphic was prepared for UNICEF's 'State of the Arab Child' by the Amr Group, www.amr-group.com.
63 Brian Nichiporuk of RAND Corporation, remarks at a lecture on demography and national security at Brookings Institution Middle East working group, 20 September 2002.
64 Brian Nichiporuk, *The Security Dynamics of Demographic Factors,* RAND Document Number MR-1088-WFHF/RF/DLPF/A, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 30.

The issue of nuclear weapons raises a different order of concern. There is almost no public discussion on questions of nuclear strategy among Muslim states, except in Pakistan, where it is conducted strictly in relation to India. However, legitimate questions arise as to whether, with large youth populations, leaders in Muslim states may think they have "less to fear" from a potential nuclear war down the road. Certainly between India and Pakistan, India's vastly greater population could sustain a nuclear war better than Pakistan. Likewise, in confrontations between nuclear Israel and the Arab world, suicide bombing may be seen as an "alternative" to nuclear capability—a policy sustainable primarily through youthful participation.

When a youth bulge dramatizes growing populations, the state with the burgeoning population creates anxieties for other states. Finally, where there are harsh regional competitions for limited resources, the presence of a youth bulge can dramatically highlight the reality of one state's growing population, creating anxieties among rival states. 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.[65] For example, many in Israel view the Palestinians in this context.

YOUTH IN THE MUSLIM DIASPORA

As domestic population pressures build, particularly among the youth cohort, there is a growing incentive to emigrate in search of employment or better working conditions. Some of that emigration has been within the Islamic world, especially to countries of the Persian Gulf. In past years, radical elements of the youth population found one outlet in joining "jihadist" campaigns of Muslims fighting for

independence around the world, such as in Bosnia, Chehchnya, and Kashmir. The War on Terrorism has complicated that kind of travel. Jihadists aside, much of the Muslim emigration has gone to Western Europe, North America and Australia, but not in sufficient numbers to significantly diminish the population back home.

The percentage of Muslim populations in Europe and the United States has been growing over the past decades. In Europe, Muslims now make up the largest of the immigrant communities. They "already form 5–10 percent of the population of some European countries, and much higher percentages of younger age cohorts" due both to higher birthrates and increased immigration. Much of this immigration is admitted to meet rising employment needs for less skilled labor in European communities with graying populations, or a "youth deficit."[66]

The growing presence of Muslims creates new blocs of ethnically or religiously oriented politics that complement older and different existing ethnic interest groups; indeed this process typifies the workings of all democratic governments in multicultural states where internal struggle among various ethnic groups to shape foreign policy goals is endemic. The new Muslim element undoubtedly inserts a new factor into the calculus in the complex process of balancing and adjudicating the foreign policy interests of both European states and the U.S. In the U.S., traditionally the Jewish community has had the greatest direct interest, expertise and influence in the formulation of American Middle East policies. Today the intensity of that community's interest now competes with Muslims in seeking to influence the direction of American policies. With demographic shifts in the Middle East pushing more emigration, dimensions of this competition will likely grow, especially as long as the intensity and polarization of emotion over Palestine persists. Muslims in the diaspora are growing more organized and sophisticated in the use of media

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65 Nichiporuk, p. 38.
66 James Kurth, "Migration and the Dynamics of Empire," *The National Interest,* Spring 2003, p. 9.

and political action groups. The youth cohort obviously has even greater clout, both in numbers and in the new possession of native familiarity with the political workings of their new homelands. In France, for example, "about a third of the Arab Muslim population is under the age of 20, compared to 21 percent for the country as a whole." [67]

While in the U.S., Muslim immigrants are highly represented at the professional level, in Europe the Muslim diaspora has a much higher working class component, partly as a result of ties with former Muslim colonies, or in Germany, from the arrival of Turkish guest-workers. A worrisome question in Europe has been the degree of assimilation that has, or has not, taken place among Muslim immigrants. The situation naturally differs from country to country, ethnic group to ethnic group. At the same time, Europe, itself a "homeland" of specific longstanding ethnic groups, has found the process of multiculturalization more painful than in the U.S. that has been an immigrant society from the start. Thus, the degree of integration or assimilation of Muslims—or any other group from the developing world—is in part a two-way street, reflecting not only the degree of willingness of Muslim populations to be integrated, or even assimilated, but the readiness of these societies to integrate them.

Where Muslims—and particularly younger generation Muslims, usually born in Europe—have not readily integrated, concerns arise about potential radicalization of young Muslims who feel alienated from the societies in which they live and are turning to a new transnational "Islamic" identity. French scholar Olivier Roy writes of a spectrum of assimilation that includes total assimilation, or abandonment of earlier identity; a middle stage in which the new identity comfortably coexists with the old as in being a "Turkish-German" or "Tunisian-French", like American hyphenated ethnic groups; and finally "recommunalization" in which alienated Muslims, particularly youth, gravitate to a new generalized "Islamic" identity in which the ethnic

roots to any specific former country have slipped away and solidarity is discovered with other Muslims who may orignially be of different ethnic origins.

This process tends to produce a new "virtual ghetto." The group searching out the new Islamic identity is more easily radicalized by local conditions, even if not necessarily turning to violence. Among radicalized Muslims, the tendency is to direct that radicalization back to the country of origin in supporting radical movements there and in seeking to influence the policies of their new European homes toward their countries of origin.[68] While only a tiny percentage of this community may be involved in political violence, that tiny percentage does have immense implications for terrorist concerns.

Thus, there is often a new foreign policy dimension involved in these new Muslim communities, in which youth often plays a more active role, in one respect or another, than their parents.

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 U.S., playing out in the struggles between diaspora populations for voice over American 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 thus 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 greater attention to or advocate policy changes on Middle Eastern issues, just as other minorities direct attention to their own regions of origin.

67 Olivier Roy, "The Jihad Within?," *The National Interest,* Spring 2003, p. 65.
68 Ibid.

IX. Easing of the Youth Bulge

With each generation, the youth bulge will drop in nearly all Middle East states (with Yemen virtually the sole exception). However, 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.[69]

Percentage of youth aged 24 and below over the next 30 years [70]

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 suggest 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. However, as the study makes clear, it is not the bulge alone which matters, but the specific conditions under which it is emerging that is most important. We are entering arguably a period of the greatest tensions between the U.S. and the Islamic 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 U.S. nonetheless focuses primarily on U.S. policies. The ambivalence noted earlier—an admiration for

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

many aspects of American political values accompanied by deep anger at U.S. policies—is accompanied by a recognition that the world is changing. This is 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.[71] 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.[72]

It would appear critically important then, that U.S. 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. However, the issue hardly depends upon the U.S. 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.

71 Fattah, op. cit., p. 2.
72 Fattah, op. cit., p. 5.

X. Implications for American Foreign 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, 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 a 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 U.S. 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 U.S.-imposed regime change and the massive political and social changes in the country that will emerge therefrom, the large Iraqi youth cohort can only complicate the problems of transition for a U.S.-run governance structure. This may include the release of intense pent-up pressures and heightened expectations. Only if the consequences of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein leads to dramatic

improvement in Iraqi life will there be a chance for marked change in attitudes toward America. The inauguration of serious long term reform and liberalization will therefore have to be a key component for nation building in the aftermath of the war.

Barring dramatic change in the American 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 U.S. 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 short-term actions in the global war against terrorism continue to monopolize U.S. foreign policy, American 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 a 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 pubic 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, without serious prodding or assistance.

SUGGESTED U.S. 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 U.S. government, in conjunction with regional partners, must work to expand these institutions in the region, as means for channeling youth discontent.

- The U.S. 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 U.S. have long since learned. Nevertheless, 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 U.S. 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. The U.S. can also do vastly more to assist in Middle East education both in increasing access to education in the U.S., 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.

- At the same time, it must be recognized 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.

- 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 American interest to help. Improved health care and education for women and children will also facilitate management of this problem.

- The U.S. 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 U.S. policies abroad. Fifty years ago, at the time of the collapse of the British Empire, the U.S. was the most widely admired society in the world among Middle Easterners. Today it is the most hated. American idealism could once again be powerful force in harnessing the idealism of youth around the world. This will occur only if its security and military policies become augmented by values that go beyond the current routine lip service.

These goals are easily stated but much more complex to apply. At the least, they require an overall strategy that pays far greater attention to issues of democratization in the developing world, such that they play a serious, systematic and uniform role in U.S. policy formation. This would include application of explicit penalties as well as rewards—particularly through international financial institutions and in U.S. foreign and military aid policy, which are linked to this strategy.

The U.S. admittedly carries tremendous credibility problems in the Islamic world at present. A longstanding U.S. focus on security issues and a highly selective application of our values have damaged the American reputation. These can sandbag even the best and most altruistic of American goals. Nonetheless, efforts must be taken to face the challenges of the emerging youth factor in Middle Eastern politics and re-establish a positive relationship between the U.S. and Muslim youth. Only then can the rising instability be averted and Usama bin Ladin's greatest aspiration—a clash between the U.S. and the Islamic world—be destroyed.

The Brookings Project on
U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World

The *Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World* is a major research program, housed in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. It is designed to respond to some of the profound questions that the terrorist attacks of September 11th have raised for U.S. policy. The project seeks to develop an understanding of the forces that led to the attacks, the varied reactions in the Islamic world, and the long-term policy responses that the U.S. can make. In particular, it will examine how the United States can reconcile its need to eliminate terrorism and reduce the appeal of extremist movements with its need to build more positive relations with the wider Islamic world.

The Project has several interlocking components:

• A Task Force made up of specialists in Islamic, regional, and foreign policy issues (emphasizing diversity in viewpoint and geographic expertise), as well as government policymakers, who meet on a monthly basis to discuss, analyze, and share information on relevant trends and issues;

• A Visiting Fellows program that brings distinguished experts from the Islamic world to spend time in Washington D.C., both assisting them in their own research, as well as informing the wider work ongoing in the project;

• A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the U.S. and the Islamic world;

• A series of Regional Conferences, which will bring together local experts in the Middle East and South Asia with their American counterparts. This component will not only provide an opportunity for scholars to discuss their own diagnoses of current trends and possible responses, but also promote a much-needed exchange of ideas and information;

• An Education and Economic Outreach Initiative, which will explore the issues of education reform and economic development towards the Islamic world, in particular the potential role of the private sector;

• A culminating Brookings Institution Press book, which will explore U.S. policy options towards the Islamic World. The aim of the book is to synthesize the project's findings for public dissemination.

The Project Convenors are Professor Stephen Philip Cohen, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow; Ambassador Martin Indyk, Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy; and Professor Shibley Telhami, Professor of Government at the University of Maryland and Brookings Senior Fellow. Dr. P.W. Singer, Brookings Olin Fellow, serves as the Project Coordinator.

The Brookings Task Force on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World

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THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy was established on May 13th, 2002 with an Inaugural Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The establishment of the Saban Center reflects The Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center's purpose is to provide Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth, and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable people who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The Center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. Its central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The Center's establishment has been made possible by a generous founding grant from Mr. Haim Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the Director of the Saban Center. Dr. Kenneth M. Pollack is the Center's Director of Research. Joining Ambassador Indyk and Dr. Pollack in the work of the Center is a core group of Middle East experts, who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. They include Professor Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; Professor Shaul Bakhash, an expert on Iranian politics from George Mason University; Professor Daniel Byman from Georgetown University, a Middle East terrorism expert; Dr. Flynt Leverett, a former senior CIA analyst and Senior Director at the National Security Council who is a specialist on Syria and Lebanon; and Dr. Philip Gordon, a Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at Brookings who specializes in Europe's and Turkey's relations with the Middle East. The Center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Vice President and Director, James B. Steinberg.

The Saban Center is undertaking original research in six areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Gulf security; the dynamics of the Iranian reformation; mechanisms and requirements for fulfilling a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for Phase III of the war on terror, including the Syrian challenge; and political change in the Arab world.

The Center also houses the ongoing *Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World,* directed by Dr. Peter W. Singer, Olin Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at Brookings. This Project, established in the wake of the September 11 terror attacks, focuses on analyzing the problems that afflict the relationship between the United States and the Islamic world with the objective of developing effective policy responses. It includes a Task Force of experts that meets on a monthly basis, an annual Dialogue between American and Muslim intellectuals, a Visiting Fellows program for experts from the Islamic world, and a monograph series.