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

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World Youth Population
Armed Conflict by Region 1946-2006

Yearly conflicts by region from 1946 to 2006, showing trends in the number of conflicts in different regions of the world.
The Location of Armed Conflict, 2006

Youth Bulges

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

• The grievance perspective
  – Unemployment
  – Education
  – Democracy
  – Urbanization
Youth Bulges and Political Violence

- Global multivariate model
- Three measures:
  - armed conflict
  - terrorism
  - riots and violent demonstrations
- Contextual factors
Youth Bulges

Age composition and political violence 1950–2000

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

- No threshold values
- Robust for low-intensity conflict, but not for full-fledged civil war
- Demography is not destiny: most countries with large youth bulges avoid conflict most of the time
- Governments hold the key to whether large youth cohorts are blessing or curse
- Challenges: the evidence base for what works is limited; lack of competent government
The Future of Youth Bulges

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

Youth Bulges vs. Dependency Ratio over Time

- Year: 1950 to 2050
- Youth Bulges range from 0 to 40
- Dependency Ratio range from 0 to 250

Graph shows the trend of youth bulges and dependency ratio in South Korea from 1950 to 2050.
China
Afghanistan
Future Research Priorities

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