

# PROJECT FINAL REPORT

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**Title:** Investigating the Iranian and Zapatista Revolutions with the Youth Bulge Theory

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 General Background

The 1979 Iranian Revolution, which saw the citizenry of Iran reject the monarchy headed by Mohammad Reza Shah in support of an Islamic, fundamentalist state, is widely regarded as a major turning point in Iranian history as it brought an end to 2,500 years of the Persian Empire. Led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shah was overthrown through a popular, relatively non-violent uprising that precipitated the fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty. Khomeini then founded a theological, authoritarian state in its wake, which has persisted till today.

The Revolution has garnered significant attention from the historical scholarship, as it lacked many of the traditional causes for an uprising, such as a financial crisis or a major defeat at war. The Shah has in fact been credited for multiple improvements in education and living standards, which has caused some to question why a leader who was so successful would be overthrown. Most historians currently converge on the consensus that the Revolution was largely caused by disillusionment and discontent with the Shah's autocratic ruling style and pro-Western stance.

Meanwhile, the 1994 Zapatista uprising was the culmination of the discontent towards the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) from indigenous groups in Mexico. The NAFTA would allow Mexico to import near-unlimited amounts of corn, which the indigenous people of Chiapas and other subsistence farmers relied on for survival. With their economic survival endangered, the Chiapas natives formed the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), took up arms and occupied cities and towns in Chiapas, the southernmost and most impoverished state in Mexico. It demanded a democratization of governmental structures and a reversal of NAFTA, as well as other laissez-faire policies that were detrimental to them (henceforth referred to as neoliberalist policies).

Although the Zapatistas were not able to prevent the latter from occurring, they still control the majority of territory in Chiapas to this day and have made significant headway into the former with significant improvements in indigenous communities' rights. With EZLN territory being divided into fully autonomous communities, the area has also seen standards of living increase markedly.

In this project, we plan to focus on a differing explanation for the uprisings by utilising the Youth Bulge Theory. In doing so, this paper would build on the existing literature that has attempted to identify the root causes for the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

## **1.2 Rationale**

The Youth Bulge theory is a relatively recent development in historical research. Coined by social scientist Gunnar Heinsohn in 1995, the theory has been used to explain the mass revolts against totalitarian governments in North Africa and the Middle East in the 2010s. In these countries, the youth formed close to a third of the total population. The proponents of this theory assert that large youth populations are a main cause for social unrest and uprisings.

Owing to the recency of the Youth Bulge theory, it has rarely been used retrospectively to explain uprisings that occurred prior to its development, as its focus has been on more recent phenomena such as the Arab Spring. Ergo, applying the theory to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and 1994 Zapatista uprising is appropriate as it allows us to understand the causes of the social unrest that culminated in both revolutions. Additionally, by examining two uprisings that occurred under extremely different conditions and in different parts of the world, we would be able to understand if the Youth Bulge theory was universalisable and universally applicable.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

- a. Was there a youth bulge in Iran in 1979 and Mexico in 1994?
- b. To what extent was the rule of the government in both countries successful?
- c. To what extent was the youth bulge responsible for both revolutions?

## **1.4 Thesis Statement**

The large youth population in 1979 Iran and 1994 Mexico created the economic and social conditions for the uprisings. In both cases, the lack of economic benefits for the youth was the underlying cause for the youth-orchestrated uprisings.

## **1.5 Scope**

The scope of this paper is limited to the periods preceding the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the 1994 Zapatista uprising. This paper will cover the policies that were introduced during the period of the Shah's rule (1941-1979), to investigate the impact that these policies had on the youth population at the time. This scope is appropriate as the youth population that overthrew the Shah in 1979 largely grew up during this time and were affected greatly by his socio-economic reforms. It will also be studying the period of the Mexican "Dirty War" (1964-1982) waged by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to study the causes of the 1994 Zapatista uprising.

## **1.6 Significance of Research**

While the causes of the 1979 Iranian Revolution has been covered by multiple analysts and scholars, it has focussed on the attitudes denizens at the time had towards the West, as well as on the discontent with the Shah over his policies to sell oil to Israel and improve women's

rights. Previous studies of the Zapatista movement have not considered the Youth Bulge Theory as a catalyst behind the uprising, instead suggesting generic disillusion with neoliberalist policies adopted by the PRI. Therefore, this paper aims to add to the research area on the theory.

### **1.7 Limitations**

This paper is limited in part due to the secretive and isolated nature of the current Iranian regime, which has largely suppressed dissent to official state narratives of the 1979 uprisings. Additionally, sources that are available to the public on both uprisings tend to be in Persian or Spanish, rather than in English. Although many of those sources have been translated, some details might have been lost in the process of translation, rendering them to be less nuanced than in their original language.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definition of Youth Bulge Theory**

In this paper, the Youth Bulge Theory will be used to investigate the causes of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. A “youth bulge” is usually defined as a demographic imbalance in which “young adults ages 15 to 29 account for more than 40 percent of all adults” (Mastny, 2004). Mastny writes that an ideal demographic distribution would have a population structure where “youth account for 25 percent of the adult population”. Some demographers have challenged Mastny’s definition, choosing instead to expand the definition of a youth bulge. Lin (2012) defines a youth bulge as a society in which “three-quarters of the population is under 30”. For the purposes of this paper, I will be using the narrower definition proposed by Mastny. This is because most of the Iranian citizens who participated in the protests at the time were from that age range. Additionally, for statistical reasons, Lin’s definition is more frequently used in studies regarding the impact of the youth bulge on a country or region’s economic future, while Mastny’s is typically employed in studies on civil and political conflict (Inayatullah, 2016). Given that this paper is investigating Iran’s political revolution, Mastny’s definition would be employed.

Another definition for a “youth bulge” revolves around a country’s fertility rate. As a country’s fertility rate increases, the likelihood of a future youth bulge increases as well. A fertility rate above the threshold of 3.4 is considered to be a strong predictor for future youth bulges in a country (Espenshade, 2003). According to Espenshade, however, the fertility rate is only a prediction for future youth bulges and cannot be used to accurately gauge if a country is currently experiencing a youth bulge. Hence, this paper will be utilising Mastny’s definition in its analysis.

### **2.2 Economic Features of Youth Bulges**

Demographers agree that most countries with youth bulges share a few quintessential economic features (LaGraffe, 2012). LaGraffe posits that “unemployment, poverty, social unrest, and declining economic conditions” are the features of a youth bulge which cause youth to engage in anti-government behaviour. He qualifies that while these conditions can exist “regardless of demographic structure,” the aforementioned “negative variables” are more “dramatic in cases where a demographic challenge is present,” referring to the presence of a youth bulge. In LaGraffe’s view, these poor economic conditions, usually created when youth are unable to find work, fuel resentment against the ruling government and thus generate support for opposition groups.

LaGraffe’s hypothesis proved to be highly relevant during the 2011 Arab Spring, where the youth population in multiple Arab countries acted en masse to violently overthrow their respective governments. In those countries, such as Bahrain, Egypt and Libya, there was a youth bulge, with the percentage of young adults as a percentage of the adult population exceeding 40 percent. Those countries experienced “joblessness” and “financial crisis” in light of the 2008 recession, with some parts of the region experiencing an unemployment rate of close to 30 percent (Inyatullah, 2008). They also experienced a large amount of poverty, with a bank account ownership rate of only 18%, compared to the global average of

50%. This led to a groundswell of support that attempted to challenge the authority of the country's leadership, leading to massive political upheaval and change.

In this paper, I will be using the features highlighted by LaGraffe to investigate the causes of the Iranian revolution. As seen from the Arab Spring, the role of economic conditions such as poverty and unemployment in generating political upheaval is large. Thus, this paper will be considering the economic conditions in Iran in relation to the youth bulge in its analysis.

### **2.3 Socio-Cultural Features of Youth Bulges**

Other demographers have chosen to focus on the socio-cultural features of youth bulge societies (Cincotta, 2003). This includes the family and religious backgrounds of the youth in countries with youth bulges. Cincotta writes that their family backgrounds and the reason why many youth choose to engage in revolutionary activity. He observes that in youth bulge societies, "a large proportion of young adults tend to ... prolong dependency on parents", which leads to "diminished self-esteem and frustrations". This increases the likelihood that they find "social advancement by alternative, extralegal means", making them "more prone to taking up arms."

In a similar vein, Caldwell (2007) asserts that revolutions are caused by a desire for respectability among youth, especially from the youngest son in a family. He states that in more underdeveloped areas where youth bulges exist, large families are extremely common. In these places, "envy against older, inheriting brothers is released ... so is ambition", leading them towards anti-establishment ideologies.

Another socio-cultural characteristic of many youth bulge societies is that they have many individuals of religious faith (Beehner, 2007). Beehner found that most youth bulge societies have deeply religious features, especially among the youth. This includes an exceptionally high level of religious involvement, as well as generally conservative views towards society. Beehner asserts that religion plays a "contributing factor" in causing social unrest, as young people "are often drawn to new ideas and heterodox relations" which challenge older forms of authority, particularly to "virulent strains" of religion which are seen as alternative sources of social mobility. In the Arab Spring, for example, religion was often used to promote participation in revolutionary action against the governments in the Arab world, such as through public Qu'ran readings and other religious elements at the protests (Hoffman et al, 2014).

It is evident that socio-cultural factors induced by youth bulges, such as one's family and religious background, can cause political revolution as well. Thus, in this paper, I will also be examining the socio-cultural characteristics of Iranian society and consider if they played a role in undermining the Shah's leadership.

### **2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review**

In conclusion, this paper will be employing the narrower definition for the youth bulge, which defines it as a society where "young adults ages 15 to 29 account for more than 40 percent of all adults". As gleaned from the literature review, most of these youth bulges have defining economic features, such as high poverty and unemployment rates, as well as defining socio-

cultural characteristics, such as large families and high religiosity. In Chapter 4, we will be studying how the youth bulge at the time of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the 1994 Zapatista uprising.

### **Chapter 3: Research Method**

The paper will use the Youth Bulge Theory to test its thesis statement.

This paper will mostly be employing secondary sources, such as books, journals, and newspapers, as its primary method of data collection and analysis, given the difficulty of acquiring primary sources. To answer the first research question, this paper will analyse previous published literature on the population structure of Iran before 1979 to understand if there was a youth bulge under the Shah. It will also use censuses conducted in 1970, 1980 and 1990 to determine if there was a youth bulge under the de la Madrid and Salinas administrations.

To answer the second and third research questions, this paper will investigate the situation in Iran under the Shah to understand if the economic and sociocultural factors discussed in the previous chapter existed then. This will be done through an assessment of the Shah's socio-economic policies, which would allow us to understand if the post-war youth bulge was responsible for the uprising against the Shah. It will also be assessing the neoliberal socio-economic policies enacted during the de la Madrid and Salinas administrations to understand if the Chiapas youth bulge was responsible for the uprising against the government.

## Chapter 4: Discussion & Interpretation

### 4.1 Was there a Youth Bulge in Iran in 1979 and Mexico in 1994?

While there is a lack of available data with regard to population demographics preceding 1979 in Iran, there is clear evidence that Iran under the Shah's reign displayed many features of a youth bulge. According to LaGraffe (2012), youth bulges usually exist in economies with low levels of education, particularly for women, and that indicators such as the literacy rate can be used to accurately predict a country's fertility rate. The United Nations (1972) found that despite the expansion of education under the Shah, 62% of the youth population was deemed illiterate, with an even higher illiteracy rate among women. While this was an improvement compared to the 76% illiteracy rate amongst the entire adult population, the level of education remained low compared to developed countries. The percentage of youth who attended tertiary education, another indicator of educational development, was only 4.4%. This data is a strong indication that a youth bulge existed under the Shah's Iran.

An approximation by the World Bank (2017), conducted through extrapolation and studying available indicators, places the fertility rate of Iran in 1960 at 6.9. Most of these children were born in rural areas, though many of them eventually moved to large cities such as Tehran. The World Bank estimate is much higher than the threshold of 3.4, beyond which a youth bulge is likely to exist (Espenshade, 2003). Thus, it would be fair to suggest that Iran was experiencing a youth bulge during the rule of the Shah.

There was also a youth bulge in Mexico from 1970 to 1990. As can be seen from Fig 1.1, the 15-24 years old age group decreased by 8.82% in proportion to the total population nationwide from 1970 to 1990 (INEGI, 1970) (INEGI, 1980) (INEGI, 1990). Conversely, in the same time period, the same age group had increased for Chiapas by 5.70%. This data is a strong indication that a youth bulge existed in Chiapas prior to the 1994 uprising that was not present elsewhere in Mexico.

	Nationwide (%)	Chiapas (%)
<b>1970</b>	23.8	19.3
<b>1980</b>	20.8	20.1
<b>1990</b>	21.7	20.4
<b>Relative change</b>	-8.82	+5.70

*Fig 1.1: Graph of percentages of population 15-24 years old over time*

The presence of a youth bulge can be further confirmed by corresponding factors. According to LaGraffe, youth bulges usually exist in economies with low levels of education, and that



indicators such as the literacy rate can be used to accurately predict whether a country had a youth bulge. As seen in Fig 1.2, the literacy rate, defined as the percentage of population with any form of education with instruction in the 1970 census and later as the ability to recognise the alphabet in the censuses afterwards, increased nationwide from 1970 to 1990 (INEGI, 1970) (INEGI, 1980) (INEGI, 1990). In the same time period, the literacy rate was constantly approximately 20 percent lower for Chiapas. This corroborative data and disparity in education serves to further reinforce the presence of a youth bulge, answering the first research question.

	<b>Nationwide (%)</b>	<b>Chiapas (%)</b>	<b>Difference (%)</b>
<b>1970</b>	65.2	45.7	19.5
<b>1980</b>	82.0	62.0	20.0
<b>1990</b>	87.4	69.6	17.8

Fig 1.2: Graph of literacy rates over time

## 4.2 To what Extent was the Administration in both Countries Successful?

### 4.2.1 Economic Aspects of the Shah's Rule

The Shah's economic rule has divided historians. He pursued a set of policies that he believed would lead Iran to become a *tamaddon-e-bozorg* (Persian for "great civilisation") in the mould of the old Persian Empire. This included the nationalisation of forests and pastures, the privatisation of state-owned factories, construction of new rail and road networks, and large-scale land reform. These policies came at the backdrop of increasingly leftist sentiments in Iran, with increasing pressure for him to pursue redistribution policies that were taking place in China and the USSR. While the Shah's policies were in no way socialist, it was the Shah's hope that these policies could gain him the support of peasants and working-class who were increasingly dissatisfied at their standard of living (Siavoshi, 1990).

Historians largely agree that these reforms benefited the country from an economic perspective. Between 1953 and 1979, per capita income for Iranians skyrocketed, and oil revenue-fuelled an enormous increase in state funding for industrial development projects. His policies resulted in the improvement of Iran's port facilities, the expansion of the Trans-Iranian Railway, and the increase in transport networks connecting Tehran to Iran's provincial capitals. Iran became a leading industrial hub in the Middle East for clothing, food processing, textiles, and car assembly (Said, 1988). Nonetheless, whether such reforms successfully benefitted the populace in Iran is still a subject of discussion.

These policies, which broke up agricultural land and placed greater emphasis on economic development, resulted in the creation of a "landed gentry" which was able to hold land

(Halliday, 1988). While the growth in Gross Domestic Product and revenue from these policies were supposed to trickle down to the working-class in theory, Halliday states that these policies created deep economic divisions in Iran which led to the overthrowing of the Shah, who was viewed as elite and disconnected. He notes that while a large number of youth who participated in the Iranian Revolution protest came from middle and upper-class families, he observes that “a majority of them were from rural areas ... who were unable to find work in big cities”. Halliday states that the Shah's reforms “more than quadrupled the combined size of the two classes that had posed the most challenges to his monarchy in the past—the intelligentsia and the urban working class”. Many poorer individuals saw this as a sign of their economic conditions declining and the government being run for and by the elite.

This perception of inequality was exacerbated by the ways in which the Shah presented himself, such as holding extravagant state banquets and lavish ceremonies (Abbas, 2011). Abbas notes that the Shah's political speeches often alluded to the “glory of Iran during the Achaemenid period” and “the economic success of Iran”. This led to poorer individuals feeling that the Shah was out-of-touch, even when he was attempting to communicate his plans for the poor. This caused social unrest between the rich and the poor, which was one of the economic factors highlighted by LaGraffe (2012) as being a catalysing factor for revolutions when a youth bulge exists.

Since the majority of young people in Iran at the time of the Revolution were living in rural areas, they were likely galvanised by the widening class divide and what they saw as increasing inequality to take part in protests against the Shah. Hence, we can conclude that the Shah's policies were successful in expanding the government's largesse and growing Iran's economy, but were not as successful in catering to the needs of Iran's rural and working-class populations. The creation of socioeconomic inequality by his policies, as well as his failures in communicating them properly, led to the perception that his government was out-of-touch with ordinary Iranians.

#### **4.2.2 Sociocultural Aspects of the Shah's Rule**

The Shah's approach to religion, one of the sociocultural cornerstones of Iranian life, has been the subject of much controversy. Iran was a country that practiced predominantly Shia Islam in 1979, with an exceptionally high level of religious involvement when compared to the rest of the Arab world. Nonetheless, the Shah pursued a secularist agenda, which he termed the “White Revolution”, that largely ran counter to the religious mood in his country. The Shah's government was intent on extending the secularist policies that his father, Reza Shah, had implemented before he was deposed in 1941. He did so due to his view that modernising Iran to become like Western, industrialised nations required it to get rid of outdated and old-fashioned religious beliefs. This doctrine, which has been termed *laïcité*, was rigorously enforced by Iran's secret police, the SAVAK (Abrahamian, 2008).

The Shah's pursuit of *laïcité* encompassed numerous areas, including foreign relations and domestic issues. For instance, the Shah allowed for the sale of oil made in Iran to be sold to the Jewish state of Israel, a move that angered religious factions of Iranian society. He isolated Iran from the rest of the Arab world geopolitically and strengthened ties with the United Kingdom and the USA, both of which were pro-Israel and thus seen by many Iranians

as anti-Islam (Kaye et al., 2011). At the same time, on the domestic front, the Shah was seen as prioritising the interests of other groups in Iranian society. He imposed restrictions on the public display of religion, including the wearing of the Muslim headscarf (the *hijab*) in public areas. Under his rule, the number of Christian and Jewish lawmakers increased significantly, a trend that worried Islamic fundamentalists in Iran (Brumberg, 2001). In one of his most controversial decisions, the Shah decided to extend voting rights to women in 1963. While this was lauded by observers in the West, the clergy and even some Muslim women in Iran saw this as a breach of Islamic faith by according too much freedom to females (Said, 1988).

While the role that religion played in the Revolution is still widely debated, the Shah's approach to Islam can be concluded to have largely failed. His secularist approach was unsuccessful in changing the religious climate in Iran. According to Brumberg's research, the vast majority of Iranians still adhered to Shia Islam principles by the end of the Shah's rule in 1979, with 99.2% of Iranians identifying with Islam. In terms of making Iran more secular, his policies only deepened the religiosity of many Iranians of Muslim faith.

The Shah's downfall was to some extent caused by his approach to religion, and his perceived opposition to Islamic values. Islamic themes played a huge role in the campaigns against him in 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini, one of the Shah's largest critics and the leader of the religious movement against his reign, portrayed himself as a fundamentalist Islamist. Meanwhile, he portrayed the Shah as a modern-day version of the hated tyrant Yazid I, who was not loyal to Islamic values (Bruno, 2008). Khomeini often attracted support through the use of Islamic doctrines that "appeared modern, liberal and appealing" (Momen, 1985). Momen also writes that many in the protests saw the Shah's policies as "unfairly targetting them", leading them to be drawn to Khomeini's interpretation of Islam. This shares a feature that is exceptionally common among youth bulge movements around the world, which is the presence of "virulent strains of religion" which are able to attract young individuals.

Thus, we can conclude that the Shah's economic and sociocultural policies, while achieving some degree of success, created conditions in which the youth-led movement could gain traction and lead to his being overthrown. Firstly, it led to increasing economic inequality between the rich and the poor, as well as between urban and rural areas, creating social tensions that catalysed youth to join protests. Secondly, the secular environment that the Shah implemented drew many young Iranians to the more virulent and radical strain of Islam forwarded by Ayatollah Khomeini.

#### **4.2.3 Economic Aspects of the Chiapas People**

The economic prospects of the Chiapas people were already bleak prior to the trigger event of the signing of the NAFTA. At the start of the 1970s, commodity prices stagnated, expenses rose, and there were difficulties in credit and foreign exchange (Rus, 2010). The agricultural backbone of Chiapas began to crumble. Over the next two decades, Chiapas' indigenous population doubled, yet the economic opportunities for seasonal agricultural labourers declined due to the aforementioned economic struggle. This in turn caused the state's economic fortunes to decline.

In addition, Chiapas was severely affected by the neoliberal policies pushed out during the 1970s to 1990s. In 1971, the government declared a 614000 hectares of the forest, encompassing both the previously unsettled regions and the former Mexican-owned farms, as a protected area: the "Montes Azules Bio-sphere Reserve". They appointed only 66 Lacandon Indian families as tenants, thereby displacing 2000 families from 26 communities, and leaving non-Lacandon communities dependent on the government for asserting their rights to land. This marked the start of a long push to strip the indigenous communities of their land by the governments. In the following two decades, these efforts would be amplified by the successive de la Madrid and Salinas administrations. The former had kickstarted Mexico's economic policy of attracting foreign capital through the portrayal of Mexico as an agricultural power. He did so through attempting to privatize communal *edijo* lands through amendments to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, but had little success. His successor was then able to challenge the *edijo* system through removing Article 27 entirely, eventually putting communal land under federal jurisdiction and urbanizing the once-communal lands in preparation to sell them to foreign companies. (Kelly, 1994).

With regards to the Youth Bulge Theory, this change disproportionately affected the youth population, who believed that the government's indefinite repossession of the communal lands would effectively be the end of agriculture in Chiapas - often the sole source of income for many families (Stahler-Sholk, 2010). With a major source of employment and economic prosperity stripped from the state, anti-government sentiments, especially among the youth, began to gain traction. Civil society in Chiapas had already undergone two decades of grassroots organizing, and economic frustrations provided the base for movements such as the EZLN to rise (Whittmeyer & Hopcroft, 1996). Therefore, with the first and third conditions posited by LaGraffe, namely unemployment and poverty; as well as urbanization fulfilled, the theory thus explains the economic factors precipitating the uprising

In spite of occasional partial state concessions to these social movements in the early 1990s, the dominant pattern was repression and frustration. The activists, largely comprised of youths concerned about their economic futures, were forced to seek more radical political options, especially when the Salinas presidency closed off the few remaining channels for negotiation (Harvey, 1998), providing an explanation for political violence as the EZLN's method of choice.

In 1994, the economic frustrations reached their climax during the signing of the NAFTA. After the removal of Article 27 in 1991, the native farmers feared the loss of their remaining lands and ruining of livelihoods due to cheap imports from the US undercutting the price of Chiapas-grown crops.

#### **4.2.4 Sociocultural features of the Chiapas people**

The Chiapas people were relatively detached from the cultural and political mainstream of Mexico. With the highest percentage of indigenous people relative to total population and indigenous languages sharing more linguistic similarities with Guatemala than the rest of Mexico, the loyalty of Chiapas had always been shaky due to the lack of commonality between its people and the rest of Mexico (Bazak, 2016). The state downplayed the influence of indigenous Mayan culture and hammered in schools and society that such culture was "worthless, idolatrous and superstitious". In the face of a Mayan revitalisation

movement across the Americas, this could have potentially caused the indigenous Mayan population which made up the bulk of the EZLN to reclaim their indigenous heritage before it got wiped out by the state (Benjamin, 2000).

#### **4.3 To what Extent was the Post-War Youth Bulge Responsible for the Uprising Against the Shah in 1979?**

This section of the paper will analyse and assess the relative impact of the youth bulge in causing the uprisings against the Shah and in Chiapas. As seen from Chapter 4.2, the Shah was unsuccessful in preventing rising socioeconomic equality and engaged in policies which were seen as unfairly targeting Islam. This increased social tensions and caused Islam to become a strong political force in Iran, galvanising the youth population to overthrow the Shah. Meanwhile, the government of Chiapas pursued neoliberal policies which disenfranchised many local people of Chiapas.

From this, we can conclude that the youth bulge was the underlying cause of both the Iranian Revolution and the Zapatista uprising. In the absence of a youth bulge, the Shah's policies might not have caused the same level of furore and the concomitant revolutionary action. If the population structure in Iran had been more developed or mature, the Shah's government might have remained in power given how there was no electoral mechanism for the Shah to be deposed. In Chiapas, if the youth population did not act as a conduit for violence, it is questionable if the indigenous population would have chosen the path of armed conflict instead of conventional party politics or peaceful agrarian reform.

In comparison to their elders, the youth were more likely to rebel against the system for the following reasons:

1. Unlike their older counterparts, many of them did not have a stable job and had less to lose economically if they chose to take part in protests and revolutionary activity.
2. Compared to those in their middle ages and the elderly, who were more dispassionate about issues facing Iran, the youth had a more idealistic conception and vision for Iran.
3. Many youths were the youngest child in their family, and thus felt the need to join anti-government groups to unleash their ambition and desire for power.

Hence, while inequality and religious suppression could have been independent causes that resulted in the Iranian Revolution, they were catalysts that created the conditions for the youth bulge to flourish and act against the Shah's government. The same can be said of Chiapas, where economic neoliberalism might not have induced a revolution without a large youth population.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

In recent years, we have seen the many youth bulge societies in the Middle East taking part in massive protests for their civil liberties and economic freedoms. Through this project's examination of the Iranian and Zapatista uprisings, we were able to further understand if the phenomenon of the youth bulge was the cause of those pivotal moments in history. From our analysis, it is clear that the youth bulge played a large role in these societies taking part in revolutionary activity. With the conditions of economic inequality that persisted in both Iran and Mexico, the youth felt the need to take part in revolutionary activity against the respective administrations.

This underscores the need for leaders and politicians alike to be attendant to the youth in their crafting and implementation of policies. While some youth bulge societies, including but not limited to the Iran and Mexico, entered into phases of prolonged turmoil, some have been able to flourish economically and socially. They did so by leveraging their large youth populations as a strength rather than allowing conditions of economic inequality and poverty affect the country. This is important to bear in mind as many countries are now experiencing their youth bulges and will face the same problems as Iran and Mexico did.

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