



Hans Groth
Alfonso Sousa-Poza
Editors

Population Dynamics in Muslim Countries

Assembling the Jigsaw

 Springer

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Part I
Introduction and Overview

Chapter 1

Introduction

Hans Groth and Alfonso Sousa-Poza

Demographic change and unprecedented population dynamics are a global phenomenon affecting both the developed and the developing world. This inevitable change, however, does not simply involve the size of a given nation's population – it also entails a new relationship between generations, one that on a national level presents challenges related to the economy, wealth, health, political governance, and social structures. Such demographic change can also affect relations between individual nations and regions, creating new alliances and increasing the influence of some countries while decreasing the power of others. How then will the various actors respond? To answer this question, we first recognize that demographic development and planning for a country's future – both in economic and social terms – is characterized by one important feature: it focuses not merely on the future but on long-term outcomes over periods far beyond those usually considered.

At the time of writing, as is abundantly evident from the pervasive coverage in newspapers, journals, and electronic media, European countries are increasingly concerned about the ageing and shrinking of their continent's population. Westerners, however, tend to know considerably less about the unfolding demographics in other parts of the world, especially in Muslim countries. Yet if we want to grasp the global demographic challenges, we need to know as much as possible about all these changes in an increasingly globalized world.

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Table 1.1 Population overview

| | 2010 (Mio) | 2030 (Mio) | Versus 2010 (%) |
|--|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Global population (193 nations) | 6,909 | 8,309 | 20.3 |
| Organisation of the Islamic Conference (57 members) | 1,588 | 2,150 | 35.4 |
| EU-15, Norway, Switzerland | 407 | 422 | 3.7 |

Source: <http://esa.un.org/unpp/> (medium variant projection)

We ourselves embarked on this ‘journey of knowledge’ about 3 years ago – long before the unfolding of the Arab Spring – driven partly by curiosity and a desire to learn more about a region quite unknown to us – the Muslim countries. Not only does this area encompass 50 countries whose populations are over 50% Muslim, but the number of Muslims in the world, which in 2010 already exceeded 1.5 billion, is expected to grow to well over 2 billion people by 2030 (see Table 1.1). Needless to say, such developments have important geopolitical implications.

Obviously, nobody could have predicted the ongoing turbulence in the Arab world that began quite unexpectedly on December 17, 2010 in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a young university graduate forced by a lack of job opportunities to sell vegetables on the street. Nevertheless, demographers and other social scientists in the Muslim world have long been aware of the broad spectrum of demographic challenges facing many of these countries, all of which have the potential to generate social unrest.

Our first field trip took us to the Islamic Republic of Iran in February 2010, followed by several visits to the MENA and Gulf regions. These visits not only gave us in-depth knowledge about the Muslim region and about Islam but also helped us establish a network of leading local experts who encouraged and assisted us in the development of this book.

1.1 What You Can Expect

Part 1 of the book provides a concise overview by *Nicholas Eberstadt* and *Apoorva Shah* of the demographic changes taking place in Muslim countries, whose 2009 population totalled about 1.57 billion. Arguing that there exists a general misperception about the ability of Muslim countries to undergo the same demographic transformations experienced by most industrialized countries in recent decades, both authors describe some of these changes, examine their correlates and possible determinants, and finally speculate about their implications.

Part 2 of the book discusses several specific topics and issues that affect virtually all major Muslim countries. First, *Gavin Jones* analyses the potential for a demographic dividend in Muslim countries and argues that its realization, rather than being inevitable, requires a suitable expansion of education to prepare the large cohorts of young working-age people for employment and an expansion of job opportunities for young people entering the workforce. If either or both of these

requirements are not met, he emphasizes, the potential dividend opportunity could quickly turn into a disaster.

Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and *Fatemeh Torabi* discuss the value that Islam places on women's education and outline the trends in female education in Muslim-majority countries, including country-level differences and the gender gap in education and the reasons for such variations. They also examine fertility changes in Islamic countries and the pathways by which female education has had an impact on fertility. One important observation they make is that there is a need to reconsider the stereotypical assumptions, often encountered in the West that Muslim societies discriminate against women for religious reasons.

Abla Mehio Sibai explores trends in ageing and older-adult care in Arab societies in the context of significant recent changes in procreation and family formation and composition. Because improvements in life expectancy have preceded the decline in fertility, accelerated ageing of the population in the Arab region over the coming decades is imminent. One important conclusion of her essay is that governments should review their social and health policies and pay greater attention to the growing needs of their ageing populations while capitalizing on existing systems of cultural capital and social resources.

Part 3 of the book presents more detailed analyses of the following countries and regions: Pakistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Gulf States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the Maghreb countries.

Zeba Sathar, in an overview of anticipated population change in Pakistan up until 2030, emphasizes the dramatic population increase expected in the next two decades. Because of its magnitude, she argues, failure to achieve the potential of the demographic dividend would be more than a missed opportunity: a Pakistan that by the end of its demographic transition remains poor and underdeveloped will be drawn into a dangerous trap in which demography again plays a leading role – but one that is negative. It is important to note that this observation applies to many other countries examined in these chapters.

Intriguing insights from the Islamic Republic of Iran are provided by *Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi* and *Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi*, who show that fertility rates fell from around 7.0 births per woman in the early 1980s to replacement levels in 2000 and to below replacement levels by the mid-2000s, one of the fastest fertility decline ever recorded. These fertility changes have resulted in a population with a very young age structure, which, in combination with an expansion in education, has created the so-called 'demographic window' for Iran. This 'golden opportunity', however, although it could potentially result in economic prosperity, could be hindered in the foreseeable future by the current economic and political situation. Most particularly, the dynamics of current population development, especially the further fertility decline projected for Iran, call for the revision of national population policies and plans.

In Turkey, the fertility decline has been underway since about 1960 but has recently increased in speed to bring the fertility rate almost to replacement level. *Banu Ergöçmen* highlights this population evolution from 14 million in 1927 to 74 million in 2011 and describes the remarkable demographic transition being