

TWO QUESTIONS AND A PREDICTION Si Frumkin

This column is about two questions and a prediction. The questions have little in common and the prediction is made with some trepidation and a lot of chutzpah because in just a few weeks – or even sooner – it will be obvious how wrong – or right – I was. What unites these three items is that the answers to all three different problems are based on the same thing: the Youth Bulge theory, by a German professor, Gunnar Heinsohn.

If you have no idea what I am talking about here is a very brief explanation. A few months ago I wrote several columns about the book I translated from German. In it Heinsohn claims that most of the historical armed conflicts, religious violence, conquests and even contemporary terrorism are based on a proportional surplus of young men in a society where they feel unappreciated, unable to achieve and who search for an ideology that permits them to turn to violence to achieve what they consider righteous and just. The “Continent of Losers” part 1 and 2 were followed by “Prophetic Pyramids” with population statistics arranged in pyramids representing the ages of the world’s population, in all countries, for the last 20 years. (If you have missed these columns, they are posted on www.sifrumkin.com.)

Among the conflicts, the Youth Bulge theory explains the Crusades, Spanish and Portuguese conquest of South America, the violent and victorious spread of Islam that began in the 7th century C.E. and much more.

However, I had an unresolved question – my question #1- what is the explanation for the American revolution? The population of the American colonies in the 18th century was primarily British, they were at least as well off as the people in the mother country, and the majority of the mostly illiterate colonist farmers were probably quite unaware of the commercial problems and concerns that motivated the wealthier and more sophisticated merchants of Boston and Philadelphia to demand concessions from the King. Why did thousands of young men go off to fight for esoteric reasons that surely were not of great

importance to them? How many of them were impacted by the tea tax or felt anger over taxation without representation? Surely, not very many.

And then, I came across fascinating documentation about American birthrates. Not just one, but several contemporary articles in England expressed amazement over the unusual increase of births among English women in the colonies. The families that had an average of 2-3 grown sons in Britain grew to families of 8-10 children for reasons that are still not quite clear. The result: a surplus of young men, lack of opportunity for them and an attractive ideology of liberty, freedom, prosperity, equality and even a meager soldier's pay. Result: revolution and the birth of a new nation.

Question #2 is more contemporary: why is it that among the murderous international terrorists there are so few Muslims from Iran and Turkey? There is violence and instigation to violence in both countries but it is largely internal, not exported elsewhere. I asked several terrorism experts and scholars but the responses were nebulous and not very satisfactory. But then, when I looked at the U.S. Census population pyramids I realized that they held the answer: there were no Youth Bulges in Turkey or Iran! In the 1970s, when there was a lengthy war with Iraq and we had the hostage crisis there had been a surplus of young men in Iran, but at present, there is a shortage of young men in the 4-29 range – the largest percentage is in the late 30s and mid-40s category, a group that is not usually eager to go off to fight and die in a foreign land.. The Turkish situation is similar – its Youth Bulge exists among immigrants in Germany and, yes, there is a problem with violence there.

Now the prediction. As I write this, there is a problem with presidential succession in Lebanon; a West-leaning pro-American candidate is competing with a Hezbollah Islamist. Our media suggest that a civil war is imminent but I predict no serious violence except for a few mass demonstrations and some rock throwing. My prediction is based on the demographics – in 1975, during a period of a bloody civil war, there was an enormous surplus of young men in

Lebanon. The 2007 population breakdown shows a percentage of young men that is markedly lower – *there is no Youth Bulge!* Just a few months ago there was another governmental crisis in Beirut – thousands of protesting Hezbollah supporters surrounded the government buildings, blocked traffic, and camped in the streets for weeks. There was screaming, placards, outraged speeches, burning tires but no serious violence. And then, just like that, it was over. At the same time there was bloody violence in a Palestinian refugee camp (Palestinians have the largest Youth Bulge worldwide – the result of U.N. subsidies that encourage large families); it was pacified by the Lebanese army after some serious fighting, but there was no involvement by the Lebanese population.

And so, I predict that there will be no civil war, no violence, and no serious trouble in Lebanon.

So, using the Youth Bulge theory and the demographic data, what countries are a threat to peace? The good news is that North Korea, Iran, China, Russia, the U.S., Venezuela, Israel, Jordan and most of Europe do not have nearly enough youth surplus to be a problem.

The bad news is that the two countries with prominent Youth Bulges are also nuclear powers. I hope that I – and professor Heinsohn – are wrong but I think that the next crisis will come from India and Pakistan.