

# **The Critical Role of Youth in Fueling and Resolving Conflicts in the Middle East**

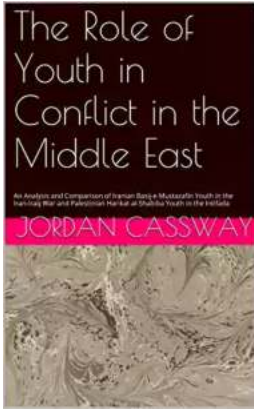
Over the years, the Middle East has been marred by a series of conflicts and tensions, attracting global attention due to its geopolitical significance and rich historical heritage. While various factors contribute to the region's turmoil, one cannot underestimate the pivotal role that youth play in shaping the outcomes of these conflicts. In this article, we will explore the influence of young individuals in both fueling and resolving conflicts in the Middle East.

## **The Youth as Agents of Change**

The Arab Spring, which erupted in late 2010, brought the world's attention to the power of young people in inciting change. As governments repressed their populations, youth-led movements emerged, fueled by frustration and a desire for political, social, and economic reforms. From Tunisia to Egypt, Libya to Syria, young individuals took to the streets, demanding their voices to be heard and seeking a brighter future.

These young activists utilized social media and online platforms to mobilize, organize protests, and share their messages with the world. The digital era played a significant role in amplifying their voices and ensuring the global community stayed informed and engaged. The youth's determination for change, combined with their abilities to utilize technology effectively, made them formidable agents of transformation.

**The Role of Youth in Conflict in the Middle East:  
An Analysis and Comparison of Iranian Basij-e  
Mustazafin Youth in the Iran-Iraq War and**



## Palestinian Harikat al-Shabiba Youth in the Intifada

by Donna M. McAleer (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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### The Role of Youth in Fueling Conflict

While the youth's call for change was driven by noble intentions, some conflicts in the Middle East have been exacerbated by misguided aspirations or extremist ideologies. Certain factions have exploited the vulnerabilities and frustrations of young individuals, manipulating them into becoming involved in violence or extremist movements.

In countries like Iraq and Syria, young people were recruited by extremist organizations, offering them a sense of belonging, purpose, and protection. Poverty, lack of opportunities, political instability, and a sense of alienation have made some youth more susceptible to radicalization, casting them into a cycle of violence that further deepens the conflicts in the region.

Furthermore, the division between generations within societies affected by conflicts has played a role in escalating tension. Differences in ideologies, religious beliefs, and aspirations have strained relationships and fueled

sectarianism, hampering reconciliation efforts and perpetuating the cycle of violence.

## **The Youth as Catalysts for Peace**

However, not all youth contribute to conflict; many are actively engaged in promoting peace and seeking solutions to the region's challenges. Recognizing the potential of young people as catalysts for change, several initiatives and organizations have emerged, providing platforms for youth empowerment, dialogue, and reconciliation.

The United Nations Development Programme's Youth Leadership Programme in Yemen is one such initiative. It engages young Yemenis in conflict-affected areas, equipping them with leadership skills, promoting social cohesion, and fostering an environment of tolerance and coexistence. These efforts aim to break the cycle of violence by empowering youth to become agents of peace and ambassadors of change.

## **The Role of Education in Conflict Resolution**

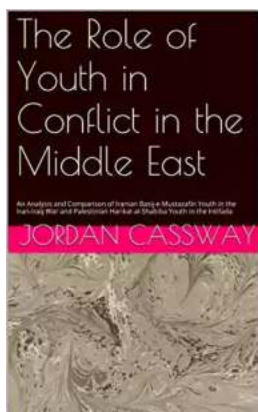
Education plays a vital role in transforming young minds and molding them into responsible global citizens. By implementing inclusive and quality education programs, societies can provide young individuals with the necessary tools to comprehend complex issues, resolve conflicts, and engage in constructive dialogue.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) targets education as a key factor in the prevention of violent extremism. Through innovative teaching methods and inclusive curriculum, young people can develop critical thinking skills, embrace diversity, and reject extremist ideologies.

Education becomes a powerful tool to break the cycle of violence and promote lasting peace.

, the role of youth in conflict in the Middle East cannot be ignored. Their influence as agents of change is demonstrated by their ability to mobilize and demand reforms, as seen during the Arab Spring. However, the vulnerability of young individuals to radicalization and the ensuing involvement in conflicts highlights the need for inclusive education and proactive efforts to engage them in peace-building initiatives.

By recognizing the potential and resilience of young people, societies can leverage their enthusiasm, innovation, and energy to shape a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East. The collective efforts of governments, international organizations, and civil society are crucial in providing young individuals with the necessary resources, opportunities, and platforms to resolve conflicts and create a brighter future for the region.



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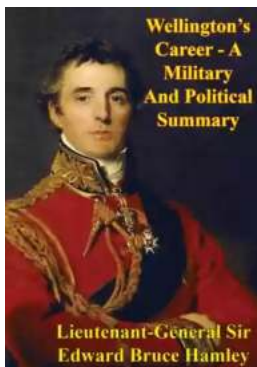
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In the following pages, the role of youth in conflict in the Middle East will be analyzed and compared using two case studies: the Iranian Basij-e Mustazafin (Basij hereafter) youth in the Iran-Iraq War and Palestinian Harakat al-Shabiba (Shabab hereafter) youth in the Intifada. This study will show that although there were serious differences why the two groups participated in their respective conflicts, one through the Islamically colored act of defense, and one through a national liberation movement, the basic reasons for the youth to commit themselves are comparable.



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