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The Age-Structural Maturity Thesis

The Impact of the Youth Bulge on the Advent and Stability of Liberal Democracy

Richard P. Cincotta and John Doces

THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL recently speculated that the "easy transitions" from authoritarianism to liberal democracy may have run their course. They warned of a growing tendency for countries to stall along the path toward liberal democracy, to backslide after democratic reforms, or to settle into a regime that guaranteed periodic elections but granted few of the civil liberties and political rights defining liberal democracy (NIC 2006).

The report mirrors a darkening outlook that has been building among analysts for more than a decade (see Carothers 2002; Diamond 1996). This pessimism has spread to diplomats and foreign affairs policymakers, many of whom now conclude that the global trend of political liberalization that began in 1974—what Samuel Huntington (1991) dubbed the "third wave of

