Religion, Demography and Conflicts in Muslim Countries

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Abstract

This paper, based on a forthcoming book, presents the universal trend of demographic transition in the fifty Muslim countries and highlights the exceptions to this universal rule due to conflicts, family structures and varying degrees of globalization. There is a universal story of accession to modernity whose trigger is the eradication of illiteracy. Hence, today, varying levels of literacy explain why some Muslim countries are still lagging in demographic transition. But there are also failed or stalling transitions, superficially attributed to Islam, whereas the real reasons might be elsewhere. 1) Political: Deliberate forms of resistance to demographic transition do exist in some Muslim countries, but has nothing to do with religion; they are political with a religious dress. 2) Anthropological: Demographic differences might derive from family systems: the central Arab, Iranian, Indian systems are patrilineal, which give advantage to boys. 3) Openness/ Globalization: Differences in pace of fertility transitions might be due to the contrasting effects of globalization ,of the opening to the outside world. Also international migration, depending on the country of destination, facilitates a more or less rapid demographic modernity. Hence, the large differences between Maghreb and the Near East.

1. INTRODUCTION: A UNIVERSAL TREND OR AN ISLAMIC EXCEPTION

This paper, based on a forthcoming book[1], presents the universal trend of demographic transition -mainly fertility- in the fifty or so Muslim countries. This revolution is still a non-recognized achievement, in spite of all the indicators showing the contrary, namely the population estimates and projections of the United Nations or of the US Census Bureau. Hence the pessimistic analyses of the Arab and Muslim world, now a little bit revised in view of the political upheavals of 2010-1011. Since the Huntington's "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996) it became a common place to think of Muslims as a different specie, namely in their demographic behavior (Caldwell, 2009, Naumann, 2008), Lewis, 1990).

Consideration of social, historical and demographic indicators points rather to the idea of a meeting or a "convergence of civilizations" (Courbage and Todd, 2011). The Muslim world has definitely embarked on the demographic, cultural, and mental revolutions that enabled the development of the regions now the most advanced. We, demographers have seen fertility in the Muslim world collapse over the last thirty years. From more than 7 children per woman in 1975 (Weeks, 1988), the average fell to 3.1 in 2011 (considering the normal decrease between the figures for 2005 in table 1 and those in 2011). With the exception of Muslim countries in Sub Saharan Africa (TFR =5.1) the rest of the Muslim countries are now much below the 3 children per women threshold: 2.72. Rates in various Muslim countries now run from 7.2 children in Niger to 1.2 in Bosnia. The fertility rates in Iran and Tunisia, in Lebanon and in former communist countries are now about the same or even lower than in France (2.02) (Table 1).

[1] Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd, *A Convergence of Civilisations-The Transformation of Muslim Societies Around the World*, Columbia University Press, 2011 (forthcoming).

Such a reversal has deep cultural and social roots. This disruption permeates relations to authority, family structures, ideology, political system, and so on. Fertility control is both a symptom and a cause of a major cultural transformation.

The explanatory variable on fertility decline clearly identified by historians, demographers (Courbage, 2002) and many scholars is the literacy level, of women especially (Obermeyer-Makhlouf, 1992). As table 1 and graph 1 show when literacy level for youngsters is high, fertility is low. The best situations are to be found in ex-communist countries where literacy rates are close to 100% for both sexes and TFR close to replacement level. The worst in sub-Saharan Muslim countries (Oladosu, 2001) where a TFR exceeding 5 children per woman is in line with low literacy rate at 15-24 years of 73% for boys and 56% for girls.

After decades of culturalist assumptions on Islam and the Arabs, and their inability to adjust to modernity, the big question is how come does religion, so present in the media, was'nt able to impede those changes? Religion is considered as a crucial determinant of high fertility, with Catholicism, Islam and Judaism at the top, Protestantism and Buddhism at the bottom. Yet no religion was in a position to block the demographic transition, Islam no more than Christianity or Judaism. Not a single country, foremost among them the Islamic Republic of Iran could escape this universal trend.

Demographic transition in the past has shown that religious crises might usually precede fertility decline. Hence, it is suggested here that Muslim world does not escape to this rule: fertility decline and generalization of contraception being clear symptoms of the secularization of the societies and individuals. The "disenchantment of the world" according to Max Weber does not single out anymore the Muslim world.

Inside Islam, there are religious particularities, namely that between Shiism (as well as other denominations such as Alawites, Druzes, Zaidis, Ismailis…) and the Sunni tradition.

These divisions will be brought into attention in the cases of Lebanon, Syria, etc. Neither Sunnis or Shiites are the Muslim Khareji (Ibadites) of Oman and the Maghreb.

2. DEMOGRAPHY AS A MEASURE OF MODERNITY – THE GENERAL PATTERN

Hence, demographic analysis helps dismantling myths and stereotypes, very frequent on the Arab and Muslim world (Sirk, 1966). They enable an analysis of the concrete Muslim populations and not the imagined one: based upon quantitative indicators such as fertility, marriage, divorce, cohabitation, infant and child mortality, life expectancy, literacy, consanguineous marriages, patrilinearity... Demographic variables are not mere technical indicators useful to gauge the state of a country, but powerful indicators of mentalities, going deep in the order of intimacy: unions between men and women, sexuality, reproduction, death. Demography is a psycho-analysis, a Rorschach test of societies.

Considering our preferred indicator, the Total Fertility Rate, it varies worldwide from over 7 children per woman for the most fertile populations to a bit over 1 child for the less fertile. This is exactly the same for the 50 Moslem countries. Hence these very simple data help to refute Huntingtonian demographic paradigm based on religious or culturalist arguments. Muslim countries come all across the spectrum. TFR goes from 7.2 in sub-Saharan Africa (Niger) to less than replacement level in Iran (1.8), Tunisia (2.0), Lebanon (1.6, whose population is 60% Muslims) and in five former communist countries (2.0). Bosnian Muslims with a TFR of 1.1, are the most “advanced” in terms of fertility transition, more advanced than their neighbours (and rivals) Serbs and Croats. Such Western countries as France and the USA, are so to speak, left behind several Muslim countries. Far from being a trivial phenomenon, this is most meaningful, proving that on demographic criteria (which go much beyond pure demography), the "Muslim world" has no existence. Its “population

explosion" is a myth, just helpful to feed the fantasies of advocates of the "clash of civilizations".

True, Demographic transition began late for Muslim populations as compared to Europeans. But the same causes have contributed to the same outcome: the rise of literacy, first among young men, then with two to three decades delay among young women. Literacy however does not tell the whole story. Secularism was also a prerequisite: reproduction, no more considered as supernatural - God's will - but an attribute of man's free decision. Fertility limitation has to be within the "calculus of conscious choice" according to Ansley Coale. When entire segments of the population decided to control fertility, this equated to a change in perception of present world, which is no more the outcome of "divine intervention". The disenchantment of the world- first European - is what the whole humanity is living today, the Muslim world being no exception, with a meaningful difference. Demographic transition spread over two centuries in Europe. It is speedier in the Muslim countries (three decades in the Arab Maghreb for the passage from 7.5 to 2 children).

3. EXCEPTIONS TO THE UNIVERSAL RULE OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION?

3.1. POLITICAL ISSUES, MAJORITIES/MINORITES

Definitely there is a universal story of accession to modernity triggered by rise of education. Indeed, diverging levels of education explain why some Muslim countries are still lagging behind in demographic transition, while others are as advanced as developed countries. But, there were several exceptions to the universal law of the demographic transition which were found in Europe: Kosovo, Bosnia, Bulgaria… (Courbage, 1992) in Asia: Turkey, China (Ouigurs, Huis…) India and Malaysia, and in Muslim parts of sub-

Saharan Africa. In view of their importance to the world geopolitics we stress on the Arab Near East. Chart 2 gives a graphic illustration of the "war of cradles" in the Near East.

These failed or stalling transitions, might superficially be attributed to Islam whereas the profound reasons lie elsewhere. Hence, deliberate form of resistance to demographic transition in Muslim countries does exist, but has nothing to do with the religion as such. Its essence is political under a religious dress.

3.1.1. The Palestinians: Religion, conflict or battle of cradles?

Palestinian populations are deeply involved into Israeli politics (Leuprecht, 2010, Courbage, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2005, Fargues 2000, Zimmerman et al., 2006), the "embededdness" of the Palestinian and Jewish demographics (Goldsheider, 1991). This holds true for Palestinians, citizens of Israel, or those occupied in the West Bank or Gaza under Israeli direct or indirect control. Demography cannot be dissociated from the demo-political project of a sustained growth of the Jewish population (Anson, 1996, Portugese, 1998; Courbage, 1999). The relative weight of the Jewish and Palestinian populations will determine the nature of the State, a Jewish State with a definite Jewish majority, a Jewish State with a Palestinian majority or a multinational one.

Confronting an expansionist Israeli demography, the Palestinians seemed protected by their lagging demographic transition. Fertility placed them at record levels, atypical for a highly educated population, perhaps the most educated together with the Lebanese. In the occupied territories and for the Palestinians in Israel, the conflict-context not only blocked the demographic transition, but contributed to increased fertility, especially among the most educated women (Khawaja, 2000, 2006). Although already high in 1985, at 6.4 children per woman despite universal education and urbanization, the Palestinian TFR found means to

increase after the 1st Intifada (1987-1993). It exceeded 7 children in 1988 and culminated at 7.57 in 1990 with a peak of 8.76 in Gaza. Women had become the guardians of the national borders with the duty of producing the children the Nation called for (Kanaaneh, 2002). For Yasser Arafat their womb was a biological weapon. He exhorted Palestinians to have 12 children, 2 for themselves and 10 for the national Cause. Palestinian fertility resisted the paradigm of the demographic transition namely women's education and declining fertility. Even after having gone to university, Palestinian women continued to have many children, perhaps not the 12 that Arafat called for, but still a lot.

The withdrawal of the Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005 (Courbage, 2005) left in dispute the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with a population of 2 million Palestinians and a half-million Israeli settlers, a territory where the demographic confrontation is the essential question. But recent developments had unexpected result. The 2nd Intifada did not fuel fertility increases like the 1st, but signalled a fall. From 6 children up to 2000, it fell to 3.4 in 2002 (Courbage, 2005). The movement that started with the uprising has continued.

It is difficult to imagine the demographic transition taking place in such pronatalistic conditions, where religious and political opinion leaders presented procreation as a rampart against Jewish immigration and threatened population transfer. Beginning in 2000, those slogans had lost their effectiveness. The economic reasons for this are obvious a "poverty-led transition": the blockade in the Palestinian territories has accelerated the decline in living standards. But this decline goes back to 2000, before the deterioration of economic conditions. Other causes were decisive. Despite the overwhelming presence of the community and family, individuals started developing for themselves. This fertility decline reveals a divergence between individual and social goals. To a large extent Palestinian couples started to chose to have small families, for the future of their children and less for the national cause.

Yet in Palestine this development carries a political risk in its wake, because unlike the Palestinians, and contrary to received ideas, the Israelis occupying the West Bank and East Jerusalem have a clear –although not so much advertised- advantage of a superior demographic dynamic. Their fertility has constantly increased, in 2009 it reached 5.16 children per woman hence at least 50% more than the West Bankers (3.1 according to US Census Bureau, 2011 latest estimates). Another cause of concern, with a particular emotional charge, is Jerusalem, the fortieth anniversary of whose "reunification" was loudly celebrated, while at the same time it was feared that it would be captured by the Palestinians of Hamas, not in combat but because of supposed explosive demography. It is true that, more than in the rest of the West Bank, resistance to the occupation of Jerusalem in the wake of the 1967 war had stimulated a higher than expected fertility. But now, the fertility of the quarter of million Palestinians in Jerusalem is below that of the Jews: 3.87 compared to 4.16 (and over 5.2 for the Jews in East- Jerusalem).

Today in the historical Palestine -or in greater Israel-, the obvious and irresistible trend is for the increase of Jewish fertility, which will exceed in 2011, the symbolic threshold of 3 children per woman (2.96 in 2010, increasing by 2% annually). The extremely high fertility of the ultra-orthodox and religious/nationalists Israeli Jews (TFR= 6.5-7.0) whose share in the population is ever-increasing fuels national level. Contrariwise, Palestinian fertility is falling down at -3%, namely for the Palestinians in the Galilee and the Neguev, but also in the West Bank and East-Jerusalem, as well as in the Gaza strip (Courbage, 2011). The least of the paradoxes is that Palestinian fertility is going Western whereas Jewish fertility is becoming more and more "Arab". From a theoretical point of view, these inversions of fertility trends for Jews and for Palestinians question the relevance of the analysis of demographics of conflicting groups, whereby the minority –be it demographic or political, such as the Palestinians- try to use high fertility for ever as a political weapon. (Chart 3).

3.1.2 Lebanon: far from the demographic civil war

Lebanon is multidenominational: four varieties of Islam, a dozen of Christian rites and the remnants of a Jewish community. Christians were the largest group until the 1950s, but the country has since become in majority Muslim (Courbage and Fargues, 1997). Differentials in fertility and emigration reduced the share of the Maronites (Eastern-rite Catholics), who were the largest group when Greater Lebanon was created at the fall of the Ottoman Empire, from 32.7 percent in 1922 to 19.9 percent in 2005. They ceded weight to the Shiites, the proportion of whom grew during the same period from 17.2 to 32 percent. The demographic metamorphosis inevitably affected the political balance. Lebanon is accustomed to demographic adjustments, peaceful or violent. Rule over Mount Lebanon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which the Ottoman sultan had placed under the authority of a Druze emir, gradually passed into the hands of the Maronites, who were then demographically more dynamic than the Druze, numerically stagnant (Courbage, 2009).

The rise in numbers of Shiites, the next stage in the evolution of the balance of denominational forces in Lebanon, may seem to be an irony of history. If they have grown so much in numbers in two centuries, this is because of a very high fertility rate. Until the 1975-1990 so-called “civil war”, Shiite women gave birth on average to 8.5 children throughout their reproductive life. This was a record for the region, though perhaps challenged by Israeli ultra-orthodox women. In terms of demographic transition, the delay of Shiites compared to Sunnis (6.9 children), Druze (5.3), and Christians (5.1) was obvious. This excess fertility has no religious meaning, because Shiites were the poorest of the poor and the least educated in Lebanon. But since the first civil war (1958) they benefited from educational progress under the more progressive President Chéhab (1958-1964) and entered later on into demographic transition.

Their fertility began to decline by 1975 war which makes it possible to glimpse a

Lebanon in which communal tensions will be later on pacified. However, the "civil" war occurred at this decisive moment in the country's demographic transition, when it was destabilized by changes in the relative sizes of communities and when Muslim groups were caught up in a cultural and demographic transformation of great magnitude. Schooling, urbanization, openness to the media, and the globalization of ways of thinking were no longer the preserve of Christians alone, and this modernization affected reproductive behaviour. The speed of the transition in fertility between 1971 and 2005 was greater among the Shiites (3.2 percent annual decline) than for all other groups (2.3 percent for Maronites and other Christians, 3 percent for Sunnis). This war of 1975 –1990 brought about indiscriminate pauperization among all denominations, which accelerated the adoption of small families.

The convergence was obvious, and at the end of the war, communities seemed to be closer demographically, and perhaps later would be politically. In 2005, the fertility for Shiites had fallen to 2.2 children, compared to 1.7 for the Maronites. It is not certain that these family choices delighted the political leaders (Hezbollah and Amal at one end or the Lebanese Forces at the other), who no doubt would have preferred an increase in their electoral or militia base thanks to a kind of Shiite or Maronite demographic war of cradles. But political parties and militia machine guns cannot force people to have more children than they want to. In most socio-demographic respects communities are not very different from one another. Lebanese households are nuclear everywhere, in Shiite as well as Christian regions. Women are heads of household as often in Shiite southern Lebanon as in largely Christian Mount Lebanon. Matrilocalism is even more widespread in Shiite southern Lebanon than more Christian Mount Lebanon or majority Sunni north Lebanon. Throughout the country, marriage is celebrated much later than in other Arab countries, and the age gap between spouses is smaller. In this respect as well, Shiite areas manifest a strong inclination for modernity. But fertility remains the indicator that best encapsulates family and mental

developments. According to this variable, Lebanon, through all its communities, seems fully modernized.

These demographic convergences contradict a political situation that suggests that conflicts between communities could resume (written in February 2011). But they are perhaps a harbinger of political and ideological convergences to come. If Shiites join other Lebanese in their demographic behaviour, this is because, more than is commonly believed, they share the same values. In any event, they are closer to Lebanese Christians, Sunnis, and Druze than to the Syrians and Israeli Jews who continue to have more than 3 children. The demographic present of Lebanon may predict a form of democracy that is communitarian but peaceable.

3.1.3 Syria: a Nation-State?

Fertility in Syria, which remained at record levels until mid-1980s, began to decline very late in 1986 although it is one of the most advanced Arab states in educational terms: the literacy threshold of 50 percent for young men was reached in 1946 and for women in 1971. Fertility first sharply declined from 7.8 children from 1960 to 1982 then reached 4.25 by 1990. Thereafter, the rate of decline slowed almost to a halt in the 1990s (3.50 in 2005). These developments took place within the framework of an unusually unchanging discourse about population. Syria has declared itself to be in favour of high fertility, in contrast to almost all the countries of the South. Unlike the Egyptian, Tunisian, Jordanian, and even Yemeni regimes, it has never encouraged a lowering of fertility. The “Chinese model” fascinated the government because of its combination of political authoritarianism with economic liberalism. But the birth control encouraged by the Beijing leadership left the leaders in Damascus cold. In official statements as in the conversations of ordinary citizens, the demographic question holds a strong emotional charge (Courbage, 2007).

This pronatalistic credo is a product of the country's complicated history; to understand it we have to go back not just to the Arab-Israeli wars but to the immediate aftermath of World War I. Imagined Syrian territory was much more extensive than Syria's real territory. The *Bilad el-Sham* (Greater Syria), made up of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and the Sandjak of Alexandretta, was dismembered. Pronatalistic stances were a response to a syndrome of geographical and historical shrinkage. The Arab-Israeli wars accentuated this impulse: Numbers were promoted to the status of a strategic element in a conflict that was expected to go on for a very long time. Nationalism and demography often go hand in hand. The state did not have to intervene to guarantee a high fertility. Syrians have unanimously preferred a large family, the ideal was 6.1 children in the 1960s and is still high: 4.6 children today. Syria is one of the few countries where the ideal number of children is higher than their real number. Yet at first there was a sharp decline in fertility, even though the regime officially maintained its pronatalistic posture.

Oddly enough, the regions where the demographic revolution went the furthest, reaching fertility rates between fewer than 2 and 2.5 children are most supportive of the regime. One of the political particularities of Syria is that its presently authoritarian regime relies fundamentally on religious minorities, chiefly on the Alawites (11 percent of the population), connected to the Shiite branch of Islam, who are dominant in the coastal and mountain provinces of Lattakia and Tartus. Fertility in the Alawite region was at 2.10 children per women in 2004, the Jebel Druze at 1.80, the Golan at 2.66, and Damascus at 2.45. The Christians (5 percent of the population) scattered throughout the country were at 2 children or less. These regions and minority communities might seem threatened by the "explosive" demography of the majority, which were two or three times higher. But the government knows it is futile to fight the battle of numbers for its Alawite community and for the communities loyal to the regime. The majority group of Sunni Arabs (72 percent of the

population) is undoubtedly a numerical giant. But it is also an artificial category, an aggregation that suits statisticians, although it has no real sociological substance. The opposition between the Sunnis of Damascus and the Sunnis of Aleppo is a part of national folklore and an element in the popular consciousness. Pragmatically, the current regime has adopted a laissez-faire position and tried neither to change community and regional demographic imbalances nor to encourage a specific program for birth control in Sunni regions. It would have been inept to proclaim such a policy and shock religious sensibilities. Why provide an easy argument for opponents like the Muslim Brotherhood who would have been able to claim that the Alawite leaders, heretics if not ungodly, were trying to undermine Islam and weaken Syria?

What is the explanation for the regional diversity of Syria's demography? The religious variable could be relevant, because it provides an explanation for different levels of fertility among Sunnis, Alawites, Druzes and Christians. But pursuing the analysis of social and mental structures, there is an explanation to the completed demographic transition in Alawite and Druze areas, or for the stalled transition in Sunni regions. The coastal and mountain periphery of Syria is characterized by substantial remnants of matrilocalism, a higher status for women, and greater tolerance for daughters inheriting, a trait associated with the Shiite religious tradition. The interior of Syria, particularly those provinces characterized by very high levels of fertility, are patrilineal to a degree that in global terms can be considered the maximum: Patrilocalism in rural areas is above 99 percent. A direct relationship, however, can be established between absolute patrilinealism and the temporary stalling of demographic change at a level higher than 3 children per woman. It is easy to understand why Alawite areas, less obsessed by patrilinealism, are not blocked above 3 children per woman (Chart 4).

3.2. FAMILY SYSTEMS: COULD THEY BE NEUTRALIZED BY POLITICS?

Hence the Syrian case has shown the difficulties of analyzing intriguing fertility trends on political ground only. To add to the complexity of the relationship between politics and demographics, one has to recognize such unexplainable fertility differences in the Muslim world, unexplainable by "classical" factors: level of education, urbanization, standard of living… As in Syria, they might derive from anthropological factors namely family systems (Todd, 1985). Family systems might be as old as humanity or at least very ancient. In Islam most of them existed before its spread and survived to it. The central Arab, but also Iranian and Indian systems are patrilineal, give antecedence to boys over girls and patrilocal: young couples live together with or near relatives of the husband. They are also traditionally endogamous, preferring marriage with the first cousin or at least relatives to marriage outside the enlarged family.

Patrilineality, was identified in Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium BC, thus much before the region was islamized. Geography is important: Patrilinearity decreases while moving away from the original Arabic kernel, Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent, which was arabized before being islamized (there were Christian Arab tribes, which moved from Arabia and settled everywhere as far as Aleppo region in Syria). Some traces of matrilocality still exist in North Africa, Iran, Turkey, and as we have seen previously in coastal provinces in Syria. North Africa for instance has notable exceptions, such as the Sahraouis in Morocco whose matrilocality rate reached 21-38% in1982.

When patrilinearity and patrilocality are so absolutely dominant, they definitely impact impact on fertility. Few couples are willing to forsake childbearing until they get, at least one boy. A very simple model shows that when the TFR was 7-8 children, which was the case of the Arab and Muslim world until de seventies, odds for parents to remain sonless were negligible: 1%. At the opposite with TFR of 2, it is close to 25%. (Chart 4). If fertility has

dropped to something like 2 children in the Maghreb countries, this means that a large percentage of one-quarter of North Africans are now ready to accept their offspring limited to daughters Contrariwise, the absolute patrilinearity in Syria, Egypt and Jordan; might contribute to explain why fertility is stalling and still above 3 children per woman.

Moving from the Arab world to the Far East, there is the extraordinary case of Indonesia (Courbage, 1997, Courbage, 2002) -the largest Muslim country with 250 millions-, where matrilinearity, an inheritance of times ahead of Islam goes hand in hand with high female status and very frequent transmission through girls. In Indonesia but also in Malaysia, matrilocality is the norm for 2/3 couples (and peaks at 77- 91% in Aceh and for the Menangkabaus). Men and women inherit equally. Sometimes, in complete contradiction with the rules of Koran, men are disinherited and the eldest daughter collects bulk of the inheritance. In Indonesia therefore, there are no anthropological limits to fertility reduction. Interestingly also in Indonesia, Muslims have lower fertility than Christians; and the country has a lower fertility than the neighbouring Philippines, whose population is mostly Christian.

But why Malaysia, which benefits from the same family system as Indonesia has not undergone through the same paths of fertility transition? Beside the fact, that it has better socioeconomic indicators in terms of infant mortality, urbanization, standard of living and same levels of literacy rates? In the case of Malaysia, politics recovers its foremost importance. Malaysia is an ethnically divided society, which is less the case of Indonesia. The Malay Muslims excess fertility is explained by a sort of "war of numbers," the competition with the Chinese and Indians. In Malaysia, nationalism and fertility interact in Islamic costume (Jones, 2005, Morgan, 2002). In the middle of the nineteenth century, the population was made up of a half million Malays (95 percent) and a handful of Chinese and Indians (5 percent). The low population density and the economic boom created by rubber and tin produced toward the end of the century a veritable gold rush. The British, who controlled

Malaysia, encouraged the movement as sensible colonizers (divide and conquer) and as competent capitalists (pressure on wages).

In 1914, the Malays had become a fragile majority of only 57 percent of the population, compared to 29 percent Chinese and 10 percent Indian. The relative decline continued thereafter. By independence in 1957, they had lost the absolute majority, and Malays were now 49.8 percent of the population. To reverse the tendency, the new regime began by forging a nationalist ideology with an ethnic basis. The NEP (New Economic Policy), a variety of positive discrimination, came next. It favoured Malays, who were less represented in both the public and private sectors, through employment quotas. A "national" preference in favour of Malay companies was instituted for government contracts. Incredibly, 96% of scholarships were reserved for Malay students. Malay became the exclusive language of instruction.

Demography was not long in following this set of political, economic, and cultural reforms. Malay Islam, traditionally mild and syncretistic, as in Indonesia, was radicalized, transformed into a spearhead for a xenophobic nationalism. Malaysia is one of the most successful examples of the political exploitation of Islam; Malay identity has become consubstantial with Muslim religion, the word Malay a synonym of Muslim. Islam has become a state religion, and conversion and apostasy are prohibited. Only the tribunals that apply shari'a have jurisdiction over personal status: marriage, divorce, polygamy, inheritance. For Malaysians, Islamic supremacy to assert itself, it needed a solid demographic foundation: more Malaysians, fewer Chinese and Indians.

With respect to religious demography, Malaysia's policy was an unqualified success. Chinese and Indians of Malaysian nationality emigrated en masse, whereas the Malay population was increased by the immigration of ethnic cousins who came legally or not from Indonesia. But fertility played an even more important role. During the preceding century, the

Chinese and Indians had more children than the Malays. Fertility then declined, but more quickly for the Chinese and Indians. At the time of the ethnic riots of 1969, the gaps were still small: 5.1 children among Malays, 4.8 among Indians, and 4.6 among Chinese. Following the NEP and the new ideology, the Malay fertility stopped declining. Between 1970 and 1986, the modest movement from 5.1 to 4.8 children, was akin to stability, at a time when the Chinese fertility was declining by half and that of the Indians by a third. Yet another illustration of the war of numbers, in a rather peaceable version compared to Palestine, Kosovo (or Christian Ireland). The megalomaniacal national goal of "70 million Malays in 2100," twice the number that could be reached, had a partial effect. A fifth of Malays started having more than their desired number of children. But the high fertility of Muslim Malays was also the result of their own aspirations. It was not imposed from above. A survey has shown that at equal educational and economic levels they have more children than the Chinese and Indians (+0.4), and twice as many of them want to have more children. 55% of Malays do not use contraception, compared to 21% of Chinese and Indians. The high fertility of Malays is therefore not an effect of underdevelopment. After four decades of positive discrimination, economic inequalities have become less marked or have even been reversed.

A comparative examination of Indonesian and Malaysian data does not validate the hypothesis of an Islam that plays a particularly active role in the demographic sphere. Questions of identity and confrontations between national, regional, and ethnic/religious groups are, on the other hand, an obvious factor maintaining fertility at a level higher than the replacement threshold.

3.3. OPENESS AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Differences in pace of fertility transitions might be due to the contrasting effects of globalization or the opening to the outside world. Also international migration, depending on

the country of destination, facilitates a more or less rapid demographic modernity. Hence the large differences between the Arab countries of the Maghreb and those of the Near East. History, geography, languages in use, especially destination of migrants: Europe in the first case, Arabian Peninsula in the second, plays a significant role.

The most recent fertility rate in Tunisia (2.02) is identical to that of France (2.01). Fertility in Morocco has continued to decline and will be as low as that of Tunisia in less than five years. Algeria, where developments are never simple, saw its fertility decline to 2.38 in 2000, and then it moved up again in 2005. The 10 percent increase is thought to be due to an improvement in security and economic conditions and perhaps to a slight return of the effect of oil income. In Libya, where the sense of identity is complex -Arab, Oriental, Maghrebi, African?-the TFR suggests movement away from the Machrek and confluence with the Maghreb. Mauritania, on the other hand, is linked more with sub-Saharan Africa than with North Africa.

The gap between the Maghreb and the Machrek has increased. Population origins, geography, and colonial and postcolonial history shaped the Maghreb in a specific way that is reflected in its demography. Maghreb family patterns were influenced by a long period of interdependence: 130 years of life in common between France and Algeria, 75 years in the case of Tunisia, and 44 years for Morocco. To these periods has to be added the half century of interaction since the countries gained independence between 1962 and 1965. Despite indicators of social and cultural development that are often less advanced than those in the Machrek, fertility is lower in the Maghreb and the gap is increasing.

Maghreb identity unquestionably reflects a stronger Western imprint. Media and educational systems, despite their Arabization, have retained a privileged position for European languages, especially French. Textbooks in foreign languages can instill a different way of thinking, even if their substance is identical to that of Arab-language texts. But this

factor is very partial. Elsewhere in Africa, elevated levels of French-language schooling have not brought about massive declines in fertility, indicating that teaching in a foreign language is not the only factor involved.

The Maghreb diaspora in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany has become the major direct agent for European cultural influence in the Maghreb. Émigrés contributed to the acceleration of the demographic transition in their countries of origin. In the 1960s, migrants continued to follow the natalist family model. A generation later, values are no longer the same, and emigrants bring home the ideal of the nuclear family. The small distances and the lowering of travel and communications costs have stimulated exchanges. Ironically, at the very time when people are worrying about the penetration into Europe of an irreducible Islam, incompatible with cultures of Christian origin, the real cultural shock was the one experienced by the Maghreb, whose culture was transformed by migration to Europe. In the case of Algeria, where modernization of ways of thinking led to a deadly Islamist crisis, the historical acceleration produced by the interaction with France came at a high price.

Emigration seems therefore to be a capital element in understanding the movement of fertility indicators, which do not depend entirely on endogenous educational and economic factors. The destination point for emigrants is not anodyne. A consideration of Egypt, another major source of emigration, shows that although mass emigration always has an effect, it does not always lead to modernization of thought patterns and the acceleration of the demographic transition. Émigrés from Egypt went almost exclusively to the Arabian Peninsula. They brought back *wahhabized* minds. Between 1975 and 1985, Saudi Arabia and the other oil-producing countries contributed to the revival of traditionalism in Egyptian society. In a country that should have been a driving force behind demographic change, since Nasser times -who succeded together with Bourguiba in Tunisia to curb fertility rates- emigration to the Gulf enabled the preference for large families to survive. Remittance payments are a practice

shared by the Maghreb and Egypt, but their cultural and demographic effects were not identical but contrasting. For the Maghreb, contact established by emigrants with the external world led to acceleration; for Egypt, it led to slowing down.

4. DISCUSSION

In this paper we have used demographic indicators to explain the modernization of the Muslim world. The approach of social reality is complex and has multiple levels of explanation. But demographic indicators are able to encapsulate an infinite number of individual and collective behaviours and are more objective than other indicators.

The present revolutions in 2011, whether successful (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, etc) or ongoing show that the Muslim countries are not cases apart, detached from world history. Indeed, one can observe the same sequences than those which were at hand in Europe since XVIIth century England: education-secularization-contraception- revolution.

- Fertility transition which had momentarily spared such conflict-ridden countries (Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Kosovo, Malaysia…) or population groups inside those countries cannot be stopped for ever. Thus fertility rates in the Muslim world will ultimately converge, also encompassing Muslim countries of sub Saharan Africa. Hence, there is nothing such as "Islamic demography", contrary to the claims of culturalist demographers. The range of indices of fertility rates from about 8 children to 1. The universality of demographic transition and fertility decreases, invalidates idea of an unbridgeable gap between the West and Islam, of intangible religious roots of demographic behaviour and of radically opposed mentalities. On sensitive issues, the world is more in a logic of convergence than conflict.
- Unavoidably, transitions produce crisis, triggered by rise of male then female literacy, contraception, change of gender relations and generational conflicts. But it is not absurd to dream that the demographic transition will ultimately lead to a democratic transition in both the Arab and Muslim worlds.

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- **Table 1: Demographic and socioeconomic indicators of Muslim countries**

	Pop 2010	% Muslims	TFR Peak	Year	TFR 2005	IMR (per 1000)	Literacy rate 15-24 years Males	Literacy Rate 15-24 years Females	% urban	GNP p. capita (USD)
ARAB COUNTRIES	**359310**	**93**	**7,51**		**3,58**	**37**	**87**	**77**	**56**	**6957**
Morocco	32911	99	7,40	1972	2,43	31	81	61	57	4330
Algeria	35423	99	8,36	1962	2,57	31	94	86	67	7940
Tunisia	10374	98	7,25	1962	2,02	20	96	92	67	7070
Libya	6546	97	7,62	1982	2,85	18	98	97	78	15630
Mauritania	3366	100	6,79	1987	5,20	73	68	56	41	2150
Egypt	84474	94	7,07	1962	3,36	35	90	79	43	5460
Soudan	43192	70	6,67	1972	4,20	69	85	71	45	1930
Iraq	31467	97	7,30	1957	3,50	33	89	81	66	2300
Syria	22505	94	7,80	1982	3,50	16	94	90	55	4350
Jordan	6472	96	8,00	1967	3,55	19	99	99	79	5530
Lebanon	3762	60	5,74	1948	1,69	15	99	99	87	10880
Palestine	4409	96	8,00	1962	3,70	16	99	99	72	1100
Saudi Arabia	26246	100	8,45	1976	3,61	18	96	96	82	22950
Yemen	24256	100	8,70	1982	6,20	55	59	44	32	2210
UAE*	4707	100	7,50	1982	3,69	10	93	93	78	24090
Kuweit*	3051	100	7,50	1962	4,14	9	100	100	98	52610
Oman*	2905	100	8,70	1986	3,56	12	98	97	72	20650
Qatar*	1508	100	7,75	1972	4,44	8	95	98	96	52000
Bahrein*	807	100	6,21	1972	3,10	9	97	97	89	21290
Somalia	9359	100	7,25	1962	6,23	110	45	34	37	900
Comores	691	98	7,05	1982	5,09	48	91	80	28	1170
Djibouti	879	94	7,80	1962	4,20	85	79	55	88	2330
NON-ARAB M E	**529078**	**93**	**6,85**		**3,53**	**53**	**84**	**73**	**43**	**4948**
Turkey	75705	99	6,90	1953	2,35	28	98	93	70	13770
Iran	75078	98	7,00	1963	2,00	31	99	97	70	10840
Afghanistan	29117	99	8,00	1998	6,80	157	51	18	25	900
Pakistan	184753	97	6,60	1983	4,60	64	76	55	37	2700
Bangladesh	164425	83	6,85	1963	3,00	45	86	82	28	1440
EX-COMMUNIST	**79027**	**80**	**5,97**		**2,31**	**41**	**100**	**100**	**44**	**4721**
Ouzbekistan	27794	88	6,80	1963	2,43	48	100	100	37	2660
Kazakhstan	15753	56	4,56	1958	1,89	26	100	100	59	9690
Azerbaidjan	8934	93	5,64	1963	1,70	43	100	100	52	3390
Tadjikistan	7075	90	6,83	1973	3,40	60	100	100	27	1860
Turkmenistan	5177	89	6,75	1963	2,62	51	100	100	50	6210
Kirghistan	5550	75	5,39	1963	2,87	37	100	100	37	2130
Albania	3169	80	5,98	1958	2,15	16	99	99	48	7950
Kosovo	1815	90	5,65	1954	2,71	48	98	90	35	817
Bosnia	3760	52	4,82	1953	1,20	13	100	100	49	8620
FAR EAST	**261152**	**87**	**5,81**		**2,54**	**25**	**99**	**98**	**56**	**4963**
Indonesia	232517	90	5,67	1958	2,48	27	99	99	54	3830
Malaysia	27914	65	6,94	1958	3,07	10	97	97	72	13740
Brunei	407	67	7,00	1958	2,60	6	99	99	76	50200
Maldives	314	100	7,00	1978	2,73	24	98	98	41	5280
SUBSAHA AFRICA	**247685**	**58**	**7,05**		**5,87**	**102**	**73**	**56**	**43**	**1656**

Nigeria	158259	50	6,90	1983	5,59	109	84	68	50	1960
Mali	13323	90	7,56	1983	6,75	106	38	25	33	1090
Senegal	12861	94	7,00	1983	5,26	58	67	48	43	1760
Niger	15891	80	8,15	1998	7,55	88	40	27	17	680
Guinea	10324	85	6,80	1983	5,71	98	69	36	35	1190
Burkina Faso	16287	50	7,68	1988	6,20	80	46	29	20	1160
Tchad	11506	51	6,65	2003	6,32	102	52	34	28	1160
Sierra Leone	5836	60	6,50	2003	6,49	104	59	37	38	750
Gambia	1751	90	6,50	1983	5,10	77	85	79	58	1280
Guinea Bissau	1647	50	7,10	2003	7,09	114	59	37	30	530
GRAND TOTAL	**1476252**	**86**	**6,81**		**3,69**	**52**	**86**	**77**	**48**	**4875**

* Fertility of national population

Sources :

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Chart 1: Total Fertility Rate and literacy level for females 15-24 years, in Muslim countries

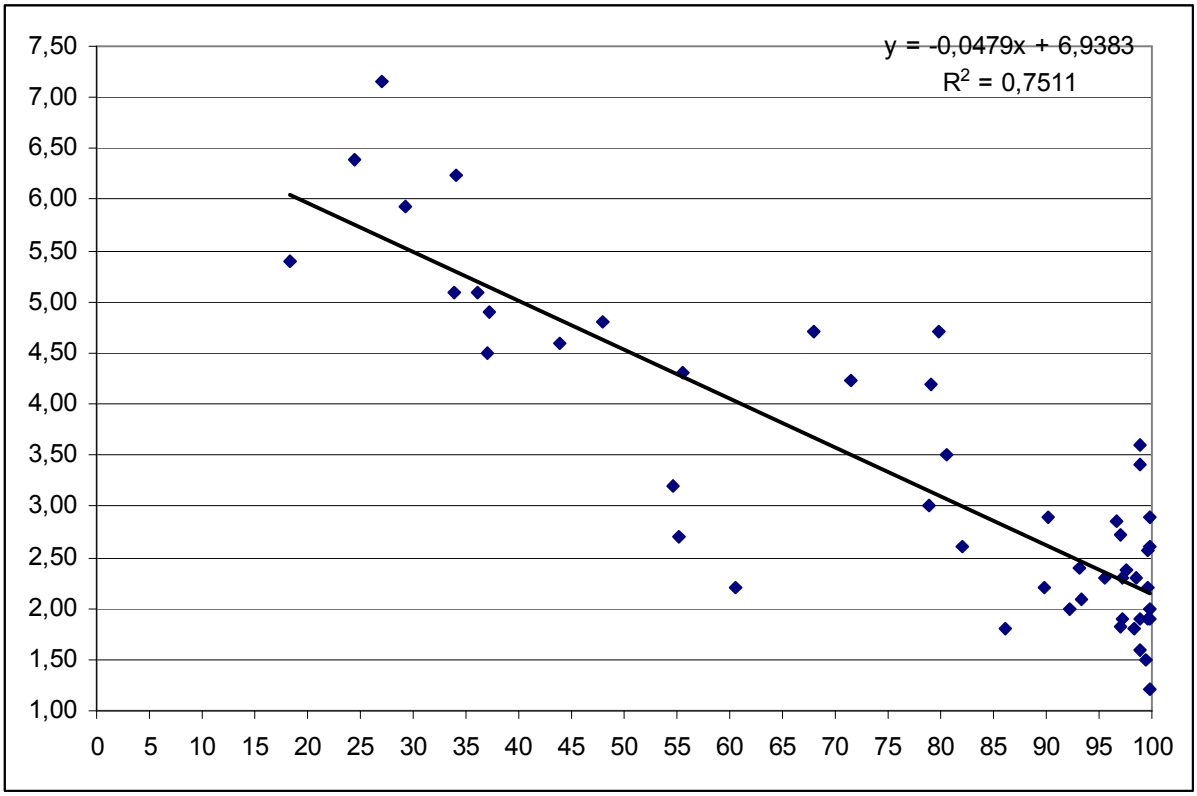

Chart 2: War of cradles in the Near East: Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine

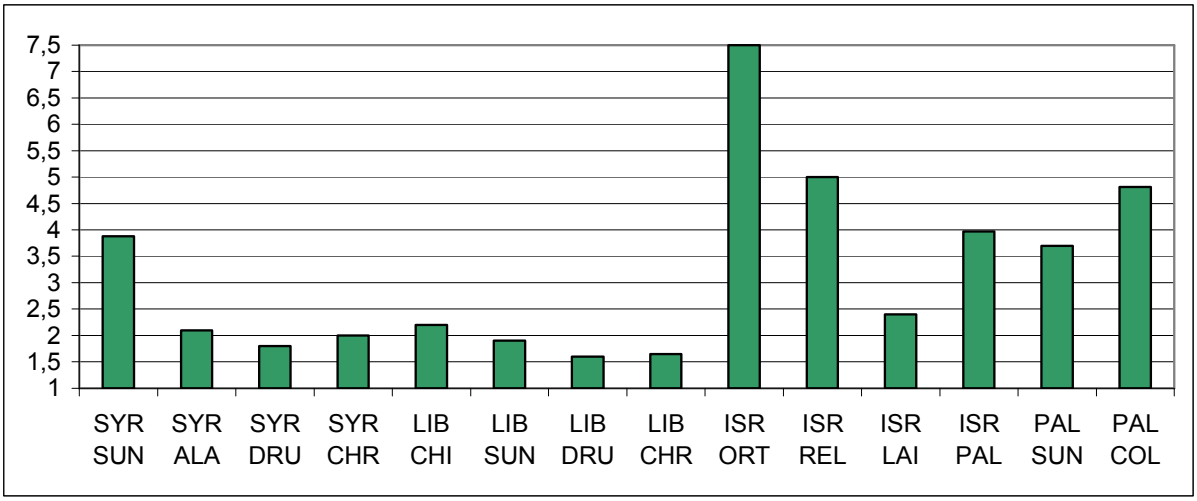

Chart 3: Crude birth rate in Israel 1996-2010

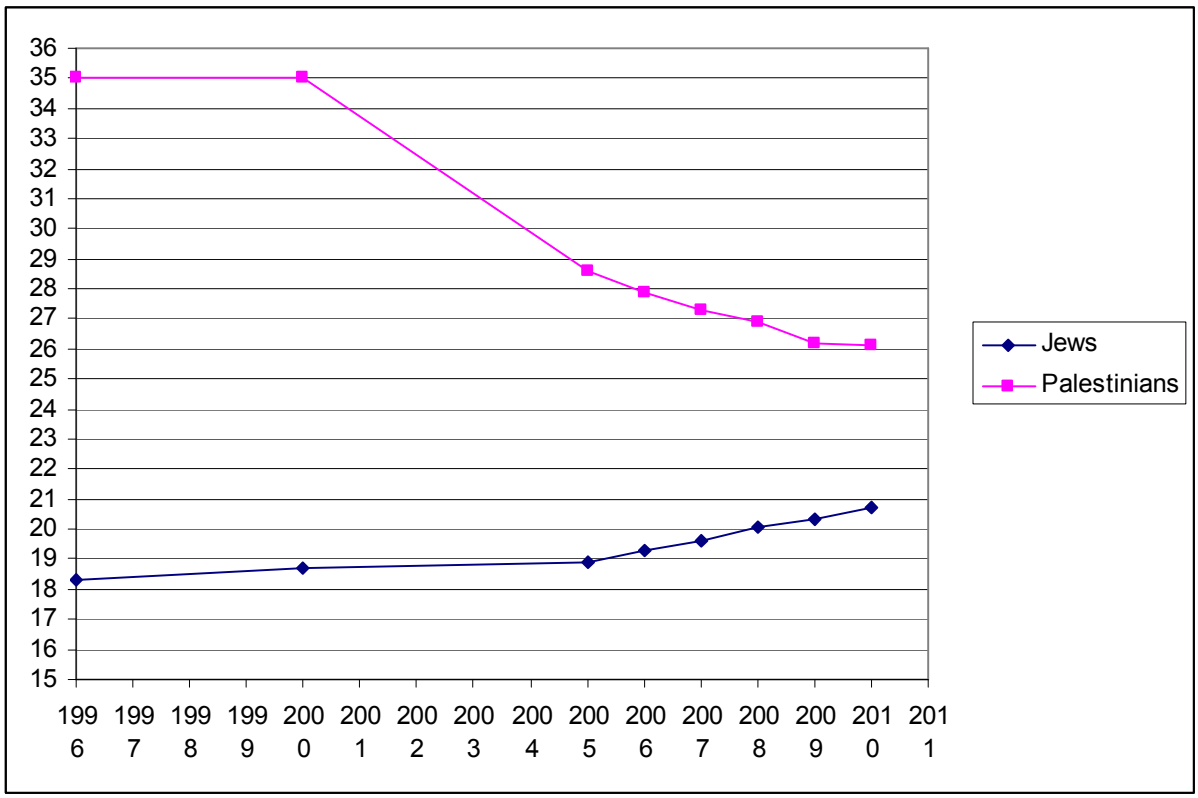

Chart 4 : Probability to be sonless by Total fertility rate

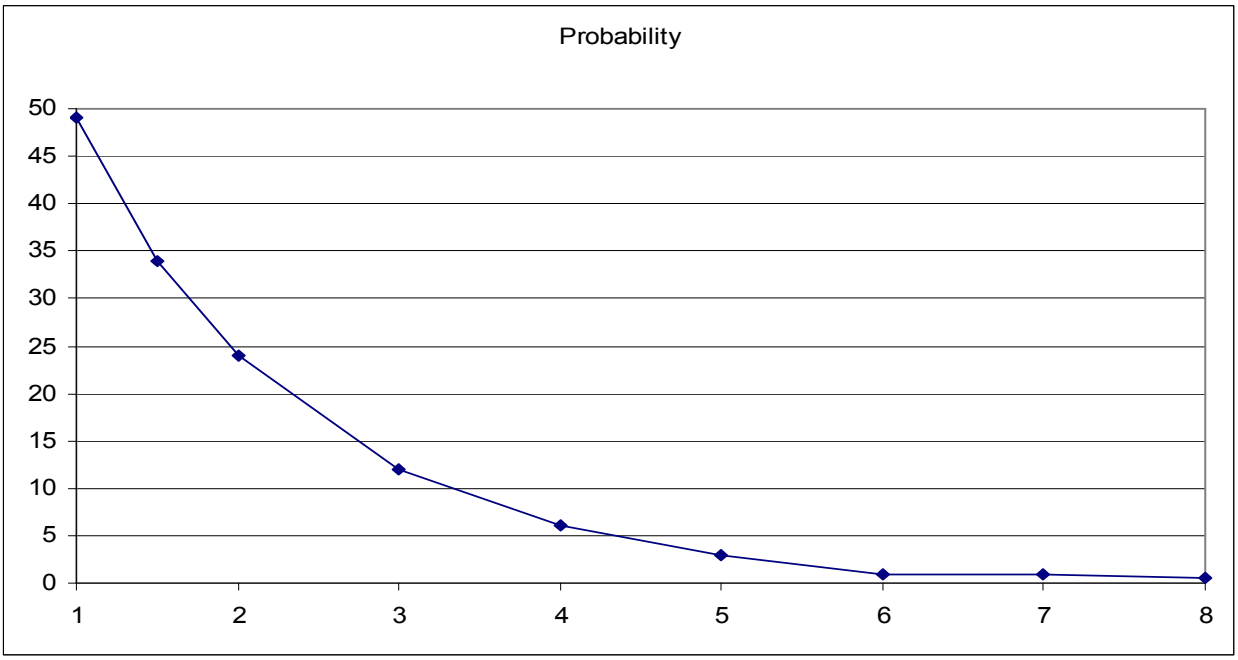

Chart 5: Ethnic differences of TFR in Malaysia

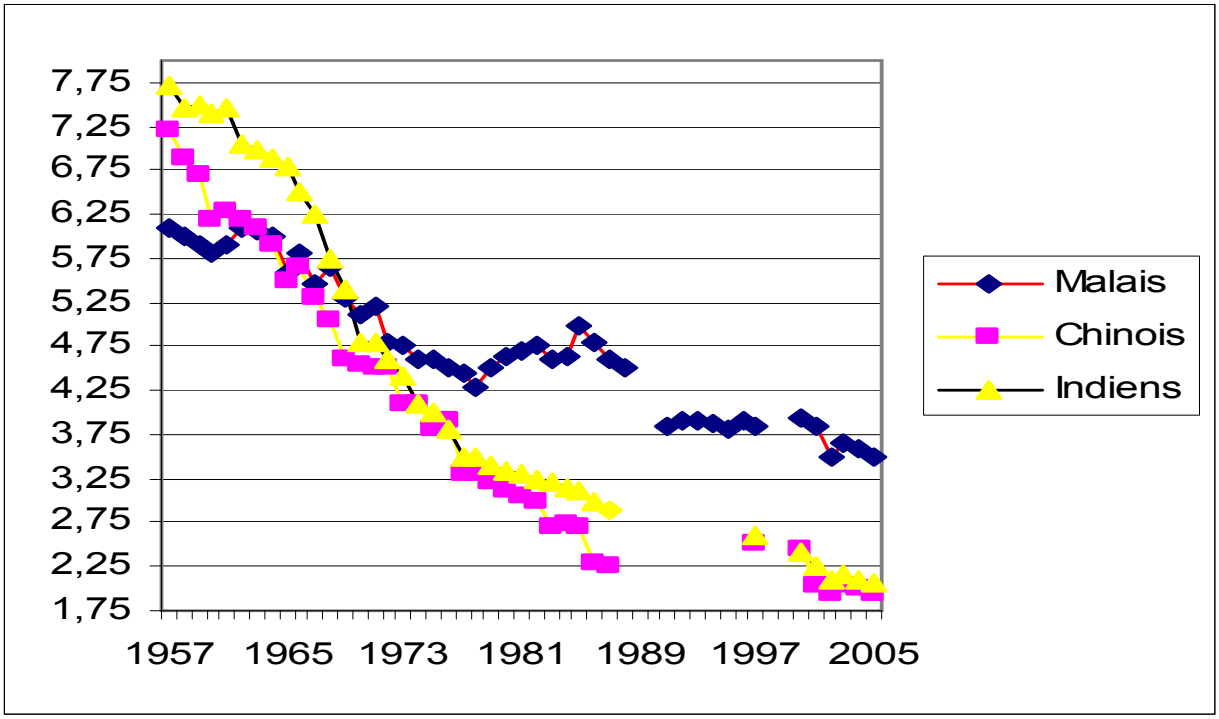

Chart 6: The higher fertility decrease in Morocco than in Egypt and Syria