



The Middle East: Regional Disorder

Case Study: Algeria and Sudan

Recent protests in Middle Eastern states are reminiscent of those which ignited the 2011 Arab Spring, begging the question: could these mass demonstrations trigger region-wide protest? Since 2011, Arab regimes have lived in fear of the sudden diffusion of political, social, and economic unrest. Prevention quickly rose to become a top priority for Arab autocratic leaders, utilizing financial and political means to support one another from potential revolutionary threats. Despite their efforts, many regimes have still encountered turmoil. Middle Eastern states face a multitude of specific local challenges, making the root cause of collective demonstrations hard to pin-down; however, the cases of Algeria and Sudan will be examined to reveal how this region experiences similar obstacles to stability.

Algeria: Political Turbulence

In March 2019, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his plan to run for his fifth consecutive term as president. His announcement ignited some of the largest protests in the country's recent history, fueled by civilian opposition to his "iron-grip" and "system" of corruption. Algerian protesters demanded that Bouteflika be removed from power.

On April 1st, 2019, Bouteflika was forced from power. The Algerian Army's Chief of Staff voiced concerns over Bouteflika's ability to fulfill his role due to corruption allegations. While the basic demands of protesters were met, Bouteflika's influence was not completely erased from Algerian governance. The former president's hand continued to be felt through an interim government, headed by a Bouteflika loyalist and hardliner.

To protesters, Bouteflika's influence over the interim government evidences the idea that Algeria is deeply entrenched in a network of corrupted politicians, businessmen, and military who suppress democracy. The legitimacy and credibility of the government is limited with the populace, who now demand a clean slate—a civilian-run democracy.



Sudan: Political Distress

Sudan has been in the midst of a political crisis since former president Omar al-Bashir's overthrow in April 2019. While the crisis reached its peak with Bashir's overthrow coupled with the addition of police brutality, political unrest can be traced back to December 2018 when Bashir imposed emergency austerity measures to curb economic issues.

In an attempt to stave economic collapse, Bashir cut bread and fuel subsidies. As citizens' living conditions worsened as a result of the new policy, demonstrations sparked in eastern provinces. With the passage of time came demands for Bashir's removal from office. On April 6, 2019, demonstrators occupied the military's headquarters, demanding that the army force the Bashir out of office. On April 11, 2019, the military announced that Bashir had been overthrown.

Despite Bashir's overthrow, Sudan remains in political struggle. A council of generals took power on April 11, 2019 but have struggled to return the country to normalcy. Ever since martial power, civilians have taken action as well. An organization of demonstrators called the Sudanese Professionals Association—a collaboration of doctors, health workers, and lawyers—have unified under the message that the military generals transfer authority to a civilian administration. Talks between the ruling generals and groups vouching for a civilian administration initially showed little signs of progress, but they eventually came to an agreement.



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