THE ARAB SPRING'S BERTH IN ALGERIA AND SUDAN: INSIGHTFUL COMPARATIVE PARALLELS

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Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) was engulfed by a riveting wave of popular revolts and uprisings in 2011 resulting in dramatic reshaping of geo-political dynamics in Tunisia with domino effects in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen (Friedman 2011; Fahim 2011; Mushtaq and Afzal 2017). These movements, expressed through spontaneous but sustained street protests led by youths, reverberated in major cities leading to divergent outcomes.

In Tunisia, the autocratic regime of President Ben Ali was brought down, leading to his flight to exile in Saudi Arabia. In Egypt, the military seized power, while Syria, Libya and Yemen descended into a fratricidal civil war (Joffe 2015). These movements are widely dubbed as the “Arab Spring”, the “Arab Revolution”, the “Arab Awakening” or “Arab Insurgencies” (Souza and Lipietz 2011). The Arab spring has remained the most popular concept and refers to a widespread, complex and multi-faceted phenomenon epitomizing the fall of entrenched dictatorships to pave way for new democratic systems (Abdulsattar 2015). The movement has also been against widespread unemployment, poverty and inflation, all of which have resulted in declining or stagnating living conditions for the majority of citizens in affected countries.

In terms of spread, the Arab spring has seen a lull since 2013 but finally berthed in Sudan and Algeria in 2019. Street protests in Sudan began

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in September 2013 upon the announcement by President Omar al-Bashir of the end to fuel subsidies and the introduction of other austerity measures that saw the price of bread soar to unprecedented levels (Elmilek 2018). In Algeria, protests began on 1st March, 2019 against President Abdullaziz Bouteflika and were further inflamed by his desire to run for a fifth term in office, having ruled the country for 20 years.

The main comparative cases considered here are Sudan and Algeria. Both countries had experienced uprisings in the mould of the Arab Spring. The two countries express a false homogeneity in its Arab population but show remarkable differences in economic and social dynamics and the structure of society. Algeria is different from Sudan in its dynamics and structure and international economic relations. Historically, both countries experienced colonial rule: Sudan under the British and Algeria under the French. Algeria's bloody war of independence compares with Sudan's bloody decades civil war². This is an overview of the Arab Spring as a revolutionary movement with initial inchoate demands that culminated in the consolidated demand for the departure of the prevailing autocrats and their regimes. The triggers of the uprising are comparatively explored against the backdrop of deep rooted economic and structural dynamics of the countries societies to undergird the differentiation in the outcome of the revolution. In conclusion, the paper illustrates the impact of the popular uprising on democratization in both countries.

Revolutionary underpinnings: Theoretical Notes

In its strict sense, a revolution signifies radical and deeply rooted transformations of society in political, economic and social terms. In this sense are considered revolutions: the French Revolution of 1789, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Chinese Revolution of 1948, the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and also the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Ramaswamy 2003). These events had drastically altered the nature of the social and political systems in the societies in which they occurred. Revolutions can take a violent or nonviolent character. Dunn's (1989, 12) violent characterization reflects "a form of massive, violent and rapid social change [...] attempts to embody a set of values in a new or at least a renovated social order". Contrastingly,

2 Algeria's bloody war of independence against France remains indelible in the minds of citizens as a dark moment Algerians dread to return to. In Sudan, the decades of secessionist war with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army are an enormous moment of instability.

nonviolent revolutions are orchestrated by unarmed civilians relying on tactics like civil resistance and other forms of public protests aimed at forcing a departure of an entrenched authoritarian regime (Summy 2007; Nepstad 2011; Lehoucq 2016;). The People Power Movement of the Philippines in 1986 and the bloodless Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 are credible illustrations (BBC 2019). Aristotle, in the 4th century BC, believed that social change was inevitable and had the potential to lead society towards perfection. In this sense, revolutions are critical corrective tools for restoring a just and properly ordered society that may have been disturbed by tyranny.

The desire to checkmate tyranny of rulers formed the original justification and has remained the fundamental basis of revolutions. John Locke justified revolutions as a legitimate means for governments to be altered whenever a monarch introduces arbitrary will in place of laws; when the monarch constrains the legislature from performing its constitutional functions and arbitrary power of the monarch tampers with elections without the consent of the people. In addition, a deliberate delivery of the people into foreign governments and when the supreme executive power neglects laws popularly enacted but could not enforce would produce a revolution.

The material basis of social revolutions were subsequently laid by Karl Marx in his comprehensive treatise on the course of human history. To Marx, a revolution is a product of irresistible historical forces along class lines expressed in the exploitative nature of relationships that intensifies class conflicts. Thus, Skocpol (1978, 26) defines social revolutions as “rapid, basic transformation of a society’s state and class structures, often accompanied by class-based revolts from below”. Goldstone (2001, 142) describes a revolution “as an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and non-institutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities”. According to Abdulsattar (2015), the key to the success of any revolution is the willingness of the mass of the people to pour out into the streets to demand change and this must be achievable. Arendt (1969) cautions that the focus of a revolution as pursued by its leaders must be less on issues of mass poverty but rather be concentrated on achieving freedom for citizens including democracy and human rights as resonated in Algeria and Sudan.

The causes of a revolution are broadly framed under materialistic and psychological conditions. Tocqueville (1955) and Davies (1962) had a similar emphasis on material conditions, where long term increase in economic development followed by a sharp decline might precipitate a revolution. A revolution is, therefore, a popular movement that seeks a significant change

in the structure of a society resulting in the overthrow of an existing government accompanied by remarkable social and economic changes (Gottschalk 1944; Davies 1962). These changes can be achieved by nonviolent means of public protest and civil resistance.

An Overview of the Arab Spring

The Arab spring is an umbrella term for the social movements and widespread popular uprisings that emerged in December, 2010 in Tunisia (Abdulsattar 2015). From Egypt to Tunisia and Libya, prevailing political leadership was authoritarian even when democratic semblance was perceived in the mould of “illiberal democracies” (Zakaria 1997) or “liberalized autocracies” (Brumberg 2002). These pseudo democracies permitted civil society institutions to exist but civil liberties were largely curtailed, which became the bastion of social movements that were mobilized to demand for radical political changes.

The Arab Spring was sparked by the desperate self-immolation of a 26 year old Tunisian graduate vegetable vendor Mohammed Bouazizi, on 17 December, 2010 in the city of Sidi Bouzid (Souza and Lipietz 2011). Bouazizi, was an unemployed man who began selling vegetables and fruits after a hard struggle for a job. Without a licence to sell, a policewoman confiscated his cart, a repeated experience and his attempt to pay a fine to the police woman elicited a slap and a spat in the face, in addition to insults on Bouazizi's deceased father (Joffe 2015). Infuriated and frustrated, Bouazizi left but returned to the headquarters and doused himself with inflammable substances and set himself ablaze (Mckay 2011).

Bouazizi's self-immolation was transformed into a symbol of generalized discontent with Ben Ali's regime (Joffe 2015). With indeterminable rapidity, widespread spontaneous demonstrations had begun and coalesced around the demand for the removal of Ben Ali's regime. The protests were demonstrations of deeply buried frustrations against high unemployment, corruption, food inflation and lack of political freedoms (Mckay 2011; Mush-taq and Afzal 2017). The protests intensified, and on 14 January, 2011 President Ben Ali stepped down into exile in Saudi Arabia after 23 years in power.

The causes of the uprising vary across the region, but some shared similarities are distinguishable. Following the economic crisis in the early 1990s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank induced liberal reforms in North Africa, leading to wide ranging privatization of state

enterprises that resulted in reduced government interference, but with sustained decline in standards of living that remained for years (Akram 2011). The fall in oil prices and global financial crisis of 2008-2009 meant low revenues for the state, which in turn forced a drastic reduction in public expenditure (Muller and Hubner 2014). The far reaching implication of that was economic austerity that gave rise to higher unemployment rates (Tucker 2012), which average 20 percent across the region. Closely following high unemployment rates was an ensuing food crisis in 2010 (Mushtaq and Afzal 2017). Consequently, public protests against rising inflation and food prices had begun to appear in these countries by 2010 (Ansani and Daniele 2012). Behr and Aaltola (2011, 2) sum the cause of the Arab uprising as deteriorating living standards and growing inequality, lack of political freedoms and public accountability (Shahi 2011; Muller and Hubner 2014).

The practical outcomes of the uprising vary across the region, due essentially to the internal socio-economic and political dynamics and structures of each country. In Tunisia, the state dominated society and held total control over peoples' lives. The Tunisian revolution became an internal revolt against state domination, and the uprising was supported by exiled opposition parties and coordinated by trade unions like the Tunisian General Union of Labour (UGTT) (Shahi 2011). The ousting of Ben Ali was possible only with the support of the military that pledged to protect the revolution (Brooks 2013).

The outcome in Egypt has been radically different from Tunisia. The events in Tunisia triggered protests in Egypt that culminated in Tahrir square demonstrations on January 26, 2011. As the protests increased and expanded with intensification of demands for liberalization, President Hosni Mubarak called on the military to crack down on protesters, which was rejected. On 10th February, 2011, Mubarak resigned and the military took over by changing the head of the regime as President Mohammad Morsi took over while retaining the underlying power structure (Hassan 2011). The military promised reforms and held elections on 3rd July, 2013 when General Sisi took over as President. By this development, Egypt's revolution has stalled with a terrible backslide into a repressive junta rule, due to social division and violent cycles of conflict since the military coup (Abdulsattar 2015). Like Tunisia, the dictator has left but dictatorship stayed. The military supported the revolution, but exploited it to its own advantage to sustain the regime, suppress the people and retain its privileges and protect US interest.

The momentum and staggering transformations in Tunisia and Egypt raised expectations in Libya, whose citizens saw the evolving scenario

as potentials for the future. Tribal schism, military isolation and Gaddafi's son's willing experimentation with openness revealed the weakness of the regime coupled with Libya's acquiescence to the international system in the handover of the Lockerbie bombers. These were to confirm the gradual loss of control by the regime. The failure of the Libyan government to compensate victims of the 1996 prison massacre further deepened resentment against the regime and in this light plan for public protest on February 15, 2011 was ignited in Benghazi (Lehmann 2011).

These developments depleted the regimes morale and tribal support from Cyrenaica, selected urban intellectuals, Islamist guerillas, secular professionals and other tribal leaders that formed an Interim National Transitional Council on 17th February, 2011 to topple the regime (Joffe 2015). Though the regime was toppled with the assassination of Gaddafi, the country descended into a fratricidal civil war with the interim government of national unity recognized by the United Nations, while General Khalifa Haftar rebels with Saudi Arabia's support remain a deadly challenge in Libya (Yom 2011; Abdulsattar 2015).

Yemen, another literally failed state with endemic tribalism, religious sectarianism with a growing rebellion from Houthi Rebels in the north also drew inspiration from the Arab spring. The country, under President Ali Abdullah Saleh's three decades rule, is in painful misery. With falling oil prices and growing population predominantly youth, unemployment at 50 percent, highest level of malnutrition and acute water shortage, the country's citizens have reeled under widespread grievances. Against economic misery, nepotism and political repression, widespread protests had "united tribal leaders, the opposition and unions" (Jones 2011) into their demand for Saleh to step down. Buoyed by Saudi Arabian support with the blessing of the US, Yemen has fallen without a functional government and is still reeling under a brutal civil war against the Houthi Rebels. So by and large, the heterogeneity of the various Arab countries in their internal dynamics and the technical assistance from external actors have revealed paralleled outcomes of the Arab Spring in different Arab countries (Negri 2015).

Algeria and Sudan Enter the Fray: Political Background and Economic Conditions

Though Algeria shares commonalities with its neighbours, such as a burgeoning young population, a laggard economy and uncertain political lead-

ership transition under the authoritarian 20 years rule of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the country appeared to have weathered the Arab Spring storm in 2011. The Algerian government offered a pragmatic response to the uprisings by upping public spending through excessive subsidies, infrastructure investments and an ambitious housing program to douse local discontent, in addition to clandestine handouts. Large public jobs were also created in the security sector to absorb many young unemployed and a large grant of interest-free public loans for young entrepreneurs was made (ICG 2018).

The Algerian society was reeling under difficulties economically and politically. Politically the country was in the grip of President Bouteflika who was seen as a symbol of reconciliation after the civil war against the Islamist fundamentalists in the late 1990s. Bouteflika came to power in 1999 and was rooting for a fifth five year term in April 2019 despite being paralyzed by a stroke in 2013. Though rarely seen in public due to his health challenge, he was determined to cling onto power, a tendency that was an initial transition concern for the country. Economically, the country depended “on oil and gas up to 97 percent of total exports, two thirds of state revenue and one third of gross domestic product” (ICG 2018, 2). When oil prices dropped in 2014³, the economy was belly up forcing the regime to turn to its US\$200billion foreign exchange reserve to patch things up by maintaining a supportive subsidy regime and state patronage. Even though prices partially recovered in 2017, the state could only respond to the crisis by introducing austerity measures like raising the prices of fuel, introducing import restrictions and permitting cautious devaluation of the local currency. These measures had an enormous painful effect on public welfare.

Contestation for power and influence had also emerged in Algeria between a new private business oligarchy since the collapse of the socialist economy in 1992 and an entrenched political class skimming resources of the state. Since 2017, it appeared that the emerging private sector oligarchy was on the ascendancy, raising the transition tension (Mekouar 2017). It was seen as a parasite benefiting from special state favour yet playing a deadly political role. In all of these dynamics, the state had successfully warded off unrest by a veiled threat of the return of the 1990 styled violence. But this seemed to fail when protests began in 2017 challenging state economic pol-

3 Algeria is a strategic country in Western Mediterranean; the largest natural gas producer and exporter of crude oil to Mediterranean countries and the second major exporter of LNG to Europe and neighbours. The 2014 oil price collapse threatened the country's economy and security, raising concerns for comparison with the 1986-1988 price collapse that triggered riots leading to a military coup, repression and Islamist electoral victories and the civil war of the 1990s.

icies. These protests were spontaneous, but scattered and uncoordinated. In January 2019, protests grew, spread and intensified but were largely tamed by security forces.

The Algerian state efforts to fully tame the popular uprising failed when on 21 February, 2019, thousands of its citizens staged a peaceful demonstration against corruption and oppression under Bouteflika's regime when the President announced the decision to run again for the fifth time in the April 18 election (Aljishi and Jacobs 2019). Bouteflika came to power in 1999 and through a constitutional coup created amendments against a two term limit in 2008 allowing him the possibility of a life presidency. Incapacitated by a stroke since 2013, the 81 year old president was perceived by citizens as medically unfit to run for another term. When the president confirmed his intention to run, the protests exploded and intensified throughout the country, leading to his resignation after pressure from the military when it called on the Parliament to declare him unfit. The military's resort to constitutional means was a testimony to the level of institutionalization of democracy in Algeria. Besides, the move associated the military with the people and avoided the impression it wanted power for itself. Similarly, Judges across the country also announced their decision to not supervise the elections if President Bouteflika was to run. A combination of these moves with unrelenting protests aptly supported by the military forced the President to resign and handover to an interim candidate who promised elections within 90 days and a subsequent referendum on a new constitution.

In Sudan, President Omar-al Bashir came to power in 1989 through a coup d'état and transformed himself into a civilian elected president and has ruled the country for 30 years. Under the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), South Sudan separated from the rest of the country and the rest of Sudanese society continued to experience excruciating human suffering. The country's deteriorating economic conditions were largely responsible for the South Sudanese secession of 2011³. This led to the loss of 75 percent of Sudan's oil reserves (ICG 2019) denying the country billions of dollars in revenue. Oil revenue had constituted more than half of Sudan's resources and 90 percent of its exports (Sudan Tribune 2019). The Sudanese government under Bashir was not prepared for the economic shock of South Sudan's secession. Much of the country's economy was mismanaged through entrenched corruption and high military spending in the fight against insurgency in South Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile Regions (Abdulbari 2019). Sudan was rated 175 out of 180 on the corruption perception index in 2017 testifying to the high level of entrenched corruption in the country. The small gold boom of 2011 also did not benefit the economy as miners refused to sell to the Central Bank pre-

ferring to smuggle it to where prices were higher. With low foreign reserves and a \$55 billion foreign debt, external loan leverage was curtailed and the country was forced to rely on ad-hoc loan arrangements from the Gulf States (ICG 2019). Access to the IMF-World Bank highly indebted poor country initiative was blocked due to US 20 year sanctions. The combined effect of these developments worsened economic conditions in Sudan, leaving the government vulnerable to discontent.

Though the Sudanese government blamed US sanctions imposed for their support of international terrorism and prevalence of human rights violation (Verjee 2018) for economic dysfunction, its management of the economy was poor. With the lifting of sanctions in November, 2017, a meeting with the IMF by Sudanese officials resulted in a recommendation for “streamlined tax exemptions and the phasing out of costly fuel and wheat subsidies” (Elamin and Mampily 2018, 1). Government accepted these recommendations and cut subsidies to fuel and wheat, but failed to implement the other IMF recommendation on cash transfer to vulnerable families as part of social protection spending (Abdulbari 2019). In addition, the government devalued the Sudanese pound (ICG 2019). These measures raised inflationary pressures that cumulatively hit the poor hardest, many of whom were unemployed that accounted for 20% of the youth population (Altaher and Fox 2018; Abdulbari 2019). The Sudanese people responded to the crushing economic condition and unsatisfied manner the government had handled the situation that resulted in fuel shortages and food price rises especially bread on 19th December, 2018 with public protests that started in the city of Atbara spread across the country to other cities including Khartoum the capital, demanding for the overthrow of NCP and for al Bashir to step down.

Triggers of the uprising in Algeria and Sudan

There are profound parallels that can be drawn in the triggers of the Arab spring’s berth in Sudan and Algeria. Broadly conceptualized, Sudanese and Algerians had long suffered economic deprivations. In Sudan, economic fortunes had largely disappeared following decades of mismanagement and the yoke of twenty-year US sanctions over the Sudanese economy. In 2017, sanctions were lifted but its benefits were too slow in spread. Besides the sanctions, the South Sudanese secession occurred in 2013, and the Sudanese economy lost 75 percent of its oil revenue (Abdulbari 2019). Following insurgencies in South Kordofan, Darfur and the Blue Nile regions, military expenditures remained high while those on health and education continued

to decline. With inflation at 72.94 percent, youth unemployment at 20 percent and austerity measures introduced to shore up public revenue through subsidy withdrawals on fuel and wheat, prices of these essentials dramatically rose and living conditions worsened, pushing the Sudanese to their tether's end and making them rise against the regime.

In Algeria, an oil dependent economy like Sudan, oil revenues plummeted in 2014 following global oil prices slump. The effect of this drop-in revenue was ameliorated by drawing down from the country's \$200 billion foreign reserve and \$37 billion Sovereign Wealth Fund. But this was not enough to push for recovery of the economy shortly. By 2017, reserves were down to \$97 billion and the state responded with the introduction of austerity measures by trimming state spending by 9 and 10 percent in 2016 and 2017 respectively (Mekouar 2016). Subsidies on fuel were cut and its price rose. Import restrictions were imposed and the currency devalued. In 2018 more budget cuts followed, leading to rising cost of living. In a rentier economy like Algeria, cutting state spending is an unpopular decision in a country used to subsidizing fuel and other basic goods. In the light of this, unemployment rose to 29 percent among the youth, which constitute 70 percent of the country's population (Aljishi and Jacobs 2019). An economy in such a crisis cannot help citizens to access opportunities for better livelihood and it appeared it was getting worse.

The political conditions that were also at the root of the uprising shared parallels in both Sudan and Algeria. Sudan had been under the authoritarian leadership of Omar al Bashir since 1989. President Bashir's thirty-year rule tolerated no opposition. His brutality has a genocide tag on his head from the International Criminal Court (ICC) and an arrest warrant (Abati 2019). Political repression was predominant using security forces. The Sudanese people could no longer contemplate a future with Al Bashir as president and demanded he leave office.

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika had ruled Algeria for 20 years and is perceived as a national reconciliator, having ended the country's bloody civil war of the 1990s. He is perceived as the scion of social and political stability. In 2013 he suffered a stroke and was hardly seen in public since then. Despite this physical weakness for seven years, it appeared that the military, business and political elites had a consensus on keeping him as the country's leader (Boduszynski 2019). While initial protests were against austerity measures, the announcement of the intention of Bouteflika to contest presidential election for another term sparked off outrage and protesters added the demand for him to step down. Sudan and Algeria, two societies accustomed to subsidies,

could not take cuts in public expenditures, especially with no alternatives and with a growing unemployed and dominant youth population. It was time to take their destinies in their hands and demand for the emergence of new political leadership.

Mass protests: States and International Response

Massive protests began in Sudan on 19th December, 2018 against austerity measures in the city of Atbara, 180 miles from Khartoum, but quickly spread to 28 other cities, including the capital by January 2019. Comparatively, these protests had been going on in Sudan much longer with a greater spread than in Algeria. The Arab spring had triggered protests in Sudan in late September 2013, but was stoutly tamed through the deployment of security forces. The wave of protests broke out in three major cities of Wad Madani, Khartoum and Omdurman, as well as other towns over state policies that ended fuel subsidies and other austerity measures. State security forces responded with lethal force leaving over 170 people dead (HRW 2014, 1). Many hundreds more were wounded and detained. Due to the uncoordinated nature of the protests, they lacked direction and, with extreme force applied by security forces, they soon petered out. The onset of peaceful protests in mid-December 2018 differed from the previous ones, because the “drivers, intensity, popularity, duration and death toll” were significantly different (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies 2019, 4). The protests which began in Atbara, a semi town, quickly spreaded to other towns and cities by December. It is important to note that Atbara and other towns were deliberately targeted by austerity measures to forestall the effective organization of protest in the capital, but with the protests it was clear this strategy had failed.

Once it had begun, organized Sudanese professionals consisting of doctors, engineers, lawyers and journalists, university teachers and students joined forces with the two largest opposition parties to intensify the protests. Initial protests were against the high cost of bread and fuel due to inflation, but this changed soon into a demand for the President to step down (Altaher and Fox 2019). The intensity of the protest had been reinforced by the huge number of unemployed youths who have been effectively mobilized by intellectuals and professionals with clear objectives: a transition to civilian rule that would prepare the frameworks, including legal and political, for holding free and fair elections.

State response had been brutal, with security forces using live ammunition and tear gas, leading to the death of over 45 people by late January

2019 (Abdulbari 2019). The more force was used, the more energized were the protesters. The uprisings were boosted by the withdrawal of 22 political parties including Islamic ones from the national dialogue and their call for President Bashir to step down and put a sovereign council and a transitional government in its place. The Sudanese government also imposed a state of emergency for a year, but was reduced to six months by the parliament. It was followed by the dissolution of the cabinet and the removal of the Vice President Gen. Bakri Hassan Salih, who was replaced by the Defence Minister Gen. Awah Ibn Auf. All elected regional governors were also dissolved (Hashim 2019). These moves were to distance Bashir from his NCP and assume broad neutrality. The last straw was the army's tactical support for protesters which they described as ambitious.

The persistence of protests led to a military coup that ousted President Bashir on April 10, 2019 with his arrest and detention. A military Council was put in place led by Gen Auf. The Council announced widespread reforms with a promise for elections in four years, promises that were turned down by protesters who insisted on a civilian transitional council without any of the personalities associated with the Bashir regime. Gen. Auf would bow to protesters' demands and step down within twenty four hours for Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah-al-Burham (Tisdall 2019). The Freedom for Change alliance coordinating the protesters was determined to eliminate the entire old system and inaugurate a new dawn in the country's political history. The military determined to hold onto power accepted a compromise of a hybrid military-civilian transitional council for three years.

The resilience of the protests is attributed to a number of salient factors. The protest did not begin in the capital Khartoum where the regime had invested in security forces to checkmate similar activities. Protests may have struggled to gain momentum in 2013, but this time the rural areas were the focus of attention and their mobilization supported national rallies in major urban centres. The coalition of forces in organizations and notable figures gave vent to the protests also. Large opposition political parties (Sudan Call, including Umma Party, Democratic Unionist Party and the National Consensus Forces) coalesced toward the protests. The return of the self-exiled opposition leader Sadiq-al-Mahdi, who declared support for the protesters, remained a major plank that surged with the demonstrations. Then the fragmentation in the ruling party that led to the isolation of the army and its fringe presence outside the capital opened the regime and paved the way for the army to turn against Bashir and favour protesters.

The role of the military in shaping the outcome of the protests in Algeria and Sudan is significant. Trust in the military in Algeria is fairly high due to its role in decolonization and stability in the country. In Sudan trust in the military oscillates between very high and low and remained declined after the Arab Spring from 2011-2018 (Alkurd 2019). It was this positive perception of the military that accounted for its siding with the protesters to remove Bouteflika and Bashir from power (Alaoui 2019; Alkurd 2019).

On a broader regional scale was the contagious effect of the protests in other countries (Mampilly & Elamin 2019). Finally, the demand of the protesters was clear: change that meant a complete break from the past including the military. What the protesters asked for was a new untainted civilian transitional government headed by technocrats capable of transforming Sudanese economy for improved opportunities and political freedoms; a government in which they would have a stake.

Comparatively, protests began in Algiers without clear political demands or objectives and no firm leadership. Protesters' voices were a mere challenge against austerity measures. These voices, however, soon coalesced into a political demand for President Bouteflika to resign upon confirmation of his intention to seek a fifth five-year term. These protests like in Sudan differed from previous ones as they were galvanized by more educated urban unemployed youth.

In the wake of the Arab spring in 2011, sporadic protests appeared in Algiers but were tamed. Two reasons account for this. The country placed a premium on stability and security, which have been buoyed by collective memory of the civil war of the late 1990s. More than 200,000 people lost their lives and Algerians dread going back to that era, hence are cautious on political moves, especially drastic changes. The second reason relates to the use of oil revenue to buy peace through increased public spending by nearly 25 percent (Khan and Mezran 2014). Domestic discontent was diluted by lavish subsidies, infrastructure investments and a huge free housing scheme. In addition, large recruitments were undertaken by security forces (ICG 2018).

Politically, as in Sudan, the country was fed up with the prospects of the same authoritarian regime under Bouteflika and they demanded change. The isolation of the military and its transformation into a professional body left it untainted by the regime and it could not be used to quell the protests. Acting in favor of protesters, they leveraged constitutional arrangements to demand the removal of Bouteflika by Parliament. This sustained pressure led to the resignation of the President, paving way for the appointment of Abdelkader Bensalah, former Speaker of the Parliament with a promise for

election within 90 days (The Economist 2019; Nossiter 2019). Unlike the brutal response from the security forces in Sudan against peaceful protesters, Algerian authorities simply pushed for the resignation of the President through the instrumentality of the military.

Non-violent protests have been largely less costly and reasonably constructive and result oriented in the face of aggression. By remaining peaceful, security forces in the context of wide media international coverage could not retaliate with brute force against unarmed protesters. Over all, the dying regime may have been visibly divided on the option of deploying brute force to demobilize the protesters. Closely related but powerfully reinforcing is the functional effect of the peaceful protests in generating effective mobilization of the people. At the heart of mass participation of the populace in the protests was the palpable inclusiveness as a principle for mobilization. Protesters broke the social, political and economic barriers and were united by the deprivations endured for years to demand for basic freedoms and improved conditions of living as collective entitlements (Bishara 2019).

The United States, Norway, the United Kingdom and Canada issued a joint statement that condemned orchestrated violence by security forces against peaceful protesters and called on the Khartoum government to avoid violence, arbitrary detention and media censorship (Altaher and Fox 2018). In general, the international community has remained cautious about events in Sudan, a move that has been informed by the disastrous outcome of international influence of events in Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Libya. However, in the wake of a military crackdown on protesters in early June killing 113 people, the UN nations urged restraint and called on Sudanese military authorities to respect Sudanese basic rights including freedom of expression and assembly. The United States too condemned the attacks and called for a civilian led transition that would conduct elections that will see the free expression of the will of the Sudanese people (Aljazeera 2019).

The African Union, in its traditional response against military coups, gave the military three months within which to hand over power to a civilian regime in Sudan. This was a strategic move that served the ends of protesters' demand for a clean break from the past, in which the military was a veritable part of. The African Union (AU), though a reincarnation of the old African sentiments of self-preservation, was forced by events to act decisively. First was the Military Council suspension of talks with the opposition on the composition of the Transitional Council, the massacre of 113 people by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) using excessive force to disperse the revolutionary sit-in protesters from the military headquarters (AP 2019a; 2019b). Following this

drastic turn of events, the AU suspended Sudan from the Union until the appointment of a civilian transition in the country (Aljazeera 2019).

International response to the uprising was also muted and appeared neutral, leaving Algerians to decide their future (DW 2019). The French stand on the fence reflects its fear born out of its relationship with Algeria, especially its colonial legacy. France from all indications avoided any interpretation of its action as interference. Algeria is also seen as a strategic partner to France on economic and social issues, such as the curbing of migration from sub-Saharan Africa and Islamist terrorism in the Sahel. In this strategic context, French diplomatic relations with Algeria are a sensitive matter and the latter turning into turmoil is the least desirable option as this may affect relations with the European Union.

The seemingly muted and sideline posture of France was copied by the US, with a tilt in favour of protesters. The US noted that protesters had a right to oppose President Bouteflika in the context of their right to peaceful assembly (Kramdi 2019). European leaders were bothered about events in Algeria, especially Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy and France, who have stakes in stability in Algeria as regards immigration and terrorism. As the largest trading partner in oil and gas with Algeria, the country's stability is therefore invaluable to the US and Europe, hence the muted and covert support to the protesters by the US in order not to aggravate the events that may precipitate instability with adverse effects on strategic concerns to both parties.

Conclusion

The Arab spring has remained one of the most relevant events on the international scene since the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Economic crisis with high inflation, unemployment and lack of democracy triggered the nonviolent uprising which achieved significant results, notably the ouster of the authoritarian leaders in both countries. The Arab spring became the vent to outburst decades of suppressed frustrations and fears for the future.

The nonviolent approach to regime change has proved successful with the military as an effective ally. The isolation in Sudan produced a coup which has positioned the military as a formidable institution to guarantee security and the future of their countries by siding with the protesters with a major role in the transitions. In Algeria, the military being more professional relied on constitutionalism to drive the transition. In both countries, however, protesters have evolved a common demand to do away with the past in its

entirety and shape the future of their countries with the military on the side of the civil population, a positive outcome of a nonviolent strategy.

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ABSTRACT

The existential conditions in Middle East and North African countries that gave rise to the Arab Spring have been comparatively explored against the backdrop of heterogeneous socio-economic and political dynamics that undergirded its varying outcomes. These developments were further examined to draw parallels in the delayed but eventual berth of the Arab spring in Sudan and Algeria. Relying on documentary evidence, contextual thematic content analysis was employed to explain the contagion that is the Arab Spring and its inevitable arrival in Sudan and Algeria. Declining economic livelihoods and opportunities, high youth unemployment and political repression triggered the uprising, but internal political and socio-demographic dynamics and the degree of international influence of events in these countries generated different outcomes in Sudan and Algeria, as much as in the other countries touched by the uprisings. The Arab Spring holds all the trappings of a revolution, but leaned strongly towards a non-violent slant. Broad based political and economic liberalization are therefore critical to political stability and economic progress in MENA and sub-Saharan Africa.

KEYWORDS:

Democracy. Economic crisis. Public protests. Political repression.

Received on December 26, 2020

Accepted on February 22, 2021