THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

ALGERIA'S UPRISING: PROTESTERS AND THE MILITARY

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Introduction:

BRUCE JONES
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

Presentation of Findings:

SHARAN GREWAL
Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

Discussants:

TAMARA COFMAN WITTES, Moderator
Senior Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

ALEXIS ARIEFF
Africa Policy Analyst
Congressional Research Service

AMBASSADOR ROBERT FORD (Ret.)
Former U.S. Ambassador to Algeria
Senior Fellow, Middle East Institute

SHARAN GREWAL
Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. JONES: Good morning. Thank you all for joining us today. My name is Bruce Jones. I'm the vice president and the director of the Foreign Policy program here at Brookings. And a particular thank you for joining us today on this very timely and important issue and event on a timely and important issue. I should say, by the way, feel free to follow the conversation and comment on the conversation under the #AlgeriaUprising.

It's a particular delight, don't tell my colleagues I said this, to be opening and a sharing event that's not on China. It's an increasingly rare phenomenon in Washington these days.

Many of you will be following the fact that since February, Algeria has seen 21 straight weeks of protests. Those protests succeeded in ousting a dictator, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, on the 2nd of April. But they continued since racking up several other outcomes, including the arrest of two former prime ministers, and the arrest of several prominent businessmen accused of corruption.

But the protests show no signs of stopping. What we want to try to understand more deeply today is what are driving the protests? What are the goals? How are they viewed by the regime and in particular, by the military, the long-time power broker in Algeria?

And to help answer some of these questions and spark the discussion today, I'm delighted to introduce a new paper by Sharan Grewal, Tahir Kilavuz and Robert Kubinec that you can find on the Brookings website and the web page for this event.

Sharan Grewal was a postdoctoral fellow at Brookings. I'm delighted to say, he is now a visiting fellow at Brookings as well as an assistant professor of government at the College of William and Mary, having completed his Ph.D. from Princeton in 2018.

Sharan and his co-authors conducted a unique survey of protesters and military personnel in Algeria, allowing us to see the conflict and the tensions from both sides of the vantage point and with strong empirical backing. And he'll discuss the results of the

survey. And after presenting the paper, he'll be joined by a very distinguished panel to help put the findings into context and discuss what's next for Algeria.

I'm delighted to welcome back to Brookings, Ambassador Robert Ford, the former U.S. ambassador to Algeria from 2006 to 2008. And former U.S. ambassador to Syria from 2011 to 2014. And a current scholar at the Middle East Institute and fellow E. L. Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. Ambassador Ford is a recipient of the Secretary's Service Award, U.S. State Department's highest honor, and also received the Annual Profile and Courage Award for the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston for a stout defense of human rights in Syria. Anybody who has followed American policy in the Middle East, if policy is the word we can use for our whatever in Syria, understands how critical a voice in every sense of that term, Robert Ford was during that entire period.

Alexis Arieff will also join us on stage. She's a specialist in African affairs at the Congressional Research Service, where she examines U.S. security assistance in the Sahel, engagement with North Africa in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and responses to instability and humanitarian needs in the Great Lakes region. She previously served as a policy advisor to U.S. ambassador at the UN, Samantha Power.

And our very own Tamara Wittes will also join us on stage. Tammy is a senior fellow here in the Foreign Policy Program and was formerly deputy assistant secretary for Near East affairs at State Department and played a critical role in the thinking about questions of democracy and institutional reform in the Middle East and North Africa during her tenure, and in her thinking here at Brookings.

With that, Sharan, I'll turn it over to you. Thank you all for being here.

(Applause)

MR. GREWAL: All right, good morning everyone. Thank you, Bruce for the introduction. And thank you all for coming. I'm very excited to launch this paper today. What we've done over the past three months is to conduct an online survey in Algeria of over 9,000 Algerians. In order to conduct the survey, we use some non-traditional methods.

So, let me discuss how we did the survey before we get to the results of the survey itself.

So, what we aimed to do in this survey was not to conduct a nationally representative survey, but instead to over represent two groups that we were interested in, protesters and military personnel, as we were interested in seeing the differences in their attitudes between the protesters and military personnel.

So, to target these two groups within Algeria, we used a new or less traditional method of survey recruitment, which is through Facebook advertisements. So, we purchased advertisements on Facebook that advertised a survey, it said, take this academic survey from Princeton University about Algerian politics. And it was shown to all Algerians over 18 currently living in Algeria. If you click the advertisement, it takes you to a separate platform Qualtrics where they fill out the survey.

So, we used Facebook advertisements for two reasons, it has two advantages that help us to target both protesters and military personnel in Algeria. The first advantage of Facebook is that Facebook users tend to skew younger, urban more educated, the same demographics that are protesting in Algeria. The news coverage of the protests suggest that they are primarily, though not exclusively, in cities and urban areas, and that protesters tend to be led by college students and other youth.

And so by choosing Facebook, we were able to over represent the number of protesters that took our survey. So, of the about 7,000 civilians that took our survey, over 4,000 said in the survey that they have protested at least once since February. So, using Facebook then allowed us to generate this very large sample of protesters that we can use to help describe what the protesters attitudes are.

The second and more unique advantage of using Facebook is that you can target advertisements based on people's interests. So, we targeted specific advertisements to those who have an interest in the military in Algeria. These are people, for instance, who write in their employment history on Facebook that I've worked in the Ministry of Defense or who like Facebook pages about the military. Not all of them have served in the military, but

by targeting ads just to this group who has this interest in the military, we can oversample the number of military personnel who see our advertisements and therefore, take our survey.

Overall, we had about 1,700 survey takers who self-described as being either active duty or retired military personnel, including about 400 soldiers, 1,100 junior officers and non-commissioned officers, and about 90 senior officers. So, by using Facebook, we were able to generate this pretty unique survey, this unique survey sample that over represents these two categories, protesters and military personnel.

Now, let me caution that this survey is not nationally representative, nor can we conclude that these 4,000 protesters are necessarily representative of the entire protest movement, or that these military personnel are representative of the entire military. But what we did succeed in doing is generate very large samples of protesters and military personnel that we can use to compare and contrast their attitudes within this survey sample.

So, with that caveat in mind, let me jump into the results of the survey. So, first we asked about general impressions towards the protests. We asked two questions here, which were, do you support the goals of the protest movement? And do you think the protest should continue? In each of these figures I'm going to present five bars which represent the different groups of individuals represented in the survey.

Let me start with the first one, which are the protesters which, as you may expect, very strongly support the goals of the protest, about 93 percent say they support the goals and very strongly think the protests should continue.

The second bar represents the non-protesters. So, these are civilians in the survey sample who said that they've never attended a protest since February. The non-protesters, as you can see, are significantly lower in their support for the protests. But what's important to recognize is that it's still a majority of the non-protesters are supporting the goals of the protests and think they should continue.

The final three bars in each of these figures will show the three military personnel. So, these, the first one is soldiers. That doesn't show up. The first is soldiers;

the second are junior officers; and, the final bar are the senior officers. And so, what's immediately clear is that there appears to be a vertical split within the military where the lower ranks of the military, the soldiers and the junior officers, appear to be very supportive of the protests, about 80 percent of the lower ranks are saying they support the goals of the protest movement and think the protests should continue.

The senior officers, by contrast, are a bit more hesitant, only about 60 percent are saying that they support the protests. We should underscore that that's still a majority of the senior ranks, but this suggests that there is a bit of weariness or hesitation from the senior ranks towards the protest movement.

That vertical divide between the senior ranks and the lower ranks comes out throughout most of the survey questions. Here, for instance, are two specific goals of the protests. The first has been the resignation of the president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who resigned in April. As you can see, for that question, almost everyone agrees, almost everyone supports Bouteflika's resignation, about 90 percent of each of these groups. And that makes sense as Bouteflika was 82 at that point, mentally, almost incapacitated. Everyone seems to recognize that his time was up.

The question then was what comes after Bouteflika? What the protesters had been demanding is a complete change of the system, not just the removal of Bouteflika, not just this government, but the complete change of the political system and the system of patronage that he had created.

And what we see in the surveys that about 80 percent of the protesters, 82 percent, supported a complete change of the political system. Interestingly, among the lower ranks of the military, you see similar levels of support, about 80 percent in the survey are saying that they support this complete change of the political system.

Naturally, the senior officers once again, are a bit lower, only about 50, 60 percent are saying that they would support a complete change of the system. And that makes sense, these senior officers have been the ones who are most deeply invested in this

political system, the ones who have profited, not only from large military budget and high salaries, but also cronyism in the sense of family members being appointed to private and state-owned enterprises.

Also, in addition to the material gains, these senior officers have also benefited from political influence. Stephen Cook, for instance, describes the Algerian military as ruling, but not governing, as essentially running the political show from behind the scenes. So, these senior officers naturally have material and political interests to preserve the political system, whereas, the lower ranks have less of that. They haven't yet benefited from that political influence, so those material perks that tend to accrue to the senior ranks of the military.

So, the takeaway from these initial slides is this vertical divide between the junior officers and the soldiers versus the senior officers. That, I would guess, has likely inhibited the ability of the Army Chief of Staff Ahmed Gaid Salah to repress the protests, because it appears that the lower ranks of the military would actually prefer to side with the protesters as opposed to repress the protesters. So, at this point, it seems that high level repression from the military is unlikely, and as a result, the protests are likely to continue.

So, what are the protesters demanding exactly? What we see here is a complete change of the political system. But what does that mean, and what does that mean for the transition moving forward? We asked about several actions in particular, that would represent a clearing out of the old regime, and we see high support for four in particular.

The first is to rewrite the constitution, which sees very high support from almost all groups, 90 percent or so, even 85 percent of senior officers, would support rewriting the constitution. But the other actions that I've listed here are a bit more controversial.

So, the second action that the protesters are very much in favor of is the removal of the two B's, that's referring to the Interim President Abdelkader Bensalah, and

the current Prime Minister Noureddine Bedoui. Both of these figures, the two B's, Bensalah and Bedoui, are holdovers from the Bouteflika regime. The Interim President Bensalah used to be the speaker of the Upper House. And the current, the prime minister was the last Prime Minister of Bouteflika, Bedoui, he had previously been the Minister of Interior.

So, the protesters have targeted these two individuals, the two B's, repeatedly in their protests, as they recognize that a transition away from the Bouteflika regime cannot be run by individuals from the Bouteflika regime. And so they have been the target of many of the protests in recent weeks.

Interestingly, the lower ranks of the military as before, are actually quite supportive of removing the two B's. About 70 percent of soldiers and junior officers are saying they would support the removal of the two B's, and the senior officers once again are much more reluctant.

The other two actions here are other revolutionary actions to dismantle the Bouteflika regime. One is to seize the assets of businessmen affiliated or close to the Bouteflika regime. And the other is to ban senior members of the -- senior officials from the Bouteflika regime from running in the future elections. Here again, you see high support for both of those demands from protesters, from the lower ranks of the military, but again, less so from the senior ranks of the military.

Instead of this revolutionary path that the protesters are demanding, what the regime has done since Bouteflika's resignation is instead to pursue a more conservative path. What the regime did was to activate Article 102 of the Constitution, which says that as a result of Bouteflika's resignation, the Upper House -- the Speaker of the Upper House, Abdelkader Bensalah, becomes the interim president, who needs to hold elections within 90 days.

Those presidential elections were set for July 4th, initially, but this path, this Article 102, constitutional path, was widely rejected by the protesters for a couple of reasons. First, again, they did not want a transition led by the two B's, these holdovers from

the Bouteflika regime, but in addition, there were no guarantees that these July 4th presidential elections would be free and fair, or that they would have certain political liberties moving forward. And so what we see in the survey as well is that about only 20 percent of protesters thought these July 4th elections would be free and fair, and that they should stop protesting and start campaigning.

As a result of this popular rejection of the regime's path, only two relatively unknown figures put forth their candidacies to run for president. And as a result, the Constitutional Court rejected those candidacies and cancelled these July 4th presidential elections.

Later, on July 9th, the interim president's 90-day mandate ended, he is still in power in violation of that. But what is clear is that the constitutional path as written in the Constitution has expired, right? Ninety days have passed, there were no new presidential elections, and as a result, the regime is now left without any constitutional legitimacy to try to impose their preferred pathway.

So, the way forward now appears to be negotiations between the regime and the protesters. But the difficulty here is that unlike in Sudan, where you have a professionals association, that's, you know, heading the protests and that you can talk with, in Algeria there is no one hierarchical organization that you could speak to that would represent the protesters. But that's not to say that there are no leaders or figures who are popular among the protesters.

So, the next questions we asked in the survey, were who do these protesters support and who do they trust? Who could serve as potential leaders and representatives? So, we asked several different questions to try to get at this. But one I'll present here is how much support, how much do you support each of these 20 individuals? This is a bit difficult to see, so let me walk you through who emerges as the top leaders. This, by the way, is just among the protesters, but the results were very similar among the non-protesters and the military personnel.

There are two groups of individuals that appear at the top of the survey. The first are individuals who have already been floated as possible consensus candidates between the regime and the protesters. These are statesmen, who served prior to the Bouteflika regime. So, one of the top individuals here was the Former President, Liamine Zéroual, who was president from '95 to '99, prior to Bouteflika. Similarly, Houari Boumediene, who was the former foreign minister in the '80s, previous Minister of Education before that. And also Ahmed Ben Bella who was a former prime minister. Bouteflika's first prime minister from '99 to 2000, but who resigned in disagreement with Bouteflika, early on.

So, you have these three individuals who are former statesmen, but who are distant from the Bouteflika regime or not tainted by the Bouteflika regime. They appear at the top of our survey, even among the protesters, as individuals that they have support for. So, that would suggest that these individuals potentially could help to shepherd a negotiation or transition between the regime and the protesters.

The other group of individuals who we see support for in this survey are certain members of the opposition. In particular, opposition members who first are relatively centrist as opposed to Islamic or secular, and also who did not participate in elections under Bouteflika. And so therefore, did not help to legitimize the Bouteflika regime.

So, at the top of our survey status Fatas Maddula, an economist at the University of Blida, who has never run in elections. Similarly, we have Mustafa Masoudi, who was the head of, the former head of the Human Rights League, and who had run elections in 2012, won a seat, but then resigned from parliament saying it was toothless. And similarly, other political outsiders and figures who have either been in exile or have boycotted elections in recent years.

These are the figures that tend to be popular among the opposition, as opposed to the political parties that have been in some sense coopted by the Bouteflika regime and ran in the Bouteflika regimes elections. So, these are the individuals that we find in the survey have some support among the protesters.

In these negotiations that will eventually occur between the regime and the protesters, one sticking point that we find in this survey revolves around the role of the military and the interests of the military moving forward. And in particular from the survey, we can figure out a couple of different areas in which the protesters in the military are going to disagree.

One is whether to investigate military officers and potentially prosecute military officers for human rights abuses committed in the 1990s and in Algeria Civil War, the Black Decade. What we see in the survey is that about 60 percent of protesters want to investigate the military for abuses committed in the '90s. Naturally, only about the 33 percent of the senior officers want such investigations. So, that will be one potential friction moving forward.

Another revolves around the defense budget, both about civilian control and parliamentary oversight over that defense budget. But even the more mundane question of whether the defense budget should increase or decrease. We see in the survey that only 30 percent of protesters and non-protesters want the defense budget to increase, whereas, about 50 percent of senior military officers want it to increase even though it has already tripled in the last 10 years. So, these are two potential frictions moving forward.

And a third that we can highlight is the more general political role of the military moving forward. So, historically, the Algerian military has played a role of a referee of the political arena, or a moderator of the political arena, in the sense of approving and vetting presidential candidates. But more generally, also intervening into politics when, for instance, the feast is poised to take power in 1991.

This role of a guardian of the political arena, or the referee of a political arena, was largely rejected by the civilians in our sample, only about 30 percent of protesters and non-protesters said they wanted the military to play the referee of the political arena. And that's in line with the massive protests that we're seeing every Friday chanting against a military state and preferring a civilian state.

Military officers, however, are a bit more divided on this question. Here we find about 45 to 50 percent of a military personnel with every rank, are saying they want the military to be the referee of the political arena, and only about 20 to 30 percent are open and disagreeing that the military should play that role. So, that suggests that another potential friction moving forward revolves around this more behind the scenes political role that the military has played.

Finally in the survey, we also see some points of agreement between the protesters and the military that could serve as potential concessions to the military moving forward. One, for instance, is whether the military should have influence or veto power over security policy. And surprisingly, what we found was across the board general agreement that the military should have such power and decision-making power over security policy, all ranks of the military seem to want this and civilians appear to agree as well. So, that would suggest that one potential concession that could be made to the military moving forward would revolve around security policy moving forward.

All right, so to conclude, the takeaways from this survey are first that the protests tend to be popular, even among the non-protesters and majority were supporting the protests and want them to continue. As you can see in the paper, majority of Algerians are fed up with corruption and want a transition to democracy. The lower ranks of the military appear to support the protests, but the senior officers are more resistant. That I believe has likely prevented the regime from being able to repress the protests at this point. And so, so long as that continues, I think repression is unlikely.

The question then is then what would make that change? What we find is that the lower ranks are similar to the senior officers on attitudes related to the military and whether the military should be the referee of the political arena, whether they should have power over security decisions. If democratization encroaches on those interests, I think it's more likely that repression occurs, that the lower ranks would then agree to repress as a result of that encroachment.

And the final takeaway, I think, is that there are certain consensus candidates, especially these figures from the pre-Bouteflika regime, who may be able to have enough trust among the protesters and the regime to help shepherd a negotiated solution moving forward. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Well, good morning everyone. I have to say I am delighted, and I'll admit slightly surprised that we managed to pack a room in Washington D.C. to talk about Algeria in late July. But I think the fact that we have done so is indicative of the significance of what's been happening in this country over the last several months and its significance that goes well beyond Algeria itself.

And so I want to start by commending to all of you the full paper. Sharan presented just a slice of some terrific data that I think illustrates perceptions and attitudes that will shape what may come in this on-going confrontation between protesters and the regime in the search for some kind of proactive transition.

And in the course of our conversation this morning with Sharan, Alexis, Robert, we are going to dig into all of those questions. I want to start though, Sharan, with something that goes to what the survey does and what it doesn't do and give you a chance to fill in a little bit of what the survey doesn't do, but what you are thinking about in your other research. Because as you noted, you targeted this survey to certain segments in an attempt to dig into the attitudes of protesters, and the military at different levels.

So, we can't draw conclusions about attitudes of Algerians as a whole. But we do know that these events, these months and months of Friday protests, have been taking place in a context, a broader economic context, a broader political context. So, I'm going to start with you and then turn to our colleagues here on stage for their thoughts as well about that broader context and how you would connect these survey findings. Where are they consistent with broader trends that you see; where did they surprise you, given the broader trends that you see?

MR. GREWAL: Great. So, first of all let me reiterate, as Tamara also did

that the survey is not nationally representative and so we should not take it away as the majority of Algerians based on this survey, think X. The survey was designed to over represent these two populations, protesters and military personnel. And even there, I would caution that it's not, it's difficult to know if it is representative of the all the protesters or of all the military personnel almost certainly it is not as it as a sample based on Facebook.

But what it does do is that it provides one of the largest samples we have of protesters and of military personnel. So, even if it is not representative, I think it is still informative, and therefore, especially where it is consistent with what we're seeing on the ground, I think there is where we can take some strong takeaways from the survey.

So, where do we see consistencies? So, the first of course, is that the protests are popular, that there are massive number of people turning out every Friday in Algeria for the last 21 weeks. And the demands that the protests are chanting every Friday are also consistent with also what we are seeing in the survey that there is -- people are fed up with corruption; people think the economy is not doing well; people want free and fair elections; they want democracy; they want a complete change of the system. So, those demands are all consistent and we find support in the survey.

Other aspects that are consistent. So, one would be that many of the opposition figures and the political parties that have come to represent Bouteflika, the Bouteflika era, many of them are not popular among the protesters, or among Algerians more generally. So, many of the smallest Islamist parties, many of the small secular parties, even the ruling parties, none of them perform very well.

We had asked, as you can see in the paper, a potential parliamentary elections poll, who would you vote for in parliamentary elections, none of the parties get over 3 percent. So, there is absolutely no support for any of the existing political parties. On the other hand, as we saw in the survey, there appears to be some support for opposition figures who were unaffiliated with political parties or who didn't run in elections. There are a couple other points of consistency that perhaps we can tease out in the discussion.

MS. WITTES: Okay great. Ambassador Ford, I want to turn to you, because part of the context here for what we see happening in Algeria today is context that you lived through. Now, it's quite difficult for Americans to get access as researchers to Algeria, but you lived there for five years. And in fact, when we first met, I think you were recently back from your term as ambassador.

And that was your time there included the civil war and the aftermath of a civil war that killed more than 150,000 people and really traumatized a generation of Algerians, when it comes to the possibilities for political change and the risks of political change. So, I wonder if you can reflect a little bit on how you see these 21 weeks of protests and the results that Sharan has brought to us in the context of your experience?

MR. FORD: Well, first, thank you for inviting me. And I thought your study was absolutely fascinating. A couple of things just leap out at me. Number one, I was in Algeria from '94 to '97. I ran the embassy's political and economic section. This is well before the internet. And it would be hard for me to overstate to people here how horrible it was. Villagers were massacred by the dozens and horribly murdered, car bombs. And Algerians used to say on (speaking in foreign language) we don't know who's killing whom, which I think goes into your question then in the survey about should the military be held accountable or not. And that has been an issue for a lot of people, human rights defenders in Algeria ever since.

I am very struck, therefore, that over the last 21 weeks the protest movement has been exceptionally peaceful, well organized, but very peaceful. And that there is a real effort to reach out to the military during the marches themselves. I think you had a picture of a young lady handing a flower to some of the police. But they've also chanted that we're brothers with the security, handed out water. It's just a very different climate from the protest movement in Algeria of 1991, 1992 when Islamists were in the streets on mass, but we're not in any way reaching out to the military. I think there's a level of maturity here which is quite remarkable.

And the other thing I would just say is if you had told me, or frankly any Algerian, including the names of the various opposition and independent people in your survey, Sharan, if you had told us 10 years ago, that the very powerful heads of the military intelligence, general media, two prime ministers and a president would all be forced out and in some cases jailed, we would have said, wow, that's amazing. And so, there's been more change in some ways in the last five months than there had been in the previous 10 years.

MS. WITTES: So, Alexis, you focus on Algeria and North Africa as a whole, the Maghreb as a whole. And I wonder if some of what Robert was just describing, the discipline and the care in this protest movement to reach out to the military, does that reflect in your view lessons learned from other countries in the region?

MS. ARIEFF: Absolutely. I mean, everyone in the region has been watching other cases, certainly since 2011. But then, of course, there's also lessons learned from Algeria's own past, and Algerians would be the first to say, Algeria is unique, and we're going to make our own way. And you can't just sort of directly compare it to Egypt or especially, there's a lot of sensitivity about comparing to Egypt in particular.

But in so doing, they're also acknowledging that they do have watched these other cases play out. I think, one takeaway for analysts as well, because there should be lessons learned for those of us who watch these countries and try to extrapolate what might happen in the future, is that, number one, it's very difficult to know what people really think. So, this kind of study is useful, even if not even if the what you can extrapolate is limited, there are just very few ways for us to get good information about how people feel about their politics in settings such as Algeria.

So, we shouldn't assume that when people are quiet and not protesting that they're happy and optimistic about the future. Even pulling data it's just a snapshot, so I've been in a lot of Algeria discussions, for example, between 2013 and 2015, where discussions pointed at Arab barometer data, for example, showing that Algerians had become relatively more satisfied with their economic opportunities and with politics such as

they were, and pointed to that to say that Algerians were learning the lesson from Libya and Syria, that they would never --

MS. WITTES: The negative demonstration effect --

MS. ARIEFF: -- exactly that they would not challenge their government because uncertainty can prevail, and obviously that was also seen as a lesson learned from Algeria's own past. People's views can change and people can also take new conclusions to new places. So, all that to say that there are lessons learned. On the other hand, I think we still see a lot of uncertainty about where Algerians want things to go today. So, there isn't a clear mechanism through which Algeria is going to be led out of or lead themselves out of the current impasse.

We're in an extra constitutional situation. The constitutional mandate of the interim leadership is now over. There is no roadmap. There are sort of various efforts by certain civil society platforms and some government actors to put forward possible roadmaps, but I don't see anything like a jelling around one specific path forward. So, it's, there's still enormous amounts of uncertainty even months after Bouteflika was forced out.

MS. WITTES: So, I want to dwell on this for just a minute, because it strikes me that lessons have been learned about what these protesters don't want. They don't want to go down the road they've seen other countries take; they don't want to behave in the way that they feel perhaps the earlier generation behaved that created so much tension and resulted in a civil war. They don't want a civil war. At the same time, it's not clear what they do support or who, particularly who they do support. And there's no mechanism, as you said, Alexis, for a path forward because the institutional processes simply don't apply. So, there's literally no road from here, which puts those in power in a very advantageous position, right, they can invent a path. And I think the question posed by your survey results, Sharan, is what path could they invent that would get sufficient support from these key constituencies, protesters on the one side and military on the other, to be viable? Do you have any hint of an idea there?

MR. GREWAL: Sure. So, the good news is that the regime is no longer able to impose a roadmap without any consultation from the protesters or other actors. The path that they had relied on had a hint of legitimacy, a shroud of legitimacy because it drove from the Constitution, right. So, that gave it a bit of legitimacy that it no longer has. So, that's the first point.

So, now, any path they come up with has to be done in consultation, or else it will be rejected every Friday by protesters once more. So, what could that entail? What is clear is that there needs to be new elections and a new constitution. But before that even, the formation of an independent electoral commission, genuine rights and freedoms, freedom to create new political parties, so how to institutionalize that? Most likely the only credible path is through the removal of these two B's and the creation of some sort of national unity government that has some representation from protesters as well.

If the regime agrees to that, then we can see a path forward of national unity government that can hold credible elections, rewrite the Constitution, et cetera, but short of that, I don't see any path that can get Algeria through this without a massive protest continuing every Friday.

MS. WITTES: And the protest movement itself does not have a leadership of named individuals who are out in front, right? So, it's not clear if I were in the regime and I wanted to negotiate with people who are leading the protests, I don't even know who to talk to. Right. So, what, how is that taking place now, those attempts at dialogue?

MR. GREWAL: So, the regime has asked for dialogue on a couple different occasions and most recently, I believe, this morning had named a couple names that would be part of a dialogue. It's not yet clear if those figures have actually agreed to be in that dialogue, but I think even a dialogue would not be accepted by protesters until the two B's are gone. Until then, I mean, it's why I think the argument they're making every Friday is why would we negotiate with these remnants of the Bouteflika regime? We should be negotiating with some, either consensus candidate or some more moderate individual, that

we can actually have a discussion with, not these remnants from the old regime. So, that I think is the precondition to any negotiations.

MS. WITTES: You looked skeptical of that?

MR. FORD: This is why I am. We don't know. I think Alexis is right, Algeria is at something of an impasse and the way forward is unknown, underline, underline. One thing that has struck me watching this from a great distance, is that no one has yet been willing to get out in front of the hierarch of the head out of the street protest movement, and tell it to be reasonable, tell it to moderate, tell it to prepare to negotiate.

I mean, the government has said that and the result is denunciations the following Friday or Tuesday during the student demonstrations. I suspect that if the government tries to structure the dialogue and say here's our list, anybody on that list is going to be perceived by substantial elements of the street protest movement as being in league with the hated, distrusted government. And even people who were relatively high on your list on the left end of the scale, like Bensalah, Meta Bensalah, human rights lawyer, very, very brave man, defended Islamists during the 1990s Civil War, at great personal risk, his own life. But he's been very careful not to get out in front, and to say I don't represent them. And he doesn't want to be discredited that way, I think.

And so, I almost think it's going to take a group of people, maybe including a few of the names on the left side, who themselves say, we're going to start the process to sketch out a plan. And that might get a little more traction. I think if it's got even a fingerprint of the government on it, it's going to be much harder.

MS. WITTES: I recall the Egyptian military's attempt to pull protest leaders out of the crowd in Tahrir Square, in late January, early February of 2011, and bring them into a dialogue that was dominated by men in their 60s and 70s. And what ended up happening in most of those cases was those individuals spending a day and then coming out and telling the rest of the protesters, this is junk, which only made the confrontation worse.

I want to come back to something you said earlier, Robert, which is the sort of the concern about a confrontation with the military or the outbreak of violence that sort of lurks behind this protest and lurks in Algerian history. And so even though most of the young folks out in the street, the students on Tuesdays, and everyone else on Fridays, they have no memory themselves of the Civil War. They have heard these stories, they have heard about the horrors that you described, and they know that the military as they've reached out to the military, the military has also acted with a certain degree of restraint after the first couple of rounds. So, it's a tightrope, right?

I got to say that one of the things that struck me in your survey results, Sharan, was the similarity and views on a lot of questions between the senior officers in the military and the non-protesters who took your survey. So, at what point do any of you think that the military says, or the senior officer corps says, enough chaos, we're going to decide on a plan here and impose it. And we think we can get away with this because Sharan's survey tells us that everyone who's not in the streets already agrees with us. In Egypt, this was called the party of the couch, right. The folks who did not protest, who were sick of protests. And do you think that's a possibility here?

MS. RIEFF: So, I think, that's an excellent question. That is sort of the question in a lot of ways. I think, though also, there is this larger question about what are the military's interests? So, I think it is important to distinguish between a military that has some shared corporatist interests. So, the senior officers may be concerned not just about their ability to veto security decisions, but also maybe about certain economic prerogatives, a role in the illicit economy in Algeria, a role in sort of the black market importation of goods, these are thought broadly to be core interests of senior military leaders.

And maybe an interest also in tamping down demands for accountability. If that would mean opening up the kind of box of the '90s and maybe even leading to prosecutions or something like that.

On the other hand, it's not clear that the military as an entity has a lot of

shared goals. And it's also not clear that that officer corps, therefore, because they have those interests, wants to be running the political scene in the in the front being the face of the regime, let's say as they were briefly in the early '90s.

So, I think that when we talk about lessons learned, we should also think about what lessons the military learned from the 1990s. And I think it's fair to say that one of them seems to be that they don't actually want to be the face of the regime. Yes, they want to be able to veto certain things behind the scenes, they want to protect certain prerogatives, and Guisela has certainly challenged sort of that assumption with some of his public pronouncements. But I think the fact that even though guide sell it, there have been anti Guisela slogans in the protests, even though we see some pushback against Guisela in the survey data, he still hasn't proclaimed himself president. And we also see that he has a fair amount of support. Actually, he was sort of even with some figures like Benedor and others, even among sort of a broader Algerian community.

So, there isn't, it's not possible to say that there's sort of a unilateral, unanimous rejection of his role and leadership. So, it's this very delicate dance where the military senior leadership is seeing if it can maintain its --

MS. WITTES: Ruling, but not governing.

MS. ARIEFF: Exactly. Ruling, but not governing. Exactly. I think it's also important to see that just because the senior leadership in the military doesn't embrace the goals of the protesters does not mean that they are attempted to go in and shoot everybody who's protesting. So, I think it's very -- I think what we're seeing actually is not just that the conscripted core is acting as a counterweight in the military against repression. I actually think that one of the lessons learned for the senior leadership is that if you repress it can backfire. And they've learned that lesson again from watching Tunisia and other countries play out in the last few years.

So, I think there's a lot of restraint. They think that they can outwait the protesters. They think maybe that the protest movement will wane if it starts to really affect

the economy, I can imagine that calculation. Just because they think that they can win, doesn't mean that they're going to necessarily go in and massacre everybody in the streets. I should be very, very, very surprised if that happened, of course, you never know.

MS. WITTES: From your lips to God's ears, Robert, you want to jump in?

MR. FORD: It's also, I think, fair to say that the army's stance in this is not static. They have gradually, and I underline that word gradually, been increasing pressure against the Heidrich, against the street protest movement. They have started arresting people. Some protesters have actually now been sentenced to prison terms. They are either in detention or they've been sentenced to prison and they're out on appeal.

Several political figures, including a former War of Independence against France, a former veteran, has been jailed. Louisa Hanoune who figures well to the right on Sharan's polling scale, not a huge amount of street support for Louisa Hanoune, but she's been jailed. That's a very, she's a very visible opposition party figure.

They have been compared to where they were in, say, March and April. There's a bit more pressure on press, on media, TSA Algeria's now, which was a leading news site, you can't get it directly in Algeria. You have to go through a proxy server. So, they're sort of pressing the street protests movement very gently, nothing, nothing like 1992.

And the street protest movement is responding to that by trying to keep their numbers up in the street. They make a very visible call that people have to maintain the pressure, they have to stay out on the street. And so that I think is actually the week-to-week indicator of is the army going to do something. Because if the movement I think starts to get weaker, then the army might feel it's safe to raise the pressure.

MS. WITTES: So, it's a waiting game on both sides, then. Sharan.

MR. GREWEL: I'd like jump in on that.

MS. WITTES: Yeah.

MR. GREWEL: I think one way to think about when the military would try to impose a roadmap, which would by necessity require repression, revolves around perhaps

three factors. So, one is, as I discussed earlier, what the lower ranks, are they going to obey that order to repress these protesters or not? At this point, it seems like no. And I think until the military's interests, as Alexis talked about, are encroached on, I don't think the lower ranks are going to go with repression.

The second factor to think about, as you've noted as well, are the protesters, right. So, long as they're so numerous, it's very difficult to repress that amount of people. And so what the regime is trying to do, as Robert mentioned, is both to repress certain individuals, as well as sort of wait and see and hope it dies down. But in addition, also try to divide and rule the protesters.

So, you've seen, for instance, then the military guide Salah saying that the Berber flag shouldn't be flown when you should only flow the Algerian flag. So, that's trying to divide the protesters into Arabs and Berbers. You also see attempts to sort of insert some secular Islamic polarization, both in I think the involvement of some of the Islamist parties, in these negotiations in, for instance, becoming the head of the Parliament. Now, I think these are attempts to try to trigger some Islamic secularist concerns, in the hopes that that would divide the protesters and therefore, help the military to repress them.

But the final factor, other than the conscripts and the protesters, is the non-protesters, as Tamara, you pointed out. And this…

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…I think is critical, not just that this silent majority, this couch party, not just that they become disillusioned with the protests and would be supportive of some repression, but that they would come out to the streets to support that. Right.

I think the lesson that I learned at least from Egypt, from July 3rd and June 30th, is that there also needs to be some mass support in the streets in favor of repression that then gives the military justification to do that. And so I think until the non-protesters in Algeria, because I mean, at this point, that's unlikely, right? The non-protesters, at least in the survey, are very much in support of the protests, less so than the protesters, of course,

but in support of the protests, in support of a transition, fed up with the system. Until that changes and they come out into the streets, I think repression is unlikely of the protesters.

MS. WITTES: Okay, and as Alexis said, the economy is one factor and we have to remember this is a state driven rentier economy. So, global oil prices are also going to play a role here. So, I'm going to open it up in just a minute for your questions. So, please begin to think about that.

But before I do, there's one other issue I wanted to raise with all of you. Which is coming back to this question of who can represent the opposition in negotiations with the regime? Political scientists, we always say, the most stable kind of political transition is a packed transition one that's negotiated on the South Africa model, if you want to take one example.

And your survey results, Sharan, suggests that there are very few people who have better than, more positive than negative, let's say, associations amongst the protesters, and particularly any opposition figure who participated in the formal system under Bouteflika, is forget it, delegitimized.

And I find this very interesting because it cuts against the advice. Not only that sort of prodemocracy organizations often give to opposition parties, but that the U.S. government often gives to other governments and to opposition parties when a political system opens up enough to have some kind of elections, a semi-authoritarian system with elections, or managed elections. We'll often say go, participate, get what you can out of it. It's better to be in the game than to boycott.

Well, if I were an opposition leader in another country, weighing whether or not to participate in what I might think are rigged or limited elections, I would look at your survey results and say, no way that's going to taint me forever. So, what do we do with this insight?

MS. ARIEFF: I mean, that's actually what happened, right.

MS. WITTES: Yeah.

MS. ARIEFF: We didn't have elections on July 4th, is that nobody of any particular weight came forward to say I'm going to run. And even now, I think one of the biggest uncertainties is that no one is sort of visibly positioning themselves to run in some future election, which just underscores how unclear the roadmap is going to be. How soon elections might possibly occur and what significance they would take on.

So, that is exactly right. And I think it points to the larger phenomenon of people. As soon as somebody looks like they're trying to position themselves to be a power broker in the current situation, they're immediately discredited as being maybe manipulated by the state. I mean, it is a common thing that we've seen in other transitional settings, but I think it's particularly acute in Algeria, because there has been this political phenomenon or this political shorthand of pouvoir and sort of the idea that there is a system that unites kind of business, elite political, and senior military and senior intelligence ranks in some kind of nebulous behind the scenes decision-making body that's hidden from public view.

But that actually makes all of the important decisions over public life. There is this idea that that's how Algeria's system has worked. And there's this idea that that system kind of came to an accommodation under Bouteflika, and there was sort of a Pax Bouteflika, in a way after the 1990s where nobody was happy in the inner circles, and they also still saw themselves as competitors. But there was a way that these elite interests were mediated behind closed doors.

So, because that's already such a strong concept in Algerian political life, there's already this habit of, oh it's a flexible concept, right. So, anybody who seems to be opposition will actually they're -- Louisa Hanoune, opposition, but also pouvoir. Arisa Rebrab, who's on the face of it a strident opposition figure in the business community, also seen as close to the intelligence, the old Intelligence Service. So, anybody --

MS. WITTES: So, you're implying that this model may not apply as well elsewhere. This might be a problem that is particularly intense in the Algerian content?

MS. ARIEFF: I think there's something about Algerian political culture that

makes finding a consensual body of people who could claim to represent both the protesters and the ruling elite in some kind of credible good faith negotiation. It makes it particularly challenging I think.

MS. WITTES: Okay, Robert, you have spent a career across the Arab world in a number of countries that have these sort of electoral autocracy, do you do you think this applies beyond Algeria?

MR. FORD: Well, actually first, your summation of American policy is accurate and I am guilty as you charge.

MS. ARIEFF: As am I.

MR. FORD: But I think we did some of this together--

MS. ARIEFF: We may even have collaborated on that, yeah.

MR. FORD: So, absolutely our policies in places like Algeria, Egypt when I worked at the American Embassy in Cairo 30 years ago, even in Syria where we urged in March, April, May, June, we urged the Syrian street protesters to pick people to go talk to the outside government. We've always encouraged dialogue and a sense that if you're in the game, you can achieve gradual, but real change. I emphasize the words gradual and real, both gradual.

I think in Algeria, that's the case at least where there was no change. And as I said before there was almost no change for 10 years, and then suddenly outside the system there's been massive change. It may not be enough for the street protest movements, clearly not. But compared to the norms in Algeria, this is simply gigantic.

So, I think it behooves us, the foreigners on the outside, to be a little cautious about giving advice to people who have to deal with these authoritarian governments up close. I think a big dose of humility is in order.

MS. WITTES: And yet, there is a moment in any protest movement where you have to take the gains you've achieved on the street and translate them into institutional games. Right. So, at some point you have to figure out how to make that transition, Sharan,

or do you think there might be another way?

MR. GREWAL: If I can make two final points here?

MS. WITTES: Yeah.

MR. GREWAL: So, one is that even when negotiations start with the regime, protests still have an important role. The protests should be continuing to express whether they are happy with what's going on in the negotiation, and also to put pressure on the regime to give more concessions, for instance. So, protests still play a very important role even once the negotiations begin.

The other final point I would raise is that, as the survey shows as well, is that there's no one figure who could represent the protesters, right. Even so, yes, we see this difference between the opposition that was coopted versus the opposition that was somewhat distant. But even then, none of the figures get more than a three on average in the one to five-point scale. Right.

And so none of the figures are that popular among the protesters, which would suggest that for any negotiation, or even some national unity government to work, it has to include a number of these figures. Not just for instance, one consensus president for instance, but there's already been talk of having perhaps a consensus presidential institution of multiple people. That may be the way forward that gives enough buy in from different sections of the protesters.

MS. WITTES: Okay, thank you. I'm going to open it up to all of you. Please, number one, wait for the microphone. Number two, identify yourself. And number three, ask one concrete question. And let's start right up here.

MR. LAWRENCE: William Lawrence, George Washington University. Excellent panel. Excellent study. Thank you. The question for Sharan is how did you prevent in an online survey what often happens in American online surveys of sort of people flooding the zone with collectively generated answers? You must have had to verify unique addresses and then were there other ways that you sort of policed the viability rather than,

and got maybe more diversity in response than you would if respondents were manipulating, or trying to drive a certain agenda?

And if I could ask one more to the group, a question. Algeria has a kind of anti-politics, both at the regime level and at the street level, this sort of ideology of one people, that's one with the military and will almost like as a one party state will come up with one solution, notwithstanding all the interesting things you pointed out. So, I'm not sure anyone's going to be in a hurry to form political parties. So, the question for the panel is, you know, given all the questions that Tamara asked and the answers that you gave, how does a non-political party future of --

MS. WITTES: Got it.

MR. LAWRENCE: -- a transitional moment in Algeria look like?

MS. WITTES: Got it. Okay. Sharan, you want to start?

MR. GREWAL: Sure. So, first on verification of the survey respondents. So, the first point that you raised is that yes, so Qualtrics checks the IP address of each respondent and from the same IP address you cannot take the survey more than once. So, that's the first check. But that's surmountable, of course, you can get around that.

So, the other ways that we looked at it, so you can, I mean one, I'll also related to the IP address is that you can check that they're all coming from Algeria, for instance. So, it's not as if there's others taking the survey. Similarly, as the incentive for taking the survey, we provided phone credit to their mobile phone. And so those individuals who wanted that credit, put in their phone number, and we can also see that they're all Algerian phone numbers 213 country code.

So, that gives us some, at least initial verification that they're all Algerian, for sure taking the survey. Then about flooding, for instance, if there were bots, for instance, that were just taking the survey. So, it's one thing to, I guess, create a bot that would put the same comment on Facebook posts or to take a Facebook poll, which is like one question poll. But it's another thing entirely to create a bot that would take 100 question survey,

especially when the questions in the survey, the question order is randomized, the answer order is randomized. And it would be very difficult, I think, to create a bot that would be able to flood in that way.

The other way, though that we do check for it though, is that we can look for duplicates. If there's the exact same answers to all 100 questions that would suggest that there is some flooding and we saw very little of that, like less than 5 percent were the exact same. So, I think the concern of bots is not that high.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. And on the question of unity versus division.

MR. FORD: No, please.

MS. ARIEFF: I mean, this is sort of what I was getting at with this nebulous notion of pouvoir. I agree with your terms of anti-politics and I like the fact that you pointed out that it's both an impulse within power brokering circles and outside. I always think it's intriguing and telling that many political parties in Algeria don't have the word party in their name actually. They're either fronts or --

MS. WITTES: Rallies.

MS. ARIEFF: -- or yeah rallies, or other things. So, I think you're right to ask the question. I don't have a great answer. But I think one scenario that we haven't talked about, and it's sort of also a lesson learned scenario is, and this would be under the context of a broker transition, if something, if a roadmap emerges. But the Tunisian sequence of having elections, but for the constitutional --

MS. WITTES: Constitutional --

MS. ARIEFF: -- assembly or elections for the council that would lead Algeria during an extended transitional period, that is one that I assume people are looking at and that has obvious advantages. It has disadvantages too, it delays sometimes indefinitely the end point of when you actually have confirmed legitimate leadership.

On the other hand, it deals with these transitional questions of who speaks for who, who can decide divisive policy issues. Who can actually produce a constitution and

has legitimacy to do so? So, that would be what a constituent assembly election would produce in terms of results is unknown, but it could be that it produces a lot of independent candidates or blocks, and then that becomes the basis under which these things are negotiated. It's just one possibility among many.

MS. WITTES: Robert, did you want to add anything?

MR. FORD: Well, two comments, Bill. Nice to see you again. First, I don't know that Algeria is still in the one nation one politic. I mean, its part unique. That's kind of passé now, I think in Algeria, that one party, the FLN and the umbrella. It's very noticeable that the FLN has really splintered in all of this, as did its government coalition.

So, I would assume, in fact, that what will happen is that you'll get an atomization of the body politic and you'll get many, many, many associations, rallies, friends, parties, whatever. I recall in the first elections in Iraq, the ballots were about this big. No it's true.

MS. WITTES: Yeah.

MR. FORD: You can go see one down at the George W. Bush Library. And it had about 140 political parties. That was kind of absurd. So, that I think is a more likely scenario for Algeria. And I think the point you've raised Alexis about the order in which the transition comes that, what you're talking about elections for constituent assembly to write a constitution and then go to election.

That is not what army chief Gaid Salah is talking about during his Tuesday weekly address. He's talking about Presidential elections now. And I think many people suspect, notably the street protesters, that the reason he's pushing it so hard, is he knows he can manipulate it.

MS. WITTES: Okay, on the aisle in the black jacket. Yeah.

MS. ANDERSON: Thank you very much for this. It's very interesting. Christina Anderson, AWPS News. So, two bureau chiefs have lost men forced out of the country, AFP and also Writers. My question is about the military being very focused and

apparently they were behind the scenes with this manipulation, but that's unclear. So, with the army cracking down more and more on protesters, more and more arrests and prosecutions now happening, and the inability for journalists to get information, is there a role for outside parties to try to push more for more openness, more information, more ability to cover?

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Thank you, I'm going to turn to the diplomat for that one.

, MS. ANDERSON: Thank you.

MS. WITTES: Robert?

MR. FORD: I have to say, personally, I'm very reluctant to see outside countries try to get very involved in what's happening in Algeria. I think where we really ought to draw the line is defending Algerians' rights as they are enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights. And I wouldn't go much beyond that. I don't think it's -- I don't think we're very good at picking individuals or picking people, I think we need to get very, very far away from that. And just stay at the hundred thousand foot level.

MS. WITTES: Are there regional governments that are pushing one way or the other in Algeria?

MR. FORD: There is kind of collective wisdom that I see coming out of a Heidrich, out of the street protest movement, that the Emirates are encouraging the military to be tough. But I think that is a suspicion, not based on anything that I've seen as evidence but, Alexia, Sharan, maybe you've seen something?

MS. WITTES: Thanks. Anything to add?

Mr. GREWAL: So, I haven't seen any verification or evidence that foreign powers are meddling in Algeria in a way that these specific countries in particular have been meddling in Sudan and Egypt, for instance, which is somewhat surprising that they wouldn't. But one thing that may be interesting is that we added recently a question about which

countries would you want to see stronger relations with? We added it more recently. So, we didn't feature it in this report, but maybe if we do a follow up we would put it there.

But what we're seeing so far is that Algerians in the survey don't want stronger relations. They want to reduce relations with the UAE, with Saudi, with France was the very lowest. The U.S. comes somewhere in the middle, and then it's Turkey, China, and Russia that are at the top that Algerians want stronger relations with.

MS. WITTES: Okay, I'm going to see if we can take a couple questions at a time. So, why don't we take those two right there? Yeah. Starting with the lady in the blue sweater. Yeah.

MS. COLLINS: Thank you. Sarah Collins, Congressional Research Service. My question --

MS. WITTES: That was a plant Alexis.

MS. ARIEFF: See me afterwards.

MS. COLLINS: So, we've seen a lot of people be arrested on corruption charges, but that's not really seeming to satisfy the protesters. What are the bigger economic concerns that people have? What are the structural things that need to change to bring more of a satisfied response from the protesters?

MS. WITTES: Great, and then just hand the mic to the gentleman behind you? There.

MR. ABDULLAH: Hi, I'm Abdullah. I'm from by Muslim Lincoln Newspaper. I'd like to comment about the opposition --

MS. WITTES: We're not taking comments; we're just taking questions.

MR. ABDULLAH: No with a question, yeah. With a question.

MS. WITTES: So a well formulated question please.

MR. ABDULLAH: Okay. Algeria doesn't have any opposition parties, since Algeria gained independence. But we have opposition within the regime between intelligence services, the army, the presidency. And this is the first time where one man is

controlling the three factions, intelligence services, presidency and the army. So, how do you see that, this president situation will shape the future of Algeria?

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Okay. So, first on the economy, second on the reins of power. Sharan you want to start?

MR. GREWAL: Sure, Just one quick point on the corruption trials. I think the protesters are viewing that with two minds. On the one hand, yes, they're happy that there are these trials against these figures, unprecedented arrests of former prime ministers. But they're also viewing it skeptically in the sense that it's very clear that these are not necessarily free and fair trials, or that there is an independent judiciary. It seems very much politically motivated that Gaid Salah, or others are ordering your arrests of essentially enemies or rivals within the institution.

Sure, it's a concession to protesters, but I think they realize that there's also this underlying nature to it, which is, I think why you're not seeing that much support, I think for those corruption trials.

MS. ARIEFF: Sure. And a comment on the economic question. I think there is probably no majority support for a single economic system in Algeria. I think it as with anyway it would be very difficult to sort of figure out even if you were starting from scratch, sort of how the economy should be run. Obviously, until to date it's been run in this extraordinarily state centric way that's just incredibly out of sync with both how Western donors think that an economy should be run, but also even how other countries in the region are organized.

I think the economy was a catalyst for these protests, but in a slightly nuanced way. Not necessarily because Algerians look at the economy and say, oh I sure wish that I had a market-based capitalist economy along the lines of what the IMF would propose, if they came into Algeria. Clearly, that's not a major demand in Algeria.

But because they saw the current economic system as having been based on a social contract and there won't be enormous entrepreneurship or dynamism in the

economy. On the other hand, people will have a decent minimal and actually rising standard of living and that there will be, despite inequality at the very extremes, that there will actually be a fairly large middle class that has really emerged in the last couple of decades.

And the news and public statements about fiscal balances in light of the oil price crash and the gas price crash really raised anxiety inside and outside the system, that that social contract could not continue in its current form.

So, I think the economy is actually another example of what you alluded to at the beginning, where it's very clear what people don't want. They don't want corruption. They don't want shadowy economic masterminds who operate with a lot of impunity, and are seen as controlling consumer good flows and so forth. But it's not clear what they do want. And I think we would be mistaken to think that because people are unhappy with the current economic status quo, that that means that they would wrap their arms around the kinds of reforms that the donor community would come in and advocate.

MS. WITTES: Yeah, and Robert, you were ambassador during a time when you operate in an authoritarian country you're often engaged in criminology about the regime, right. So, how did that --

MR. FORD: Especially in Algeria.

MS. WITTES: -- read on the divisions within the regime, sit with you?

MR. FORD: Well, first again in humility, I'd have to say, I don't think any of the embassies operating in Algeria when I was there, understood very well the really detailed workings of how the pouvoir operates. I do think there is a system, maybe, Alexis that I disagree on how nebulous or opaque it is. I think it exists. What kinds of issues divide it? They don't like to talk about that in public. And is it business or is it strategy? I don't know.

It seems pretty clear that there was a disagreement between the Bouteflika family and Gaid Salah and some of his army commanders, and what a surprise the army won. Let that be a lesson. Let that be a lesson. And it just reminds me again, for American

policy, it's much better to stay at a higher level defending broad principles without trying to muck around too much in the operations of a system that we don't understand it very well.

I get very nervous when people think the Americans have to do something about Algeria, because it's not clear (a) what would we do; what would be the impact of what we do when we don't clearly understand how the system works? And staying at a higher level I think it makes more sense.

MS. WITTES: Great. I'm going to try and take a few more questions before we close here in the front if you can, Israa. We'll start with Mohammed in the second row.

MR. ISHELL: Mohammed Ishell, with (inaudible). The army has been managing the transition so far, and the Chief of Staff was agitated last week when some Algerians were calling for civilian democratic state.

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. ISHELL: What does that tell us about the intention of the army at the end of the game?

MS. WITTES: Thank you and just the gentleman right in front of you. Thank you.

MR. SIRHAN: Thank you very much. This is Ambassador Sirhan, I represent Arab League in Washington. Actually, I missed the first part of the session for some reason. So, my question now, so I'm asking Sharan, Sharan, if you heard about the new elimination of the new speaker for the Algerian Parliament. What do you think how the street received that sort of nomination? And how is the new speaker impact on the political crisis now in Algeria? Thank you.

MS. WITTES: Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much. So, a question about civilian control. The demand among protesters for civilian leadership, not Gaid Salah. And the nomination of a new speaker in Parliament and how does that affect this challenge we've been describing of coming up with new leadership?

MR. GREWAL: Sure. So, first on the new speaker. So, the new speaker

comes from a very small Islamist party who's the head of the parliamentary block of this coalition of three very small Islamic parties. And he's been somehow made the Speaker of the Parliament after getting the support of some of the larger parties.

How did the protesters view it? I think with skepticism. I mean, on the one hand, yes, it's a concession. You have this opposition figure who's now the head of the Lower House of Parliament, but I think he has very low popularity as his party does as well. And so I don't think the protesters see this as a big win, to have this opposition figure. And I think they also recognize that since this party has, what like 15 seats in the Parliament that that parliamentary speaker won't be able to do anything in that Parliament without the consent of the ruling parties. And those who hold the majority of the seats.

So, I don't think they see this as a win. And I think there's also another lens to view it more skeptically. Which is that this is an Islamist figure who's been named the head of the Parliament. And so you could even see it as the regime trying to fuel secular Islamic tensions by explicitly appointing and Islamist to try to divide and rule some of the protesters. So, I don't think they're welcoming this new speaker.

MS. WITTES: Civilian control. Is that, I mean maybe let me try and sharpen your question, if you'll give me permission, Muhammad, if the le pouvoir is behind everything, how do you ultimately solve that problem? You solve it by insisting on having a clean civilian, unaffiliated with previous governments. Right. Because somehow having that person in front deflates the power. Is that just a fantasy on the part of protesters? Is it a wise demand? Is it irrelevant?

MS. AREIFF: That's a right question. You stumped him.

MR. FORD: So, what I would say to that is, first, it's just very important to emphasize that the street protest movement itself is not just about removing the president, the Interim President Bensalah and the Interim Prime Minister Bedoui. It's about changing the whole system. I mean they have this expression in Algeria (speaking in foreign language) and (inaudible) is a very Algerian Arabic word that just means, the lot of it. Just

let them go. And get them out.

And that's not asking for incremental change here and there. It's talking about changing a system. Probably the most surprising result of your survey to me was that even among the protesters, they were willing to give the military a wide margin of authority on security issues.

I'm kind of curious, as this situation as this impasse continues, my guess is the protest movement itself will become more and more suspicious of the senior elements of the military. And so then it becomes a question of, can the protest movement itself understand that it needs to reach out to those beyond its massed ranks on Fridays, and pull in still more, including junior officers?

It's been pretty smart about the way it's handled the military and the police so far. I've watched videos of these protests where they're back slapping and cheering police officers and they are very careful not to attack verbally, to attack the police, not to attack verbally the army. And so, they're pretty shrewd for a leaderless group. But you know, how do you take that to a transition? That's not so clear.

MS. WITTES: Other thoughts? Okay, let's sneak in one last question here on the side. Just wait for the microphone, if you would. Thank you.

MR. MONCEF: Thank you very much, Moncef Con. One point, one factor that is critical and has been lacking in this discussion and from the coverage, the international coverage of what's happening in Algeria right now, over the past 20 weeks now, is the magnitude of the protest. It's a revolution in the making. It started not in Algiers, it's fair to remind colleagues, it started in the countryside in the provinces and its spread throughout the country.

So, I know political scientists have the tendency to try to make comparisons. But it's quite unique in the sense that it's, Algeria is a huge country. It's --

MS. WITTES: Okay and your question.

MR. MONCEF: The question is twofold but allow me just 30 seconds. It's a

huge country. So, it's quite extraordinary to have that protest throughout the country. And the numbers have not been mentioned. Even today, you read a newspaper and they talk about thousands of Algerians protesting. It's been plateaued between 20 and 22 million people every single Friday, not to mention the millions throughout the week at 20 to 22 million. That's roughly 50 percent of the population, that's unprecedented.

One of the main demands is about corruption. And here's my question. It's been estimated that per annum during the first 10 years to 20 years $5 billion have been embezzled. $5 billion per annum. Whatever the estimation, it might be off by a couple of billions, but it's still substantial. What can, and those monies are sitting in foreign banks in the West, essentially. What should or what could U.S. banks, U.S. authorities and others do at least to freeze assets?

MS. WITTES: Great. Okay. So, Sharan, first, I want to let you address the national scope question, because I know the survey responses you got were heavily concentrated on the coast and in the capital. So, if you can talk a little bit about that, and then we can tackle this stolen capital question.

MR. GREWAL: Sure. So, the survey, yes, it over represents some of the urban areas, but there are still a ton of respondents coming from rural areas as well. I haven't looked into whether their differences in their attitudes, but what's certainly important to underscore is the huge number of protesters that are protesting. I'm not entirely sure on the figure, but it's certainly a tremendous amount of protesters and something that's completely unprecedented.

In terms of assets, assets that are abroad. There's, I mean, huge support in the survey among all of these groups for seizing assets of businessmen repatriating them and using them in some form. So, I would certainly hope that the international community would help in repatriating those assets. But I mean, if we also look at Tunisia, they're having similar troubles of assets from the Bengali family, the Trabelsi family that had gone abroad. And has struggled to bring it back to Tunisia. And so let's hope, but we'll wait and see.

MS. WITTES: Yeah. Other thoughts?

MS. ARIEFF: Just from a matter of policy, I think it's notoriously difficult to repatriate stolen assets. But that doesn't mean there aren't good examples out there where it's been done well, and there has been some progress on the Tunisia side. On the other hand, as a matter of policy, it requires either a legal or of political ask right? So, you would either need the government of Algeria or some future elected government of Algeria ideally, to make that ask on a bilateral basis.

And/or you would need some kind of judicial mechanism for starting that process. So, as with everything else, all of that is on hold --

MS. WITTES: Until there is a transition, or government --

MS. ARIEFF: Until some --

MS. WITTES: Is willing to make the ask.

MS. ARIEFF: -- maybe some of these cases could come before the courts, and we could see some progress before then. But it seems like it's stalled for now.

MS. WITTES: Yeah.

MR. FORD: I was just going to say one step that's very much an evidence-based process for Western countries, certainly for the United States. And as I said before, I don't think we have a very detailed understanding of the internal operations for how for example, much of this corruption works. You're looking skeptical, but there's the CIA in the movies, and then there's the real CIA.

And so if furnished by a government, evidence of ill-gotten gains, it's much easier for the United States then to move forward. But in the absence of that evidence, it's actually quite difficult.

MS. WITTES: Yeah. And I will say as well, you know, this is an issue that came up in 2011, in 2012, with Egypt, with Libya, with Tunisia, as you noted. And even once the government of the country concerned makes that formal request, there is a lot of legal process that would have to take place in Algeria in order to enable banks.

So, say, for example, there's an allegation that a given businessman, Algerian businessman, got a sweetheart contract from the regime and stole a billion dollars that way. The Algerian courts would have to rule that that was illegally done, and that the money is owed back to the Algerian state before foreign banks would then be able to seize assets. So, it will require an Algerian government with the will and the capacity to do that work and that's why this asset forfeiture stuff is so slow in so many cases.

So, I recognize it's often the first demand of a transitional government, and it's something that has a lot of popular support. But to do it in a way that accords with due process takes a lot of time. And, as Robert said, a lot of evidence.

We're going to have to end it there, folks. Thank you so much for coming. Thanks to our terrific panel and Sharan and your colleagues for a great paper. Thank you.

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