EXPLAINING THE RESURGENCE OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Why has the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region seen the resurgence of authoritarianism in the post-2011 Arab Spring uprisings era? Despite broadly positive attitudes toward democracy, the resurgent authoritarianism and sustained corruption since the Arab uprisings (and in non-Arab countries, such as Iran and Turkey) will likely be an enduring feature of the region as a whole in the coming years. Experiments in this era of resurgent authoritarianism point to the perseverance of the old institutions that are central to the maintenance of order and stability. Especially in post-conflict societies, the need for order and stability has outweighed the demand for civil-political rights and constitutional changes. Arguably, the resilience of authoritarianism does not reflect deeply rooted beliefs in such forms of governance, but rather demonstrates the persistent public fear of political uncertainty, instability, and deteriorating economic conditions.