

10 NATIONS TO WATCH IN THE FUTURE

Area studies specialists failed to predict the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the fall of the Soviet Union, or the Arab Spring. Other than existing conflicts in Libya, Syria, Yemen, the South China Seas and Ukraine, the following 10 countries (in no particular order) are 'on the radar' due to early warning signs of pending instability.



1. SAUDI ARABIA

Falling oil prices - looming debt/economic crisis

Involved in "never-ending" conflicts in Syria and Yemen

No clear successor for ailing king



Arch-enemy Iran empowered by long-time ally, US, through nuclear deal

"Expect an isolated and domestically weaker kingdom to lash out in new ways."

2. ALGERIA



Falling oil prices - increased social discontent

No clear successor for ailing president (long-time strongman)

Increase in refugees/migrants seeking work, refuge, or passage to Europe - raised ethnic tensions



"Algeria practises a politics of silence. We even have no idea who governs our country."

3. MALDIVES



Rising religious (Islamic) intolerance and increased conservatism

Political instability

Gangsterism



Key external influences: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt

"This place is more dangerous than they think. It is becoming highly radicalised. This is not a paradise on Earth anymore."

4. JORDAN



Economic crisis - influx of Syrian refugees



Terror attacks and rising homegrown extremism

King Abdullah II more popular abroad than at home

"The only threat... that would put the state in danger is coming from within Jordanian society."

5. TURKEY



Involvement in regional conflicts

Strongman leadership style of President Erdogan

Increased influence of ultra-nationalist, Doğu Perinçek

Key external influences: Russia, Kurds, exiled cleric (Gulen)



"Turkey is a very polarised and bitterly politicised country".

6. NIGERIA



Terrorist (Boko Haram) insurgency

Ethnic and religious division/tension

North-South economic disparity

Endemic corruption challenges

Piracy in Gulf of Guinea



"If its fragile democracy fails, West Africa may see a conflict worse than any it has seen in decades."

7. RUSSIA



Strongman leadership style of President Putin

Demographic crisis - rising Muslim/falling ethnic Russian population

Growing numbers of Muslims in military - question of loyalty in sectarian conflict



"The future will belong to the Muslims. They will plough this land, because today's Christians are not in need of these things."

8. MAURITANIA



Impoverished Islamic republic

Slavery still practised

Haven to smugglers and terrorists

Weapons readily available via Libya

Key external influences: Saudi Arabia, Gulf States



"The country is slowly but surely becoming more pious and conservative."

9. CHINA



Uneven economic development and possible stagnation

Regional expansionism could overstretch resources

Demographic crisis from one-child policy



"China, instead of growing rich and then getting old, will grow old long before it has a chance to get rich."

10. ETHIOPIA



Prevalent poverty

Heavily dependent on agriculture - vulnerable to drought/floods

Ethnic and religious division/tension

Key external influences: Ethiopian diaspora (living abroad)



"They want to rule the old way, and people are refusing to be ruled in the old way."