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SPECIAL REPORT:

RIISING YOUTH MOBILISATION AND THE CHALLENGE TO POLITICAL STABILITY GLOBALLY

Youth-led protests are reshaping politics and impacting economies across emerging markets, with unrest spreading from Nepal to Kenya, Indonesia, to Mongolia. Driven by inequality, corruption, and exclusion, these movements mobilise rapidly through digital platforms and resist blunt state repression. As demographic shifts intensify, recurring protest cycles are set to become structural features of politics, testing resilience and demanding forward-looking strategies from policymakers and businesses alike.

Across continents, governments are being tested by youth-driven protests that reveal the fragility of the social contract. From Nepal to Kenya, Indonesia to Türkiye, recent flashpoints show how economic frustration, political exclusion, and governance failures can rapidly spill onto the streets. While these movements share generational characteristics, often mobilised through digitally connected Gen Z social networks, they are shaped foremost by country-specific grievances and political dynamics closer to home. In some cases, protests have already forced governments into concessions, reshaping tax directives and political agendas. With economic headwinds and weak institutions persisting in many states, the risk of further unrest remains high, demanding close attention from policymakers, business leaders, and investors navigating these volatile environments.

While each case is distinct, there are some similarities that could point to new markets that carry comparable vulnerabilities. The most recent surge of unrest in Nepal in early September is therefore not an isolated flashpoint, but a critical signal that youth activism is entering a less predictable, more disruptive phase. Youth-led unrest is emerging as a structural force, rooted in local grievances but likely to erupt simultaneously across multiple countries facing similar challenges. For commercial stakeholders, resilience now depends on anticipating the political agency of a restless generation reshaping its future. The trajectory of these movements will test governments and global businesses alike, rewarding those able to account for social volatility into long-term plans and adapt to shifting demographics. Investors and commercial operators must balance traditional economic fundamentals with social risk factors such as unemployment, inequality, and state-level corruption, within their strategies.

PANGEA-RISK highlights how youth unrest is reshaping politics and economies in emerging markets, identifying where volatility is most likely to occur and how demographic change is driving both instability and transformation. Our aim is to provide foresight that helps anticipate disruption, manage exposure, and inform strategies to evolving risks.

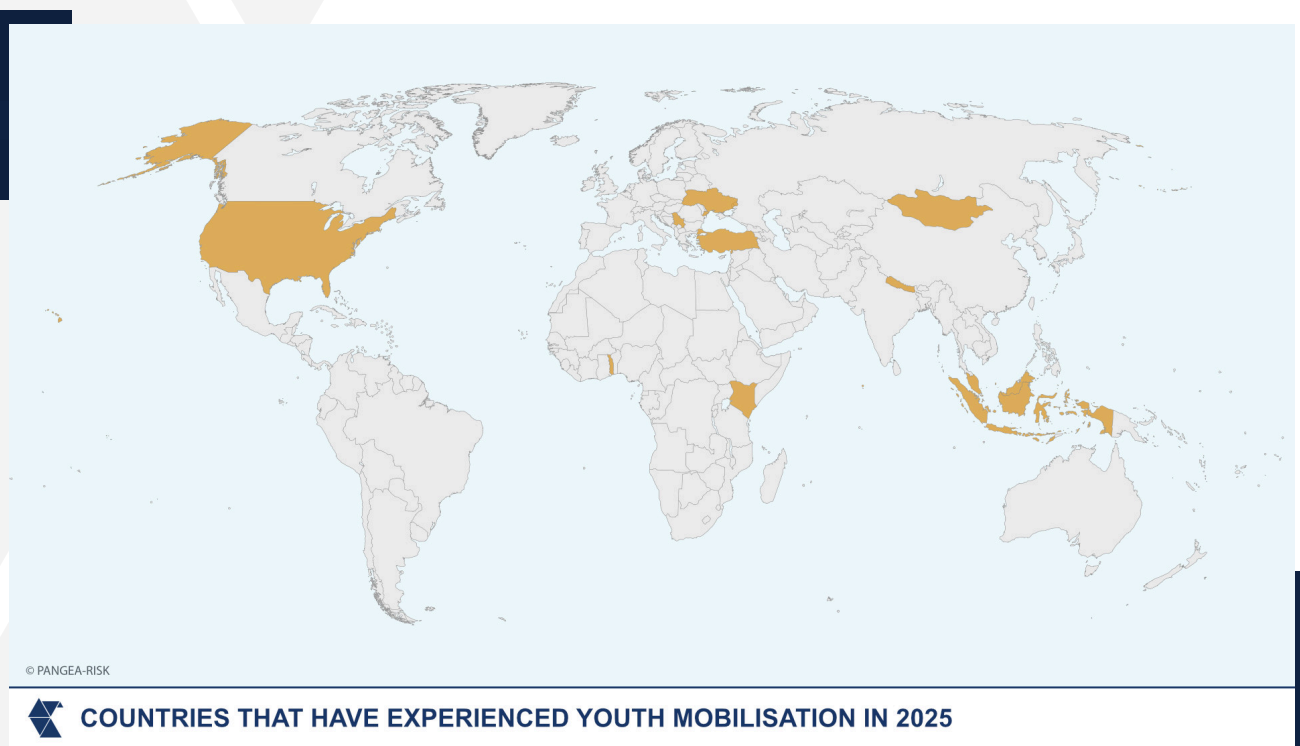
Mobilisation outpaces state responses

The events in Nepal in early September signal that youth unrest has entered a phase beyond predictable cycles and established pressure points. The sudden decision by the government to block access to 26 social media platforms triggered a national uprising in less than 48 hours. While earlier protest waves in the region had centred around economic grievances or corruption scandals, this round drew its momentum from what younger citizens viewed as a direct assault on their political voice, their access to information, and their role in the national conversation. The recent unrest was the cumulative effect of [repeated state attempts to control](#) how young people express themselves and engage politically. And, as a result, within three days, state institutions had been torched, more than 70 people were killed, over 300 were injured, and the prime minister was forced to resign.

The character of youth unrest across recent cases shows a shift in protest organisation and objectives. Mobilisations now emerge rapidly, without the need for traditional political leadership, formal opposition movements, or party affiliations. The Indonesian protests that erupted in late August were initially sparked by proposed parliamentary reforms, but quickly evolved as delivery riders, students, and informal workers, who identified with broader concerns about inequality and elite impunity, joined the campaign. Campus-based mobilisation was again at the centre, and coordination moved through encrypted messaging applications and short-form video platforms rather than a formal opposition. State responses focused on physical containment, deploying riot police and conducting large-scale arrests. These tactics failed to break the momentum, with the unrest having a direct impact on Indonesia's economic standing. The Jakarta index, for example, dropped by over 3 percent on 1 September before partially stabilising, reflecting how markets reacted to the protests and the government's inability to contain them.

Similarly, in Mongolia, [anti-government protests escalated in mid-2025](#) under near-identical dynamics. Protesters were overwhelmingly under 30 years of age, organised through encrypted message applications, and mobilised across urban and peri-urban locations without affiliation to any formal movement. The momentum of protests was sustained not by central leadership but by a circulating digital repertoire that reframed political grievances through generational identity. As in Nepal and Indonesia, the Mongolian government responded with curfews, internet restrictions, and mass detentions, all of which only exacerbated youth grievances.

[The renewed unrest in Kenya this year](#) signals the persistence and durability of underlying youth grievances. The demonstrations coincided with the one-year anniversary of the tax uprising in June 2024 and were framed by youth groups as a direct continuation of this unresolved dispute. Unlike episodic protests driven by single issues or once-off government decisions, this round was embedded in a narrative of betrayal, where earlier concessions were seen as cosmetic and accountability was absent. At least 27 people were killed during the two separate mobilisation phases. The state response was both repressive and politicised. President William Ruto authorised police to shoot protesters in the legs, and courts aligned with counter-terrorism frameworks to charge detained youth.

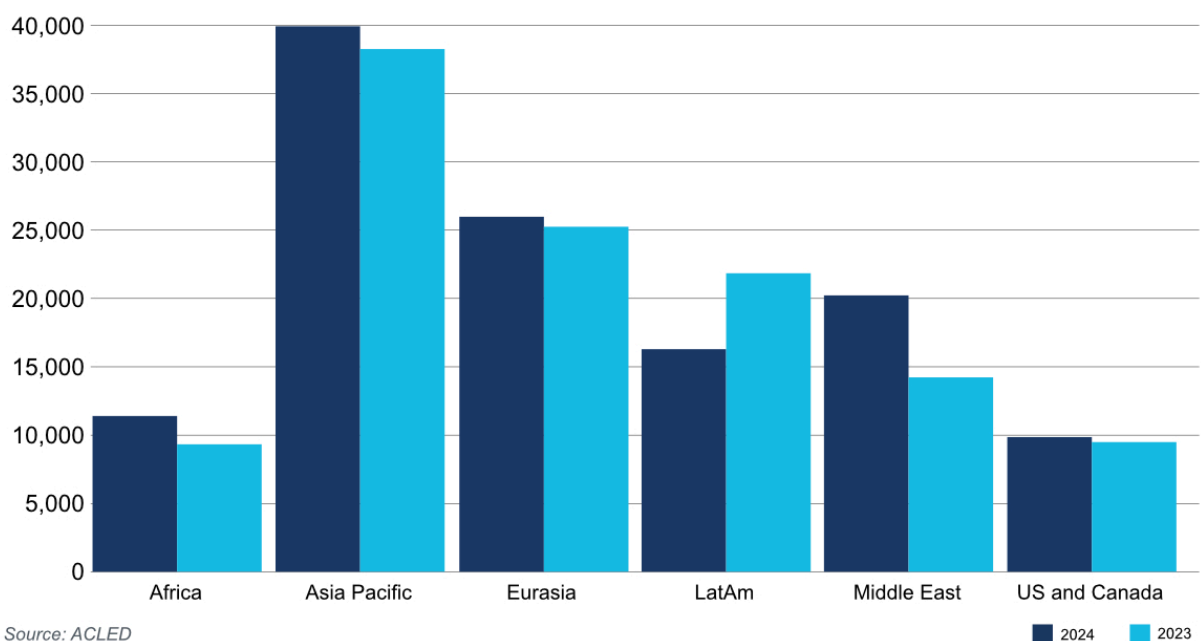


In Türkiye, youth participation in opposition-led protests escalated in September against a year-long legal crackdown on members of Türkiye's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), including rulings that invalidated the party's 2023 congress. [These developments followed months of pressure on CHP](#) figures, including the arrest of Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu in March. Although the political opposition proved central to the campaign, the September mobilisation reflected a broader resistance to perceived judicial interference in political opposition, with tens of thousands joining public demonstrations. Student groups and young professionals featured prominently, framing the protests as a defence of electoral pluralism and institutional continuity.

Across these cases, it is evident that protest coordination is becoming agile; digital strategies are growing more evasive; and, the ability to sustain pressure without formal representation is increasing. Governments are not adapting at the same pace. While states have moved to block online platforms, impose curfews, and criminalise mobilisation under broad legal frameworks, these responses appear to escalate rather than suppress the youth challenge. In Nepal, attempts to disable digital tools triggered state collapse. In Kenya, the escalation of force was met with repeated protest phases. In Türkiye and Mongolia, judicial containment strategies backfired by broadening the appeal of mobilisation. It is evident that state reliance on blunt control measures such as platform bans, heavy policing, and legal manipulation, no longer deters organised youth dissent. Instead, these responses often deepen institutional weaknesses, damage state legitimacy, and broaden support for protest movements.



NUMBER OF PROTESTS AND RIOTS BY REGION



Economic grievances and political disenfranchisement drive unrest

While each case reflects specific local dynamics, two overarching themes persist across recent unrest globally, that of long-standing economic grievances and political disenfranchisement. The convergence of these issues ultimately reflects a deeper breakdown in the social contract.

Economic grievances remain the most pervasive and immediate driver of recent protest action. In many developing and least developed countries, elevated levels of youth unemployment, high costs of living, and reduced purchasing power have narrowed pathways to economic advancement. These economies have failed to generate sufficient high-quality jobs to absorb growing youth populations, instead pushing many into informal work or compelling them to pursue economic migration. These grievances help explain the surge in public anger towards political elites perceived to be enriching themselves at the public's expense. In Mongolia, protests targeted the prime minister's son's extravagant lifestyle; in Indonesia, lawmakers' perceived financial privileges; and in Nepal, the children of political leaders seen as symbols of elite impunity. Across these cases, perceptions of inequality reinforce discontent. At the same time, entrenched economic pressures limit governments' ability to advance unpopular policies even when they may be required, as seen in widespread resistance to tax hikes and austerity measures in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and elsewhere.

PROTESTERS CONFRONT POLICE IN INDONESIA IN AUGUST 2025

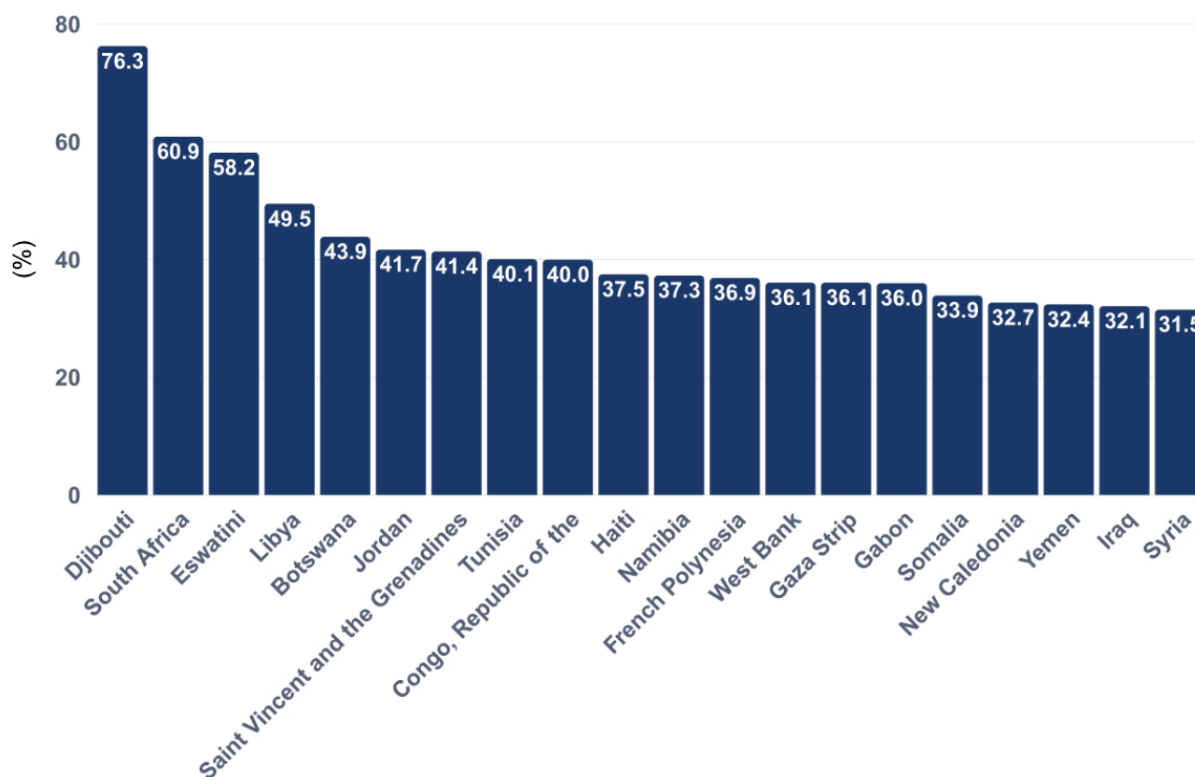


Political disenfranchisement constitutes the second main pillar of the unrest. Despite high levels of civic consciousness, youth across the Global South experience limited representation within formal political processes. Corruption, patronage, and dynastic politics further amplify the disconnect between governing authorities and the governed. This sense of political marginalisation deepens when governments respond to dissent with indifference or repression.

When authorities resort to force against protesters, small, localised, and peaceful demonstrations can escalate into large-scale and violent unrest. For example, in Bangladesh, the 2024 student protests over government job quotas persisted peacefully for several weeks. However, the government's use of lethal force to suppress demonstrators triggered widespread unrest, ultimately culminating in the collapse of the Awami League administration. Similarly, what began as peaceful gatherings against parliamentary perks in Indonesia recently [escalated into countrywide protests](#) and riots after a police vehicle fatally struck a delivery driver. The demonstrations quickly expanded to include broader grievances, including police brutality and institutional impunity.



20 COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST YOUTH (15-24 YEARS) UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN 2024

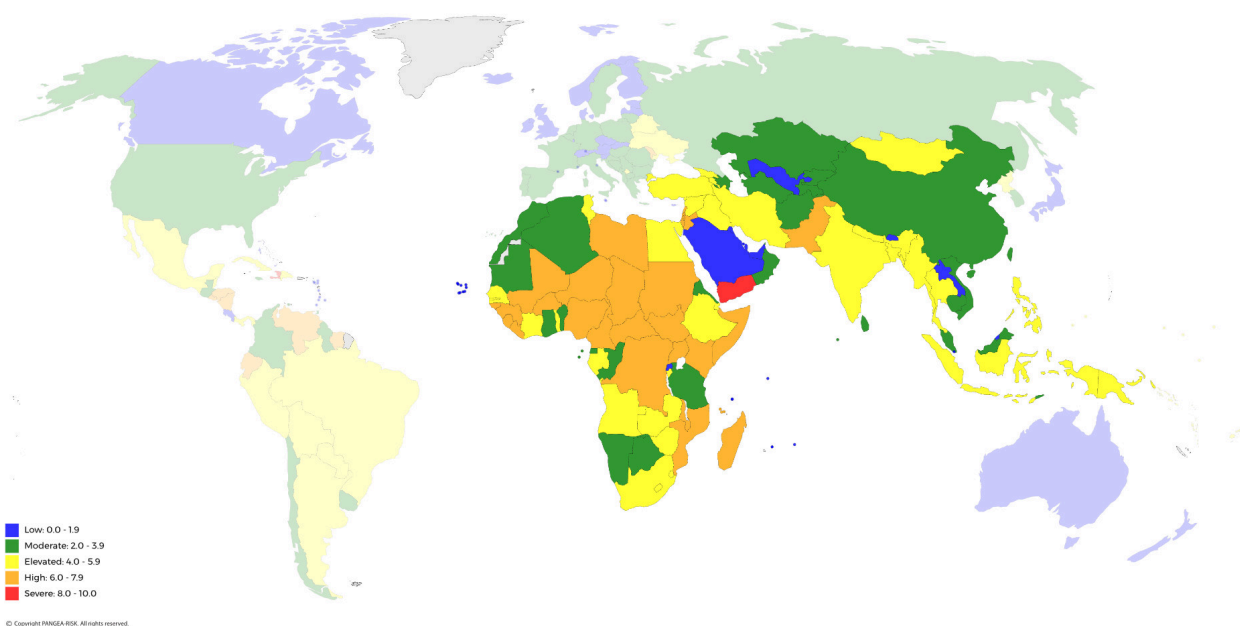


Source: CIA World Factbook

Potential flashpoints for youth-led unrest

The recent youth mobilisations demonstrate that youth-led civil unrest remains a prominent risk across a range of emerging and frontier markets where economic hardship and weak governance structures have undermined public confidence. Looking ahead, countries with large youth populations, rising living costs, and entrenched political elites are likely to face heightened risk of renewed mobilisation.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, aged 80, will [contest for a seventh term](#) in the 12 January 2026 election, potentially extending his rule beyond four decades. Over 50 percent of Uganda's population is under 30, leaving them disillusioned with the country's ageing leadership. Constrained civic space and the use of military tribunals for civilians have heightened public discontent. Although protest activity remains sporadic, a disputed election outcome or further repression could trigger widespread unrest, particularly among the urban youth. Meanwhile, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), widespread poverty, limited access to public services, and intensifying [conflict in the eastern provinces](#) are eroding institutional legitimacy. With over 60 percent of the population under the age of 25, and insufficient employment prospects outside the informal sector, younger Congolese are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation and mobilisation by local militias or civil society groups. The lack of a cohesive national strategy to address youth marginalisation will continue to act as a destabilising factor over the coming year.



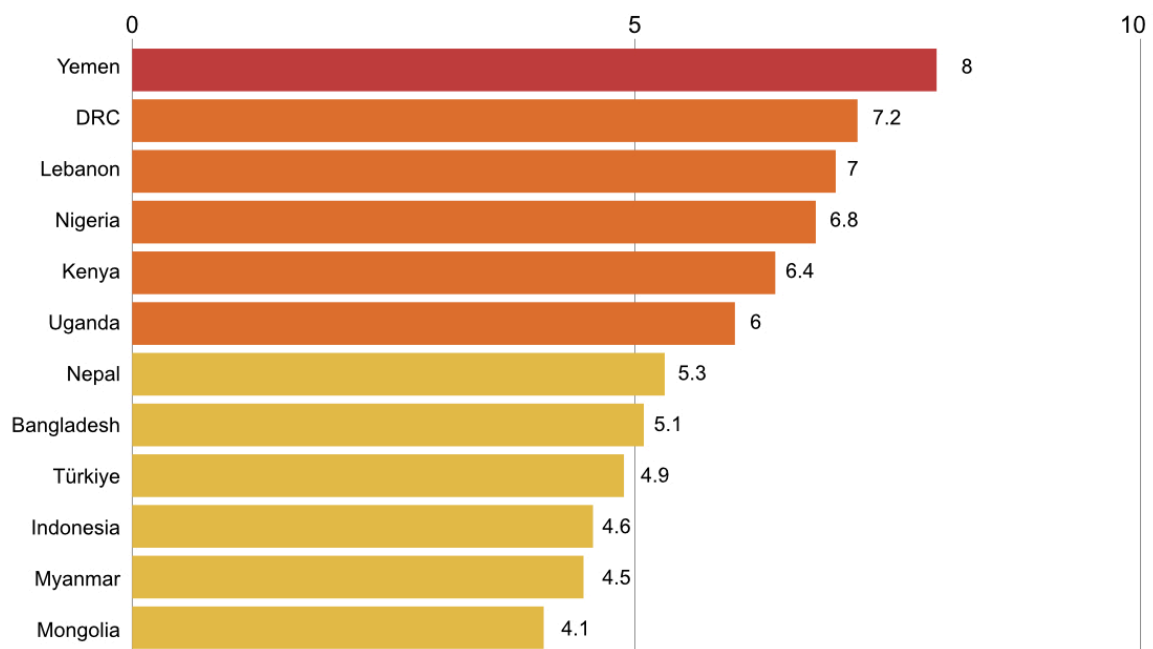
In Asia, Bangladesh has already witnessed periodic protest activity linked to youth grievances, most recently in response to education reform and allegations of government corruption. The prolonged [delay in holding elections](#) risks heightening recurrent discontent. The likelihood of unrest will increase in the run-up to the next electoral cycle, particularly if perceived irregularities emerge. For Myanmar, the post-coup environment continues to generate widespread armed resistance, with youth playing a central role in both peaceful protests and insurgent operations. The military junta's limited control outside urban centres, economic collapse, and aggressive conscription campaigns are accelerating political radicalisation among younger demographics.

In the Middle East, Lebanon and Yemen represent more acute cases of systemic institutional failure. In Lebanon, the [collapse of public services](#), widespread corruption, and currency devaluation have pushed large segments of the youth population into poverty, making them a focal point for mobilisation. In Yemen, [ongoing conflict](#), regional fragmentation, and economic devastation continue to drive unrest, particularly in urban areas outside the control of major armed factions.

While civil unrest is often shaped by domestic factors, the contagion effect remains a relevant consideration. Increased digital connectivity, particularly through social media platforms, has enhanced the visibility of protest movements and allowed for the rapid dissemination of tactics and narratives. This can, in some contexts, foster a sense of solidarity across borders, especially among youth facing similar socioeconomic challenges, such as unemployment, rising living costs, and disillusionment with governance. However, despite this digital proximity, recent protest movements have remained largely rooted in local dynamics, and there is limited empirical evidence that unrest in one country directly inspires mobilisation in another. Structural conditions and domestic political contexts continue to be the primary determinants of mobilisation.



PANGEA-RISK CIVIL UNREST RATINGS FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES



Pangea-Risk Rating for strikes, riots, and civil commotion (SRCC)

Source: Pangea-Risk

Severe High Elevated



ADVISORY

Looking ahead, unrest is unlikely to remain isolated events. Instead, recurring protest cycles could become a structural feature of politics in many emerging economies, especially where youth populations are large and institutions are weak. The rise of youth-led unrest highlights the urgent need to address economic and political grievances before they escalate. Governments that respond only with repression risk deepening social divides and damaging long-term legitimacy. Inclusive economic reforms, targeting job creation, skills training, and inflation control, will be critical to alleviating pressure. Equally important are reforms that expand youth participation in governance, strengthen accountability, and rebuild trust in institutions. However, this will take time to implement, and protest-driven volatility carries more immediate operational and reputational risks. Disruption to supply chains, transport, and commercial activity can escalate quickly in affected countries, particularly in urban centres where demonstrations concentrate.

Countries facing similar triggers may witness unrest at overlapping times, but protest dynamics will remain domestically rooted. For international actors, this signals a shift: resilience in investment and policy planning will increasingly hinge on anticipating and adapting to the political agency of a new generation, one that is both restless and determined to reshape its future. Investors must weigh macroeconomic fundamentals as well as social risk indicators such as unemployment, inequality, and corruption levels when assessing exposure. Ultimately, the trajectory of youth-led unrest will test not only government resilience but also the capacity of global businesses and policymakers to integrate social volatility into long-term strategies. Those who can anticipate and adapt will gain a decisive advantage in markets where demographic shifts are rapidly redrawing the political and economic landscape.

To discuss how we can support you through tailored analysis and strategic risk solutions, contact our Advisory team.



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[CONTACT OUR ADVISORY TEAM](#)



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