

# Societal (In)Security in the Middle East: Radicalism as a Reaction?

Written by Hassan Ahmadian

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## Societal (In)Security in the Middle East: Radicalism as a Reaction?

<https://www.e-ir.info/2019/04/24/societal-insecurity-in-the-middle-east-radicalism-as-a-reaction/>

HASSAN AHMADIAN, APR 24 2019

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Ever since the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, Arab societies have remained vulnerable to cross-border identities. Arab collective identity has been exploited by Arab states to strengthen their regional reach and might. Without this foundation, Abdul Nasser, for instance, would not have been able to embolden Egypt's regional position. Once a useful tool at the disposal of Arab rulers, this same collective identity turned problematic in other periods. Because of his pursuit of Arab nationalism, Nasser was forced to take action in Yemen and at Egypt's borders with Israel, which brought about devastating repercussions that led to the decline of Arab nationalism (see Ajami 1987). The same goes for Saudi Arabia's pursuit of Salafism as a tool in its foreign policy, which backfired through Al-Qaeda's 'internal Jihad' campaign (see Ahmadian 2012). Therefore, cross-border identities are now a challenging variable for Arab states. Besides cross-border identities, identity crises in Arab states have also emanated from ethnic and sectarian realities. The Kurdish issue, Muslim-Christian conflicts, and Shiite-Sunni rifts in the modern Arab history, are examples of conflicting identities leading to national catastrophes. Although identity is not the only determining factor in conflicts, it is surely an analytical category that is very useful for understanding some of them (Panic 2009, 37).

As much as those conflicting identities and loyalties in Arab states are of a historical nature dating back to the formation of the new Middle East, they have been emboldened by the functional inefficiencies of Arab states. From the inability, and at times unwillingness, of states to function properly in the economic, political, social, and security spheres arose cross-border ethnic and religious identities as a means to protect Arab societies' mere *we-ness*. Within such an equation, societal security remains unmet by states that are lagging behind huge developments sweeping the region. The question this chapter tries to answer is how has societal insecurity helped radical and terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS flourish within Arab states? The hypothetical answer is that collectively perceived threats along with states' inability to function properly in resolving internal and external challenges, creates collective frameworks to address perceived challenges, one of which has been radical and terrorist organisations.

### **An Applicable Concept?**

Securitisation theory has unleashed a wide range of debates on the effects of new dimensions of security on states and societies. Societal security is one of the theory's main offshoots. The concept was designed to address the limitations of existing conceptual tools in analysing contemporary developments (Bilgin 2003, 211). It is concerned with the ability of societies to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and customs within acceptable conditions for evolution (Buzan 1991, 433). Therefore, its design was meant to highlight the role that "identity" plays in security relations (Williams 2003, 518).

Another factor that will contribute to its appeal and influence is its focus on societal identity as the core value vulnerable to threats and in need of security (McSweeney 1996, 82). Societal security suggests that identity groups

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are concerned with survival through preserving ethno-national identity, whilst states seek to maintain their sovereignty (Saleh 2010, 239). Accordingly, a nation can only be mobilised for national security in peacetime if the majority of the people identify the state and its enemies as the highest expression of their own personal security and fear. (McSweeney 1999, 21) Therefore, unlike Roe's argument that the maintenance of territorial integrity is invariably as important for societal identity as it is for state sovereignty (Roe 2005, 157), in some cases societal security is not achieved by sticking to the state's territorial integrity.

Societal security was a byproduct of Europe's post-Cold War challenges. Barry Buzan puts it within the centre-periphery dichotomy, stressing immigration and clashes of rival civilisations as sources of societal insecurity in the centre. 'The immigration issue does not exist in isolation. It occurs alongside, and mingled in with, the clash of rival civilisational identities between the West and the societies of the periphery' (Buzan 1991, 448). This begs the question whether the concept is applicable in a Middle East faced with drastically different challenges.

The answer resides within the main assumption Wæver and Buzan provide us with: dichotomised identities of states vs. societies. As the general definition of Wæver goes, 'a state that loses its sovereignty does not survive as a state; a society that loses its identity fears that it will no longer be able to live as itself' (Wæver 1995, 67). The main challenge here is the differentiation of state security from that of the society. Criticising the concept, Williams argues that, according to societal security, the state cannot represent and protect the society and its 'we-ness'. As such, the state and societal security can come into conflict as 'societal' elements challenge the state's right to decide (Williams 2003, 520). Despite critics' arguments against the identity-based dichotomy (see McSweeney 1999; also Williams 2003), societal security is useful in providing analytical means to address challenges of radicalism and terrorism in the Middle East. There are two main – historical and functional – reasons for that.

Historically, the creation of Arab states post-World War I created unmatched state-society identities. Despite the Arab nationalist rhetoric accompanying the revolt against the Ottoman Empire (see Sorby Jr. 2006), Arab elites accepted new borderlines drawn by the Sykes-Picot Accord. Being the leaders of new states within those borderlines, Arab elites started consolidating their power, asserting the newly founded states' identities into their societies. Previously, Arab societies' identities were attached to the subnational (tribal and geographical) and transnational (Islamic and ethnic) *we*.

The main advocates of the new states' identities turned out to be the same elites who used to challenge Ottoman rule based on the transnational ethnic identity. This had two main outcomes: first, it deprived elites of much needed legitimacy during nation-building processes; and second, it paved the way for the middle class to move against the ruling elites. Thereafter, the sequence of coups in Arab nations brought militaries to the forefront to lead the political scene (see Cook 2007). Therefore, when the starting enthusiasm faded away, Arab people came to realise the semblance of the old and new elites and their attempts to consolidate power and impose the state's prioritised identity on their society. Those facts brought up a new form of activism that went beyond the state and challenged it. The failure of Pan Arabism in its two main forms (Nasserism and Ba'athism) created a vacuum soon to be filled with radical orientations.

A short reading of the modern Middle East brings up an image of a dichotomised identity: elites trying to consolidate power through coercion and the imposition of the state's fragile identity on the one hand and a vibrant society with a multifaceted identity on the other. Because of that dichotomy, sometimes even increases in a state's security can lead to increases in the insecurity of certain societal groups (Saleh 2010, 239). The continued failure of elites to improve their society's sense of *we-ness* rendered societies fertile ground for alternative, sometimes challenging, narrations of identity. Radical readings narrated the modern Middle East history as irrelevant to its true identity, thereby widening the state-society identity gap.

Functionally, preoccupied with consolidating their power, state elites were less worried about the functionality of the state's apparatuses. If developing economies, political opening and providing security are the main objectives a state is expected to deliver, Arab states were only functional in terms of providing security. States with better fortune found adequate rent to meet their societies' economic needs. Still the majority were not that fortunate. Therefore, with nationalism's appeal fading away, 'bread uprisings' started or loomed ahead during the 1970s and 1980s.

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The Arab Spring brought these dysfunctions into daylight. The 'dignity revolutions' were not about Arab or Islamic unity, but rather a defiance to states' dysfunctions (see Salih 2012; Aissa 2012; Douglas et. al. 2014). Those uprisings did not fuel radical orientations per se, still their consequences provided radicals with the environment to flourish. This happened on two main levels.

The first was related to the security vacuum the Arab Spring brought up within which a Salafi-Jihadist revival became possible. The second was regional rivalries that divided regional actors into those in favour of vs. those opposing the status quo. Conflicting regional agendas weakened states' institutions and created an ideal disequilibrium for Jihadists across the region.

In general, the state-society dichotomy resisted ruling elites' attempts to fill the gap and their dysfunctions widened it. Bread revolutions and the Arab Spring came to illustrate that dichotomy's evolution.

## **The Dichotomy Challenge**

Societal security theorists hold that 'nation' and 'state' do not mean the same thing in a majority of countries and that 'national security' is becoming an increasingly irrelevant framework (Bilgin 2003, 211). The duality combines state security, which is concerned with sovereignty, and societal security, which is concerned with identity (Wæver and Buzan 1993, 25). That duality has long existed in the Arab region where parts of the society do not see the state as representing their aspirations as nations. Identity-based analysis brings up the challenges of nation-building as the equation from which the duality stems.

The division of Arab lands into new states left Arab elites with little means to create a sense of nationhood. With some exceptions of where a historical sense of nationhood existed, as in Egypt. New nationalities came about as a result of great power agreements dividing their spheres of influence in the Middle East. Thereupon, the borders of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and later Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE were drawn. Even the borders of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen (both northern and southern) were affected by those agreements.

The Arab Revolt headed by Sharif Husayn of Hijaz at the advent of World War I, aimed at creating an Arab Kingdom across the region, was a mere indication of the way Arabs were perceiving one another. Later on, the Arab Revolt came to be appropriated as the single most important milestone in the coming of age of Arab nationalism (Kayal 1997, 105). While state elites, once being the driving force against the Ottoman Empire to seek an Arab state, turned out to be the vanguards of the new states, Arab intellectuals went unsatisfied with the new reality. With the institution of the Caliphate replaced by the secular state of Turkey, Islamist intellectuals and activists started their struggle to fill the vacuum. The Muslim Brotherhood, established in 1928 in Egypt, was the first indication of defiant Islamist elites. Nine decades later ISIS claimed that it has achieved what no other Islamist movement did: a filling of the void left by the abolition of the caliphate and the creation of a Muslim renaissance (Zelin 2015, 160). Still, Arab nationalists were more successful in their struggle against state elites. Through military coups, they took over in many countries paving the way for an Arab unity, as it was perceived in the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, driven by rivalries rather than ideology, Arab nationalists replaced the old elites to guard the status quo. The failure of Arab nationalism, felt widely after the 1967 war (see Ajami 1987), was the beginning of an Islamist revival from the 1970s onward.

Decades of 'division' according to Pan Arab and Islamist rhetoric, rendered Arabs a fundamental fact: Arab states are to survive. The separate challenges facing each Arab state and their unique developments bolstered that 'division'. Dissatisfaction with the state's inability to fulfil 'Arab unity' was replaced by criticisms of government inefficiencies and their inability to deliver in the economic and political spheres. Besides healthy debates surrounding those issues, government inefficiencies provided their rival worldviews with the social environments needed to flourish. Many Arab states could not perform their main functions acceptably, which alienated societies from their states.

In general, state elites played a key role in the dichotomy upon which alternative worldviews flourished. Their role can be categorised in the following five categories:

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1. *Representation*: the Arab region remains one of the least developed in terms of political openness and democratic governance. Six years after the start of the Arab Spring, only one out of 22 Arab states is categorised as free (Freedom House 2017);
2. *Oppression*: most Arab regimes survived for decades by carrying a big stick. Cases like Khalid Saeed's death under torture in Egypt and Mohammad Bu Azizi's self-immolation played a symbolic role in the 2011 uprisings. Oppression raised the popularity of alternative discourses, thereby Salafi-Jihadism gained attraction;
3. *Economic development*: except for Arab states enjoying windfalls of oil and gas revenues, others remain underdeveloped and unable to fulfil their economic obligations. Economic grievances have had a delegitimising role depriving ruling elites of their social bases;
4. *Regional rivalries*: rivalries in general and the use of ideology as a tool in regional rivalries in particular have had a crucial effect on the Middle East. Just like Egypt's Abdul Nasser's encouragement of Pan Arabism during the 1950s and 1960s, capitalising on Salafi movements in regional rivalries emboldened their regional reach and popularity;
5. *Independence*: for most Arabs, their governments lack the much needed independence to face national and regional challenges. This perception rendered states unable to mobilise societies to back a national agenda. The sense of being underrepresented by dependent governments has always been a part of Arab public debate.

Those factors have helped embolden the state-society dichotomy. Insecurities stemming from the state's inability to deliver drove parts of their societies to radical narrations of the alternative that, once established, could lead to societal security. The Arab Spring came as a result of those deeply rooted grievances.

While at first it was all about peaceful change to more efficient and representative governance, Arab uprisings created the needed environment for radical forces to take the lead. Those forces thrive amidst chaos, they seek it out, and they have become adept at surviving under immense pressure (Lister 2015, 277). ISIS could not have expanded without the breakdown of state institutions and the deepening communal rift, which has been wearing down the social fabric of Arab countries in the Fertile Crescent for decades (Gerges 2016, 202). That is not to say that the Arab Spring was the only variable in the extremist's revival.

## The 'We' Under Threat

The status quo after independence failed to enhance Arab societies' sense of security. Nevertheless, Arab societies accepted Arab 'separation' and state-centred identities became the main source of reference to one's identity in the Arab region. Yet this did not eradicate societal insecurity. Although a Syrian became Syrian first – at least when dealing with citizens from abroad – this did not mean that a Syrian felt less threatened in terms of his/her identity.

With the transition from a collective identity to a state-centred one, the states' failure to fulfil perceived historical unity gave room to internal debates and criticisms against states' conduct of their obligations. And with that, Arab citizens started criticising their governments mainly based on their dysfunctionalities.

That did not mean the demise of historical debates of Pan Arab or Islamist rhetoric. In fact, parts of those nostalgic debates were used to delegitimise governments, likening dissatisfaction with ruling elites' dysfunctionalities with their inability to act independently and collectively on issues like the Palestinian one. The linkage between the two was never clear, still the effect was felt vividly during the Palestinian Intifada (uprising). Therefore, that was part of a deeply rooted criticism about the state's independent character in the international arena. As such, Arab governments' foreign policies and international alliances were seen by parts of their societies as under-representing the perceived collective Arab and Muslim *we*. The declarations of Jihad announced by Al-Qaeda in 1996 and 1998 stressed the presence of foreign troops on the 'holy lands' of Islam as a mere indication of treason to Islam by Saudi rulers (See Ahmadian 2012).

Al-Qaeda was not the only defiant party. Pan Arab debates have also criticised Arab foreign policies. Arab states' perceived *dependent* foreign policies were yet another means of alienation. In other words, the critics were

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unintentionally emphasising the identity dichotomy of state vs. society on the one hand and revealing to their fellow citizens the perceived reality that Arab states are not protecting the Arab/Muslim identity on the other.

A short reading of Arab scholars' writings on their states' foreign policies toward the Palestinian issue for instance is a revealing indicator of a core reality: Arab and Islamic parcels of their identities remain robust and play a role in mobilising Arab societies during change-times. Hence, collectively perceived threats, and the notion of Arab regimes' inaction toward them, help mobilise parts of Arab societies against their states.

In defending against perceived threats, societal identity is (re)constructed and thus also strengthened (Roe 1999, 195). As such, collectively perceived threats create collective frameworks to react. They definitely would not rally all Arabs, but could still provide a connecting framework for those who want to do something about it. If ISIS's use of social networks to recruit and rally Arab populations against their governments is any indicator, a digital world has made it easier to connect and organise against a perceived threat.

One of the main forms of action against collectively perceived threats has occurred within radical movements such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The connection between government misconduct and the collective responses in which citizens from around the globe are drawn to organisations like ISIS remains ambiguous to some extent. Still there are three points made by critics that could help clarify the linkage. The first is that Arab elites are under Western, particularly American, influence. Accordingly, they represent Western interests rather than those of their own societies. In Salafi-Jihadist rhetoric, ruling elites are puppets protected by foreign powers preserving their interests within the status quo. Therefore, there is a mutually constructed trade of interests between Arab rulers and Western nations. Second, Arab secular rulers are far from representing the Muslim *umma*. According to this rhetoric, they are imposed on Muslim nations and as such cannot protect something they do not believe in, that is, the Islamic identity of their nations. Third, most recently, some Arab states have been criticised for alienating parts of their societies. Iraqi and Syrian governments are criticised as being biased against their Sunni communities. The Bahraini government is under criticism for alienating its Shiite community. Some of the criticisms are politically motivated, still, widened sectarian gaps helped strengthen the state-society dichotomy. As a result, Baghdadi has hijacked sectarian uprisings on either side of the Syria-Iraq border to create his caliphate (Hosken 2015, 22).

A comparison of ISIS recruits from Arab nations provides a clearer image. Arab states with adequate oil/gas revenues to meet the economic needs of their tiny populations are less affected by Jihadists' recruitment tactics than their counterparts lacking a similar revenue. As a report by the Soufan Group suggests (The Soufan Group 2015, 6), Tunisians, Saudis, and Jordanians continue to outnumber other national contingents, although a reverse flow to North Africa may alter the balance within the Arab group. There are the ideologically-motivated recruits among those estimates, still the second category of recruits, the economically-motivated ones, are a main part of the figures. While the number of Tunisian recruits (6,000) was the highest as of December 2015, the number of recruits from Kuwait (70), Qatar (10) and UAE (15) remained way lower. Recruits from those wealthy Arab states are mostly, like their colleagues from Western countries, ideologically-motivated, while on the other hand, recruitment in countries such as Tunisia (6,000), Jordan (2,000), Saudi Arabia (2,500) and Morocco (1,200) is affected by the economic and social conditions of the people.

### **In Search of Protection**

Perceived threats against Arab collective identity and perceived inability of states to counter them led Arab activists and opposition figures to act beyond state authority. The irony is that for most of them, Arab governments illustrated the internal threat aiding and abetting the external one against their identity and very existence. It was in such an environment that radicalism flourished across the region and resonated in frustrated societies. Radical figures like Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri, capitalised on a protectionist rhetoric, asserting themselves as the guardians of Muslim people, lands, and religion. In Daniel Byman's words, Al-Qaeda plays on a form of religious nationalism (Byman 2015, 103). To get a clearer image of its protectionist rhetoric, later to develop at the hands of ISIS's ideologues, it is worthwhile to analyse Al-Qaeda's declarations of Jihad.

In his first detailed unilateral fatwa issued on August 1996, Bin Laden states that 'the Muslim people had suffered

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from aggression, iniquity, and injustice imposed by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators'. He concludes that it is not acceptable anymore to remain silent and inactive. He calls Muslims to take part in destroying, fighting and killing the enemy – namely Israelis and Americans who occupy Muslim lands and impose their will upon that of the Muslims – until it is completely defeated.

In a second multilateral fatwa issued on February 1998, (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 1998) Bin Laden joined five other radical leaders to declare war on the 'Crusader-Zionist alliance'. In this short fatwa, Al-Qaeda brought up three arguments on the necessity of Jihad against the United States and its allies:

1. The United States has been occupying the lands of Islam's holiest of places, namely the Arabian Peninsula, and imposing its will on its rulers and humiliating its people;
2. The Crusader-Zionist alliance has destroyed Iraq rendering it a weak state and killing more than a million of its innocent people;
3. Besides economic and religious goals, US wars are aimed at serving the Jewish petty state and diverting attention from its occupation of Bait al-Maqdes (Jerusalem) and the killing of Muslims there.

The killing of Americans and their allies, the fatwa concludes, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible.

The theme of both and many other Jihadi fatwas has been the suffering and humiliation of Muslims as a result of occupation and the targeting of their holy places. Al-Qaeda's propaganda ranged from encouraging Muslims to fight oppressors in Afghanistan to portraying the United States as bent on brutally dominating the Muslim world and local allied regimes as apostates (Byman 2015, 102). Therefore, the inability of Arab governments to protect Muslims and their lands against occupation is another aspect of the same theme. In fact, Al-Qaeda portrays Arab rulers as collaborators with the 'enemy'. In general, Al-Qaeda's declarations of Jihad are based on four pillars:

1. The United States and its allies are occupants of Islamic lands and should not be mistaken otherwise;
2. Through occupation and imposition of their will on Muslims, the United States and its allies are posing an imperative threat against Muslim beliefs and true identity;
3. Muslim rulers that are collaborators are unable to fulfil their duties in protecting Muslims and their holy lands;
4. Muslims have to take up arms themselves to fight the crusaders and Zionists in defence of their holy lands and beliefs.

Reading Al-Qaeda's rhetoric in accordance with societal security theory, one can say that Muslim societies faced grave dangers targeting their lands and the very underpinnings of their beliefs (their identity as true Muslims). Still their rulers collaborated with those posing the threat instead of facing them and hence distanced their will (and identity as Muslims) from the will of their own societies. As a result of this dichotomy and because a society that loses its identity fears that it will no longer be able to live as itself (Wæver 1995, 67), Muslim societies are to shoulder the burden of protecting themselves and their identity through Jihad against the United States, its allies and collaborators.

Al-Qaeda's updated version, ISIS, added new dimensions to Al-Qaeda's rhetoric. Instead of the *Muslim we* that was to be protected by Muslim societies according to Al-Qaeda's rhetoric, ISIS narrowed the 'we' into *Sunni Muslims* perceived to be under threat. Accordingly, the source of threat has changed: Shiites first, then Western countries and those who collaborate with them. From its very beginnings in Iraq, ISIS's predecessor organisations were deeply sectarian, and six years after Zaraqawi's death (2006), ISIS's operational strategy and modus operandi was very much still dominated by sectarian anti-Shia motivations (Lister 2015, 265).

The Islamic State of Iraq and its successor, ISIS, have consistently focused on the Shia and the 'near enemy' (the Iraqi and Syrian regimes, and all secular, pro-Western regimes in the Muslim world) (Gerges 2014, 340), as well as the issue of collective Takfir (disavowing others as unbelievers) of Shiites (Abu Hanieh and Abu Rumman 2015, 36-37). The far enemy, the United States and its allies, remained a second priority. As such, some argue that by

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scoring victories against the Iraqi government and supposed apostates like the Shi'a and 'Alawi, the Islamic State has emerged as a champion of the Sunni Muslim community (Byman 2015, 213).

According to ISIS rhetoric, Shiite politicians and elites are legitimate targets for working with the occupiers of Iraq. Zarqawi articulated a strategy of deliberately targeting the Iraqi Shi'ite community with the intention of stoking civil war (Bunzel 2015, 14). In addition, he justified killing innocents as collateral damage. Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir, a religious figure who provided Zarqawi's organisation with a doctrinal framework, exploited the concept of *Tatarrus* (Barricading) to justify in detail the killing of innocent Muslims as collateral damage of Jihad (see Al-Muhajir ND, 192–219).

An important question remains: why do people, mainly young Muslims, listen to Jihadists' calls and join their cause. Their recruits can be divided into two main categories: first, those who join the 'Jihad' for ideological reasons. They perceive their acts as fulfilling a religious duty and as such, they are targets of Jihadists' religious propaganda.

The second category is composed of those who seek to get rid of their limited options and gloomy future at home. To them, terrorist organisations are seen as an alternative to their current rigid situation. Therefore, whether it is corruption and venal politics in Pakistan or military dictatorship in places like Algeria and Egypt, jihadists are able to channel anger at the illegitimacy (and often incompetence and stagnation) of the regimes they oppose (Byman 2015, 213). ISIS, for instance, offers an alternative, promising wives, luxury items, and financial stability. There is an incentive of a monthly salary, food, and shelter that are basic needs individuals need to survive. These individuals tend to have fewer prospects and ISIS is able to provide for them (Tse 2016, 17). While the first category explains the state-society dichotomy in ideological terms, the second category provides an added variable to comprehend how and why state inefficiency, as well as inability and unwillingness to deliver, is paying off in radical organisations' favour. Additionally, the identity-based dichotomy creates yet another duality based on the gap of perceived threats. While states have their own set of threats and challenges, centred around sovereignty (Wæver 1995, 67), and regime survival, societies perceive some other issues to be threatening to their security. At times, the measures that one side takes to defend its societal security (strengthen its identity) are misperceived (or rightly perceived) by another as a threat to its own identity (Roe 2002, 73). Accordingly, an identity-based security dilemma between states and societies deems itself self-constructing.

## Conclusion

Societal insecurity, stemming from historical and functional realities has emboldened the identity-based gap of states vs. societies in the Arab region. The division of the Ottoman Empire into new states without much attention to identity lines, created a historical identity challenge in those states. On the other hand, Arab ruling elites' efforts to enforce state-centred identities failed to prevent the challenge of conflicting identities. Later on, their functional inefficiencies emboldened the identity dichotomy.

As a result of threats perceived by Arab societies against their collective identity as well as separate challenges facing each state, the state-society gap continues to challenge state identities. Collectively perceived threats create and strengthen collective frameworks intended to address those threats. And among other frameworks come radical and terrorist organisations.

In the mutual construction process, radical organisations' rhetoric and practice strengthen the state-society gap. As such, those organisations' recruitment tactics, an obvious challenge to Arab states, have worked well. The main theme of Al-Qaeda's rhetoric was to confront the external threat of the United States and Israel. Later on, Al-Qaeda in Iraq and then ISIS included and prioritised the 'internal threat' against Sunni Muslims.

Nevertheless, despite their popularity among certain circles of radicalised Arab citizens, the rates of their recruits are more telling on the role of Arab state's dysfunctionalities in their success. The poorer states with more economic and societal challenges provided Al-Qaeda and ISIS with the most Arab recruits. While the role of ideology is important, a good share of ideologically-motivated recruits came as a result of Arab states inefficiencies and inability to deliver economic and political security.

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In general, there are four main conclusions to draw from this chapter: first, societal insecurity in the Arab region came as a result of both historical and functional realities, including the formation of Arab states based on the Sykes-Picot accord and the inefficiencies and dysfunctionalities of Arab governments. Second, societal insecurity and the identity gap among Arab states and societies create an additional gap in terms of threats perceived by states and those perceived by societies. Third, collectively perceived threats have created collective frameworks for reaction and attracted parts of Arab societies to act within those frameworks; one of which has been radical and terrorist organisations. Fourth, there is a mutual construction process between terrorist organisations' rhetoric and actions and the gap alienating Arab societies from their own states. Terrorist organisations' rhetoric and actions strengthen the gap on the one hand and the widened gap in turn emboldens these organisations on the other.

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# **Societal (In)Security in the Middle East: Radicalism as a Reaction?**

Written by Hassan Ahmadian

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## **About the author:**

**Hassan Ahmadian** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of West Asia and North Africa Studies at the University of Tehran, Iran.