

The State of the States in the Middle East and North Africa

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Registration is Closed

Nation-states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are facing powerful challenges and are undergoing profound changes. In recent years the Arab Upheaval has effectively dismantled some states, rendered others ungovernable, while leaving yet others under the threat of instability. These events have brought to power new rulers, enabled the reemergence on the political scene of older social and religious forces, such as tribal and religious movements, while redefining the rules of political action.

The political turbulence is raising questions regarding borders between states, rocking regimes and weakening central control, as well as gnawing at the shared internal visions of these states. Efforts of states in the region to stay above the fray and of others to help prevent states from unraveling or to reconstitute defunct states such as Iraq have run into internal difficulties that jeopardize these efforts.

The workshop "The State of the States in the Middle East and North Africa" is intended to be a first step in what hopefully will be an ongoing exploration and systematic dialogue regarding fundamental questions raised by these dynamics. Toward this end, the workshop will approach these questions from three complimentary perspectives, which will be addressed sequentially in separate sessions:

First panel: Will focus on the **states** themselves through a series of **case studies**. Here we will inquire about the specific dynamics and causes that led to the Upheaval and its effects on the various states examined. We will also address the question of why the Upheaval has not heretofore spread to certain countries in the MENA region.

Second panel: Will examine the MENA region from a number of **disciplinary perspectives**, such as economics, gender, media and religion. This group of experts will try to identify patterns in the events and underlying forces across the region, inter alia by comparing states that underwent the Upheaval, to states that were not heavily affected.

Third panel: Will place the developments in MENA in a **broader historical, global and policy perspective**. These academics will ask whether the developments are specific to the MENA region or should be understood as part of a global trend. They will discuss the implications for the principles of world order, international organization and foreign policy, both toward the more robust states that are bucking the trend, at least for now, and those that are presently undergoing intense upheaval.

The unique feature of this workshop is a conscious effort to encourage a discussion among experts from a variety of disciplines. The workshop will create a conversation between specialists who study Middle East states and societies, and scholars whose areas of expertise are cross-state or regional disciplines, such as economics, sociology, political science, demography, gender studies, media and religion. The workshop will not only look across the cases but will also place the evidence from MENA in a global perspective. The hope is that such multi-disciplinary discussion will bring into relief new insights about the fascinating developments in MENA and their potential indications and implications for other parts of the globe.

Bottom line: the workshop is intended to improve our understanding of the state of the nation-state in the twenty-first century.