

“Security amidst Dissolution”
The Challenges of Assuring the Continuity of Security Arrangements
in the Middle East Amidst the Reality of the Dissolution of the Regional
Order and the Fragmentation Process it is Witnessing

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The term "Middle East" has become today enormously elastic with the region turning to a molten mess of conflicts spreading across borders that increasingly mean little on the ground. Fraught with subnational conflicts, exasperated by regional feuds, and subject to foreign interventions, the Middle East as a regional system is in deep crisis: States are fracturing and are, in some instances, close to fragmentation, some even seem to be teetering on the verge of collapse; armed formations espousing Islamist ideology are empowered, with the Islamic State being the grotesque outcome of this era of chaos and conflict; state boundaries are being eroded by sub-state/trans-state actors changing the concepts of identity, citizenship and allegiance to the nation-state and leading to social disintegration. As a consequence, the region exhibits signs of deep social trauma and crisis of identity at the state and society levels. Sub-communalization is taking place across the region, thus gradually eroding the hard-won century-old national societies that independent states forcefully but carefully put together. These ‘contested’ states seem to be unraveling into smaller communities of sects, religious affiliations, tribal groups and ethnicities. Amidst this mass extinction of states taking place in the Middle East since the post-Arab uprisings turmoil, the fragmentation and disintegration is reaching an international level tearing apart in inter-fighting sects, tribes, ethnic groups, regions, parties and even emerging radical Islamist groups. Simultaneously, far older processes of regional integration in varying forms, from the Arab League to economic and political union like the Gulf Cooperation Council, have never been more powerless or fragile.

Neither regional nor international developments bode well for the foreseeable restoration of a stable order in the Middle East. This harsh reality, underlined by the heightening tensions and escalating conflicts, cannot nonetheless translate into an abandonment of the fragile and precarious systems of security that insure a primordial level of continuity and survival for the embattled societies.

The Annual Conference of the MAISON DU FUTUR proposes a thorough examination of this national and intra-national fragmentation phenomena the region is witnessing—with limited focus on the analysis of the deep causes — before addressing the on-going collapse of the regional order and assessing its impact on security arenas: hard (safety, national control, political-military balance, monopoly of enforcement), resources (water, food, energy, infrastructure), and cultural (social contract, values, continuity), from both an immediate, remedial, point of view, and a longer-term anticipatory perspective.

The purpose of this examination is to identify approaches of utility in managing, containing, and potentially reversing the negative trends, even if topically and locally, while sensitizing decision- and opinion-makers, as well as the general public, to the detrimental indelible damage that has been associated with similar circumstances from comparative experiences.

The conference will consist of five sessions, each one figuring three panelists and one moderator.