

## Arab perceptions of Hard and Soft Security Threats

### Abstract

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The distinction between hard and soft security threats was hardly accepted in the Arab world. This can be attributed to two major factors, (i) Such distinction assumes the possibility of separating hard and soft security threats, but the Arab mind tends to view issues and threats as inter-related, (ii) Such distinction also assumes that soft security issues should be given priority at a time in which hard security threats have not been resolved in the hard<sup>3</sup> Arab world. And the Arab region is being engulfed in

Assuming that the distinction between these types of security threats exists, this paper reviews Arab perceptions of hard and soft security issues and threats. It is argued that one cannot speak of a single Arab perception of these issues. The dominant perceptions in the Maghreb or Gulf Cooperation Council countries differ from their counterparts in the Arab Mashreq ones. Most importantly, there are major differences between ruling elite and mass perceptions of hard and soft security threats. Mass perceptions, especially at the level of NGOs and civil society groups are more inclined to emphasize upon hard security issues. Finally, the paper attempts to infer the implications of these perceptions for the present security agenda of the region especially regarding the validity of the distinction between hard and soft security issues under conditions of the persistence of hard security threats in a certain region, and of the tendency to generalize the role of NGOs in peace promotion without taking into consideration the regional security agenda.