

## 2 Security in the Arab world and Turkey

### Differently different

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The study of security, with its attention to relations of power, constitutes a suitable site for exploring how and why International Relations (IR) has evolved in the way it has outside “core” settings.<sup>1</sup> By focusing on the cases of the “Arab world” and Turkey, this chapter shows that, over the years, “non-core” settings have produced diverse approaches which distinguish them not only from the core but also from each other, so much so that it is difficult to generalize about the study of security outside the core.<sup>2</sup>

By virtue of shared history, geography, the trials of developing statehood, and proximity to Cold War and post-Cold War struggles of power over strategic resources and waterways, Turkey and the Arab world have experienced similar insecurities.<sup>3</sup> Yet in only one of these two sites security thinking followed a trajectory that was different from the core. While actors in the Arab world insisted on self-reliance and remained non-aligned, their Turkish counterparts pointed to the overlap between their own and “Western” security concerns and joined U.S.-led security schemes. In the study of security, attempts by Arab scholars to come to terms with developing statehood, trans-state Arab identity and superpower interventionism, contrasted with Turkish analyses of those insecurities shared with the “West.” In other words, Arab actors underscored their “difference” as Turkey’s actors emphasized their “similarity.” Although one might consider Arab actors’ behavior as an “authentic” non-core response and explain away their Turkish counterparts’ assumptions of sameness as sheer byproducts of U.S. prevalence, this chapter offers an alternative account by exploring the international political sociology of the study of security.

In 1998, Ole Wæver called for studying the sociology of International Relations as opposed to tracing the development of the discipline in relation to the dynamics of international politics alone. This chapter proposes bringing international politics back into such analyses—only in a distinct way—not by studying events “out there” that influence the trajectory of disciplinary IR, but by tracing scholars’ responses to real-world events in a reflexive manner, even as they seek to explain/understand them (Oren 2003).<sup>4</sup> As will be argued, it is not sociological factors alone that explain how security approaches in the Arab world and Turkey came to be

*differently different*. Understanding the production of such differently different approaches to security requires focusing on the agency of non-core scholars in adopting, adapting, or bypassing concepts and theories originating in the “core.” Such agency, in turn, cannot be considered in isolation from the academic context in which scholars operate and the international political context that shapes (and is in turn shaped by) them.

The discussion begins by juxtaposing “standard” and “critical” approaches to security in the “Middle East” and pointing to a limitation shared by both: a lack of curiosity as to how and why practices and conceptions of security have been different in this part of the world. The following two sections look at security practices and conceptions as found in IR texts and contexts.<sup>5</sup> There is a caveat here. While non-IR texts and contexts may be equally (if not more) valuable in exploring “alternative” visions of IR in general and security in particular (Chan, Mandaville and Bleiker 2001; Jones 2003; Tickner 2003), the interests of this chapter lie not in discovering “alternatives” as such but exploring how existing approaches to security as found in the Arab world and Turkey have developed in the way they have. Such a focus allows for exploring occurrences of “difference” and “similarity.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Security in the Middle East—the “standard” perspective and its critics**

The “standard” perspective on security lumps together the Arab world and Turkey under the label “Middle Eastern security.”<sup>7</sup> Practitioners and scholars in the Arab world and Turkey have taken issue with the Middle East perspective on regional security (Bilgin 2005), albeit in varying ways.

At the root of the Middle East perspective on regional security has been the “standard” approach with its characteristic state-centrism, military-focus, top-down approach, and outward-directed outlook (e.g., Tripp 1984; Walt 1987). This perspective is top-down because threats to security are defined mostly by external powers based upon their own insecurities, as opposed to a bottom-up approach that pays attention to local actors’ concerns. It has an outward-directed outlook in that threats to security are assumed to stem from outside the state, whereas inside is viewed as a realm of peace. During the Cold War, for instance, the Middle East perspective listed communist infiltration and Soviet interventionism as the greatest threats to security. As a solution, regional states were invited to enter into pro-Western alliances. In contrast, local actors’ concerns with decolonization and postcolonial statehood were seldom acknowledged.

The Middle East perspective on regional security is not without its critics. Lenore Martin (1998) and Bassam Tibi (1998) both adopted broad definitions of security that included non-military aspects in order to highlight what is left out of studies informed by the standard notion. Tamara Jacoby and Brent Sasley’s (2002) edited volume, *Redefining Security in the Middle*

*East*, presented a nuanced picture of insecurity that covered an even broader range of issues, including the Israel–Palestine conflict, water disputes, political Islam, gender relations, militarism in Israel, and political liberalization in the Arab world. While all three studies sought to move away from the standard conception of security with its characteristic state-centrism, military focus, and outward-directed outlook, they failed to address its top-down quality.<sup>8</sup> Arguably, this was because these otherwise critical studies overlooked a key concern of local actors: that they do not conceive of themselves as belonging to the “Middle East.” Indeed, over the years Arab scholars have insisted on writing about security in the “Arab region” and not the “Middle East” (Abdel Aal 1996; Abu Jaber 1991; Al-Sayyid 1998; Bayomi 1998). While Turkey’s scholars seemed to harbor no such reservation, their writings suggested an ambivalent stance. Even as they designed research analyzing Turkey’s insecurities within a Middle Eastern framework, they looked at it from a “Western” perspective, thereby locating Turkey in the “West” and not the “Middle East” (e.g., DPE 1982).<sup>9</sup>

To a large extent, the absence of conceptual explorations of these issues by scholars from the Arab world and Turkey is to be blamed for the lack of curiosity as to how scholars in both reacted to the Middle East perspective. Nevertheless, what is available may be used to initiate such an exploration. Consider, for example, Jordanian political scientist Abu Jaber’s contribution to an edited volume on the study of the Arab World (Sullivan and Ismael 1991). Jaber’s (1991) reflective essay, titled “Strategic Studies and the Middle East,” is remarkable not only due to the near absence of military-focused accounts of security, but also because of the geographical delimitation of the author’s analysis. Unlike the title, which promises a survey of the field in the Middle East, Jaber focuses on the Arab world alone. While the mismatch between the title and the essay could be explained with reference to a latent disagreement between the author and the editors, it could also be considered a starting point for exploring how security is conceptualized and practiced differently in this part of the world.

In a precious account of the study of International Relations in the Arab world, Lebanese scholar Karim Makdisi (2009) points to the significance of exploring the rationale behind Arab scholars’ reaction to the Middle East perspective by arguing that their reservations mask deeper worries regarding its underlying political project. According to the author, scholars who express preference for an “Arab perspective” do not only offer another label for the same geography, or express their preference for the “Arab region,” but also view themselves as fighting off the projects of “foreign donors” who have

since the 1970s ... often sought to break up an imagined Arab community into the more nebulous “Middle East” that could accommodate Israel—thus forcing a political project of Arab-Israeli “normalization” on the Arab research community before Palestinian self-determination

was reached and occupied Arab territory liberated—and even Turkey and Iran.

(Makdisi 2009: 182)

As such, the decision to study the Middle East or the Arab world is not governed by whim, but rather, reveals Arab scholars' different approaches to security, prioritizing the concerns of distinct referents.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than restating the point that the “Middle East” is an invented region (Lewis and Wigen 1997) or that there are many “Middle Easts” (Ibrahim 1996), this observation constitutes a call for paying attention to the “politics of geographical specification of politics” (Dalby 1991). More specifically, it underscores the need to look at the mutually constitutive relationship between (inventing) regions and (conceptions and practices of) security (Bilgin 2000, 2005). Following critical approaches to political geography, spatial definitions are not neutral (O Tuathail and Dalby 1998), nor are they independent of actors' conceptions and practices of security. Therefore, a crucial place to begin when analyzing “non-core” actors' conceptions of security are the geographical constructs behind.

In what follows, this chapter pays particular attention to geographical constructs shaping (and shaped by) various actors' security practices. This allows me to overcome an important limitation of IR in the Arab world and Turkey; the relative lack of conceptual analyses. In their absence, I attempt to tease out various actors' conceptions from their broad-remit treatises on regional security. Given that a full account of security practices in the Arab world and Turkey is beyond the scope of this chapter, I highlight broad trends in security practice, in particular their (military/non-military) character and referent object (state/non-state/supra-state).

### **Security practices in the Arab world and Turkey**

The Arab world and Turkey have experienced not entirely dissimilar insecurities. The trials of state-building and development have topped policy-makers' agendas in both settings; however, the resemblance ends there. Whereas Turkey sought security within the Western fold, some Arab states remained hesitant while others opposed pro-Western alliances outright. Differences between Arab and Turkish actors' security practices were partly to do with Soviet policies. In the immediate aftermath of World War II the Soviet Union sought to make the renewal of the 1925 Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality between Turkey and the Soviet Union conditional on the former surrendering its two eastern provinces (Kars and Ardahan) and the revision of the 1939 Montreux convention (governing the running of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits). Although the Soviets later retreated from these demands, Turkey sought military security through closer relations with the United States and NATO membership.

Most Arab states did not have similar reasons for joining an anti-Soviet alliance. The Soviet Union did not begin pursuing a consistent policy towards the Arab world until the mid-1950s (Dawisha 1980). Many Arab leaders simply did not put the Soviet threat on their security agenda, thinking that sheer geographical distance would deter the Soviet Union from undertaking any military attack (Heikal 1978). The only significant exception to this trend was Iraq, which followed pro-Western (and anti-Soviet) policies until the 1958 coup that ousted the Hāshimite monarchy. While the coup crystallized widespread public dissatisfaction with such pro-Western policies, it was not pro-Soviet as much as it was pro-full sovereignty and autonomy from the West.

Developments during 1951–2 revealed differences between the security outlooks of political leaders in the Arab world and Turkey vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In the spring of 1951 Egypt invited Turkey to join the members of the Arab League in creating a non-aligned bloc, and Turkey declined. At around the same time, the United States and Great Britain proposed the formation of a Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) to “defend” the region against perceived Soviet expansionism. Turkey sponsored the proposal in the hope that this would bolster its bid to join NATO. Only Iraq accepted the invitation, thereby rendering MEDO stillborn. What these two episodes highlighted was that Turkish policy-makers considered NATO to be the solution to their insecurities, whereas many Arab leaders preferred non-alignment.

However, Arab actors’ attempts to distance themselves from Great Britain and the United States should not be reduced to the absence of the “Soviet threat,” nor should Turkey’s search for security within the Western fold be reduced to its presence. Both pro-Western and pro-Arabist stances across the Arab world and Turkey were responses to insecurities of military *and* non-military kinds. Non-military insecurity was rooted mostly in the trials of decolonization and postcolonial statehood. While Arab states gained nominal independence in the post-World War II era (with the exception of Saudi Arabia, which was not colonized), they struggled to gain full control over the production of oil or strategic ports/canals.

Decolonization was an important aspect of regional dynamics. By the end of World War II many countries had yet to gain full independence and/or sovereignty. The last to gain independence was United Arab Emirates in 1971, preceded by Yemen in 1967, Algeria in 1962, Iraq in 1958, Libya in 1951, and Jordan in 1946. Yet independence did not immediately translate into full sovereignty. Egypt had to live by the limitations of the Canal Treaty signed with Great Britain. Oil-bearing states could not control production, nor were they able to reap the full benefits of oil wealth. Needless to say, anti-colonialist sentiments remained high throughout the Arab world.

In the case of Egypt, it was the British presence and/or influence and not potential Soviet interventionism that were the primary security concerns. In response to aforementioned calls for Egypt to join anti-Soviet defense

schemes, President Gamal Abdel Nasser responded, “How can I go to my people and tell them I am disregarding a killer with a pistol sixty miles from me at the Suez Canal to worry about someone who is holding a knife 5000 miles away?” (quoted in Brands 1991: 277). President Nasser was more concerned with decolonization, which involved keeping both former colonial powers and the United States at bay. While U.S. policy-makers worried about Soviet interventionism in the region, they remained oblivious to how their own actions constituted acts of “intervention” when viewed from the perspective of some regional actors (Grovoqui 2007; Khalidi 2002).<sup>11</sup>

This is not to suggest that concerns with sovereign development did not busy minds in Turkey. Yet, as noted above, Turkey’s policy-makers responded differently, mainly through the pursuit of pro-Western policies. While Turkey is widely considered to have turned toward the West for security in the post-World War II period, this is true only if security is understood in a narrow sense. As far as non-military aspects of security are concerned, Turkey took a turn toward the West much earlier, with the establishment of the Republic in 1923. Turkey’s insecurities during this early period were non-military in that there was no apparent military threat to its independence, territorial integrity or sovereignty. Nevertheless, its founding leaders were concerned about the future, based upon their particular remembrances of the past and interpretations of the present. One such remembrance was that non-military insecurities (the withholding of formal recognition as a full member of the European/international society) had consequences for military security (instances of military intervention and/or loss of sovereignty). Thus, as early as the 1920s, Turkish security practices had come to rest on the West–non-West divide partly as a response to non-military and non-specific insecurities vis-à-vis the European/international society (Bilgin 2009). These practices went largely undetected by the Middle East perspective (to which Turkey’s scholars also subscribed) that was informed by the standard notion of security. Stated differently, there were important similarities between insecurities as experienced in the Arab world and Turkey, stemming from their character as developing states and experiences with the “core.” However, regional actors’ policymaking and scholarly writings framed and responded to such insecurities in distinct ways.

That said, there was a significant difference between the two areas’ security experiences as well. In the case of the former, the existence of the “Arab identity” factor meant that state–society relations in the Arab world had two inter-related layers: relations between individual Arab states and their societies, and relations between Arab states and the trans-state society of Arab peoples. The latter relationship made inter-Arab coordination and cooperation possible. Even after pan-Arabism as a political movement began to decline, Arab actors were able to act in tandem in seeking a solution to the plight of the Palestinians through imposing an oil embargo in 1973, blocking progress in the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process from the mid-1990s onwards, and slowing down progress of the

Euro-Mediterranean partnership since 1999. At the same time, however, “Arab identity” rendered Arab states vulnerable toward each other’s interventions. Arab actors were able to interfere in each other’s affairs through resorting to what Michael Barnett (1998) refers to as “presentational politics” and “impression management.” Shared language and points of cultural reference allowed Arab actors to address each other’s populaces. Nasser was the most active of all, using the radio to address populations throughout the Arab world. So as not to lose legitimacy, leaders also had to be seen as acting in accordance with the precepts of “Arab security.” Accordingly, their actions had to be justified not only vis-à-vis their own society but also the trans-state society of Arab peoples. Even the more conservative Arab leaders willing to follow the British and U.S. lead hesitated for fear of losing domestic legitimacy. In Iraq, for instance, which was under British trusteeship until 1958, the anti-colonialist and anti-Western mood of the public made it difficult to enter into defensive alliances with the West. The 1948 treaty of Portsmouth (signed between Iraq and Great Britain), which had to be repudiated within a week because of public outcry in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world, was an instance of the power of the “Arab security” discourse as a tool in “presentational politics.”

In pan-Arabists’ use “Arab security” had two referent objects that were not entirely compatible with one another. These were the “society of Arab states” and the “trans-state society of Arab peoples.” For the society of Arab states, threats were considered to stem from outside the Arab world. When pan-Arabists referred to securing the Arab world (in contrast to the Middle East and/or individual Arab states), they assumed it to be a realm of security on the inside with threats coming from the outside—the West in general and Israel in particular. While pan-Arabists did not entirely overlook political and economic insecurities inside the Arab world under the terms of what Saad Ibrahim calls the “revolutionary social contracts” they signed with their societies, addressing individual and social group insecurities was to be postponed until the state succeeded in the following:

grant or [consolidate] newly obtained independence, achieve rapid economic growth (through industrialization), institute social justice, march toward Arab unity, liberate Palestine, and maintain cultural authenticity.  
(Ibrahim 2000)

In this usage, pursuing Arab security meant first addressing threats to the Arab world stemming from the outside and only then turning inwards.

Yet, the pan-Arabist discourse on security pointed to another threat: the practices of conservative leaders. Here, the referent object of Arab security was the trans-state society of Arab peoples. By virtue of defending their interests, the revolutionary model of pan-Arabist leaders needed defending against the royalist model of the conservatives. The clash between the radical and conservative leaders meant a bitter rivalry, whereby each side

sought to undermine the other's security albeit through non-military means. While pan-Arabists were able to come to power only in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, they punched above their material weight through their command of the discourse of "Arab security."

The discourse of pan-Arabist leaders threatened the security of the conservative regimes too. Contrary to their pan-Arabist counterparts, conservative leaders of the Arab world had no "contractual" obligations to meet and were not accountable as such. Nevertheless, they could not overlook the effects that "Arab security" discourse (with its promise of justice, unity, liberation, and authenticity) had over peoples across the Arab world. Radical leaders in general and President Nasser in particular exploited such sensitivities by shaping public opinion across the Arab world and calling for people to put pressure on their leaders.<sup>12</sup> The conservative leaders responded by providing support to Islamist groups and providing/withholding much needed monetary aid for their less well-to-do counterparts.

Throughout the years, as inter-Arab cooperation lagged, differences between the security concerns of distinct Arab actors became more and more apparent. In 1990 inter-Arab relations reached a low point following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. While President Saddam Hussein did not hesitate to employ the discourse of "Arab security" and was able to attract the attention of people on the streets, the responses of regional leaders showed how Arab security concerns were far from being unified. In this case, Iraq, an Arab state, had invaded Kuwait, another Arab state, and threatened Saudi Arabia, yet another Arab state. This chain of events allowed Saudi Arabia to invite the United States to aid in its defense, which led the U.S. to strengthen its political and physical presence in the "Arab region" in a hitherto unforeseen manner. Since then, Arab actors' resistance to the Middle East perspective has grown weaker, with individual state identities and alternative regional identities (as with the Gulf and Maghreb or the broader and much contested *ummah*) gaining strength. The marginalization of the trans-state society of Arab peoples as a referent object of security has meant that Arab states have become undisputed referents and agents of security. As the near absence of interest in security sector reform also suggests, societies have almost no input into and/or voice over security in the Arab world (Luethold 2004).

Islamist actors have made strategic use of the emerging disconnects between Arab society and peoples. They have done so by adopting non-violent practices that have alleviated human insecurity (as with food, shelter and health services). However, Islamists gaining sympathy in the eyes of Arab peoples has been declared a threat to regime security by regional leaders, who have made use of the post-9/11 environment (Benantar 2006). As with the high time of pan-Arabism, when individuals' and social groups' security had to be postponed for reasons of "Arab security," current regimes have suspended human rights and freedoms in the attempt to address the "terror threat" (UNDP 2009). Therefore, over the years regional leaders'

approach to security has retained its state-centric and military-focused qualities while their discourse has de-emphasized their common Arab identity.

In synthesis, whereas Turkey pursued pro-Western policies from its inception, becoming a U.S. ally in the aftermath of World War II and joining NATO in 1952, many in the Arab world declined British and later U.S. overtures to join defense pacts. Even those Arab leaders who chose to maintain relatively close ties with the United States (especially through arms transfers) stopped short of establishing alliance relations until the 1990s. As will be discussed subsequently, differences between the security practices of various actors in the Arab world and Turkey were also reflected in the security conceptions of Turkish and Arab scholars.

### **Security conceptions in the Arab world and Turkey**

The literature on security conceptions across the Arab world and Turkey is considerably thin. In part, this is a result of IR's status as a newcomer to the developing world. U.S.-trained professors introduced International Relations courses in Turkey during the 1950s. However, not until the mid-1980s did IR begin to be established as a separate discipline (Bilgin and Tanrısever 2009). Since then, research in Turkey has been characterized by a combination of accounts on the state of world politics and Turkish foreign policy dynamics. Precious few conceptually informed analyses exist. This is not entirely different from how IR developed in the Arab world, which, according to Makdisi (2009: 183) was "not so much a distinct empirical field of study as an amalgam of pressing current affairs and short-term public policy concerns." There, IR has been able to gain a foothold mostly in English-medium universities (such as the American University in Cairo and Beirut).

Nevertheless, IR studies in the Arab world and Turkey constitute fertile ground for exploring security notions. This is the case especially because security experiences constitute an important part of the reason why International Relations has remained relatively impoverished (Tickner and Wæver 2009: 172). In contrast to Western Europe, where no inter-state wars occurred after World War II, the Middle East underwent numerous inter- and intra-state conflicts. The impact of international politics was not reduced to the frequency of wars and their effects. Scholarship in the region was also marred by colonial politics of an earlier era, namely, encounters with the European/international society and the legacy of "Orientalism" (Said 1978). The latter has not only influenced the study of the "Middle East" in Europe but also regional actors' ways of knowing in that it evolved into a division of labor between area studies and the disciplines (Bilgin and Morton 2002). In this hierarchical division of labor, distinct disciplines turned to area studies for "raw data" and very little else. For years regional scholars assumed the role of "data producers" for their disciplinary-oriented colleagues, normally located in the West, or authors of policy-relevant accounts telling the world about their region. Such a division of labor

resulted in the evolution of IR in the Arab world and Turkey in its current “amalgam” form.

Given the limitations of IR scholarship and the dearth of conceptual discussions on security, I will tease out regional scholars’ main ideas based upon their writings on regional security. Based upon the preferred spatial constructs used in such analyses, I focus primarily on the clash between different regional definitions and notions of security. As noted above, Arab scholars writing about international relations have traditionally expressed a preference for calling the part of the world that they live in as the “Arab world” or the “Arab homeland” rather than the “Middle East.” Writing in 1986, two Egyptian scholars, Ali Eddin Hilal Dessouki and Jamil Matar, clarified the underlying rationale for this preference as follows:

(1) the term Middle East does not refer to a geographical area but rather it represents a political term in its creation and usage; (2) the term is not derived from the nature of the area or its political, cultural, civilizational and demographic characteristics; for when we use the term “middle” we have to ask “middle” in reference to what? (3) the term tears up the Arab homeland as a distinct unit since it has always included non-Arab states.

(Dessouki and Matar cited in Abdel Aal 1986: 197–8)

Dessouki and Matar’s objection was not merely to the label itself but also the security perspective beneath it. They considered the Middle East perspective on regional security to be problematic because it legitimized the presence of Israel, Iran, and Turkey in this region, while also marginalizing the concerns of Arab states, which were deemed different from if not opposed to those of non-Arabs. The authors’ preferred regional designation, the “Arab regional system,” served two simultaneous purposes: it symbolized resistance to what they considered to be a self-serving geographical designation and constituted an alternative designed to serve the interests of Arabs, both of which suggested that the security concerns of Arab states could be considered a unified whole and, perhaps more importantly, different from that of non-Arabs (Abdel Aal 1996).

Dessouki and Matar’s piece, published in Arabic, is still considered to be a “classic” and is widely cited by other Arab scholars. According to Egyptian scholar Baghat Korany (1994), the authors’ perspective is better characterized as “pan-Arabist” and therefore should not be considered fully representative of security thinking across the Arab world. This may be even truer for contemporary world politics, in which pan-Arabism is a shadow of its former self. Nonetheless, traces of it are still visible owing partly to the resilience of pan-Arabist institutions, including the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Beirut, the Arab Thought Forum and Arab Institute for Security Studies in Amman, and the Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies in Cairo. The latter has published the Arab Strategic Yearbook since 1986. That the

word “Arab” is used to qualify one’s perspective on various security concerns in the Arab world suggests that “Arab security” still constitutes a single unit in the minds of some scholars. Consider, for example, writings on issues as diverse as “Arab food security” (El-Solh and Chaalala 1992), “Arab water security” (Khouri 1990), or a 2008 conference convened by the Arab Women’s Organization on “Arab Women’s Human Security.”<sup>13</sup>

The ubiquity of the “Arab” dimension of security conceptualizations cannot be explained away simply as the product of pan-Arabist whim. Korany’s designation of Dessouki and Matar’s perspective as pan-Arabist is better understood as a reference to the origins of Arab national security in the discourses of radical Arab leaders. That those leaders are long gone and their political positions in rapid decline need not render the concept less relevant. Indeed, the fact that it has remained central to the analyses of Arab scholars, notwithstanding its decline as a discursive tool of Arab leaders, begs an explanation. As Said Ali has highlighted,

[m]ost of the Arab literature on security perceptions is based on the notion that Arabs have common security needs, even when the much narrower security perceptions of one or another Arab state are being represented. Major research centers in the Arab world take it as a point of departure and analysis.

(Abdel Aal 1996: 27)

All major think tanks, including the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Beirut, and the Arab Thought Forum in Amman orient their activities towards issues such as the Palestinian predicament, which is considered to be the top item on the Arab national security agenda. Such a stance, in turn, fits the profile of an intellectual tradition that has been attentive to the Arab–non-Arab distinction when considering various topics, including security. Korany highlights how “state frontiers have been less important as barriers in collective psychology than has the distinction between Arab and non-Arab” (Korany 1994: 167; Korany 1999; Korany et al. 1993a). This has been the case since the early days of the formation of individual Arab states and despite the efforts of Arab leaders to fortify state boundaries and strengthen sovereignty.

When viewed against such an intellectual and political background, scholarly writings on “Arab security” come across as critiques of “standard” concepts and theories that appear to critically engage the increasingly state-centered and military-focused security practices of many Arab leaders by voicing insecurities that otherwise go unnoticed. Nevertheless, Arab scholars, similar to policy-makers, remain divided over the issue of what “Arab security” is/should be.

In Egyptian scholars Dessouki and Mattar’s aforementioned classic, the term is discussed with reference to the insecurities of the society of

Arab states. There is a state-centered conception of Arab security. It is also outward directed in that they stress the differences between the security needs and interests of Arab states as opposed to non-Arabs. Framed as such, "Arab national security" retains some of the basic characteristics of the "standard" conception. Indeed, the authors' critique of "Western" approaches focuses not on the conceptualization of security but the referent object, the "Middle East." Thus, "Arab security" leaves little room for the insecurities of individuals and social groups who choose to define themselves with reference to other dimensions of their identity such as gender or (in the case of non-Muslims) religion, not to mention non-Arabs whose concerns are crowded out completely within this framework.

On the other hand are scholars who have prioritized the concerns of the trans-state society of Arab people when conceptualizing "Arab security." Korany is the most prominent example of this second group. For years he has maintained that the analysis of security issues in the Arab world should not be limited only, or even, primarily, to the *raison d'être* of the territorial state and that it should address the security concerns of Arab people (Korany 1994: 173). Similarly, Abdul-Monem M. Al-Mashat (1985) maintains that the "standard" concept of national security is not only state-centric but also statist by virtue of the primacy accorded to the security of the state over other referents. Putting the state at the focal point of analysis is problematic, Korany has argued, because it would leave societal insecurities out of security analyses (Korany, Noble, and Brynen 1993b).

Another problem identified by this second group of Arab scholars is the military focus of the "standard" concept. According to Al-Mashat (1985: 34), "the national security literature does not look for deep, structural conditions, but only overt evidence of political and military power or of insecurity," whereas

essential issues such as the quality of life (both physical and psychological), social equality and justice, national total development, structural interdependence among nations, global concern with common environmental problems, and international cooperation should also be built into the theory of national security.

(Al-Mashat 1985: 19)

(Re)conceptualized by Al-Mashat and Korany, the concept of "Arab security" serves as a corrective to the state-centered and military-focused practices of Arab leaders and a reminder that policies designed to secure individual states do not exhaust what could be done in the name of security in the Arab world. Viewed as such, Arab scholars' critical engagement constitutes "an act of political insurgency" (Said 2000: 202) in that their writings do not merely present theory-critique addressed to security studies audiences at home and abroad, but also constitute acts of defiance to the

security practices of their own governments that often neglect the multiple security concerns of the Arab people.

Whereas Arab scholars' writings on security have produced insightful critiques of and an alternative to the "standard" concept of "national security," Turkey's scholarly scene is characterized by the limits of such critical engagement. Indeed, a review of Turkish IR scholars' writings on security reveals that they exhibit the very characteristics of the security studies literature that has been identified as problematic by Arab scholars.<sup>14</sup> During most of the Cold War, studies on security portrayed Turkey as a "junior partner" of the United States in the "fight against communism" while its security concerns were represented as aspects of "Western security," a derivative of the security interests and policies of the United States and other "Western" allies. This, in turn, led analysts to focus on those insecurities shared by other NATO members to the neglect of other problems stemming from inside state boundaries by virtue of Turkey being a developing state.<sup>15</sup> Although the latter set of concerns was addressed by the economics literature, academic IR barely touched them.

Consider, for example, Metin Tamkoç's 1961 article entitled "Turkey's Quest for Security through Defensive Alliances," in which the author defined security in explicitly state-based, outward-directed and military-focused terms (Tamkoç 1961: 2). At the same time, however, the analysis gave away an inward-directed conception of security especially when Tamkoç discussed the policy priorities of the early Republican period in terms of the search for security and peace through relying "mainly on its own strength in order to consolidate the homeland." Once this was achieved, the governing elite's goal became one of "preserving and defending [Turkey's] territorial integrity and political independence against possible encroachments by the great powers to overthrow the status quo in the Middle East" (Tamkoç 1961: 13–14). In other words, although the author explicitly adopted a "standard" definition of "security" that emphasized inter-state dynamics, his analysis of Turkish insecurity revealed an internally oriented conception that emphasized intra-state dynamics, including establishing the idea of the state in the minds of the populace and strengthening its institutions.

Not until the 1960s and 1970s, when Turkish foreign policy underwent a period of rethinking and readjustment, did scholars begin to actively question the relevance of the "Western security" framework in accounting for Turkey's insecurities. This period witnessed widespread public debate on Turkish foreign policy in which IR scholars also contributed. The country's Western orientation in general, and membership in NATO specifically, was the most popular topic of discussion. The terms of the debate were still narrowly defined, in that Turkish security was debated solely in terms of external threats. While the appropriateness of the "Western" framework was questioned, the main concerns that were raised had to do with the political implications of the "Western" alliance for the country's foreign policies.

Turkey's internal insecurities and the interaction between the "internal" and "external" dynamics were still not a part of public or scholarly debates.

Haluk Ülman's 1966 study, titled "Thoughts on Turkey's National Defense," constitutes an example of studies that pointed to the discrepancy between Turkey's security needs and interests and those of its "Western" allies. While the author did not reflect upon the roots of such differences he did call for the rethinking of Turkey's national security interests with a view to the economic costs of military sector investments.<sup>16</sup> While adopting a comprehensive notion of security by integrating the economic dimension, Ülman did not reflect upon insecurities stemming from problems such as underdevelopment. Rather, he presented them as consequences of Turkey's ostensibly "unique" characteristics, similar to its geographical position and historical background (Ülman 1966).

Duygu Sezer's 1981 *Adelphi Paper*, "Turkey's Security Policies," constitutes the first exhaustive study that did not shy away from pointing to such incongruities. Contrary to many authors who preceded her, Sezer's study moved away from state-centered and military-focused readings of security and analyzed those vulnerabilities generated by the socio-economic transformation that Turkey experienced during the Republican era. She wrote:

Despite the absence of obvious military threats, the very precariousness of Turkey's domestic situation exposes her to precisely the kind of internal and external pressures which may dangerously undermine her ability to stand on her own feet and to formulate a coherent security policy. This internal instability is currently the major source of Turkey's insecurity.

(Sezer 1981: 39)

Domestic vulnerabilities included the rising socio-economic expectations and demands of Turkish youth, political instability, systemic economic difficulties, resource scarcity and the role of the military in Turkish politics. Hence the need for focusing on the "internal" aspects of Turkey's insecurities, argued Sezer (1981: 39): "external security cannot be achieved without a stable internal environment and a large degree of consensus." On the issue of Turkey's differences from its Western allies, this author introduced underdevelopment as a factor that had until then remained unexamined in the Turkish security literature, primarily by emphasizing the "wide gap in the level of development between Turkey and the other European members" as a factor that impeded cooperation in arms procurement (Sezer 1981: 28).

In short, what characterized the scholarly literature in Turkey was a dearth of critical reflection on the limits of "standard" notions of security in understanding and explaining the country's insecurities as a developing country. Even as discussions revealed that its insecurities were different from

those of Western allies, these were analyzed as “unique” qualities stemming from Turkey’s “geopolitical location,” not as products of its difference from the “West.” While Turkey’s scholars seemed to accept the Middle East perspective without reservations, they studied Middle Eastern issues from the perspective of Western security (DPE 1982; Karaosmanoğlu 1983; Taşhan 1987). Stated differently, even as they wrote about security in the Middle East, Turkish scholars located Turkey in the “West.”

When coupled with post-independence policies of “Westernization” and “modernization,” this overview suggests that the academic study of security in Turkey might be explained with reference to seeking “similarity,” which in itself is a security practice (Bhabha 1994; Ling 2002). Viewed through the lens of postcolonial IR, Turkey’s post-independence policies of “Westernization” as well as its post-World War II policy of joining the “Western” alliance transpire as attempts to become “similar.” While one element of seeking similarity rested on admiration of the achievements of the Enlightenment in the West, another was rooted in the search for security vis-à-vis the source of such admiration. In the case of Turkey, the latter strategy took the form of adopting a Western orientation and then formally joining the Western alliance. Viewed as such, scholars’ focus on the Western security framework as well as the standard notion of security in analyzing Turkish insecurities (analyzing them like “any other Western country”) comes across less as a dispassionate analysis of the country’s security predicament and more as a contribution to Turkish efforts at Westernization, which, in turn, was part and parcel of the country’s search for security.

To summarize, in this section I have shown how scholarly literature in the Arab world has pointed to *difference* and qualified prevalent notions of security by offering “Arab national security” while Turkey’s IR insisted on *similarity*, based upon the relevance of prevalent ideas notwithstanding apparent incongruities between ostensibly “standard” “Western” notions and Turkey’s insecurities. Scholarly reflections on security in these two worlds were thus *differently different*.

## **Conclusion**

The Arab world and Turkey faced similar challenges throughout the twentieth century that revolved around state building and development. Yet, their similarity ended there. In terms of the security practices of policy-makers and scholarly writings, the two have exhibited significant differences. Regarding practice, whereas actors in the Arab world insisted that their difference be recognized by remaining non-aligned, their counterparts in Turkey sought to efface such difference by joining Western-led security schemes (including NATO). In terms of the study of security, whereas scholars in the Arab world sought to come to terms with developing statehood, trans-state Arab identity and superpower interventionism, in Turkey they focused on the insecurities the country shared with the “West.”

In the Arab world, while the more “radical” actors promoted pan-Arab collaboration (if not unification) as a means of attaining “Arab security” (a vague notion that, in theory, covered concerns with the plight of the Palestinians as well as equitable distribution of oil wealth), the more “conservative” ones considered pan-Arabist rhetoric and policies a threat to their regime security and sought close collaboration with the United States and/or Britain. The bitter rivalry between the two camps that characterized the 1950s and 1960s eased as pan-Arabism declined from the early 1970s onwards. However, Arab actors continued to challenge each other’s legitimacy by questioning one another’s commitment to “Arab security.” Threats to security in the Arab world took military and non-military forms, including the challenges Arab regimes posed to each other and that of their respective citizens.

In Turkey, on the other hand, pro-Western practices were considered a solution to insecurities of both a military and non-military nature. While formal alliance relations with the United States were established only in the aftermath of World War II (with NATO membership following in 1952), Turkey has sought to locate itself in the “West” since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 by modeling its state building and development efforts after European countries and the United States. As such, Turkey’s security benefited from membership in NATO (and pro-Western policies in general) in more ways than one. While NATO protected the country against military threats perceived to stem from the Soviet Union and its regional allies, it also reaffirmed Turkey’s “Westernness,” thereby anchoring (and legitimizing) state-building and development efforts.

In accounting for security in the Arab world, scholars have challenged the “relevance” of the “standard” concept of security, which they find deficient in accounting for the trials and travails of postcolonial statehood (Al-Mashat 1985; Korany 1986; Korany, Noble, and Brynen 1993a; Sayigh 1990). Highlighting identity/security dynamics, Arab scholars have utilized the notion of “Arab security” and reworked it to qualify the “standard” concept (Dessouki 1993; Korany 1994; Korany, Noble, and Brynen 1993a, 1993b). Turkish scholars, contrary to their Arab world counterparts, did not challenge the relevance of “standard” concepts but rather offered accounts of Turkey’s security as an aspect of “Western security.” Apparent incongruities between Turkey’s insecurities as a developing country and the standard notions were either explained away with reference to its ostensibly “unique” qualities (Dış Politika Enstitüsü 1982; Tamkoç 1961; Taşhan 1987) or accounted for through exploiting “geopolitics” as a theory of state security—invoked as yet another “Western” perspective.<sup>17</sup>

By virtue of insecurities derived from state building and development, the Arab world and Turkey have both differed from the West. However, the examination of security practices and scholarly analyses reveals that only actors in the Arab world highlighted such difference whereas Turkish actors underscored similarity. While it is possible to explain Turkish actors’

emphasis on similarity as mere byproducts of its alliance with the United States, this chapter has inquired into the ways in which the two have been differently different. Such inquiry requires taking seriously the agency of non-core scholars in adopting, adapting or bypassing concepts and theories originating from the “core.” Local scholars’ agency was analyzed in terms of the scholarly context in which they operate (that is, the sociology of the study of security) and the international political context that shapes (and is in turn shaped by) them. In these two non-core settings, policy-makers and scholars alike were no mere victims but also merchants of the increasing production and consumption of the notion of “security,” albeit in different ways. Whereas some (as in the Arab world) reworked “security” in order to highlight the insecurities of state as well as non-state referents, others (as in Turkey) refrained from such critical engagement.

Such differently different responses of actors in the Arab world and Turkey suggest that although IR scholars outside “core” contexts are expected to reflect on the consequences of past relationships of power inequity (as with colonialism and exploitation) and produce radically “different” perspectives on world politics (as did the *dependencia* school), differences in experience may also result in seemingly “similar” end-products that are “different” in unexpected ways (Bilgin 2008). Therefore, exploring the diverse forms “difference” takes may provide greater insight into the “international” outside the “core.” Clearly, there is an international politics dimension to the ways in which IR has developed in “non-core” contexts. Inquiring into the study of IR outside the core reveals different insecurities experienced by non-core actors even as they chose to emphasize their similarities.

## Notes

- 1 I have put the terms “core” and “non-core” in quotations to signal their problematic nature. I will continue using them in reference to “Western Europe and North America” and “the rest of the world,” respectively. This divide is not based on the relations of production and consumption in the world of ideas about international relations. For a discussion, see Wæver (1998).
- 2 Portraying this part of the world as the “Arab world” is not without its critics. This is mostly because the term (over)emphasizes the region’s “Arab” character, whereas “non-Arab” peoples (including Berbers and Kurds) make up a significant portion of the population. What is more, the definition of who is and is not “Arab” is highly contested among regional peoples themselves.
- 3 Turkey is a developing country that has inherited the Ottoman imperial legacy. Postcolonial states of the Arab world (with the exception of Saudi Arabia) were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire and were subjected to post-World War I mandate regimes of Great Britain and France.
- 4 See Bilgin (2009) for an earlier exploration of this argument.
- 5 The term “IR literature” is loosely defined for reasons to do with the characteristics of academic IR in Turkey (Bilgin and Tanrıseven 2009) and the Arab world (Makdisi 2009).
- 6 This point is further developed with reference to non-Western IR in Bilgin (2008).

- 7 In some places the geographical scope of the “Middle East” changes. In others, it remains the same, but terminology shifts. Notwithstanding such differences, the conception of security that shapes them has remained constant in that it is an outsiders’ perspective on security located to the southwest of Asia and north of Africa.
- 8 Barnett’s book entitled *Dialogues in Arab Politics* (1998) is an exception in terms of looking into the non-military means through which Arab actors were able to challenge each other’s security. That said, Barnett’s study mostly brackets security and is more interested in the ways in which “dialogue” has taken place.
- 9 In a similar fashion, Turkish scholars viewed the Mediterranean as the “Southern Flank,” not as a region of interest for Turkey as a fellow Mediterranean country but from the perspective of NATO.
- 10 For example, Abu Jaber’s aforementioned survey of strategic studies literature in the Arab world revealed a conception of security that took Arabs as its referent object and viewed non-Arabs in general and Israel in particular as threats to “Arab security.”
- 11 This is not to suggest that U.S. policymaking consisted solely of strong-arming regional leaders or that it was designed purely to divide and rule (Little 2002). Throughout the Cold War successive governments poured military as well as economic aid into the region in the attempt to win hearts and minds. Economic development as well as military defense of Turkey was bolstered by U.S. aid. Notwithstanding such efforts, other practices such as the maintenance of the mandate system, oil extraction privileges and covert operations undertaken to prevent the downfall of pro-Western leaders/regimes resulted in the rise of anti-Western feelings among Arab peoples.
- 12 For example, consider the pressure Egypt’s President Nasser put on King Abdullah of Jordan to join the war against Israel in 1967 through shaping public opinion in that country.
- 13 The full-text of the conference proceedings is available online at: [http://www.aucegypt.edu/research/forum/Publications/Documents/Women%20in%20the%20Concept%20and%20Issues%20of%20Human%20Security\\_Vol.%201.pdf](http://www.aucegypt.edu/research/forum/Publications/Documents/Women%20in%20the%20Concept%20and%20Issues%20of%20Human%20Security_Vol.%201.pdf)
- 14 Based on a survey of *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yıllığı* (The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations), *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* (both published by the Faculty of Political Science, Ankara University) and *Dış Politikai Foreign Policy* (published by the Foreign Policy Institute, Ankara).
- 15 This is not to deny the ways in which foreign and security policy serves to address “internal” insecurities in developed as well as developing countries but to emphasize the latter’s concern with prioritizing “internal” over the “external” for reasons of state-building.
- 16 Ülman’s study constitutes an exception to the generalization made above about the dearth of studies addressing the relationships between economic and military dimensions of Turkey’s insecurities.
- 17 The history of geopolitical approach to Turkey’s security goes back to the early 1950s. For an evaluation of the evolution of geopolitical discourse in Turkey and its political uses, see Bilgin (2007).

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