DERADICALIZATION IN ARAB STATES—MODELS AND CASE STUDIES

Against the backdrop of escalating jihadist violence across the Arab world in the early 2000s—including major attacks in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia—regimes in the region implemented a range of deradicalization strategies aimed at suppressing violent extremism and reshaping the ideological space in which it had flourished.

These efforts evolved differently in each country, shaped by distinct political, religious, and institutional contexts, and produced a spectrum of approaches. The common denominator across all cases is the attempt to exert **control over the ideological ecosystem** within which jihadist movements operate. In each case, **jihadist Islam is framed as a deviation from "authentic" and "correct" Islam, while the state and its laws are positioned as a normative counterweight.**

In some cases—most notably in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—deradicalization is embedded within far more ambitious projects aimed at **constructing a national ethos of religious and interreligious tolerance as part of a broader vision of modernization, growth, and prosperity.**

The differences among these cases stem from the source and strength of the legitimacy upon which each regime could draw as a basis of authority for reshaping behavior and in some instances, even beliefs.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES[7]

In the aftermath of the 2011 "Arab Spring," the Emirati regime intensified its coercive campaign against political Islam within the federation. In 2013, dozens of citizens were convicted of membership of al-Islah, which was designated as an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood (the *UAE94* case). Some of those convicted remain imprisoned to this day, formally within "rehabilitation" (*munāṣaḥa*—counseling) frameworks, though in practice with little transparency regarding their actual conditions of detention. In parallel, teachers were dismissed, clerics were replaced, and educational, religious, and charitable institutions—as well as media outlets—were closed. Jihadists returning from Syria were prosecuted and brought to trial.

The regime placed very strong emphasis on obedience to state law as part of reshaping citizens' moral and ideological consciousness. **Compliance with state law (*qanun*)** is presented as the supreme moral framework, **overriding tribal, sectarian, and religious loyalties.** Civic duty is defined as loyalty to the state and has been embedded in curricula, media content, and state-supervised sermons.

Beginning in 2016, an **education reform** was introduced in which Islamic and Arabic studies were reduced, "problematic" teachers were dismissed, and curricular content increasingly emphasized **pluralism and interreligious dialogue**.

As part of a **religious reform**, the UAE established a national Fatwa Council to centralize the licensing of preachers and the issuance of religious rulings. Binding guidelines were introduced for weekly sermons, mandating messages of compassion, coexistence, and obedience to the state, while explicitly denouncing jihadism as a deviation from "true" Islam.

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7   The UAE's test-case is based on: Amnesty International (2013); Balla (2022); Boghardt (2013); Human Rights Watch (2023); Mazzucco et al. (2023); MENA Rights Group (2020); U.S. Department of State (2021, n.d.).

Alongside these measures, the regime has pursued a broad public-facing effort to embed **messages, narratives, and symbols of religious and interreligious tolerance.** Thus, for example, 2019 was declared the "Year of Tolerance"; a Ministry of Tolerance was established; and initiatives such as the Abrahamic Family House (a complex of worship spaces for the three monotheistic religions, built in Abu Dhabi), museums, commemorative stamps, and public remembrance events were launched to anchor coexistence as a national ethos. Influential religious figures justified the Abraham Accords with Israel through religious and national principles of conflict resolution (*muṣālaḥa*) and national security. Popular Ramadan television series, meanwhile, portrayed terrorists as hypocrites and glorified state security forces.

Establishing Supporting Institutions: A significant component of the UAE's capacity to implement its de-radicalization agenda and the societal "re-education" toward an ethos of tolerance lies in its deliberate establishment of a network of professional institutions that generate ideological, civic, and international infrastructure—while also reinforcing internal control. These include the Hedayah Center (the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism), which focuses on training, research, and policy development in the field of CVE (Countering Violent Extremism); the Sawab Center, a platform dedicated to countering online radicalization through campaigns that promote moderate narratives and rebut extremist content; and the Al-Mesbar Studies & Research Center, an independent research institute analyzing trends in political Islam, disseminating research, and supporting policy formulation in the UAE and across the Arab world.

The Emirati model has served as a source of inspiration for the Saudi approach and, to date, appears to be a success; however, only the passage of time will ultimately determine the depth and durability of the change. It is also important to acknowledge that the processes undertaken in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates benefit from the vast resources available to the local authorities.

SAUDI ARABIA[8]

Saudi Arabia operates the most comprehensive and institutionalized deradicalization program in the Arab world, shaped by the problematic legacy of extremist Wahhabism and by the involvement of Saudi actors in the rise of terrorist organizations—most notably al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, who orchestrated the 9/11 attacks. As such, the Saudi case illustrates both the capabilities and the limitations of a state-led authoritarian approach to deradicalization. The Saudi strategy evolved in two main phases: first, a targeted rehabilitation program under Mohammed bin Nayef, followed by a broad, systemic campaign of ideological rebranding under Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

Phase I: Mohammed bin Nayef's Rehabilitation Program (2003–2015)
In the wake of the al-Qaeda attacks in Riyadh in 2003, the Ministry of Interior launched a strategy that combined robust security repression with the rehabilitation of members of Islamist groups. On the security front, internal security services dismantled jihadist networks within the kingdom while simultaneously purging state institutions of Muslim Brotherhood influence, including the education system, religious establishments, and civil society organizations. Teachers affiliated with the Brotherhood were removed, clerics associated with it were dismissed, and the powers of the religious police (the "Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice") were significantly curtailed.

The flagship program for rehabilitating Islamist detainees operated through the Mohammed bin Nayef Counseling and Care Centers. Implemented on a limited scale involving several hundred detainees, the program sought to achieve behavioral disengagement from extremist groups and reintegration

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8   The Saudi Arabia's test case is based on: Guzansky & Perlov (2014); Braude (2014a,b, 2017); El-Said (2017); Rabasa et al. (2010); Regional Cooperation Council (2019).

into society through material incentives (similar to the *demobilization* and *reintegration* components of DDR). Key elements of the program included:

- Religious re-education through dialogue with clerics trained to engage theologically with extremist (takfiri) doctrines;
- Psychological counseling and trauma treatment, particularly for returnees from Afghanistan and Iraq;
- Vocational training and employment placement support;
- Family involvement as guarantors of post-release stability;
- Material incentives, including housing, living stipends, and marriage assistance;
- Post-release monitoring, including mentorship, home visits, and security supervision.

Phase II: Mohammed bin Salman's State-Led Campaign (2015–Present)
From 2015 onward, the focus of deradicalization efforts in Saudi Arabia **shifted from the rehabilitation of extremists to a broader project of "ideological reengineering"** and national rebranding. Deradicalization became an integral component of a far more expansive vision, aimed both at consolidating domestic authority and at reshaping the Kingdom's image on the global stage.

A central pillar of Mohammed bin Salman's new strategy was the **branding of "moderate Islam"**—a revised religious vision aligned with Saudi Arabia's modernization agenda, including expanded women's rights, the promotion of tourism, the attraction of foreign investment, and related initiatives. Accordingly, the religious establishment underwent a broad reorganization, including purges of clerics who were arrested, dismissed, or compelled to fall in line with the new orientation. In parallel, preachers loyal to the regime and identified with more moderate religious approaches were promoted.

The online sphere has become another central arena of contestation, given its extensive use by extremist clerics and jihadist actors to disseminate their

messages. To alter this dynamic, pro-regime commentators were mobilized, often launching forceful attacks on radical Islam. In addition, the government initiated the *Sakina* campaign, under which regime-affiliated clerics engaged directly—via social media dialogues—with individuals identifying with extremist Islamist ideas, seeking to persuade them to reconsider their positions through religious, psychological, and communication-based arguments.

Beyond direct action against extremists, the state advanced a range of initiatives aimed at **delegitimizing extremist narratives among the broader public**. These included amplifying testimonies of former jihadists who publicly renounced violence (the *Humumna* project), supporting comedic programs that satirized extremist clerical figures and jihadist narratives, and sponsoring interreligious dialogue initiatives such as KAICIID (the *King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue*).

Additional reforms led by MBS, while not directly tied to deradicalization, have contributed to it indirectly by **encouraging more pluralistic value orientations** within Saudi society—for example, granting women the right to drive (the *Women2Drive* initiative).

In terms of outcomes, Saudi Arabia has thus far continued to enjoy internal stability, and at least on the surface, no significant threats from extremist Islam are apparent. At the same time, alongside the far-reaching measures and the ambitious vision underpinning them, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of—and the open questions surrounding—the Kingdom's deradicalization processes. These include the extent to which the regime's messaging of "correct" or "moderate" Islam has genuinely taken root in public consciousness, as opposed to being perceived as unconvincing state propaganda; whether, and to what degree, extremist and subversive ideas continue to simmer beneath the surface; and whether the liberalizing reforms promoted by Mohammed bin Salman—while potentially moving Saudi society toward more modern forms of consciousness and social practice—will ultimately

succeed, or instead erode key pillars of authoritarian stability in ways that could be exploited by extremist currents and lead to renewed instability.

EGYPT[9]

Egypt was among the first Arab states to suffer the challenge posed by extremist Islam. The struggle against the Muslim Brotherhood—whose origins lie in Egypt—has accompanied the Free Officers' regime since its earliest years in the 1950s, under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who confronted the movement with force and ordered the execution of Sayyid Qutb in 1966. Terrorist organizations that emerged ideologically from the Muslim Brotherhood were, as is well known, responsible for the assassination of President Anwar Sadat. More recently, the Muslim Brotherhood briefly rose to power during the Arab Spring, under President Mohamed Morsi (2012–2013).

Part of the regime's response to the Islamist threat has involved **weaving the religious dimension into the national ethos** cultivated by what was originally a secular state. Anwar Sadat promoted the image of himself as the "believing president," Hosni Mubarak framed state stability as a religious imperative, and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has likewise sought to fuse religious identity into an overarching national ethos, in part to neutralize Islamist criticism.

The Egyptian state, **drawing on the religious legitimacy conferred by the al-Azhar institution**, has over decades constructed a narrative of moderate Islam as the authentic expression of the faith, and has used this framing to justify a comprehensive campaign of repression against the Muslim Brotherhood, portrayed as representatives of an extremist deviation from the "correct" path of Islam. The regime has actively disseminated this narrative through various instruments of public consciousness formation, including popular cinema

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9   The Egyptian test-case is based on: Winter (2024), Al-Anani (2009); Brachman (2007); Brzuszkiewicz (2017); El-Said (2017); International Peace Institute (2010); Ismail (2023).

that mocked Islamist figures and depicted their ideology as catastrophic for the state and its citizens.

The regime's approach produced a notable and widely publicized success in the form of a series of public *recantation statements* issued by imprisoned members of the two major terrorist organizations active in Egypt during the 1990s and early 2000s—al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. In these texts, the authors explicitly renounced violence and grounded their ideological reversal in core Islamic jurisprudential principles. The critical turning point that catalyzed this process was the 1997 Luxor massacre, which generated profound public shock and outrage and, in turn, created significant internal and external pressure on these organizations to reassess their strategic and moral course.

The state facilitated this process in several ways, including easing prison conditions, providing access to "correct" religious study materials, and allowing family visits. However, the initiative was never institutionalized as a comprehensive program: no systematic rehabilitation mechanisms were established, no meaningful risk-based screening of prisoners was conducted, and no clear distinction was maintained between those who genuinely renounced violence and those who remained committed to it. As a result, while some released prisoners went on to act as relatively moderate public figures, others gradually reverted to extremist patterns of thought and behavior.

The removal of President Morsi and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's rise to power ushered in a new and uncompromising wave of repression against the Muslim Brotherhood, coupled with an effort to dismantle its influence over society. The Brotherhood was designated a terrorist organization, outlawed, and its members were subjected to mass trials and, in some cases, executions. In parallel, the regime invested heavily in rewriting school curricula, re-centralizing control over Friday sermons, and shaping public consciousness through media and cultural institutions that framed loyalty to the state as a religious imperative.

At the same time, at the outset of his presidency el-Sisi introduced the notion of *renewing religious discourse* (*tajdīd al-khiṭāb al-dīnī*) as a central slogan, reflecting his ambition to reform the religious messaging led by al-Azhar. In el-Sisi's view, al-Azhar's discourse was overly rigid, insufficiently pragmatic, and poorly adapted to the needs of the state and society in confronting contemporary global challenges. In pursuit of this goal, the president even sought to elevate the Ministry of Religious Endowments as an alternative religious authority to al-Azhar.

As in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Egypt's de-radicalization measures combine coercive security actions against Islamist actors with efforts to dismantle their presence and influence across key spheres of social life, alongside the construction of a narrative that elevates loyalty to the state and its laws to the status of a supreme moral value. At the same time, the Egyptian model places more limited emphasis on the rehabilitation of individuals drawn into extremism. Unlike the Gulf models reviewed above, it does not advance a comprehensive counter-vision of religious and interreligious tolerance as a new national ethos—certainly not with the same level of ambition or systematic investment in societal internalization. This may help explain Egypt's more limited success in curbing extremism, alongside other factors related to the nature of the regime (non-monarchical) and the acute socio-economic hardships facing large segments of the Egyptian population.

MOROCCO[10]

The Moroccan approach to deradicalization combines top-down, monarchy-led religious reform, selective reintegration of former extremists who have renounced violence, and a limited degree of civil society involvement. Following the 2003 Casablanca bombings, the monarchy reinforced its position as the supreme religious authority by restructuring the Supreme Council of Religious

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10   The Moroccan test case is based on: Abu Dalhoum et al., (2020); Bastani & Gazzotti (2021); Brzuszkiewicz (2017); Fakoussa-Behrens & Kabis-Kechrid (2020); Masbah (2017).

Scholars (ʿulamāʾ), tightly regulating mosque sermons, and promoting a religious framework grounded in the ruling dynasty's lineage—traced back to the Prophet Muhammad since the seventeenth century—as a key source of legitimacy. The emphasis is less on direct coercion and more on religious re-education and cultural engineering, such that deradicalization processes are woven into everyday religious and social practices.

Religious and educational reforms: The state invested heavily in reshaping the religious–social sphere. Imam-training institutes and the *Murshidat* program (female religious guides) disseminated the idea of "moderate Islam" within communities, schools, and families. The guides' role extended beyond formal instruction to include counseling, mediation, and community accompaniment, thereby embedding norms of moderation into everyday life. This strategy was designed to entrench loyalty to the king as *Amir al-Mu'minin* ("Commander of the Faithful") and to reinforce his status as the supreme religious–political authority.

The "Musalaha" (Reconciliation) program: In 2017, Morocco institutionalized a program focused on the rehabilitation of prisoners. The program combined religious re-education, psychological treatment, and legal rehabilitation, administered jointly by the prison administration, the League of Muslim Scholars, and the Council of Religious Scholars. Prisoners were assessed and classified according to their level of radicalization and offered tailored educational and vocational tracks. Prison thus served not only as a security instrument but also as a site for ideological disengagement. At the same time, the program has been criticized for limited transparency in participant selection, unequal access to resources, and the risk of public backlash surrounding the granting of pardons.

Program graduates faced significant challenges, including unemployment, social stigma, and the absence of a robust post-release support framework. Psychological services—both during incarceration and after release—were limited, undermining the stability of the rehabilitation process. Civil society

organizations were scarcely integrated into the later stages of reintegration, preventing the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation model. Moreover, state efforts to advance a counter-narrative to extremist Islam relied primarily on rational and theological arguments, which have struggled to compete with the emotional and identity-based appeal wielded by extremist recruiters.

Selective integration of former extremists: Morocco has cautiously integrated former Salafi-jihadists who renounced violence into prisoner rehabilitation programs and, to a limited extent, into the public discourse, positioning them as intermediaries between the state and at-risk youth. This approach is grounded in the use of "local voices" with social credibility to convey state-sanctioned messages, albeit under close governmental supervision.

Civil society as a limited partner: Civil society organizations—such as youth groups, religious associations, and various NGOs—have been incorporated into prevention and awareness initiatives. In most cases, however, these organizations function effectively as extensions of the state, reliant on government or external funding and subject to close oversight. While this controlled use of civil society allows the regime to expand its reach, the lack of genuine independence means that these actors are often perceived as part of the state apparatus, limiting public trust in them.

The Moroccan case illustrates how religious lineage can be leveraged as a source of political legitimacy. Particularly noteworthy as sources of inspiration are the integration of rehabilitated extremists into deradicalization efforts throughout society, and the use of local civil society actors as intermediaries (even though tight state control and oversight undermine their public credibility). At the same time, the relevance of this model to the Gazan case is limited, given the absence in Palestinian society of a monarchical regime or a ruling dynasty endowed with comparable religious lineage.

JORDAN[11]

Jordan's effort to de-radicalize society took shape in the aftermath of the 2005 Amman bombings, carried out by jihadist networks affiliated with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The Kingdom's central response was the Amman Message (2004)—a **religious–political declaration that delineated clear jurisprudential boundaries and rejected *takfiri* interpretations that excommunicate other Muslims.** To further consolidate control, the **Fatwa Law** (2006) was enacted, transferring the authority to issue religious rulings to clerics appointed and approved by the state. Together, these measures signaled the Kingdom's attempt to articulate a "state Islam" aligned with political leadership.

The king and state authorities have also drawn legitimacy from the Hashemite lineage, as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and custodians of the holy sites in Jerusalem. This lineage has been used not only to underpin the struggle against extremism, but also to justify the peace treaty with Israel (1994). Official discourse framed peace not as a political compromise, but as a religious and moral imperative, emphasizing the "shared lineage" of Jordanians and Israelis as Abrahamic peoples.

At the institutional level, **the Ministry of Waqf became a central instrument of control**. All imams are required to consult the official journal, *Hādī al-Islām*, which provides theological and political guidelines. In addition, they receive weekly, state-prescribed talking points for Friday sermons. Their salaries and housing are subsidized by the state, and compliance is enforced through "mosque informants"—security-affiliated monitors who observe sermons and report deviations from the approved line.

At the same time, the **media sphere was restructured**: stringent legislation, fines, and censorship mechanisms were employed to ensure conformity with official discourse. Islamist media outlets that dared to criticize the state or

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11   The Jordanian test case is based on: Winter (2024); Abu Dalhoum et al., (2020); El-Said (2017); International Peace Institute (2010); Svetlova (2025).

oppose normalization with Israel were shut down or subjected to sustained harassment.

In the realm of incarceration and prisoner treatment, the Hiwar ("Dialogue") program was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Community Peace Center. Its aim was to **engage extremist prisoners in structured dialogue with regime-approved clerics**. Prisoners were classified according to their level of radicalization and separated from the general prison population. However, the program suffered from several limitations: it did not provide psychological or vocational services, lacked a structured post-release reintegration plan, and relied almost entirely on the subjective assessments of clerics. As a result, cases of recidivism—and even further radicalization within prison—were reported.

At the legal level, **amendments to counterterrorism legislation** expanded the definition of terrorism to encompass online activity—including "likes" or the sharing of posts on social media—and attached severe penalties to such actions. These measures, however, deepened perceptions of repression, increased the prison population, and in some cases generated new hostility toward the regime.

In April 2025, the regime designated the **Muslim Brotherhood as an illegal organization**, outlawed all of its activities (including its parliamentary presence through the "Islamic Action Front party") and ruled that its offices would be closed, its assets confiscated, and any publication or promotion of ideology associated with it would constitute a criminal offense.

Alongside these measures, **the regime sought to cultivate a social consciousness of a "warm peace."** Sermons in mosques, official speeches, and programs on state media framed coexistence as both a religious and national value. At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements advanced a counter-narrative portraying peace as betrayal and the regime as subservient to the West. The tension between these narratives

underscored the **credibility problem facing official discourse**, which was often perceived as reflecting regime interests rather than authentic religious truth.

Jordan's deeper challenge lies in a deficit of legitimacy. State-appointed imams are widely perceived as lacking independence, while civil society organizations and former militants are almost entirely excluded from the system. Even after release from prison, former inmates receive little to no assistance or rehabilitation—there is no psychological support, no structured employment pathways, and no institutionalized family assistance. This reality leaves many trapped in cycles of stigma, unemployment, and potential relapse into extremism.

In sum, the Jordanian model reflects broad but shallow institutional control. The state exercises extensive authority over mosques, the media, and the prison system, yet excludes authentic actors who are not affiliated with the regime, thereby undermining its own credibility. In other words, while the Kingdom benefits from an image of stability, it has not succeeded in building sustainable societal resilience against radicalization.

TUNISIA[12]

Tunisia represents an unusual case in the Arab world: the only state to undergo a democratic transition after the Arab Spring, yet simultaneously one of the leading exporters of foreign fighters to jihadist organizations. Between 2011 and 2015, thousands of Tunisians traveled to fight in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. By 2017, hundreds had returned, but most were neither prosecuted nor placed in rehabilitation programs, due to institutional weakness and the absence of reintegration infrastructure. The combination of political openness, weak governance, and socio-economic marginalization turned Tunisia into a hub of radicalization and a particularly challenging arena for countering extremism.

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12   The Tunisian test-case is based on: Cragin (2021); Mattei & Domergue (2021); Strong Cities Network (2025); UNODC (2022); Watanabe & Merz (2017); Zelin (2020).

The deeper drivers of this dynamic were an institutional vacuum and social marginalization. The 2011 revolution opened the public sphere, but simultaneously weakened state control over religious institutions. Hundreds of mosques fell under the influence of radical preachers, and the organization *Ansar al-Sharia* succeeded in mobilizing supporters through charitable and community activities until it was outlawed in 2013. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which had suffered a crisis of credibility after years of political control under the former regime, struggled to restore its legitimacy. On the political level, the Islamist Ennahda movement achieved significant electoral success in the post-revolutionary period.

Among young people, feelings of marginalization intensified due to chronic unemployment, center–periphery disparities, exclusion from the political system, and persistent police violence. These experiences created fertile ground for narratives of grievance and oppression, which extremist groups framed as evidence of the righteousness of their cause.

A series of severe attacks—including the 2015 assault on the Bardo National Museum and the attack in Sousse—prompted the state to harden its stance. A new counterterrorism law granted expanded powers of arrest and prosecution, a specialized terrorism court was established, travel by young people suspected of heading to conflict zones was blocked at the borders, and the number of detainees increased significantly.

In parallel, the authorities sought to reassert control over mosques. Hundreds were closed, radical preachers were dismissed, and imams were retrained through government programs—some of them in cooperation with Morocco, which exported its "moderate Islam" model. Media outlets suspected of disseminating extremist content were also shut down. Through these measures, Tunisia attempted to articulate a distinctly "moderate" and "Tunisian" religious identity, distancing itself from external influences. At the same time, these steps reinforced perceptions of the persistence of authoritarian governance patterns. Especially in high-unemployment areas,

identification systems in mosques and tight supervision of sermons generated a sense of coercive control rather than genuine partnership.

Since 2011, **civil society** has become an important actor in prevention efforts. Substantial funding from the United Nations, the European Union, and other international donors supported a wide range of NGOs; however, in many cases, locally rooted, family-based, or community initiatives proved more credible and effective. Programs that relied on respected religious figures or family networks were able to interrupt recruitment processes. Local authorities also began to engage in prevention efforts, including through the **Strong Cities Network** and **UNDP** projects. By working through schools, community centers, and social workers, early-warning mechanisms were established to identify signs of radicalization and to offer non-punitive alternatives. Nevertheless, despite the positive role of civil society actors, their involvement has remained limited in scale and insufficiently resourced.

In sum, despite sporadic attempts, Tunisia still lacks an institutionalized framework for the rehabilitation of returning fighters. Initiatives led by international organizations have provided psychosocial support or prison-based workshops, but these have remained small-scale pilot projects dependent on external funding. Women and children—a substantial share of "returnees"— have received little tailored attention. At the same time, continued violence by security forces, the absence of employment opportunities, and persistent social stigma have deepened feelings of alienation and increased the risk of renewed radicalization within society.

Attempts by the state to import moderate ideas from abroad or to engineer a religious identity from above have encountered significant challenges of trust and commitment. The gradual shift toward community-based prevention is noteworthy and promising; however, as long as large-scale rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms are absent, and socio-economic living conditions remain unchanged, Tunisia's fragility will continue to provide fertile ground for the expansion of cycles of extremism.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ARAB CASE STUDIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GAZA STRIP

Crisis events as catalysts for deradicalization: In all the countries examined, deradicalization processes did not emerge in a vacuum; the impetus for their implementation arose in the wake of crises, such as severe terrorist attacks (Riyadh 2003, Casablanca 2003, Amman 2005) or large-scale political upheavals (the "Arab Spring"), which in the Egyptian case even led to a change of regime. This yields a direct implication for Gaza: the war has resulted in the near-total destruction of civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, widespread loss of life, mass displacement, and collective trauma. While this constitutes an extraordinarily difficult starting point for reconstruction processes, at the same time the magnitude of the disaster also creates a rare "window of opportunity" to reshape the population's political and ideological cognitive space.

State sovereignty versus religious authority: A common denominator among the countries examined is the **recognition that the use of force alone is insufficient to suppress extremist ideology** and the actors that promote it; control over the symbolic sphere is also required—collective identity, religious interpretation, and the national narrative. Many of these states have designated the state and its laws as the supreme normative identity, superseding alternative forms of affiliation, and have sought to anchor civic loyalty above factional (tribal or religious) loyalties. **Applied to the Palestinian case, so long as there is no (even incipient) credible movement toward a horizon of sovereignty and national independence, a serious question mark remains over the very feasibility of advancing deradicalization processes** within Palestinian society.

A theology of peace under conditions of conflict: Arab states have, over the years, grounded peace agreements in religious-legal justifications. In Gaza, **a theology of "just peace" is relevant only if it is tied to a tangible political horizon** of Palestinian independence and sovereignty; absent such a horizon, the message will be perceived as empty propaganda.

Credible religious intermediaries: It is important to mediate the new moderate ethos through a religious–social anchor that is as local as possible. However, given the absence of such an anchor in Gaza—due to Hamas' long-standing indoctrination processes—it should be reinforced through a consortium of moderate religious figures from Arab states. Owing to cultural proximity, Egypt could serve as a supporting pillar (via the al-Azhar institution), although Gulf states appear capable of contributing more moderate voices.

Modest models versus ambitious models: Egypt and Jordan are the closest to the Palestinians in terms of language, geography, and patterns of interaction; however, their approaches have largely remained **models of threat containment, relying primarily on coercive means** (security enforcement, control of sermons, centralization of religious authority), **with little to no engagement in the rehabilitation of activists** (stemming from the belief that extremists cannot be "reformed" and are better "broken"), and with relatively **limited social engineering of beliefs and identities**. By contrast**, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates** offer a more comprehensive and ambitious model of re-educating society as a whole toward an ethos of religious tolerance and of creating a **"state orthodoxy" as a full alternative** to jihadist ideology, combining "hard power" with "soft power" (education, culture, and media). Thus far, **the ambitious Gulf models appear to be yielding greater achievements**, although they have also benefited from more favorable initial conditions. Adopting Gulf-style models **in the Gaza Strip would require demanding preconditions**: vision and leadership among all stakeholders, a political and economic horizon, and sustained long-term planning and implementation capacity.

The paradox of "authoritarian tolerance": The Saudi and Emirati models do indeed seek to cultivate a national ethos of religious tolerance and disciplined citizenship, but they do so through centralized mechanisms that are themselves intolerant of dissent. This constitutes a paradox; nevertheless, it is one that enables the marginalization of extremist ideologies and the articulation of

a new civic–religious identity under conditions in which the state operates in a unified, resolute, and effective manner. Applying this model to the Gaza context would require accepting its underlying authoritarian assumptions and ensuring robust implementation capacity and consistent rule of law; absent these, the model would be liable to collapse.

The Palestinian Authority as an insufficient but necessary anchor: The institutional base of the Palestinian Authority is far from sufficient, and the current functional capacities of the Authority and its leadership fall well short of what would be required to deliver the implementation capability and public legitimacy needed for deradicalization measures. Nevertheless, the PA provides a national "anchor" that, from the perspective of Palestinian society, is not replaceable—except by Hamas. From the standpoint of Arab states, which are vital to advancing deradicalization within Palestinian society, and of the international community as a potential source of financial support for such efforts, there is likewise no genuine alternative to the Palestinian Authority.