

Agents in Search of an Actor:
Societal Security for the Palestinians and Turkish Kurds

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Societal security has become a prominent concept in the field of security studies where it has been used to challenge the dominance of the state as the primary object of reference in the study of security. With the end of the Cold War, an array of new threats were identified that could not fit neatly into the established paradigm of state security. Thus societal security was introduced to account for developments that threatened the identity of social groups, which states were either helpless to prevent or instrumental in causing.

Societal security was introduced, first as one sector of state security, then as a competing referent object of security to the state. Threats to societal security emerge from any development that may threaten the identity of that society. Buzan identifies three developments that threaten the identity of societies: vertical competition, horizontal competition and migration. Buzan and Waever place these developments in the field of societal, rather than state, security because these forces are often produced or encouraged by states, and threaten the ability of societies to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats (Waever 1998).

In the study of security, there are some that dismiss the concept of societal security and continue to advocate the maintenance of the state as the sole referent object of security. This paper does not share such a view. I contend that the concept of societal security is essential to understanding a vast array of threats that cannot be understood through the lens of state security. Societal

actors articulate a number of threats, many of which stem from the policies of the state in which they find themselves. The paradigm of state security fails to properly address these threats because in some cases the protection of the state's security leads to increased insecurity of the society. From the state security perspective, the security of a society is only important insofar as it threatens the security of the state. The atrocities committed by states against societal groups makes this position untenable. Additionally, the prominence of the state security paradigm has fostered the belief that states are the only source of security, which has in turn led to significant efforts by minority groups without a state of their own to create independent states. These efforts have contributed to a decline in overall levels of security for a significant portion of the world's population.

Critical security theorists have launched a much more insightful and potentially damaging criticism at the societal security concept. They have argued that inserting societies into the study of security in place of the state merely reifies the identity of a society, the same way such traditional security studies have reified the state. Treating society as unproblematic ignores the processes that create and re-create societies' identity (Bilgin 2003). While this criticism is valid, it is not a criticism of the concept itself but rather how it has been applied.

Because the concept is relatively new to the study of security, it has yet to be applied to a broad range of societies. Thus far, the Copenhagen school has used the concept primarily within the European context. While it has proven fruitful in the study of changing European societal security interests, the concept

has really only been applied to societies that are largely coterminous with the nation-state in which they live. It is not clear if the concept travels well to societies that are not coterminous with the states in which they exist. The problem with applying the concept only to nation-state societies is that these states claim to speak on behalf of that society and have a clear mechanism of enunciating threats. Consequently, these security claims are co-opted by state elites thus making it difficult to determine if the society is in fact capable of enunciating threats or if the societal sector is just one element of state security. To see if this concept travels well, I intend to use this theory in examining two stateless societies, the Kurds and Palestinians.

Aside from testing the concept in stateless societies, this paper seeks to make two rather modest contributions to the ongoing debate over the concept of societal security. The first supports the critical security theorists' critique of societal security; that it tends to reify societal identity. I argue that the identity of a society does not exist prior to the identification of threats, rather the identification of threats acts as a constitutive element of societal identity. Assuming an established identity misses this crucial aspect of the construction of security threats. The second contribution does not address the theoretical aspect of societal security, but speaks to the socially constructed nature of threats. Developments constructed as threatening to society often do not have the impact on a society as was portrayed by the securitising actor. In both the Palestinian and Kurdish cases, developments portrayed as threatening by some societal elites actually served to enhance their vision of that society's identity.

Building on the critical security literature, this paper contends that the manner in which the concept of societal security has been employed has tended to reify a secular nationalist identity of society to the exclusion of all other forms. I argue that when employing the concept of societal security it is essential to do so without reifying one particular version of societal identity. In the Kurdish and Palestinian cases, secular nationalism has been forced to compete with other identity claims. Focusing only on the threats articulated from a secular nationalist perspective ignores the threats enunciated by significant portions of Kurdish and Palestinian society. It is important to view enunciations of threats not as defending a given identity, but part of an ongoing debate over the identity of that society.

In addition to wading in to the debate over state versus societal security, this paper argues that threats are intersubjective. The typology of threats that Buzan identifies as threatening to society should be understood as a typology of constructed threats. Some actors construct these three forces as a threat to society, while other actors view them as providing for the security of the society. Additionally, these forces often do not have the outcome attributed to them. Just because an issue is constructed as a threat, it does not mean that it is. In many cases, the developments that some actors have identified as threatening to society have had the opposite effect of enhancing their security by reducing the power and influence of those that espouse competing societal identity claims.

What is ultimately at stake in this debate is the proper identification of the source of violent conflict. Inadequately specified conceptualizations of security

can lead to a misdiagnosis of the sources of conflict and misdirected policy prescriptions. At a time when the international community is faced with uncertain and highly problematic security situations in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, it is essential to employ conceptualizations of security that call attention to competing claims within society and that are based on a long term historical understanding.

To illustrate these points, I have chosen to examine the formation and development of Kurdish and Palestinian societies. In both cases, Buzan and Waever's three forms of societal security are clearly enunciated and supported in the security discourse of each of the actors within these societies. However, unlike Buzan and Waever's formulation, these security threats were not enunciated to protect a given societal identity, but rather they were enunciated as an attempt to define the society's identity. Thus, developments that one actor within a society interprets as threatening, are often portrayed by others as essential for the security of the society.

What is Societal Security?

The developments that occurred following the end of the Cold War prompted a re-evaluation of the concept of security. The Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, associated primarily with Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, was motivated by the concern that 'nation' and 'state' are not synonymous in most countries around the world, and that the traditional concept of national security studies was increasingly irrelevant to study post-Cold War developments (Bilgin 2003). In the cases where state and nation do not coincide, the security of a nation will often increase the insecurity of the state (Waever 1998). In such

instances, the activities of states often represent the primary threat to societies, such as the breakup of Yugoslavia and resistance to EU expansion (Bilgin 2003).

Waeber argues that scholars can best understand societal security by examining the processes whereby a group comes to perceive its identity as threatened and when it starts to act in a security mode; this is referred to as securitisation. The securitisation approach to security claims that societal communities argue within themselves as to what constitutes a threat to their community (Buzan 1998). Unlike states however, societies lack a final arbiter of security decisions. Elites within the society act as securitising actors, by naming threats to the group and attempting to persuade or coerce the society of the validity of their claim. Once the claim is accepted by society, it enacts extraordinary means to alleviate the threat. The process by which actors in a society or state argue and decide what constitutes a threat depends on the established rules of that society. Ultimately, Buzan concludes that perceptions of threat cannot only be imposed, societies must be convinced or persuaded that certain other groups or actions constitute a threat (Buzan, Waeber et al. 1998).

Buzan provides a typology of threats that are presented as threatening to society: horizontal competition, vertical competition and migration. Horizontal competition entails a transformation in the identity of a society due to the overriding cultural and linguistic influence from a neighbouring culture (Buzan, Waeber et al. 1998). For instance, actors within the Quebecois and native Canadian populations have, at various times throughout their histories, constructed the larger English Canadian society as a threat. From this

perspective, these two cultures fear the erosion of the linguistic and religious aspects of their culture as segments of their population adopt the culture of the larger Canadian culture in an effort to succeed economically or academically. In an effort to protect an identity they perceived as threatened, Quebec has responded by instituting language protection laws.

Vertical competition occurs from integration into a wider cultural definition, or disintegration into smaller cultural units (Waever 1993; Buzan, Waever et al. 1998). This process can be seen at play in the current expansion of the European Union with a number of societies expressing fear of integration into a larger European identity. Some of these societies have responded by rejecting the adoption of the European currency and of ceding power to European political institutions. The last source of societal insecurity is from migration. Migration threatens the identity of a society by causing a shift in the composition of society (Buzan, Waever et al. 1998; Herd and Lofgren 2001). The large-scale inflow of migrants of different societal backgrounds may ultimately lead to that culture becoming dominant. For instance, the large numbers of Hispanic migrants into the southern states of the U.S., has been portrayed by some as leading to an erosion of American culture and political values (Huntington 1997).

In an effort to have society stand on its own as a referent object of security that is distinct from the state, Waever offers a view of society that differentiates it from the traditional conception of society as 'civil' society or as the source of the state's legitimacy. To make this distinction, he provides a definition of society that separates society from any link to the state but in doing so, makes the units of

analysis far less obvious. Furthermore, Waever argues that we cannot view societal security as the aggregate sum of smaller groups within society. Waever concludes that societal security can only be understood by examining large-scale, we-identities or collective units that constitute themselves as social and political realities by interacting in an international system (Waever 1998).

This means that the concept of security is tied to very specific forms of political community, such as nations, ethnic groups or religious communities (Waever 1998). While the Copenhagen school concedes that all societies contain a number of groups carrying their own identities, they conclude that ethno-national groups and religions have become the primary units of analysis for societal security. To further limit the definition of society, Waever concludes that in security analysis, 'society' is mostly understood as meaning nations or other ethno-political communities modeled on the nation idea (Waever 1998). Thus Waever claims that societal security is about the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, custom and religious and national identity (Waever 1998).

Waever's conception of society is profoundly shaped by the nationalism literature. Drawing on this literature, Waever argues that national identity became the predominant form of societal identity due to four cosmological changes. The first is the development of the nation as the dominant 'imagined community', which replaced earlier forms of imagined community such as religion. The second change was the spread of the concept of the nation as the principle political form of organization by the European powers. Third, was the use of the

nation concept to facilitate de-colonization under challenging conditions. Lastly, romanticism and German idealism changed the way of thinking about the relationship between man and the community. From these four changes, Waever concludes that when threatened, national identity takes priority and re-arranges all other identities. The problem is that this literature is Euro-centric and accepts that the concept of the nation spread to other parts of the world without being adjusted to facilitate cultural differences in identity. Thus while nationalism changed many of the societies of the world, so too was the European version of nationalism changed by these societies. Juergensmeyer has argued that nationalism was changed in many parts of the world to maintain and incorporate religious identity that had been eliminated in Western variants of nationalism (Juergensmeyer 1993). According to Juergensmeyer, in many non-European regions of the world, religious nationalism has confronted the secular nationalism of the West. Thus Waever's conception of nationalism ignores how the secular nationalism of the west has been portrayed in the non-west, and how it has been modified by those who incorporate other forms of identity, such as religion, as an essential part of their societal identity.

Because of their equation of societal identity with national identity, this approach has been accused of reifying society and identity in ways that are untenable and dangerous (Lapid and Kratochwil 1996; McSweeney 1996; Bilgin 2003). McSweeney contends that societal security defines society as a having a single identity, and that this risks supporting the rise of intolerant identities that make conflicts more likely (McSweeney 1996). Williams, in defense of societal

security, argues that this criticism misses the primary contribution of societal security: it is precisely under the conditions of securitisation that a reified monolithic form of identity is declared (Williams 2003). The Copenhagen school admits that all societies have multiple identities but that a situation in which identity is being securitised is one in which this reality is being denied and seeking to be transformed (Williams 2003). This may well be the case, but it is not clear as to why the secular nationalist identity is the one that is assumed to trump other identities.

Societal security, as formulated by the Copenhagen school, assumes that nationalism has succeeded in becoming the monolithic identity, prior to the enunciation of security threats. Wæver states that societies 'normally contain internal conflicts as well as defend itself against outside threats' (Wæver 1998). The word 'contain' could be misleading, in its usage here it does not imply that societies contain internal conflicts in that every society has internal conflict, but that a dominant view of society has successfully contained other competing views. Clearly such a view of society rests on the assumption that one form of identity has been accepted prior to the enunciation of security threats. Thus when Wæver refers to the threats that societies 'such as the Kurds and Palestinians' face, he assumes that these groups have a nationalist identity. Under Buzan and Wæver's conception we expect that Kurdish society would construct Turkish migration as a threat, however, as we will see there is a significant element in Kurdish society that has not accepted such a construction.

In essence, those that have employed the concept of societal security have acknowledged only one voice emanating from within a society; the secular nationalist one. Unfortunately this bias has influenced policy makers and academics alike. The effect of this has been to encourage only those who espouse secular nationalism, with all the baggage that it carries. The most significant element associated with secular nationalism is its inherent acceptance of the state-security paradigm that has contributed to the focus on independent statehood for each nation.

A societal security approach must avoid the dangers of reifying societal identity. To do so, it must maintain some separation from identifying secular nationalism as the only type of societal identity that can be secured. As this study will show, various actors claiming to speak on behalf of the entire society offer competing views of the threats a society faces. In the cases examined here, the rise of secular nationalism itself has been portrayed as a threat. The criticism that the concept of societal security reifies identity and society stems not from a problem inherent to the concept, but rather from the way societal security has been studied, when the existence of a society is assumed as prior to the construction of threats and based on the secular nationalist model. The next section of this paper will examine how the enunciation of threats has been used to define the identity of Kurdish and Palestinian society.

Case Studies

The purpose of the case studies is not to provide a detailed history of Kurdish and Palestinian nationalism, but to show how competing views of their

identity have resulted in distinct enunciations of security threats. The threats identified by the secular nationalists within Kurdish society do fit the typology of societal security threats identified by Buzan and Waever, but not all actors have identified the same threats. I have selected the Palestinians and Kurds because Waever explicitly lists them as an example of identifiable societies – presumably based on the nationalist model. Furthermore, they are both stateless societies, reducing the confusion over whether it is the society or its nation-state representatives that are acting. These groups also share some historical similarities not only in terms of their identity formation but also in their socio-economic structures. Both groups emerged from the fall of the Ottoman Empire with traditional notables, landholders and religious leaders as the primary actors in these societies capable of enunciating security threats. In both cases, these actors attempted to defend/impose a non-nationalistic view of the societies identity. The rise of actors advocating a national identity challenged the traditionally held views of Palestinian and Kurdish society.

The Kurds of Turkey:

The term 'Kurds' as an identifier of a distinct people was in use as early as 1150 A.D., although it did not necessarily imply a national identity. The term 'Kurd' was often applied to nomadic peoples or to a particular linguistic group; though in recent times the term has come to include an ethnic or national identity (van Bruinessen 1992). Most historians agree that it was not until the early years of the twentieth century that this group of tribes and people acquired any sense of community as a nation of Kurds (McDowell 1996). Additionally, it is generally

agreed that Kurdish nationalism has not been a constant of Kurdish identity, but rather has flourished in two waves, the period around the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War One and after 1960. As we will see, Kurdish nationalism faced serious competition from other identity claims.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish nationalist aspirations were fuelled by the Treaty of Sevres; negotiated between Great Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire; promising the Kurdish tribes an independent state. The Kurdish nationalist movement was the primary advocate of an independent Kurdish state and was led by westernized, educated urban intelligentsia. This group set up Kurdish literary clubs and educational societies and published magazines and journals espousing independence based on a nationalist identity of the Kurds. The urban intelligentsia operated in the major Middle Eastern urban areas such as Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Mosul and Baghdad, where they sought to convince the Great Powers rather than domestic actors or Kurdish society, that the Kurds constituted a distinct nation and ought to have an independent state of their own.

As with all identity claims, those supporting a nationalist view of Kurdish identity based their claim on the identification of threats to the emergent Kurdish nation. The nationalists identified the Turks as the dominant threat to the Kurds. The Kurdistan Ta'ali Jamiyati (Society for the Rise of Kurdistan), one of the most prominent nationalist organization run by the urban intelligentsia, proclaimed that the Kurds have 'no common cause with the Anatolian movement....the Kurds have resolved to have no other protector than England' (McDowell 1996).

Similarly, the Azadi (Independence) movement, which arose between 1909 and 1924, stated as its goal: to deliver the Kurds from Turkish oppression, to give Kurds freedom and opportunity to develop their country, and to obtain British assistance, realizing Kurdistan could not stand alone (Entessar 1992). The Kurdish nationalists feared that the Kurds would form a minority in the newly created states that Britain and France would carve out of the former Ottoman Empire. Thus fear of domination by a larger ethno-nationalist group fuelled the push for the development of Kurdish national identity, and its logical outcome, an independent state.

These actors advocating a nationalist identity for the Kurds argued that the Turks and the Anatolian movement under Mustafa Kemal Attaturk, were the most significant threat to Kurdish identity and that the United Kingdom, and eventually an independent Kurdistan, was the best means of providing security for the fledgling and extremely divided Kurdish nation. From the nationalist perspective, Buzan and Waeaver's typology of threats to societal security seems applicable. Nationalist Kurds clearly feared horizontal competition from the larger, more developed Turkish cultural identity. Though most Kurdish people had lived peacefully beside the Turks and the Arabs under the Ottoman Empire, they now identified these groups as a threat.

The Kurdish nationalists also feared vertical integration from a pan-Islamic identity that sought to subsume nationalism under religious identity. The Kurdish nationalists described those advocating the religious identity of the Kurds as 'religious fanatics...motivated by the fear of national consciousness which would

awaken the people and leave them without so much as a single slave, and that their wealth, earned without effort, will be gone with the wind' (Bozarslan 2003).

For the British, it was clear at this time that Kurdish nationalism was in its infancy as Kurdish society remained severely divided along tribal lines, that also involved linguistic and religious divisions (McDowell 1996). So while the British entertained a number of influential urban intelligentsia claiming to speak for a united Kurdish nation they ultimately concluded that these actors lacked support of the population and the rural leaders to effectively press their claims for an independent Kurdistan based on a national identity (McDowell 1996). The weakness of the urban intelligentsia was exacerbated by the importance of territorial claims within the nationalist identity construct. This served to enhance the power of the traditional leadership as they controlled the territory the nationalists claimed as the Kurdish homeland (Vali 2003).

At this time, Kurdish society was based on a feudal economic system with local tribal chiefs (aghas) controlling the territory and allegiance of the population on their land. There were also powerful religious authorities (shaykhs) that held considerable influence over the local population and the tribal leaders. Thus the religious and tribal leaders, who were the primary landholders, served as the most prominent societal actors capable of enunciating Kurdish identity and security, and enforcing such a view on the general Kurdish population. While there were a few traditional tribal leaders and landholders that favored an independent Kurdistan, many saw the evolution of a nationalist view of Kurdish identity as threatening to the personal economic and social advantages they

enjoyed due to the feudal arrangement of their society that was encouraged and supported by the Ottoman Empire, and later by Turkish authorities. The religious leaders also attempted to thwart a Kurdish nationalist identity from emerging in an effort to maintain a Kurdish identity based on the Sufi sect of Sunni Islam and its association with the Caliphate and a larger pan-Islamic identity.

Because of these socio-economic and religious interests, the traditional leadership distrusted the urban Kurdish nationalists. They were described as 'carriers of ungodly and revolutionary ideas' (Entessar 1992). Thus the nationalists were presented as threatening to the religious identity of the Kurds and their established socio-economic order. The nationalists advocated sweeping social and economic changes that would do away with the feudal economic system and the personal power of the traditional leadership. Thus the educated intelligentsia, and the nationalist identity they advocated, represented a threat to the religious leaders and the large landholders.

Though Kurdish nationalists sought to do away with the power of the landholders and religious leaders, secular nationalism was not the primary threat that these traditional leaders identified in their efforts to maintain their view of Kurdish identity. The traditional Kurdish leadership responded to the security threat posed by the possibility of the creation of an Armenian/Christian state in the region. British Admiral Calthorpe noted this in a report to his superiors in the Foreign Office that 'the most important factor in this situation is fear that the eastern section of Turkey will be placed under Armenian rule. There is otherwise a strong tendency for Kurds and Turks to drift apart but this fear drives them into

union'(McDowell 1996). This fear was motivated partly due to feared retribution over the role of the Kurdish tribes in the Armenian genocide of 1915, but also due to a general fear of Christian rule. Significant elements of Kurdish society sought to maintain a union with the Turks in order to limit the power of the Armenian Christians in the area. Newspaper articles at the time claimed that support for Kurdish independence was tantamount to assisting Armenian nationalism (McDowell 1996). In response, several Kurdish nationalists were captured and killed.

By identifying Christian Armenia as the primary threat in the region, Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Attaturk successfully co-opted the traditional Kurdish notables in support of his state building project. To do this, he appealed to the religious element that the Turks and Kurds shared. In 1919, Kemal proclaimed that 'Turks and Kurds will continue to live as brothers around the institution of the khalifa' (McDowell 1996). In making this statement, Kemal assured the traditional Kurdish leaders that union with Turkey would not threaten Kurdish identity. The one common element of Turkish and Kurdish identity was their Sunni Muslim identity that tied them to the institution of the Caliphate. The religious element was particularly important in opposing the Christian Armenian threat and in the initial union of Turks and Kurds in the Turkish state.

From this perspective, Buzan and Waeber's societal security threats are less applicable. The traditional Kurdish leadership advocated union with the more powerful Turks to ward off the Christian threat. Thus integration into a Turkish state was not a perceived as a threat to Kurdish identity, but rather was seen as

instrumental in protecting Kurdish society from being overwhelmed by Christian Armenians. Horizontal competition from Turkish identity was largely ignored, while vertical integration within a larger pan-Islamic movement was not only not a threat to Kurdish identity, it was an essential element of Kurdish identity.

Kemal's appeal to Kurdish religious identity proved successful during the difficult years of the early formation of Turkey, as many Kurdish tribal leaders assisted the Turkish army in putting down revolts by Kurdish nationalist groups. However, by 1923, it was clear that Mustafa Kemal had altered his strategy toward the Kurds in the eastern regions of Turkey as he sought to create a new, secular Turkish national identity. At this time, Kemal abolished the Caliphate and on the same day, closed all Kurdish schools, associations and publications (Houston 2001). Kemal had clearly revealed his plan for an ethnically Turkish nation that rejected Islam as a primary aspect of Turkish nationalism. As a result, the ranks of those calling for Kurdish independence, which had previously consisted of the nationalist educated intelligentsia in the western urban centers, swelled to include the religious leaders and religiously minded landholders in Kurdistan (McDowell 1996).

As a result of this move, the Kurds who had advocated union with Turkey to alleviate the Christian/Armenian threat now portrayed Turkey as a threat. The threat however was not primarily seen as threatening to Kurdish national identity, but to the religious aspect of Kurdish identity. The first major uprising of the Kurds in response to Kemal's change of strategy was the Shaydh Said Revolt of 1925. Invoked by modern day Kurdish nationalists as part of their mythic past,

the Said Revolt appealed much more to the religious identity of the Kurds than it did their nationalist aspirations (McDowell 1996). So while the call was for an independent Kurdistan, it was hoped that this new entity would be subject to the institution of the Caliphate. As noted earlier, re-instituting the Caliphate appealed to the Sufi sect of the Sunni branch of Islam, which the majority of Kurdish society identified with. In seeking to restore the Caliphate, Shaykh Said lost the support of the Alevi Kurds whose non-Sunni identity was threatened by the possibility of Islamic rule. The religious, rather than nationalist, nature of the revolt is also apparent in Shaykh Said's choice of king for an independent Kurdistan; he chose a non-Kurdish caliphal representative, indicating his concept of Kurdish identity was based less on ethno-national identity than on Kurdish religious particularism (McDowell 1996). Ultimately the revolt failed and led to severe reprisals against the Kurds by the Turkish state.

From this point, Kurdish nationalism remained largely inactive until the mid-1960's. In the meantime, various elements within Kurdish society continued to fight against Turkish aggression in Kurdistan, but most leaders and fighters were motivated by religious reasons rather than a nationalist agenda (McDowell 1996). In their own effort at creating a modern secular nation-state, the Turkish authorities instituted a number of policies aimed at redefining Kurdish identity. Turkish governments refused to even acknowledge the existence of Kurds as a minority population in Turkey, referring to them as Mountain Turks. The Turkish state tried to assimilate the Kurds by banning all things Kurdish, including publication of books and music; changing the names of towns, villages and areas

from Kurdish names to Turkish ones, and even forbidding parents from giving their children Kurdish names. Education in Kurdish was forbidden, thus leading to generations of uneducated Kurds combined with a Turkish-speaking educated Kurdish elite. The Turkish state also forcibly deported Kurds to Western Turkey, forced Turkish migration into Kurdish areas, murdered and assassinated Kurdish leaders and intentionally ignored Kurdish areas in their efforts at modernization and economic development.

The publication ban meant that the Kurds lacked a common, published Kurdish literature and media – an important element in the creation and re-creation of identity and instrumental in enunciating security threats. In addition to impeding development of a common Kurdish national identity, it also helped traditional notables maintain their position of power over the population, as the primary actors capable of enunciating and defending Kurdish identity and security. The dominant position of the traditional leaders was also enhanced by the lack of development and resistance to land reform in the east of Turkey.

However, one effect of Turkey's policies in Kurdistan forced many Kurds to migrate to Europe or to the urban centers of western Turkey, either through forced deportation, as migrant workers or as migrants seeking higher levels of education. These demographic changes served to erode the influence of the traditional notables in favor of the left wing urban leaders (Hyman 1988). Rather than assimilating, the growing 'left wing' urban population continued their fight to define Kurdish identity. It was from within this group that a new Kurdish nationalistic identity developed. This version of Kurdish nationalist identity was

infused with an awareness of class struggle, underdevelopment, exploitation and imperialism (Entessar 1992). Thus, in addition to Turkish oppression, they had identified underdevelopment and poverty as major security threats to Kurdish identity. These Kurdish migrants in the west began to join left-wing political parties that claimed to speak for Kurdish society and called for increased development of Turkish Kurdistan. These groups also spawned a renewal of Kurdish literature by publishing a number of journals and books. The effects of this was felt less in the eastern Kurdish regions due to linguistic differences and vast illiteracy, but it had a large effect on the growing urban Kurdish population.

Those Kurds still in the underdeveloped eastern regions were still bound by the traditional Kurdish leadership and thus maintained a religious view of Kurdish identity. In 1969, sociologist Nur Yalman observed, “religious affiliation remains more important than linguistic affiliations. If religious affiliations were weakened ... Turkish-Kurdish opposition would be more divisive”(McDowell 1996). The traditional Kurdish leaders favored involvement with the democratic institutions of Turkey, and generally supported political parties devoted to the revival of Islam in Turkish politics, such as the Justice Party or the National Salvation Party. Thus democracy in Turkey sustained feudal ties and the power of traditional leaders in Kurdistan who could effectively persuade their constituencies that support for these parties was in the interest of Kurdish society. The Turkish political parties pandered to the economic interests of traditional Kurdish leaders who were able to deliver a significant numbers of votes (Entessar 1992).

By the 1960's, the quest to define Kurdish nationalist identity had fully embraced a class dimension as well. The rise in number of both educated Kurds and underemployed young Kurdish men swelled the ranks of the leftist parties and organizations. These parties advocated the abolition of feudal remnants and land reform, in addition to defining Kurdish national identity. This clearly put them at odds with the traditional notables whose sole claim to authority rested on their landholdings. Thus the struggle over Kurdish identity involved much more than defining Kurds against the Turkish aggressor. It involved elements of class, economics, religion, and nationalism.

The combination of these forces can be seen during the rise of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the late 1970's. A relatively unknown party, the PKK sought to become the sole actor capable of defining Kurdish identity and identifying threats to it. Abdullah Ocalan, the founder and former leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rose from the left wing urban elites who had migrated to the west and advocated a secular nationalist view of Kurdish identity. Typical of the new urban elite, Ocalan was highly educated, he was a law graduate of Ankara University, and speaks Turkish, not Kurdish (Hyman 1988; McDowell 1996).

As an extremist organization advocating socio-economic reform and independence, the PKK has clearly enunciated security threats to their view of secular nationalist Kurdish identity. The list included agents of the Turkish state and those that supported them, the Turkish left that subordinated the Kurdish question to the leftist revolution and the exploitative Kurdish landlord class

(McDowell 1996). For the PKK, Kurds as well as Turks are identified as a threat to Kurdish identity. In naming Kurds that support the Turkish state the PKK explicitly targeted the village guards, who were Kurds paid by the Turkish state to police Kurdish areas. The early operations of the PKK were devoted to eliminating as many of the village guards as they could.

The PKK, having clearly identified those that represent a threat to their vision of Kurdish secular nationalist identity, went about attempting to eliminate these threats. Through widespread violence, assassinations and open military conflict the PKK attempted to impose its view of Kurdish identity onto the Kurds and the Turkish state. This resulted in the death of many Kurds and Turks and brought renewed oppression from the Turkish state. For some, this was a clear indicator that the Turkish state represented the greatest threat to the Kurds, for others it indicated that the PKK was the primary threat facing the Kurds. While it is difficult to tell whether the majority of Kurds support the PKK or not, it is clear that secular nationalism under the PKK has made a much stronger breakthrough in the rural eastern parts of Kurdistan than previous Kurdish nationalist movements have succeeded in doing.

The growth and mass success of the secular nationalist view of Kurdish identity does not signify the emergence of a singular vision of Kurdish identity. Among secular nationalists, there is a division between moderates and extremists. The PKK is the primary extremist organization, but there have been a number of successful political parties representing a more moderate Kurdish cause. During the 1960's and 1970's, the HEP fought for Kurdish autonomy

within the political institutions of Turkey. The party was banned by the Turkish state, but was reformed as the Democratic Labour Party (DEP) and later as the People's Democratic Party (HADEP). These parties have consistently garnered large shares of the Kurdish vote, illustrating the widespread support for a moderate solution within the political institutions and sovereignty of Turkey. While both groups view Kurdish identity as secular and nationalistic, they disagree on the level of threat that Turkey poses. Those advocating independence claim that Kurdish security can only be provided by an independent state, while those that favor autonomy or increased minority rights contend that a new relationship within the Turkish state is sufficient to provide security for Kurdish identity.

The secular nationalist view of Kurdish identity also continues to face challenges from those advocating a pan-Islamic Kurdish identity. The Islamist movement has long regarded secular nationalism as the primary threat. Early on, the western, secular aspect of Kemal's nation building project was identified as the threatening all Muslims in Turkey, and it largely ignored the fact that Kemal's project favored one national identity, the Turks, over another, the Kurds (Houston 2001). Thus, the political parties that were devoted to revitalizing the place of Islam in Turkish politics were silent over the treatment of the Kurds. For this reason, the PKK identified them as one of the three groups that represented a threat to Kurdish identity. Worse yet, several militant Islamic organizations sprung up that targeted the Kurdish secular nationalist movement and the PKK. By the end of 1993 over 500 Kurdish activists and PKK supporters had been

assassinated by these groups who still sought to subordinate Kurdish nationalism to a pan-Islamic view of Turkish politics and Kurdish identity.

By the early 1990's it appeared that Ocalan and the PKK had modified their list of potential threats to Kurdish nationalist identity. In 1991 Ocalan proclaimed that there was no question of separating Kurdistan from Turkey, 'my people need Turkey. We cannot separate for at least 40 years' (McDowell 1996). From this statement, Ocalan acknowledged that Turkey need not be constructed as a threat to the Kurds, but rather has an essential role to play in the survival and development of the Kurdish nation. Ocalan also fostered associations with religious leaders to show that a secular nationalist view of Kurdish identity need not pose a threat to those whose aim was to re-establish role for Islam in Turkish politics.

While nationalists and pan-Islamic forces continue to battle over Kurdish identity, it is important to recognize that they have not been the only ones making a claim on Kurdish identity. The Turkish state has actively sought to redefine Kurdish identity within the Turkish identity. In creating a new Turkish identity, Kemal Attaturk sought to eliminate the institutions that carry on a societies identity. His ban on Kurdish schools and publications stood until the mid-1990's when it was partially rescinded. Since the founding of the Turkish state, there has existed a longstanding prohibition against even uttering the word "Kurds" in Turkish politics, Kurds were to be referred to as 'Mountain Turks'. The Turkish state even revived scientific theories claiming that Kurds were of Turkish origin (Entessar 1992). The Turkish state claimed the Kurdish language(s) were

derivative of Turkish, though there existed a well-founded scholarship authenticating its Indo-European roots. For others, Kurds were those who had lost their Turkish identity due to the poor socio-economic position in the less advanced eastern regions of the Turkish state (Houston 2001).

Kurdish identity, like all societal identities, remains debated. The decline in the power of the traditional notables has clearly enhanced the power of those actors advocating a secular Kurdish nationalist identity (Hyman 1988). However, religion continues to play an important role in the ongoing debate over both Turkish and Kurdish identity. There are significant economic factors that continue to influence the identity of and the security threats to the Kurds. As Ocalan has now acknowledged, economic impoverishment makes union with Turkey essential for the future survival of the Kurds in Turkey. Potential involvement in the European Union has also impacted the potential societal threats that the Kurds face. As Houston notes 'contemporary Kurdish identity is hardly unified but subject to competing claims over its constitution' (Houston 2001). These competing claims over Kurdish identity are made evident by the security threats that their advocates identify.

The Palestinian Arabs

The Palestinian case is somewhat more difficult than the Kurdish case, due to the large number of actors in the region. Internationally, Great Britain, France, Turkey, the Soviet Union, the United States and all the surrounding Arab states have played a securitising role in the Palestinian region. Additionally, there are an even greater number of 'domestic' actors that have sought to gain control of

the Palestinian struggle, all of whom held their own view of Palestinian identity and what represented a threat to this view. As a result, it is possible to list a great number of securitising actors and to identify an even greater number of threats enunciated throughout the conflict. I cannot hope to cover all of these actors and threats here, rather I will focus on two periods of struggle: the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the late 1960's when Palestinian nationalism came to the forefront under the PLO.

At the time of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Palestinian nationalism had not yet been articulated and was subsumed under the broader scope of Arab nationalism. The primary distinction between the Arab populations in the Middle East was not geographical but based on religion; hence we see reference to the Muslim Arabs, Jewish Arabs and Christian Arabs occupying Palestine after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The period around the fall of the Ottoman Empire exposed the Arabs to various competing identity claims: including pan-Islam, Ottomanism, pan-Arabism and geographic, including Palestinian, particularism(Cohen 1987).

Like most other nationalisms, Arab nationalism was a growing phenomenon at this historical juncture. Early enunciations of Arab nationalism identified two primary threats: horizontal competition from the Turks and the Egyptians. In 1905 the League of the Arab Fatherland asserted that any new Arab state must remain separate from Egypt, which was populated by people belonging to a different race and having a different language. The Program of the League of the Arab Fatherland noted that it was important to maintain a frontier

between the Arab and Egyptian peoples to avoid the introduction of ‘the germs of discord and destruction’(Azouri 1905). Interestingly, Hegib Azouri, the author of this Program was a Christian Arab that sought to attract the attention of the Great Powers, primarily Great Britain, to the cause of Arab nationalism(Cohen 1987). The role of Egypt however, was to change drastically throughout the history of the Palestinian struggle, and shortly after this enunciation, Arab nationalists had identified the Turks as a greater threat.

The Arab Nationalist Manifesto of 1914 identified the Turks as the primary threat to Arab nationalism, and declared that the Turkish government sought to ‘destroy Islam’, ‘shed the blood of the people of Islam’ and ‘to kill the language of Islam’(Haim 1962). The authors of this manifesto call Arabs, to ‘unsheathe their swords’ and ‘cleanse your country from those who show enmity to you, your race and your religion’(Haim 1962). Thus the threat to the Arabs, to whom the manifesto is addressed, contains racial, linguistic and religious elements. Interestingly, the religious threat identified was not horizontal competition from other non-Muslim religions, but from the corruption of Islam by the Turks. We see this in the call for Christian and Jewish Arabs to put aside religious differences to defend all Arabs against the Turks.

To defend against the Turkish threat, the creation of a large Arab state was the preferred solution for many Arab nationalists in Palestine. A distinct Palestinian entity was not even a consideration. Early negotiations between the British and Arab nationalists did not even mention Palestine as a distinct unit, but rather included the Palestinian Arabs in the attempt to create a Syrian state

centered around Damascus under King Faysal I(Cohen 1987). Thus early on, King Faysal and the greater Syrian state served as the primary provider of security for Arabs in Palestine. The acceptance of Syria as the security provider is for the Palestinian Arabs is evidenced by the fact that the first two Palestinian national congresses, in 1918 and 1919 were held in Damascus. It was not until Britain and France decided to divide the lands held by Faysal that the Palestinian Arab leadership moved their national congresses to the city of Haifa, in Palestine.

In the creation of Faysal's greater Syria, the Jews were not identified as a primary threat to Arab nationalism. King Faysal of Syria, in 1919, struck an agreement with Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a leading Zionist at the time, to encourage large scale Jewish immigration into Palestine, and to settle them as quickly as possible. Article IV of the Faysal-Weizmann Agreement indicates that Jewish immigration was sought in order to assist in the economic development of the Palestinian region. Not only was Jewish immigration not threatening to Faysal's Syria, it was actually served to enhance the new state's economic security. Faysal's greater Syria experiment ended the next year, in 1920, when the French ousted Faysal.

While Faysal did not identify Jewish immigration as a primary threat, fears of Jewish settlement had been building following the Balfour Declaration by the British government in 1917, which signaled Britain's willingness to create a Jewish national home in Palestine. In 1920, there were Arab riots over the large influx of Jewish immigrants that resulted in the burning of the Jewish immigration hostel and forty-three deaths(Cohen 1987). For many, Jewish immigration had

become the primary threat for Palestinian Arabs. Jewish immigration continued, permitted by the British authorities and aided by Palestinian Arabs who sought to make money off the Jewish immigrants. For many landholders, the influx of Jewish immigrants was not a threatening development at all. Jewish immigration was actually beneficial for these landholders because land value increased with the demand created by large-scale immigration(Cohen 1987). As a result, many landholders sold their land to Jewish immigrants for economic gain.

By the early 1930's, the speed with which Jewish settlers were purchasing Arab land began to attract the attention of Palestinian Arab leadership. Palestinian Arab leader Haj Amin al-Husayni convened a conference of Palestinian religious notables, which threatened to excommunicate all those who sold their lands or those who brokered the transactions(Cohen 1987). A year later, the Higher Arab Committee was formed and declared a national strike unless three demands were met: cessation of Jewish immigration, cessation of all land sales to Jews and the establishment of a national Arab government(Cohen 1987). Clearly Jewish immigration had become perceived as a serious threat to many of the Palestinian Arabs.

Thus from the early 1920's to the present day, the Jewish population in Palestine was enunciated as the primary security threat in the region. However, this assertion misses an important but subtle distinction in how Jews were portrayed as a threat. Arab and Palestinian nationalists disagreed on the extent of threat that the Jewish population posed. Some groups regarded any and all Jews in Palestine as a threat, but for many others, including Fatah, it was the

imperialism of Zionism that represented the threat, not the Jews or even an Israeli state. For other groups, it was the existence of an independent Jewish state that represented the threat, not necessarily the Jews themselves. How the Jews were portrayed was a result of how different actors within Palestinian society portrayed Palestinian identity.

Between 1936 and the late 1960's the dominant identity orientation in Palestine was pan-Arab, and to some extent pan-Islamic, rather than purely Palestinian (Tessler 1989). During this period the primary securitising actor(s) for the Palestinian Arabs was Arab nationalists in other states, like Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq. These states, while acting as securitising actors for the Palestinians, often placed the aggrandizement of their states ahead of Palestinian security, thus leading to annexation of parts of Palestinian territory under UN resolution 242, and ultimately to the victories of Israel which resulted in even greater tracts of Palestinian land falling under Israeli control. By the late 1960's an emergent Palestinian nationalist identity had begun to challenge the securitising role of the Arab states, and even whether these states were actually a threat to Palestinian identity.

This change occurred in many respects due to the changes that were occurring in Palestinian society. Like the Kurds, Palestinian society was dominated by traditional tribal and religious leadership that was conservative, fragmented and interested in maintaining the socio-economic order that provided for their personal power (Tessler 1989). Because of the failure of Palestinian Arab leadership to take a prominent role as a securitising actor, it fell to the

surrounding Arab states. The failure of Palestinian Arab leadership to deal with the partition of Palestine had two important impacts: it put the Palestinian issue squarely into the hands of the Arab states and it contributed to the decline of the Palestinian traditional notables. The elimination of the Palestinian peasantry, land confiscations and the establishment of a Palestinian university system all contributed to the emergence of a new counter-elite in Palestine, that sought to wrestle control of the 'Palestinian issue' from the Arab states (Robinson 1997). Robinson argues that the Palestinian peasantry became migrant workers in Israel following the opening of Israeli labour markets to residents of the Occupied Territories. As a result, these workers became less tied to village life and less tied to traditional forms of power and control that occurred in such a setting. The village life meant workers were indebted to the notables who owned the land, once workers were no longer dependent on the notables for their livelihood and identity in society, the power of the notables over the population waned (Robinson 1997).

The hold of the Palestinian nobles over the population was dealt a further blow by the land confiscations on the part of the Israeli state. Israel began forceful and illegal confiscation of Palestinian land for the purpose of establishing Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. Control of the land was the primary means by which the traditional nobles maintained their privileged status and held power over the population (Robinson 1997). By removing this source of power, Israel undermined the ability of the Palestinian nobles to maintain the status quo through the popular uprising.

The creation of the Palestinian university system in the 1970's contributed to reducing the hold of the Palestinian nobles. It contributed to a number of social changes in Palestinian society: mobilization of women in the workforce, political activism of urban professionals, cementing ties between rural and urban Palestinians, established student movements and Voluntary Works Programs (Robinson 1997). These changes contributed to the rise of the new counter elites, which were both anti-Israeli occupation but were also anti-notable. However, to regard Palestinian nationalists as united in their vision of Palestinian identity and the level of threat the Jews represented is to reify one version of Palestinian nationalism.

The failure of the Arab states to provide for Palestinian security combined with the massive social changes forced by Israeli occupation led to the rise of a new educated counter-elite that formed a number of insurgent groups. These groups challenged not only the Israeli occupation, but also the hold of the Arab states on the Palestinian cause. As a result much of the violence of these groups was directed at Palestinians that supported traditional leadership or at reactionary Arab regimes, such as Jordan (O'Neill 1978). The emergence of a Palestinian nationalism resulted in the creation of a large number of liberation groups with differing views of Palestinian identity. Some still favored an Arab nationalist view, while others, including Fatah came to favor an independent Palestinian national state.

The contest over the role of securitising actor in Palestinian society is evident in the evolution of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that was

initially established by the Arab League in 1964. Lerman argues that the purpose of establishing the PLO was to garner international legitimacy and control over the Palestinian issue by the Arab states, most notably Egypt under Nasser (Lerman 1997). While there were a great number of resistance organizations operating in Palestine, many of which have been mentioned already, the PLO was designed to take control of the movement away from the Palestinians, particularly Palestinian nationalists that favored an independent Palestinian state rather than incorporating Palestine into a larger Arab political entity. This goal fell by the wayside once Fatah was invited to reorganize the PLO.

The primary Palestinian nationalist organization was Fatah, which was launched in 1965. Initially Fatah was a rival to the PLO and the multitude of other liberation movements that sought to subsume Palestinian nationalism under Arab nationalism. The goal of Fatah was not only to remove the Israeli occupation, but also to replace the Arab states and the traditional Palestinian notables as the primary securitising actor for the Palestinian society. In 1968, the PLO invited Fatah's leader, Yassir Arafat to join and revitalize the PLO. Arafat, in turn sought to include the various commando organizations that had arisen to fight the Israeli occupation (Gowers and Walker 1990). In essence, the PLO under Arafat's leadership succeeded in combined the various securitising actors under one umbrella. The new PLO made their first enunciation of Palestinian identity and security. The 1969 Program of the Palestinian National Council stated that the goal of the PLO was for a free and democratic Palestinian state that would include Muslims, Christians and Jews (Gresh 1985; Cohen 1987). This statement

was a radical departure from what had previously been advocated by the Arab states and their affiliated Palestinian liberation groups for two reasons. First, this proposal advocated an independent Palestinian state, which was not to be part of some larger Arab political entity; essentially rejecting pan-Arab nationalism. Secondly, the state was to include Jews, in addition to Christians and Muslims. Acceptance of the right of Jews to live in a Palestinian state with minority rights challenged the predominant idea that the 'Jews must be driven into the sea' for Palestine to be secure(Gresh 1985).

Many groups vehemently opposed the PLO's idea of an independent and democratic Palestinian state. The Arab Liberation Front, which was a pro-Iraq Palestinian movement identified regionalist solutions i.e. an independent Palestinian state outside a larger Arab Empire as the primary danger threatening the Palestinian movement(Gresh 1985). Similarly, the ANM's successor, the PFLP similarly viewed regionalist approaches as the cause of the 1948 catastrophe in which Israel defeated the Arab states. The PFLP, one member group of the PLO, favored a united Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Palestine to deal with the Jewish threat. For the PFLP, as well as its predecessor the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), liberation of Palestine from Zionism could only be achieved by the Arab states, particularly Egypt under Nasser.

Most violently opposed to the idea of an independent Palestinian state was the Hashemite kingdom in Jordan. After the war of 1948, the Jordanian state had occupied the West Bank and strove to incorporate it into a larger Jordanian state. Even after this territory was lost to the Israelis, there were many who

placed their hopes for Palestinian society on the reunification of the East and West Banks of the Jordan. However, Palestinian nationalist opposed Jordanian control of the West Bank. In 1951, the Jordanian King Abdullah was assassinated in Jerusalem for betraying the Palestinian cause(Cobban 1984). For King Hussein, twenty years later, the rising Palestinian nationalism that sought an independent state in Palestine posed a threat to Jordan and to the Palestinians. The PLO was characterized as traitorous because their proposed solution seemed to support the American and Israeli plan to separate the West Bank from Jordan. In response, King Hussein ordered the massacre of Palestinians in Amman in 1970. Hussein's continued to attack the Palestinian nationalists in an attempt to drive them out of Jordan, and to protect the place of Jordan as the primary securitising actor for the Palestinians. This attempted repression of Palestinian nationalism only increased its virulence and the calls for the creation of a separate state in the West Bank and Gaza, independent of Jordan. Hashemite Jordan was no longer regarded as a securitising actor but rather was a security threat. For Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, the enemy, in addition to the Israelis, was seen as the pro-Jordanians who wanted to return the West Bank to Jordanian occupation(Gresh 1985).The PDLF even cited the overthrow of the Hashemite regime in Jordan as its essential goal(Gresh 1985).

Arafat continued to advocate a negotiated solution, and eventually accepted the idea of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, recognizing Israel in the territories they controlled prior to 1967. This was another important

security enunciation. Now an independent Israeli state was no longer a threat to the Palestinians, only the occupation of Palestinian territories spelled out in the UN Resolution 242. But his willingness to negotiate with the Americans and the Israelis caused a split amongst the Palestinian nationalists, which Khalidi argues had resulted in three distinct trends. The first is the majority of Palestinians that support Arafat's evolving stance toward the Israelis. The second is the resistance to the independent state solution offered by Arafat. Some groups within the PLO rejected Arafat's new security enunciations that lessened the threat that Jews in the Middle East posed. For these groups, the moderate stance taken by the PLO represented a threat to Palestinian nationalism. The PDLF, led by George Habash, left the PLO over the idea of a West Bank – Gaza Strip Palestinian state. For this group, a single Palestinian state, in which Jews form a minority, is the only solution to the conflict. The third trend is the extremist element that rejects any compromise with Israel and any negotiation (Khalidi 1989). In the 1970's and 80's, the Abu Nidal group launched a war of extermination on Fatah and Israeli moderates in an effort to suspend all negotiations between the two parties.

The division of Palestinian society continues along these lines today, making it difficult to identify one version of Palestinian society. Some groups still view any Israeli state as threatening, others view unification with the Arab states as essential for Palestinian security, while many accept a two state solution based on the original UN partition plan as the solution likely to provided for long term Palestinian security.

Conclusions

This quick examination of Palestinian and Kurdish identity formation does a disservice to the complex processes that had contributed the evolution of their societies, but it has provided fruitful ground for the testing of the concept of societal security. Buzan's typology of threats is evident in both the Palestinian and Kurdish enunciation of threats, but this has occurred primarily from one type of securitising actor, the nationalists. Nationalist views of Palestinian and Kurdish identity face significant challenges from those advocating a different view of societal identity. As is clear from the brief case examinations, reifying Palestinian and Kurdish identity is problematic. Doing so neglects the ongoing debate in these societies over their identity and ignores the evolution of these societies following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Reifying these societies' as nationalist in the European sense misses the economic element of threat identification and underestimates the strong religious and supra-national forces that have altered nationalist identity as traditionally understood.

These cases also illustrate that the enunciation of security threats is an integral part of defining the identity of society. Identity of a society cannot be understood as prior to the identification of security threats, it is through the enunciation of security threats that identities evolve. Lastly, the policies of Israel and Turkey, constructed as threats by the secular nationalist elements of Palestinian and Kurdish society, actually served to eliminate the power of the traditional power holders that had been resistant to secular nationalism.

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