Why are most of the once-iconic Arab uprisings faltering and descending into conflict? To address this question, Prof. Iskandar will discuss how counterrevolutionary forces successfully exploited post-colonial identitarian divisions in their respective nation-states and societies. These divisions have entrenched discourses and narratives, which precipitated dramatic transformation by shifting the focus from the collective good to self-interest, from sacrifice to preservation, from the utopian imaginary to status quo protectionism. As Prof. Iskandar will demonstrate, identity politics—Islamist, secularist, nationalist, pa-Arabist, ethnic, racialized, gendered, etc.—has become the defining features of contemporary political expression in Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, and Tunisia.

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