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The Caliph's New Clothes: The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

Stephan Rosiny

On 9 June 2014, fighters of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) pushed deep into Iraq from Syria. Within a few days they had taken over the west of the country and advanced to just outside of Bagdad. On 29 June 2014 they declared the formation of the "Islamic State" and a new caliphate.

Analysis

For the first time, jihadists are in control of a contiguous, transnational territory in the Middle East. However, with the designation of their leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as "the Caliph" – the religious and political leader of all Muslims – they may have overreached, ideologically and politically.

■ The rapid success of ISIS in Iraq has several causes: Iraq is politically and ethnically divided and in some places without centralized power. ISIS already had a territorial base in Syria and some Iraqi towns under its control; extensive resources in terms of weapons, money, and fighters; and Iraqi allies in the fight against the unpopular government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in Baghdad.

■ By adopting the early Islamic concept of the caliphate, ISIS is appealing to many Muslims' longing for cultural authenticity, religious purity, and political unity. It is not fulfilling this promise, however, because its brutal approach is dividing societies and even scaring off many Sunni Muslims – whom it claims to defend.

■ Inherent to the caliphate is a claim to sole political and religious representation, which neither the existing Muslim states nor most Sunni religious authorities will be willing to accept – not to mention the numerous religious and ethnic minorities in the region.

■ The advance of ISIS has intensified the fragmentation of Iraq and could accelerate the dissolution of the single state there. However, a breakdown into individual ethnic-confessional micro-states would not do away with ISIS. It would also not solve the country's problems, but rather multiply them.

Keywords: jihadism, Iraq, ISIS, Islamism, caliphate, Salafism, Syria

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Al-Qaeda in Iraq Has Become Radicalized since 2003

Since the founding of the state of Iraq in 1920, tensions related to ethnic, confessional, tribal, and political identities have emerged repeatedly. Arabs compete with Kurds; Sunnis with Shiites; different tribes, and various nationalist and Islamist ideologies, with one another. This competition relates to the interpretation of historical, political, and religious "truth," and also to the distribution of power and resources among groups and communities. The overthrow of the (Sunni) dictator Saddam Hussein in April 2003 by a US-led "Coalition of the Willing" and the formation of a government dominated by the Shiite majority in 2005 intensified the tensions between the two Islamic confessional communities. Iraq also became the scene of a regional power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, in which the Sunni–Shia division also formed the ideological dichotomy (Abdo 2013).

From April 2003 on, the US occupying power accelerated the breakdown of the Iraqi state – whether on purpose or through negligence remains questionable – from which the country is still suffering today. In the anarchy phase following the overthrow of the regime, the US troops allowed the plunder and destruction of ministries and weapons depots. Only the oil ministry was protected on time. In May 2003 the US civilian administrator, Paul Bremer, dissolved the Baath Party, which had ruled for decades, and the Iraqi Army. It was from their ranks that the armed resistance to the occupation recruited from that point forward; in recent months many former Baath members and high-ranking members of the Iraqi army have reemerged within the rank and file of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), the former Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda.

After its expulsion from Afghanistan in 2001, al-Qaeda found an ideal new field of operation in Iraq. It was able to supply itself with a large amount of weapons, with explosives, and with a huge number of angry young men. The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the Jordanian Afghanistan veteran Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, ramped up the brutality of the global jihadists' fight. In May 2004 he presented the global media with a video in which he himself beheaded American businessman Nicholas Berg as revenge for the torture practices in Abu Ghraib prison, which had been revealed shortly

before. Murders staged for the media remain the trademark of his movement up to today.

In addition, the supporters of the Iraqi al-Qaeda typically have an extreme hatred of Shiites, whom they pejoratively describe as *rafidun* ("rejectionists") because they would not recognize the first three "rightly guided caliphs," Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, as well as many of the Prophet's companions. This disobedience makes them "apostates" and thus legitimate targets for murder according to the AQI ideology. Therefore, the Zarqawi branch of al-Qaeda carried out numerous suicide and bomb attacks against Shia religious processions, shrines, and residential areas. Although al-Zarqawi was killed on 7 June 2006 by a US air strike, the allied forces were only able to force al-Qaeda to go underground, with the help of Sunni tribal fighters from the Awakening Movement (al-Sahwa), in 2008. The anti-Shiite terror campaign subsided but has still not come to an end today. The Islamic State in Iraq (ISI, al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi-l-Iraq), as the group had come to call itself in the meantime, also hung onto a tight network of supporters. According to Athil al-Nujaifi, the governor of Mosul, it ran an oil-smuggling network right under the nose of the US occupiers and the Iraqi state. It also established strong links within the police and the army and blackmailed "taxes" from Mosul's traders. It was with this income that ISI financed its advance into Syria (al-Hayat, 2 July 2014).

The Expansion into "Greater Syria" (Bilad al-Sham)

The Arab Spring created new room to maneuver for jihadism. Some authoritarian regimes were overthrown or significantly weakened by popular protest movements. In most of the protest countries, moderate, reform-oriented Islamists were among the winners of parliamentary elections – for example, in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. But fundamentalist Salafists, who had previously mostly been apolitical or obeyed the regimes, started to openly demand the Islamization of society. In their behavior and their "striving in the way of God" (*jihad fi sabili-llah*) they have imitated the life cycle of the Prophet Muhammad and have adapted very quickly and pragmatically to changing circumstances. Like Muhammad in his first prophetic phase in Mecca (610–622), they are

using their "Islamic calling" (*al-da`wa al-islamiyya*) to Islamize the society through grassroots efforts. But some are also, like the later prophet-turned-statesman (622–632), making political demands for an "Islamic state" based on the Covenant of Medina. Migration and segregation from nonbelievers (*hijra*) represent a further form of jihad. In the same way that Muhammad left the city of Mecca, which was then ruled by polytheists, with the early Islamic community in 622 and migrated to the allied Medina, the Muslims today should break with their "non-Islamic" surroundings and come to the "Area of Islam" (Dar al-Islam) in order to strengthen it. Finally, jihadist Salafis are calling for a global armed fight against the global power of the "nonbelievers" and the "non-Islamic" regimes in the Islamic world. Al-Qaeda, which was formed by the Arab veterans of the Afghanistan War (1979–1988), is seen as the initiator of the latter orientation and continues to be its primary "base" (*qa`ida*).

As of mid-2011 the uprising in Syria escalated into civil war. The Salafists, who were formerly oppressed under Bashar al-Assad, radicalized and militarized (Pierret 2013). At the beginning of 2012, ISI fighters of Syrian origin returned from Iraq under their emir, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, and formed the nucleus of the Syrian al-Qaeda franchise, the Nusra Front (the Supporting Front). In addition to jihad veterans from the battlefields of Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Iraq, and Libya, the uprising in Syria also continues to draw many new religious fighters (*mujahidun*) – for example, from European countries – because it has received a great deal of attention worldwide due to its brutality, because access through Turkey is relatively easy, and because many financiers from the conservative Gulf monarchies are willing to donate money for a jihad against the "Alawite" regime in Syria.

For the jihadists, the popular uprising against the authoritarian regime of Bashar al-Assad is secondary, the democratization of Syria irrelevant. For them the current-day territory of Syria represents much more the building block of a far-reaching salvation. Their interim goal is the "liberation" of Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham) – which, in addition to today's state of Syria, includes Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine – as the nucleus of an Islamist empire that is to be rebuilt, that of the caliphate. In addition to the Nusra Front, the full name of which is Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahli-l-Sh-

am (Supporting Front for the Residents of Greater Syria), other Islamist militias also use the term "Sham" instead of the word for the modern state, "Syria" (Arabic: Suriya), in their names.

Sham has a special salvational meaning for Muslims, because Jerusalem (al-Quds, the Holy) was the initial prayer direction in Islam and the starting point of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension into heaven. The Second Caliph, Umar (634–644), secured the city for Islamic rule through negotiations. In 690 the Umayyad Caliph, Abd al-Malik, built the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount. Furthermore, Damascus became the capital city of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750). This is where the graves of Saladin, who drove the crusaders out of Jerusalem in 1187, and of Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), an Islamic scholar held in high esteem by Salafists today, are located. Several Shiite shrines are also located in Sham, such as the shrine of the Prophet's granddaughter Zaynab near Damascus. In addition, Sham is also connected to eschatological expectations, because according to both Sunni and Shia sources a terrible civil war is supposed to foreshadow the appearance of the apocalyptic redeemer (the Mahdi).

This symbolic density motivates current-day religious fighters of both confessions to come to Sham. Shiite militia members from the Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah and from Iraq support the regime of the Alawite Shiite Bashar al-Assad, thereby fuelling many Sunnis' feeling that it is necessary to defend Sunni Islam against "Safawid" – that is, Iranian hegemony.[1]

The Iraqi branch of the ISI didn't want to miss out on this symbolic location either. It entered into the Syrian civil war in the early part of 2013 by settling in the already "liberated" territories in the east of the country. On 9 April 2013 its leader (since 2010), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared the group's amalgamation with the Nusra Front – the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda and in fact its own offspring – to become the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi-l-Iraq wa-l-Sham), or ISIS for short. Only a day later, however, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani denied the amalgamation. And on 23 May 2013 the leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, demanded that Baghdadi withdraw back to Iraqi territory. A break be-

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1 "Safawi," which refers to the Iranian Safawid dynasty (1501–1722), is a pejorative term used by many (Sunni) Arabs today to describe Iranian influence.

tween the two al-Qaeda branches and between ISIS and its parent organization al-Qaeda ensued. In the first half of 2014 alone, 6,000 people died in battles between ISIS and the Nusra Front and between ISIS and other opposition groups such as the Islamic Front and the Free Syrian Army. ISIS has repeatedly been able to recapture lost territory and to expand – often without a fight, as many Salafist and jihadist fighters have deserted to it. Foreign jihadists and a younger generation of jihadists feel particularly drawn to ISIS's uncompromising approach. The group has attacked competing Salafist and jihadist groups, which Baghdadi has accused of apostasy (*ridda*), with great brutality: car bombs, suicide attacks, and the murder of leaders. The Syrian campaign has also been economically successful for ISIS, because the Syrian oil fields around Dair al-Zor have made possible the sale of oil to Bashar al-Assad's regime, to Turkey, and, since July 2014, to Iraq.

The Return to Iraq

The expansion into Syria was accompanied by Baghdadi's increasingly undisguised claim to be the supreme and only legitimate representative of the jihad in Iraq and Syria. His longtime plan to establish a caliphate, however, required a transnational territory, for which the power vacuum in Iraq offered an opportunity.

On 9 June 2014, ISIS launched a surprise attack and took over several Iraqi cities, including Mosul, and parts of the provinces Anbar, Niniveh, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salahuddin within just a few days. The Iraqi army and security forces, which were technically superior in number and weaponry, fled haphazardly; 30,000 soldiers deserted in the face of a militia with – at that time – an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 fighters. As they advanced, the latter destroyed security facilities and symbols of the Iraqi state and plundered weapons depots containing modern US weaponry, tanks, and artillery – including Scud missiles and Humvees. They took the property of the state and of civil servants as well as that of minorities who had been driven out or even massacred – such as the Christians of Mosul, and later the Yazidis and other minorities – as spoils of war (*ghanima*). They kidnapped young Yazidi women and sold them to their fighters. Additionally, ISIS announced the expansion of fight-

ing to, for the time being, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Even if nobody had expected such a massive move on the part of the jihadists, the offensive was not a complete surprise. Parallel to the uprisings of the Arab Spring there had also been protests in Iraq since 2011. Many Iraqis complained of the increasingly authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki; rampant corruption; and the insufficient provision of power, water, and security. Following the violent actions of the Iraqi security forces against the protest camps in the western Sunni provinces in April 2013, the confessional element of the conflict had intensified. In January 2014, following a violent crackdown on a protest camp in Ramadi, there was an armed uprising, which ISIS also took part in. After the parliamentary elections in April 2014 no governing majority could be established because Sunni Arab, Kurdish, and some Shiite politicians did not want to grant Maliki a third term.

It was in this power vacuum that the ISIS attack of June 2014 took place. In addition to the weakness of the security forces, its military success can be explained by the mobile tactics of the fighters, who attacked with some suicide bombers, then broke through the "front lines" on pick-ups and looted Humvees and started a guerilla war while "sleeper cells" in the hinterlands simultaneously carried out bomb attacks. The militias massively intimidated their opponents with the use of excessive force, separating border guards, police, and soldiers according to their sectarian affiliation: Sunnis were "forgiven" if they joined ISIS; Shiites and members of other minorities were murdered by the hundred if not by the thousand. Propaganda videos on the Internet showed the brutal execution of prisoners by mass shooting or sadistically slow beheading. Finally, ISIS undertook a skillful policy of allying with supporters of the Baath Party, fighters from the Sufi Naqshbandi order, and Sunni tribal fighters.

The Declaration of the Caliphate

On 29 June 2014, the first day of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, ISIS surprised the global public with a further coup: its speaker, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, announced that the ISIS council had designated its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as the new caliph. All Muslims were to pledge their

obedience to him (*bai`a*). Baghdadi's civil name, Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim al-Qurashi al-Hashimi al-Husseini al-Samarra'i, indicates, in addition to his origins in Samarra, his supposed descent from the Quraish tribe – a condition for the office of caliphate according to classical teachings – from the clan of the Prophet, Banu Hashim; and even directly from Muhammad over his grandson Hussein.

In subsequent days there followed additional appearances with key messages for the Muslims of the world. On 1 July 2014 the caliph declared that it was the individual duty of every Muslim around the world to undertake the *hijra* (migration) to the land of Islam. He explicitly called on Islamic legal professionals and judges, engineers, administrators, and doctors to help in building the state.[2] Thousands of Muslims have so far followed this "order" and have joined the Islamic State. On the first Friday of Ramadan, 4 July 2014, "Caliph Ibrahim" held his first Friday sermon in Mosul's Great Mosque. Because of a war injury suffered in the "jihad," he ascended to the pulpit with a limp. There he first cleaned his mouth with a tooth-cleaning twig, a devout gesture among Salafists, before taking the verses of the Qur'an, "God's words" – with which he strengthened his sermon, held in classical high Arabic – into his mouth. He was dressed in a black turban and cloak, as Muhammad was supposedly also clothed when Mecca was recaptured in the year 630. Even his valuable watch, which had been heavily mocked in Internet forums, demonstrated, as a legitimate "spoil of war" according to Islamic law, the material advantages of jihad. On the whole, however, he presented himself humbly as "an equal among equals" who had taken on the heavy burden of the caliphate. "Obey me, as I obey God and his messenger. If I do not obey God and his messenger, you don't have to obey me." With this rhetorical phrase, which he took from Abu Bakr's inaugural speech as caliph in 632, he distanced himself from the power-hungry despots of the region. He simultaneously adhered to the Salafist creed forbidding any worship of a person as holy. Anything else would, according to this strict interpretation, be polytheism (*shirk*). Implicitly, however, he also indicated that he would not accept any other political or religious leader's orders anymore – especially not those of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

In the areas it controls in Iraq and Syria, IS has taken on ever more functions of a state: it imposes taxes and customs duties; distributes food; passes draconian Islamist court verdicts; maintains information offices and a secret service; presents itself with the capital Raqqa, a flag and a hymn; has a council and various executive organs; and grants its own passports in Mosul.

The Omnipotence of the Caliph

From the viewpoint of the new state, inherent to the caliphate are political and religious powers that cannot be called into question. These can be summarized as three guiding principles.

1) **The caliph is the political leader of all Muslims.** The man-made, colonial borders of the nation-states are irrelevant and should be demolished. At the border between Syria and Iraq, ISIS fighters have already celebrated this symbolically by destroying some border fortifications.[3] Accordingly, the Islamic State in Iraq and in Sham renamed itself Islamic State (IS, al-Dawla al-Islamiyya), without any territorial limitations, at the same time as the caliphate was declared.
A single political entity has not existed within the Islamic community since the middle of the seventh century, as the classical caliphates such as those of the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Ottomans each only controlled parts of the areas inhabited by Muslims. Caliph Ibrahim has thus returned to the beginnings of Islam, when, during the period of the first four "rightly guided" Rashidun caliphs Abu Bakr (632–634), Umar (634–644), Uthman (644–656), and Ali (656–661), at least territorial unity still existed – even though the confessional split into Sunni and Shia had already become apparent. The IS thus calls itself "The Second Rashidun Caliphate."

2) **The caliph enjoys supreme religious authority over all Muslims.** He is responsible for the introduction and imposition of sharia, "God's law." For example, the "Information Office" in Mosul has published comprehensive rules of behavior for the residents.[4] Sharia is regarded by the IS as

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2 For an English translation, see: <https://ia902501.us.archive.org/2/items/hym3_22aw/english.pdf> (29 July 2014).

3 In an English-language Internet video from 29 June 2014, "Abu Safiyya from Chile" celebrated the end of Sykes-Picot – online: <http://aljazeera-news.net/focus/letters-to-editors/42536-end-of-sykes-picot.html> (3 September 2014).

4 Excerpts were published in the *Huffington Post*, 13 June 2014 – online: <www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/13/isis-iraq-brutality_n_5490910.html> (30 July 2014).

decisive and must be implemented – with violence if necessary. ISIS had already proclaimed its complete sovereignty of interpretation. For example, in January 2014 it refused to recognize an Islamic mediation court in the conflict between it and other Salafist and jihadist groups because "as a state" it could not accept a court outside its jurisdiction (Bunzel 2014). The group now appears to be attempting to strengthen this claim through the declaration of the caliphate.

3) **Anyone who does not acknowledge the caliph is an "apostate."** The declaration of the caliphate is above all a self-authorization to exercise autocratic rule. Whoever does not obey the caliph, so goes the undisguised threat in practically all IS statements, is an apostate (*murtadd*). According to this radical understanding, the caliphate is in fact a "license to kill." The fact that Baghdadi took on the honorific name of "Abu Bakr" could be a reminder of the Ridda Wars of the First Caliph, who bore the same name: Many tribes had joined forces with the Prophet Muhammad in a sort of tribal alliance and pledged him their loyalty (*bai`a*). After his death, they viewed the political alliance as being dissolved; Abu Bakr and the young Islamic community, however, who understood the oath of loyalty as applying to the Islamic community and not the person of Muhammad, did not. These tribes were thus seen as disobeying the Islamic community. They had renounced this community (*ridda*) and had thus become apostates (*murtaddun*), who were then fought and defeated. Translated to the current day, Baghdadi is pursuing "apostatic" movements, such as the Nusra Front in Syria, that deny him their allegiance, and thus purportedly reestablishing the unity of the Islamic community.

"The Caliph Has No Clothes!"

The surprising territorial expansion of the Islamic State and the proclamation of the caliphate can't distract from the new entity's massive legitimacy deficits. To date IS has only been able to establish itself in those peripheral areas of the civil-war-weakened states of Syria and Iraq that were already outside of or only weakly within state control. The tearing down of the "Sykes-Picot borders," a media success, was thus more for show. In the meantime the IS fighters have come up against

the core regions held by Syrian and Iraqi troops and by the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters. The Iraqi government has regrouped its security forces and sent its elite troops. Voluntary Shia militias, which are much more motivated than the Iraqi army to defend their holy shrines – for example, the two imam's graves in Samarra – have also formed. The states on the caliphate's immediate wish list – Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon – are already undertaking extensive measures to fend off an infiltration or an attack by the IS. Even the cooperation of political enemies such as the United States and Iran, and even Iran and Saudi Arabia, to combat the joint threat is currently a possibility. Most importantly, the US government, at the request of the Iraqi government and the Kurdish regional government, has ordered its air force to strike IS military positions in Iraq. Since the end of August 2014 it has also been seriously discussing the possibility of attacking IS targets in Syria.

The Islamic State also lacks important foundations of statehood, such as established borders and the recognition of the international community and its own population. The caliphate is consciously keeping its borders vague because it wants to expand its territory. The protagonists are not concerned about diplomatic recognition: according to their understanding, those Muslim states that recognize the caliphate will automatically be incorporated into the *one* Islamic State, whereas gaining recognition from the "nonbeliever" states is explicitly not an aim. Ultimately, the new caliph is also not concerned about Muslims' acknowledgment of his legitimacy: the duty to do so is, according to his interpretation, divine and not subject to human judgment.

Even Salafists and jihadists, who definitely share the ideological and theological foundations of the IS, reject the proclamation of the caliphate at this point in time and are comparing it with apostate sects from the early period of Islam. For example, the Islamic Front, the largest amalgamation of Syrian Salafists, equates IS with the Kharijites, the group of early purists, who "left" (*kharaja*) the Islamic community because they saw it as having deviated from pure Islam. The Nusra Front describes its former parent organization IS as "extremists" (*ghula*). Finally, it is contended that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – unlike his namesake – was not appointed as a result of the consensus of the community and the religious scholars but rather only by the council of his own troop of fighters. The

Salafist–jihadist camp is split deeply, and not even the collective enemy, Bashar al-Assad, is providing cohesion at the moment. For example, the Saudi-financed Army of Islam, a member group of the Islamic Front, has declared that the fight against the Islamic State has priority over the fight against the Syrian regime.

With the occupation and control of a territory, the IS has entered into classical warfare; in this type of war the state armies will be superior to it in the long term. It also needs to provide for its own population, something that ties up resources and has the potential to generate discontent. The introduction of a rigid sharia law with draconian corporal punishments for everyday pleasures such as listening to music or smoking and the destruction of historical places of worship are alienating the population. It is not just minorities such as the Christians, Shiites, Turkmen, and Yazidis – all threatened and persecuted with murder – who are fleeing the caliph, but also many Sunnis.

A Strategy against Jihadism and Separation

Within the entirety of the Muslim community – and even within the Salafist camp – the Islamic State caliphate is nothing more than a sect-like derailment. Yet, it is highly likely that it will intensify its attacks, aggravate political conflicts in the region, and leave behind a trail of devastation and suffering. In the long run, however, not much is likely to remain of the "caliph without clothes" other than unfulfilled expectations. IS will not overcome the colonial borders or bring about the unification of Muslims but will rather contribute to the further fragmentation of the region. However, global jihadism will not completely lose its appeal as a result. What is really necessary, therefore, is concerted action by local, regional, and global actors that – unlike the "War on Terror" – also takes into account the political, socioeconomic, and ideological roots of jihadism.

The jihadists have primarily taken hold in the heavily divided societies of the Middle East, where different ethnic-confessional and tribal identity groups are competing for power – for example, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Libya. Only in multiconfessional Lebanon have the elites of the various communities, following the experience of the civil war from 1975 to 1990, agreed on a power-sharing compromise that regulates the competition between these communities. Via guaranteed quotas and certain predetermined posts, all of these communities participate in the state. Competition thus takes place within the state – regarding posts, influence, and decisions – but is not about control of the state as a whole, as it is in other divided societies. Despite all the failures of this system – a confessional mentality that stretches into all areas of society and often-difficult decision-making processes – the country has prevented a return to civil war for 25 years and has maintained a high degree of freedom and democratic participation.

Whether Iraq and Syria continue to exist within their current-day borders remains to be seen. But a separation into small ethnic-confessional micro-states would not bring calm to the region because new minority-group conflicts and wars regarding the drawing of new borders would arise. In the short term, a power-sharing compromise between the societal elites could be more effective, whereas in the mid term, reliable state structures and a legal system that handles all people as equal citizens need to be established. Fewer rather than more borders are necessary in the region in order to promote business, political cooperation, and cultural exchange. Western countries could provide more extensive statebuilding assistance – for instance, by advising institutions and supporting education. They could promote cooperation within the region and with the West. This is definitely more sustainable (and more economical) than dealing with the consequences of recurring radical ideologies and armed uprisings.

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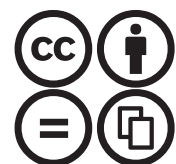
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