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# ARMED CONFLICTS AND THE EROSION OF THE STATE: THE CASES OF IRAQ, LIBYA, YEMEN AND SYRIA

**Virginie Collombier (editor), Maria-Louise Clausen,  
Hiba Hassan, Helle Malmvig, Jan Pêt Khorto**



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### ABSTRACT

How have armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen challenged or weakened each state? This report underlines the main dynamics that have affected state capacity and authority and highlights the key challenges facing policymakers in rebuilding centralized, efficient and legitimate states. It puts particular emphasis on the need for building consensus around governance mechanisms that can reconnect local- and national-level institutions and manage resource distribution. It also underlines the need for a holistic approach towards rebuilding efficient and legitimate security structures, taking into account that any such efforts will be political and contentious.

### INTRODUCTION

The 2011 uprisings deeply affected the political order in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The popular protests directly challenged incumbent regimes' authority and legitimacy and in turn triggered what can be characterized as a crisis of the state itself (Boserup and Colombo 2017). While in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt state institutions, as well as the very idea of the nation-state, have proven resilient in the face of the sudden disruption of power relations, this has not been the case in Syria, Libya or Yemen, where the uprisings rapidly became militarized and resulted in armed conflicts with foreign military intervention. Similar processes had occurred a decade earlier in Iraq, where military intervention by the American-led coalition and the ousting of Saddam Hussein in 2003 had a significant impact on state capacities and triggered dynamics that are still ongoing and in many respects mirror current trends in the overall MENA region.

The crisis of the state post-2011 has to do with the nature and capacity of MENA states prior to the uprisings, but also with the way power has been exercised. Rather than representing "rational bureaucracy" (Weber 1964) that was external to society (Mitchell 1999, Abrams 1988), state institutions were closely integrated with regimes as instruments of (sometimes arbitrary) control and patronage. In spite of these important distortions, however, institutions did function and administrate. "State" security apparatuses were often deliberately unrepresentative of the ethnic, tribal and sectarian composition of the population and were significantly biased towards ensuring regime survival. This was the case in Syria, where the Assad family captured state institutions

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<sup>1</sup> Virginie Collombier is Part-time Professor at the European University Institute (EUI). Maria-Louise Clausen holds a PhD in political science from University of Aarhus, Denmark, and is currently a Post-doc researcher in International Security at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). Hiba Hassan is a Yemen specialist with over 12 years of experience in analyzing political and security developments. Helle Malmvig is Senior Researcher at DIIS. Jan Pêt Khorto Jan Pêt Khorto is a Syrian-Kurdish writer, lecturer and public speaker resident in Copenhagen. He is the co-founder and board-member of the Syrian Cultural Institute in Denmark.

through strong patron–client relations, fierce repression by the security apparatus and eventually crony capitalism. Similarly, in Yemen, security services played a major role in maintaining President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s regime, in a system built on patronage networks to ensure the cooperation of a society in which kinship, tribal and regional identities continued to be important. In Libya, on the other hand, Muammar Gaddafi pursued a policy that destroyed rather than captured many of the institutions inherited from the previous era and replaced them with disparate structures, which served to concentrate power in his hands. Nevertheless, the need to ensure revenues from the oil industry meant that the main economic and financial institutions, the National Oil Company (NOC) and the Central Bank of Libya (CBL), remained centralized and functioned with a higher level of administrative capacity.

In these three countries, the transformation of the initially peaceful 2011 uprisings into armed conflicts pitting pro- and anti-regime forces against each other has further weakened the institutions of the state and led to extreme power fragmentation – especially in the security sphere; the collapse of formal political institutions and increased influence of armed actors over political processes; and the constitution of new power networks triggered by war economy dynamics. This has been the case irrespective of whether warfare eventually resulted in regime change or not. Similar dynamics have been at play in Iraq as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s focus on securing control of key institutions, including the security services, resulted in the further weakening of institutional capacity and deep divisions within state structures along ethno-sectarian party lines that paved the way for the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014.

This report focuses on the ways that states have been challenged or weakened as a result of armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. It underlines the main dynamics that have affected state capacities and governance, and highlights the key challenges facing policymakers in rebuilding centralized, capable and legitimate states.

It is based on a combination of desk studies and fieldwork, including interviews with civil society activists, social leaders, businessmen, experts and journalists, as well as people close to the security sector and centres of political power. Field research was conducted between September 2017 and July 2018 by the authors in Baghdad (Maria-Louise Clausen); in Istanbul, Beirut and Amman (Helle Malmvig); and in Tripoli (Virginie Collombier). Jan Pêt Khorto contributed to the section on the Kurdish Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. The research on Yemen also included interviews conducted with Yemeni nationals based in Beirut, Doha, London, Riyadh, Salalah and Amman (Hiba Hassan).

## 1. THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING CENTRALIZED STATES

If the state and the regime in the cases of Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq before 2011 (or 2003) were largely overlapping, there nevertheless existed physical institutions and administrators that constituted the machinery of the state and, often through the exploitation of nationalized resources, provided, or at least purported to provide, basic services. At times, and to different extents, in the four cases these functions and assets have been taken over by different groups often claiming to be performing “stateness”, albeit with differing visions of what the state should be (or their role in it). The resulting fragmentation has often served to empower local actors and communities and to enforce community identities, with clear implications for the future (re)building of a centralized state.

## 1.1 PRIVILEGING LIBYA'S NATIONAL OR LOCAL INSTITUTIONS?

A focus on national-level political institutions – legislative and executive – has not proved particularly successful as a means to rebuild the centralized state, as demonstrated in the cases of Libya and Iraq, because these institutions have often lacked the capacity to recentralize service provision and security in the context of the new realities on the ground, including in some cases the presence of foreign actors. This inability to deliver what is expected of the “state” has been detrimental to the overall legitimacy of the centralized state.

Libya exemplifies many of the trends highlighted in the introduction to this section, with the specificities of local service delivery serving to reinforce the power and significance of local communities vis-à-vis the central state embodied in newly formed national-level political institutions.<sup>2</sup> With the start of the 2011 civil conflict, newly developed local councils or local elites took on governance functions as the Gaddafi regime collapsed (Mangan and Murtaugh 2014). This trend largely mirrored the local nature of newly formed armed revolutionary brigades (Lacher 2012). Despite the essentially local nature of the new power structures, the initial focus of international actors and Libyan political elites following the end of the conflict was on building national-level political institutions, particularly through electing the General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012. Elections for municipal councils took place between 2013 and 2014, based on a legal framework that made them responsible for all local service delivery. While in some areas they replaced the existing local governance actors/bodies, in others they became one of several actors in this space.

Since the breakdown of Libya’s nascent national-level political institutions in 2014,<sup>3</sup> the local nature of governance has been further reinforced, to the detriment of the political institutions of the central state.<sup>4</sup> In the context of having two parliaments and governments, the central state’s already weak ability to manage public finances and ensure a sufficient operating budget to provide basic services has further deteriorated (UNDP 2015). The fact that municipal and local councils in some areas have continued to provide limited services, coupled with the fact that they are elected, has provided these local bodies with a degree of legitimacy that generally exceeds that of national-level authorities.<sup>5</sup> The strength of the local over the national-level political institutions has been further bolstered by certain international organizations working at the municipal level (Mezran and

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2 EUI team’s interviews, Tripoli, March 2018.

3 In 2014, different factors led to the formation of two rival politico-military coalitions and sets of institutions. In the east, former general Khalifa Haftar had in May of that year announced the launch of Operation Dignity by his newly formed Libyan National Army (LNA). This operation purportedly targeted “terrorism”, a term the LNA applied to a wide range of Islamist groups. The newly elected (June 2014) House of Representatives (HoR), dominated by anti-Islamists, was forced to flee Tripoli to the east, and one coalition thus brought together the HoR, the LNA, eastern tribes and other pro-HoR armed groups. In the west, the outgoing General National Congress (GNC) was reconstituted as an alliance of armed groups – some of whom were Islamist-leaning – from Misrata and certain other cities in the north-west and took control of the capital. In the period that followed, the two legislatures remained, each with their own affiliated government. The authorities in the east attempted to gain control over state finances by creating their own “branches” of the NOC and CBL.

4 EUI team’s interviews, Tripoli, March 2018.

5 EUI research team’s observations within the framework of the Libyan Social Dialogue project funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. For more information on this project, see <http://middleeastdirections.eu/?p=927>.

Talbot 2018), and by the inability of national-level authorities such as the Government of National Accord (GNA) to secure basic service provision.<sup>6</sup>

However, it is perhaps a positive sign that the idea of the Libyan state remains significant for municipal councils, albeit with an undefined concept of “decentralization” and with budgetary concerns apparently viewed as one of their main links with national political institutions (Al-Motawaset 2017). The highly centralized nature of the Libyan economy, based on oil and natural gas extraction, coupled with poor tax administration capabilities (UNDP 2015), has meant that municipalities continue to rely on the economic administration enshrined in the NOC and the CBL. The fact that these two bodies have more or less continued to function is testament to the fact that they were among the most technocratic institutions in the country before 2011 (given that they were responsible for the vast majority of the Libyan economy), and to the fact that they have been protected during the post-2011 transition. However, even the NOC’s administrative integrity has been threatened by the fact that it relies on physical assets – Libya’s oil infrastructure – to function. As a result, different groups on the ground have been able to blockade or take control of state infrastructure in pursuit of partisan aims (political and/or economic) (ICG 2015). This has reduced the potential for these bodies to play a role in rebuilding the legitimacy of the centralized state, as well as further linking the rebuilding of the state to rebuilding security structures.<sup>7</sup>

One further challenge in the Libya case is that institutional divisions and continuing conflict have rendered the economy deeply dysfunctional, as highlighted by the founding of a parallel Central Bank and National Oil Company (albeit with limited success) and the collapse of the banking system. The proliferation of players willing to take advantage of the crisis has dramatically increased corruption and malfeasance in the financial sphere, as well as the de facto privatization and plundering of state resources.

Armed groups and actors across the country in particular have made use of their military might on the ground to join or build profiteering networks that also include businessmen, politicians and members of the state administration (Collombier 2017, Lacher 2018). They have largely benefited from – and, by doing so, deepened – the blurring of the distinction between state and non-state, private and public interests, as well as between legitimate and illegitimate activities (Al-Arabi 2018). They have, for instance, become involved in the diversion of state funds – notably through exerting pressure on managers of major commercial banks, misusing Letters of Credit and playing a direct role in cash distribution circuits (which should go from the Central Bank directly to local banks) – which allows them to finance their activities, but in so doing weakens state control over key economic functions.<sup>8</sup>

In Tripoli, the “militia cartel” that provides security on the ground (Lacher 2018) to the GNA seems to have been motivated to a large extent by access to power and resources, rather than particular political views. Yet the special relationship between the cartel and the Presidential Council (PC) has also enabled them to exert considerable influence over appointments to key positions in

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6 EUI team’s interviews, Tripoli, March 2018.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.; Lacher (2018).

the state administration and state-owned companies, and therefore to increasingly influence political decision-making.<sup>9</sup> In the east of the country, Khalifa Haftar's strategy for consolidating his authority and expanding the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) has also been at least partly dependent on his capacity to source and distribute economic benefits and equipment to his eastern constituencies, especially among the tribes. The foreign support networks he has built up (especially in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, UAE) have played a key role in this regard, thereby bypassing the traditional "state" channels altogether.

## 1.2 ONE SYRIAN TERRITORY, MANY SYRIAN "STATES"

The situation in Syria shows many parallels with Libya insofar as governance has become increasingly fragmented and localized. However, in contrast to the Libyan example, local governance is (to varying degrees) linked to entities with differing visions of the state: the regime, opposition groups, the Kurds and the Islamic State (IS). The country is de facto divided into different areas dominated by different actors, which has been interpreted at times as the unravelling of the Syrian state as a territorial sovereign entity. However, the reality is that governing structures are highly dispersed among loose networks of multiple actors that compete over, or divide, governing tasks between them. All over the country, multiple groups enact and perform what are perceived as key state tasks – sometimes living side by side, and other times fighting, competing and negotiating in overlapping networks of power. These cross-cutting lines defy the simple rebel-versus-government control dichotomies that have become all too familiar from military control maps. Governing structures in Syria have become extremely fragmented, overlapping and above all localized, in no way resembling the highly centralized Syrian state from before the 2011 uprising, even though the Assad regime is keen to project an image of an uninterrupted all-powerful *dawla* (state) (Khatib 2018, Al-Dimashqi 2017, Khaddour 2017).

### 1.2.1 THE REGIME'S STRATEGY FOR STATE SURVIVAL: PATRONAGE NETWORKS AND SECURITY OUTSOURCING

Government-held areas have been calmer overall than those controlled by the opposition, with fewer active front lines and aerial bombardments and better access to international aid. This has obviously created more conducive conditions for governance in terms of providing basic public goods, administering daily life and providing the civilian population with a relative sense of security. Importantly, the regime has been able to draw on the Syrian state's existing institutional and administrative capacities as well as its international status as a sovereign state. Yet there are vast differences between the territories nominally controlled by the Assad government.<sup>10</sup>

The overlapping and very localized force structure is closely tied to Syria's war economy and business patronage networks. These have enabled the regime to simultaneously provide a minimum of (government) services to local communities and to nourish new and old power bases. Militia leaders and their families – both foreign and Syrian – have played a central role in these mechanisms. So too have business leaders, some of whom have, for instance, engaged in

9 EUI team's interviews, Tripoli, March 2018.

10 For instance, in Aleppo and Suwayda more fragmented, chaotic and violent governance dynamics prevail compared with Damascus, Tartus or Latakia on the western coast, which have been largely sheltered from the fighting.

smuggling and trade of oil from IS-controlled areas to the regime or in illegal trading from regime-held territory to besieged areas (Sottimano 2016). Local business leaders that help fund the armed groups are in return given rewards and remunerations such as government positions in the public sector, with local intelligence bureaus or as heads of the many new charity organizations that act as intermediaries for the regime (Khaddour 2016).<sup>11</sup> The Syrian government has also used contracts, properties and urban development rights to retain the loyalty of its patronage networks.<sup>12</sup>

These patronage networks have been in part reconfigured due to war and displacement,<sup>13</sup> with a new cohort of crony businessmen emerging (Sottimano 2016, Khaddour 2016). The new business figures have, on the one hand, made it possible for the regime to partially circumvent international sanctions and create a new loyal power base that feeds on the war economy and is dependent on the regime's continued survival (Veen 2018, Khaddour 2017, Barri 2018). On the other hand, the new networks are highly decentralized, heavily involved in the illegal war economy and strongly influenced by foreign powers, thereby positioning the Syrian state in a less controlling role than before the war.

### 1.2.2 THE OPPOSITION'S FAILED EFFORTS TO BUILD A DIFFERENT SYRIAN STATE

In opposition-held areas, opposition groups and activists have aimed from early on to create alternative governance structures to those of the Assad government. Importantly, however, the opposition efforts were not intended to create a new territorial sovereign entity or to break up Syria but rather to replace the Assad regime's state institutions within the existing national framework of Syria (Vignal 2017). The key civilian body – the so-called Local Administrative Councils (LAC) – initially grew out of the activist networks and over time were replicated all across the opposition-held areas – in part at the request of international donors (CHD 2014) – just as provincial councils were revived and organizational links with external opposition structures were established.<sup>14</sup> Opposition governance became, in the words of one of the interviewees, “a simulacrum of the Syrian government”.<sup>15</sup>

Performing key tasks associated with “stateness” such as delivering basic health care, electricity and water, or even running local bakeries and providing affordable bread, have from the beginning been important vehicles for building local support in opposition-held areas. Local councils, non-

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11 In order to access international funds and aid, notably from the UN, larger NGOs need to register with the Syrian Foreign Ministry, and as has always been the case, NGO registration requires connections and bribes. To stay on the approved Foreign Ministry list, charities are reportedly told, for example, to appoint regime-affiliated militia leaders, and declining to do so has led to dismissals from the list altogether. Local businessmen may also serve as intermediaries in order to circumvent international sanctions and access funding from international donors. Moreover, many of the Syrian interviewees point out that the crony capitalist order of illegal trading, transfer of public assets and licences to business leaders closely associated with the Assad regime that flourished before the war is still intact, and has merely accelerated with the war economy (Sottimano 2016).

12 Many of the poor suburbs of Aleppo and Damascus that were at the heart of the uprising have been destroyed as a result of the war, and residents have either fled or been forced to move. The Syrian government has used new legal dispositions to expropriate land, and the regime is now generating funds through property development or using it to compensate its new and old networks of business-militiamen (Veen 2018, Yahya 2018a).

13 The war has forced even loyal business leaders to go into exile or relocate from war-torn cities to Tartus or Latakia.

14 The Syrian National Coalition (ETILAF) and the Syrian Interim Government (SIG).

15 Interview with Syrian activist, June 2018.

governmental organizations (NGOs) and armed groups have therefore attempted to fill the void left by the withdrawal of the central government. Their governance efforts, however, have been heavily impacted by a hostile environment of rebel infighting, regime military attacks, sieges and inconsistent donor funding. Moreover, the Assad government has deliberately targeted opposition attempts to build alternative institutions, from military attacks on health care facilities and bakeries to “evacuating” members of the local administrative councils (Martinez and Eng 2018).

Moreover, armed groups, local councils and a variety of NGOs have ended up competing to provide basic services and regulation, and therefore competing for legitimacy. In practice governance structures have always been extremely localized and scattered,<sup>16</sup> with very weak vertical linkages to, and support from, the Syrian National Coalition (ETILAF) and the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) (Heller 2016). Armed groups have often employed coercive means to tax goods and services, and have directly benefited from their control over lucrative channels of trade, smuggling and looting. However, such practices have also served to distribute resources and provide common goods to their own clients and extended families. Similarly, the armed factions’ smuggling routes and shady wheeling and dealing with regime intermediaries have served as sources of self-enrichment and inflated prices on basic goods for the civilian population, especially in Eastern Ghouta (Lund 2018), but at the same time these dodgy deals have facilitated the deliverance of goods to besieged areas (Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Turkmani 2018). Poor living conditions, deep insecurity and a sense that the opposition has lost the war for good are now steadily causing Syrians to move from opposition-held to government-held areas. Yet people interviewed by the MENARA team underlined that local councils enjoy a form of popular legitimacy in their local communities that armed actors have not acquired, and that local council governance has for many Syrians been a whole new experience of participatory and representative politics that will have a long-lasting impact.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.2.3 THE KURDISH DEMOCRATIC SELF-ADMINISTRATION: A QUASI-STATE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

Building on the proclaimed principles of feminism, ecology and self-defence, the Kurdish Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM)<sup>18</sup> in northern Syria has endeavoured to form a new grassroots system of democracy known as Democratic Confederation since gaining control over the Kurdish territories.<sup>19</sup> In 2014, TEV-DEM announced the creation of three autonomous cantons in Afrin, Kobani and Jazeera. These are formally ruled through provincial councils, referred to as Democratic Self Administrations (DSAs), a highly structured, multilevel administrative system in

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16 According to the Local Administration Councils Unit (LACU), there are at present about 350 local councils that are struggling to meet daily needs, with little central coordination or accountability. While the technical and administrative capacities of the local councils have improved over time, they have not always been up to speed. Obtaining formal documents such as birth and marriage certificates, property documents and passports has evidently also been difficult.

17 Interviews in Beirut and Istanbul, June 2018.

18 Democratic Society Movement, *Tevgera Demokratîk* (TEV-DEM) in Kurdish, is an umbrella organization that has been established by or with assistance from the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which itself later became a member of TEV-DEM. The rationale behind the establishment of TEV-DEM is to put the values and principles of the Democratic Confederation model into practice from the bottom up. According to TEV-DEM’s statute, any person, organization, party or member of civil society, after accepting its principles, can become a member of TEV-DEM.

19 A social political ideology that has been advocated by Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) Kurdish leader in Turkey.

which the commune plays a key role.<sup>20</sup> These self-administrations function as an administrative umbrella under the provision of the General Council of the Self Administration in Northern and Eastern Syria.

Each of the three DSA administrations has generally been able to provide basic services to the local population such as electricity, health care, education and security (Khalaf 2016: 17). Most of these services are provided for a fee, signalling that the DSA of each autonomous canton enjoys a more solid and exclusive authority compared with rebel-held areas, where service provision is often shared and fought over among multiple competing actors. The DSAs have developed a number of institutions to administer various aspects of life in each canton.<sup>21</sup> These institutions provide the main services in each of the cantons and the DSA pays the salaries of most of the employed personnel. The DSAs are also able to raise revenue from construction permits, taxes on land and cars, and border trade (Narbone et al. 2016).<sup>22</sup> The construction of roads, the provision of electricity and the management of health clinics are financed exclusively by the Kurdish authorities (Khaddour 2017, 2015).

Interestingly, while service provision and administrative functions are essentially undertaken by the DSA, the Syrian regime remains in control of many government institutions (especially in Al-Hasakah and Qamishli, including the airport and a military base), just as the Syrian government continues to pay the salaries of many state workers and civil servants in state-run schools.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the DSA coordinates with regime institutions and works to a large extent in parallel with them (Khalaf 2016: 19). Thus, some services such as higher education and transport are planned, coordinated and paid for by the Syrian regime, and the regime also continues to provide key official state documents such as passports and certificates.

This pragmatic division of governing functions between the Syrian regime and the Kurdish authorities has, on the one hand, allowed the DSA to build relatively well-functioning and autonomous institutions. The regime has accepted this co-governance and outsourcing of its sovereignty, insofar as it has freed up valuable resources to be used elsewhere, while at the same time reminding the local population of its continued administrative presence (Khaddour 2015). On the other hand, however, for the Kurds the continued presence and administrative foothold of the regime constitutes a constant reminder that it may intend to reclaim full authority over the Kurdish areas and Syria's external borders once the fighting is over in opposition-held areas. The

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20 Each of these has its own legislative, judicial and executive councils and one general coordinating council acting for all the cantons (Khalaf 2016: 11). Communes are the smallest cells of TEV-DEM, and they are formed at the basic level of society, i.e. streets, villages and neighbourhoods. Communes send their delegates to a so-called Mala Gel or House of People, a confederate council at the neighbourhood level. Houses of People send their delegates to another council at the city level, and the city assemblies send their delegates to the canton level, which is administered by that canton's DSA (Gupta 2016). TEV-DEM oversees these DSAs and acts as a parliament for the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria.

21 These institutions comprise four main bodies: the Power Commission manages electricity and oil resources, the Financial Commission manages financial matters of governance, the Education Commission manages schools and the Commission of Local Administration and Municipal Offices manages local services provision and municipal offices (Al-Tamimi 2018b).

22 Oil is the major source of income, however.

23 The regime, however, stopped paying the salaries of school staff after the PYD decided to change the main teaching language for Kurdish students to Kurdish.

extent to which Kurdish authorities will be able to sustain some degree of autonomy will largely depend on the support they receive from external powers – the USA, Russia and Turkey. If the USA remains committed to staying in north-eastern Syria in order to contain Iranian influence and secure some leverage in political negotiations, this may enable the Kurds to persevere. If not, the Kurds may stand to lose most of what they have built.

### 1.3 YEMEN'S UNITY IMPERILLED?

The mismanaged (and very recent) unification of the country in 1990, followed by several years of civil war, together with the weight of tribal structures, can account for the fact that Yemen has long been regarded as a “fragile” state, lacking strong central authority and with limited government control outside of the cities (Whitaker 2009, Juneau 2010). As a result of the 2011 uprising and the subsequent failed transition process, Yemen now appears to have broken down into an agglomeration of “small states” where traditional “state” functions are being carried out by different actors, including militias, armed groups and tribes. With the onset of the 2015 war and Saudi military intervention, political and local groups emerged and created their own order. In the south, the cities of Aden, Lahj, Al Dhale, Abyan and Shabwa, as well as the eastern governorates of Hadramawt and Al Mahra, are purportedly controlled by Hadi’s government. Yet these governorates are subjected to varying degrees of control by pro-Hadi forces; security forces loyal to the UAE-backed former Aden governor, Aydrous al-Zubaidi;<sup>24</sup> and other UAE-funded militias, including the Security Belt forces in Aden and the elite forces in the Shabwa and Hadramawt governorates. Interviewees have confirmed that local leaders, rather than Hadi’s government, are in reality handling governance. Secessionist groups in the south have become more organized, thanks in large part to the support they have received from the UAE (Patrick 2017). The Houthis, who formed their own cabinet, have seized government facilities in the north and started performing state functions (Salisbury 2017). Living conditions in the areas controlled by the former Houthi–Saleh alliance, particularly in the governorates of Saada, Hajjah, Amran, Hodeidah, Sana’a, Dhamar and Ibb, were described as “worse than in the rest of the country” due to the war, “although local security was perceived to be better than elsewhere” (Salisbury 2017: 15; see also Yemen Polling Center 2017).<sup>25</sup>

Direct foreign military involvement and competition, in particular between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, also contributed to the collapse of central authority and the division of the country into different areas of influence and control. Unlike Saudi Arabia, the UAE has been backing the secessionist groups under the pretext that “Hadi is a serial incompetent”, and the country is believed to be carving out “strategic footholds for itself” in the south, “undermining Saudi influence” in Yemen (Patrick 2017). The Emiratis have seized the island of Socotra, in the Gulf of Aden, and have been establishing an air base on the island of Perim located to the west of the Bab al-Mandeb coast (Salisbury 2017). Differences between Saudi Arabia and the UAE have started to surface, particularly after Al-Zubaidi’s forces surrounded Hadi’s government in Aden in January 2018 (Mukhashaf 2018). The UAE, which is a staunch opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB),

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24 He announced the creation of a twenty-six-member Southern Transitional Council (STC) following armed clashes with pro-Hadi forces in the city of Aden (Mukhashaf 2018).

25 However, the Houthis have carried out detentions, torture and enforced disappearance in the areas they control, particularly in Sana’a (Salisbury 2017).

has been at variance with Saudi Arabia over the latter's support of the MB-affiliated Al-Islah Party against the Houthis. Moreover, before Saleh's death, the UAE was encouraging Saudi Arabia to back the former president instead of Hadi (Patrick 2017).

Interestingly, despite the war, overland trade has continued and the extraction of resources by the various groups in control of parts of the territory has been key to the expansion and consolidation of their power. The Hadi government has been able to generate income by resuming the export of hydrocarbons resources (Salisbury 2017: 28). Tribes in Mareb, Shabwa and Hadramawt have seized the oilfields in their governorates, while UAE-backed military forces, according to some of our interviewees, have controlled export facilities in Hadramawt and Shabwa since the withdrawal of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2016. The Hadi government has negotiated with the tribes and other UAE-backed forces in Hadramawt to export oil seized at the Al-Shihr facilities and in July 2016 a European oil trading firm, Glencore, secured a deal with the government to buy 3 million barrels for 40 US dollars a barrel.<sup>26</sup> In Mareb, gas production has continued despite the war, with "the refinery [...] running at or close to capacity (estimated at 8,000–10,000 barrels a day) since at least late 2015" (Salisbury 2017: 30). Mareb governor and strongman Sultan al-Aradah has used the money from oil and gas revenues to pay local militants and civil servants and for the provision of water, electricity and infrastructure services. In addition, property prices have peaked in the city of Mareb and electricity supply, "historically limited to around four districts, now reaches nine out of 14 districts" (Salisbury 2017: 19). For the Houthis, customs and taxation make up the majority of income, reaching 1.2 billion US dollars in 2014 (Salisbury 2017: 27). Before their alliance fell apart in December 2017, the Houthis and Saleh were sharing around YR10 billion (30 million US dollars) a month generated from customs collection (Salisbury 2017: 28). The Houthis also levied taxes on local markets and firms. Anecdotal accounts from Sana'a indicate that signs of wealth, including luxurious cars and houses, have become visible among Houthi leaders.

#### 1.4 IRAQ'S POLITICAL SYSTEM: A MAJOR THREAT TO THE STATE

In contrast to what is described in the other cases studied in this report, recent developments in Iraq (military successes against the Islamic State, overall improved security and the organization of parliamentary elections in May 2018) have been described as a positive indicator that the state might be on its way towards regaining capacity and authority.<sup>27</sup> However, reconstruction after decades of war and conflict is an overwhelming task. In particular, it would require major attention to the "institutional reconstruction" of the Iraqi state (EEAS 2018), which has not yet been translated into a nationally shared and viable vision for (re)building the institutions of the state.

The inertia and corruption of the political system have been central to the crisis of the Iraqi state, both before and after the focus was put on defeating IS militarily. Interviews in Baghdad shed light on the widespread and cross-sectarian disillusionment of Iraqis with politicians and the political system in general.<sup>28</sup> The political practice of the *mahasasa*, a power-sharing arrangement between the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds which was meant to secure minority representation,

<sup>26</sup> "Exiled Yemen government sells crude to Glencore", in *Reuters*, 27 July 2017, <http://reut.rs/2a9wuml>.

<sup>27</sup> Information extracted from the interviews conducted in Baghdad in March/April 2018. See also Alkadiri (2018) and Mansour (2018c).

<sup>28</sup> Information extracted from the interviews conducted in Baghdad in March/April 2018.

is particularly criticized by Iraqis, as it has had the unintended effect of emphasizing sectarian identity over issue-based politics. Iraqis pointed to sectarianism and its misuse for political ends as one of the reasons for the rise of IS.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, sectarianism has been somewhat delegitimized as a mobilizing tool, as evidenced in the 2018 parliamentary election campaign. Yet ethno-sectarian background remains a key determining factor in how people vote and frame their position in Iraqi society.

Although there were more than 200 parties running in the 2018 elections, the key coalitions are headed by political actors that have,<sup>30</sup> in most cases, been part of the political elite since 2003, were shaped by repression during the Saddam regime and in several cases spent their formative years in exile.<sup>31</sup> These coalitions were largely, although less profoundly than in the past, based on confessional affiliations, so in those cases where there was an attempt to establish a national cross-sectarian appeal, they would often put forward local candidates that matched the community's ethnic or sectarian identity (Mansour et al. 2018).

The influence of tribal structures on politics is another element that has fed the perception of a political system where political parties are essentially engines of influence for specific actors or groups. Strong tribes can help "their" representatives get elected in return for favours after the election (Dawod 2017: 19-20). Hence, while politicians are criticized for their lack of vision and national outlook, it is not uncommon to expect that a vote for a specific politician will be personally advantageous (Abdullah et al. 2018).

Many Iraqis perceive corruption, together with the lack of reform of the public sector, as the main reason for the degradation of the economic situation and the inability of the state to provide basic services.<sup>32</sup> Corruption is indeed entrenched in all aspects of the politico-economic system, with politicians using their positions within the state institutions to access revenues stemming from oil and to build patronage networks that extend into the military and the private sector. The practice of using public employment or promotions as rewards for loyalty (including hiring unqualified people based on their political or sectarian affiliations) constitutes a major problem and has led to a bloated and, in some cases, incompetent public workforce. For many Iraqis, the development of the private sector is therefore seen as a possible way not only to create jobs, but also to challenge the political status quo, as it would loosen their dependence on politicians who have been using public sector employment in exchange for support.

The Iraqi state is federal, but the fragmentation and lack of capacity in the Iraqi central state has led to calls for greater local autonomy, most notably by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).

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29 Ibid.

30 Some of the key coalitions are the Victory Coalition (Nasr) headed by current Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and the State of the Law Coalition headed by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, both part of the Dawa party. Others include the Conquest Alliance (Fattah) headed by Hadi al-Ameri from the Badr organization, the National Alliance (al-Watania) headed by Ayad Alawi and the Marching Forward Coalition (Sairoon) headed by Muqtada al-Sadr.

31 The election system favours coalitions over small parties and makes it difficult for new parties to enter the political system, which was highlighted during interviews as a factor that secures the dominance of established political actors over the political system (Kouti and Ala'Aldeen 2018).

32 Information extracted from the interviews conducted in Baghdad in March/April 2018. The incapacity of the Iraqi state to deliver basic services has obviously been exploited by actors such as the Islamic State in recent years.

The independence referendum in September 2017 strained relations between Erbil and Baghdad and led to the Kurds being forced out of Kirkuk. At the same time, the KRG has experienced recurrent protests over (the lack of) public salaries, maladministration and corruption. Likewise, serious protests erupted in July in the southern part of Iraq, starting in Basra, over the lack of services, especially water and electricity, as well as corruption and the lack of jobs. These protests have been directed at the entire political elite, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and have demonstrated that the feeling of alienation from the political elite unites all sectarian and ethnic groups in Iraq (ICG 2018a).

The low voter turnout in the 12 May election of approximately 45 per cent is a warning sign that the Iraqi population has lost trust in the democratic system as a means of holding politicians accountable and achieving real change. Moreover, while Muqtada al-Sadr's victory can be seen as an indication that voters have opted for an anti-establishment and anti-corruption agenda, it remains to be seen how this will affect the Iraqi state-building project.

## 2. THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING SECURITY INSTITUTIONS THAT CAN SERVE THE STATE

The proliferation of armed groups has been a major consequence of the armed conflicts that erupted across the MENA region starting in 2003 in Iraq, then after 2011 in Libya, Syria and Yemen. The militarization of opposition to incumbent regimes, foreign military interventions and support for warring local factions, as well as the attempts by communities to protect themselves, together contributed to the emergence of armed groups organized along political, local, sectarian or tribal lines which have grown autonomously outside the control of the state. Even in countries such as Iraq, where institutional political life has been normalized since 2005 and where jihadist groups (including IS), which have constituted the main threat to the state over the last decade, have been at least temporarily neutralized,<sup>33</sup> the fragmentation of the security sector and the proliferation of armed groups constitute a major challenge. In all the cases studied here, the restoration of the capacity *and* legitimacy of states will directly depend on the rebuilding of security institutions that can equally serve all components of society and be subordinated to a civilian administration.

### 2.1 THE SENSITIVITY OF IRAQ'S SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

Iraq represents a complex example of these challenges. War and the militarization of society are not new to Iraq. The collapse of the regime and the policies implemented by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)<sup>34</sup> and the subsequent Iraqi governments paved the way for a proliferation of armed non-state actors that, in many cases, have been supported by external actors.<sup>35</sup> While much domestic and international effort has been put into strengthening the capacities of the Iraqi

33 IS is not the threat it was in 2014–15, when it was marching towards Baghdad. Yet it is still very active as a terrorist group and still constitutes a serious security risk, especially in the areas it previously controlled (for instance around Mosul). It was argued by some interviewees that in some places the security forces ruled by day and IS by night.

34 In particular CPA Order No. 2, which dismantled the army.

35 External support to armed non-state actors is not new. The American support to tribal sheiks during the so-called Anbar Awakening is another well-known example of such policies (Dawod 2017).

Security Forces (ISF)<sup>36</sup> since 2014, and the security forces overall are held in relatively high esteem for their role in defeating IS (Ahn et al. 2018), the complexity of the security sector has hampered the Iraqi state's ability to regain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Mansour 2018b).

Following the defeat of IS, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has not been able to contain the influence of the powerful Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella term for more than fifty sub-groups that mobilized after Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa in June 2014 urging Iraqis to volunteer to fight IS (Gaston and Derzsi-Horváth 2018: 20). Instead, the PMF continue to challenge the authority of the state both directly as alternative security providers and by seeking to integrate themselves into state institutions while retaining their autonomy (Mansour 2018a).

The militias have tended to mobilize local communities along sectarian or ethnic lines, thus exacerbating cleavages within and between communities. The PMF are dominated by Iran-backed Shia groups, but also include local and smaller Sunni, Turkman, Yezidi and Christian groups. However, these are under the overall control of the PMF leadership (ICG 2018b: 21). The composition of the PMF vary greatly, but they are dominated by groups that pre-existed the fatwa, such as the Badr organization, which was boosted by the influx of volunteers and now controls thousands of battle-trained and well-equipped fighters thanks to Iranian support (Steinberg 2017).<sup>37</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the PMF are not the only paramilitary groups outside Iraqi state control. A number of political actors have mobilized militias along sectarian or ethnic lines, such as the Sunni Usama Nujaifi who has argued that the Sunni militia led by his brother, the Haras Ninewah, are best able to protect the citizens of Nineveh (Mansour et al. 2018). The most internationally prominent group, the Kurdish peshmerga, is likewise not controlled by the Iraqi central government. This has implications for the long-term cohesiveness and legitimacy of the security forces, especially given that they remain politicized and controlled by various elite actors (Knights 2016: 18).<sup>38</sup> There is a perception, at least among some Iraqis, that the security sector is controlled by the Shia. This accounts for the fact that some segments of Iraqi society remain hesitant to trust the ISF's ability to act objectively.

Moreover, leaders of armed groups play a central role in politics. For instance, Hadi al-Ameri, the current leader of the Badr organization,<sup>39</sup> heads the Fatah (Conquest) coalition, whose primary base comprises the PMF fighters, their families and the families of those who fell fighting IS. The Fatah coalition came second in the 12 May election on a platform that capitalized on the PMF reputation in combat to argue that they can be trusted to provide services and rebuild Iraq.

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36 The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) include the traditional security forces such as the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Force, the Iraqi Navy, the Counter-Terrorism Service, the Federal Police, the Iraqi Police Service, the Department of Border Enforcement and Coast Guard, and various other protection units as well as the Hashd al-Sha'abi.

37 The PMF are formally under the command of the prime minister, but function as a separate entity. On 8 March 2018, Abadi sought to limit the military influence of the PMF by setting up a series of formal requirements, most notably that fighters that enjoy the rank of lieutenant or above must have received formal training. This would force some 20 per cent of PMF commanders to retire (ICG 2018b: 18).

38 This was stated by sources of various political persuasions. Information extracted from the interviews conducted in Baghdad in March/April 2018.

39 The Badr organization won twenty-two seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections.

While government policies have sought to bolster the security forces and their ability to monopolize the use of force by incorporating these various militias, the incumbent Iraqi government will at some point face the daunting task of having to streamline and slim down the bloated security forces.<sup>40</sup> This will be a sensitive process, especially since the military is a major employer in Iraq and the high unemployment rate has increased popular demands for job creation. It is unclear how the election results will affect these processes.

## 2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF HYBRID ARMED ACTORS ON LIBYA'S DIVIDED POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Attempts to rebuild Libya's security forces in the aftermath of the 2011 civil conflict resulted in similar dynamics to the case outlined above, with nascent political authorities attempting to incorporate a plethora of different groups that had formed during the uprising, often along geographical or ideological lines, into the new state security forces. While some international efforts at capacity building took place, limited efforts were made in relation to creating cohesion or breaking down local/ideological group identities, in part because of the relative weakness of the nascent political authorities and their inability to manage competition. The salaries and external funding made available to these groups, moreover, as well as the need for local protection, resulted in an increase in the number of armed groups (McQuinn 2012, Lacher and Cole 2014, Collombier 2017).

Whereas at various points in the period since 2017 Libya's security sphere has been characterized by broader alliances or more significant fragmentation, these local, tribal and ideological group identities have remained largely intractable. The post-2014 institutional splits and the UN-led process have led to different political and security contexts in eastern and western Libya. In western Libya, local groups that act relatively autonomously remain the key security actors. While these groups have attached increasing importance to formal affiliation with the UN-backed GNA based in Tripoli as a means of gaining legitimacy and access to resources, the GNA's weakness means that armed groups in fact are able to influence political decision-making and control state institutions (Lacher 2018). The more limited state resources available in this period (compared with the period immediately after the 2011 civil war) has been one factor that has pushed armed groups to engage in their own economic activities and to compete over access to political and administrative actors, forming new alliances in order to do so.<sup>41</sup> The main pro-GNA armed groups in Tripoli have thwarted the GNA's attempts to build up its own neutral force into a significant actor on the security scene (Lacher 2018).

In eastern Libya, on the other hand, it appears on the surface that more capable and cohesive security forces have been established around the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA). However, this force – which controls most of eastern Libya and has expanded significantly since the launch of Operation Dignity targeting “terrorist” groups in 2014 – remains a hybrid coalition. While the core General Command led by Khalifa Haftar has made attempts to build up “military” institutions, existing groups and identities continue to operate within this framework or in alliance with it. This

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<sup>40</sup> This process has already begun, as the 2018 Iraqi budget shows planned defence spending cuts, including a 4,000-personnel reduction that is intended to focus on the retirement of high-ranking personnel. Information extracted from the interviews conducted in Baghdad in March/April 2018. See also Al-Mawlawi (2018).

<sup>41</sup> EUI teams' interviews, Tripoli, March 2018.

includes, for example, tribal militias and Madkhali Salafist groups (Salem 2018).<sup>42</sup> This coalition, based in part on a shared aim of targeting “terrorist” groups and in part on Haftar’s capacity to source and distribute equipment, therefore remains fragile.

Moreover, similar to western Libya, the LNA appears to hold more significant decision-making power than the political institutions under which it ostensibly operates (the eastern government and House of Representatives), which, coupled with the LNA General Command’s difficulty in fully controlling its various units and allies (Salem 2018), points to the obstacles to reconstituting unified, centralized and legitimate Libyan security forces. This is not to mention the challenges posed by the abuses committed by armed groups in both eastern and western Libya in recent years and the continuing polarization between different groups, such as between the LNA and Islamist groups or between the Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups and the Madkhali Salafists.

### 2.3 THE SYRIAN REGIME’S TACTICS OF OUTSOURCING AND SHARING SECURITY FUNCTIONS

Even in Syria’s regime-held areas, the use of force is now dispersed, fragmented and outsourced to multiple groups: pro-regime paramilitary groups, foreign powers and local militias. These groups operate under loosely connected umbrella affiliations, such as Local Defence Forces (LDF) and National Defence Forces (NDF).<sup>43</sup> Foreign influence is a key challenge in the case of many of the NDF and LDF forces, who are trained and partly financed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Lebanese Hezbollah, and some of the militias – such as the Fatimiyun and Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas – are entirely made up of foreign Shia fighters from Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Other militia groups such as Liwa al-Baquir were created and are run by a foreign power (Hezbollah and Iran), while its rank and file comprises local Syrians. There are also powerful paramilitary groups that are more closely linked to the regime’s inner circle in terms of finance and control.<sup>44</sup>

These multiple pro-regime paramilitary forces, foreign militias and government forces appear to live side by side, complementing, substituting and sometimes competing with each other in overlapping local dynamics, at times fighting together, at others taking action where the state is unable to (Al-Masri 2017). Thus the regime has out of necessity informally outsourced a defining element in performing statehood to foreign and local semi-private agents, be they tribal or clan leaders, powerful businessmen or foreign actors. In the short run, this has paradoxically enabled the Syrian government to perform and keep up its claim to statehood and ultimately to survive.

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42 The term Madkhali is used in Libya to denote Salafists following the teaching of Saudi preacher Rabie al-Madkhali. Although they have become militarized in Libya, this strain of Salafism is best known for its obedience to the ruler (*ta’ā li wali al-amr*).

43 In parts of Homs, Eastern Aleppo and Hama a range of pro-regime armed non-state actors are manning checkpoints, policing the streets, and engaging in extraction and protection racketeering with little or no central control by the Syrian government (Leenders and Giustozzi 2017, Lund 2018, Al-Tamimi 2018b). In the Suwayda province in the south, several interviewees indicated that the Syrian state is completely absent and that lawlessness reigns. Druze militias and tribal leaders seek to govern in its place, for instance running tribal courts and civil affairs with substantial support from the Druze community in Lebanon (Al-Zarier et al. 2017).

44 This includes Liwa Imam al Baqr and the Tiger Force run by the Syrian intelligence agencies, Fahud Homs, Suqur Sahra Dir and the Fourth and Fifth Volunteer Assault Corps run by the infamous regime oligarchs Rami Makhlof, Ayman Jaber and Maher al Assad respectively (Al-Masri 2017), in addition to LDF militias linked to political parties such as the Ba’ath Battalions or the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and to the tribes in Deir Ezzour and Suwayda.

Early in the conflict the regime tactically withdrew most of its forces from the northern parts of Syria. This allowed the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) to establish relatively well-functioning local institutions. The People's Protection Units/Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) forces are responsible for defence and security, including protecting the "external borders" with Iraq, Turkey and the rest of Syria, while the so-called Asayish functions as an internal police force. The former has largely been preoccupied with fighting the Islamic State and they have been careful not to directly target the Syrian regime forces. The Kurdish forces have gained recognition for their effectiveness in fighting IS, but reports of human rights violations against Syrian rebel groups, suppression of alternative civil society voices and pragmatic relations with the regime continue to cause friction both within and outside of the Kurdish community.

The Syrian regime, since its withdrawal, has in practice – albeit not formally – outsourced parts of its sovereignty and territorial control over borders and border crossings to the Kurdish forces, including the flow of fighters and goods (Vignal 2017). This has freed up much-needed resources for the regime to employ elsewhere, while at the same time retaining an administrative and military foothold in the Kurdish area. When Turkish forces advanced on Afrin in January 2018, for example, the Syrian government did not send troops to assist the Kurdish militias, but merely allowed Kurdish fighters, civilians and politicians to reach Afrin through the territory it holds (Bassam and Perry 2018).

Paradoxically, the outsourcing and co-sharing of key state functions with a multiplicity of foreign and local actors (be they foreign Shia militias, Kurdish YPG or the LDF) has for now enabled the Syrian government to perform and keep up its claim to statehood and ultimately to survive.<sup>45</sup> In the longer run, however, delegating or outsourcing violence to such a plethora of armed actors is not without costs. It challenges the regime's claim to central control and sovereignty, including decision-making and implementation. The fact that key figures within the regime's inner circle all have their own armed or paramilitary forces is also an indication of rivalry and fragmentation within a hybrid rather than centralized order. Many of the foreign powers and militias are also likely to remain in Syria after the war, in order to secure so-called strategic depth, and they benefit from a certain degree of "controlled state chaos". Reportedly there are also some concerns on the part of the regime and Russia that the militias sponsored by Iran are too autonomous and will seek to establish a permanent presence in Syria once the war has ended (Al-Masri 2017, Al-Tamimi 2018b).<sup>46</sup>

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45 On the performance of statehood in Syria, see also Martinez and Eng (2018); on the outsourcing of violence, see also Leenders and Giustozzi (2017).

46 Russian proposals to enrol the NDF and the LDF within the Syrian army structures were allegedly met with strong Iranian and Hezbollah opposition (Leenders and Giustozzi 2017), and today the NDF continues to operate entirely outside of the Syrian army and state institutions, while the LDF is more closely connected to the Syrian armed forces, yet with strong Iranian ties and only very partial command and control. The boundaries and command structures between the many pro-regime militias are in any case blurry. Local NDF units have, for instance, been incorporated into the LDF, or transferred to the Fourth and Fifth Corps, just as foreign Shia fighters have been found wearing NDF identity cards.

## CONCLUSION

In Syria, Libya and Yemen, the 2011 uprisings against incumbent regimes that were perceived as illegitimate by protesters have rapidly degenerated into armed conflicts involving the regimes and their opponents, but also a multiplicity of domestic and foreign actors. Whether or not the regimes collapsed as a result of warfare, the use of violence to achieve political objectives has had a deep, and most probably lasting, impact on the states themselves. This has already been demonstrated by the experience of Iraq since 2003, which anticipated some of the trends currently observable in these three countries.

Despite the questions raised, albeit to different extents, in all the cases covered in this report, the issue of territorial integrity has not been considered by the authors as the most acute component of the crisis that affects the states of Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

Rather, issues related to governance and the provision of basic services (including economic and security) have been highlighted in all four cases. They should be considered as central to any reflection on the collapse and rebuilding of the states, in terms of both their capacity and their legitimacy. In addition, the cases of Iraq, Libya and Yemen also underline that when priority is given to the creation of national political mechanisms and institutions based on electoral competition, and the importance of the local dimension is overlooked, this can result in further weakening of state legitimacy and increased fragmentation of societies.

Throughout the region, and in a particularly acute way in the cases under consideration here, the economy and the transformations it has undergone amid warfare (and post-2003 reconstruction efforts in the case of Iraq) have had a profound impact on power arrangements within state structures and between the states and other components of society. Corruption and the plundering of state resources, and the blurring of the line between public and private, legal and illegal activities, have seriously affected the overall performance of the economy as well as the quality of services delivered to the people. This has further challenged the legitimacy of the states and of their representatives in public opinion.

Key trends in the security spheres of the cases under consideration indicate that the main challenges to policymakers in the coming period will stem from power imbalances between political and security actors, the difficulties of promoting cohesion in contexts of significant foreign influence and discrimination towards certain groups, as well as the building of actual security capabilities. Prioritizing this last issue without simultaneously addressing the other challenges underlined in this report has proven (and will prove) counter-productive. The examples of Iraq and Libya show that even where armed conflicts have stalled, it has so far been impossible to (re) constitute forces that are capable, representative, cohesive and willing to be subordinated to a civilian administration.

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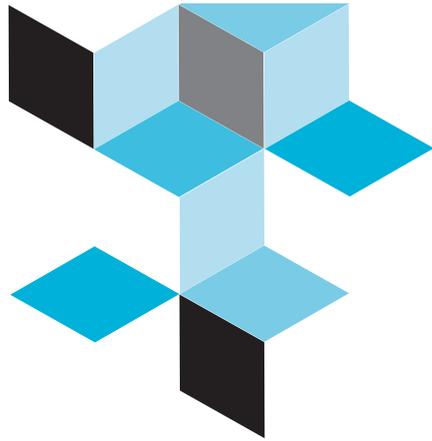
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