Aftermath of IS in West Asia

Why in news?

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Raqqa, the Islamic State's de facto capital in Syria, was captured by U.S.-backed Kurdish and Arab troops.

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What is the present condition?

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- IS once controlled territories as large as the U.K.
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- But is now concentrated in some pockets in Iraq and Syria.
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- In Iraq, government troops were joined by Kurdish Peshmerga and Shia militias in ground battles while the U.S. provided air cover.
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- In Syria, the Syria Democratic Forces (SDF), with cover by U.S. aircraft cover, and Syrian government forces aided by the Russian Air Force opened multiple fronts against the IS.
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- Under pressure from all sides, the group finally crumbled.
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- It lost Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, to government troops earlier in 2017.
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- Now with the loss of Raqqa, its self-proclaimed "Caliphate" is now practically over.
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What is the aftermath?

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- The IS transformed itself into a proto-state with a global appeal.

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- That state is militarily destroyed, but IS movement, is far from over.
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- As al-Qaeda in Iraq, retreated to the deserts and regrouped during 2008-2011, the IS could also retreat and wait for the right moment to strike back.
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- With terror attacks in faraway locations such as Paris and Brussels and lone wolf attacks by individuals inspired by its world view, the IS has already proved it could continue its lethal campaign even while under military pressure.
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- The geopolitics of West Asia suggests up until now a common enemy had bound them together.
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- With the IS challenge fading, cracks are visible in the coalition.
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- e.g Iraqi government troops and the Kurdish Peshmerga — which fought together against the IS in Mosul — are now fighting each other in Kirkuk.
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- Even in Syria, once the IS is defeated the regime could turn its focus on the Kurdish autonomous region.
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- So the stakeholders should have a larger vision for a post-IS West Asia.
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- The fundamental issues that helped the rise of groups like the IS should be addressed.
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Source: The Hindu

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