

The Islamic State's Shadow Governance in Eastern Syria Since the Fall of Baghuz

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Given the group's multileveled efforts to exert local authority, it could resurge quickly into full territorial control if the coalition pulls back too soon.

Since losing its last semblance of control in Syria in March 2019, the Islamic State has spent the last four and a half years not only attempting to survive, but also working to create the conditions for returning to territorial control. While it is true that the organization's insurgency has been degraded in recent years, only focusing on the Islamic State's attack claims and propaganda misses an important trend happening at the local level: despite the best efforts of the global coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Islamic State has continued attempts to govern as shadow actors in eastern Syria. These efforts can be seen on four main axes: taxes, moral policing, administrative documents, and retaking of territory (albeit for brief periods of time). The Islamic State's level of governance today is nowhere near where it was when it controlled territory the size of Britain from 2014-2017. Yet, these governance attempts illustrate that the group may be stronger than many assume, while also highlighting that the group's interest in governing and controlling territory has not waned in recent years...

To read the full article, download the PDF above or [visit the CTC Sentinel website \(https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-islamic-states-shadow-governance-in-eastern-syria-since-the-fall-of-baghuz/\)](https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-islamic-states-shadow-governance-in-eastern-syria-since-the-fall-of-baghuz/). ❖

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