

In Syria, America Should Be Ruthlessly Focused on the Islamic State

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Jan 17, 2025

Also published in War on the Rocks

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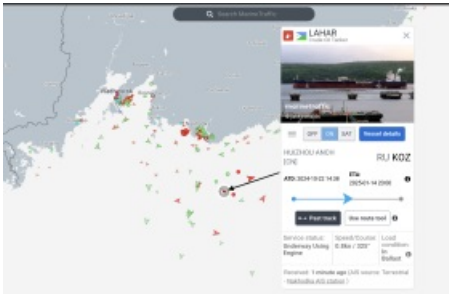
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With the U.S. military presence on a potentially short timetable, officials should prioritize policies that ensure the continued security of Islamic State detention facilities, such as brokering local ceasefire agreements and alleviating Turkish concerns.

Five years ago, we [warned \(https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/10/danger-abandoning-our-partners/599632/\)](https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/10/danger-abandoning-our-partners/599632/) that a snap decision to depart Syria would be a devastating setback and damage American credibility. A few weeks later, amongst a U.S. withdrawal and subsequent Turkish invasion into areas held by the Syrian Democratic Forces, we [argued \(https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/10/turkey-kurds-syria-trump/600388/\)](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/10/turkey-kurds-syria-trump/600388/) the United States would need to maintain the ability to fight remnants of the Islamic State and ensure the fighters in detention remain there. Washington ceded much of its negotiating power in the country to Moscow and Ankara, only to reverse course a few months later and keep a small allotment of troops in northeast Syria to prevent a power vacuum and a run on Syrian oil and gas infrastructure. Today, the United States and its Kurdish-led partners face a nearly identical set of challenges, but in a massively changed balance of power in Syria. And despite political nominees' reassurances that the United States is unlikely to abandon its partners there, Trump himself has been more ambivalent...

[Read this article at the War on the Rocks website.\(https://warontherocks.com/2025/01/in-syria-america-should-be-ruthlessly-focused-on-the-islamic-state/\)](https://warontherocks.com/2025/01/in-syria-america-should-be-ruthlessly-focused-on-the-islamic-state/) ❖

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