

The New Syrian Government's Fight Against the Islamic State, Hezbollah, and Captagon

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An in-depth look at how the new rulers tackled these counterterrorism issues in Idlib province for years prior to Assad's fall, and what steps they are taking at the national level today.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's background as a former branch of the Islamic State and al-Qaeda has created a perception that it is untrustworthy when it comes to U.S. and allied security concerns. This has come to the fore even more acutely with the fall of the Assad regime. The Islamic State, remnant Hezbollah networks, and the criminal Captagon trade continue to pose some of the biggest threats emanating from Syria. Although few paid attention when HTS was controlling territory in northwest Syria for seven years prior to the fall of the regime, it actually took those challenges on and has continued to do so since it took over most of Syria in December. Of course, dealing with security challenges should not be the only lens through which the new rulers in Damascus are viewed; observers should also take into account the nature of their governance and who is involved beyond core supporters. Strictly judging Syria's new leaders by their actions against the Islamic State, Hezbollah, and Captagon, however, they appear to be committed to these tasks, even if challenges will likely persist for the foreseeable future...

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