

The Radicalization of Syria

by [Aaron Y. Zelin \(/experts/aaron-y-zelin\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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As extremist foes fight for supremacy in Syria, their rivalries could threaten Europe.

Al-Qaeda, its branches, and sympathizers viewed the 2011 Syrian uprising, which turned into a civil war, as a great opportunity to expand their reach. Of all of the Arab Spring countries, Syria was the most prized because of its religious-historical significance, relative closeness to the West (compared with other jihadist battlefields), and proximity to Israel. What al-Qaeda viewed as a promise, though, has turned into a nightmare because of its now-existential battle with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) for supremacy of the global jihadist movement...

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