

Securing al Sham

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Sealing borders and arming tribes and the moderate opposition are keys to uprooting jihadists in Syria and Iraq.

Uprooting the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) from the swath of territory it now holds between Aleppo and Baghdad will take a lot more than airstrikes or a change of government in Iraq. Although the 2003 war in Iraq might have led to the formation of the jihadi group, the chaos in Syria provided it the space to metastasize. To prevent ISIS -- and other such organizations -- from building a permanent safe haven in Iraq and Syria, then, Washington must help settle Syria by supporting Sunni tribes and other moderate opposition groups there.

Over the last week, the Obama administration has focused its attention on pushing Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki (or whoever might replace him) to be more inclusive of the country's Sunni Arabs, who make up around 20 percent of the population. Washington is right to do so. ISIS and the other groups fighting alongside it rely on this disenchanted community for support. Without Sunni backing, ISIS would crumble and Iraq could stabilize. To help that process along, the United States could launch airstrikes against ISIS camps in the country...

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