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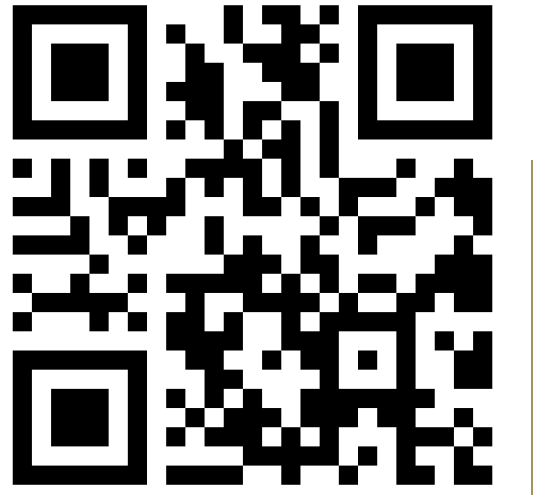


Syria after Assad: Political transition under the aegis of Salafi rebels

Wednesday, 10 June 2026 · 16:00 c.t.

Room 124, Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Or join online via Zoom: 930 8975 0663 (Meeting ID), 142311 (Passcode)



The fall of the decades-long dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad on 8 December 2024 marks a significant turning point for Syria. This presentation examines crucial institutional and security dynamics over the course of the 1 ½ years after Assad, with a particular focus on Syria's interim government. It asks specifically: What happens when Salafi-jihadist rebels, here Hai'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS), take over the government in a country? Do they remain 'true' to ideological doctrine or do Salafis in suits govern in much more pragmatic ways? To answer this, the presentation first outlines the "Idlib model" of HTS rebel rule over the northwestern region (2017-2024), in terms of personnel, policy preferences and connections to Salafi-jihadist doctrine. This "Idlib model" then serves as a benchmark against which the Syrian interim government's personnel, policy preferences and connections to Salafi-jihadist doctrine are examined since December 2024. It finds that the Syrian interim government builds on core elite personnel from Idlib and on continued policy preferences, especially the skepticism against (civil) society participation and democratic process. At the same time, compromises with non-Salafi partners suggest that there is an ideological distance from doctrine. These two trends suggest therefore a more complex dynamic, indicating the emergence of an authoritarian regime with hybrid or tempered Salafi Jihadi form of governance.

Dr. André Bank is Senior Research Fellow at GIGA German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Institute for Middle East Studies in Hamburg. His research on authoritarianism, conflict and regional order in the Middle East has been published in, among others, Democratization, Journal of Peace Research, Mediterranean Politics and Middle East Policy. In late 2025, Dr. Bank conducted field research in Syria.



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For more information

