



## Origins of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Approach as a non-state actor.

The Syrian war was a complex conflict that began in 2011, characterized by unleashing one of the greatest humanitarian crises of recent times. One of its main features was the involvement of a large number of actors, both state and non-state, each pursuing its own interests through the use of force, an element that generated alliances not without tensions. Focusing the study on non-state actors, the great heterogeneity of objectives, methods, strategies, and beliefs led to internal disagreements among groups to become their main axis of action, diverting them from their original objective: the regime of Bashar al-Assad. These idiosyncratic elements inherent to each group established individual identities that attracted followers to the cause in defense of their own ethnic, cultural, or religious collective, rather than in pursuit of joint cooperation against the regime<sup>1</sup>.

There is a certain consensus among analysts that the origin of the conflict lay in the so-called “Arab Spring,” that wave of uprisings and protests that toppled long-standing regimes, mainly in North African countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. However, the optimistic Western idea of democratizing the Arab world failed to take into account the country’s internal divisions, poverty and insecurity, its ethnic heterogeneity, and the religious rigorism of certain groups with a Salafist ideology. This framework of instability created a power vacuum that typically leads to the emergence of extremist groups, which consider the use of violence as the main means of achieving their political objectives<sup>2</sup>.

At this point, it is necessary to introduce Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, president of the Syrian government, currently known as Ahmad Hussein al-Sharaa. He began his involvement in Al Qaeda in 2003 following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, being recruited by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi himself, who was then the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Due to his activities, he was imprisoned in U.S. detention facilities, where his radicalization process intensified, bringing him into contact with figures such as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the future leader of Daesh. Initially, he took an active part in the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006, serving as a franchise of Al Qaeda<sup>3</sup>.

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1.- TALAVERA CEJUDO, G. (2024) “La intersección entre idiosincrasia, cultura y civilización: naturaleza y origen de los conflictos internacionales”, Opinion Paper 103/2024, IEEEE: [La intersección entre idiosincrasia, cultura y civilización: naturaleza y origen de los conflictos internacionales - CESEDEN](#) [last visit: 12/04/2025].

2.- JUAN CONESA, J. L. (2021) “El conflicto en Siria y el uso de la fuerza”, Tesis Doctoral, Departamento de Derecho Financiero, Internacional y Procesal, Universidad de Murcia: [El conflicto en Siria y el uso de la fuerza - Dialnet](#) [last visit: 22/04/2025].

3.- MAHER, S. (2024) “Syria’s rebels won the war – can they win the peace?”, Department of War Studies, King’s

Subsequently, after the outbreak of the war in Syria, al-Zarqawi decided to place his trust in him and send him to bring together all Syrians supportive of jihad into a new group, also an Al Qaeda affiliate, called Jabhat al-Nusra, thereby separating the insurgent fronts in Syria and Iraq. This implies not only that there was an ideological and strategic alignment with Al Qaeda, but also that the group was financed and logistically supported by it, without being organically integrated into the organization. In 2015, the decisive entry of Russia into the conflict on the side of the regime, together with the limited coordination among non-state actors and the split between Daesh and Al Qaeda, led to the withdrawal and subsequent loss of most of the territory controlled by Jabhat al-Nusra, leaving it reduced to the province of Idlib<sup>4</sup>.

In the following years, an internal reassessment took place within the movement that resulted in a break of ties with Al Qaeda, the main factor preventing other insurgent groups from forging closer relations with the organization. This decision reflects al-Jolani's distinguishing approach, sacrificing his relationship with Al Qaeda in order to unite the forces of various local groups, distance himself from the international spotlight, and improve his public image among neighbouring countries, all in pursuit of his political project, revealing for the first time a predominantly nationalist drive. The symbolic and unifying nature of this decision brought together a large part of the Islamist rebel factions into a single front, which was renamed Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and later, in 2017, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)<sup>5</sup>.

At this point in the conflict, HTS was a non-state actor that effectively controlled the province of Idlib through the self-proclaimed Syrian Salvation Government. Inhabited by approximately three million people, it consisted largely of displaced persons and citizens of Turkmen origin, thereby increasing Turkey's influence and interest in the region. In reality, it functioned as a self-declared Islamic state, following a logic similar to that employed by Daesh: the implementation of sharia, tax collection, the establishment of basic social services, and an organized military wing whose main focus remained asymmetric warfare, particularly suicide attacks. Its ultimate objective was to achieve institutional legitimacy. In this regard, it issued proclamations such as renouncing the

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College London, ICSR, Engelsberg Ideas: [Shiraz Maher, Author at Engelsberg ideas](#) [last visit: 13/04/2025].

<sup>4</sup>.- Ibídem.

<sup>5</sup>.- Ibídem.

global jihad declared by Daesh and announcing a direct confrontation against them. However, it is highly likely that its true aim was to disseminate propaganda in order to gain regional prominence and followers at the expense of its rival organization<sup>6</sup>.

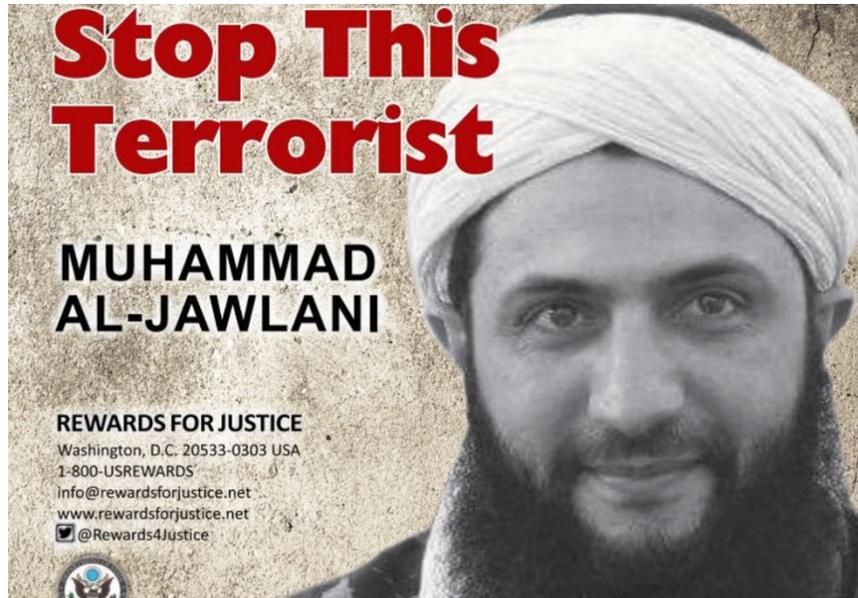


Figure 1. Reward poster of Al-Jolani

Source: ABC news (2024)<sup>7</sup>

Daesh and HTS were the options available to that segment of the Syrian population that adhered to Salafist precepts and sought to take part in the war. Their main difference (aside from the number of fighters and the level of influence Daesh attained in Syria and Iraq) was the pursuit of global jihad, a factor that precipitated the fall of Daesh while keeping HTS out of the international spotlight.

### **The fall of the regime. From HTS bases emerges a state actor.**

Al-Jolani and his organization's sacrifice in order to secure support for their campaign involved distancing themselves from other jihadist groups in pursuit of a nationalist and unifying vision, a vision that, over the years of war, generated a sense of greater normalcy in the province of Idlib. The mujahidin gradually became citizens, and with this, the region experienced a certain level of development during wartime, while always maintaining adherence to Sunni Salafist religious ideology, and therefore always under reasonable doubt regarding the protection of the population's human rights.

<sup>6</sup>.- SEIJAS, N. (2024) "¿Qué es Hayat Tharir al Sham (HTS)", EOM: [¿Qué es Hayat Tahrir al Sham \(HTS\)? - El Orden Mundial - EOM](#) [last visit: 23/04/2025].

<sup>7</sup>.- Available in: [EE.UU. retirará al nuevo líder sirio de la lista del terrorismo mundial](#)

For his part, during the years in which al-Assad remained in power, his government, centralized in the Baath Party, carried out practices that can be associated with state terrorism, such as the alleged use of chemical weapons<sup>8</sup>. In this regard, he decided to suppress demonstrations by deploying the army rather than using the police, as General Qassem Soleimani had advised. From the very beginning of the conflict, the suspicion that chemical weapons were being used loomed over events, a fear that materialized in August 2013. A brutal chemical attack left between 1,000 and 1,400 dead, mostly civilians, in the Eastern Ghouta region, which at that moment was controlled by factions of the Free Syrian Army and Salafist groups. The responsibility for the attack was confirmed by the UN and served as basis for the launch of judicial proceedings and accusations of crimes against humanity directed to al-Assad's government<sup>9</sup>. This incident marked a turning point in the conflict; that year the UN Security Council approved Resolution 2118, which required the Syrian government to declare and destroy all its chemical weapons stockpiles, a process to be carried out under the supervision of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)<sup>10</sup>.

On the other hand, it is necessary to note that many survivors of the attack were transferred from Eastern Ghouta to Idlib Province, a development that undoubtedly acted as a catalyst for the region's hatred toward the regime, and one that al-Jolani skilfully channelled in order to gain supporters for his cause. In addition to this, in 2017 the Syrian government once again carried out a chemical weapons attack, this time in Idlib Province itself, in a direct strike prompted by the growing influence of Jabhat al-Nusra (the aforementioned Al-Qaeda affiliate) in the region. The attack left hundreds of dead and triggered a direct military response from the United States through strikes launched from its destroyers deployed in the Mediterranean Sea; to which France and the United Kingdom later joined in a combined attack<sup>11</sup>, bending al-Assad's will. These chemical attacks not only resulted in a loss of international legitimacy for al-Assad's regime, but

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<sup>8</sup>.- CARDOZA ZÚÑIGA, R. (2015) "El uso de armas químicas en Siria, un desafío para el derecho internacional", Vol. 8, Anuario Colombiano de Derecho Internacional, ISSN 2027-1131: [El uso de armas químicas en Siria, un desafío para el derecho internacional - Dialnet](#) [last visit: 10/11/2025].

<sup>9</sup>.- FRANCE 24 ESPAÑOL (2024). "Ataque químico en Guta, Siria: activistas exiliados buscan justicia por la atrocidad de 2013", report, 01/06/2024: [https://youtu.be/xNrE1\\_jjok](https://youtu.be/xNrE1_jjok) [last visit: 11/08/2025].

<sup>10</sup>.- HIDALGO GARCÍA, M. (2025) "El futuro de las armas químicas de Siria con el nuevo gobierno: desafíos y... ¿oportunidades?", Documento de Análisis 10/2025, IEEEE: [IEEEE. El futuro de las armas químicas de Siria con el nuevo gobierno: desafíos y... ¿oportunidades? - CESEDEN](#) [last visit: 12/08/2025].

<sup>11</sup>.- BORGUER, J. y BEAUMONT, P. (2018) "Syria: US, UK and France launch strikes in response to chemical attack", The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/14/syria-air-strikes-us-uk-and-france-launch-attack-on-assad-regime> [last visit: 12/11/2025].

also increased local support for al-Jolani and his project, which continued overshadowed internationally due to the fight against Daesh<sup>12</sup>.

During the following years, Syrian conflict entered in a phase of military stalemate and political fragmentation. Despite retaining control of Damascus and part of the territory, al-Assad's regime survived only thanks to Russian and Iranian support, while in the north al-Jolani's group continued consolidating its political power. The slow but unmistakable deterioration of state structures opened the door to change.

The decisive offensive in December 2024 by all Syrian armed groups led by HTS resulted in the collapse of al-Assad's government, reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. President al-Assad was unable to respond to coalition's advance and was forced into exile in Russia after the fall of Damascus, two weeks after the beginning of the attacks. However, the reality is that the weakening of the regime culminated in a complete rupture between the population and the State, driven by three essential factors: the precarious condition of the Syrian army in terms of equipment and unpaid salaries, a population exhausted by constant repression, and a severe crisis that had triggered economic collapse and had practically turned the country into a narco-state<sup>13</sup>.

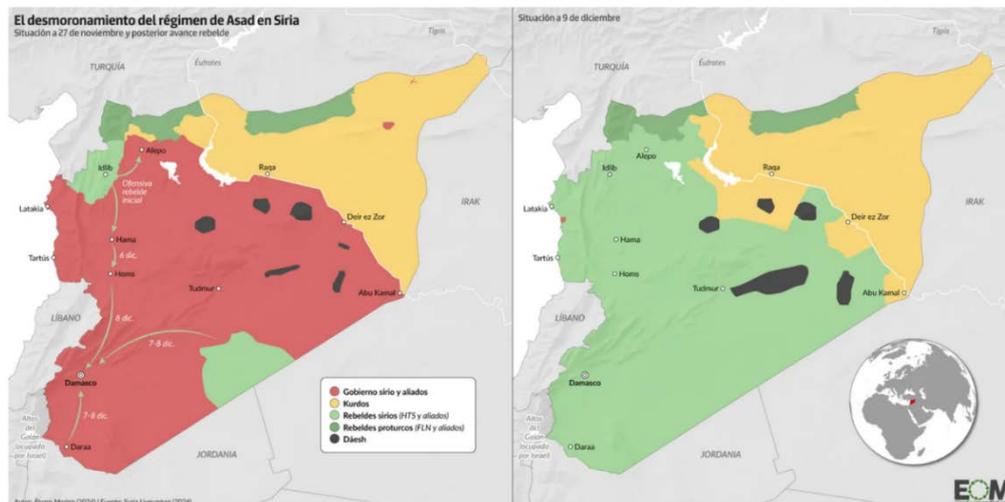


Figure 2. The collapse of the al-Assad regime.

Source: Álvaro Merino, EOM (2024)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>.- HIDALGO GARCÍA, M. (2021) "Siria: un desafío para la Organización para la Prohibición de las Armas Químicas (OPAQ)", Documento de Análisis 22/2021, IEE: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/8153021.pdf> [last visit: 12/08/2025].

<sup>13</sup>.- NACHAWATI REGO, L. (2025) "La caída de la dinastía Asad en Siria: factores locales, regionales y globales", Anaquel de Estudios Árabes, Ediciones Complutense, ISSN 1130-3964: [Vista de La caída de la dinastía Asad en Siria: factores locales, regionales y globales](#) [last visit: 11/08/2025].

<sup>14</sup>.- Available in: [¿Quién controla Siria? El mapa de la ofensiva rebelde que ha acabado con el régimen de Asad - Mapas de El Orden Mundial - EOM](#)

This rapid collapse caused a hopeful Western outlook regarding the country. The visit of France and Germany foreign ministers was an example of this<sup>15</sup>; moreover, many countries of the regional environment quickly moved to contact the new government in search of favourable treatment. Taking advantage of this momentum, the new Syrian leader swiftly carried out a remarkable rebranding: the combat uniform was replaced with a suit and tie, and the narrative was no longer of warfare but of unity and peace. Finally, he realized that his war name would no longer be necessary; from now on, he would present himself as Ahmed al-Sharaa, the leader from the Sunni religious majority who brought an end to more than fifty years of Alawite autocracy. His reward: the lifting of the U.S. arrest warrant against the HTS leader and his acceptance into the international community<sup>16</sup>.

### **Theoretical analysis. Political transition or State Terrorism?**

According to information given, there is evidence to classify the radical Islamist organization HTS as a terrorist organization. However, HTS itself no longer exists and, therefore, Ahmed al-Sharaa no longer presents himself as the leader of a terrorist organization, but rather as the unifying president of Syria, received with a certain sense of hope by the U.S., the EU, Israel, and an important part of Western community. In fact, the UN Security Council's special envoy for Syria stated that there is strong international consensus regarding support for the political transition in Syria. In this regard, he emphasized the need for the unification of armed groups, security guarantees along the Kurdish north-eastern border, a representative and non-sectarian governing structure, and the new president's commitment to ensuring the protection of civilians, this being the main issue where clear signs of non-compliance have already emerged<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>.- FRANCE 24 (2025) "Ministros de Exteriores de Francia y Alemania llegan a Damasco para reunirse con nuevos líderes sirios": <https://www.france24.com/es/medio-orient/20250103-ministros-de-exteriores-de-francia-y-alemania-llegan-a-damasco-para-reunirse-con-nuevos-l%C3%ADderes-sirios> [last visit: 13/11/2025].

<sup>16</sup>.- HANSLER, J., MARQUARDT, A. y CONTE, M. (2024) "EE.UU. retira una antigua recompensa de US\$ 10 millones a cambio del líder rebelde sirio", CNN Español: <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2024/12/20/mundo/eeuu-elimina-recompensa-lider-rebelde-sirio-trax> [last visit: 13/11/2025].

<sup>17</sup>.- SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT (2025) "Syria: Closed Consultations", What's in Blue: [Syria: Closed Consultations : What's In Blue : Security Council Report](#) [last visit: 13/08/2025].



Figure 3. Visit of the European Commissioner for Crisis Management to Damascus  
Fuente: Audiovisual Service of the European Commission (2025)<sup>18</sup>

The analysis should not be carried out by studying the organization itself, but rather trying to determine, in light of the events that have occurred since last December, whether they are sufficient to classify the current Syrian government as a terrorist one. That is, is this administration currently practicing State terrorism, in the same way that it was easily attributed to the Daesh government in Syria and Iraq, or to the Taliban movement in Afghanistan? Is it neglecting its duty to protect the ethnic minorities of the region? Are its actions becoming blurred in favour of strategic interests of third States, compared to the media amplification of the attacks perpetrated by Daesh at that moment, in order to justify an intervention?

In this regard, according to the studies of Lopez and Stohl (1988), it can be stated that there are three types of State terrorism<sup>19</sup>:

- The first one is the use of direct threats as a method of coercion so as to modify citizens' behaviour.
- Secondly, exist the so-called covert State terrorism, in which clandestine action may be carried out either by government agents or with operations that are planned and devised by the State, but executed by private groups.

<sup>18</sup>.- Available in: [EC AV PORTAL](#).

<sup>19</sup>.- LÓPEZ, G. A. y STOHL, M. (1988). *Terrible beyond endurance? The Foreign Policy of State Terrorism*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

- The third type would be the so-called surrogate terrorism. In this case, the State in question explicitly or implicitly assumes or approves actions of terrorist groups that have their own agenda within the country. In other words, the government is aware of and effectively allows certain independent groups to use violence without any opposition against specific segments of the population.

This third type is the case study of the Syrian government of Ahmed al-Sharaa. The elements of analysis are the violent actions carried out by radicals with Salafist ideology against Syrian ethnic minorities, specifically Christians, Alawites, and Druze.

The first one began on March 6th, when militias from the coast, supporters of the former al-Assad regime, carried out an incursion against the new Syrian army. The army's retaliation to this attack was harsh, but even more so was the freedom of action granted to radical armed groups formerly linked to HTS, as well as smaller local Salafist groups that saw this attack as an opportunity for revenge. Command orders to these armed groups came directly from Damascus for better coordination, and commanders who issued them were promoted to generals after the operations<sup>20</sup>. This disproportionate sectarian hunt, compared to the skirmish initiated by supporters of the old regime, left more than 1,300 dead, mainly Alawites followed by Christians, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, as well as a large number of displaced people who fled to the Russian base at Jmeimim<sup>21</sup>.

The second element concerns the Druze community, an Islamic religious minority living in the southwest of the country, which was also disproportionately attacked by Syrian government military forces and, once again, by radical Salafist groups with their own agenda in early July. This attack, which began as a feud between Bedouins and Druze, escalated with the intervention of military forces, leading to clashes and bombings in residential neighbourhoods, as well as deaths of dozens of civilians, according to Druze sheikhs and spiritual leaders. This escalation even prompted Israeli intervention in support of the Druze, primarily through aerial means, largely due to the historical, familiar, and military ties that the Druze community in northern Israel maintains within the country, as well as the need to ensure peace in the area that Israel considers a buffer zone with

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<sup>20</sup>.- MICHAEL, M. (2025) "Syrian forces massacred 1,500 Alawites. The chain of command led to Damascus", Reuters: [Syrian forces massacred 1,500 Alawites. The chain of command led to Damascus. | Reuters](#) [last visit: 13/10/2025].

<sup>21</sup>.- BALANCHE, F. (2025) "Geography of the Alawites Massacre", Lyon University: [Geography of the Alawites Massacre - Fabrice Balanche](#) [last visit : 09/10/2025].

Syria, beyond the Golan Heights. Nonetheless, all acts of violence were condemned by the UN Secretary-General<sup>22</sup>.



Figure 4. Demonstration of Druze citizens in the Golan Heights  
Source: EOM (2016)<sup>23</sup>

These two processes of violence against minorities suggest two main conclusions. Firstly, Syrian society is not undergoing cohesion as the Syrian president claims. Exist clear indications that both armed forces and radical ideology groups aligned with the new government are seeking revenge following the fall of al-Assad, believing that this requires carrying out ethnic cleaning. Secondly, the nascent army lacks discipline. The army has a clear support for Islamist paramilitary militias (some of which are foreign, such as Uyghur jihadists) that previously backed the offensive against al-Assad and act independently according to their own interests, taking advantage of directives from the central government to exceed the orders received and carry out genuine acts of State terrorism, falling within the category of surrogate terrorism<sup>24</sup>.

Despite these events, since May 2025 both the US and the EU have lifted much of the sanctions imposed on Syria, although in response to the attacks carried out in March, the EU implemented a set of restrictive measures targeting individuals and certain entities, but not the government, toward which a favourable and hopeful narrative is still

<sup>22</sup>.- NOTICIAS ONU (2025) "Siria: El Secretario General condena los ataques israelíes y toda la violencia contra la población civil", Mirada Global Historias Humanas: [Siria: El Secretario General condena los ataques israelíes y toda la violencia contra la población civil | Noticias ONU](#) [last visit: 13/10/2025].

<sup>23</sup>.- Available in: [Los drusos, solo fieles a sí mismos - El Orden Mundial - EOM](#).

<sup>24</sup>.- HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2024) "Syria: Post-Assad Transition Should Center Human Rights": [Syria: Post-Assad Transition Should Center Human Rights | Human Rights Watch](#) [last visit: 13/11/2025].

maintained<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, the question is whether Ahmed al-Sharaa is aware of the actions of his armed forces and thus “allows” them to progressively carry out ethnic cleaning, or whether the pressures he receives from the leaders of these Islamist militias, through whose support he came to power, force him to ignore these attacks and refrain from intervening. In any case, whether through connivance or omission, the Syrian president would be committing an international crime of State terrorism, given the evidence of unequal security guarantees for certain groups or minorities.

### **Conclusions and strategic implications.**

The perspective on the new Syrian government is now different. It is no longer a terrorist organization seeking to destabilize an autocratic regime; it is now a legitimate interlocutor for the world and a country that may be neglecting the protection of minorities because of the influence and/or pressure of agents with radical ideology. It is evident that this government cannot be held responsible for the previous situation in Syria, for which it has been acknowledged that the harsh repressions of the former regime played a decisive role, thus creating an inherent violent legacy. However, HTS was a non-state actor, an internationally recognized terrorist group and leader of a Salafist ideology coalition, which, after taking control of the government, could be very close to achieving its strategic objectives, if it succeeds in gaining full international legitimacy, although with a different approach.

For all these reasons, and even though the scenario is not a Western state whose democracy has been undermined by a terrorist group through a campaign of attacks, we could be facing the first terrorist group that has achieved all of its strategic objectives, by using political violence. Such a potential recognition would conflict with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which establishes the need for a democratic and pluralistic process that excludes any type of terrorist organization or State, in this case<sup>26</sup>.

Given all of the above, there are clear beneficiaries and victims of this regime change.

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<sup>25</sup>. - DANIELA LENZU, M. (2025) “Siria: la UE adopta actos jurídicos para levantar las sanciones económicas relativas a Siria, en aplicación de un reciente acuerdo político”, Comunicado de Prensa, Consejo de la Unión Europea: [Siria: la UE adopta actos jurídicos para levantar las sanciones económicas relativas a Siria, en aplicación de un reciente acuerdo político - Consilium](#) [last visit: 13/08/2025].

<sup>26</sup>. - Servicio Diplomático de la Unión Europea (2020). “The EU and the Crisis in Syria” EEAS: [The EU and the crisis in Syria | EEAS](#) [last visit: 25/08/2025].

On the one hand, Iran ceases to provide ground-based supply it had been delivering to its militias, primarily Hezbollah, through al-Assad's Syria. Israel not only takes advantage of this, but also gains territory beyond the Golan Heights, justifying its support for the Druze population attacked by Syrian military forces. Turkey, for its part, may be the greatest beneficiary of al-Sharaa's rise, as their mutual cooperation dates back to its inception. In doing so, Turkey not only strengthens its soft power in the Islamic world but also consolidates greater control over the Kurdish population, having influenced agreements such as the one between the Kurdish army and Syrian military forces to unify and integrate military and civil control of the Rojava region after years of combat<sup>27</sup>. Consequently, this places Turkey in a clear superiority position over Iran in the region. Russia, on the other hand, loses some capacity and influence, as it has been forced to negotiate the maintenance of its naval and air base in the western part of the country. However, during the Syrian president's visit to Moscow, it was assured that Syria would honour the agreements previously signed with Russia.<sup>28</sup>

It seems evident that States increasingly defend a pragmatic balance of power, a process presented directly to the public. It is not a matter of determining whether it is ethical to legitimize a country that engages in State terrorism; instead, the pragmatism of Western States, led by the US, aimed at isolating the reactionary regime of the Ayatollahs in Iran, recovering the Abraham Accords, and containing Russian forces, has transcended liberal idealism and its ideas of international cooperation above national interests. Realism prevails. This applies to the dual use of the concept of terrorism, sometimes portraying certain groups as rebels or freedom fighters when legitimizing an action serves a purpose, supporting the overthrow of a dissident government, or presenting them to the public as cruel terrorist groups when delegitimization is advantageous<sup>29</sup>.

Supporting a country that practices State terrorism goes against the democratic principles that the Western community claims to uphold, from the perspective of liberal idealist theory. However, it makes a great deal of sense from a realist perspective, since this new

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<sup>27</sup>.- BORGÑOZ MOYA, R. (2025) "Implicaciones geopolíticas y estratégicas del cambio de régimen en Siria", Opinion Paper 49/2025, IEE: [IEEE. Implicaciones geopolíticas y estratégicas del cambio de régimen en Siria - CESEDEN](#) [last visit: 13/10/2025].

<sup>28</sup>.- QUILLEN, S. (2025) "Syria seeks to 'redefine' Russia ties, al-Sharaa tells Putin in Moscow", Al Jazeera: [Syria seeks to 'redefine' Russia ties, al-Sharaa tells Putin in Moscow | Bashar al-Assad News | Al Jazeera](#) [last visit: 12/11/2025].

<sup>29</sup>.- TALAVERA CEJUDO, G. (2024) "Perspectiva internacional de la piratería y el terrorismo marítimo. Comparativa, causalidad y motivaciones", Opinion Paper 24/2024, IEE: [Perspectiva internacional de la piratería y el terrorismo marítimo. Comparativa, causalidad y motivaciones](#) [last visit: 25/08/2025].

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government, although currently unstable, works in favour of strategic interests of countries such as the US, Israel, and Turkey. In this sense, the Western liberal idealism that these countries try to project to their societies, gives way to the offensive realism described by John Mearsheimer (2014), where national interests and the objective of great powers to maximize their relative power to ensure their predominance and national interest are presented with stark clarity to the observer, even if this means recognizing a State as a legitimate interlocutor that allows reprisals against Christian, Alawite, and Druze minorities<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup>.- MEARSHEIMER, J. (2014). The Tragedy of Great power Politics. New York: Norton & Company.