

Welcome to Idlib: America's Model Syrian City. Al Nusra's New Homeland?

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

A report published by The Century Foundation (TCF), [a US-based policy think tank](#), helps shed light on the inner workings of the small northern city of Idlib, Syria.

Idlib is to the US State Department-listed foreign terrorist organization Jabhat Al Nusra (also known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham or Al Qaeda in Syria) as the eastern Syrian city of Al Raqqa is to the self-proclaimed "Islamic State" (IS).

It is also home to a wide range of other militant groups cooperating with the terrorist organization, as well as a myriad of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) funded and directed by the US, Europe, Turkey and the Gulf states.



And while great hope resides within statements of US, European and Gulf state politicians, echoed across their respective media platforms for this city's possible role [as an alternative "capital"](#) for an alternative "government," opposed to the current Syrian nation-state, TCF's report dumps a cold bucket of water on what was but a spark, not even a flame of hope.

The "Opposition" Exists Solely Through the Support of Foreign Interests

The report titled, "[Keeping the Lights On in Rebel Idlib](#)," describes a city so dangerous and dysfunctional, the authors of the report could not even venture there to conduct their interviews, which were instead conducted remotely from the other side of the Turkish-Syrian border.

The report even admits that the "provincial council" meant to replace the Syrian government remained based in Turkey for years and still maintains an office there today.

The report states:

In Syria's rebel-held Idlib province, residents have established local governance bodies that provide needed services and simultaneously pose a political challenge to the regime of Bashar al-Assad. No overarching authority has replaced the state after it was forced from Idlib. Islamist and jihadist armed groups hold power at the local level, and have developed relatively sophisticated service coordination bodies. Yet ultimate decision-making power has typically sat with donor organizations outside the country.

The report points out that armed groups compete not only for influence within Idlib, but also

for access to the constant stream of resources foreign donor organizations provide. The report admits that this foreign aid (dominated by USAID) sustains Idlib's occupiers, who themselves lack the ability to unify the city, fund any of their activities, let alone challenge the Syrian state.

The report also admits that initially the Syrian government was able to protect Idlib's urban centers, and that they only fell after the Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Turkey was taken over. This suggests that an influx of weapons, supplies and fighters over the border from Turkey, with Turkish and other state-sponsors' backing, helped turn the tide against Syrian forces, not the momentum of the "uprising" itself.

Idlib province is now one of the few regions in the country that still has an unsecured border with Turkey, making it no surprise that Idlib remains one of the few areas still left beyond the Syrian government's control. The report also admits terrorist organizations (Ahrar al-Sham and Al Nusra) dominate this remaining region, contrary to US and European rhetoric.

Dysfunction in Idlib Mirrors Failed Intervention in Libya, Afghanistan

The TCF report explores the various facets of dysfunction plaguing Idlib including corruption, nepotism and interference from armed groups. The crippling dependency on foreign aid and the constant infighting is not only the shape of things to come nationwide should the Syrian government ever be toppled, but it is also a reflection of Libya post US-NATO intervention, [or even US-occupied Afghanistan](#).

With contractors interested only in getting paid, and local groups being consumed with infighting, Idlib provides the latest example of failed US-European "nation building."

Idlib a Failed City, Would Preside Over a Failed Nation

The report refers to Idlib as a "microcosm of the war." It states:

Idlib's governance and service sector has been, in many ways, a microcosm of the Syrian war and Idlib's fractious rebel scene. As with the province's armed opposition, an existing tendency towards localism and disparate, uncoordinated streams of external support have resulted in a service sector that is discombobulated and fractious.

Even if the US and its allies believed it was politically possible to announce Idlib as an alternative "capital" to Damascus, Idlib in reality could never serve such a role. Between its small size, the fact that it is transparently dominated by armed terrorists and completely dependent on foreign aid means that Idlib cannot even administer itself, nor the province it resides in, let alone the entire country. Any nation subjected to "rule" from the failed city of Idlib, would without doubt be a failed nation.

All Idlib could ever be used for is the illusion of viable opposition. The city and province's administration is as artificial as the armed conflict its current state of dysfunction resulted from. Both city and provincial administration depends entirely on foreign support that is interested only in the overthrow of Damascus, not Idlib's peace and prosperity.

Like Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, once the war is over and regime change accomplished, contractors will seek to make as much money "nation building" as possible, interested more

in returning home to spend their new fortunes than leaving behind a functioning and “free” nation state.

The report concludes with the question of whether or not the Syrian government could reassert itself in Idlib. The Syrian government possesses absolutely everything the current “administrators” of Idlib lack, namely unity, ability and resources. Just as is happening across Aleppo, when areas are finally returned back to Syrian control and the supply of foreign aid, weapons and support is removed, so too is the illusion of opposition.

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