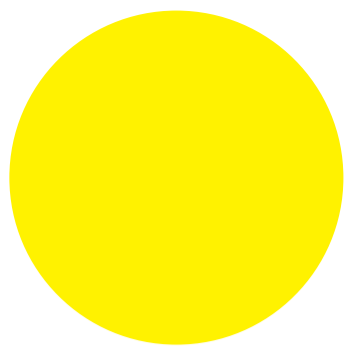


Petchem industry  
nearing 100-m-ton  
production capacity:

NPC

3 >



## Hezbollah's staying power remains unshaken

**OPINION** Despite relentless pressure, Hezbollah has stood its ground, proving that its influence is not fading anytime soon. Far from losing its grip, the movement has tightened its hold—not just militarily but as a deeply rooted political and social force. Its ability to bounce back from crises, rally support, and outmaneuver its adversaries has kept it a step ahead. While opponents have tried to chip away at its power through sanctions, military threats, and political isolation, Hezbollah has pushed back, adapting to every challenge. [See page 4 >](#)  
**EXCLUSIVE** As tensions rise, one thing is clear—this movement is not backing down.



Iran, Russia, China  
to hold joint  
naval drills today

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AFC Champions League Elite:  
Last eight on the  
horizon as Esteghlal  
visits Al Nassr

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Story of Miankaleh  
Wetland; from  
drought to revival

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Dam levels reach critical lows

Iran faces severe water crisis  
as reservoir supplies  
plummet

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## Iran says nuclear talks possible only if related concerns are to be addressed

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## Over 1,000 people, mostly civilians, killed in two days of Syria clashes

2 >



Vehicles of members of Syria's new authority's security forces block a road in Sanamayn, in the southern province of Daraa, during clashes with opposition fighters on March 5, 2025.

• BAKR ALKASEM/AFP

## Deep dive into roots of Alawite armed uprising in western Syria

By Navid Kamali  
Foreign policy analyst

**PERSPECTIVE**  
**EXCLUSIVE**

More than a decade into Syria's turmoil, the country's future remains up in the air. The fall of Bashar al-Assad and the rise of Ahmed al-Sharaa, the leader of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, as the interim president may have brought the Assad family's long rule—and with it, the Ba'ath Party's grip on power—to an end. However, as many had predicted, the shift in leadership has been far from a silver bullet for Syria's deep-rooted crises. Recent developments, particularly in western Syria, including Latakia and Tartus—strongholds of the Alawite minority—suggest that instability is still lurking around the corner. The emergence of resistance groups in these areas has thrown a new variable into Syria's power equations, with far-reaching strategic consequences for the country and beyond.

Against this backdrop, the role of the Alawite minority, which has long been intertwined with Syria's power structure, has taken on even greater significance. Given the involvement of regional and international players, these developments demand a thorough analysis to unpack their broader implications. Since Assad's downfall, Syria has effectively been carved up among various domestic and foreign factions, with the central government struggling to get a firm grip on the entire country. To get to the bottom of these ongoing shifts, one must delve into Syria's social, political, and historical fabric. The country has always been a mosaic of ethnic and religious communities—including Sunni Arabs, Alawites, Kurds, Druze, Christians, and Ismailis—each with its own history of coexistence and friction. The Alawite minority, whose fate has been closely tied to Syria's recent upheavals, has historically faced its fair share of challenges and restrictions. While recognized as a branch of Shi-

ism following rulings by clerics like Imam Musa Sadr in the 1970s, the community had endured systemic marginalization under Ottoman rule and earlier periods, being largely shut out of political and economic power. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and Syria's transition to a French mandate opened new doors for minorities, including the Alawites. The French, aiming to weaken Sunni Arab nationalism, gave these groups a leg up by integrating them into the military and administrative sectors. Though driven by colonial interests, this policy laid the groundwork for the Alawites' eventual rise within Syria's power structure. The turning point came when the Assad family took the reins of power. Hafez al-Assad, himself an Alawite, seized control in a 1970 coup, cementing his rule by weaving an extensive network of loyalists across the military, security apparatus, and government. Under his leadership, Alawites gradually climbed the ranks of political, economic, and military

spheres. While this helped uplift the community, it also stoked resentment among other ethnic and religious groups, fueling a sense of exclusion. When Hafez al-Assad passed away in 2000, his son Bashar picked up where he left off, keeping power and wealth concentrated within the Alawite elite, particularly in Syria's coastal regions. This further widened the country's social and political divides. By the time Syria was engulfed in civil war in 2011, its sectarian cracks had already deepened. The Alawites, as Assad's staunchest supporters, found themselves in the crosshairs of various rebel and extremist factions. The mass killings of Alawites by terrorist groups forced many to flee their homes and seek refuge in safer areas, particularly around the capital. The war didn't just reshape Syria's demographic landscape—it also pushed some Alawites to reconsider their loyalty to Assad. Many began to question whether the government's rigid policies and failure to adapt to the times had only fueled violence,

instability, and widespread conflict. Now, with Assad out of the picture and Sharaa at the helm, the Alawite community faces an even greater existential threat. From the moment Damascus fell and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham took over, deep-seated fears gripped the Alawites. The group's track record of violence and extremism—especially against religious minorities—has left many Alawites deeply uncertain about their future in their own homeland. In recent months, reports of human rights violations, discrimination, and targeted violence against Alawites have surfaced, further stoking tensions. In response, some within the community have begun banding together to form armed resistance groups, determined to fend off potential threats. At the same time, remnants of the former Syrian army still loyal to the Assad family have resurfaced, launching sporadic attacks on the new rulers using whatever weapons they can get their hands on. [Page 8 >](#)