

Making Sense of Syria Sanctions: The Syria Breakdown, Part Seven

by [Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](/experts/matthew-levitt)

Jun 18, 2025

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](/experts/matthew-levitt)

Matthew Levitt is the Fromer-Wexler Senior Fellow and director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at The Washington Institute.



Articles & Testimony

Part of a series: [The Syria Breakdown \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/syria-breakdown\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/syria-breakdown)

What does it mean for Damascus, for Washington, and for U.S. partners and allies now that the Trump administration has dismissed fifty years worth of economic sanctions against Syria?

President Trump's sudden decision to drop all sanctions on Syria caused cheers and confusion.

Peeling away the many layers of sanctions that have been leveled on Syria since the 1970s could help the country's new government rescue the economy from the devastation of a half century of authoritarian rule and more than a decade of civil war. But what are these sanctions? Does President Trump even have the authority to end them? And can the new leadership in Syria be trusted to follow through on their assurances to minorities within Syria and their surrounding neighbors without this leverage?

Former Treasury official Matthew Levitt breaks down the U.S. sanctions regime and explains how the government can carefully reduce the burden on the emerging Syrian economy. Levitt is the Fromer-Wexler Senior Fellow and the Director of the Jeanette and Eli Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. ❖

PART OF A SERIES

[The Syria Breakdown \(/policy-analysis/series/syria-breakdown\)](/policy-analysis/series/syria-breakdown)



[The Syria Breakdown, Episode One: Why Assad Fell](/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-one-why-assad-fell)

[\(/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-one-why-assad-fell\)](/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-one-why-assad-fell)



[The Syria Breakdown, Episode Two: Putin's Playground](/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-two-putins-playground)

[\(/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-two-putins-playground\)](/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-two-putins-playground)



[The Syria Breakdown, Episode Three: Turkey Turns an Enemy into an Ally](/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-three-turkey-turns-enemy-ally)

[\(/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-three-turkey-turns-enemy-ally\)](/policy-analysis/syria-breakdown-episode-three-turkey-turns-enemy-ally)

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Key Outside Actors in the Iran-Israel Showdown: A Compilation of Washington Institute Assessments](/policy-analysis/key-outside-actors-iran-israel-showdown-compilation-washington-institute)

Jun 18, 2025

♦
Hanin Ghaddar,
Noam Raydan,
Michael Knights,
Ghaith al-Omari,
Grant Rumley,
Anna Borschchevskaia,
Souhira Medini

[\(/policy-analysis/key-outside-actors-iran-israel-showdown-compilation-washington-institute\)](/policy-analysis/key-outside-actors-iran-israel-showdown-compilation-washington-institute)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

The Bigger Picture in the Iran-Israel Conflict: Russia, Missiles, Militias, and More

June 20, 2025, starting at 12:00 noon EDT (1600 GMT)

◆
Anna Borshchevskaya,
Michael Knights,
Farzin Nadimi,
Assaf Orion

(/policy-analysis/bigger-picture-iran-israel-conflict-russia-missiles-militias-and-more)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

Why Israel's Attack on Iran Has Been a Success

Jun 17, 2025

◆
Matthew Levitt

(/policy-analysis/why-israels-attack-iran-has-been-success)

TOPICS

Energy & Economics (/policy-analysis/energy-economics)

U.S. Policy (/policy-analysis/us-policy)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Syria (/policy-analysis/syria)