

# Toward a New U.S. Policy in Syria

## Ground Zero for Countering Iran and Deterring an Islamic State Revival

by [Katherine Bauer \(/experts/katherine-bauer\)](#), [Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](#), [Patrick Clawson \(/experts/patrick-clawson\)](#), [Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](#), [James Jeffrey \(/experts/james-jeffrey\)](#), [Barbara A. Leaf \(/experts/barbara-leaf\)](#), [Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](#), [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#), [Robert Satloff \(/experts/robert-satloff\)](#)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



#### [Katherine Bauer \(/experts/katherine-bauer\)](#)

Katherine Bauer is an Adjunct Fellow at The Washington Institute and a former official at the U.S. Treasury Department.

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#### [Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](#)

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family Senior Fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.

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#### [Patrick Clawson \(/experts/patrick-clawson\)](#)

Patrick Clawson is the Morningstar Senior Fellow and Research Counselor at The Washington Institute.

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#### [Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](#)

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Senior Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program.

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#### [James Jeffrey \(/experts/james-jeffrey\)](#)

Ambassador is a former U.S. special representative for Syria engagement and former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq; from 2013-2018 he was the Philip Solondz Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute. He currently chairs the Wilson Center's Middle East Program.

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#### [Barbara A. Leaf \(/experts/barbara-leaf\)](#)

Ambassador Barbara A. Leaf was the Ruth and Sid Lapidus Fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Geduld Program on Arab Politics from 2018-2021.

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**[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.

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**[Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](/experts/dennis-ross)**

Dennis Ross, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama, is the counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute.

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**[Robert Satloff \(/experts/robert-satloff\)](/experts/robert-satloff)**

Robert Satloff is the Segal Executive Director of The Washington Institute, a post he assumed in January 1993.

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**T**oday, Syria is the sole battlefield in the world where American, Russian, Turkish, Iranian, and Israeli military forces all operate, along with a kaleidoscope of proxy actors foreign and domestic. As the preeminent arena of strategic competition in the Middle East and a wellspring of potential Islamic State resurgence, Syria matters a great deal for a host of U.S. interests. The question is whether U.S. withdrawal is the best way to safeguard those interests. In this special report, a working group of Washington Institute fellows outlines an alternative approach. Rather than abandoning U.S. allies and exacerbating regional perceptions of U.S. retreat, they show how the Trump administration can couple a no-fly/no-drive zone and a small residual ground presence in the northeast with intensified sanctions against the Assad regime’s Iranian patron. In doing so, Washington can support local efforts to stabilize the area, encourage Gulf partners to “put skin in the game,” drive a wedge between Moscow and Tehran, and help Israel avoid all-out war. ❖

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