



“In fact, the issue is always between two points”

Weekly Political and Geopolitical Developments

May 26, 2025



This service is provided to you free of charge by **2blackdot** and **Tema Group**. These articles are not investment advice.

Prepared by: Hakan Çalışkantürk

2twoblackdots@gmail.com

<https://www.2blackdots.com>

***** Legal Notice:***** The investment information, comments and recommendations provided herein are not within the scope of investment consultancy. Investment consultancy services are provided within the framework of an investment consultancy agreement to be signed between brokerage firms, portfolio management companies, investment and development banks and the customer, and by authorized institutions, taking into account the risk and return preferences of individuals. The comments and recommendations provided herein are of a general nature. These comments and recommendations may not be suitable for your financial situation and risk and return preferences. Therefore, making an investment decision based solely on the information provided herein may not yield results that are in line with your expectations. **2blackdot** and **Hakan Çalışkantürk** cannot be held responsible for any errors and omissions in this publication or the sources used in this publication, and for any direct and/or indirect damages, loss of profit, moral damages and any damages that third parties may suffer in any way or form, as a result of using the information provided in this publication.

Marco Rubio's Statement That "Syria Could Potentially Descend Into a Full-Scale Civil War Within Weeks"

SYRIA IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL DYNAMICS: IS THERE A CIVIL WAR RISK? CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST AND SYRIA UNDER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

Following the change of administration in the United States in 2025, a clear shift has been observed in Washington's Middle East policy. The new leadership—headed by President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio—took surprising steps in Syria policy under the "America First" banner. Unlike the previous administration's cautious and conditional approach, the Trump administration adopted swift and radical decisions on Syria. In May 2025, President Trump announced a policy that fundamentally altered the course of Syria's civil war, pledging to lift all U.S. sanctions against Damascus.

This move followed the practical realization of the long-standing U.S. policy that "Assad must go." In December 2024, the Assad regime was toppled in Syria and replaced by an interim government. The new U.S. administration appears to have adopted a strategy centered on "winning post-Assad Syria while containing Iran." During his Middle East tour, Trump declared that Syria "deserves a chance to be great again," announcing that the country would be removed from international isolation.

In this framework, the U.S. moved to fill the power vacuum in Syria in coordination with its regional allies. At the heart of the new strategic approach lie two goals: diminishing Iranian influence in the region and addressing Israel's security concerns. Trump, in his speeches in Riyadh, sharply criticized Iran, stating that its long-standing support for Assad had "brought death and misery" to Syria.

This rhetoric marks a shift away from the Obama/Biden-era diplomacy centered on the nuclear deal, toward a containment-oriented view of Iran as a source of regional instability. There is no doubt that the new U.S. administration has prioritized Israel's security concerns in its relations with Tel Aviv. For instance, after an Islamist faction within the new interim government attacked the Druze minority in Syria, the U.S. did not object to Israeli retaliation—signaling that Washington maintains a cautious distance from even the new leadership in Damascus, in alignment with Israel.

The Trump administration's support for Israel is also evident in areas like Eastern Mediterranean energy projects and coordination against Iran. Moreover, the new strategy defines the primary threat as "terrorist groups and Iran-backed militias." This is significant because the U.S. has effectively engaged with the leader of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a group previously designated as a terrorist organization. Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former HTS commander and the head of the interim government, was received by Trump in Riyadh and even praised as "a young and strong man with a chance to rebuild Syria."

This indicates a softening of Washington's previous stance that it would "never negotiate with radical groups," in an effort to align with on-the-ground realities. Rubio defended this shift by stating, "If we don't engage with them [the interim government], failure is certain. If we do, they might succeed—or they might not."

Therefore, the U.S. has prioritized stability in Syria over ideological red lines. The new administration is also focused on expanding cooperation with regional actors. It is likely not a coincidence that Trump's decision to lift sanctions was announced from Riyadh, suggesting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is mediating U.S. policy toward Syria.

In short, the new U.S. administration has implemented a significantly more interventionist, risk-tolerant, and results-oriented Syria strategy, marking a sharp departure from the previous era.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT OF LIFTING U.S. SANCTIONS

The Trump administration's decision to lift comprehensive sanctions on Syria is a major policy shift, both symbolically and practically. Symbolically, Washington has, for the first time since 2011, recognized the (albeit interim) government in Damascus as a legitimate interlocutor. Through broad general licenses issued by the Treasury Department in May 2025, the U.S. opened the door for trade with Syria—reversing the isolation once enforced through measures like the Caesar Act.

Simultaneously, Secretary of State Rubio announced a six-month waiver on Caesar Act sanctions. He described this as "the first step in realizing Trump's vision of a new relationship with Syria."

By lifting sanctions, the U.S. effectively repositioned Syria's new government from a regime to be punished to a partner to be supported. This move suggests that the U.S. views the post-regime transition as critical for both regional stability and its own strategic interests. Practically, the effects are already being felt on the ground.

Economic revitalization is anticipated. Under General License 25, dealings with the Central Bank of Syria, public banks, Syrian Airlines, oil companies, and even certain tourist facilities in Damascus previously under sanctions are now permitted. This opens access to the global financial system and invites foreign private investment. Washington stated that the license “will encourage new investment and private sector activity.”

Furthermore, Rubio emphasized that this waiver would remove obstacles to humanitarian aid and infrastructure improvements, particularly in electricity, water, sanitation, and energy. His statement reflects the belief that lifting sanctions could be key to addressing critical on-the-ground issues like power outages, fuel shortages, and water crises. Field actors have already started to mobilize. For instance, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar announced that Ankara would supply 2 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Syria annually and that the Turkey-Syria gas pipeline would open in June 2025. Additionally, Turkey has begun supplying Syria with 1,000 MW of electricity to meet emergency needs.

These steps indicate that neighboring countries can now support Syria’s reconstruction without fear of U.S. retaliation. The European Union also lifted its economic sanctions on Syria in coordination with the U.S. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Kaja Kallas said, “We want to help the Syrian people rebuild a new, inclusive, and peaceful Syria,” signaling continued support for the Syrian population. As a result, investment, trade, and aid flows from the Gulf and Europe to Syria are expected to resume. Syria’s Foreign Ministry welcomed the decision as a “positive step in the right direction” to alleviate the country’s humanitarian and economic suffering, and declared its readiness to cooperate with other countries “on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference.”

Another key impact of lifting sanctions is the increased legitimacy and maneuverability it grants to the interim Syrian government. The 14-year war had devastated Syria’s economy—causing an estimated \$442 billion in damage and over 600,000 deaths. The interim government argued that lifting sanctions was essential for rebuilding the war-torn country. The U.S. move has given the new leadership a much-needed breather and renewed hope for a “new beginning,” including reestablishing ties with the outside world through banking, imports, transportation, and tourism.

However, the U.S. has made clear that it expects the interim government to fulfill specific commitments: expelling all foreign fighters (primarily Iran-backed militias), deporting members of what it defines as “Palestinian terrorist groups” (likely Hamas/Islamic Jihad), and cooperating to prevent an ISIS resurgence. These conditions indicate that the continuation of sanctions relief hinges on these steps. Existing laws, such as the Caesar Act passed by Congress, have not been repealed but merely suspended in six-month intervals—meaning private investors may remain cautious, fearing sanctions could return if the situation deteriorates.

Nevertheless, overall, the lifting of sanctions has softened Syria’s political climate, revitalized its economy, and accelerated the transition process. The Syrian government has described this as “a new chapter” beginning with the EU, while even the UNHCR has predicted that swift implementation of the U.S. decision will support the voluntary return of refugees.

THE DIPLOMATIC SIGNIFICANCE OF RUBIO’S STATEMENT AND ITS MESSAGES TO THE REGION

Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s statement that “Syria could descend into a full-scale civil war within weeks” carries multilayered diplomatic messages beyond a mere warning. Rubio made this remark during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing while defending Trump’s decision to lift sanctions on Syria.

The first message is directed at the international community and regional states: Rubio warned that failure of the interim Syrian authority would plunge the country into chaos and destabilize the entire region. With this statement, Washington is telling its allies, “Now is the time to support Syria—otherwise, we will all bear the consequences.” Indeed, Rubio explicitly stated, “When Syria is unstable, the region is unstable,” calling on neighboring countries and global actors to assume responsibility.

Diplomatically, this suggests that the U.S. is seeking multilateral support in its Syria file. The message also implies a call to regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and the EU to recognize and support the new Syrian administration diplomatically and economically. As Rubio spoke, EU foreign ministers were simultaneously announcing the decision to lift sanctions—possibly reflecting a coordinated strategy.

Following a violent incident near Damascus at the end of April 2025, Syrian security forces and allied militias began patrolling areas of sectarian tension. Rubio’s warning reflected fears that similar outbreaks of violence could again drive Syria into civil war. His remarks also served as a defense of U.S. Syria policy to the domestic audience. Engaging with a former HTS leader and working with groups previously designated as terrorists had sparked debate in Washington. Rubio responded to critics by saying, “They were bound to fail without our support.”

In other words, diplomatically, he conveyed that “we had no alternative—failure was inevitable otherwise,” thus legitimizing the U.S. stance. His words implied that U.S. support for the interim government is conditional: in the same sentence, he noted, “If we support them, they might succeed. If they fail, at least we tried,” signaling both awareness of the risk and the absence of other options.

This reveals that the U.S. does not fully trust the new Syrian authority but sees it as a ship that must not sink. One regional recipient of Rubio’s message is Israel. By warning of a fragmented and chaotic Syria if the transition fails, Rubio invoked the scenario long feared by Israel—that Syria could become a base for radical groups. Indirectly, Rubio’s message to Israel was: “We support the transition to prevent Syria from becoming a terrorist haven.”

He also stressed the threat of an ISIS resurgence, noting that the interim government is currently struggling to fight ISIS due to capacity shortages. This can be read as a strategic card held by the U.S., hinting that American forces will remain in Syria temporarily—serving both American and Israeli interests.

Another diplomatic message in Rubio’s statement targets the interim Syrian leadership. He said that minority groups in the country are deeply distrustful due to Assad’s years of divisive rule. With this, the U.S. conveyed to Ahmed al-Sharaa and his team: “You must protect minorities—otherwise, the country will slip from your hands.” The State Department had previously made the protection of religious and ethnic minorities a precondition for lifting sanctions. Despite Sharaa’s promises, a wave of violent incidents has since erupted.

CONCLUSION

In the Senate, Rubio simultaneously defended and cautioned the new administration—a diplomatic balancing act. On one hand, he presented an image of “standing with the new leadership,” but on the other hand, he implied, “If you fail, our support is not unconditional.” Rubio’s statement conveys multiple diplomatic meanings: signaling to the Russia-Iran axis that the U.S. has taken the initiative in Syria, mobilizing international support, justifying U.S. policy, issuing a warning to the interim government, and coordinating with allies.



<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-wants-syrian-government-to-succeed-alternative-is-full-scale-civil-war-rubio/3574246>