Great Caesar’s Ghost: Repeal Caesar Syria Sanctions

By David W. Helton

***Resolved: The United States federal government should significantly reform its policy regarding import and/or export regulations.***

Summary: The US has applied many military and economic sanctions against the Syrian government since the 1970’s, but the Caesar Syria Civilian Protections Act of 2019 (Caesar Act) surpasses them all. Previous sanctions have only targeted persons and entities inside Syria, but the Caesar Act expands the reach of sanctions against Syria to include any entity or person, regardless of locality, which offers weapons, economic assistance, or construction services to the country of Syria. Named after an anonymous photographer (Caesar) who seemingly obtained over 50,000 photos of tortured bodies in Syrian prisons, the Act needs to be repealed to balance US involvement in Syria.

Over the past decade (and then some) Syria has lost many of its schools, hospitals, and other necessary infrastructure in the midst of its civil war. The Caesar Act means foreign companies or governments looking into rebuilding the basic infrastructure of Syria will be unable to do so. This worsens the humanitarian crisis in Syria and unduly causes suffering for its people. Worse, Isis has made a comeback in the country and will only grow stronger as the Caesar Act makes the Syrian people weaker. All this for another sanction which won’t cause change and only pushes Assad deeper into the influence of Russia and Iran, who will most certainly take advantage of Syria’s weakened state to pursue their own objectives. That’s not a good trade, which is why the Caesar Act, even if it’s an excellent name for a law, should be repealed.

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Great Caesar's Ghost: Repeal the Caesar Act

Holding those accountable who abuse human rights is an honorable goal, but if that comes at the expense of those being abused, then the cure is worse than the disease. Please join us in affirming that the United States Federal Government should significantly reform its import and/or export policy within the bounds of international trade.

OBSERVATION 1: DEFINITIONS.

Significant

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2022. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/significant> (accessed 10 May 2022)

2a**:**having or likely to have [influence](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/influence#h1) or effect **:**[IMPORTANT](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/important)

Policy

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2022. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy> (accessed 10 May 2022)

a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body

OBSERVATION 2: INHERENCY, or the structure of the status quo. The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

**It was named after a photographer who documented human rights atrocities by the Syrian regime.**

While the US already had widespread sanctions on Syria, the Caesar Act in 2020 began sanctioning other countries for trading with Syria

[Natalie Armbruster](https://reason.com/people/natalie-armbruster/" \o "Posts by Natalie Armbruster) 2022 (a research associate at Defense Priorities. BA in Political Science and Arabic Language and Literature from Notre Dame University.) June 17, 2022 “Sanctions on Syria Aren't Punishing Assad. They're Hurting Syrians.” <https://reason.com/2022/06/17/sanctions-on-syria-arent-punishing-assad-theyre-hurting-syrians/> (accessed July 8 2022)

Today marks two years since the Caesar Act came into effect. [The act](https://www.rand.org/blog/2021/07/the-power-and-limits-of-threat-the-caesar-syrian-civilian.html) expanded upon past U.S. sanctions, targeting "anyone providing support to the Syrian government and senior political figures, supporting the Syrian oil and gas industry, providing military aircraft or parts, and providing construction or engineering services directly or indirectly to the Syrian government"—opening the door for the U.S. to sanction not only Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's allies within the country's borders but also any foreign entities willing to help him.

OBSERVATION 3. The PLAN, to be enacted by Congress & the President

1. Congress repeals the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.  
2. Funding from general federal revenues with net reduction in federal spending by no longer enforcing the sanctions.   
3. Plan takes effect 3 days after an affirmative ballot.  
4. All Affirmative speeches may clarify.

OBSERVATION 4. THE JUSTIFICATIONS

JUSTIFICATION 1. Hardens Resistance / prolongs the conflict

Perverse incentives of the Caesar Act guarantee Syrian bad guys will never surrender

Dr. [Karam Shaar](https://www.mei.edu/profile/karam-shaar) and [William Christou](https://www.mei.edu/profile/william-christou) 2020 (Shaar - *a Non-Resident Scholar at the Middle East Institute and a Senior Economic Analyst in New Zealand’s public sector. PhD in Economics. Christou - an Amman-based journalist)* October 15, 2020 “US sanctions hurt Syrian civilians — they need to be worth it” <https://www.mei.edu/publications/us-sanctions-hurt-syrian-civilians-they-need-be-worth-it> (accessed July 10 2022)

In order to have the sanctions lifted, the government of Syria needs to — [among other things](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/31/text) — “establish meaningful accountability for perpetrators of war crimes.” Doing so would be existential for Damascus, as it would implicate most of the regime and its surrounding oligarchy in said war crimes. In this sense, the Caesar Act sanctions are primarily punitive in nature, and create little incentive for designees to change their behavior. Why would a high-ranking member of the regime trade their privilege and riches for a jail cell? If sanctions are the stick, where are the carrots? This lack of incentives is clear in how some designees, such as [Wassim Qattan](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3134187316663658&id=100002172606897), have responded — by expressing pride after being listed. In the minds of regime affiliates, being sanctioned confirms one’s loyalty and helps solidify their position within the regime.

JUSTIFICATION 2. Lost US geopolitical influence in the Mid East

A. Link: Caesar Act undermines our allies and increases Russia and Iran's influence at US expense

Faisal Al Yafai 2020 ( the executive editor of *New Lines*. He was previously an investigative journalist for The Guardian in London reporting on the Middle East.) June 24, 2020 “Caesar Act will only create new victims in Syria” <https://asiatimes.com/2020/06/caesar-act-will-only-create-new-victims-in-syria/> (accessed July 21 2022)

The other potential winners are Moscow and Tehran, two other of Washington’s indirect targets. Isolation will make the Assad regime more, not less, dependent on them. Recall that the major reason for the tentative outreach by Arab states over the past two years (Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan have all taken steps to improve relations with Damascus) was to offer an explicit counterweight to Iranian influence. The Caesar Act will bring that to an end. Far from weakening their grip on Damascus, the act will ensure the Syrian government has nowhere else to turn, giving Tehran and Moscow even more leverage.

B. Link: Blocking Russia in the Middle East is key to maintaining US leadership as a great power

Steven A. Cook 2018 (senior fellow for Middle East and Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations) 16 March 2018 FOREIGN POLICY “Russia Is in the Middle East to Stay” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/16/the-middle-east-needs-a-steady-boyfriend/>

If the United States is, as Secretary of Defense James Mattis averred in January, in a new era of great power competition, it is time the United States treated the situation as seriously as it is. Putin must be disabused of the notion that the Middle East is the most propitious place to begin weakening the West and the United States. Americans once before contained and rolled back Moscow’s influence in the region; there is no reason to believe that they cannot do it again — but only if they have the wisdom to recognize what is important in the world right now and the collective stomach to meet the challenge.

C. The Impact: Life, money and freedom. They all depend on maintaining US great power status over Russia and China

Dr. Robert Kagan 2017. (PhD in American history; Stephen & Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow - [Foreign Policy](https://www.brookings.edu/program/foreign-policy/), [Project on International Order and Strategy](https://www.brookings.edu/project/project-on-international-order-and-strategy/) at Brookings Institution) 6 Feb 2017 ‘Backing into World War III” <https://www.brookings.edu/research/backing-into-world-war-iii/>

Think of two significant trend lines in the world today. One is the increasing ambition and activism of the two great revisionist powers, Russia and China. The other is the declining confidence, capacity, and will of the democratic world, and especially of the United States, to maintain the dominant position it has held in the international system since 1945. As those two lines move closer, as the declining will and capacity of the United States and its allies to maintain the present world order meet the increasing desire and capacity of the revisionist powers to change it, we will reach the moment at which the existing order collapses and the world descends into a phase of brutal anarchy, as it has three times in the past two centuries. The cost of that descent, in lives and treasure, in lost freedoms and lost hope, will be staggering.

JUSTIFICATION 3. Harms the Victims

A. Reconstruction desperately needed

[Osama Aghi](https://mena-studies.org/author/o-aghi-e/) 2019 (studied at the Faculty of Agricultural Engineering in Aleppo University. Currently living in Turkey, he is active in the field of media and is a member of the Syrian Women’s Political Movement.) July 2, 2019 “Re-construction of Syria, the Country and Human Beings”<https://mena-studies.org/re-construction-of-syria-the-country-and-human-beings/> (accessed July 17 2022)

The war in Syria is one of the worst humanitarians and economic disasters, and has great repercussions on the rest of the world. Seven years of war have torn the country‘s social and economic fabric, and caused a considerable damage to the national economy as a whole, infrastructure and all aspects of life in Syria. This war led to extensive destruction of houses and facilities of public and private, service or economic ones. Most of the infrastructure of the country was out of service, and turned into rubbles, and the destruction of the infrastructure has led to internal displacements and emigration. Water and sanitation networks are no longer functioning. Schools, mosques, health centers and hospitals have been destroyed in addition to the destruction of shops, workshops and small and big factories. Railway network were either destroyed or looted. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said in an interview: “75% of the infrastructure in Syria was destroyed by what he described as terrorist attacks”

B. Caesar blocks reconstruction

Dr. [Karam Shaar](https://www.mei.edu/profile/karam-shaar) and [William Christou](https://www.mei.edu/profile/william-christou) 2020 (Shaar - *Non-Resident Scholar at the Middle East Institute and a Senior Economic Analyst in New Zealand’s public sector. PhD in Economics. Christou - an Amman-based journalist covering the politics of the Levant and the Mediterranean)* October 15, 2020 “US sanctions hurt Syrian civilians — they need to be worth it” <https://www.mei.edu/publications/us-sanctions-hurt-syrian-civilians-they-need-be-worth-it> (accessed July 10 2022)

While the messaging to those being sanctioned has been unclear, one of the strongest effects of the Caesar Act was public signaling that the U.S. would not allow foreign investment in Syria’s reconstruction. Though not as grandiose and direct as releasing a list of newly sanctioned individuals, the standing threat of secondary sanctions quietly deters companies from signing new contracts to cash in on Syria’s waiting redevelopment projects.

C. The Impact: Hunger & poverty. The suffering people of Syria, who we're supposed to be helping, end up worse off

[Natalie Armbruster](https://reason.com/people/natalie-armbruster/) 2022 (a research associate at Defense Priorities. BA in Political Science and Arabic Language and Literature from Notre Dame University.) June 17, 2022 “Sanctions on Syria Aren't Punishing Assad. They're Hurting Syrians.” <https://reason.com/2022/06/17/sanctions-on-syria-arent-punishing-assad-theyre-hurting-syrians/> (accessed July 8 2022)

Today marks two years since the Caesar Act came into effect. [The act](https://www.rand.org/blog/2021/07/the-power-and-limits-of-threat-the-caesar-syrian-civilian.html) expanded upon past U.S. sanctions, targeting "anyone providing support to the Syrian government and senior political figures, supporting the Syrian oil and gas industry, providing military aircraft or parts, and providing construction or engineering services directly or indirectly to the Syrian government"—opening the door for the U.S. to sanction not only Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's allies within the country's borders but also any foreign entities willing to help him. This strategy of [maximum pressure sanctions](https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/counting-the-cost-of-financial-warfare.) has not worked. So far, it has garnered few concessions and extracted no meaningful change. Though it is successfully delivering punitive justice, the U.S. sanctions strategy in Syria does not punish Assad—it punishes Syrians, whether they support the regime or not. Currently, nine in 10 Syrians live in [poverty](https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-factsheet-last-updated-10052022#:~:text=Some%2014.6%20million%20people%20inside,lives%20below%20the%20poverty%20line.), and more than six in 10 face the [risk of going hungry](https://www.rescue.org/press-release/syria-11-years-hunger-drought-and-collapsing-economy-threaten-even-more-misery). U.S. sanctions exacerbate Syria's [immiserated economic condition](https://tcf.org/content/report/syrians-going-hungry-will-west-act/?session=1.) by blocking prospective economic cooperation from willing regional or international partners.

JUSTIFICATION 4. Terrorism

Caesar Act undermines counterterrorism efforts and increases the risk of violence against the U.S.

Syrian Democratic Times 2020 (News, analysis, and opinion on democratic Syria from Washington DC. Their material is distributed by the U.S. Mission of the Syrian Democratic Council on behalf of the Syrian Democratic Council) August 21, 2020 “Four Ways the Caesar Act Sanctions Impact Syria” <https://www.syriandemocratictimes.com/2020/08/21/four-ways-the-caesar-act-sanctions-impact-syria/#:~:text=Most%20analysts%20attribute%20the%20collapse%20of%20the%20currency,ice%20to%20preserve%20food%20is%20about%202%2C000%20pounds>. (accessed July 20 2022)

The forces who have been fighting ISIS, the Syrian Democratic Forces, are now having more difficulty feeding and paying soldiers, buying military equipment, supporting tactical teams, and performing other functions due to the economic downturn. The SDF must also maintain the detention facilities that hold thousands of captured ISIS militants, but must now do so with even fewer resources. One prison break may provide the former ISIS “caliphate” with the capacity it needs to re-group and carry out a new wave of attacks. The Caesar Act has generated the kind of economic downturn that terrorist recruiters thrive in. Not to mention a new excuse to once again blame the United States and the West for hardships in the Muslim world. It may be only a matter of time before the violence of ISIS terrorism once again blasts through the Western world.

2A Evidence: Repeal Syria Caesar Act

DEFINITIONS & BACKGROUND

Previous US sanctions on Syria (before Caesar Act) - going back to 1979

Arwa Ibrahim 2020 (journalist focusing on the Middle East and North Africa;Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Political Sociology from Univ of Cambridge. Masters in Near & Middle Eastern Studies from Univ of Manchester.) 16 Jun 2020 “Caesar Act: How will new US sanctions on Syria be different?” <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/6/16/caesar-act-how-will-new-us-sanctions-on-syria-be-different> (accessed July 9 2022)

US sanctions on Syria go all the way back to 1979, when Washington listed Damascus as a sponsor of “terrorism”, imposing restrictions on the trade of “dual-use” products with Syria that can be used for both military and civilian purposes. US pressure on the Syrian government then expanded with a 2011 executive order that banned trade in Syrian oil after it prohibited in 2004 the export of US goods – except for food and medicine. More recently, Washington sanctioned specific Syrian individuals and institutions after it held the government responsible for a deadly sarin gas attack that killed more than 80 people, including women and children, in the northern Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun in April 2017.

Detailed explanation of the Caesar Syria Act

International law firm Baker McKenzie 2020 (written by: Nicholas F. C[oward](https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/author/nicholas-coward/) – a senior counsel at the Baker Mckenzie Washington DC office where he focuses on outbound trade compliance matters. [Samir Safar-Aly](https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/author/samir-safar-aly/) - an Associate in *Baker McKenzie's* Dubai office. [Inessa Owens](https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/author/inessa-owens/) - Senior Associate at *Baker* *McKenzie.* Assistant General Counsel & Vice President of Bank of America. [Maria Sergeyeva](https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/author/maria-sergeyeva/) – Author at  Global Supply Chain Compliance.) August 11, 2020 “First Designations Under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act Target the Syrian Government” <https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/first-designations-under-the-caesar-syria-civilian-protection-act-target-the-syrian-government/> (accessed July 8 2022)

The Caesar Act, named in honor of a Syrian photographer who documented Syrian atrocities, authorizes blocking and visa restrictions against non-US persons who knowingly engage in the following activities:

1. Provide significant financial (including the provision of loans, credits, or export credits), material, or technological support to or engage in a significant transaction with the Government of Syria (including any state-owned or controlled entities), or senior political figure thereof, or to a foreign person “operating in a military capacity” in Syria on behalf of the Governments of Syria, Russia, or Iran, or a foreign person subject to US sanctions with respect to Syria;
2. Sell or provide significant goods, services, technology, information, or other support that significantly facilitates the maintenance or expansion of the Syrian Government’s domestic production of natural gas, petroleum, or petroleum products;
3. Sell or provide aircraft or spare aircraft parts that are used for military purposes in Syria for or on behalf of the Government of Syria to foreign persons operating in an area controlled by the Government of Syria or to foreign forces associated with the Government of Syria;
4. Provide goods or services associated with the operation of aircraft  used for military purposes in Syria for or on behalf of the Government of Syria to any foreign person operating in an area controlled by the Government of Syria; or
5. Directly or indirectly provide significant construction or engineering services to the Government of Syria.

Differences between Caesar Act and other sanctions: Caesar targets foreign trade with Syria. Others only ban US trade

Center for Strategic and International Studies 2020 (an American think tank based in Washington, D.C.) July 13, 2020 “U.S. Sanctions on Syria: What Comes Next?” <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/us-sanctions-syria-what-comes-next> (accessed July 8 2022)

These new sanctions applied to non-U.S. entities are in addition to previous U.S. sanctions banning the provision of U.S. products, services and investment to Syria except for humanitarian purposes. Those sanctions specifically ban U.S. entities from importing, trading or engaging in transactions related to Syrian oil, and prohibit them from providing financial services to Syria, a measure with significant impact, given U.S.-based financial institutions’ centrality to the global economy. The U.S. first imposed sanctions on Syria in 1979, when the State Department designated the country a “state sponsor of terrorism”. In adopting the 2003 Syria Accountability Act, Congress added new sanctions, which have gradually expanded since the civil war began in 2011 to include an extensive list of targeted measures against individuals, such as asset freezes and travel bans, including on persons linked to state-owned companies or the Central Bank, and persons who offer material support to the regime.

Caesar says – the seven demands Caesar makes

Center for Strategic and International Studies 2020 (an American think tank based in Washington, D.C.) July 13, 2020 “U.S. Sanctions on Syria: What Comes Next?” <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/us-sanctions-syria-what-comes-next> (accessed July 8 2022)

Whether sanctions can get Damascus to move at all is a legitimate question. But with sanctions in place and new ones being implemented, the U.S. and EU ought at a minimum to outline a range of concrete and immediate demands, describe what they are willing to concede if and when the regime starts meeting some of these, and limit the humanitarian costs that sanctions inevitably entail. The Caesar Act stipulates seven conditions that, if met, would trigger the suspension of sanctions. These include the regime halting attacks on civilians; allowing access to besieged areas for international medical and humanitarian assistance; releasing all political prisoners; facilitating the safe return of the displaced; and holding accountable all war criminals.

Syria today – split into three sections

[Humeyra Pamuk](https://www.reuters.com/authors/humeyra-pamuk/) and [Daphne Psaledakis](https://www.reuters.com/authors/daphne-psaledakis/) 2022 (Pamuk - U.S. State Dept Correspondent at Reuters News Agency. BA in Int. Relations from Koç Univ, MA in European Union Studies from Galatasaray Üniv. Psaledakis - covers sanctions for the foreign policy at Reuters) May 12, 2022 “U.S. permits some foreign investment in northern Syria despite sanctions” <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-permits-some-foreign-investment-northern-syria-despite-sanctions-2022-05-12/> (accessed July 10 2022)

Assad's forces have recovered most of Syria but some areas remain outside his control. Turkish forces are deployed in much of the north and northwest, the last rebel stronghold, and U.S. forces are stationed in the Kurdish-controlled east and northeast.

Syria today – millions displaced

**Oula Alrifai** [2022 (Assistant Vice President of Field & Constituencies, National Immigration Forum.)](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/oula-alrifai) **April 5, 2022“**The Future of Syria: ISIS, the Iranians, and the Displaced Millions” (ellipses in original) <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/future-syria-isis-iranians-and-displaced-millions> (accessed July 19 2022)

“90% of Syrians live in poverty today. At least 60% of Syrians are food insecure. Thousands and thousands of people… are continuing to face bombing and Assad attacks on their homes and on their communities. Millions and millions… of Syrians are displaced and the estimated numbers are half of the Syrian population—not just official numbers. So, it’s actually worse than that. So, there are more than 9 million internally displaced Syrians, there are probably close to another 10 million Syrians displaced as refugees in Turkey, in Jordan, in Lebanon, and in other countries around the world.”

HARMS/SIGINIFICANCE

Caesar Act creates a siege mentality in Syria and hardens resistance to positive change

 Danny Makki 2020 (non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute. MA in Middle East politics, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Bachelor’s in international relations, University of Westminster.) June 23, 2020 ”Syria’s Response to the ‘Caesar Act’ <https://newlinesinstitute.org/syria/syrias-response-to-the-caesar-act/> (accessed July 9 2022)

Officially, the Assad government has portrayed the Caesar Act as a last-chance U.S. attempt to bring Syria to the negotiating table. The rhetoric in Syria has been typically fierce. A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pulled no punches: “The U.S. administration that is chasing its citizens in the various streets of its states, killing people in cold blood, and practicing the most heinous forms of racial discrimination is the least entitled to rant about human rights.” The increased pressure will likely exacerbate the siege mentality that has prevailed since the early stages of the international isolation imposed on the country. In preparation for the sanctions, the Syrian political establishment has ratcheted up its criticism of U.S. policy rather than identifying the possible ways to avoid further sanctions. Hardline Syrian People’s Assembly member Muhannad al-Haj Ali called the Caesar Act “evidence of America’s failure in Syria.” Meanwhile, influential Aleppo-based Assembly member Fares Shehabi warned of how the United States wanted to “destroy the country and loot it, and not anything else.”

Russia and Iran will use Caesar to gain resources & control in the Mid East

Danny Makki 2020 (A non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute covering internal dynamis of the conflict in Syria. Makki specializes in Syria’s relations with Russia and Iran. MA in Middle East politics, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London Bachelor’s in international relations, University of Westminster.) June 23, 2020 ”Syria’s Response to the ‘Caesar Act’ <https://newlinesinstitute.org/syria/syrias-response-to-the-caesar-act/> (accessed July 9 2022)

The U.S. Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act went into effect on June 17, with a [first round](https://www.state.gov/syria-caesar-act-designations/) of 39 Treasury and State Department designations. The United States vowed to continue a “sustained campaign of economic and political pressure to deny the Assad regime revenue.” The “[Caesar Act](https://www.state.gov/caesar-syria-civilian-protection-act/)” sanctions will undoubtedly accelerate the demise of Syria’s faltering economy. However, the United States could be inadvertently pushing Syria further into Iran and Russia’s sphere of influence. Both Moscow and Tehran will seek to exploit Damascus’ financial ruin to secure more resources and control.

Russia wants more presence and influence in Syria, and would be strengthened if they got it

Danny Makki 2020 (non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute covering internal dynamis of the conflict in Syria. MA in Middle East politics, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London Bachelor’s in international relations, Univ of Westminster.) June 23, 2020 ”Syria’s Response to the ‘Caesar Act’ <https://newlinesinstitute.org/syria/syrias-response-to-the-caesar-act/> (accessed July 9 2022)

Russia has a lease on the strategic Khmeimim air base in Latakia on the Mediterranean that runs up to 2066, and Moscow negotiated a long-term contract for Syria’s Tartus port for 49 years in 2017. Reaching its tentacles into Syria’s center or Aleppo, for instance, would give Russia a greater strategic depth – especially in Syria’s north, considering the Russians’ historical rivalry with Turkey. Russia has been eyeing crucial areas and installations in Syria for some time, including bases in Eastern Homs and the Hama military airport. The weakened Syrian economy could give Russia a prime opportunity to expand from its traditional areas of influence on the Syrian coast and have permanent bases elsewhere in the country.

Apocalyptic consequences if we lose US hegemony

Brook Manville 2018 (principal of Brook Manville LLC, consulting on strategy and organization) 14 Oct 2018 “Why A Crumbling World Order Urgently Needs U.S. Leadership” FORBES [https://www.forbes.com/sites/brookmanville/2018/10/14/why-a-crumbling-world-order-urgently-needs-u-s-leadership/#2bb8912f2e61](about:blank#2bb8912f2e61) (brackets added) (accessed 17 Aug 2022)

The botanical metaphor in [Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert] Kagan’s book title began our recent conversation. “We’ve been living in a tranquil garden of largely peaceful practices and liberal expectations across much of the world, ignoring the dark forces of jungle multiplying under the rocks. If we don’t defend civilization’s cultivation—especially American’s guarantee of peace and economic integration across the world—the toxic creatures and weeds will roar back.” Thus China’s determined military rise, Russia’s continuing aggressions, fiery authoritarians on the march in so many once democratic countries. [**END QUOTE]** As [Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert] Kagan continued, “Trump has been damaging the system—he too seems to have forgotten what good it has delivered—but actually America’s desire for maintaining the global order has been diminishing for years. After the dissolution of the Soviet empire in the 1990s, people talked about ‘the end of history”—that America didn’t have to worry anymore about war or aggression. History doesn’t end, it simply paused. [**He goes on later in the same context to say QUOTE:]** The ugliest aspects of human nature are surging again.”  
**Vanishing Leadership, Vanishing Peace**  
Kagan’s apocalyptic message, repeated [in other recent writings](about:blank), is lucid and terrifying, all the more devastating for its relentless use of history. It’s a footnoted plea that “we’ve seen this movie before.” He reminds us that Americans have frequently turned away from defending world order, with regrettably familiar outcomes: to be dragged in later at greater cost (e.g. helping to stop Hitler earlier might have prevented World War II); or, simply hoping that “the problem would go away,” to watch it get ten times worse (e.g. Obama’s policy in Syria). Kagan acknowledges that America has sometimes misstepped (e.g. Viet Nam, Iraq), but he still argues that overall our foreign engagement has produced more peace and prosperity than not. “History shows,” he summarized, “that world order has never been achieved without some constructive force to keep the peace. The relative harmony and fair play we’ve created in the modern world will vanish if the U.S. forsakes international leadership.”

World peace & prosperity at risk without US influence. US hegemony is key to global peace & prosperity

Capt. M. V. Prato 2009 (United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Marine Corps University) “The Need for American Hegemony” <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA508040> (accessed 3 June 2021)

The world witnessed a vast shift in the polarity of geopolitics after the Cold War. The United States became the world’s greatest hegemon with an unequalled ability to globally project cultural, political, economic, and military power in a manner not seen since the days of the Roman Empire. **[END QUOTE]** Coined the “unipolar moment” by syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, the disparity of power between the U.S. and all other nations allows the U.S. to influence the world for the mutual benefit of all responsible states. Unfortunately, the United States is increasingly forced to act unilaterally as a result of both foreign and domestic resentment to U.S. dominance and the rise of liberal internationalism. [**He goes on to conclude later in the same context QUOTE**:] The United States must exercise benevolent global hegemony, unilaterally if necessary, to ensure its security and maintain global peace and prosperity.

Caesar will negatively affect more than just Syria

Dr. Daniel Larison 2020 (PhD in history from Univ. of Chicago) June 18, 2020 “The Imperious Caesar Act Will Crush the Syrian People” <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-imperious-caesar-act-will-crush-the-syrian-people/> (accessed July 17 2022) (brackets in original)

The Caesar Act’s destructive effects won’t be limited just to Syria, but are already [spilling over](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/12/us-caesar-act-sanctions-and-could-devastate-syrias-flatlining-economy) into Lebanon: The ramifications of Caesar are rippling through Beirut, where traders retain lucrative ties to Syrian officials that are barely keeping Lebanese state revenues ticking over. “This is a disaster for the [Lebanese] government, said one Lebanese banker. “They will sanction Lebanese traders and banks. Our currency will plunge as far as theirs. One of the few places we can trade is Damascus. If that’s shut down, we’re doomed.”

Caesar Act worsens refugee crisis

Faisal Al Yafai 2020 (executive editor of *New Lines*. He was previously an investigative journalist for The Guardian in London reporting on the Middle East.) June 24, 2020 “Caesar Act will only create new victims in Syria” <https://asiatimes.com/2020/06/caesar-act-will-only-create-new-victims-in-syria/> (accessed July 21 2022)

Moreover, the regime in Damascus will certainly respond to this new pressure as the Saddam regime did, with further and deeper repression. A poorer, more isolated and more repressed Syria will in turn push more ordinary Syrians to leave and offer those already abroad even less incentive to return. That will increase the pressure of refugees on European and Middle Eastern countries.

Caesar Act worsens the humanitarian crisis by blocking reconstruction

United Nations 2020. December 29, 2020 “UN rights expert urges United States to remove sanctions hindering rebuilding in Syria” <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1081032> (accessed July 17 2022)

Alena Douhan, United Nations [Special Rapporteur on the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on human rights](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/UCM/Pages/SRCoerciveMeasures.aspx), voiced concerns that sanctions imposed under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act – also known as the Caesar Act – risk exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in Syria, especially in the course of [COVID-19](https://www.un.org/coronavirus) pandemic, and put Syrians at even greater risk of rights violations. “When it announced the first sanctions under the Caesar Act in June 2020, the United States said it did not intend for them to harm the Syrian population,” she [stated](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26630&LangID=E).  “Yet enforcement of the Act may worsen the existing humanitarian crisis, depriving the Syrian people of the chance to rebuild their basic infrastructure,” Ms. Douhan added.

Helps Hezbollah by harming Lebanese companies

Faisal Al Yafai 2020 ( the executive editor of *New Lines*. He was previously an investigative journalist for The Guardian in London reporting on the Middle East.) June 24, 2020 “Caesar Act will only create new victims in Syria” <https://asiatimes.com/2020/06/caesar-act-will-only-create-new-victims-in-syria/> (accessed July 21 2022)

First in the firing line is Lebanon, already reeling from social unrest, an ongoing political crisis and a disproportionate share of the burden of refugees from the Syrian civil war. If Lebanese companies – particularly financial companies – cannot do business with Syria, that will affect exports and tax revenue. Ironically, it will also directly benefit Hezbollah, one of the indirect targets of these sanctions. If Lebanese companies cannot trade directly with Damascus, they will turn to indirect smuggling routes. As Hezbollah exerts enormous influence over the mountain ranges along the eastern border through which most of the smuggling is conducted, the militant group stands to gain handsomely.

Caesar blocks reconstruction and increases conditions that fuel extremism

Dr. [**Arta Moeini**](https://peacediplomacy.org/arta-moeini-2/) and Dr. [**Christopher Mott**](https://peacediplomacy.org/christopher-mott/) 2021 (Moeini - Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Statesmanship in Washington D.C as well as an elected member of the Academy of Philosophy and Letters. PhD and MA in Government from Georgetown Univ; MA in International Relations from Johns Hopkins, BA in Political Science and Near Eastern Studies from UC Berkeley. Mott - Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of St Andrews, MA in International Relations from London Metropolitan Univ.) September [16, 2021](16,%202021) “Economic Sanctions: A Failed Approach” <https://peacediplomacy.org/2021/09/16/economic-sanctions-a-failed-approach/> (accessed July 18 2022)

This effort culminated in the [Caesar Sanctions](https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/caesar_act.pdf), a crippling and [controversial](https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1081032) program designed to isolate and devastate the Syrian economy. In reality, such practices have only succeeded in [hindering](https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/what-are-americas-sanctions-on-syria-good-for/) postwar reconstruction in Syria and possibly exacerbating the conditions that [fuel extremism](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/new-sanctions-on-syria-risk-empowering-extremists?fbclid=IwAR0LiPrHzT6VYVMCXfYGcv8BVK9Z1tKBPeCK3CDhvGGcnN1Jy4UTy5rq7do).

Caesar Act harms the economy and poor Syrians - makes supplies too expensive for households to afford

Syrian Democratic Times 2020 (material is distributed by the U.S. Mission of the Syrian Democratic Council on behalf of the Syrian Democratic Council) August 21, 2020 “Four Ways the Caesar Act Sanctions Impact Syria” <https://www.syriandemocratictimes.com/2020/08/21/four-ways-the-caesar-act-sanctions-impact-syria/#:~:text=Most%20analysts%20attribute%20the%20collapse%20of%20the%20currency,ice%20to%20preserve%20food%20is%20about%202%2C000%20pounds>. (accessed July 20 2022)

Prices in the Syrian marketplace have spiked. Everyday Syrians are having trouble affording medicines, bread, and other household goods. In 2019, the average rate of the Syrian pound was approximately 500 pounds per US dollar. At the end of July 2020, the rate was hovering at about 2,000 pounds per US dollar. Most analysts attribute the collapse of the currency to global market divestment from the Syrian pound in preparation for the Caesar Act sanctions. A loaf of bread now costs about 500 Syrian pounds. A bag of ice to preserve food is about 2,000 pounds. The average low-wage worker in Syria currently makes roughly 2,500 to 3,500 pounds per day.

Syria and ISIS are among the greatest terrorist threats to the US today

[Katie Bo Williams](https://www.cnn.com/profiles/katie-bo-williams) 2021 (covers intelligence and national security, including all related federal agencies and Congressional committees.) September 13, 2021 “Top US spy says Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq represent greater terrorist threat than Afghanistan” <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/politics/dni-avril-haines-terrorist-threat-somalia-yemen-syria-iraq/index.html> (accessed July 20 2022)

Terror threats emanating from Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq – in particular ISIS – pose a greater danger than those that might emerge from Afghanistan, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines told the annual Intelligence and National Security Summit. “In terms of the homeland, the threat right now from terrorist groups, we don’t prioritize at the top of the list Afghanistan,” she said, speaking by videoconference. “What we look at is Yemen, Somalia, Syria and Iraq for ISIS. That’s where we see the greatest threat.”

A/T “Not many people sanctioned under Caesar” – Impacts reach far beyond and prevent improvement in Syria

*Sam Heller 2020 (an independent researcher and analyst focused on Syria and the broader Levant.) September* 29, 2020 “What Are America’s Sanctions on Syria Good For?” <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/what-are-americas-sanctions-on-syria-good-for/> (accessed July 18 2022)

In all likelihood, the impact of the Caesar Act is not measured in the individuals and entities actually named in successive batches of sanctions. Rather, the law’s real impact is the names that do not appear: investors who might otherwise have contributed to Syria’s recovery, but who were deterred. The effect of the law is thus [likely to be felt over the medium and long term](https://www.syria-report.com/news/economy/caesar-act-meaningful-long-term-consequences-less-important-short-term-impact), as it prevents already bad conditions in Syria from getting better.

A/T “no terrorist threat in Syria/Isis doesn’t control any territory” – Examples prove otherwise

Taim Al-Hajj 2022 (*an investigative Syrian journalist.)* March 15, 2022 “The Insurgency of ISIS in Syria” <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/86643> (accessed July 19 2022)

On January 20, 2022, insurgents affiliated with the Islamic State (ISIS), attacked Al-Sina prison in the Ghweiran neighborhood in the city of al-Hasakah in Syria’s far northeast. The attack sent a message to many beyond the borders of the small city that the organization has significant military, financial, and media abilities. The raid, one of a long series of multi-pronged attacks in Syria and its neighboring Iraq, highlights ISIS’ resolve to model its post-caliphate strategy for insurgencies that are not necessarily contingent on territorial control.

A/T “No terrorist threat in Syria” – Isis remains

*Charles Lister 2020 (a senior fellow and director of Middle East Institute's Countering Terrorism and Extremism Program.)* February 3, 2020 “In Syria, we’re getting counter-terrorism all wrong”

<https://www.mei.edu/publications/syria-were-getting-counter-terrorism-all-wrong> (accessed July 19 2022)

The threat from ISIS is a long way from over. ISIS retains thousands of fighters in Syria and is sustaining a steady pace of insurgent and terrorist attacks east of the Euphrates. More worryingly, ISIS appears to be growing in confidence and ability west of the Euphrates, in Syria’s central desert, where the Assad regime and its militia partners seem largely incapable of containing, let alone defeating, ISIS’s activities. Syrian soldiers and militiamen are dying almost daily in ISIS attacks centered along the M20 highway that runs between Palmyra and Deir ez-Zor. In recent weeks, ISIS has briefly taken control of a village and several key sections of the M20.

SOLVENCY/ADVOCACY

Advocacy: UN. We should reverse Caesar sanctions on Syria because they block reconstruction and harm common people

Middle East Eye 2020 (a London-based online news outlet covering events in the Middle East and North Africa) December 29 2020 “US sanctions harming Syrians and hampering reconstruction efforts: UN“

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/un-rights-experts-calls-us-remove-caesar-act-sanctions-syria> (accessed July 20 2022)

A UN rights expert has called on the United States to reverse its sanctions on Syria, saying the designations are impeding the country's ability to reconstruct civilian infrastructure and deterring foreign aid groups from helping the country recover from its decade-long civil war.  
  
**END QUOTE. THEY GO ON LATER IN THE CONTEXT WRITING QUOTE:**  
  
"The conflict and violence have already had a dire impact on the ability of the Syrian people to realise their fundamental rights, having extensively damaged houses, medical units, schools, and other facilities. "What particularly alarms me is the way the Caesar Act runs roughshod over human rights, including the Syrian people's rights to housing, health, and an adequate standard of living and development."

Advocacy: lift Caesar sanctions because of the awful humanitarian impacts

Harley Schlanger 2021 ([a Political Analyst for LaRouche Foundation](https://deagle-network.com/nutrimedical-broadcasters/harley-schlanger-political-analyst-for-larouche-foundation-worldwide/#:~:text=Harley%20Schlanger%20is%20a%20top%20political%20activist%20for,conferences%20where%20he%20often%20attends%20with%20world%20leaders.)) April 23, 2021 “‘Caesar Sanctions’ Are Killing Syrians: They Must Be Overturned” <https://larouchepub.com/other/2021/4817-caesar_sanctions_are_killing_syr.html> (accessed July 20 2022)

As sanctions have become a weapon of choice by regime changers, as part of a broad strategy of hybrid warfare, it is essential that the intent behind them be exposed. It is the height of evil hypocrisy to proclaim, as Secretary of State Blinken did, that the sanctions against Syria represent a “humanitarian effort” to protect the Syrian people. A policy of deliberate genocide was defined at the Nuremberg Tribunals at the end of World War II as a crime against humanity. If the cry “Never Again” is to retain any meaning, the Caesar Sanctions against Syria must be immediately lifted.

Caesar exemption in Syrian areas that aren’t government controlled – fights terrorism and stabilizes economy

[Humeyra Pamuk](https://www.reuters.com/authors/humeyra-pamuk/) and [Daphne Psaledakis](https://www.reuters.com/authors/daphne-psaledakis/) 2022 (Pamuk - U.S. State Department Correspondent at Reuters News Agency. BA in Int. Relations from Koç University, MA in European Union Studies from Galatasaray Üniversitesi. Psaledakis - covers sanctions for the foreign policy at Reuters.) May 12, 2022 “U.S. permits some foreign investment in northern Syria despite sanctions” <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-permits-some-foreign-investment-northern-syria-despite-sanctions-2022-05-12/> (accessed July 10 2022)

The United States on Thursday authorized some foreign investment in areas of northern Syria that are outside government control, in what it said was a strategy designed to defeat Islamic State through economic stabilization. The U.S. Treasury Department approved activities in 12 sectors including agriculture, construction and finance, but made clear that it did not permit any transactions with the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or those designated under U.S. sanctions during the 11-year-long Syrian civil war.  
  
**END QUOTE. THEY GO ON LATER IN THE ARTICLE WRITING QUOTE:**   
  
"Private sector investment in these areas will help reduce the likelihood of ISIS resurgence by combating the desperate conditions that enable the terrorist groups' recruitment and support network," a senior administration official said.

US allies will invest in reconstruction of Syria if we get the sanctions out of the way

[Natalie Armbruster](https://reason.com/people/natalie-armbruster/) 2022 ( a research associate at Defense Priorities. BA in Political Science and Arabic Language and Literature from Notre Dame University.) June 17, 2022 “Sanctions on Syria Aren't Punishing Assad. They're Hurting Syrians.” <https://reason.com/2022/06/17/sanctions-on-syria-arent-punishing-assad-theyre-hurting-syrians/> (accessed July 8 2022)

Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed even [criticized](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-us-caesar-sanctions-complicate-arab-league-return-uae-minister-says) the Caesar Act; the UAE is willing to help Syria, but the cost of prospective sanctions "makes this path very difficult, not only for us as a nation, but also for the private sector." Still, the U.S. refuses to deviate from its policy of regime isolation. The U.S. should encourage potential support from regional partners—those with a greater stake in Syria's future stability than the United States. It is in our interest to shift the cost of reconstruction onto [regional partners](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2022-02-22/axis-abraham), such as the UAE, which has the means, willingness, and compelling interest to bear this burden instead of repelling potential foreign investment. The last thing the U.S. should want is to shoulder the estimated $250 billion to $400 billion reconstruction bill for [Syria's reconstruction](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/7-17-19_Daher_Syria.pdf) alone.

Caesar stops US allies from investing in reconstruction efforts – Jordan, UAE, Lebanon

Nabih Bulos 2020 (the Middle East bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times) June 17, 2020 “Syria faces financial ruin as U.S. imposes fresh sanctions” <https://news.yahoo.com/syria-faces-financial-ruin-u-225855498.html?fr=yhssrp_catchall> (accessed July 20 2022)

Walker said that though it was clear there were exemptions aimed at not hurting the civilian population, “when you get to that point where the sanctions are so broad that it becomes very difficult to purchase olives or local produce from Syria, for example, then that clearly has an impact on the local market. If you can’t move goods very easily into Syria, then that creates a problem.” It also in effect freezes out neighbors, including U.S. allies such as the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Jordan, hoping to take advantage of investment in Syria. “This is as much a warning to their allies who are willing to consider putting money in Syria and invest in Syria’s reconstruction,” Lebanon political analyst Michael Young said, adding that the sanctions were especially daunting for Lebanon.

Caesar stops reconstruction

Dr. [Howard J. Shat](https://www.realcleardefense.com/authors/howard_j_shatz/)z PHD in public policy 2021 (a senior economist at the RAND Corporation and a professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School. He specializes in international economics and economics and national security. Ph.D. in public policy from Harvard Univ.) July 07, 2021 “The Power and Limits of Threat: The Caesar Syrian Civilian Protection Act at One Year” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/07/07/the_power_and_limits_of_threat_the_caesar_syrian_civilian_protection_act_at_one_year_784525.html> (accessed July 9 2022)

Now, one year later, it is apparent that the act's power lies not in who the United States has sanctioned but in who the United States could sanction. The law, which sunsets after five years, also shows the limits of sanctions to effect change, with the Syria conflict now continuing into its eleventh year.   
**[END QUOTE. LATER IN THE ARTICLE HE GOES ON TO SAY QUOTE]**  
The law has been used so far to make it harder for Assad and his networks to profit from reconstruction activities, some of which involve land taken from displaced Syrians. It is now a major obstacle to investment in Assad-controlled areas of Syria by other Arab countries, such as the [United Arab Emirates](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/us-sanctions-blocking-syria-reconstruction-says-emirati-minister-1.4506720) and [Saudi Arabia](https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/06/slow-uncertain-pace-saudi-syrian-rapprochement) – countries with the capital and business acumen to spur reconstruction. Doing so would enrich and empower Assad because they necessarily would have to deal with his networks to make their investments.

Backup: Reconstruction needed in Syria

United Nations 2020 December 29, 2020 “UN rights expert urges United States to remove sanctions hindering rebuilding in Syria” <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1081032> (accessed July 17 2022)

After a decade of crisis, humanitarian needs remain [extensive](https://gho.unocha.org/syria) and multifaceted across Syria, with millions dependent on international assistance. Thousands of [schools](https://www.unicef.org/syria/education) have been destroyed and the health system is in tatters, with only 58 per cent of hospitals reported to be fully functional.  
**[END QUOTE. THEY GO ON LATER IN THE ARTICLE WRITING QUOTE:]**  
“What particularly alarms me is the way the Caesar Act runs roughshod over human rights, including the Syrian people’s rights to housing, health, and an adequate standard of living and development,” she said.  “The US Government must not put obstacles in the way of rebuilding of hospitals because lack of medical care threatens the entire population’s very right to life,” the Special Rapporteur added.

A/T “Aid solves” – Helps few citizens. The ones who need help are still blocked by sanctions

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust 2020 (HART works with communities to establish aid programmes in active conflict zones, post-conflict areas still devastated by war, and areas where people are marginalised, oppressed and exploited) August 1, 2020 “Why Economic Sanctions on Syria Must Stop” <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/why-economic-sanctions-syria-must-stop> (accessed July 17 2022)

Of the huge amounts of humanitarian aid that western governments are sending ‘to Syria’, the vast majority reaches either refugees who have fled the country, or only those areas of Syria occupied by militant groups opposed to the Syrian government. Most Syrian people are therefore deliberately left unsupported; indeed, even their own efforts to help themselves and re-build their lives are hampered by sanctions.

A/T “Sanctions aren’t the main problem” –Sanctions won't solve and only make it much worse

The Conservative American 2020 (magazine published by the American Ideas Institute which was founded in 2002) June 18, 2020 “The Imperious Caesar Act Will Crush the Syrian People” <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/the-imperious-caesar-act-will-crush-the-syrian-people/> (accessed July 17 2022)

Sanctions are not the primary cause of Syrians’ hardships, and the Syrian government bears significant responsibility for the wreckage of the economy. Even so, further strangling the Syrian economy now will succeed only in starving the country of investment and commerce for no real purpose. Sanctions will fuel inflation and make even basic necessities unaffordable for millions of people. The U.S. can choose to assist the people of Syria, or it can choose to grind them down even more. The Caesar Act is the latter. The people of Syria are being made to suffer more in the vain attempt to weaken the Syrian government.

DISADVANTAGE RESPONSES

A/T “Lost progress” – No progress to lose. Since Caesar was enacted, countries have moved closer to Syria

[Natalie Armbruster](https://reason.com/people/natalie-armbruster/) 2022 (research associate at Defense Priorities. BA in Political Science and Arabic Language and Literature from Notre Dame Univ.) June 17, 2022 “Sanctions on Syria Aren't Punishing Assad. They're Hurting Syrians.” <https://reason.com/2022/06/17/sanctions-on-syria-arent-punishing-assad-theyre-hurting-syrians/> (accessed July 8 2022)

Syria's neighbors have started to recognize the reality Washington refuses to admit—Assad is not going anywhere and neither is Syria's Russian and Iranian backing. Beginning in December 2018, Arab countries began to reopen their embassies in Damascus—the [United Arab Emirates](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-emirates/uae-reopens-syria-embassy-in-boost-for-assad-idUSKCN1OQ0QV) (UAE) being the first to do so. Today, 13 [Arab League countries](https://www.axios.com/2021/11/17/syria-assad-arab-league-egypt-jordan) have reengaged with Assad, and all but two countries – [Kuwait](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/kuwait-s-apprehension-about-normalizing-relations-with-syria/) and [Qatar](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/12/qatar-has-no-plan-to-normalise-ties-with-syria-says-fm) –  appear supportive of reengagement with Syria.

A/T "Force Syrian govt. to change" - Caesar sanctions will not motivate change

*Sam Heller 2020 (an independent researcher and analyst focused on Syria and the broader Levant.) September* 29, 2020 “What Are America’s Sanctions on Syria Good For?” <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/what-are-americas-sanctions-on-syria-good-for/> (accessed July 18 2022)

But that “hypothesis” is fantastical. Almost no one truly thinks the Caesar Act and, more broadly, the current U.S. policy of pressure on Damascus will accomplish their stated aims. None of these tactics seem likely to put Damascus under such duress that it would submit to a political transition or reforms tantamount to regime change, or to deter it from attacking the country’s last rebel-held enclaves. The Syrian government’s resources may dwindle further, but it is still likely to devote what little remain to, first and foremost, regime survival and military victory. Even in the government’s lowest, most desperate moments over the past decade, it never conceded or moderated its bloody-minded pursuit of reimposing its writ nationally.

A/T “Now is the time – protests, lost support, etc” – Assad has seen it before. His regime isn’t going anywhere

[Kali Robinson](https://www.cfr.org/bio/kali-robinson) 2020 (covers the Middle East with the Council on Foreign Relations and edits the *Daily News Brief*; bachelor’s degree in journalism from Northwestern Univ.) June 30, 2020  “Can Syria’s Assad Regime Survive a New Wave of Threats?” <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/can-syrias-assad-regime-survive-new-wave-threats> (accessed July 17 2022)

Despite these new threats, many analysts expect the regime to endure. The Assad family is no stranger to [internecine conflict](https://www.nytimes.com/1984/09/12/world/assad-s-brother-exiled-forever-syrian-declares.html), so the Assad-Makhlouf drama could ultimately have little effect. As the government has previously shown, it’s not shy about cracking down on protests, which it could do again to prevent a [new revolution](https://blogs.eui.eu/medirections/sweida-protests-start-new-syrian-revolution/) amid its financial crisis. And the regime could circumvent the Caesar Act by using well-connected elites, warlords, and local brokers to do business with the rebel-held north, which is excluded from the sanctions, writes the Carnegie Middle East Center’s [Kheder Khaddour](https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/81946" \t "_blank" \o "Kheder Khaddour). Moreover, Assad still has the backing of Iran and Russia, whose support has helped him retake control over most of Syria. Yacoubian argues that this will be enough to weather the storm. “I don’t think this combination is enough to bring the regime down,” she says. “It just means, unfortunately, more suffering for ordinary citizens.”

A/T “Now or never” – Doesn’t matter. Caesar won’t compel Assad to respect human rights

*Sam Heller 2020 (an independent researcher and analyst focused on Syria and the broader Levant.) September* 29, 2020 “What Are America’s Sanctions on Syria Good For?” <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/what-are-americas-sanctions-on-syria-good-for/> (accessed July 18 2022)

Of course, the problem with the law’s aims of halting Syria’s violence and forcing a political transition is that they are impossible, either with the Caesar Act or any other means realistically available. The United States will not somehow force Syria to respect human rights and the rule of law. It will not even compel it to “stop atrocities” in its prisons or on the battlefield.