



ROSA & ROUBINI
ASSOCIATES

POLICY COMPASS

**The Significance of Syria's
President's Visit to Washington**

By

Gulf State Analytics



10 November 2025

Gulf State Analytics

The Significance of Syria's President's Visit to Washington

10 November 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	Page 3
1. A Turning Point in U.S.–Syrian Relations	4
2. Re-joining the Fight Against Isis	5
3. The Reconstruction Dilemma	5
4. Quiet Security Talks with Israel	6
5. Region in Transition	6
NOTES	7

Page | 2



Rosa & Roubini Associates Ltd is a private limited company registered in England and Wales (Registration number: 10975116) with registered office at 118 Pall Mall, St. James's, London SW1Y 5ED, United Kingdom.

For information about Rosa&Roubini Associates, please send an email to info@rosa-roubini-associates.com or call +44 (0)20 7101 0718.

Analyst Certification: I, Giorgio Cafiero, hereby certify that all the views expressed in this report reflect my personal opinion, which has not been influenced by considerations of Rosa & Roubini Associates' business, nor by personal or client relationships. I also certify that no part of our compensation was, is or will be, directly or indirectly, related to the views expressed in this report.

Disclaimer: All material presented in this report is provided by Rosa & Roubini Associates-Limited for informational purposes only and is not to be used or considered as an offer or a solicitation to sell or to buy, or subscribe for securities, investment products or other financial instruments. Rosa & Roubini Associates Limited does not conduct "investment research" as defined in the FCA Conduct of Business Sourcebook (COBS) section 12 nor does it provide "advice about securities" as defined in the Regulation of Investment Advisors by the US SEC. Rosa & Roubini Associates Limited is not regulated by the FCA, SEC or by any other regulatory body. Nothing in this report shall be deemed to constitute financial or other professional advice in any way, and under no circumstances shall we be liable for any direct or indirect losses, costs or expenses nor for any loss of profit that results from the content of this report or any material in it or website links or references embedded within it. The price and value of financial instruments, securities and investment products referred to in this research and the income from them may fluctuate. Past performance and forecasts should not be treated as a reliable guide of future performance or results; future returns are not guaranteed; and a loss of original capital may occur. This research is based on current public information that Rosa & Roubini Associates considers reliable, but we do not represent it is accurate or complete, and it should not be relied on as such. Rosa & Roubini Associates, its contributors, partners and employees make no representation about the completeness or accuracy of the data, calculations, information or opinions contained in this report. Rosa & Roubini Associates has an internal policy designed to minimize the risk of receiving or misusing confidential or potentially material non-public information. We seek to update our research as appropriate, but the large majority of reports are published at irregular intervals as appropriate in the author's judgment. The information, opinions, estimates and forecasts contained herein are as of the date hereof and may be changed without prior notification. This research is for our clients only and is disseminated and available to all clients simultaneously through electronic publication. Rosa & Roubini Associates is not responsible for the redistribution of our research by third party aggregators. This report is not directed to you if Rosa & Roubini Associates is barred from doing so in your jurisdiction. This report and its content cannot be copied, redistributed or reproduced in part or whole without Rosa & Roubini Associates' written permission.

www.rosa-roubini.com

Gulf State Analytics

The Significance of Syria's President's Visit to Washington

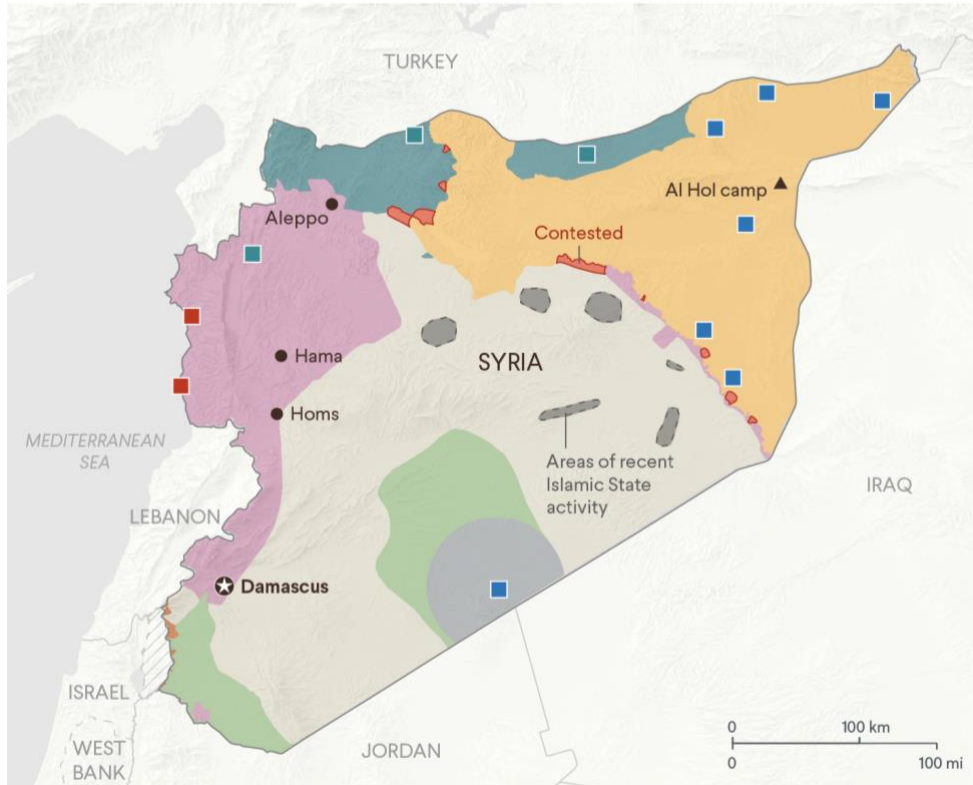
10 November 2025

Executive Summary

Page | 3

- ✧ President Ahmed al-Sharaa's planned 10 November visit to Washington will be the first-ever by a Syrian head of state, signaling rapprochement in U.S.–Syria relations after decades of hostility.
- ✧ Damascus frames the visit as a “new chapter,” seeking the lifting of all U.S. sanctions, international recognition, and backing for counterterrorism and reconstruction efforts.
- ✧ Sharaa's evolution from jihadist commander to statesman marks one of the Middle East's most dramatic political shifts, highlighting Syria's internal transformation since Bashar al-Assad's ouster on 8 December 2024.
- ✧ Syria is expected to formally join the U.S.-led Global Coalition against ISIS, institutionalizing years of covert intelligence sharing and limited joint operations between Damascus and U.S. Central Command.
- ✧ The collapse of Assad's government and U.S. troop drawdowns have enabled ISIS to regroup and expand as a mobile insurgency, with 117 attacks recorded in northeast Syria by August 2025, up from 73 in 2024.
- ✧ The epicenter of ISIS's revival lies in Deir Ezzour province, where an estimated 3,000 militants are reasserting influence through assassinations, extortion, and intimidation against Kurdish-led authorities.
- ✧ With rebuilding costs exceeding USD 216 billion, sanctions remain the principal barrier to recovery, deterring Gulf and Western investment despite growing regional willingness to re-engage.
- ✧ Damascus and Tel Aviv are engaged in direct security talks aimed at restoring calm along the southern frontier and possibly reaching a security accord by 2025, while avoiding discussion of the Abraham Accords.
- ✧ The U.S.–Syria rapprochement could support Washington's regional stabilisation agenda, complementing Gaza ceasefire diplomacy and potentially prompting Congress to ease or repeal Caesar Act sanctions.
- ✧ Sharaa's visit embodies a broader regional realignment: a post-Assad Syria seeking legitimacy through pragmatic engagement rather than confrontation, testing whether partnership can replace isolation in shaping the country's future.

Key Picture: Syrian Territorial Control Post-Assad



Source: Institute for the Study of War and American Enterprise Institute (As of 9 Jan. 2025). [On CFR](#).

Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa is set to make a landmark visit to Washington on 10 November for talks with U.S. President Donald J. Trump, marking the first by a Syrian head of state in history.¹ The last time a senior Syrian official came to the White House was in 1999, when then-Foreign Minister Farouq al-Sharaa participated in peace talks with Israel.² This meeting carries the potential to fundamentally reshape U.S.–Syrian relations after decades of estrangement.

1. A Turning Point in U.S.–Syrian Relations

Speaking at the Manama Dialogue Conference in Bahrain on 2 November, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani described the upcoming visit as a “historic moment” and the beginning of a “new chapter” in bilateral ties.³ “Many issues will be discussed, starting with the lifting of sanctions,” he said, noting that Damascus also seeks international backing for its counterterrorism campaign and post-war reconstruction.⁴

Sharaa’s trajectory, from militant commander in the 2000s and 2010s to head of state in 2024, represents one of the Arab world’s most dramatic political reversals. A former al-Qaeda–linked leader who fought U.S. troops in Iraq, he severed ties with global jihadist networks nearly a decade ago. Since ousting Bashar al-Assad 11 months ago, Sharaa has sought to rebuild Syria’s fractured institutions and reintegrate the country into the global community.

His first encounter with Trump occurred in Riyadh in May during the U.S. president's Gulf tour, followed by a speech to the UN General Assembly in September—the first by a Syrian leader since 1967.^{5,6}

2. Re-joining the Fight Against ISIS

According to U.S. Special Envoy Tom Barrack, Sharaa will sign a formal agreement at the White House joining Syria to the U.S.-led Global Coalition against the Islamic State (ISIS), now composed of 88 nations. Barrack described the move as “a huge step” for Syria and the culmination of years of quiet cooperation between Damascus and Western intelligence agencies.⁷

Page | 5

Though official participation is new, Sharaa's forces have fought ISIS for years. Analysts estimate that since 2017 his troops have conducted over 70 counterterrorism operations against ISIS remnants, often with discreet intelligence support from the United States.⁸ In recent months, U.S. Central Command and Syrian forces have reportedly coordinated at least eight joint missions in government-held areas.⁹ Such a level of cooperation was simply unimaginable under Assad.

The chances are good that the ISIS file will grow increasingly important to U.S.-Syria bilateral engagement mindful of the extremist group's resurgence as a decentralised insurgency. The fall of Assad's government and the subsequent power vacuum have allowed ISIS to regroup, recruit, and expand its operations across Syria. U.S. and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commanders report that the militants exploited the chaos following Damascus's collapse, looting abandoned Syrian and Iranian military stockpiles to rearm and reorganise.

Though ISIS lacks the capability to hold territory as it did a decade ago, its growing activity is destabilising Syria's fragile post-Ba'athist order. SDF data shows 117 ISIS attacks in northeast Syria through August 2025, up sharply from 73 in all of 2024.¹⁰ Such figures speak to ISIS's expanding operational tempo.

Deir Ezzour province is home to an estimated 3,000 fighters.¹¹ There, ISIS is reasserting influence through assassinations, extortion, and intimidation targeting local authorities. Nonetheless, Damascus has also reported thwarting several planned attacks in the capital, signaling that ISIS ambitions now extend far beyond its traditional eastern strongholds. The group's renewed insurgency underscores how Syria's fragmentation has created conditions which appear to be reviving ISIS. This disturbing development has serious repercussions not only for Syria, but also for the rest of the Middle East and other regions of the world too.

3. The Reconstruction Dilemma

After fourteen years of war, Syria faces a reconstruction bill exceeding USD 216 billion, according to the World Bank.¹² Initial optimism over partial sanctions relief, Gulf financial support, and agreements with foreign investors has been tempered by persistent economic challenges in Syria.

Although officials have pledged market reforms, trade liberalisation, and banking stabilisation, tangible progress remains limited, and liquidity is scarce despite Swift system reconnection. Quick-fix initiatives, such as high-end real estate, benefit only a small elite, worsening inequality amid inflation and housing shortages. Economic revival depends on political settlements, security, and reintegration of Kurdish and southern regions. Without addressing structural weaknesses, Syria risks entrenched socioeconomic disparities, predatory land grabs, and vulnerability of local producers, limiting the impact of Sharaa's foreign policy gains.¹³

4. Quiet Security Talks with Israel

In parallel, Syria and Israel have opened direct security talks to defuse tensions along Syria's southern frontier. Although technically still at war, both sides have expressed interest in finalising a security and military accord by 2025, potentially leading to an Israeli withdrawal from positions seized in southern Syria after Assad's ouster.

Since December, Israeli forces have conducted repeated airstrikes on Syrian targets and crossed the 1974 disengagement lines into the UN-patrolled buffer zone in Quneitra. Damascus has not retaliated, which signals the Syrian government's calculated display of restraint while maintaining a weakened position and desire to avoid renewed conflict with a neighbor that is far superior militarily.

Shaibani stressed that Syria seeks "a security arrangement that preserves the 1974 ceasefire agreement and prevents the legitimisation of any new realities Israel may attempt to impose in the south."¹⁴ He dismissed speculation that Syria might join the Abraham Accords, insisting the issue "has not been discussed and is not being considered."¹⁵

5. A Region in Transition

Sharaa's impending visit reflects a dramatic recalibration of Middle Eastern geopolitics. Less than a year after Assad's downfall, a former jihadist once imprisoned by U.S. forces is preparing to enter the White House, not as an adversary but instead as a prospective partner in counterterrorism and reconstruction.

Barrack suggested that the evolving partnership could strengthen U.S. efforts to advance regional stability following the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. He also expressed optimism that progress in negotiations among Damascus, the SDF, and Israel might help persuade Congress to lift the 2020 Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act sanctions. Bipartisan lawmakers have introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act seeking a full repeal, with Barrack noting, "Syria is doing a very good job in trying to get there."¹⁶

Significant challenges persist, including ISIS's lingering insurgency and economic collapse to unresolved Kurdish autonomy questions. Yet the symbolism of this encounter at the White House will be unmistakable. For the first time in decades, Washington and Damascus appear ready to test whether pragmatic engagement can succeed where isolation, sanctions, and confrontation have long failed.

NOTES

-
- ¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/01/trump-to-host-syrian-president-at-white-house-00632812>
- ² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/dec/15/israel1>
- ³ <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20251102-syrian-leader-to-discuss-lifting-sanctions-reconstruction-in-historic-us-visit>
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/05/meeting-al-sharaa-and-trump-has-shifted-balance-power-middle-east>
- ⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/22/president-al-sharaa-is-first-syrian-leader-to-visit-unga-in-six-decades>
- ⁷ <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/011120252-amp>
- ⁸ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/11/syrias-sharaa-sign-deal-white-house-join-anti-isis-coalition>
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/871554>
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² <https://www.newarab.com/news/world-bank-estimates-syria-reconstruction-costs-216-bln>
- ¹³ <https://carnegieendowment.org/middle-east/diwan/2025/10/syria-needs-a-reconstruction-plan?lang=en>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20251102-syrian-leader-to-discuss-lifting-sanctions-reconstruction-in-historic-us-visit>
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/11/syrias-sharaa-sign-deal-white-house-join-anti-isis-coalition>