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Diplomacy and opportunities: Syria's new chapter begins

Under the leadership of al-Shaara, the movement seized a critical window of opportunity to launch their campaign against Bashar al-Assad's regime. At a time when Assad's key ally, Iran, was heavily preoccupied with supporting its regional proxies and its Russian-backed foreign partners, al-Shaara strategically capitalized on the regime's vulnerability. This well-timed offensive enabled the group to dismantle the existing power structure and establish a new political order in Syria, marking a significant turning point in the country's modern history.

The leadership in Damascus now has the opportunity to demonstrate to the international community its commitment to principles such as the protection of minority rights, access to education and just governance. al-Shaara and his government are fully aware of what is at stake—both the potential gains and the possible consequences. Following a meeting with the U.S. President Donald Trump in Riyadh during the GCC–U.S. Summit, the American President publicly declared that sanctions on Syria would be lifted, signaling a possible turning point in Syria's reintegration into the global arena. al-Shaara and the Syrians made it clear that the country is more than ready to welcome foreign investment and rebuild its economy on a new foundation.

In May, Syria signed a landmark \$7 billion energy agreement with a consortium of Qatari, Turkish, and U.S. companies, aiming to restore its devastated power sector. The deal was formalized at the presidential palace in Damascus in the presence of President Ahmed al-Sharaa and the U.S. Ambassador to Türkiye, Thomas Barrack. Led by Qatar's UCC Concession Investments, the consortium also includes Turkey's Kalyon GES Enerji Yatirimlari and Cengiz Enerji, alongside Power International USA. The project involves the construction of four gas-powered plants in central and eastern Syria and a 1,000 MW solar farm in the south, using advanced U.S. and European technology.

Syria's Minister of Energy Mohammed al-Bashir described the agreement as a "turning point" for Syria's infrastructure, which has suffered from years of war and widespread blackouts. Ambassador Barrack confirmed that U.S. President Donald Trump had lifted all sanctions on Syria and pledged ongoing support, calling for regional cooperation and economic integration. In addition, Turkey has committed to supplying Syria with two billion cubic meters of natural gas annually. Qatar has also begun funding gas deliveries through Jordan to alleviate ongoing electricity shortages. The initiative is expected to create over 50,000 direct and 250,000 indirect jobs, signaling Syria's renewed push to attract foreign investment in the wake of eased Western sanctions.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have announced a joint initiative to provide financial support to Syrian state employees. The aid, to be delivered over a three-month period, was confirmed during Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan's visit to Damascus, where he held a press conference alongside Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani. While the exact amount was not disclosed, the initiative mirrors a recent Qatari effort to finance Syria's public sector.

In April, both Gulf nations also contributed approximately \$15 million to help Syria settle arrears owed to the World Bank, signaling growing financial engagement with the newly formed Syrian government under President Ahmed al-Sharaa. These developments come in the wake of significant diplomatic shifts. The U.S. move to lift the sanctions was reportedly made at the request of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The European Union has followed suit, easing its own sanctions on Syria's government. Saudi Arabia has emphasized its role in advocating for sanctions relief and supporting Syria's reconstruction efforts. Minister Bin Farhan stated that Saudi Arabia will remain a key partner in Syria's economic recovery. He arrived in Damascus with a high-level economic delegation and confirmed that Saudi business leaders would explore investment opportunities in energy, agriculture, infrastructure and more.

Meanwhile, Syria's leadership continues to strengthen ties with both Arab and Western states, aiming to secure international investment and aid in rebuilding the country after years of conflict.

### *Analysis*

I believe this represents a pivotal opportunity for Syria. The leadership in Damascus is expected to approach the process with great caution to avoid any critical missteps that could result in renewed sanctions or diplomatic setbacks. With financial investments flowing in from the Gulf states, the reactivation of salaries for state employees and energy support from Qatar, the U.S. and Türkiye, Syria cannot afford to jeopardize the trust placed in it by its regional partners. This is a defining moment for Syria—not only to prove its capabilities to the international community but also to demonstrate to its own people that it has the competence to manage the country's recovery, diplomatic affairs and most importantly, the internal pillars of stability: employment, energy supply, and rule of law. It is also an opportunity for the Gulf states, the U.S. and Türkiye to support a potential ally in Damascus, rather than contend with a Syria aligned and backed by the leadership of Tehran.