

Culture and Entrepreneurship in Syria Revisited: What Changes Have Occurred Economically, Socially, and Politically?

Casimir Barczyk
Purdue University Northwest

Charles Rarick
Purdue University Northwest

Kasia Firlej
Purdue University Northwest

Gregory Winter
American University of Iraq

Submitted:

July 30, 2026

Accepted:

August 19, 2026

Revised:

September 2, 2026

Published:

October 16, 2026

Citation:

Barczyk C., Rarick, C.,
Firlej, K., & Winter, G.
(2026). Culture and
Entrepreneurship in Syria
Revisited: What Changes
Have Occurred
Economically, Socially,
and Politically? *Journal of
Management Policy and
Practice*, 27(2), 90–102.

This paper revisits a 2025 article asserting that people from the Syrian diaspora had a cultural orientation and mindset conducive to entrepreneurship. Arguing that these people hungered to return home to rebuild their war-torn country and create a new society, the authors cautiously predicted that entrepreneurship could succeed if Syria facilitated changes in its economic, social, and political environment. The question raised is what has occurred in the country over the last year. The paper opens with a background discussion on the situation in Syria leading to the December 2024 ouster of the Assad regime and subsequent installation of President Ahmed al-Sharaa's HTS government. Syria's new government appears to be making progress economically, socially, and politically. The country has realized a relaxation of sanctions, improvements in its economic environment, and the development of cross-border collaborations. The outlook for the role of entrepreneurship in rebuilding Syria is positive and optimistic.

Keywords: cultural values, entrepreneurship, Hofstede, national culture, Syria

INTRODUCTION

In a study of the cultural values of a group of Syrian people living in a refugee camp operated by a non-governmental organization in Turkey,

researchers found that the people dispossessed of their land – the diaspora – would likely return to their homes with a mindset towards entrepreneurship (Barczyk, Rarick, Winter, and Firlej, 2025). Envisioning a dream long in the making, they would build a new society. The researchers believed the Syrian diaspora had the resilience and cultural orientation to foster the entrepreneurship needed to rebuild their country and its devastated, war-torn economy. The key to success, they suggested, was to maintain peace, which included bringing an end to the bombing by Israel and other countries, as well as a push for political stability. To sustain entrepreneurship, Syrians would need cross-border collaborations with the USA and neighboring countries.

This paper revisits the situation in Syria slightly more than a year after the December 2024 ouster of Bashar al-Assad and the publication of the article assessing the cultural values and entrepreneurial mindset of Syrians displaced to Turkey. It is organized into three sections. The first provides a background into the situational factors leading to the removal of the Assad regime, involving the 60-year reign of a corrupt family and a 13-year subjugation to bloody conflict. The installation of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) government ushered in an unprecedented opportunity for Syrians to break with the decades-long history of tyranny and create a rights-respecting country (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

The second summarizes the cultural values of the Syrian diaspora. While several factors are known to contribute to a country's success with entrepreneurship, one thought to have a significant influence is national culture. By understanding the cultural values of its people, countries can work with organizations to foster and effectively support entrepreneurship. In small but significant increments, entrepreneurs' work contributes to trade, helps restore infrastructure, and facilitates economic rebuilding. This paper assesses values using a five-dimensional model (Five D) of national culture developed by Geert Hofstede and Michael Bond (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Scores for the five dimensions are summarized for a group of Syrian refugees and compared to the scores for individuals from the USA. A brief description of the five dimensions is provided, along with details on values consistent with an entrepreneurial mindset.

The third section summarizes the current situation in Syria to assess the status of the conditions thought to be necessary for the successful development of entrepreneurship since the HTS government of Ahmed al-Sharaa has been installed. The conditions relate to changes in the country's economic, social, and political environments. Each environment is examined with a focus on answers to the following questions.

Economic: Have the people of the Syrian diaspora, because of their cultural mindset, returned to their homeland to engage in business, resulting in an increase in entrepreneurial start-ups? What is the government's three-part plan to develop a free market economy? How are policymakers aligning their economic agenda and working to ease international sanctions in order to promote long term foreign investment?

Social: How has the government addressed people's needs for food, security, and social programs within Syria? How are the authorities coordinating with international relief organizations to provide on-the-ground humanitarian assistance? What steps are being taken by the government to quell regional sectarian violence and to remedy past abuses?

Political: Has the country stabilized relations with regional powers, including Israel and Russia? Have airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria been halted along with a retreat in full-scale war? Has the Caesar Act enacted by the United States and other international sanctions been lifted?

BACKGROUND ON SYRIA AND ITS CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP

Syria is a Middle Eastern country home to diverse ethnic and religious groups. The country has a population of 22.1 million and covers a land area of 185,180 square kilometers (71,498 square miles). It is slightly larger than the state of Washington. The capital of the country is Damascus and the native language spoken is Arabic. In its history, France governed Syria following World War I. The French administered it under a mandate until 1946 when it ultimately gained independence. Uniting with Egypt in 1958, the country was called the United Arab Republic until it separated in 1961, establishing the Syrian Arab Republic (CIA World Factbook, 2025).

From 1946 onward, Syria was ruled by Hafez al-Assad, who died in 2000. After Hafez al-Assad's death, his son, Bashar al-Assad, was elected president in an uncontested election. A politically divided country, Syria became a victim of the 2010 Arab Spring. Anti-government rebels protesting the rule of al-Assad were met with harsh resistance by the Syrian army. In the chaos of the rebellion terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Nusra joined in a struggle to capture control of the country. The bloody civil war resulted in the Syrian diaspora with millions of people fleeing their country (Kahn & Khan, 2017). Many fled to Germany, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, welcomed the refugees. In 2018, an estimated 5.6 million Syrians fled their country, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2018).

The diaspora into Turkey and other countries caused a massive humanitarian crisis. Over the years, the Syrian pound's value has been eroded, with inflation reaching double digits. Reuters reports that the Central Bank of Syria currently has \$200 million in foreign exchange reserves, compared to \$17 billion in 2010 (Kozul-Wright, 2025). Among the challenges the country faces are the need for funding, peace, and security. The World Food Programme estimates that more than 3.1 million Syrians do not have enough food to eat (WFP Syria, 2024). Most of the country's oil and gas wells, electrical grids, roads, farmland and infrastructure have been destroyed. Syria has been further crippled by wide ranging Western sanctions imposed on the country and on Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the main group that overthrew Bashar al-Assad. HTS is now leading Syria's transition away from the corrupt system that gave loyalists to the Assad family not only privileged access to government contracts but also control over key industries. The corruption extended into Assad's lucrative production of Captagon, an illegal addictive amphetamine used widely in the Gulf states (Kozul-Wright, 2025).

Early observers of the political situation were unable to see an end to the hostilities and predict a return of the Syrian refugees to their homeland (Kirisci, 2017; Vignal, 2018). However, much has quickly changed since December 2024. The imperative now is to stabilize HTS, the caretaker government seeking to introduce a free-market system, overhaul the tax system, and allay concerns about goods shortages. Entrepreneurship is vital to buttress HTS's efforts to rebuild Syria's economy.

While Syrian refugees are sometimes labeled in the news as a problem, it is important to remember the hardships they faced in leaving their country during its brutal civil war. Losing their homes, escaping destruction, and confronted with trauma and even death, they arrived in the refugee camps of their host countries with determination to make the most of their new sanctuaries. Many in Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey and other countries have taken the initiative to start their own businesses, becoming immigrant entrepreneurs. Evidence suggests that some of the Syrian diaspora has the motivation and mindset to pursue various types of entrepreneurship (Bayram, 2019). With the ouster of the Assad regime and recent positive changes that have occurred, it is likely that many of the displaced Syrians will return to their homeland.

CULTURAL VALUES OF THE SYRIAN DIASPORA

What Are Cultural Values and How Are They Measured?

Cultural values are defined as "desirable goals and guiding principles that are shared among members of a social collective, reflecting the norms and beliefs prevalent within a particular culture" (ScienceDirect.com). Researchers view them as people's underlying ideals that influence individual and societal behavior across different cultural contexts.

Perhaps the most renowned writer on cultural values is Geert Hofstede, an industrial psychologist who directed the personnel research division at IBM Europe. According to Hofstede, theories of organizations and management were not universal; they were bound by culture. He maintained that managerial behavior thought to be appropriate in one culture may be inappropriate in another. Therefore, effective managerial behavior should be predicated on a firm understanding of cultural values (Hofstede, 1980a; Hofstede, 1980b; Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede, 1993; Hofstede, 1994; Hofstede, 1997; Hofstede, 2001).

Initially, Hofstede's research identified four dimensions of culture - power distance (PDI), individualism/collectivism (IDV), masculinity/femininity (MAS), and uncertainty avoidance (UAI).

Collaborating with Hofstede, Michael Bond developed a fifth dimension to the model (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). It is called long-term orientation (LTO).

Power distance refers to the degree to which members of a society expect power to be shared among themselves. Individualism is a dimension that refers to the importance of the individual over the group in terms of societal focus. Masculinity (now referred to as “motivation toward achievement and success”) refers to the extent to which a culture values competition, assertiveness, and the acquisition of material goods. This is contrasted with femininity, which values nurturing, relationships, and a concern for others. Uncertainty avoidance is a dimension that refers to a culture’s collective tolerance for ambiguity. Long-term orientation is the last dimension in the Five D model. It reflects the extent to which a society encourages and rewards future-oriented behavior such as planning, delaying gratification, and investing in the future.

What Are the Cultural Values of the Syrian Diaspora?

A study of cultural values revealed that the Syrian diaspora is high in power distance, moderate in individualism, very high in motivation toward achievement and success, low in uncertainty avoidance, and relatively high in long-term orientation (Barczyk, Rarick, Firlej, and Winter, 2025). Figure 1 summarizes the scores for the Syrian diaspora on Hofstede’s five dimensions. It also summarizes the scores for the USA on each dimension for comparison.

FIGURE 1
CULTURAL DIMENSION SCORES FOR SYRIA AND USA

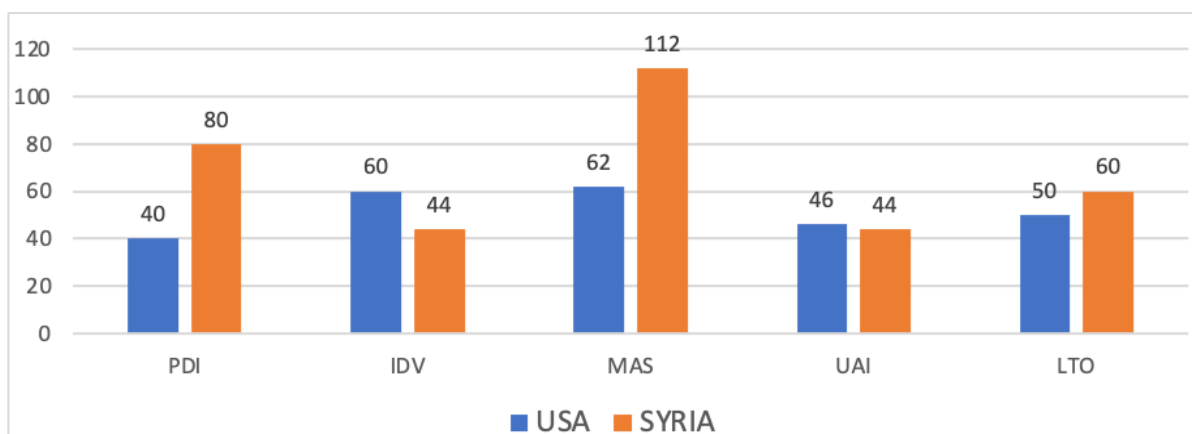


Figure 1 compares the cultural dimension scores for the Syrian diaspora with those for the USA. The figure shows that Syrians' scores are not greatly dissimilar to Americans', whose nation is recognized as the most entrepreneurially invested country in the world (Jones, 2024). This comparison is enlightening because if the returning Syrian diaspora has a cultural orientation resembling the USA, it will likely be positioned to engage in the much-needed entrepreneurship necessary for economic recovery. The data summarized in Figure 1 suggest that people from the Syrian diaspora generally have values consistent with entrepreneurship. Several cultural dimensions found among the Syrian diaspora (uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and individualism) are similar to those found in the USA, suggesting that Syrians have a mindset conducive to entrepreneurship.

Figure 1 shows that people of the Syrian diaspora have a score of 80 on power distance (PDI). This suggests that, as a group, they place a low value on equality among societal members. High power distance suggests a value preference for power concentration and a more autocratic approach to management. This score is inconsistent with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Syrians from the diaspora have a score of 44 on individualism/collectivism (IDV). It differs from the score of 60 for the USA, a country considered to be the most individualistically oriented in the world. The

Syrian diaspora is somewhat collectivistic. It has cultural values associated with loyalty and strong relationships, where people take responsibility for fellow members of their group. With an emphasis on the group rather than on the individual, the Syrian diaspora does not have a cultural orientation strongly correlated with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Figure 1 also shows that, with a score of 112 on the motivation toward achievement and success (MAS) dimension, people in the Syrian diaspora have an extremely high regard for masculine values. This high score indicates a strong preference for competitive behavior, materialism, rigid role relationships, and aggressiveness in organizational interactions. This very high MAS score suggests a mindset strongly associated with entrepreneurship.

The people of the Syrian diaspora have a moderately low score of 44 for uncertainty avoidance (UAI). This suggests a culture that accepts change and is comfortable with uncertainty. It is one where procedures and rigid rules are not seen as necessary or desirable – in organizations or in a country. The UAI score for the Syrian diaspora is almost identical to the USA's score of 46. It is one correlated with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Figure 1 also shows that the Syrian diaspora's culture is somewhat long-term oriented toward time. Its long-term orientation (LTO) score is 60, very similar to the USA's score of 50. People in high LTO cultures are not overly concerned with the present. They do not expect quick results from actions taken. Their managerial orientation is not generally on present problems or conditions. In highly long-term-oriented cultures, the focus is not on what can be obtained instantly, but on what can be achieved in the long run. The LTO score for the people of the Syrian diaspora is consistent with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Syria's many years of civil war has resulted in collapsing infrastructure, funding challenges, cities surrounded by rubble, an absence of internet service, and frequently, an absence of running water. The reconstruction effort in Damascus alone is estimated to cost between \$250 and \$400 billion (Kozul-Wright, 2025). Despite these challenges, Syrians attitude toward entrepreneurship is nothing short of extraordinary. They view it as an existential imperative, with over 80% of Syrians seeing entrepreneurial activity as "extremely important" for survival and rebuilding the country's economy (Bayram, 2025). The key to making entrepreneurship successful is to nurture new entrepreneurs and encourage cross-border collaborations with the USA and neighboring countries.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SYRIA

This section focuses on what has occurred economically, socially, and politically in Syria since the new government was installed. Improvements on these fronts were cited as critical to successfully seeding and nurturing entrepreneurship. Many things were promised by Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa and by US President Donald Trump as part of the new vision for Syria. The questions are: what has actually happened, what is the current situation in the country, and what impact has this had on entrepreneurship?

The Economic Environment

Syria found its infrastructure and economy in shambles after the overthrow of the Assad regime. No less than 90% of the country's population lives in poverty. Despite this grim picture, there is a great deal of hope for entrepreneurial rebuilding (Wamda, 2025). The HTS government has a plan to replace the state-run system with a free-market economy. The three major elements of the new economic model include a plan for currency unification. This entails eliminating multiple exchange rates for the Syrian pound to bring about financial stability.

The second element of the model relates to privatization and trade. Authorities have begun dismantling controls on imports and exports. They are engaged in establishing public-private partnerships to facilitate the movement of goods between factories, ports, and airports.

The third element of the economic model involves implementing austerity measures to stabilize the government budget. In line with those measures, there have been significant cuts or removal of the subsidies for essential goods such as bread, fuel, and electricity. This has made life for the typical Syrian even more difficult because it raises the overall cost-of-living. It is exacerbated by the fact that three out of four Syrians

still rely on some form of humanitarian aid and funding gaps for agencies assisting families remain a critical concern. International monitoring groups estimate that 16.5 million people require assistance, but the needs of only 10.3 million can be addressed due to funding shortfalls. This situation became even more dismal in the last year partly because 2.5 million Syrians from the diaspora returned home, making conditions in the country somewhat fragile (International Organization for Migration, 2025).

Increasing Entrepreneurial Start-Ups

While millions of Syrians were forcibly displaced, many are returning home with an entrepreneurial determination to help their country rise from its devastation. They have become beacons of hope and resilience. Entrepreneurship in Syria is not waiting for recovery; it is recovery (Wamda, 2025). People in the diaspora are returning to Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs (Hamida, 2025) with passion and a wealth of ideas to transform Syria's future. According to recent government figures, entrepreneurship in Syria is on an upward trajectory. A total of 5,768 new companies were established in the country during the first five months of 2025. New company registrations were primarily in three areas: trade, services, and the industrial sector. They also occurred in the agricultural, contracting, and financial services sectors, though in smaller numbers than in the top three. Entrepreneurial interest in the trade and service sectors is viewed as promising for the country because it aligns with a trend seen in other developing or transitioning economies (Hamida, 2025).

The returning Syrian diaspora bring hope, ideas, and innovation as they seek to rebuild their nation from the ground up. Their entrepreneurial mindset has resulted in the return of small and medium-sized capital. Based on some estimates, there has been a notable surge in the establishment of shops, companies, and small factories. Taken together, this signals renewed confidence in local opportunities, despite high operating costs and unsupportive infrastructure. It brings with it new jobs, a revitalized real estate market, and an inflow of currency brought by returning investors (Levant 24, 2026). Equipped with capital and expertise, the refugee Syrians play a pivotal role in rebuilding foundations for investment and a more sustainable economic future.

The perception of entrepreneurship in Syria has shifted dramatically. The view of entrepreneurs as being "extremely important" in the country surged from 26% in 2015 to 80.5% in 2024. This paradigm shift has fostered a spirit of innovation and collaboration among the Syrian youth. Women, as well, play an important role in entrepreneurial start-ups. Female participation has significantly risen from 4.4% in 2009 to nearly 35% in 2024. Fueled by necessity during the years of conflict, women are now empowered to become key contributors to Syria's social and economic recovery (Wamda, 2025). While some business failures are likely, surviving entrepreneurial start-ups are expected to contribute to job creation and economic output, which are crucial for Syria's long-term business ecosystem (Hamida, 2025).

Foreign Investment

Syrian policymakers are aligned around an economic agenda that promotes long-term investment rather than donor dependency. This is a new perspective. At the Future Investment Initiative (FII) 2025 conference in Riyadh, President al-Sharaa said that his country wants "to rebuild Syria through investment, not through aid and assistance." He indicated that his government is committed to protecting investors through laws that will integrate Syria into the regional and global economy. Among other things, the Central Bank is poised to revive the financial sector by reconnecting with SWIFT, the global payment system. Along with the country's new Investment Banks Law, this is designed to meet reconstruction financing needs. Overall, these initiatives will enhance Syria's appeal as a "financial hub for reconstruction capital" (Avcioglu, 2025).

Following the fall of the Assad regime, Western countries began lifting sanctions, which is encouraging foreign investors to reengage with Syria. Six months after the enactment of the Investment Bank Law in early 2025, Syria attracted \$28 billion in foreign investment. In July, Damascus hosted the first Syria-Saudi Investment Forum, culminating in the development of 44 proposals worth \$6 billion. At the same time, Syria entered into an agreement valued at \$800 million with Dubai Ports World to upgrade its port infrastructure and logistics. In August, Syria signed memoranda of agreement with companies in Qatar, Italy, Turkey, and the UAE valued at \$14 billion. It later finalized a series of energy agreements with Saudi

Arabia. A \$7 billion energy investment deal signed by companies from the US, Qatar, and Turkey promises to boost Syria's electricity supply, improving living conditions for millions. And finally, a consortium of partners from Turkey, Qatar, United States, and Syria is engaging in a massive modernization of Damascus International Airport – the largest infrastructure project undertaken in years. Estimated at \$4 billion, the project includes new terminals and major rehabilitation over the next 10 years that will increase the airport's capacity to more than 31 million passengers (Avcioglu, 2025).

The HTS government has worked diligently to establish these agreements following Syria's long period under international sanctions that have eroded investor confidence. Rebuilding trust, by necessity, will take time. Baraa Khurfan, a researcher focusing on governance and economy in Syria, said that "the wave of investment conferences inside Syria – and the memoranda signed during them – represent an initial sign of movement toward an investment-driven approach rather than one centered on aid appeals" (Avcioglu, 2025).

The Social Environment

Syria's social environment can be described as marked by vulnerability. The transition from an authoritarian regime to a free-market economy is fraught with many challenges. An estimated three million refugees and internally displaced persons are now back in Syria. They are returning to destroyed homes, crumbling infrastructure, and a persistent lack of electric service. Clean water is in short supply. Moreover, an estimated 7 million people remain displaced. This is causing an enormous strain on the country's social structure. Approximately 134,000 Syrians were forced to leave their homes in the north and northeast of the country in early 2026 due to localized clashes (Al-Awsat, 2026).

Sources at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies report that Syria's lack of resources and social structures is exacting a significant strain on the country's population. Only 62% of the hospitals in Syria are functional. A severe winter has damaged about 1800 tents in Aleppo and Idlib, leaving thousands of people homeless and cold. Because of a severe housing crisis, three million children cannot attend school as buildings are repurposed as shelters (ReliefWeb, 2026).

According to the International Organization for Migration (2025), one of the biggest sources of social instability remains sectarian violence, mostly between Sunnis and Alawites. Tensions continue between the central government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the northeast.

The recent movement of Syrian refugees from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan to their native land suggests that there is hope for stability and economic recovery fueled by entrepreneurial endeavors. The refugees, however, continue to face shortages in almost all the necessities required for daily living. The threat of sectarian violence makes this situation even more acute.

In response to these critical social problems, the Syrian government has begun rebuilding state institutions. Steps are being taken to provide relief to the 16 million Syrians who need humanitarian assistance and vital services. The rebuilding work is being coordinated through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, headed by Minister Hind Kabawat. The ministry has five strategic objectives, which are to:

1. Assist international organizations to rebuild local social services offices
2. Restore social protection programs
3. Expand assistance for poor families
4. Assist widows, orphans, and disabled people
5. Support employment and vocational training (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, 2026).

Because governmental resources are severely constrained, much of the practical work of rebuilding Syrian social systems is being carried out through partnerships with UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration, and the United Nations Development Program. They are working on programs to restore water and sanitation systems, reopen schools, vaccinate people, and provide necessary health care. Additionally, they are managing programs to nutritionally support children, furnish psychosocial services for people affected by the war, and assist internally displaced people (IDPs) and returning refugees (UNICEF, 2026).

To address the problem of regional conflict and past abuses, in 2025, the government established the National Commission for Transitional Justice. Headquartered in Damascus and led by Abdulbaset Abdullatif, the Commission has a mandate to investigate abuses during the civil war, promote accountability, support victims, and encourage national reconciliation. The Commission is positioned to play a major role in building unity and providing post-conflict stabilization. It is an attempt to balance reconciliation with accountability by (1) addressing the grievances of affected communities and (2) laying the necessary groundwork for governance reform and sustainable peace. The Commission is mandated to coordinate with national and international partners to ensure that it follows international standards of justice and reconciliation. These efforts, it is hoped, will reduce social divisions and rebuild trust in public institutions (SANA, 2025).

With the restoration of basic municipal services, the reopening of government offices, and the repair of damaged infrastructure, Syrians in the diaspora are being encouraged to return home. Some of the refugees have returned in 2025 and more are expected to return in 2026. However, many are still hesitant to return to Syria because of the challenges they would face and the continuing security concerns. The returning refugees are primarily settling in Aleppo, Damascus, Idlib, and Homs with significant numbers returning to Ar-Raqqa, Dar'a, and Hama. Humanitarian agencies are assisting families returning to their homeland (HNRP, 2026).

The government of Syria is preparing to launch its National Recovery Strategy during the first half of 2026. This will facilitate the recovery and reconstruction efforts in the country. Economic recovery is projected to continue on a more positive trajectory, though liquidity constraints will challenge it as the country transitions to its new currency. Once the strategy is implemented, development aid will gradually flow into the country and help bridge service gaps and strengthen government capacity (HNRP, 2026). Overall, the Syrian government has made measurable progress in organizing transitional justice, restoring public services, and developing a framework for new political institutions to address the country's critical social needs. This will positively affect Syria's diaspora's willingness to return and contribute to economic development through entrepreneurship.

The Political Environment

Over the last year Syria's HTS government has implemented changes aimed to rebuild the country and facilitate the development of entrepreneurship. It has focused on restructuring governance frameworks, consolidating the armed forces, rehabilitating the devastated economy, advancing reconciliation efforts and justice systems, and reintegrating the country into the international community (Security Council Report, 2025). It has begun developing a free-market system in the country, starting with the appointment of Maysaa Sabrine as the new governor of the Syrian Central Bank, the first woman to lead the institution in its 70-year history. According to Reuters, HTS also wants to restructure the financial ministries and overhaul the tax system. Mohammed Abazeed, Syrian finance minister, said that he expects to have "a well-designed tax system that takes the interests of all taxpayers into account" (Kozul-Wright, 2025).

According to professor of economics Oman Dahi of Hampshire College in Massachusetts, the sanctions imposed on Syria by Western nations need to be eased and, in many cases, lifted. He states that "in addition to war-related costs, sanctions drained business activity and shrunk the government's tax base" (Kozul-Wright, 2025). Syria's tax revenue to GDP ratio fell from 11 to 5 percent in 2021, representing approximately \$4.5 billion – one of the world's lowest tax shares. Suggesting that the USA is willing to engage with the HTS government, on December 20, 2024, Washington removed a \$10 million bounty for Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Relations With Regional Powers

The UN recognizes that regional stability with Israel, Russia, and Turkey are critical to the success of the new Syrian government. The United States and Russia worked together on a UN presidential statement following the violence in Syria's coastal areas. The statement urges Syria to take decisive measures against foreign terrorist fighters, which came in response to the sectarian conflict in March 2025, which left hundreds of civilians dead in Latakia and Tartous. The violence erupted when Alawite militias loyal to

Assad, who is of Alawite ethnic descent, coordinated attacks against the HTS governments' security and military sites. This led to HTS forces moving into the region to pursue the Assad-loyalist fighters, resulting in large-scale killings of many civilians (What's in Blue: Security Council Report, 2025a).

One key issue in the negotiation of the US and Russian presidential statement among members of the UN centers on Israel's military activity in Syria. Members have expressed concerns that Israel's actions in Syria following the ouster of Assad is contributing to further instability in the country. It is coming at a time when Syria is facing various other security challenges. Ultimately the Security Council settled on language in its press statement calling for Israel and Syria to "refrain from any action or interference that may further destabilize Syria." The statement called for all parties to abide by the principles regarding the Area of Separation in the Golan, stressing that all parties have an obligation to "fully abide by its terms and to maintain calm and reduce tensions" (What's in Blue, Security Council Report, 2025a).

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited an outpost in southern Syria on November 19, 2025. He told the troops in this Israeli-held territory that its presence is of "immense importance" to safeguarding the country's security and the Druze population. Syrian Representative to the UN Ibrahim Olabi said that his government "strongly condemns this provocative tour" and calls on the UN's Security Council to take action to halt such violations by Israel. Najat Rochdi, the UN Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, condemned the visit and called for an end to Israeli violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Days later, on November 28, Israel conducted a raid and airstrikes on Beit Jinn, a town in southern Syria, killing at least 13 people including two children and wounding 25 others (Security Council Report, 2025). Relations with Israel remain a problem for the Syrian government, but this may be improved with patience, time, and further negotiation. The US has been mediating talks between Syria and Israel for a security agreement in the area, but without success (Berg, 2025).

Another regional conflict erupted in Suweida, a southern governorate of Syria. It involved deadly clashes between Bedouin tribes and Druze militias. Human Rights Groups reported that around 1,622 people, including 166 civilians have been killed since July 13, 2025. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a statement on July 18, 2025, noting that it had received credible reports of summary executions, kidnapping, looting, and arbitrary killings in Suweida. The reported perpetrators included members of the security forces and individuals affiliated with the interim authorities as well as other "armed elements", including people from the Druze and Bedouin communities. The hostilities displaced nearly 191,000 inhabitants in the region, which has affected the delivery of essential services and much-needed aid. Denmark issued a UN Presidential Statement on August 10, 2025 in response to these hostilities. The statement refers to the political situation in Syria, drawing upon the language of UN resolution 2254, drafted in 2015. It relates to the political process in Syria and calls for "the implementation of an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process." It also "reaffirms the importance of the UN's role in supporting Syria's political transition." Denmark's presidential statement is the second such product adopted by the UN's Security Council in response to the mass violence directed at a minority population in Syria. Earlier, the Council adopted the jointly authored US-Russian presidential statement condemning the atrocities directed at the Alawite minority population (What's in Blue: Security Council Report, 2025b).

While a ceasefire was negotiated on July 18, 2025, violent clashes broke out between the two groups in November, leading to injuries on both sides of the conflict. Clearly, the US-brokered ceasefire agreement is fragile, but at a November 16 press conference following the attacks, Syria's National Committee on the Suweida crisis provided an update on its work, saying that it has "requested the arrest of several army, security, and civilian personnel suspected of involvement in abuses" (Security Council Report, 2025).

Military Action Against ISIS Targets

In response to a December 13 attack on military personnel from the Iowa National Guard that killed two US soldiers and a civilian interpreter in Palmyra, the US launched large-scale strikes against dozens of Islamic State (IS) targets in Syria. A US-led coalition had been operating in Syria carrying out airstrikes and ground operations targeting suspects from the Islamic State. Syria's security forces cooperated in those operations. According to Pete Hegseth, US Secretary of War, the strikes targeted "ISIS fighters,

infrastructure, and weapons sites.” President Donald Trump commented on social media that the Syrian government fully supported the strikes, and that the US was inflicting “very serious retaliation” (Ali and Stewart, 2025). Through its foreign ministry Syria reiterated its steadfast commitment to ensuring that the Islamic State has “no safe havens on Syrian territory.” Syria has been cooperating with a coalition led by the US against the IS and reached an agreement in November 2025 after President Ahmed al-Sharaa visited the White House (Ali and Stewart, 2025).

On January 10, 2026, the US engaged in another round of retaliatory strikes in Syria against the Islamic State group for their terrorist ambush in Palmyra. The large-scale strikes, conducted by the US and partner forces, hit multiple IS targets operating across Syria. The strikes targeted at least 35 locations and involved more than 20 aircraft, according to a US official (Sang, 2026). The Jordanian military later announced that they had participated in the attack. One day prior to the US strikes, Syrian officials reported that their security forces had arrested the military leader of IS operations in the Levant. As of this date, no further airstrikes have been launched against ISIS in Syria. This bodes well for Syria’s being able to focus on rebuilding its economy and infrastructure, rather than on military action.

US Sanctions: The Caesar Act

The Caesar Act, known also as the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, was legislation passed in the United States that sanctioned the former Syrian government. The law was named after a Syrian military photographer who was code-named “Caesar.” He smuggled photos of torture victims out of the country to expose the atrocities to the world. The purpose of the Act was to deter foreign support for Syria’s corrupt Assad regime. It aimed to promote accountability for human rights abuses. The Caesar Act sanctioned transactions with the Syrian government including military aircraft, construction, petroleum, and natural gas infrastructure (Wikipedia, 2026).

Congress repealed the Caesar Act through the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. However, targeted sanctions remain on specific individuals such as Bashar al-Assad and entities supporting terrorism, Iran and its proxies. The US’s new policy is to support Syria’s economic recovery and reconstruction. Its policy is to encourage investment in Syria, while targeting terrorism and illicit financing. The US seeks to support the new Syrian government of President Ahmed al-Sharaa in its effort to rebuild, provided it demonstrates a commitment to peace and reform.

Other International Sanctions

Aside from those imposed by the United States, countries of the European Union and the United Kingdom had sanctions against Syria in response to the brutal Assad regime. However, on June 23, 2025, the EU joined other nations in easing their sanctions targeting Syria because of the country’s changing political situation. The UK has also recently eased its sanctions against war-torn Syria. The EU and the UK previously maintained broadly applied sanctions that targeted gas and electricity – both supply and production. This included equipment as well as technology related to energy exploration, production, liquefaction, and refining. It also applied to construction or installation of new power plants for electricity production. The sanctions also applied to financing of Syrian parties involved in oil exploration, production, refining, or the construction and installation of new power plants. The sanctions banned any import, purchase, or transport of Syrian crude oil or petroleum products. These far-reaching sanctions have been lifted by the EU and the UK. Both the EU and UK have removed various entities that engaged in the production or supply of gas, oil, or other petroleum products from their asset freeze lists (Nordin, Pearson, and Pessotto, 2025).

The EU as well as the UK have removed sanctions on cargo flights operated by Syrian carriers that prohibited them from accessing airports in the EU and UK. They have also removed the Central Bank of Syria and Syrian Arab Airlines from their lists of asset freezes. The UK has removed Syria’s Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Defense from its asset freeze lists. The EU has not removed these Syrian ministries from its asset freeze lists.

The EU and UK also lifted sanctions previously applied to transportation, import and export, as well as financial services. While it might seem like sanctions against Syria were lifted from every industry, certain

ones remain in place. Asset freezes and travel bans have not been eased under the laws of the EU and UK for persons deemed responsible for violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or those who have supported or benefited from the Assad regime. Surprisingly, President Al-Sharaa and other members of the transitional Syrian government are on the travel ban lists of the EU and UK (Nordin, Pearson, and Pessotto, 2025). Several targeted trade sanctions against Syria remain in place. However, many sanctions imposed by the international community, particularly the EU and UK, have been lifted or are currently being lifted. Keep in mind that easing sanctions on Syria is reversible and depends on the actions of the country's new government.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Cultural values are critical to the promotion of effective and harmonious relationships. They drive attitudes, thinking, decisions, behaviors, and actions. Understanding and using them can be a helpful tool to the practice of entrepreneurship. This paper revisited and extended the cultural assessment of a group of displaced Syrian people housed in a Turkish NGO refugee camp. The assessment concluded that the Syrian diaspora had cultural values and a mindset conducive to entrepreneurship. It was argued that if they returned to their homeland, their entrepreneurial work would help build a better society. Their efforts would yield substantial social and economic dividends to a country that was devastated by a hostile regime and brutal civil war. In their concluding remarks, the authors were cautiously optimistic about the number and effect of entrepreneurial start-ups to bolster the war-torn economy. They argued that entrepreneurship could flourish only with an end to economic sanctions, a commitment to peace, an end to hostilities, favorable government policies toward business, an efficient social system to address hunger and poverty, and collaborative relationships with the US and neighboring countries.

This analysis found that one year after the dissolution of the corrupt Assad regime, the Syrian government has made tremendous strides in stabilizing and rebuilding the country, invigorating its economy, and providing humanitarian help so people can regain a semblance of normalcy. With an increase in entrepreneurship and programs designed to facilitate it, Syria is on a trajectory stimulated by hope with an aim for success.

REFERENCES

- Al-Awsat, A. (2026). *UN says 134,000 displaced in northeast Syria after clashes between government, Kurds*. Asharq Al-Awsat. Retrieved from <https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/5232807-un-says-134000-displaced-northeast-syria-after-clashes-between-govt-kurds>
- Ali, I., & Stewart, P. (2025). *US strikes Islamic State targets in Syria, New York Times reports*. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-strikes-islamic-state-targets-syria-new-york-times-reports-2025-12-19/>
- Avcioglu, M. (2025). *One year after revolution, Syria turns to investment—not aid—for reconstruction*. Anadolu Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/1-year-after-revolution-syria-turns-to-investment-not-aid-for-reconstruction/3763243>
- Barczyk, C., Rarick, C., Firlej, K., & Winter, G. (2025). The returning Syrian diaspora: A cultural assessment and implications for entrepreneurship. *American Journal of Management*, 25(3), 126–137.
- Bayram, A. (2019). *Entrepreneurship in exile: Insights into Syrian refugee startups in host countries*. Retrieved from <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5cf1fea43fd8f9d99c9d1ae1e67f8fa7-0550012023/related/05-icc-case-study-start-up-syria.pdf>
- Berg, R. (2025, November 28). *Thirteen killed in deadliest Israeli raid for months in southern Syria*. BBC. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp89k31krz4o.amp>
- Central Intelligence Agency. (2025). *The world factbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>

- Hamida, M. (2025). *Syria sees significant rise in new company registrations in early 2025*. Startup3lmashi. Retrieved from https://www.startup3lmashi.com/p/syria-sees-significant-rise-in-new?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web
- HNRP. (2026). *Syria humanitarian needs and response plan 2026*. Retrieved from <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1518/document/syria-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2026>
- Hofstede, G. (1980a). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (1980b). Motivation, leadership, and organization: Do American theories apply abroad? *Organizational Dynamics*, 16(4), 42–63.
- Hofstede, G. (1983). The cultural reliability of organizational practices and theories. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 14, 75–89.
- Hofstede, G. (1993). Cultural constraints in management theories. *The Executive*, 7(1), 81–94.
- Hofstede, G. (1994). Management scientists are human. *Management Science*, 40(1), 4–13.
- Hofstede, G. (1997). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences*. Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. (1988). The Confucian connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics*, 16(4), 5–21.
- Human Rights Watch. (2025). *Syria: One year since Assad's fall*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/08/syria-one-year-since-assads-fall>
- Human Rights Watch. (2026). *Syria: Events of 2025*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/syria>
- International Organization for Migration. (2025). *Syrian Arab Republic crisis response plan 2026*. Retrieved from <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/syrian-arab-republic-crisis-response-plan-2026>
- Jones, L. (2024). World's most entrepreneurial countries, 2024. *CEOWORLD Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://ceoworld.biz/2024/04/05/worlds-most-entrepreneurial-countries-2024/>
- Khan, H., & Khan, W. (2017). Syria: History, the civil war and peace prospects. *Journal of Political Studies*, 24(2), 587–601.
- Kirisci, K. (2017, June 22). Don't forget non-Syrian refugees in Turkey. *Brookings Press*.
- Kozul-Wright, A. (2025). *Rebuilding Syria's economy: Can stability return after war?* Al Jazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2025/1/8/rebuilding-syrias-economy-can-stability-return-after-war>
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. (2026). *Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor*. Retrieved from <https://www.syrianpws.org/en/partners/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-labor>
- Nordin, S., Pearson, E., & Pessotto, E. (2025). *Status update: EU and UK easing of sanctions on Syria*. White & Case. Retrieved from <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-alert/status-update-eu-and-uk-easing-sanctions-syria>
- ReliefWeb. (2026). *Complex emergency—Syria: Flash update #1*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/complex-emergency-syria-flash-update-1-north-northeast-escalation-mdrsy014>
- SANA [Syrian Arab News Agency]. (2025). *Presidency of the Republic: Presidential Decree No. 20 establishing the National Transitional Justice Authority*. Retrieved from <https://sana.sy/en/syria/355958/>
- Sang, L. (2026). *US airstrikes hit ISIS targets in Syria, officials say*. CBS News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-airstrikes-isis-targets-syria-central-command/>
- ScienceDirect. (2025). *Cultural values*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/cultural-values>
- Security Council Report. (2025). *Syria*. Retrieved from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2025-12/syria-86.php>
- UNHCR. (2018). *Syria emergency*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>

- UNICEF. (2026). *Syrian Arab Republic humanitarian situation report No. 18*. Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/media/179506/file/Syrian-Arab-Republic-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.18-\(End-of-Year\)-31-December-2025.pdf.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/179506/file/Syrian-Arab-Republic-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.18-(End-of-Year)-31-December-2025.pdf.pdf)
- Vignal, L. (2018). Perspectives on the return of Syrian refugees. *Forced Migration Review*, 57, 69–70.
- Wamda. (2025). *Starting up a nation: Why Syria's future depends on its entrepreneurs*. Retrieved from https://www.wamda.com/ar/2025/02/starting-nation-syria-future-depends-entrepreneurs?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- WFP Syria Emergency Response. (2024, December 24). *WFP Syria emergency response: External situation report 02*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/wfp-syria-emergency-response-external-situation-report-02-27-december-2024>
- What's in Blue: Security Council Report. (2025a). *Syria: Adoption of presidential statement*. Retrieved from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/03/syria-adoption-of-presidential-statement.php>
- What's in Blue: Security Council Report. (2025b). *Syria: Adoption of presidential statement*. Retrieved from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/08/syria-adoption-of-presidential-statement-2.php>
- Wikipedia. (2025). *Caesar Act*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesar_Syria_Civilian_Protection_Act