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Just Peace Diplomacy Journal’s primary areas of interest are peace, security and stability, militarism, energy and international presence in the Middle East and Central Asia.

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Our Vision:

*In the beginning all people were one nation* (Holy Qur’an, 2:213)

Throughout human history, peace has always been the ‘primary state’ and war the ‘accidental state’. Peace is beautiful, compassionate and constructive, while war is fearsome, merciless and destructive. Unfortunately, despite this, war has been one of 20th century’s most major problems, and has proved to be the symbol of the beginning of the 21st century. As portrayed by the contemporary history of international relations, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asia, war is not the solution, nor is it constructive or helpful in solving problems; rather, it causes problems and is the root of the continuation of violence, instability and insecurity.

War is not the solution to the differences between governments and nations. Only with peace which is based on justice, i.e. ‘*Just Peace*’, can we reach a stable and permanent solution to our differences. Diplomacy and constructive dialogue which take into consideration the rights of both parties, is the only path to establishing ‘*Just Peace*’, stability and world security. Our aim is to change international relations with the active participation of nations on the basis of ‘*Just Peace*’.

*Let there be a group among you who will invite others to good.* (Holy Qur’an, 3:104)

We, as part of the international network of intellectuals, are able to play an important and constructive role in the establishment of mutual understanding, of dialogue and in the reduction and amelioration of global problems. Our intention is to provide solutions and means for the positive and just cooperation of nations with each other, and to reach this end independent of governments, through a realistic understanding of nations and governments from each other, and through clear, truthful and constructive dialogue.
The Principles of Establishing ‘Just Peace’:

1. Establishing justice between the countries of the South and the North.
2. Mutual respect between different nations and different governments.
3. Respecting and considering the valid interests of all parties which have a vested interest in any given conflict.
4. Thinking globally and acting against extreme nationalism.
5. Realistic understanding of the realities of the world.
6. Upholding and respecting human rights and the principles of democracy.
7. Accepting and moving towards the destruction of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world/on a global scale

Our priorities in the current situation are to analyse the issues and problems of conflict-zones such as those of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

Our tools for aiding in the establishment of world peace are:

1. Inviting and facilitating for intellectuals from different parts of the world to engage in dialogue with each other.
2. Dialogue between intellectuals and international organizations.
3. Preparing the groundwork for dialogue between on the basis of mutual respect between opposing governments.
4. Organising international scientific conferences dealing with regional and global issues.
5. Publishing scientific research work on peace studies in the form of books and journals.
6. Providing education internationally on the culture of dialogue, understanding, compromise, justice, freedom and spirituality.

We are a private, non-governmental organisation. Our offices are based in Europe and the Middle East.
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Syria Crisis; Regional Origins and International Implications

Dr. Mehrdad Navabakhsh¹
Dr. Tahere Torabi²

Abstract

This problem exists in terms of dealing with the government’s immediate behaviour of killing protesters, as well as what to do with a government that has never been an ally of the United States, and has increasingly problematic regional behaviour. The goal of the United States has been, and will continue to be, to break the resistance axis of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah. Previously, we had thought that would be achievable via a peace treaty between Israel and Syria. Now, policymakers have to consider that they’re going to have to deal with a different government in Damascus, eventually, and that a Sunni-led government in Damascus would create that break.

Some in the Syrian protest movement and in the West, including American officials, allege that Iran is actively helping Assad retain the post held by him or his late father for more than four decades. The White House late last month imposed
new sanctions on Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guard, alleging Iranian involvement in and support of the government crackdown.

However Iran strenuously denies providing material support or advice to Syria and has called for peaceful dialogue and reform there. If Iran is involved, that could further indebt Assad to Tehran, complicating efforts by the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia to coax Damascus to loosen its ties with Iran and the Islamist militant groups Hezbollah and Hamas.¹

This is a dilemma for the United States because it is accepted in Washington that the government is on a downward trajectory—that the Syria government faces a fundamental dilemma: that the reforms and changes that would be necessary would involve power-sharing between the minority Alawite government in Damascus, which is led by the Assads, and the Sunni majority in the country. Those political changes Bashar is not capable of, especially now that he is so reliant on the generals and the security chiefs that are Alawites, and the military and the army, for suppressing the revolt. What to do about that is a matter of debate. And that’s what’s currently going on in Washington—to try to understand that if something is broken in Syria, and the government is on a downward trajectory, what should Washington do?

Introduction

The Syrian revolt against the Baath Party government started with a small demonstration in the Al-Hariqa quarter of Damascus. The demonstration lasted for about half an hour before being dispersed by security forces who arrested many of the participants. The demonstration sparked a rapid succession of protests in different parts of Syria in the weeks that followed. The southern city of Dar’a; Latakia and Baniyas in the north; and Duma in Rif Dimashq were the most prominent sites of protest. In these places, the popular movement involved in the revolts faced tremendous
violence from the security services, leading to the deaths of approximately three hundred Syrians in one month of protests. However, neither the violence of the security apparatuses nor the official media narrative of foreign terrorist and Salafi agitation succeeded in quelling or confining the revolt.\textsuperscript{2}

There is no doubt that Friday, 15 April, marked a turning point in the Syrian revolt, whether in terms of the number of participants involved in public demonstrations, or in terms of the spread of the demonstrations throughout the country, to include cities with Kurdish, Druze and Christian majorities.

This may have prompted President Bashar al-Assad to try to contain the situation by delivering two speeches to the People’s Council (parliament) and the Council of Ministers, announcing the lifting of the state of emergency and a dissolving of the state security courts, as well as offering vague promises about future reforms. On Thursday, 21 April, he approved cabinet’s decision to abolish both the state of emergency and state security courts. Leaked reports, however, indicate that he had issued orders to suppress popular demonstrations that Syrian activists had announced for the next day. This is indeed what happened. Friday, 22 April, was a memorable day in the Syrian revolt.

1- The Nature of Social Movement in the Arab World

As the winds of Arab revolt began to blow late last December, and even after the fall of the Mubarak government in Egypt, few people had predicted that a popular movement would emerge so rapidly in Syria. The popular movement in Syria did indeed erupt, spreading to almost all parts of Syria in the demonstrations of Friday, 22 April. The next Friday (29 April) witnessed demonstrations in many parts of the country, wrecking the Syrian government’s hopes of containing the revolt by deploying troops and stepping-up its campaign of repression in Dar’a and Rif Dimashq.\textsuperscript{3}

As with Egypt, it cannot be said that there is one party or political movement that is behind the revolt, nor is there a particular individual
leading it. What is clear is that Syrians of all classes have participated in the demonstrations, and that the number of Syrian academics and political and civil organisations supporting the popular demands is both large and diverse. Even the Kurdish majority areas, marked in the past few years by separatist tendencies, abandoned their national-sectarian demands and raised the banners of freedom and dignity that were being carried in other Syrian cities. It is not yet clear whether Alawite-majority areas are siding with the popular movement, but Syrian Alawite leaders, known for their opposition to the government, have not hesitated in declaring their support for the people and their demands.

From the outset, Syrians have been conscious of the sensitivity around ethnic and sectarian diversity. As such, slogans emphasising the unity of the land and people, – and stressing the non-sectarian nature of the movement’s demands – were popularised. Although the size of the movement in Damascus and Aleppo was smaller than in cities like Dar’a, Baniyas, Homs and the town of Rif Dimashq, the protest movements that emerged in Syria’s two largest cities indicated that demonstrations were not confined to specific social classes – a phenomenon similar to that of the Arab revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. A single representative body that can speak on its behalf, or that clearly formulates and develops the demands of the revolt, has not yet emerged in the Syrian movement.4

2- The Causes of Syria Crisis Escalation

The protests in Syria are not entirely indigenous even if people have legitimate grievances. A much larger game is underway that has little to do with the rights of the people. The US, Israel and Saudi Arabia as well as exiled Syrian politicians are all involved in undermining the government of President Bashar al-Assad for their own nefarious ends. This is not to argue that Assad is a democrat or that he does not rule with an iron fist. Syria’s importance lies elsewhere: unlike governments in the rest of the Muslim East, it is not an American-Zionist puppet. In fact, it is part of the resistance alliance that includes Islamic Iran, Hizbullah and Hamas against US-Zionist aggression. Add to that the US-Zionist agents in Lebanon whose machinations to undermine
Hizbullah have been frustrated by the steadfastness of the resistance movement, and the picture begins to get clearer.

With the protests ongoing, what is clear is that the Syrian people will refuse to go back to the situation that existed prior to the revolt. President Assad’s vague and restricted statements have neither appeared to be convincing to the people, nor have they managed to reassert his credibility. It also does not appear that the Syrian people are ready to accept the government’s conflicting accounts of what is happening in the country as these accounts have lacked both logical coherence and convincing evidence.

There is no doubt that the increasing number of imprisoned, wounded and killed are indicative of the government’s lack of commitment regarding the long overdue and promised reforms. Furthermore, even if the government does undertake radical and comprehensive reforms with a clear timetable, it is no longer certain that it will be successful in containing the popular movement; the brutality of the government’s repression may have gone too far in the sense that the population may no longer consent to the government remaining in power – regardless of the reform measures it takes.

The government faces a dilemma that is only being exacerbated by its means of dealing with the revolt. It is clear that since Friday, 22 April, the government has resorted to the ‘Hama’ (the ‘Hama option’, as it is sometimes called – a reference to the 1982 crackdown by Syrian forces in the town of Hama\(^5\), option’ in dealing with the demonstrations; that is, letting loose troops loyal to the government on the city of Dar’a – that has since become a symbol of the revolt – regardless of the number of people killed and the devastation wrought upon the city. Through such action the government believes it can teach other Syrian cities a lesson in a manner that would quell the popular movement, just as it did in the early eighties.

The problem for the government is that what Syria is now witnessing is not analogous to ‘Hama’ in the sense that the international and regional contexts, as well as the size, facets and demands of the Syrian revolt
today, are entirely different from those that the government faced in the late seventies and early eighties. If the government sees force as the solution, it will not only need to suppress Dar’a, but perhaps all Syrian cities involved in the revolt before it can be assured of a return to a pre-revolt state of affairs. Such an option, however, has become untenable.

On the other hand, neither the nature of the ruling Syrian elite, nor the government’s record of responding to opposition, suggest that the Syrian revolt will be able to achieve its goals as quickly as the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, or with relatively limited loss of life from the ranks of the revolutionaries. The Syrian ruling elite is defending highly complex political, economic and religious interests, both regionally and locally, and has witnessed for itself the fate of those overthrown in Tunisia and Egypt. As such, the ruling elite will go to extreme lengths to ensure a maintenance of the status quo in Syria.

The position of the Syrian armed forces only adds to the complexity of the situation. The Syrian military is divided in terms of leadership and role, as well as in terms of loyalty to the government. As such, the possibility that the Syrian armed forces will take a unified position or play a unified role, as in the Tunisian and Egyptian cases, is unlikely. What is likely is that the government will enjoy unwavering loyalty from a considerable number of units in the armed forces.

3- The Pattern of Management Crisis of Syria

During the first few weeks of the revolts, aside from being ignored by the government and having to face the usual repression through arrests of active opposition members, the movement received little attention from the government. With a rising death toll and the realisation of the breadth of the movement’s base, President Assad then attempted to contain the situation by offering some concessions of a political and social nature at the end of March and beginning of April.
a- Increase of Salary System

The government increased the salaries of public employees, conferred Syrian citizenship to thousands of Kurds who were denied this right for decades, and dismissed the cabinet. The president then delivered a speech to the People’s Council in which he promised to take steps towards political reform, such as looking into lifting the state of emergency and considering possible constitutional amendments. President Assad asserted that these measures had been adopted at the local conference of the Baath Party six years earlier, but due to changes in the government’s priorities, the implementation of these reforms had been delayed.

In the president’s second public appearance, Assad issued instructions and recommendations to the new government to prepare for the decision to lift the state of emergency. He spoke about issues of limited significance, such as the ways ministers and public servants should treat citizens, and the need to confront corruption. However, he did not speak directly to the Syrian people, and did not apologise to the people for the rising death toll. He also stressed that Syria was facing an externally driven plot. He attempted to appear as a confident leader, able to govern in the face of a crisis that he was about to end.

b- Caused the Protests as Terrorist Group

As the protest movement grew, so did the level of violence employed by the government’s security apparatuses to suppress the demonstrations. By mid-April, Syrian human rights organisations had published the names of more than two hundred people killed by the government’s forces. In several of the cities that witnessed popular demonstrations, the presence of armed civilian groups was noticeable. The government sometimes described these groups as paid terrorist groups from Jordan or the Future Movement, a Lebanese political movement. However, sectors aligned to the demonstrators described them as groups linked to the government’s security services.
c- Fire Against Protests

It is clear that the Syria government has adopted a policy of promising future reforms of a limited and ambiguous nature, accompanied by a wide-scale crackdown that extends to all centres of popular opposition.

Several sources have suggested that, in order to justify its repressive measures, in a manner reminiscent of the Egyptian and Yemeni governments’ responses to their revolutions, the government resorted to arming certain groups (possibly of non-Syrian origin) to attack both protesters and military units. That these armed groups enjoyed unrestricted mobility is atypical for a country like Syria. That these groups completely avoided demonstrations that took place in support of the government, and usually stationed themselves atop government buildings, clearly indicates that they were linked to the government and its apparatuses.

It was noted that during the demonstrations on Friday, 15 April, which had been preceded by President Assad’s directive not to use force against demonstrators, not a single person was killed, whether from the military or the protesters. On the day that the president sought to avoid the use of force, even if it was just for a single day, the armed groups were nowhere to be seen.

4- Arab World’s Attitudes toward Syria Evolution

Most Arab states have ignored events in Syria; something that can be seen by the absence of the Syrian issue from statements issued by the League of Arab States. It is likely that the Arab states that would like to see government change in Damascus, and even those that are ambivalent towards such a change, are not yet fully confident that such change is possible. The caution characterising the official Arab position, however, has not prevented most of the Arab media, even Saudi-owned media outlets, from devoting a great deal of coverage to the protests in Syria.
Arab countries that have expressed sympathy with the Syrian government are by and large those that are themselves either facing mass revolts, or expect to, such as Libya, Yemen and Algeria. There are also indications that the ruling Shiite political forces in Iraq are as concerned about developments in Syria as their Iranian neighbours. 

5- Great Powers’ Reaction toward Syria Crisis

At an unofficial level, there seems to be confusion in the Arab political arena regarding the Syrian situation. Arab movements and personalities known for their opposition to the Syrian government have stepped up their criticism and condemnation of the government’s policies, declaring unequivocal support for the popular movement. Those that have been known for their solidarity with Syria’s support for the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance and its opposition to US policies appear to be divided into two main camps.

- The first of these includes those who see the Syrian revolt as similar to those of the other popular Arab revolutions in countries like Tunisia and Egypt. This camp sees the support of the popular movement and the condemnation of the Assad government’s repressive response as necessary.

- The second camp includes those who believe that the Syrian case is different from Egypt and Tunisia. They hold that what is necessary is to stand in solidarity with the government, while simultaneously calling on it to implement political reforms.

There was no concrete reaction by western powers and international organisations about developments in Syria throughout the second half of March. On the contrary, remarks from Washington and Paris confirmed that a western intervention in Syria akin to that in Libya would not take place. It seemed as if western powers fear the uncertainty that may result from government change in Syria. What we can tell from the US president’s remarks is that the United States seeks to drive a wedge between Iran and Syria, and to affect the latter’s policy of supporting resistance forces in the region.
a- China and Russia’s Attitude Toward Syria Crisis

With the escalation of the Syrian revolt, the government’s policy of Control, repression and the rising number of casualties, western states have taken punitive measures against Syrian officials, and intensified official statements condemning the government’s policy of repression, without declaring support for government change. Russia, however, appears to be more sympathetic to the Assad government, and opposes any external interference. Both Russia and China have played a major role in preventing the UN Security Council from issuing a presidential statement condemning the Syrian government’s repressive actions, even though a presidential statement is the weakest form of action that can be taken by the Council. By the end of April, the only action taken at an international level was a resolution issued by the UN Human Rights Council. However, by early May the European Union and the US had imposed sanctions on certain senior Syrian officials12.

b- U.S. Attitude Toward Syria Evolution

This analysis suggests that Western powers should not fear more assertive action in support of anti-government protestors in Syria. Still, compared to the situation in Egypt or Libya, for example, the international community has found it exceedingly difficult to say even that Asad has lost the moral authority to govern his country. Perhaps governments around the world are wary of taking on another political campaign because they worry that it may become a slippery slope: despite their intentions, the political steps could evolve into a military campaign. Such a campaign would be inappropriate for many reasons, not least of which is that the West lacks the will and resources for a war against a fourth Muslim country. At the same time, it is important to recognize that in the case of Syria, such a campaign may not be necessary to achieve the desired results.

Indeed, Washington and other administrations should not underestimate the power that political statements, moral judgments, economic sanctions, and efforts at diplomatic isolation can have on Asad’s hold on power. As is likely to be case with the new U.S. sanctions on Asad,
his family, and his closest advisors, such measures can have a powerful impact on the situation inside the country. Much work will be needed in response to Syria’s vicious human rights abuses and flagrant violations of international conventions. Unfortunately, Arab states and some European countries are divided on the issue, and this absence of unity makes it difficult to claim full legitimacy for tough measures against Asad.\textsuperscript{13}

The key to change lies in the clarity of the message broadcast to Syria. The men around Asad, the officers commanding the army, the Sunni merchant class, and the courageous protestors all need to know that the best choice is that “Asad should go.” And international support for taking a chance on the “devil we don’t know” will help empower Syrians to make that change.

\textbf{c- NATO Attitude Toward Syria Crisis}

The military operation to destabilize Syria and the propaganda campaign that came with it have been orchestrated by a coalition of states under US coordination, in exactly the same way that NATO coordinates its member and non-member states to bombard and stigmatize Libya. As indicated above, the mercenary forces have been provided with the compliments of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who was forced to knock on several doors, including in Pakistan and Malaysia, seeking to boost his personal army deployed in Manama and Tripoli. As an example, we can cite the installation of an ad hoc telecommunications center on the premises of the Ministry of Telecommunications in Lebanon.

Syria is not Libya and the outcome was reversed. Indeed, whereas Libya is a state that was created by the colonial powers which united Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan by force, Syria is a historical country which was reduced to its simplest form by those same powers. Therefore, while Libya is spontaneously at the mercy of centrifugal forces, Syria attracts centripetal forces bent on reconstructing Greater Syria (comprising Jordan, occupied Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus and
part of Iraq). Syria’s population today cannot but repudiate any plan to partition the country.

Far from arousing the population against the “government”, this blood bath triggered a national outpouring for President Bashar al-Assad. Aware that they are being drawn into a civil war by design, the Syrians are standing shoulder to shoulder. The overall number of anti-government protest rallies garnered between 150 000 and 200 000 people out of a population of 22 million inhabitants. By contrast, the pro-government drew crowds the likes of which the country had never seen before.

At that point, the Western-Saudi strategy needed to be revised. Realizing that military action would fall short of plunging the country into chaos in the near term, Washington decided to undermine Syrian society in the middle term. The rationale is that the policies of the Al-Assad government have been forging a middle class (the true mainstay of a democracy) and that it would be feasible to turn this class against him. In that case, an economic collapse of the country would have to be engineered.

Now, Syria’s main resource is oil, even if its production cannot compare in volume with that of its rich neighbors. To market the oil, Syria must have assets deposited in Western banks to serve as guarantee during the transactions. It would be enough to freeze them in order to pull the country down. Hence, the expediency of tarnishing its image to mold western public opinion into accepting the “sanctions against the government.”

6- Syria Crisis Effects on Region

In Lebanon, there is a deadlock in regards to the formation of a Lebanese government. Michel Sleiman, who holds the presidency in Lebanon, and the new Lebanese prime minister have been delaying the formation of the cabinet in a political row with Michel Aoun, the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement. It may be possible that the formation
of a new Lebanese cabinet is being delayed deliberately to keep Lebanon neutralized on the foreign policy front.\footnote{15}

The U.N. Security Council and several U.N. bodies are all being used by the U.S. and the E.U. to put pressure on Lebanon. U.N. Secretary Ban Ki-moon himself is a U.S. puppet who has done everything to legitimize U.S. and NATO aggression to the point where Moscow openly accused him of treachery for secret dealings with NATO in 2008. It is in this context that the U.N. is being used as a forum for insidious attempts to internationalize the domestic issue of the weapons of the Lebanese Resistance and to disarm it. Despite the fact that U.N. Resolution 1559 is no longer relevant, the Special Representative for the Implementation of Resolution 1559, Terje Roed-Larsen, still remains active and issues reports against Hezbollah.

The envoys of the U.N. to Lebanon resemble colonial figures making uninvited edicts in Beirut and working as agents of Washington, Brussels, and Tel Aviv. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), which has an entire division in the U.S. State Department dedicated to it, is also a loaded political weapon that Washington is itching to use against Lebanon and Syria. An international tribunal was formed for the slaying of the late Rafik Al-Hariri.

Hariri at the time of his murder had no official state position, but an international tribunal has been created for his case alone. On the other hand the international community has taken no interest in forming any type of tribunals to investigate the murder and assassinations of the thousands of other people killed in Lebanon. What does this say about the STL and the justice being sought?

The events in Syria are also tied to Iran, the longstanding strategic ally of Damascus. It is not by chance that Senator Lieberman was demanding publicly that the Obama Administration and NATO attack Syria and Iran like Libya. It is also not coincidental that Iran was included in the sanctions against Syria.\footnote{16}
There is a strong correlation between war in Southwest Asia and increased talk at the official level about Palestinian statehood. Hopes of Palestinian statehood have always been used twice to discharge pressure in the Arab World built from rising tensions from war preparations against Iraq. The first time was by George H. Bush Sr. and the second time by George W. Bush Jr., who was praised for being the first U.S. president to seriously talk about a Palestinian state.

Even as he flip-flops on his position, Obama now is talking about a Palestinian state too. Moreover, rapprochement between Hamas and Fatah has taken place as the count-down towards international recognition of Palestinian statehood begins. The Israelis have also released frozen funds to the Palestinians, which they refused to do before due to Hamas.

The rapprochement between Fatah and Hamas has also served to tie the hands of Hamas. Hamas will have to be careful not to effectively become a junior partner in governing the Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Hamas must now modify its behaviour to continue its partnership in a unity government with Fatah, which will undemocratically be imposed as the senior partner the Palestinian Authority. In a manner of speaking, Hamas is being domesticated indirectly by Israel and Washington.

a- Iran and Syria Evolution

Obviously a destabilized Syria potentially throws the Iranian military base idea out the window. A destabilized Syria has big implications for Lebanon and for Hezbollah. Syria has been the Lebanese overlord for decades. Today we learn, for example, that Hezbollah has been offering support to the Shia in Bahrain who are rebelling against their Sunni king.

As I indicated above, Iran has also been helpful to Hamas, even though Hamas is a Sunni Muslim movement. All of those relationships could be in jeopardy soon. And that has broad, potentially very positive, implications for Israel, whose prime minister is in Moscow today.
arguing for a tougher Russian stand on Iran’s nuclear program. And in the zero sum game of the Middle East, what’s good for Israel is bad for Syria and Iran.

That’s why you are seeing Bashar Assad shooting at his own people now. Sure he has promised increased freedoms for discontented citizens and increased pay and benefits for state workers, but his military action suggests he knows the protesters will not be bought off by such blandishments.

b- Turkey and Containing Syria

There is one other important player that must be talked about. This player is Turkey. Washington and the E.U. have pushed Turkey to be more active in the Arab World. This has blossomed through Ankara’s neo-Ottomanism policy. This is why Turkey has been posturing itself as a champion of Palestine and launched an Arabic-language channel like Iran and Russia.

Ankara, however, has been playing an ominous role. Turkey is a partner in the NATO war on Libya. The position of the Turkish government has become clear with its betrayal of Tripoli. Ankara has also been working with Qatar to corner the Syrian government. The Turkish government has been pressuring Damascus to change its policies to please Washington and appears to possibly even have a role in the protests inside Syria with the Al-Sauds, the Hariri minority camp in Lebanon, and Qatar. Turkey is even hosting opposition meetings and providing them support. Only last weekend, Gul’s key advisor Ersat Hurmuzlu told Saudi Arabia’s al-Arabya television that Assad had less than a week to meet the demands of the protesters, failing which “it wouldn’t be possible to offer any cover for the leadership in Syria because there is the danger … that we had always been afraid of, and that is foreign intervention.” By Monday, Hurmuzlu had retracted.
“We are not redesigning others’ houses. It is Syria’s own problem,” he clarified. Obviously, the Saudis are muddying the waters for Ankara. The Saudi media have been highly critical of Assad and openly call for government change. The Asharq Alawsat carried a pungent commentary on Monday:

The problem with Syria today is that everybody is looking at what is happening there as if it is the conclusion of [what is happening on] the Arab scene, and that the same pattern exists for each country. Many believe that the Syrians are “copying” the Tunisians, the Egyptians, and others, and this is simply not true. The size and depth of the Syrian opposition within the country is greater than everybody thinks. The demands that are being called for today by the Syrians have been in place ever since 2000.

Therefore what is happening in Syria is not the same as what happened in other parts of the region; it is a genuine movement … Syrians are demonstrating and shouting, “We don’t love you [Assad], we don’t love you, leave us alone and your party too!”

Again, the European voice has been strident, too. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said:

I hope our Turkish colleagues will bring every possible pressure to bear on the Assad government with a very clear message that they are losing legitimacy and that Assad should reform or step aside. And I hope they will be very clear and very bold about that.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe outstripped Hague: “Some believe there’s still time for him [Assad] to change his ways and commit to a [reform] process. For my part, I doubt it. I think the point of no return has been reached.” But Turkey grasps too well the nuances of European diplomacy to know what such gratuitous advice means.”
United States President Barack Obama phoned Erdogan on Monday following Assad’s speech. The White House statement said, The leaders agreed that the Syrian government must end the use of violence now and promptly enact meaningful reforms that respect the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

But Erdogan’s office merely said he and Obama agreed to monitor developments in Syria closely. It claimed that the conversation was wide-ranging and covered the situation in Libya and the imperative need of a Middle East process as well.

**Conclusion**

The efforts to overthrow the Syrian government have a lot in common with what has been undertaken in Libya. However, the results are substantially different owing to each country’s social and political background. The project to break up these two States simultaneously was initially brought up by John Bolton on 6 May 2002 when he was serving as Undersecretary of State in the Bush administration. It’s implementation by the Obama administration nine years down the line – in the context of the Arab Awakening – is not without problems.

The revolutionaries and the government in Syria and in the rest of the Middle East have in common that both lack a thorough plan and a productive attitude. The government’s plans have proven hollow promises. The opposition seems to lack the vision for a focused future perspective as well.

Because of this shared lack of vision, both the government and the opposition hide ever more in their deeply rooted sectarian and religious camps; and the possibility that the revolts will lead from bad to worse grows larger by the day. Meanwhile the call for freedom heard at Tahrir square is deteriorating into a state of anarchy in which armed gangs kill policemen, after having done the same to innocent Alawites, who happen to belong to the sect president Bashar al-Assad belongs to. The army is rolling in with heavy gear and has effectively called a siege on northwest Syria.
Turkey is viewed in Washington and Brussels as the key to bringing the Iranians and the Arabs into line. The Turkish government has been parading itself as a member of the Resistance Bloc with the endorsement of Iran and Syria. U.S. strategists project that it will be Turkey which domesticates Iran and Syria for Washington. Turkey also serves as a means of integrating the Arab and Iranian economies with the economy of the European Union. In this regard Ankara has been pushing for a free-trade zone in Southwest Asia and getting the Iranians and Syrians to open up their economies to it.\textsuperscript{21}

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Endnotes

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