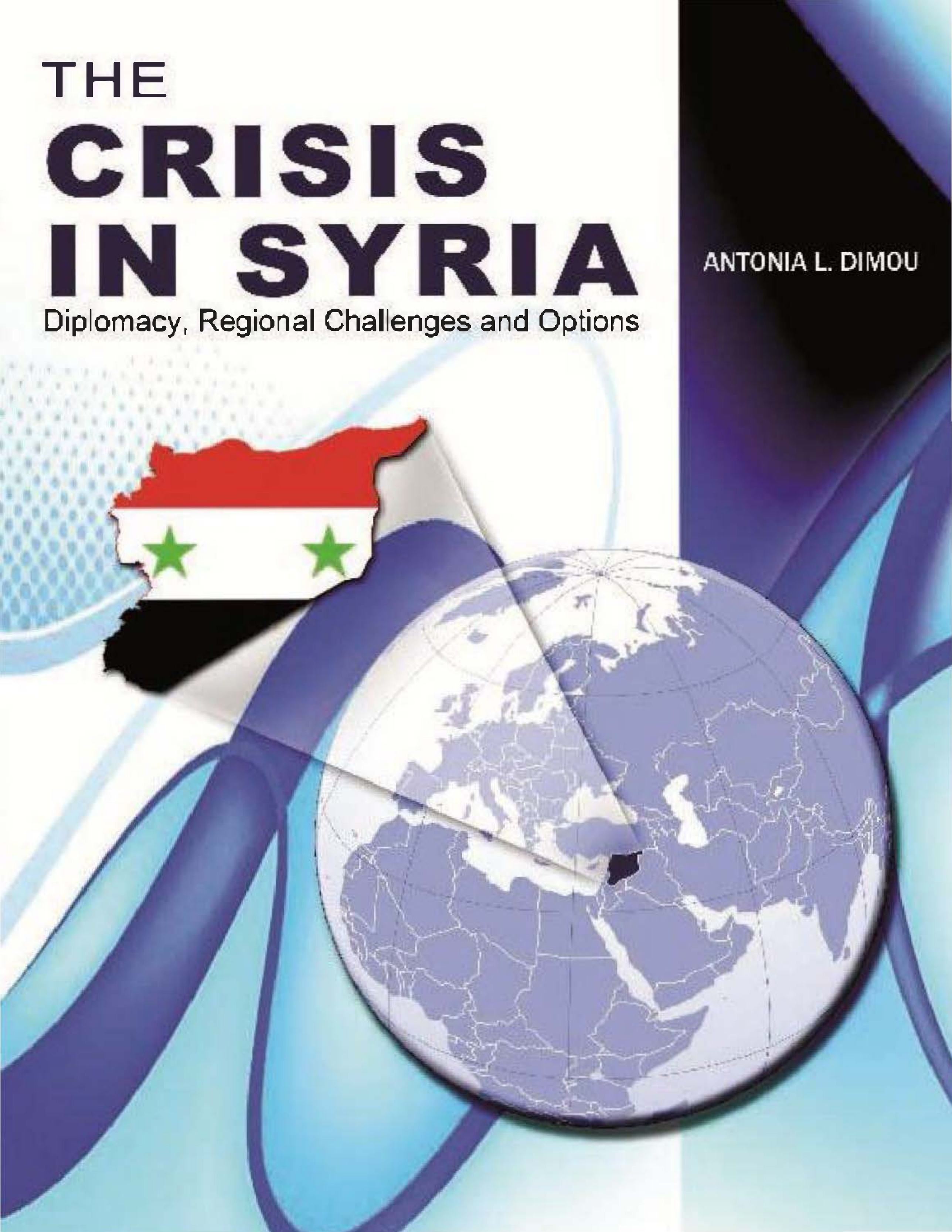
THE CRISIS IN SYRIA

Diplomacy, Regional Challenges and Options

ANTONIA L. DIMOU



First Published in 2012
By Institute for Security and Defense Analysis
39-41, Th. Sofouli Str. – Neo Psychico
Athens, Greece
15451

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National Library of Greece
A Catalogue Record of this monograph is available from the National Library of Greece

ISBN 978-618-80356-0-7 (Print Edition)
ISBN 978-618-80356-1-4 (Master e-book)

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"Every art and every research,
and likewise,
every practical pursuit or undertaking,
seems to aim at some good:
hence it has been well said
that the Good is That
at which all things aim".

Aristotle 384 - 322 BC

- *The origin of using the olive branch as symbol of peace lies in the culture of Ancient Greece.*

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PROLOGUE

INTRODUCTION

A. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN SYRIA

B. ARAB LEAGUE, EU AND US SANCTIONS EFFICIENCY

C. TURKEY'S POLICIES AND AMBITIONS *VIS-À-VIS* SYRIA

a. Turkey's Regional Motivations

b. Turkey's Domestic Agenda and Its Relevance to Syria

D. JORDAN'S POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC POSTURE

Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan's Domestic Front

E. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT- CHALLENGES AHEAD

First Scenario: *Syria and Allies React to War Threats*

Second Scenario: *Export of the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon*

Third Scenario: *Regime Change in Syria*

Fourth Scenario: *Regime Survival in Syria*

EPILOGUE

APPENDIX: Texts - EU Regulation No 1244/2011, Arab League Resolution 7442, and Presidential Documents: Executive Order 13572 of April 29, 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This monograph would not have been realized without the support of institutions and people who made the present compilation a magnificent experience. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Musa Shteiwi, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan who conceived the monograph's theme and offered invaluable guidance. I would also wholeheartedly like to express my most sincere thankfulness to the board of the Institute for Security and Defense Analysis based in Athens for embracing this publication.

I am highly indebted to those who offered time and made a series of conducted interviews possible sharing with me their deep knowledge and insights for the crisis in Syria and beyond. Specifically, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the constructive discussions I had with two former Prime Ministers and two former Foreign Ministers of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan who wish to maintain their anonymity. I make my thankful and respectful recognition of each one of their Excellencies' enthusiastic sharing of insights and expertise emanating from their vast experience in public office over the years.

My most sincere thanks also go to Dr. Adnan Abu Odeh, Political Advisor to the late King Hussein, former Senator and former Chief of the Royal Court in Jordan, and currently, member of the Board of the International Crisis Group who shared insights, knowledge and years of experience in public office; admittedly, he was truly catalytic in offering numerous tips that culminated in the completion of this monograph.

Additionally, I am beholden to Dr. Oraib Rantawi, Director of the al-Quds Center for Strategic Studies for his distinguished contribution with theoretical measurements and a series of stimulating discussions that helped put my thoughts down in a context. Concurrently, I would like to express my gratefulness

to Dr. Ruheil Gharaibe, leading politician of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood who made the writing of this monograph a stately research helping me understand the Islamic movement's political principles in Jordan and the region.

My most sincere thanks also go to Mr. Ausama Monajed, advisor to the Secretary General of the Syrian National Council and Executive Director of the London-based Strategic Research and Communication Centre who very promptly contributed to the better political understanding of the coalition of Syrian opposition groups based abroad. Concurrently, I would like to record a special note of thanks to a leading politician of the Jordanian Baath party who wishes to maintain his anonymity and who not only shared opinions but most importantly consented to information being published in this monograph.

My gratefulness is also extended to Dr. John Nomikos, Director of the Research Institute for European and American Studies based in Athens for reviewing the original manuscript and for writing the monograph's prologue. For comments on parts of the original manuscript, I would like to thank Dr. Majed Qatarneh of the Center for Strategic Studies. Last but not least, I take immense pleasure in thanking assistant researcher Ruba Mohammed Tweissi for her assistance in organizing my field work while in Jordan, and the authority of the Center for Strategic Studies that provided the facilities to conduct the present monograph.

Undoubtedly, this monograph would not have been completed without the contribution of the abovementioned individuals who allowed me to present some of their views on a contemporary issue that could potentially change the traditional currents of the wider Middle East....

Antonia Dimou,
August, Athens, 2012

PROLOGUE

Antonia Dimou's "assessment of the situation in Syria" is a well-written analytical monograph. Ms Dimou is an independent-minded innovative researcher in the Middle East Affairs and her research work on the situation in Syria provides the knowledge one needs to understand that Syria's current environment is actually more complicated than just "Assad leaving the office."

This monograph primarily focuses on the complexities of the crisis, coupled with sectarian violence, international relations and security-related concerns that make it quite difficult to really predict how the Syrian Crisis wound end.

Ms Dimou emphasizes on the sectarian aspects since large portions of Syria's population are largely Sunni Muslims, while their ruler, Bashar Al-Assad and much of his allies in power are mostly Allawites, an offshoot of Shiite Islam. Certainly, Sunni countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia are eager to back up the Syrian opposition, while majority Iran and Iraq would back up Bashar Al-Assad.

In addition, Ms Dimou assists the reader to comprehend better the significance of the "Kurdish issue" for the geo-stability of the region, and how the US, Russia, China and major European States (UK, France, Germany) as well as the European Commission take full advantage of their diplomatic mechanisms in order to collect strategic information and pass it to their decision-makers before reporting to the UN Security Council for further action, if necessary.

Reading carefully this monograph, it feels like that one plays chess with professional players who do not wish to "lose the game" no matter what the cost.

One of the outcomes that the reader can observe from Ms Dimou's in-depth research monograph is that many in the Syrian opposition confirm now that Bashar Al-Assad's regime is stronger than they had imagined! Moreover, the West needs to take more seriously the Russian concerns on what happens, if and after Bashar Al-Assad fails.

Single events are not predictable, but their consequences often are!

Dr. John M. Nomikos
Director
Research Institute for European and
American Studies (RIEAS)
Athens, Greece

INTRODUCTION

The massive wave of protests throughout the Middle East in spring 2011 set off the wind of political and economic reforms, and has engulfed most of the states of North Africa and the Middle East with spreading effects into Syria. Syria has been motivated by the momentous events in Tunisia and Egypt which inspired protests on its soil demanding economic and political reforms and illustrating the potential of genuine democracy, or more accurately, democratization from within.

However, the Syrian regime's violent response on protestors prompted them to reject the Syrian government's initial enact of reforms most prominently the lifting of the state of emergency in effect for nearly fifty years, the introduction of a new media law, and the granting of citizenship to stateless Kurds. Most importantly, state violence prompted protests to evolve into insurgency. Specifically, in the case of Syria, as violence escalated, insurgent tactics eventually replaced protest tactics, turning into an asymmetric warfare against the Syrian state. As the situation stands nowadays, the death toll is staggering and the destruction is reaching catastrophic proportions in the Arab country.

Therefore, the development of a "coalition of the able" for Syria to include the US, the EU, Russia and certain Arab countries to develop a comprehensive strategy and a set of actions to end the crisis in Syria is more relevant than ever before. The strategy could include coordinated diplomatic efforts to implement a reconciliation process, and insure a smooth political transition so that protracted conflict is ended.

In this political thinking context, the current monograph focuses on the first ten months of the crisis in Syria (March 2011 till December 2011). Being

written in the region as the Syrian crisis sparked, flared and spread, this monograph makes no pretence about providing answers to complex issues addressed, thus aiming to increase understanding through a series of conducted interviews with officials, international relations experts from the region, Baathist and Islamic figures as well as Syrian oppositionists.

As evidenced during the conduct of research, the debate on Syria reflects the deepening divisions between two camps; the first camp supports opposition to the Syrian regime and the second wishes for the maintenance of the current *status quo* in fear of dire regional repercussions. This kind of debate is reflected in the evolution of the US policy *vis-à-vis* Syria of the last three decades. The Reagan Administration defined American policy towards Syria through the prism of Cold War realism and even though the Arab country was included in the list of state-sponsors of terrorism since 1979, it was considered geopolitically important and engagement between the two countries flourished.[1] In the post-Cold War framework, the George H. Bush Administration considered Syria a key pillar for the cementing of the regional balance of power and sought for the engagement of Damascus in the US-led alliance against Iraq in the Gulf War of 1990–1991. Later on, the Clinton Administration considered Syria as major component of any Middle East peace negotiations and a series of presidential summits took place with the last one in Geneva in March 2000 between then American President Bill Clinton and the late Syrian President Hafez al-Assad.[2] For its part, the George W. Bush Administration initially employed neoconservative tools that supported approach to Syria through isolation but geopolitical realities led to the prevalence of traditional practice; Syria's cooperation in the

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[1] Holly Fletcher, "State Sponsor: Syria," Council on Foreign Relations, February, 2008; *Also,* Jeffrey Fields, *Adversaries and Statecraft: Explaining US Foreign Policy toward Rogue States,* PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2007.

[2] Jane Perlez, "In Geneva, Clinton Bet That Assad Would Bend, and Lost", *The New York Times,* March 28, 2000

post-September 11th era against al-Qaeda demonstrated avenues for cooperation between Washington and Damascus in the wider Middle East. Coming to the Obama Administration, the presidency was initially marked by a pragmatist policy towards Syria encouraging high-level visits and filling the diplomatic vacuum that existed since 2005, by appointing an American ambassador in Damascus.[3] The current crisis in Syria contributed to the differentiation of the American presidency with the imposition of a new round of sanctions against members of the Syrian regime, however, there are estimates that instability in Syria and its spill-over effects have to be contained in the name of *realpolitik* since there are increasing fears that a regime change in Syria would look a lot more like Iraq in 2003 rather than Egypt in 2011.

In the search of peace and conflict, this monograph begins with an assessment of the situation in Syria endeavoring to picking up the missing pieces of the puzzle since President Bashar al-Assad came to power in 2000. Initially, the Syrian president set out to modernize the economic and technological foundations of the inherited system shelving archaic technology and trade regulations, easing banking restrictions and enabling the private banking sector to expand. Some timid signs of a political outreach have taken place to satisfy the rising Islamic religious sentiment and the Kurdish ethnic minority, while concurrently the old guard of the security and military apparatuses was replaced by a new generation of top echelons. In terms of foreign policy, its major components were dominated by realism and have gained popular support over the years however external policy-making has not been enough to avert protests domestically. Perceived as token of artistry, Syria has been the only country on the American State Department's "terrorism" list that has maintained full diplomatic relations with the US, and though Syria maintained close relations with the former Soviet Union during the Cold War,

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3 "Obama Nominates Envoy, Robert Ford, for Syria", *Reuters*, February 17, 2010.

the Syrian leadership made sure that it met with all American Presidents from Nixon to Clinton. Parallely, while Israel occupies the Golan Heights for the last forty years, no attack against the State of Israel has taken place from Syrian territory.

Undoubtedly, the major weaknesses of the Syrian regime have been the systemic corruption that created powerful elites and the slow pace of political reforms that were only minor and cosmetic. These weaknesses have presented the keystone of the popular protests with demands for democratization. The pursue by the Syrian regime of a dual strategy responding violently against protests on the one hand and granting mediation roles on the other hand is considered as effort to resolve conflicting interests, while concurrently exploiting fears and hopes.

This monograph continues with an account of the Arab League, the EU and the US sanctions against Syria raising questions on their ultimate efficiency. Economic sanctions as a public policy tool is analyzed stressing their limitations as according to lessons learnt in contemporary politics, "the greater number of countries needed to implement the denial measures, the less likely sanctions will be effective"[4]. In this respect, it is examined how vigorously Iraq, Syria's largest Arab trading partner, which did not vote in support of the Arab League sanctions, would implement the measures. Similarly, Lebanon, with its complex economic ties with Syria regularly described as one large "pool" in which labor, commodities and money flows unimpeded, gives rise to worries on the ramifications that sanctions may have on its own economy and on its ability to ultimately enforce the set of punitive

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4 Gary Hufbauer, Jeffrey Schott, Kimberly Elliott and Barbara Oegg, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered* (3rd edition), Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2007, p. 89

measures. A detailed account is also made to Iran which represents Syria's strongest economic lifeline ranging from energy to construction predicting that the threat which sanctions pose on the Syrian economy will extra precipitate the power balancing strategies of Iran and Syria.

In its course, the monograph looks into Turkey and its central role towards Syria through the employment of its ideological foreign policy elements; neo-ottomanism and the zero problems/conflicts. Since Turkey defines its foreign policy in mathematical terms, the results of that policy are measured in the same terms, reaching the empirical realization that Ankara has not been able to successfully apply the "zero problems/conflicts policy" not only to neighboring countries, but most importantly, to its own Southeast with the promotion of the National Unity project. It is no secret that Turkey envisioned to patron the Arab spring through the exploitation of neo-ottomanism, an ideology that solidifies its aspirations to re-engage estranged neighbors and to serve as mediator in conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. In pursuit of its standing as a leading Muslim country that determines the regional currents, Turkey decided to uniquely position itself in the case of Syria. Ankara's regional motives of the unfolding policy *vis-à-vis* Syria are identified as intentions to outweigh Iranian regional influence and as commitment to consolidate regional dominance. Concurrently, a detailed account is provided with regards to Turkey's efforts to internationalize the crisis in Syria by hosting a series of opposition meetings and being instrumental in the formation of the Syrian National Council, while a linkage is made with regards to Turkey's domestic agenda and its relevance to Syria. Evidently, Turkey is made vulnerable by instability, therefore, its foreign policy strategies can not remain static and are mostly driven by the need to provide nuanced responses to undergoing developments in the region.

In the process, the monograph focuses on the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan whose position as a bridge between the Levant and the Persian Gulf has provided it a unique geopolitical standing in the Middle East, in a way that nowadays Amman is granted with a significant diplomatic and humanitarian role with regards to the situation in Syria. In fact, Syria represents a kind of litmus test for Jordan which throughout the crisis has adopted the policy of active neutrality that is divided in two parts. The first part is a proactive effort to prevent the outbreak of war in the region with the exercise of diplomatic discourse to cement a unified Arab position in the Arab League context and beyond. The second part is the attempt of Jordan to turn itself into a safe haven for refugees and a scene for political settlement, thus minimizing fears that the crisis may undermine the Kingdom's own political stability and extra weaken its already embattled economy. A presentation of the interlinked Jordan-Syria economic relations is provided with an eye on the feasibility of the Arab League sanctions against Syria and the progressively negative impact of sanctions on the Kingdom's economy overall.

Out of the turbulent events in Syria, Jordan took practical steps to unleash a political reform process to strengthen pillars of democracy and widen public participation in decision making. It has become crystal clear that the major differentiation of the Jordanian events from those in Syria and the rest in the Arab world is that protestors are asking for reform of the current system, *not* its abolition. Jordan has an important record on reform initiatives which were delayed due to major regional events. Notably, in the pre-Iraq war period, the Kingdom initiated the "*Jordan First-Al Urdun Awlan*" campaign, which attempted to articulate a comprehensive vision of economic and political reforms. The initiative provided the formation of a national committee to deal with different economic and political issues and debated five distinct themes, namely the possibility of establishing a constitutional court; the introduction of a parliamentary quota for women; the enactment of anti-corruption

measures; the drafting of a new political parties law with the aim of ending the state of fragmentation among political parties; and, the setting of rules to cover relations between civil society, professional organizations and the state.

Equally significant reform initiative was the 2005 Jordanian National Agenda, a blueprint for political, economic and social reforms that envisioned approaching the reform process in a holistic, rather than a piecemeal, way. The committee of the National Agenda consisted of representatives from political parties including the Muslim Brotherhood, the parliament, civil society, women activists, the media, the government and the private sectors, and reached recommendations in three interdependent areas, namely the economic and social policies, basic rights and freedoms, and state infrastructure. In the field of political reforms, the National Agenda proposed new laws to open up elections and prevent discrimination against women. In July 2006, the government of then Prime Minister Maarouf Bakhit assembled a forum of 700 participants over a two-day period to address the political, economic and social challenges facing the Kingdom. Capitalizing on the findings of the National Agenda, participants produced the *"We Are All Jordan – Kulna al Urdun"* document. The document was a clear attempt at political reform and selected a list of fifteen priorities. The major three were loyalty and nationalism, sovereignty of the state and the protection of national interests, and national security. The Bakhit government undoubtedly showed significant legislative initiative. Specifically, in November 2006, it passed an anti-corruption law that established an anti-corruption committee with broad powers. The law notably included in its definition of corruption actions related to nepotism (*wasta*).[5]

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[5] Antonia Dimou, "Spring of Reforms for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan", *Worldpress (News and Views from Around the World)*, June 12, 2011.

Coming to today's situation, the monograph describes Jordan's speedy and practical steps to unleash a deep political reform process which aims to reflect the Kingdom's vision of comprehensive reform, modernization and development in a way that can be translated into realities on the ground and provide a blueprint for a better future, not only for the Jordanian people, but for the people of the entire region.

Last but not least, the monograph focuses on what happens next and the challenges ahead by inquiring four distinct scenarios that could have extensive ramifications for regional competitors and allies. The first scenario concentrates on the possible reaction of Syria and its allies on war threats, the second on the export of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon, the third scenario on regime change in Syria and the major challenges that will surface not only in the Arab country but in the whole region, while the fourth scenario deals with regime survival in Syria. It has become an increasingly common understanding that whether the current regime remains or changes, the Middle East will be affected multiply with focus on Iran's regional standing, the power perception of major western powers, the posture of Israel in the context of a turbulent area, and stability in neighboring countries particularly, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

Undoubtedly, the debate on Syria reflects not only divisions but most importantly the realization that political clocks cannot be turned back; too much political mobilization has occurred for the *status quo ante* to come to the fore intact.

A. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN SYRIA

The wave of protests sweeping through the Arab world reached Syria. Snowballing demonstrations in major cities like Damascus, Dara'a, Bania and Homs, calling for greater freedoms, improvement in living standards and respect for human rights, triggered a disproportionate reaction from the Syrian security apparatus against protestors.

The Syrian regime's initial assessment that protests will not come at its doorstep were dashed, and therefore opted to project an image of strength and tight control as a means to hold on to power. The Syrian regime's early assuredness was based on two major policy pillars expected to deter protests in the country. The first was the precedent of Hama, and the second was a foreign policy close to the grassroots of the nation.

Specifically, Hama, the country's fourth largest city, is well known for its uprising against the Syrian Baath State that climaxed in 1982 with the killing of 70 Baathist officials and caused the regime's strong response with a death toll ranging between 10,000 and 25,000, according to Amnesty International. The Syrian regime's violent crackdown in the city is known as the case of Hama. In fact, the case of Hama represents a precedence that the Syrian regime perceived it had seared into the collective consciousness of the Syrian public, therefore preventing domestic protests.

Additionally, the Syrian regime assessed that its foreign policy would be more than enough to avert protests. Major components of Syrian foreign policy include (a) the Damascus constructive role in the post-Saddam Iraq in the security and humanitarian fields with the absorbance of more than 1.3 million Iraqi refugees, not an easy task for a country of 22 million; (b) the influential standing of Syria in any Arab-Israeli peace process that emanates from its significant leverage with organizations like Hamas; (c) the strategic

partnership of Syria with Iran, which produced the organization of Hezbollah, founded through a mutual agreement to fight Israel; (d) the re-emergence of Syrian influence in Lebanon through its armed relationship with Hezbollah. Hezbollah is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon. It is not the Shiite form of al Qaeda. On one level, it is the manifestation of grassroots empowerment in Lebanon, which explains widespread Shiite support for the organization. Hezbollah can also be viewed as a military and ideological arm of Iran and the Iranian revolution in Lebanon. For this reason, Hezbollah is a problem for the Sunni Arab countries because it is a Shiite power in the heart of the Arab world.

Furthermore, Syria's foreign policy includes (e) the conduct of indirect negotiations with Israel, even during the July 2006 Lebanon war. It is true that the confrontational relationship with Israel was not an obstacle for periodic secret Israeli-Syrian contacts. A case in point was the secret track of current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the late Syrian President Hafez al-Assad with the mediation of American millionaire Ron Lauder. As disclosed, Lauder presented Syria a document titled "Lauder in the name of the Prime Minister of Israel" on September 1998 that contained a proposal to discuss borders that would be based on the June 4, 1967 lines.[6] And lastly, (f) Syria emerged from isolation due to Turkey's policy of "zero problems/conflicts" with neighbors with regards not only to the Syrian-Israeli peace process and the resolution of intra-Arab affairs, but also to the development of extensive economic and political ties between the two countries.

That said, the bitter irony and the ultimate paradox for the Syrian regime is that the pursued foreign policy, while appreciated by the public, was not enough to deter protests from evolving. Today, it has become evident that,

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[6] Akiva Eldar, "Who Really Stopped Ron Lauder?" *Ha'aretz (Israeli Daily)*, January 20, 2000.

politically, younger generations need oxygen, and thus cosmetic changes and minor reforms seem no longer sufficient. Syria is in dire need of major political, social and economic transformation.

Therefore, the Syrian president's first major speech two weeks since the protests erupted at the parliament on March 30, 2011, fell short of expectations as it became obvious that it is highly unlikely to have sweeping changes instituted. Later on, in a televised address on April 16, 2011, the Syrian president announced that the emergency law in force in Syria for nearly 50 years would be abolished and called for a national dialogue, while his major third speech on June 21, 2011, appeared tepid, lacking any significant initiative claiming that instability caused by criminals and salafis was to blame for the delay in implementing reforms. Rather than promising concrete reforms, the Syrian president emphasized that security had to come first, and tried to present his authority as a neutral mediator between the population and the security forces.

It is not secret that the official position of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad supports that the Syrian society, like the majority of societies in the region, are experiencing a shift in political alignment to "conservatism." The Syrian presidential perception is best summarized by a former Jordanian prime minister who has met Assad on numerous official occasions in the past: *"When I asked Assad why he does not proceed on more rapid pace with political reforms, he replied that the pace of reforms is not that slow but the vision has to be mature because if it does not fit the society, then there will be a division".*[7] On this ground, the process of political reforms according to Assad's perception was difficult, as evidenced by the cases of countries like Lebanon and Algeria. Specifically, according to the president's perception, countries like Lebanon and Algeria that had strived for rapid reforms had set

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[7] Interview conducted in Amman on November 29, 2011.

the stage only for conflict and social unrest. In the case of Algeria during the 1980s, Islamist groups sought to exploit the political opening of the government to gain power, and this undermined the internal stability and sparked conflict lasting decades. In Lebanon, the process of political reforms and the elections of May 29, 2005, had been the cause of the subsequent sectarian violence. Upon this perception, the Syrian president repeatedly supported that the country needs time to improve education and build institutions prior to democratizing its political system.

Upon this logic, only minor reforms, cosmetic changes and some kind of opening to the Sunni community were undertaken by the Syrian regime in the last decade. In 2005, President Assad, without any political discussion, decided to move towards what was viewed as economic liberalization. Identically, the Syrian government has proceeded to a set of slow financial reforms as part of its efforts to transform the economy through the banking sector. Reforms included the institution of a single exchange rate for the Syrian pound, the increase of private bank capitalization, the introduction of the Syrian pound Treasury bill as a first capital investment instrument, and the increase of the foreign ownership level to 60 percent. Noteworthy, the easing of restrictions on bank accounts and foreign trade enabled the private banking sector to gradually expand. The first Gulf bank in Syria named *Bank of Syria and the Gulf* as well as two Islamic banks, *the Syrian International Islamic Bank* and *the Cham Bank*, were licensed in 2006 and have expanded branches and services. Additionally, in 2008, the Syrian government took the decision to cut fuel subsidies by 50 percent, a policy praised by reformers. Nevertheless, the consequent 350 percent increase in the price of diesel was reflected across the spectrum of goods and services prompting critics to argue that decreased consumer purchasing power was evidence that economic

reforms hurt Syria's majority poor.[8] Evidently, such steps should have been linked to political reforms, but little of that happened.

Alleged systemic corruption in the regime led to an economic justification for the birth of powerful elites in the immediate entourage of the Syrian regime. Concurrently, the Syrian regime developed a push-pull dynamic during the last decade, with encouraging "moderate" Islamists on the one hand, while repressing what it perceived to be a threatening Islamist minority on the other. The regime took the strategic decision to play with the issue of Islam as it assessed that it was under threat and was willing to take serious risks to prevent former Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Muslim Brotherhood leader Sadreddine Bayanouni from developing any traction in the Sunni community.

Regime outreach to the Islamic community in early 2006 included a presidential approval of a sharia law faculty at Aleppo University, the licensing of three Islamic banks, and allowing for the first time a prominent Islamic figure to lecture at the Higher Military Academy in Damascus. Specifically, the regime allowed moderate Islamic figure and Member of Parliament Mohammed Habash to address the officers at the Higher Military Academy in Damascus, with the attendance of the minister of defense and the Grand Mufti as well as other religious figures. In his speech, Habash called for a new Political Parties Law that would permit the formation of Islamic parties. On a parallel track, the Syrian regime efforts pointed toward stepped-up measures to counter rising Islamist influence. Identically, the Ministry of Islamic Endowments (Awqaaf) issued a list of ten restrictions on activities at mosques, limiting the hours of operation to times of prayer, preventing any

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[8] According to an internal price survey on a basket of 100 goods, a cumulative inflation rate of 24.55 percent was reflected since June 2007. The utilities sector was hardest hit, with an 87 percent jump in the average cost of electricity, water, fuel and telephone rates. Food that accounted for 40-50 percent of the Syrian budget increased in price by almost 23 percent.

unauthorized speakers or activities including the collection of donations, and requiring the lowering of the volume of loudspeakers used in the calls to prayer.

In the context of the rising Islamic religious sentiment in Syria and regime attempts to control it while repressing violent fundamentalism, the Syrian president accepted a petition in July 2006 signed by 200 prominent Sunni religious figures who protested education reform plans on the grounds that they would affect Islamic schools. Specifically, the proposed reforms by the ministries of Education and Islamic Endowments (Awqaaf) that met the strong opposition of the Sunni religious establishment and consequently were shelved by the Syrian government focused on the extension of the duration of primary school by two years to include the seventh and the eighth grades, and the prohibition on religious schools from registering students in the seventh grade to specialize in Islamic education.

On the chapter of ethnic minorities, regime openings were initiated over the last years toward its ethnic minorities, most prominently the Kurdish population which amounts to approximately 1.9 million in Syria, thus representing 7 percent of the country's total population. As known, during the '60s, almost 350 thousand Kurds have been deprived of their citizen rights since the predominant Baath Arabist ideology served as key plank which distinguished Kurds from Arabs and defined them as outsiders. The last decade, the Syrian regime permitted Kurds room -though limited- for political maneuver and cultural expression. From 2007 and on, the annual Kurdish celebration for the New Year "Nohruz" in major Syrian cities like Qamishli and Damascus throughout the districts of Rukneddin and Kurat al-Assad have been permitted, and thus reversed the culture of suppression that pre-existed since the 2004 Qamishli riots that left 25 killed, hundreds

wounded and thousands arrested.[9] Concurrently, major Kurdish political parties are licensed to operate in Syria like the Kurdish Progressive Democratic Party, the Kurdish Yikiti Party, the Kurdish Future Movement, the Kurdish Azadi Party and the Democratic Union Party.

Coming to the most recent situation, the violent crackdown on civil society and the opposition has reached such proportions in Syria that political observers in the region and beyond compare it to the repression of the 1980s during the rule of the late Hafez al-Assad. As one Jordanian civil rights activist cited, *"Previously, comparisons with the father always pointed to Bashar's indecisiveness, lack of experience and poor decision-making".*[10] The crackdown has become so intense that observers argue that the Syrian regime is rebuilding the "walls of fear" that once the late President Hafez al-Assad erected. It is also believed that the regime has embraced confrontation and willfully isolated itself from the EU, the US and the Arab League until recently, although internal divisions exist, and are related to how aggressively the government should pursue its crackdown on protestors as well as its dealings with the major regional and international players. The Syrian division with regards to the degree of regime isolation and escalation is among the group of the so-called hard-liners which includes key-figures in the security services who argue that Syria benefits from the policy of escalation and confrontation with the West and its Arab fellows, and that any cost in terms of isolation is negligible given the threat that the regime faces for its very survival. The other group calls for a more nuanced policy, one that seeks limited and under control confrontation, while exerting political pressure to re-engage with the West and the Arab fellows.

Despite any divisions over the degree of isolation and escalation, the overall Syrian regime policy appears solid and unanimous. As cited by a Jordanian

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[9] "The al-Qamishli Uprising: The Beginning of a New Era for Syrian Kurds?", *KurdWatch*, Report #4, Decemebr 2009

Baathist who recently headed a Jordanian delegation to Syria and met with the Syrian president, *"Assad has strong self-esteem and belief that he will overcome the crisis. Now that the Syrian regime is technically under aggression, there can be no direct negotiations with the US."*[11] And continued: *"The main pillars of Assad's strength are his people and his army. Over the past month, the Syrian president effectively presents himself as the defender of the Syrian dignity and unity against any external interference, thus appealing to Syrian nationalism and Islam"*.[12]

Nevertheless, the words of this prominent Jordanian Baathist that any impasse originates in Syria's own political culture espoused by Baath party's legacy of shunning dialogue in times of crisis may not be absolutely correct. It seems that the Syrian regime has reacted quite intelligently in the midst of the crisis by not shunning doors and by maintaining open channels of communication with major players most prominent the US, the Arab League, Iraq and Russia.[13] The exclusive interview of the Syrian president to the *ABC News* and to Barbara Walters' talk show *"The View"* in early December 2011 was the first of its kind to an American TV broadcast since the eruption of the crisis, and the message clearly sent to all interested parties was that Assad is not like the late Libyan president. On the contrary, the Syrian president appeared soft-spoken, calm, highly educated and he answered every single question with no ground rules set before the conduct of the interview.[14] One of the most revealing parts of the interview is Assad's recognition that the majority of Syrians were neither for nor against the regime, but in the middle, as well as the recognition that there is instability in some parts of the country, however, the overall situation is stable. There has also been a sound of

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[10] Interview conducted in Amman, November 28, 2011.
[11] Interview conducted in Amman, December 3, 2011.
[12] Interview conducted with a prominent Jordanian Baathist in Amman, December 3, 2011
[13] Interview with a former Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs conducted in Amman, December 8, 2011
[14] Comments of Barbara Walters on her talk show at *ABC*, December 6, 2011

presidential optimism with regards to the Arab League sanctions perceived as having the silver lining of stimulating domestic productivity and resourcefulness. Clearly, the presidential message directed to Washington was that the armed forces are a state institution and not the personal property of anyone, and that Syria could weather the storms that undoubtedly lie ahead.[15]

Concurrently, Syria awarded Iraq a role of mediation to broker a deal with the Arab League. The Iraqi mediation efforts headed by the country's national security adviser were allegedly supported by the US, as evidenced by the conducted talks of the Iraqi prime minister in his late 2011 trip to Washington, and gained the tacit approval of Iran, Syria's strategic ally. The Iraqi mediation efforts seemed to focus on opening channels of communication between the Syrian regime and the outside Syrian opposition, while there was explicit intention of Iraq to submit an initiative in the Arab League context to end the crisis.[16] The initiative reportedly aimed at opening a dialogue between the opposition and the Syrian government to reach a mutually beneficial agreement.

Nonetheless, one major factor that mediators seem to take into account is that the Syrian opposition is predominantly divided among two major umbrella organizations and lacks a united leadership that could formulate a joint plan of action *vis-à-vis* the Syrian regime and the international community. The first is the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC) based in Syria, which sees itself as representing the opposition within Syria and therefore is the legitimate leader of the protests, and the second is the Syrian National Council (SNC) based outside the country as well as the National Authority for Support of the Syrian Revolution (NASS)[17], which aim

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[15] Jim Muir, "Between the Lines: Assad Interview", December 7, 2011

[16] "Arab League Seeks Iraqi Mediation in Syria", *The Daily Star (Lebanese Daily)*, December 8, 2011

[17] NASS head is former Syrian President Abdel Halim Khaddam and its members include some 69 oppositionists residing outside Syria. *Le Figaro (Daily)*, November 6, 2011.

to deliver the voice of the Syrian "revolution" and its demands to the international community.[18] The lack of unity between the diaspora-based and the domestic Syrian opposition and their disagreement over the way that possible regime change should happen impedes strong so far support by the West. Parenthetically, the NCC advocates gradual change and rejects international military intervention, whereas the SNC and NASS call for the overthrow of the regime and do not reject the option of international interference.[19] In this context, as part of other ongoing backside diplomatic channels, Iraqi mediation between Damascus and the Arab League on a Peace Initiative that included the allowance of observers to monitor the protection of civilians and a dialogue of the regime with main Syrian opposition groups was considered valuable towards a sustainable way out from the current crisis.

On a parallel basis, Syria is estimated that it has pledged for an increased diplomatic role of Russia on the international arenas. It is in this context that Russia which held the presidency of the UN Security Council for December 2011 made a pragmatic step and submitted a new draft UN Security Council resolution to end the crisis in Syria. The draft resolution called for the end of violence by all parties and the cease of arms supplies to the opposition, urged the implementation of the Arab League Peace Initiative with special emphasis on the deployment of observers in Syria, and emphatically ruled out military intervention. The draft resolution touched upon the core of the crisis however, it was liable to amendments containing aspects of the Arab League Initiative such as the release of political prisoners, dialogue with opposition representatives, the acceleration of political reforms within a concrete timeframe, and a follow-up mechanism. Russia's move to take the Syrian

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[18] Interview with Ausama Monajed, Advisor to the Secretary General of the Syrian National Council, November 28, 2011

[19] Some 200 members of the SNC met in Tunis on December 17, 2011, for talks that aimed to unite the opposition, and concluded that "We need to emerge from this congress with a higher level of organization, clearer targets and more momentum".

crisis to the UN Security Council level coincided with the acceleration of Arab League and Western pressures towards Syria, and it was widely viewed as a turning point of Russian diplomacy as to a certain extend it paved the way for the internationalization of the crisis. Noteworthy, Russia and China vetoed a draft resolution sponsored by France, Germany, Portugal and the UK on October 4, 2011, that condemned the excessive use of force by the Syrian authorities against protestors, while Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa abstained. It seems that Russia is hedging its bets on a game that matches the gravity of the factual situation in Syria envisioning to bridge gaps and to break the silence of the UN Security Council.

The best outcome for Russia that could claim credit is the restoration of Syria's pre-protest *status quo* as part of a negotiated solution granting it a diplomatic victory on the world stage, and a solidification of the preferential relationship that it maintains with the Syrian regime. In fact, Russia holds a naval base on Syria's Mediterranean coast where recently dispatched warships including its only aircraft carrier, while Syria has been a major client for Russian arms sales. Evidently, Russia has drawn a concrete line in the sand over Syria rejecting the military option against the Arab country as the cost of intervention at the heart of the Middle East is estimated to be very high, favoring, however, the initiation of dialogue between the Syrian government and the opposition, and demanding the disarmament of all actors. It is in this context that Russia has hosted a series of opposition meetings in its capital and has tuned diplomatically with the higher political echelons of the Syrian regime searching for viable solutions.

At the peak of mediation efforts, Syria agreed to an Arab League protocol as part of the Peace Initiative with amendments on the original text negotiated and accepted by both sides which provided for the allowance of observers to monitor its implementation, while an advanced observer team was designated to prepare all technical procedures in conjunction with the Syrian

authorities.[20] The observers' mission lasted for one month and could be extended for another one with the consent of the Syrian government and the Arab League, and observers were fairly free in their movements but not allowed to visit sensitive military sites. The signing of the protocol which called for the end of all violence, the withdrawal of troops from the streets and the release of detainees, marked the initiation of Syria-Arab League cooperation with the aim to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Most importantly, the acceptance of the Arab League protocol as product of negotiations with the Syrian government gave the latter the political standing to appear to the Syrian public as a powerful authority not willing to succumb to any threat that jeopardized Syrian sovereignty[21], and as decisive to defend the country's national interests. Therefore, the signing of the protocol could have provided the basis for Syria to emerge from the crisis and move from the stage of violence to the stage of stability that could pave the way for the promotion of wide political reforms and democracy.

Evidently, Syria seems to have so far pursued a dual strategy which on the one side has focused on the adoption of "an iron fist" domestically, while on the other side it has moved methodically to melt the diplomatic ice by granting mediation roles to strategic allies not only sensing that there are prospects for conflicting interests to be resolved but also exploiting fears and hopes since history reveals, especially in the Middle East region, that once a conflict starts, it entails the danger of being unresolved indefinitely.[22]

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[20] On December 19, 2011, Syria agreed to the Arab League protocol, with the consent to let observers into the Arab country. Accessed at: http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-syria

[21] In a press conference, Syrian Foreign Minister Muallem explicitly stated that the protocol preserves Syrian sovereignty and allows Syria to establish security, and added that sovereignty is protected by the protocol's text and coordination with the Syrian government, in addition to Article 8 of the Arab League Charter. See, "Al-Moallem: Signing of the Protocol is a Pure National Decision Based on Interests of Syrian People", *Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)*, December 19, 2011

[22] Interview with a former Jordanian Foreign Minister, Conducted in Amman, December 8, 2011

B. Arab League, EU And US Sanctions Efficiency

The world's major powers and the United Nations use economic sanctions that are viewed as the liberal alternative to war in order to achieve political objectives. Economic sanctions seek to lower the aggregate economic welfare of a target state to change its political behavior. There are two main categories of economic weapons, trade and financial restrictions, each of which can be employed with varying intensity and scope. According to the International Relations theory, sanctions can coerce either directly, by persuading the target government that the issues at stake are not worth the price, or indirectly, by including popular pressure top force the government to concede, or by including a popular revolt that overthrows the government, resulting in the establishment of a government that will make the concessions.[23]

Many observers have raised doubts about the efficiency of economic sanctions because they do not only target the state's government, but they also target ordinary people. Looking at the Iraqi example, it is argued that sanctions may even strengthen the leader's grip on the country. Impoverishing the population, sanctions make people even more dependent on state supplies and consequently, make them less able to challenge the government's supremacy.

In the case of Syria, the domestic situation has become extremely problematic, as evidenced by the increasingly violent crackdown on protests, and that, made the international community break its silence and impose a first round of sanctions on the Syrian regime. Specifically, the first round of EU sanctions

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[23] For the theoretical basis, *See* Johan Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions", Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 380-381.

as of May 9, 2011 on the Syrian government[24] mainly focus on barring the sale, supply, transfer or export, directly or indirectly, of equipment that might be used for internal repression. At the same pace, the US Treasury Department renewed its sanctions freezing any assets of Syrian officials that are in the United States or otherwise fall within US jurisdiction, and barring American individuals and companies from dealing with them.

Political elites in the region and beyond, however, characterized the designation of Syrian officials as a purely symbolic gesture with no tangible economic repercussions, and as a feckless attack on the Assad inner family and regime circle, not only from a US administration with little political leverage over Syria, but also from a divided European Union. Senior Syrian officials whose assets have been frozen under US sanctions have none in the United States, and the EU arms embargo is meaningless since there are no EU weapons sales to Syria. Thus, it is estimated that sanctions alone could not deter the Syrian regime from resorting to violent means for as long as it perceived that its survival was at stake.

The initial symbolic approach of the US and the EU sanctions against Syria has reflected that foreign powers may have had a vested interest in possibly maintaining the *status quo* in Syria in the name of *realpolitik* since there were fears that regime change in Syria would look a lot more like Iraq in 2003 than Egypt in 2011. However, the rise of the death toll to more than 4,000 according to estimates of the UN Human Rights Commission[25] prompted the EU to pile more pressure on the Syrian regime initiating a new round of

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[24] Regulation 442 aimed to be part of a West-led initiative to apply more pressure on the Syrian regime to end violence against protesters. *See*, Council Regulation (EU) No 442/2001, "Concerning Restrictive Measures in View of the Situation in Syria", May 9, 2011.

[25] At the time of this monograph's writing, this was the number of the death toll. According to Amnesty International, the number has escalated over the course of 18 months into the Syrian crisis reaching more than 27 thousand victims. *See*, http://www.amnesty.org/

sanctions with regulation No 1244/2011 on December 1st, 2011.[26] The new measures have included a ban on monitoring shipments going to the Arab country, suspending insurance for transactions, and banning European companies from making new investments in Syria's oil sector. The EU sanctions target Syria's oil industry by blacklisting state-owned firms that oversee trade and exploration, as well as halting sales and imports of Syrian oil and byproducts; the state-owned General Petroleum Corporation (GPC) and Syria Trading Oil (Sytrol), as well as a GPC joint venture, Al Furat Petroleum Company, fall in the sanctions list. Additionally, the EU has suspended the printing of Syrian currency in the EU, has blocked investment and development aid, has frozen training programs in the Arab country, and has instructed the European Investment Bank to halt funding of infrastructure projects.

Sanctions have also been imposed on twenty institutions and companies connected to the regime, including the main Syrian mobile phone provider and the Al-Shams Holding Company, Syria's only privately owned political newspaper *Al-Watan*, the Cham Press television station, the Scientific Studies and Research Center (CERS) for providing support to the Syrian army to acquire equipment used directly for the surveillance and repression of demonstrators, the companies of Business Lab, Industrial Solutions, Mechanical Construction Factory (MCF), Syronics-Syrian Arab Co. for Electronic Industries, and Handasieh-Organization for Engineering Industries as front companies that also contribute to the acquisition of sensitive equipment. According to Uraib Rantawi, director of the al-Quds Center for Political Studies based in Amman, "*the imposition of EU sanctions is risky game. The EU should create a clear political vision, a roadmap to political stability in Syria. Simply imposing sanctions on Syria and demanding the oust of the current regime without specifying the political ingredients of the*

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[26] *See,* Official Journal of the European Union, Volume 54, December 2, 2011.

transitional period with regards to who will take over the day after, complicates the situation and runs the risk of intra-regional conflict".[27]

The renewed EU punitive measures came after the Arab League in an unprecedented move along with Turkey on November 27, 2011, approved economic sanctions on Syria to pressure the regime in Damascus to end the domestic suppression. The idea behind the Arab League sanctions was that being isolated by its Arab fellow countries is much more painful for an Arab nationalist country like Syria, than being sanctioned by the European Union and the United States.[28] In fact, it has been the first time that the Arab bloc has enforced a series of punitive measures of such magnitude against a member state.[29]

The Arab League sanctions include (a) a travel ban on senior Syrian officials to the Arab countries and the freezing of their assets; (b) cutting off transactions with the Central Bank of Syria; (c) the cease of trade blocking the sale of "nonessential" commodities into Syria; (d) the halt of Arab government funding for projects in Syria and freezing government assets; (e) the stop of all financial transactions with the Syrian government; (f) the cease of all dealings with the Commercial Bank of Syria; (g) the demand from the Arab central banks to cease bank transfers and trade credits, with the exception of bank transfers from workers abroad to their families in Syria, and remittances of Arab citizens in Syria; (i) a schedule to stop Arab flights to and from Syria; and, (j) the assignment of two major agencies to follow up implementation of the punitive measures, namely, the Arab Air Civil Authority, and the Arab Monetary Fund.

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[27] Interview conducted in Amman, November 27, 2011.

[28] The suspension of Syria's membership in the organization has preceded the imposition of economic sanctions.

[29] 19 of the 22 countries that make up the Arab League supported the list of sanctions. Iraq abstained from the sanctions vote, and Lebanon "disassociated" itself from the vote. Both countries said they would not enforce the sanctions.

The simultaneous EU, US and Arab League economic sanctions against Syria seek to bring a standard of success. Given their coercive nature, economic sanctions should be credited with success if they meet two criteria. First, the target state concedes to a significant part of the coercer's demands and second, economic sanctions are applied before the target changes its behavior. In the case of Syria, as the situation stands now, the basic pillars of success are to weaken the regime and withdraw security forces from the field, release tens of thousands of prisoners, and agree to negotiate the transition to a democratic system.

The series of EU economic sanctions aim to affect Syria because Europe is the country's biggest overall trading partner, while Turkey and the Arab states rank four in Syria's five major partners. Signs of economic difficulties have begun to emerge with the cost of commodities rising by 25-50 percent in the Syrian market during the last eight months of 2011, and the tourist industry has totally ceased. The shortage of fuel and the rationing of electricity to only a few hours a day in main towns present major difficulties, while international oil companies like *Total* and *Shell* have suspended operations in Syria, and the Syrian government seeks to barter crude oil as means to circumvent sanctions. Syrian oil exports have been paralyzed by the EU decision to boycott them taking into account that the European countries purchase almost 95 percent of Syria's oil. Additionally, in line with the European Investment Bank's decision to suspend a series of government investment projects on Syrian soil, Germany's *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* (KfW) bank has frozen an agreement to fund investment in the water sector. On a parallel basis, the Syrian pound has lost almost 30 percent of its value since March 2011, when the pre-revolution equilibrium was 47 pounds per dollar.

On the Arab League level, the suspension of Arab bank dealings with the Syrian Central Bank is expected to be the most effective measure, as this will

cut the money lifeline that Syrian businesses maintain with the Arab world, and this measure is also expected to favor the migration of capital from Syria.

In substance, the EU, the US and the Arab League sanctions aim to undermine the foundations of the Syrian regime, weaken its coherence, and alienate its popular support base. The internal structures of power of the Syrian regime are abided by solidarity among the elite and those in the lower ranks. These relationships can be visualized as a pyramid with the president and his close entourage at the top and the existence of hierarchical top-down networks of patronage and dependence which pervade all institutions and levels of society. Therefore, the targeting of high ranking Syrian individuals by sanctioning their businesses and freezing their assets abroad, aims to create internal divisions and disconnect the summit from the rest of the pyramid.

Additionally, the cease of foreign investments and the restriction of liquidity assets which could cause a negative balance of payments, and therefore, reduce the Syrian Central Bank's currency reserves aim to target the pyramid's structure of privileges. A possible depletion of currency reserves could lead to the collapse of the national currency. In fear of this possibility, high rank individuals may reinforce the tendency to transfer their assets abroad, as it happened during the third quarter of 2011 where deposits in Syrian banks decreased by 18 percent.

However, the effectiveness of sanctions is questioned by political observers in the region and beyond due to the lack of unanimity in the Arab League context with regards to sanctions against Syria. Also, countries that neighbor Syria namely Lebanon, Iraq and Iran are widely perceived as the potential large gates for the sanctions' break.

Lebanon adopts a stance of neutrality regarding the events in Syria and of non-interference in Syria's internal affairs, and refrained from voting the economic sanctions against Syria in the Arab League, on the grounds that

Syria's security and stability are tied to Lebanon's. Since its formation on June 2011, Miqati's government dominated by the pro-Syrian March 8 Forces, tried to cultivate the image of a moderate and neutral Lebanese government, presumably motivated by Lebanon's dependence on Western aid, both economic and military, and by the fact that it served in September 2011 as the rotating president of the Security Council. This tactic has also been employed *vis-à-vis* other major issues in Lebanese politics, such as the Special Tribunal that investigated the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri, for which 32 million dollars has been wired by the Lebanese government so that the possibility of international sanctions on the country is avoided.[30]

Lebanon's position is dictated by the geographic proximity as well as its close and complex ties with Syria that describe the traditional economic relationship between both as one large "pool" in which labor, commodities and money flows unimpeded. The linked nature of the two economies raises Lebanese worries on the ramifications that sanctions may have on the country's economy as the relationship between the two countries is not limited to official trade relations, that were estimated at around $1.3 billion in 2010, but they also include the movement of labor. Syrian expatriate workers who earn double the Syrian wage and get paid in hard currency provide Syria with an estimated $1-2 billion annually in remittances, a critical source of revenue for Syria's 22 billion dollar economy.

Mutually, Lebanese present a high-skilled labor force that traditionally makes up for the upper management in the telecommunication and other sectors in

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[30]On a parallel track, some in the US Congress have recommended cutting off military aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces, but what seems to have prevailed is that Lebanon should not be punished for a democratic change in government. It is estimated that while Hezbollah is making inroads in the Lebanese security services, the Armed Forces are still loyal to the state, not the resistance, although they do cooperate closely when necessary with the Iranian-backed organization.

Syria. The volume of trade between Lebanon and Syria is relatively small compared to other countries in the region, however, farmers and industrialists transfer most of their goods through Syria since the cost of ferrying any product by air is comparatively high. Also, Lebanese banks are considered a safe haven for savings and conduct many credit operations for exports and other purposes, and though, these activities are expected to decline, Syrian deposits in Lebanese banks are likely to rise due to instability in Syria. It is noteworthy that under the status of Arab League sanctions, Syria will most likely seek to stabilize its currency since expatriate workers in both countries play a critical role in bolstering Syria's all-important black market.

Undoubtedly, tourism in Lebanon will be strongly affected especially tourism from the Gulf, where Syria serves as transit. Statistics show that the number of tourists coming to Lebanon from Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia fell by more than 25 percent since the anti-regime protests erupted in Syria.[31] Additionally, Lebanon's need for electric energy and gas provides Syria with its most powerful lever over Lebanon. In recent past, the Syrian government periodically shut off electricity transmissions to the Beka'a valley and Northern Lebanon, and exerted extra pressure on the Lebanese government by refusing to ship gas to power Lebanon's electric plants, despite previous agreements that call for gas to flow though the Syrian-Lebanon gas pipeline unimpeded. Syria's ability to seriously affect Lebanon's power supply does give it very potent economic tools that can be employed in case its Arab neighbor applies the Arab League sanctions against it.

With regards to Iran, Syria's strongest economic lifeline is still Iran itself which has billions of dollars of investments at stake in Syria, ranging from energy and construction to automobiles and cement. Joint Syrian-Iranian ventures include a 60 million dollar car factory with Iran's Khodro Company, and the acquisition of 5,000 new buses from Iran aimed at helping upgrade

the country's public transport network. Iran could also help Syria weather the sanctions by buying its crude oil previously destined for the European countries or by allowing Damascus to pay for imports in Syrian pounds.

It is no secret that a mutually beneficial economic relationship between Syria and Iran has resulted from their political alliance - though Tehran still remains a relatively minor trading partner - governed by an agreement dating back to March 1996 that was ratified as Decree 241 in 1997, and by a "preferential trade agreement" lowering tariffs on some goods. Private Iranian investment involves a mineral oil refinery, known as the Damascus Petrochemical Refinery located in Dumeir[32], while Iran's highest profile investments in Syria are two automobile assembly plants that opened in 2007 and are export oriented. The first is the Syrian Iranian Automobile Manufacturing Company (SIAMCO) plant, a joint venture among Iranian Khodro, the Syrian General Organization for Engineering Industries and the private Syrian al-Sultan Group. The second car assembly plant is a joint project of the Iranian Saipa and the private Syrian-Iranian Vehicle company (SIVECO International). The expansion of the Hama cement plant also presents a major Iranian investment project that has increased its production line from 1.1 million to 1.4 million tons, while the Iranian Azarab company renovated, as prime contractor, the Banyas power plant. Equally important has been the contracting of the Iranian company Tohsee Siloha that has committed to built ten 100.000 metric ton grain silos across Syria that provide storage capacity of more than five million metric tons for Syrian grain, a project of vital importance as wheat reserve is viewed as essential for the country's political independence.

The threat that the EU, the US and the Arab League sanctions pose on the Syrian economy are expected to extra precipitate the power balancing

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[31] "The Lebanon Weekly Monitor," *Bank Audi*, September 12-18, 2011.

strategies of Iran and Syria. In times of political and economic hardships, Iran traditionally has sided by Syria and this policy is expected to happen again under the current circumstances as history seems to repeat itself. Identically, in the early 1980s the Syrian regime perceived itself and the Allawites as the target of an alarming Sunni rebellion campaign supported by the same Sunni states in conflict with Iran, a situation that resembles much with nowadays, though in a different political and geopolitical context. During that time, Syria received one million free barrels of Iranian oil per year and another 5-7 million per year at 1/3 discount. The Iranian subsidy is claimed to have been worth of 269 million dollars per year and came at a time when the Syrian economy was in particular trouble.[33]

The turbulent domestic Syrian front since March 2011 that has led to the gradual regional and international isolation of the Syrian regime has brought the two countries closer as they share major interests, considered at stake. Driven by the essence of solidarity, Iran pursues the policy of economic solidification, thus providing the vital alternative to Syria. Specifically, important step of strategic essence has been the July 25, 2011 signing of a 10 billion dollar natural gas agreement between Iran, Iraq and Syria which foresees that the three countries will construct a pipeline running from Iran's natural gas fields to Syria and eventually to the Mediterranean, via Lebanon.[34] Additionally, Iran and Syria agreed to set up a joint bank in Damascus where the initial capitalization of the bank is estimated to 30 million dollars, with Iran owning 60 percent of the bank,[35] while on July 15, 2011, the Iranian

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[32] The refinery was a 7.2 million dollar capital project that commenced operations in 2004.

[33] For a more detailed account on the Syrian-Iranian economic relationship during the 1980s, *See,* Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syrian and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, Routledge Publications, 1997, pp.98-99.

[34] Under this agreement Iraq would initially receive 20 million cubic meters per day, and Syria 20 to 25 million cubic meters per day. "Iraq, Iran sign natural gas agreement," *AFP*, July 25, 2011,

[35] "Iran, Syria to Set Up Joint Bank," *Press TV*, May 25, 2010

Supreme Leader expressed support for a proposal by Iran's Center for Strategic Research (CSR) to provide Syria with 5.8 billion dollars in aid.[36] The Iranian Minister of Industries and Mines Ali Akbar Mehrabian claimed in August 2011 that the Islamic Republic has 1.3 billion dollars worth of various projects underway in Syria, and on September 2011 the joint Iran-Venezuela oil company VENIROGC announced plans to build an oil refinery in Syria capable of producing 140,000 barrels per day.[37] Evidently, Iran could fulfill a fundamental role in minimizing the effects on any international or Arab League sanctions against Syria.

With regards to Iraq, Syria has been an indispensable regional player whose usual *modus operandi* of working all angles to ensure that it remains relevant on Iraq has been the dominant policy in the post-Saddam era. Syria has demonstrated over the years that it wields the power to turn off and on Iraqi opposition activities by having hosted Iraqi opposition conferences on Syrian soil including Ba'athists, tribal leaders and former Iraq regime loyalists, and by turning a blind eye on insurgents transiting through Syria into Iraq. Therefore, Iraq's decision to reject the Arab League sanctions against Syria is driven by security along with economic considerations.[38]

Iraq is Syria's largest Arab trading partner. Trade between Iraq and Syria reached 2 billion dollars in 2010 and is estimated to reach 3 billion dollars in 2011, according to the Syrian Centre for Statistics which has also disclosed that in 2009, 52.5 percent of Syria's exports went to the Arab world, while 31.4 percent of that went to Iraq. Additionally, Damascus uses its ports on the Mediterranean to build an important trade route between Iraq and Europe. Baghdad and Damascus have already agreed to re-open the Kirkuk-Banias oil

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[36] "Tehran Ready to Give Syria $5.8 Billion," *Reuters*, July 15, 2011

[37] Iran, Venezuela to Build Refinery in Syria," *Press TV*, September 22, 2011

[38] Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister Labid Abbawi summarized Iraq's decision to reject the Arab League sanctions as follows: "Our position is mainly economic. There is a trade exchange between Iraq and Syria, and a joint border".

pipeline, which extends from oil fields in Northern Iraq to the Syrian port of Banias. In fact, in September 2010, Iraq and Syria signed an agreement to build two new Kirkuk–Banias pipelines; one with capacity of 1.5 million barrels per day would carry heavier crude oil, while another pipeline with capacity of 1.25 million barrels per day would carry lighter crude oil.[39] At a time when Arab fellows recalled their ambassadors from the Syrian capital, Iraq entertained more than 100 Syrian businessmen in an effort to boost trade between the two countries, and a pact was signed to promote a soaring bilateral trade that already tops 2 billion dollars a year. Additionally, almost 200,000 Iraqis work and receive salaries in Syria, thus cementing economic ties at multi-layered levels.

With this reality in mind, a widespread notion seems to gradually gain international political backing that, in the case of Syria, economic sanctions should be employed along with the threat of overwhelming military force and/or covert use of force, such as foreign sponsorship to the growing armed opposition movement mostly known as the Free Syrian Army against the Syrian regime. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) is deemed as important element in the Syrian equation and as an increasingly significant player that could most likely influence the outcome of events. The FSA was formally announced on July 29, 2011, and allegedly includes defectors form the Syrian army of all ranks, from conscript to brigadier general, and from a wide variety of combat units and organizations, including key regime props such as the Republican Guard. The FSA, however, appears to be a relatively flat organization, with a command and headquarters in Turkey, possibly a set of regional or area commands with subordinate groups in Syria, and, according to media reports, one or two combat elements in Lebanon.[40]

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[39] "Syria, Iraq to build pipeline", *Tehran Times (Daily Newspaper)*, September 20, 2010

[40] The FSA allegedly operates throughout Syria, both in urban areas and in the countryside. Forces are active in the northwest (Idlib, Aleppo), the central region (Homs, Hama, and Rastan), the coast around Latakia, the south (Deraa and Houran), the east

Turkey, a once close ally to the Syrian regime, reportedly floats the idea of cross-border military operations playing, however, a game of semantics in line with the position of France according to which the creation of a "security zone to protect civilians along the Turkey-Syrian common border" will need military protection to ensure the delivery of aid. According to the Turkish Daily *Milliyet*, France has sent its military training forces to Turkey and Lebanon to coach the FSA, while French, British, Libyan and Turkish authorities have reached an agreement to send arms into Syria.[41]

It seems that the case of Syria is developing at a different pace from the earlier revolutionary wave of protests in Tunisia and Egypt. The Syrian protests have lacked the overall support of the urban middle class, while the army, which represents the main foundation of the Syrian regime, has remained united and has maintained its allegiance to the ruling elite.

However, the prolongation of the domestic instability in Syria provided outside powers the time to position themselves as caretakers of Syria's future. In the face of the ongoing failure of the Syrian regime to calm the domestic front and the increasing role of outside powers, the Syrian deadlock could morph into a dangerous possibility namely a Lebanon-like civil war or a Libya-kind of military intervention.[42]

(Dayr al-Zawr, Abu Kamal), and the Damascus area. The largest concentration of these forces appears to be in the central region (Homs, Hama, and the surrounding areas). For a more detailed account on the FSA's structure and operations, Accessed at: http://syriacomment.com/

[41] At a meeting, which was held in Istanbul and included Turkish officials, the Syrians requested assistance from the Libyan representatives and were offered arms and, potentially, volunteers. See, "Libya's New Rulers Offer Weapons to Syrian Rebels", Accessed at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk

[42] Interview conducted with a former Jordanian Prime Minister in Amman on November 29, 2011.

C. TURKEY'S POLICIES AND AMBITIONS *VIS-À-VIS* SYRIA

Turkey has become more focused on the Islamic world and its Muslim tradition in its foreign policy, though it remains a blend of western institutions and orientation. Turkey pursues a mix of traditional western oriented foreign policy however, it has incorporated two new ideological elements, the "zero-problem/conflicts" and neo-ottomanism. Neo-ottomanism is a Turkish political ideology[43] that promotes greater engagement with areas formerly under the Ottoman Empire and has profoundly become the new conceptual framework of the Turkish foreign policy.

The dominant traditional foreign policy centers on the country's cooperation and integration with the West, namely NATO, the efforts to access the EU and the customs union with the EU. The EU is Turkey's major trading partner accounting for 42 percent of the country's total trade while the US is important in the military, energy and aviation sectors.[44] The Turkish military is heavily dependent on the US supply and technology, while Turkey realizes that turbulence in its immediate entourage from Libya and Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan necessitates close cooperation with the West and NATO. Equally interesting is the fact that the Turkish leadership acknowledges that part of the country's allure in the Middle East stems from its key position in Western clubs and institutions.

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[43] The shift in the Turkish foreign policy under Turgut Özal's government can be described as the first step of Neo-Ottomanism. *See* Murinson, Alexander, *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan: State Identity and Security in the Middle East and Caucasus,* Routledge Publications, 2010, p. 119

[44] Katinka Barysch and Rainer Hermann, "EU Business and Turkish Accession", Center for European Reform Essays, Accessed at: http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/essay_turkey_business_22june07_forweb-1398.pdf

Borrowing from the Western rhetoric that Turkey is a bridge between the East and the West, its worldview as expressed by its leadership envisions an economically and culturally integrated Middle East as the driver for a peaceful and not the crisis-ridden periphery of today. It is in this context that Turkey supports that as the legitimate successor of the Ottoman Empire should be the focus of the re-establishment of strong Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean regions exploiting the ideological elements of the "zero-problems/conflicts" with neighbors and neo-ottomanism which employs the concepts of Islamic solidarity and of Turkish-Islamic synthesis.

The new ideological foreign policy element of the "zero-problems/conflicts" concentrates on Turkey's efforts to resolve problems with its immediate near abroad. This new element contradicts the traditional policy of letting long-term frozen conflicts fester. Upon this, Turkey pursued an opening to Armenia that climaxed with the signing of recognition protocols, and the support of the Anan Plan to resolve the Cyprus question.[45]

The second foreign policy element incorporates the conceptual ingredients of neo-ottomanism which solidifies Ankara's aspirations to re-engage estranged neighbors and to serve as mediator in conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. It is in this framework that Turkey was instrumental in mediating between Syria and Israel and in opening dialogue with all groups within Iraq, including the Kurds.[46] The idea of Turkey employing its cultural and religious links to the Middle East for the advancement of Turkish interests and regional stability has gained momentum by veteran Turkish diplomat and Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu. His theory, best expressed in his book *Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)*, is that most of the regional regimes are

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[45] Little of true practical accomplishment has been achieved as the Cyprus question is still unresolved.

[46] In 2009, Turkey agreed to receive a group of Kurdish returnees from Northern Iraq triggering reactions varying from a warm greeting by pro-PKK crowds to incredulous reactions from Turks in the West.

undemocratic and illegitimate, and therefore, Turkey by capitalizing on the alleged admiration among Middle Eastern populations for its economic success and soft political power, reaches over the regimes to the Arab street.

In the mindset of the Arab street, Turkey is multi-dimensional for a number of reasons and thus appealing; first, Turkey represents a successful economic model that managed to move the country from the developing countries level to the powerful economic elite of the G-20;[47] second, Turkey represents a soft power of Islamic governance that alternates the democracy exercised by Israel. In the Arab mindset, Israel used to represent the best model of democracy in the region rooted in solid principles and institutions. This Arab position started to gradually change when Israel took the decision to proceed in peace negotiations with the Palestinians and failed to deliver peace dividents, especially during the last ten years. Due to the political facts on the ground, Turkey has managed in large to replace Israel as the sole source of democratic admiration.[48]

To capitalize in its rapport with the people and its Ottoman experience as well as its supposed diplomatic expertise, Turkey has thrown itself deeply into the waters of the Arab Spring envisioning to patron it. The Turkish patronization is attempted with its Islamic orientation, ties to religiously conservative constituencies and alleged widespread popularity among the Arab critical mass. After the effervescent phase of social networking, the Arab Spring has entered a critical curve depicted in the electoral advances of Islamic parties, which have profoundly filled a political void in those countries where transparent political institutions and secular parties have been absent, and

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[47] The Turkish success is attributed to its technology-led growth and trade partly due to its Customs Union with the EU which is the biggest exports market as well as the investments from the EU and the decades old technological transfer by the US and Israel.

[48] Interview with Adnan Abu Odeh, political advisor to late King Hussein, a former Senator and former Chief of the Royal Court in Jordan, Amman, December 7, 2011.

therefore, could not be created by immediate and post-insurrectionary improvisation.[49]

Nevertheless, this effort cannot be translated into unfettered Turkish sway over Arab countries like Egypt, where the protests sparked and flared. Besides the fact that Egypt is too nationalist and too big to simply fall under Turkish influence, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood resentment of Turkish influence is historically persistent while the Egyptian Nour party is inclined towards the fundamentalist Wahhabis mainly controlled by Saudi Arabia. For its part, Libya is too complex and laden with resources to the point that one country cannot singlehandedly wield significant control over it, while it cannot escape from the Libyan political thinking that Turkey has initially defended the former Libyan president by condemning NATO military action to overthrow him.

The only country that Turkey seems to have a significant ideological and political leverage is Tunisia, though it is too far and too Francophone. The Tunisian al-Nahda party that has won the elections imitates the rhetoric of the Turkish ruling AKP and upholds it as a democratic party that has won three elections fairly, and which has avoided the excesses of the Iranian clerical political system as well as the salafi banner supported by Saudi Wahhabis.[50] The degree of intermeddling and Turkish ideological influence over the majority Tunisian political party is denoted by the fact that the leader of the al-Nahda party, Rachid Ghannoushi, has published his political writings in Turkey and maintains close relations with the Turkish prime minister.[51]

In pursuit of its posturing as a leading Muslim power that determines the regional currents, Turkey has aimed to uniquely position itself in the case of

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[49] Stephen Schwartz, "The Arab Spring and Turkish Neo-Islamists: A Question and Three Observations", December 5, 2011, Accessed at: http://www.islamicpluralism.org
[50] Interview conducted with Adnan Abu Odeh, Amman, December 7, 2011
[51] Interview conducted with Oraib Rantawi, Amman, November 27, 2011.

International Community since key grassroots organizers and activists allegedly serve on the SNC membership, Secretariat General, and the Executive Committee.[54] It is in this context, that the Turkish government invited a delegation of the SNC to attend the World Economic Forum conference titled "Platform for International Cooperation" held in Istanbul on November 23-25, 2011.[55] The conference was an important venue attended by government officials and businesspeople from more than 40 countries where the SNC delegation was offered the opportunity to address the whole assembly and present the Council's political agenda.

Turkey has methodically managed to enjoy significant political clout in the Syrian opposition with the aim to be uniquely positioned in the post-Assad Syria. The view of the SNC towards Turkey is best summarized by Ausama Monajed, advisor to the Secretary General of the SNC, *"Turkey has been supportive of the Syrian revolution and considers Syria's security and stability a matter of national interest for the entire region. Turkey and other countries may play a positive role during the transition, but it will be up to the Syrian people to draft the path of their future. At the same time, it is natural to expect Syrians to remember who sided with the people of Syria and who supported the Assads".*[56]

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[53] Electronic interview with Ausama Monajed, Advisor to the Secretary General of the SNC, November 28, 2011

[54] Ibid. Interestingly, Mr. Monajed supported that the SNC holds talks and dialogues with other opposition groups and independents to unify the strategy, and work on toppling the regime because the US and the EU have expressed support for the SNC. However, the Council is waiting for more regional Arab support. For this reason, the SNC will continue to work on being more inclusive.

[55] The SNC delegation included Executive office member and Economic Office Chairman Samir Nashar, the Secretary of the General Secretariat Wael Merza, and members of the Economic Office Mustafa al-Sabbagh and Adib Shishakli. *See*, Local Coordination Committees, "Syrian National Council Attends the World Economic Forum Conference in Istanbul", December 4, 2011.

[56] Op.cit. Interview with Ausama Monajed

The policies of Turkey against the Syrian regime have been intensified with the provision of logistical support to the Free Syrian Army that employs defectors from the Syrian army, and of political support for the formation of a Military Council whose main goal is to topple the regime and protect citizens, public and private property and to prevent chaos once the regime falls, while its members cannot participate in any political party or religious movement.

Turkey allegedly seeks the *de jure* establishment of a no-fly zone over Aleppo in Northern Syria following the example of Libya. Specifically, the aim of the no-fly zone is to create a secured zone that would serve as humanitarian corridor[57] and to turn Aleppo into a Syrian Benghazi much like the Libyan city that served as the political and military base of the Libyan opposition. This, however, is a risky game as the experience with no-fly zones over countries has shown that such measures in the absence of any viable political solution can complicate the situation. The case of Iraq is indicative, where the imposition of a no-fly zone over the Kurdish areas in Northern Iraq and the Shiite regions in the south of the country, without a prior mandate from the UN Security Council, has enjoyed limited success between 1991 and 2003. Under the protection of US forces, that destroyed the anti-aircraft defense of Iraq and the military bases on the ground, the Kurds established *de facto* autonomy in Northern Iraq. At the same time, the southern part of the country continues to be under a state of complete lack of security and daily armed clashes, taking for granted the entry of militants of Islamist organizations such as al-Qaeda.

On a parallel basis, Turkey supports the economic sanctions against Syria as proposed by the Arab League. Having considered its improving relations with Syria as a key foreign policy success during the last decade, Turkey has

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[57] France has ruled out military action against Syria but calls for the creation of a secured zone that will require military protection to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. *See,*

invested heavily and solidified economic cooperation with its Arab neighbor. More than 50 agreements and memoranda of understanding in fields ranging from transportation and security to energy and water are in place, the most strategically important envisioning the irrigation of 150,000 hectares of farmland in the province of al-Hasakah using water from the Tigris river as well as the construction of a dam on the Orontes river for power generation and irrigation. The allocation and use of the Tigris River waters forms the traditional core of political and strategic considerations for Syria, therefore, the sharing of benefits and expertise between the two countries presented a major shift from the intractable approach of the past.[58]

Equally important has been the agreement for the linkage of Syria's natural gas pipeline that is part of the 1,200 kilometer "Arab Natural Gas Pipeline" that exports Egyptian natural gas to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, with a separate line to Israel to the proposed Nabucco pipeline that crosses Turkey from Central Asia into Europe, and which aims to constitute another vein that will support the Nabucco project. It is important to note that Syria purchases around 1.5 billion kilowatts of electricity from Turkey annually to meet its increasing energy needs.[59]

Also, trade between the two countries expanded to such levels that Turkey's trade volume reached 1.8 billion dollars as of 2009, while investments of

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Ryan Mauro, "Reports for Coming Military Action in Syria", November 25, 2011. Accessed at: http//www.frontpagemag.com

[58]It is true that Syria and Turkey came closer to finding an understanding on water and security issues within the enhanced post-2003 bilateral *rapprochement*. Joint projects and the sharing of expertise and benefits were advocated. Since 2005, Track II channels have also gathered experts and former officials from the two co-riparian countries through the Euphrates and Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC). For more on the topic, *See*, Marwa Daoudy, "Syrian-Turkish Hydrodiplomacy", *Syria Today (Monthly Magazine)*, January 2010

[59] Hasan Kanbolat, "Economic relations between Turkey and Syria", *Today's Zaman*, October, 3, 2011

Turkish companies in Syria account to nearly 260 million dollars.[60] The signing of agreements on "Preventing Double Taxation", "the Reciprocal Stimulus and Protection of Investments" as well as the establishment of the "Free Trade Agreement" provided the legal foundations that bind the two counties and which foresee that in a 12-year period, industrial products exported from Turkey to Syria will be free from custom taxes in increments, while products entering Turkey from Syria are currently entirely free from customs taxes.

Therefore, Turkey's suspension of all financial relations with Syria and the freezing of Syrian government assets in the country have the potential to cause a serious setback in bilateral trade and economic relations overall. Syria for its part has already struck out at Turkey by placing a 30 percent tariff on Turkish imports thus increasing the prices of all Turkish products that jumped 30-40 percent overnight. In response, Turkey opened two additional crossings to Iraq in order to assist local merchants to bypass Syria in trade with the Gulf and Egypt. On a parallel basis, Turkey announced that it will stop all transactions with the Commercial Bank of Syria, except for the existing ones, and that it will halt all credit agreements signed with *Eximbank* to finance Syrian infrastructure projects.[61]

a. Turkey's Regional Motivations

It is no secret that Turkey under its current leadership has invested major political capital in methodologically deepening relations with Syria and constituted a ready mediator willing to help Damascus mend its strained

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[60] Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey-Syria Economic and Trade Relations", 2010

[61] Turkey has announced that it has already frozen nearly 250 million dollars in *Eximbank* credit to be used in projects in Syria. *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Trade with Syria Hit by Turkey's Sanctions", November 30, 2011

relations with neighbors such as Israel. Turkey has facilitated a series of Syrian-Israeli peace talks that ended in December 2008 with the main focus on that if Syria were able to achieve peace with "security" and obtain greater US and Turkish involvement, it might be willing to pull away from Iran's orbit. Therefore, the change in Turkey's posture toward Israel has been largely a tool to advance the country's re-orientation rather than any sense in its cause. The decline of Turkey's relationship with Israel that started in Davos in response to Israel's December 2008 invasion of Gaza and later on over the flotilla episode aboard the Mavi Marmara provided the basis for Turkey's ambitious regional agenda, one that primarily targets Iranian posture.

The motives of the unfolding Turkish policy *vis-à-vis* Syria lie behind its commitment to re-affirm Turkey's close relationship with the US and its intention to outweigh Iranian regional influence. The rivalry between Sunni Turkey and Shia Iran is not new. On the contrary, it is historically rooted since Turkey and Iran are widely viewed as the diminished heirs of two major competing Muslim empires, the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Shiite Safavid Empire, and this rivalry has currently evolved to the egos level of Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and Iranian President Ahmadinejad.[62]

In certain aspects, Syria seems to have become the focus of the Iranian-Turkish rivalry that largely touches upon the interests and expectations of regional countries and the West. Specifically, regional countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain that maintain large Shiite minorities have invested heavily in putting forward Arab League sanctions against Syria and support the increasing role of Turkey in intra-Arab affairs since they view the Syrian crisis as a golden opportunity to diminish Iranian influence and posture in the heart of the Middle East.[63] According to the Gulf States perspective, Iran

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[62] Interview conducted with a former Jordanian Foreign Minister in Amman, December 8, 2011.

[63] The Shiite minorities in the Arab world are widespread and numerous. In Saudi Arabia, the Shiite element accounts to around 10 percent, Bahrain over 70 percent, Iraq

anticipates that Shiite groups in the GCC states are frustrated by their failure to establish democracy and impose limits on authoritarian rule, and therefore, it is a matter of time for these groups to turn to the Iranian "big brother" for support.

Upon this line of thought, an Iraqi official who meets with Iranian policymakers on a regular basis has claimed that a group in Iran announced a project involving "national Shiite security", and examines "the Jewish experiment in exporting their idea slowly and calmly," apparently a reference to international Zionist organizations' role in advocating pro-Israel interests.[64] The Shiite protests in Bahrain in the midst of the Arab spring were portrayed by the Gulf states as a sectarian Shiite plot indicative of the fear of the expanded Iranian and Shiite influence on the predominantly Sunni Arab world, and not as a discontent stemmed chiefly from Shiites lower standard of living, unofficial exclusion from sensitive government positions, and Sunni domination of parliament.

Gulf States widely behold that a possible overthrow of the monarchy in Bahrain whose 70 percent of the population is Shiite could serve as springboard for Iranian ambitions that perceive Bahrain as the 14th province of Iran. The Gulf States' interests coincide with those of the West and Turkey since Iranian dominance is also apprehended as posing a strategic threat to vital security assets. For example, Bahrain hosts the Naval Support Activity Bahrain (NSA Bahrain) and the US Navy 5th fleet headquarters. Literally located in the heart of the Gulf, the naval base and the headquarters are a key strategic asset for the US presence in the wider Middle East, as they permit the overlooking of oil installations and trade routes, the support of the US

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about 60 percent, Kuwait around 30 percent, Qatar almost 5 percent and Lebanon around 30 percent.

[64]Interview conducted in Athens, July 25th 2011. The Iraqi official said that Iranian efforts to export its ideology will be "quiet in a way that will not be immediately noticeable, but will shape the region".

forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the fight against naval piracy in the Red and the Arabian Seas.

It is in this geopolitical framework that Turkey aspiring to broaden its horizons has got itself deeply into the waters of the Syrian crisis to diminish the Iranian influence and present itself as the neo-ottoman mediator and defender of the larger Sunni Muslim neighbourhood, with the ultimate aim to serve as the anchor for a new geopolitical alignment. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutogolu admitted inthe recent past that "*rather what we (Turkey) are trying to do is to contribute to the establishment of a permanent peace in our region. If by order this is Pax Ottomana, Pax in the meaning of order, we (Turkey) are trying to establish an order, it is not wrong to say such thing*".[65]

The Turkish rivalry with Iran seems to take into account its regional ambitions for establishing a regional order with a watchful eye on the interests of greater outside powers. By encircling diplomatically and possibly militarily Syria, Turkey estimates that Iraq and Lebanon will follow suit, and thus, a coincidence of Western and Turkish interests will empower the regional leadership role of Turkey with the blessing of the former. Concurrently, Iraq presents an arena of Turkish-Iranian competition and Western interests where the Shiite-Sunni divide is dominant, and where the Iranian influence has extended over religious Shiite political parties that shape Iraqi politics at the national level and at the provincial and local levels in Central and Southern Iraq. Lebanon for its part is largely perceived as the satellite of Iran and therefore, Turkey concerns about further consolidation of Iranian influence near its borders through the enhanced power of Hezbollah.

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[65] Nur Batur, "New Ottomans is not a Good Willed Description", *Sabah Newspaper*, December 4, 2009.

b. Turkey's Domestic Agenda and Its Relevance to Syria

There has been a certain degree of artistry by the Turkish leadership in tilting Turkey towards the Middle East with the redefinition of its domestic priorities and politics. Though few expected that the EU will embrace Turkey membership, a Turkish ambition viewed according to a former Jordanian foreign minister more like the hope of the devil in heaven[66], Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan exploited the profound EU rejection to undermine Ataturk's Westernizing legacy and to pursue an ambitious domestic agenda.

Having realized the urgent need to address the issue of Turkey's minorities and of a non-military solution to the Kurdish problem, with a clear distinction between meeting the needs of the Kurdish population and defeating the Kurdistan's Workers Party, the PKK, Turkey advertised the so-called National Unity project whose nature directed towards the country's minority groups, most prominently the Kurds and the Alevis, that maintain a significant presence in neighboring countries like Syria.

The Turkish government's initial efforts to reach out to the Kurds to calm the turbulent internal front have become futile. The early encouragement to start using the Kurdish language in the political and public arenas was widely accepted by the Kurds along with the Turkish government's agreement to receive a group of Kurdish returnees from Northern Iraq in 2009. Reforms and gestures towards the Kurdish ethnic minority were accredited to the National Unity project indicating that democratization is part of the solution to the Kurdish issue to finally defeat Kurdish separatists. The argument that the strengthening of the society leads to a strong state did not go hand in hand with reforming the constitution to recognize that Turkey has certain minorities whose rights of religion and freedom of expression are secured.

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[66] Interview conducted with a former Jordanian Foreign minister in Amman, December 8, 2011

On a parallel basis, the outline of a roadmap for an opening to the Alevis viewed as adherents of a form of Islam influenced by Shiism and Sufism was a major aspect of the National Unity project. The Turkish government sponsored a series of workshops to address Alevi issues that pertained to granting *cem* houses the status of worship places, opening a special institute to train Alevi clerics, and supporting financially the operational costs of the *cem* houses. Nevertheless, the opening has not gained any traction due to lack of genuine engagement with Alevi organizations except for *Eyli Beyt* widely seen as in bed with the Turkish government. Alevis remained largely skeptical to the project as evidenced in a survey conducted by the Eurasian Public Research Center which showed that 33.9 percent supported that they are target of permanent discrimination, while only 11 percent believed that the Turkish government was sincere with its National Unity Project.[67]

The Turkish government's initial plans to reach out to the Kurds and the Alevis led to increasing criticism of the project by all segments of the Turkish media and the political groups, thus de-generating the initial debate, and prompting the Turkish government to abandon its rhetoric about the National Unity project.

Coming to today's critical situation in Syria and the conflicting relationship of Turkey with its once close ally, there are increasing worries that the former is in position to exploit the Kurdish and Alevi cards to create instability to the latter's domestic front. The inability of Turkey to apply the "zero problems/conflicts policy" with neighbors to its own Southeast with the promotion of the National Unity project may prove, under the current circumstances, detrimental to its national interests. The Turkish leadership's recent threats to increase its military presence across the Syrian border may be insufficient to deter Syria and Iran from subversively supporting Kurdish

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[67]The survey was published by Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* which also reported that Alevis were suspicious about the Turkish government's National Unity project.

separatists, while the Turkish prime minister's late November 2011 apology for expulsions and massacres against Alevis in the Eastern province of Dersim in 1937-1939 was perceived as provocative affront to the Alevis.

For a comprehensive opening, Turkey needs to have proceeded with the implementation of effective policies that would have over the long-term improved the economic, political and cultural life of Turkey's Kurds and Alevis, therefore preventing their exploitation by regional players.

The interview of President Assad at the Syrian TV on August 21, 2011, sent a concrete message to all directions with Turkey being considered as the main recipient, according to which *"The consequences of any action against Syria would exceed by far what they could possibly bear for two reasons. First, the geopolitical position of Syria and second, the Syrian capabilities only some of which they would be able to bear... The countries that make threats are themselves weak politically and socially. They are weak, much weaker than in the past"*.[68]

Looking at Turkey's domestic front, one cannot help but see that nowadays, it has to deal with the landscape it faces not aesthetically but pragmatically to meet emerging challenges.

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[68] Syrian State TV, Interview of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, August 21, 2011.

D. JORDAN'S POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC POSTURE

In the often tumultuous politics of the Middle East, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has traditionally steered a cautious and successful course in international relations largely relying on a conservative foreign policy and the cementing of relations with regional and international states and institutions. The momentum events in Tunisia and Egypt reached Syria where the violent crackdown of protests by the Syrian regime took the overall domestic situation out of proportion, and caused a strong international and Arab condemnation.

In the first stages of the Syrian crisis, Jordan adopted a low profile approach attempting to maintain open avenues of dialogue with Damascus, while denouncing violence against civilians. Upon this political line of walk, the King had reportedly sent in August 2011 a secret envoy to meet with the Syrian president due to concerns over the accelerating events in Syria and their potential impact on the Kingdom.[69] Even before this, the King reported publicly that he was personally in contact with the Syrian president at least twice with the aim to initiate dialogue between the two leaderships that could help alleviate the crisis, and that towards this end the chief of the Jordanian Royal Court was in Damascus for consultations in late spring 2011.[70]

The foremost concern of Jordan is undoubtedly stability in Syria as there are estimates that a potential power vacuum in Damascus may lead to anarchy or civil war, providing a safe haven for militants who pose a direct threat to the Kingdom. The historical experience tells that during times of heightened

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[69] *Al-Sabil (Jordanian Daily)*, August 12, 2011

[70] The King explicitly said that *"I talked to him twice this spring expressing frustration and concerns of what is going on in Syria and I was attempting to be ...,not that Jordan by any means had a perfect story, but had national dialogue with our people, we have seen no deaths on our streets. It was an attempt on how we can help"*. Interview of King Abdallah of Jordan to *BCC News*, November 14, 2011.

tensions with the regime of al-Assad the father, the Kingdom witnessed a spike in attacks by militants who used Syria as their staging ground.[71]

The continued, however, military crackdown combined with the failure of the Syrian regime to abide by the Arab League Initiative[72] to restore peace and order, forced Jordan to pursue a more conservative position on Syria. The interview of the King with the *BBC News* on November 14, 2011, was a hallmark of the Jordanian position expressing disappointment in the Syrian government's failure to implement political reforms and bring an end to violence, while reiterating that reforms should come from within the Syrian regime in a way that would pave a free and democratic Syria.

As the prospect of domestic unrest in Syria drew higher, Jordan exercised its diplomatic discourse by cementing a unified Arab position in the Arab League context, and supported the economic sanctions that the Arab block has imposed against Syria. Nevertheless, Jordan's predicament to ultimately enforce Syrian economic sanctions overall is a reality driven by its increased level of economic interdependence on its northern Arab neighbor, and realistic concerns that the Jordanian economy will receive considerable damage. It is upon this basis that Jordan requested the exclusion of the trade and aviation sectors from the Arab League sanctions. The overall size of

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[71] Tensions between Syria and Jordan stepped up in 1958 when Egypt and Syria merged in the United Arab Republic and gave way to violence. Armed groups trained in Syria for subversive activities infiltrated into Jordan. Relations reached their lowest ebb in November 1958, when Syrian fighter MIGs intercepted the late King Hussein's private jet *en route* to Europe and forced him return to Amman. The situation even worsened when Jordan rejected the idea of Palestinian unity as promoted by Egypt and Iraq in 1959. Terrorist attacks from Syria against Jordanian targets intensified and climaxed in August 1960 with the assassination of Jordanian Prime Minister Haza al-Majali. Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv (ed), *Syria Under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks, Taylor & Francis,* 1986.

[72] The Arab League Initiative that preceded the organization's sanctions against Syria called on the Syrian regime to remove troops from cities and towns, to conduct talks with the opposition, and to allow monitors. Patrick J. McDonnell, "Arab League Initiative for Peace in Syria Appears at an Impasse", *Los Angeles Times (Daily),* November 20, 2011.

bilateral trade reached 700 million dollars in 2010, out of which two thirds of Jordan's imports are connected to Syria from clothes and textiles to food and electronics. Almost 70 percent of Jordan's exports to Turkey and Europe pass through Syrian territory and the closure of this vital trade route will have negative repercussions on trade.

Additionally, increased security and land transportation costs for almost 3,000 Jordanian trucks that use routes via Syria to reach Europe and Turkey will impact the national economy and the banking sector. In an effort to circumvent the negative consequences, the Jordanian authorities reportedly made a request to the Iraqi side for the allowance of the flow of Jordanian goods to markets in Europe and Turkey through Iraqi territory.[73] Undoubtedly, the search of economic alternatives cannot substitute the geopolitically dominant position and value of Syria *vis-à-vis* Jordan as Syria is the Kingdom's only reliable gateway to Lebanon, Turkey and Europe, therefore, a loss of Syria would be a loss to Jordan.

The loss for the Kingdom is best evidenced in Jordanian business with Syria that is estimated to have witnessed a sharp decline since the eruption of the crisis. Cities in Northern Jordan depend considerably on cross-border trade with Syria and have been severely impacted by the Syrian crisis. For example, Jordanian merchants reportedly estimate that business in the first half of Ramadan in 2011 declined at unprecedented levels that reached between 70 percent and 80 percent compared to 2010. There are also solid worries related to the uninterrupted continuation of bilateral government agreements, prominently the arrangement whereby Syria supplies with electricity certain areas in Northern Jordan.

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[73] The Jordanian request has been under review. *Al-Bawab,* "Jordan-Syria Sanctions: Jordan will be the Big Loser from Sanctions", December 8, 2011

With regards to transportation, a significant number of Jordanian businesses depend on the Syrian port of Latakia to import goods where the cost of shipping via the Mediterranean is cheaper than via the Red Sea. The Syrian crisis has already hit the multi-billion dinar European trade that passes over Syrian territory to its Mediterranean coast due to security issues and increased difficulty in insuring commodities. The air transportation is expected to be affected as according to the Arab League sanctions, the Royal Jordanian, which is among the biggest Arab airliners that carry passengers to and from Syria, will have to halt all flights to Damascus and will be prohibited to use Syrian airspace to fly other destinations. Practically, if Syrian airspace is closed, a trip from Amman to Beirut which normally lasts 45 minutes could force the Jordanian airliner to take a longer route, thus lengthening the trip and adding extra financial burdens due to the rising operational costs.[74]

Last but not least, tourism is a sector that has also been critically hit since the eruption of the crisis in Syria. Jordan is considered joint destination with Syria, therefore, tourists especially from the Gulf States avoiding Syria, inevitably, shun Jordan. According to data released by Jordan's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the total number of visitors to the Kingdom decreased by 31 percent in July 2011 compared to 2010. Additionally, data released by the Central Bank of Jordan shows that tourism revenues generatedin summer 2011 witnessed a 26 percent drop compared to 2010.[75]

Economic sanctions on Syria undoubtedly pose a direct challenge on the Jordanian economy which over the last decade has gradually transformed into an outward-oriented market based economy, and applied the strategy of diversifying its trading partners and sought greater regional trade links. An

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74 Omar Obeidat and Hani Hazaimeh, "Jordan Requests Exclusion from Syria Sanctions Regime", *Jordan Times (Daily)*, December 6, 2011.
75 Riad al-Khouri, "The Syria Syndrome", *Jordan Business (Monthly Magazine)*, September 2011

economic association agreement between Jordan and the EU to establish free trade over a 12-year period entered into force in 2002 calling for the free movement of capital and the promotion of development projects. Also the Kingdom signed a Free Trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association states in 2001 which calls for trade liberalization by 2014.[76] With the aim to safeguard new export opportunities for Jordanian products, Jordan completed the Agadir trade agreement with Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, and signed a Free Trade Agreement with Canada in 2009 which foresees the elimination of all non-agricultural tariffs and the majority of agricultural tariffs. Equally beneficial is the participation of the Kingdom in the Greater Arab Free Trade Area which has achieved overall trade liberalization with the complete exemption of custom duties for all signatories. Most prevailing, however, is the establishment since 1996 by the US Congress of the Qualified Industrial Zone Initiative that has attracted more than 987 million dollars in capital investments and generated more than 5.6 billion dollars in exports to the US between 2006 and 2009.

Also, a Free Trade Agreement was signed with Turkey in 2009 coming into gradual effect in 2011 aiming to scrap visa requirements, eliminate duties on imports, increase customs cooperation, encourage tourism between the two countries and eliminate customs fees by 2021. Noteworthy, the bulk of trade and other economic activities between Jordan and Turkey have been conducted extensively through Syria that serves as transit. The value of Jordan's imports from Turkey reached 261.9 million dollars with exports to Turkey reaching 21.4 million dollars in the first half of 2009, while Jordan's imports from Turkey were valued at 456.8 million dollars and exports stood at 28.3 million dollars in 2008.[77] Evidently, economic sanctions on Syria will

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[76] The European Free Trade Association includes Iceland, Switzerland, Norway and Lichtenstein.

[77] Jordan Trade Statistics: "EU Bilateral Trade and Trade with the World", Accessed at: http://trade.ec.europa.eu

impact severely bilateral trade of Jordan with Turkey and certain Arab countries.

Jordan is acutely concerned over the potential impact of the Syrian crisis on the bilateral and regional levels. The Kingdom's strategic location with its long-extended common Northern border with Damascus by itself turns Jordan into a central key-player who can determine the outcome of any form of international or regional consensus on Syria. It is estimated that Jordan aims to rely on the same careful diplomatic manoeuver and consensus building that has enabled the Kingdom weather regional crises in the past. Practically, Jordan stands solidly with the Arab consensus on any resolution that aims at the cease of violence and the restoration of peace and security in Syria. The Kingdom rejects military action as means to restore Syrian domestic stability, however, despite its aversion to military action, political figures support that Jordan will eventually have indirectly to support any military action, if the military option is adopted by the UN Security Council or the Arab League. As noted characteristically by Uraib Rantawi, Director of the al-Quds Center for Political Studies based in Amman, "*Jordan will not be the first to shoulder the mission, but definitely, it will not trail far behind... Military option is not a priority nowadays, but the dynamics of the crisis may lead to military action*".[78]

However, a UN or an Arab League resolution on military action against Syria is not that simple case as some in the region and beyond may suggest, since there is definitely no resemblance to the crisis in Libya. Russia and China vehemently reject a repeat of the Libyan scenario in a volatile region of unmatched geopolitical significance that could jeopardize their regional interests, and therefore, object the adoption of any UN Security Council Resolution that would pave the way for military action. For its part, the Arab

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[78] Interview conducted in Amman, November 27, 2011.

League has exerted pressure at the political and economic levels on the Syrian regime, but when it comes to military action, it is acknowledged that it lacks credibility since it is too divided between regional interests. It is estimated that though it is facing many dilemmas about toughening its position, the Arab League will not give the UN the mandate to intervene under the principle of "Responsibility to Protect". The "Responsibility to Protect" principle comprises of a range of peaceful tools such as political and economic measures to prevent civilians from state abuses, and uses military force as last resort.[79] In the eyes of certain Arab countries, the case of Libya was not successful because not only there were numerous victims but also the political team that came to power represents the most conservative Islamic elements.

Concurrently, the Arab League is estimated that it does not intend to serve as springboard that will allow NATO military action against Syria, while it cannot escape from the League's political decision-making that NATO is bad label for the Arab public, and therefore, should not perpetuate the impression that it provides NATO another base.[80] Nevertheless, there is a single estimate expressed by a former Jordanian foreign minister who supports that if the domestic violence is escalated in Syrian cities like Homs at such unprecedented levels that urges the international community to intervene, Russia and China will find it harder to block a Security Council resolution, especially if the Arab world calls for action that goes beyond the already imposed sanctions.[81]

As events unfold, Jordan is offered the golden opportunity to keep a stance of active neutrality and turn itself into the protagonist of processes much like Switzerland in World War II, since there is much resemblance between both countries. Specifically, due to its geographical location, the ethnic composition

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[79] Marika Alpini, "Right to Intervene and Right to Protect: The Dilemmas of Humanitarianism in Syria, INEGMA, November 23, 2011

[80] Odnan Abu Odeh, Interview conducted in Amman, December 7, 2011

of its population and its relatively minute territory, Switzerland has obtained active neutrality to maintain its internal cohesion.[82] Throughout Swiss history, its national territory has been coveted by surrounding powers, therefore declaring neutrality and being ready to enforce it was and continues to be the best means by which Switzerland maintains national security. Precisely because of prevailing similarities in terms of territorial size and location centrality, though in a different geopolitical context, Jordan can become of considerable interest to all parties involved in the Syrian crisis, and turn itself into the scene for diplomacy, commerce and as safe haven for refugees.

Already the creation of refugee camps across the common border to accommodate Syrians is driven by Jordanian fears for a humanitarian crisis. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has already proceeded in cooperation with the Jordanian government to the built up of a camp for the reception of Syrian refugees in the city of Al Mafraq, North of Amman. Since the escalation of violence in March 2011, over 1,800 refugees[83] have received humanitarian assistance close to the border area of Ramtha, along with Mafraq, while the UNHCR is prepared to use its stock of equipment currently in its warehouses in the city of Zarqa.[84] According to Muslim Brotherhood leading politician Ruheil Gharaibe, "*Jordan has already established camps in the Mafraq area and Syrians are already spilling across the borders into Jordan, with estimates placing the number of refugees in some tens of thousands*".[85]

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[81] Interview conducted in Amman, December 8, 2011

[82] The Swiss population is composed of French, German, Italian, and Romansh speakers. These are the four official languages of the country, and they represent the diversity that existed within its borders for much of its history.

[83] At the time of the monograph's writing this was the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan. According to released data by the UNHCR on September 2012, the number has risen to 77, 165.

[84] Rihham Fakhoury, "UNHCR Announced Master Plan for Reception of Syrian Refugees in Jordan", November 17, 2011, Accessed at: http://www.ammonnews.net

[85] Interview with Ruheil Gharaibe, Amman, November 30, 2011.

a. Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan's Domestic Front

There seem to be increasing concerns over the potential impact of changes in Syria on the Kingdom's internal front. The Kingdom has been motivated by the momentous events in fellow Arab countries which inspired protests on Jordanian soil demanding economic reforms that would put an end to rising prices, unemployment and poverty. Jordanian protests are led by the Islamic movement and by a popular protest movement that allegedly encompasses the National Front of Reform, and the four tribe coalition which represents the Kingdom's major four large tribes namely the Bani Hassan, the Bani Sakher, the al-Da'aja and the Al-Ajarme considered the backbone of the Kingdom. The major differentiation of the Jordanian events from those in the rest of the Arab countries is that protesters ask for reform of the current system, *not* its abolition.

In response, the Jordanian leadership took speedy and practical steps to unleash a deep political reform process to reflect Jordan's vision of comprehensive reform, modernization and development. The chief of reform measures was the introduction of a new constitution that came into force on October 10, 2011, and included amendments to 42 constitutional articles that met certain central demands of the Jordanian protest movement. Most prominent was the establishment of a constitutional court and an independent elections oversight commission, and the provision that the dissolution of the parliament entails the dissolution of the government. A major concession was also the curtailing of some of the King's powers with most representative, the revoke of his power to cancel parliamentary elections.[86]

It is deemed that these reform measures have not satisfied the opposition overall, most prominently, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood which has the

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[86] http://www.filmirsad.com/, August 18, 2011

ability and the political infrastructure to mobilize the streets. Sensing that it is empowered by the events in Libya and Egypt where the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood won the majority in the first round of parliamentary elections and also by the crisis in Damascus since the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood reportedly plays a significant role as part of the outside opposition, the movement in Jordan demands for more extensive changes including the instate of a prime minister and a government elected by the people, the abolition of the King-appointed senate or alternatively, the instate of a senate elected by the people, the safeguard of the Judicial Council's independency and the enact of a new elections law[87], while it supports the instate of a "genuine" constitutional monarchy in the patterns of Spain and England.[88]

The so far refusal of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood not to participate in government and the political decision-making process in general, despite repeated official invitations, is estimated that it is dictated by the fact that people will start to expect solutions.[89] Once the movement runs government institutions and its members become ministers, then people will start to question their policies and outcome. Failure to deliver in the context of the actual decision-making may take away some of their legitimacy and popularity, therefore, so far avoidance to joining governments is translated into lack of urgency or need to govern and deliver on that.[90] The best example of this position is the failure of the Islamic movement of Hamas to deliver and its consequent declined popularity in Gaza. Upon this line, quite interesting is

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[87] Interview with Ruheil Gharaibe, Amman, November 30, 2011

[88] Interview conducted in Amman with a prominent Islamic politician, December 12, 2011.

[89] The Islamic Action Front, the political branch of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, calls for the formation of an emergency government to carry out "urgent reforms" reiterating demands for wider constitutional amendments. The demand comes amidst ongoing negotiations between Islamists and decision-makers over the former's participation in the political process, widely viewed by observers alike as key to the legitimacy of any upcoming elections. Taylor Luck, "Jordan's Islamists Call for a Salvation Government", *Jordan Times (Daily)*, Decemebr 17, 2011

[90] Interview of Ibrahim Saif with Ekaterina Kudashkina, *Voice of Russia*, October 19, 2011.

the quote of Nathan Brown of *the Carnegie Endowment for Peace* who, during a presentation in Amman of his book on Islamic movements and politics, stated that when asking Muslim Brotherhood members in Jordan how many seats they intend to gain in forthcoming parliamentary elections, the answer he gets is that "we will never repeat the disaster of Hamas".[91]

Jordan has responded instantly to the regional wind of reforms not only due to the urgency of events in Syria, but also based on its immense experience as a country that has launched during the last decade a number of political and economic reform initiatives. These initiatives faced a major setback due to regional events that impacted directly the national interests of the Kingdom. Most prominent were the 2003 American military campaign against Iraq, the 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt where the Muslim Brotherhood secured 20 percent of the seats, the November 2005 bombing of three hotels in Jordan by an armed wing of al Qaeda based in Iraq that killed 60 Jordanian nationals, the 2006 elections in the West Bank and Gaza where Hamas won the majority of parliamentary seats, and the 2007 Hamas takeover of the Gaza strip.

Additionally, reform initiatives were impeded by the reality of demographics in Jordan. The Jordanian-Palestinian "split" in the country has arisen as result of the forced migration of Palestinians who fled to Jordan, acquired nationality and citizenship, and now constitute about half of the population. Palestinian fears that reforms could potentially lead to the stripping of their rights, as well as Jordanian worries that any reform process may lead to the political empowerment of Palestinians who may attempt to create an alternative Palestinian homelandin Jordan, presented a major setback to last decade's reform initiatives. In other words, for a significant segment of the Jordanian society, political reforms and democratization equals

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[91] Book presentation of Nathan Brown at the Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan, December 14, 2011

Palestinization. However, this is a major challenge. In reality, the two peoples can easily remain united in the struggle for a political system based on justice, freedom, equal opportunities and individual rights. In a system that restores power to the masses, while maintaining Jordanian and Palestinian identities and dealing intelligently with the political reality, Jordan's people can be united.

Jordan envisions becoming a model of democracy, and though the manifestation of major past regional events led to the delay of the reform process, nowadays, the reality is reversed. The current wind of reforms that has blown up the entire region from Morocco to the Gulf accelerates Jordan's long-time commitment to reforms and democratization. Concurrently at this critical time where the Syrian crisis dominates regional thinking and where the main factor of the revolutionary wave of protests is attributed to rising poverty and unemployment[92], a promise of economic gains has been extended to Jordan by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to join the organization. Relatively poor and facing high unemployment and yawning budget deficits, Jordan could benefit from concessional prices for oil and gas, better access for its citizens to work in the Gulf, and financial assistance. Jordan, run by a Sunni Muslim monarchy, some 750 miles from the Gulf, has a per-capita GDP of 5,300 dollars, while, by comparison, Saudi Arabia GDP per capita is 24,200 dollars.[93]

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[92] King Abdallah said in an interview with the *Washington Post* that *"The Arab Spring did not start because of politics; it started because of economics – poverty and unemployment... What keeps me at night is the economic situation because if people are going to get back on the streets, it is because of economic challenges, not political"*, *The Washington Post*, October 24, 2011

[93] "The Revolution Index: The State of Middle East States", February 4, 2011, CIA World Factbook, Congressional Research Service, UN data, US Census Bureau, and Transparency.org

Massive protests in two of its member states urged the GCC to agree to provide Oman and Bahrain 10 billion dollars each over a decade in order to meet protesters' demands for higher living standards. This reality has created a precedence that Jordan may be looking for similar assistance. Enriched by climbing oil prices, the Gulf monarchies have been able to respond to their internal wave of protests with generous aid programs for their already-wealthy populations. Saudi Arabia alone has committed to spending 125 billion dollars, but in Jordan, the King has no alternative other than to increase deficit spending to cover the cost of handouts at a time when the Kingdom's economy is suffering under the weight of slow growth and higher global prices for food and energy. It is no secret that repeated interruptions in the pipeline delivering Egyptian natural gas to Jordan has forced the Kingdom to ration electricity and increase its import bill. Therefore, the accession of energy-poor Jordan to the ranks of the predominantly oil-rich bloc of Gulf nations could offer an avenue for financial support for the Kingdom, while the political symbiosis in the Gulf club is the latest reflection of how the widespread protests in the Arab nations are reshaping the political landscape of the volatile Middle East.

It is thus within this context that Jordan has responded instantly to the Arab Spring and the crisis in neighboring Syria by solidifying alliances and by establishing mechanisms that aim to create a new spark of reforms that can be translated into realities on the ground, and provide a blueprint for a better future, not only for its own people, but for the people of the entire region.

E. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT- CHALLENGES AHEAD

The Arab Spring has transformed the regional dynamics, and tends to reshuffle the strategic cards of regional and international actors with the aim to alter the regional balance of power. It is in this context that one should look into the crisis in Syria which occupies one of the most volatile parts of the Middle East, and look into any scenario that will definitely have far-reaching implications for competing neighbors and allies. Evidently, we are entering a period of fantastic possibilities...

First Scenario: Syria and Allies React to War Threats

Syria is an influential regional player who can exploit alignments with certain actors in case it is cornered, either by outside intervention and covert action or diplomatic isolation. Syria's alignment with Iran could inflame and cause turbulence to perceived regional rivals, as both are well acquaintent with the perversity of the region where persistent coordinated efforts win gains, while lesser efforts likely fail.

Iran's early moves to claim ownership of the Arab uprisings, encouragement of Shiite communities demanding political reforms or regime change in certain Arab countries, and continuing tensions with Europe and the United States over its nuclear program have cost it support in the Arab world. At first, the Iranian leadership claimed that the Arab protests wanted to restore Islamic rule in their countries and were emulating Iran's 1979 Revolution. It is in this ideological context that Tehran supported regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, and to some extent Yemen, but rejected the popular uprising in Syria, attributing its creation to foreign vested interests emanating from Turkey, the US and Israel. Iran has refrained from rejecting the violent crackdown in Syria

and the main reason is that if the Syrian regime were to collapse, Iran's position and strategic interests in the region would be negatively affected, while though Tehran's relationship with Hezbollah would not disappear, its level of engagement would probably be diminished.

Therefore, it becomes more than evident that in the face of escalation of outside pressure against Syria, Iran is expected to exercise a determined policy that will deal realistically with the existent landscape, and will be supportive to Syria exploiting its predominant influence over ethnic groups, countries and militias. As known, Iran plays a central role in Iraq with an expanding political and economic leverage, as well as mentorship of the Iraqi government. The US orchestrated political process in Iraq to set up a democratic path reflective of the majority did not differ from Iran's orientation that led to the empowerment of Iraqi Shiite Islamic factions.

Iran's Shiite Islamic protégés in Iraq have won 18,5 percent of the seats in parliament in the 2010 elections under the umbrella of the National Iraqi Alliance, a coalition of main Shiite parties namely the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the affiliated Badr organization, the Sadr Movement, the National Reform Trend (Islah), the Islamic Fadhila Party and an Islamic Dawa Party-Iraq Organisation (Tanzim al-Iraq) breakaway faction: the Islamic Dawa Party-Domestic Faction (Tanzim al-Dakhli). Also the equally significant Shia group of the State of Law Coalition (SLC) whose major component is the Islamic Dawa Party has won 24,22 percent in the 2010 parliamentary elections.

Noteworthy, Iran's influence has extended to militias like the "Badr Organization", formerly named "Badr Brigades", whose members have integrated the Iraqi police and military forces, as well as the "Wolf Brigade", a Badr offshoot that is formally under the control of the Iraqi Ministry of

Interior.[94] Concurrently, Iran has over the years cemented relations with Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr who has created the "Mehdi Army", a militia to combat US forces. Al-Sadr's political movement is a partner of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's new coalition which has 39 parliamentary and 7 ministerial seats, and al-Sadr has recently returned to Iraq after nearly four years of self-imposed exile in Iran.

Given the unfolding crisis in Syria, Iran's agenda in Iraq can become more threatening than merely providing political support to pro-Iranian factions. If military threats against Syria are intensified, Iran might be seeking to develop a broad range of options in Iraq that could distract any US or Western sponsored military plans. Out of these options, most prominent can be the Iranian sponsorship of violence against the remained 8,000 American forces in Iraq, therefore weakening the US policies *vis-à-vis* Iraq.[95] The US military presence in Iraq can be further threatened if Syria ceases to strengthen border security and stem the flow of foreign fighters crossing the 640-kilometer Syrian-Iraqi border. The alignment of Syria in the fight of terrorism is regarded as crucial since it has played a major role in lifting pressure and improving the security situation in Iraq.

In the imminence of military action, Iran and Syria could also exploit the card of the Shiite organization of Hezbollah to export instability and create conflict over the un-demarcated maritime border between Israel and Lebanon. Reportedly, Iranian-Syrian efforts to arm Hezbollah especially after the 2006 Lebanon war have been successful since the Shiite organization's stockpile is estimated as high as 40,000 rockets and missiles, like the guided surface-to-surface M600 missile.[96] Syrian-Iranian integration of Hezbollah into their

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[94] Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: US Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance", CRS Report for Congress, November 21, 2005, p.11

[95] Interview conducted in Amman with Oraib Rantawi, Amman, November 27, 2011
Also, Jim Axelrod, "Only 8,000 US Troops Left in Iraq", *CBS News*, December 6, 2011.

[96] *Janes Defense Weekly*, October 28, 2009

military doctrine reinforces assessments that the military balance between Israel and its northern "opponent" has shifted, and that any likelihood of employment of Hezbollah's capabilities would represent a quantum leap over the damage and psychological terror the organization's rockets caused in Israel during the 2006 war. Under the current circumstances, the Syrian regime has the ability to cross the red lines of the 2006 war and get actively involved in arming Hezbollah as necessary step for Syrian security, and as a stick to bring the West and the Arab fellows to its own terms.[97] In this context, one should explain Israel's cautious policy towards the crisis in Syria and the change of the Egyptian and Tunisian governments as well as towards the regional uprisings in general.

Likewise, to weather the probability of a war ignition, Syria and Iran could jointly place new pieces in a game long-played with regards to the Kurdish issue. Due to security calculations, Syria in league with Iran reportedly work with the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) to exploit the mistrust of Syria's Kurds towards Turkey and the external Syrian opposition, like the Syrian National Council that has been empowered in conferences hosted by Ankara. Increased PKK attacks on Turkish soil are attributed by Ankara's leadership to the "Syrian-Iranian factor", while the alleged release by the Iranian authorities of the militant Kurdish group's acting leader after his August 2011 seize is viewed as exerting pressure on Turkey for its critical role against Syria.[98] The Syrian regime has reportedly made an overture to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party which is the PKK affiliate in Syria[99] by permitting the return of its

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[97] Interview Conducted in Amman, December 11, 2011.

[98] Tony Badran, "Syria Ruffles Turkey's Feathers", Foundation for Defense of Democracies, November 17, 2011

[99] The Democratic Union party was founded in 2003. It is one of the strongest political parties in Syria, and is especially active in Efrin and Kobani. The PKK recently launched a new satellite television station called Ronahî (Kurdish-"Daylight") in its efforts to attain more support in Syria. For a more detailed account, *See,* The UN Refugee Agency, "Turkey Afraid Syria Will Target Its Kurdish Achilles' Heel", Vol.9, Issue 41, November 11, 2011.

head Muhammad Salih Muslim sending a strong message to Turkey[100], while Damascus wishes to keep the Kurdish areas disengaged from the domestic unrest.

Towards this end, the Syrian regime reportedly prepares the ground for a Kurdish semi-autonomous regional administration much like that of Iran permitting the opening of Kurdish schools, the use of Kurdish as the language of instruction, while the Kurdish anthem is heard openly. It is safe to claim that Syria can use the Kurdish card to destabilize Turkey if the latter continues to involve in Syrian domestic politics. The relationship of Syria with the PKK is deeply rooted, although under the Adana accord signed between Syria and Turkey in 1998, Damascus removed the PKK's leader and shut down the PKK camps inside Syria.

Nowadays, the PKK has at least 2,000 militants from Syria and its Syrian leverage over its supreme commanders is indisputable as evidenced by a recent interview of one of the organization's leaders who openly stated that, if Turkey intervened in Syria militarily, the PKK would fight against Turkey on Syria's side.[101] Evidently, Turkey could possibly find itself in a war of attrition supported by Syria and its closest ally Iran.

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[100] Muslim was in exile in Iraq until the protests against Assad began in Syria earlier in 2011.

[101] PKK's leader Cemil Bayik also stated that: *"Turkey does not want Kurds in Syria to gain democratic rights there. With its intervention in Syria, Turkey is trying to stop Kurdish gains and limit the influence of the PKK. Against this policy, the PKK is ready to fight Turkey, if Turkey intervenes in Syria. We, and the Kurds in Syria, are prepared to fight Turkey"*. Look excerpts of the Interview of Cemil Bayik, *ANF*, October 8, 2011

Second Scenario: Export of the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon

Syria is a regional nexus since it borders five countries sharing religious and ethnic minorities, and maintains a fragile truce with Israel. Syria and Lebanon share a 365-kilometre long border and Syria's web of alliances extends to Lebanon.

Syria had direct control over Lebanon for nearly 30 years before pulling out its troops in 2005 after the exerting of local and international pressures. Under UN Security Council Resolution 1559 of 2004, the legal basis for the Syrian military presence in Lebanon was stripped, while the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 literally shattered Syrian legitimacy as protector of peace. The emergence of the Cedars Revolution as consequence to the UN resolution and the late prime minister's assassination accelerated international pressure that led to Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. Still, Damascus has great influence and pro-Syrian factions headed by the organization of Hezbollah dominate the Lebanese government.

It is noteworthy that during 2009, in a coordinated effort to reinstate Syrian presence, Damascus' political allies in Lebanon launched a campaign for the cancellation of UN Resolution 1559, however with no tangible results. The campaign became futile as the demand for the cancellation of the second and the third clauses of UN Resolution 1559 was rejected on the basis that the second clause, which explicitly foresees the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, applies to the Israeli occupation of Ghajar and the Shebaa Farms, not simply to the former Syrian military presence, while the third clause that provides for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, applies to Palestinian militias, in addition to Hizballah.

The crisis in Syria has affected Lebanese politics as evidenced by the course of the two major political blocs, the March 14 and the pro-Syrian March 8 coalitions, as timeless divisions and discord have erected. The pro-Syrian March 8 coalition that currently controls the Lebanese government has provided a safety net to Syria when during the Arab League November 2011 vote to suspend Syria, Lebanon was the only country, apart from Yemen, to vote against the resolution.

As the tension in Syria escalates, it might be a strategic choice for the Syrian regime to promote the so-called "chaos scenario" in an effort to bring into the surface worries that its ousting, despite its violent crackdown on protests, without ensuring a viable alternative, would likely bring chaos.[102] Syria has the ability to maneuver and meddle in Lebanese affairs, and advance its political and strategic agendas in the strongly divided neighboring country. This can be extremely challenging in a greatly polarized country, in which political parties and leaders closely rely on other regional players as well, namely Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The promotion of the "chaos scenario" by the Syrian regime intends to play with the US reservations that do not wish for a second Iraq, especially in a county that borders Israel. Having radical Islamist elements and Jihadists flowing through the border and causing chaos is a nightmare scenario also for neighboring countries. Upon this basis, according to certain estimates, the US may be concurrently examining the option to maintain the *status quo* in the region, and potentially views the Syrian crisis as a golden opportunity to persuade the Syrian regime to stop meddling in Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories, and consequently exit from Iran's orbit.[103]

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[102] Interview with a prominent Jordanian Baathist that was conducted in Amman, December 3, 2011

[103] Interview conducted in Athens, July 26, 2011

Profoundly, Syria and Lebanon's interests and future are inter-connected on multiple levels. Escalation of domestic turbulence or change in one of the two countries will undoubtedly re-shape the course of events in Lebanon. Amidst the current Syrian crisis, significant challenges lie ahead for the Syrian regime and certainly, how the outcome of the ongoing unrest will reflect on Lebanon remains to be seen.

Third Scenario: Regime Change in Syria

The crisis in Syria represents the most cataclysmic of the Arab spring uprisings because of the increasing number of victims, its duration and the flow of refugees in neighboring countries, like Jordan and Turkey. The combination of Western and Arab League diplomatic pressure and tough economic sanctions along with military defections have aimed to isolate and strangulate the Syrian regime and deprive it from its main components of support, the business and political elites as well as the Allawite unity.[104]

The break up of the Allawite unity considered key for the regime's survival could derive from the amplification of tribal and sectarian fighting within the community itself which is not monolithic.[105] The Allawite community is divided along sectarian and ethnic lines, with four major sects and four main tribes further divided into clans.[106] Since Allawite officers compose some 80 percent of the officer corps, it becomes evident that just as the Allawites co-opted Sunni military leaders during their rise to power in the '60s, the Sunnis need Allawite leaders to ensure the fall of the Syrian regime. Concurrently, the economic erosion of the critical mass residing in Damascus

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[104] Interview with a former Jordanian Foreign Minister, December 8, 2011
[105] Interview conducted in Amman with a former Jordanian Prime Minister, 2011
[106] For example, Assad comes from the Kalbiyya tribe.

and Allepo due to toughened sanctions could be an effective tool to trigger calls for regime change.[107]

In the event of regime change in Syria, the challenges that will emerge can prove catalytic domestically and regionally. The replacement of the current Syrian regime by a new non-representative democratic government in terms of ethnic and religious inclusion could potentially lead the Arab country to the brink of civil war. Full-blown civil war could raise the spectrum of regional meddling in Syria involving on the one side, Shiite Iran and on the other side, Sunni Saudi Arabia and Turkey that maintain conflicting interests in the Levant. This kind of regional exploitation in Syria could create long-term instability, divide the country into multiple poles of power and run the risk of creating a "second Iraq" on the borders of Israel, the US major strategic ally.

Noteworthy, there are two schools of thought that prevail over the Israeli political and military establishments with regards to the end result of the crisis in Syria. The first school advocates for a divided Syria and the eruption of civil war on the basis that a fragmented Syria benefits Israel since it will be weakened militarily and politically. According to this school of thought, the regional leverage of Iran in the Levant will decrease significantly while the logistics support of Hezbollah by Iran currently taking place via Syria will most likely end, therefore forcing Tehran to search for alternative blocs to sustain the Hezbollah momentum. The second Israeli school of thought supports the maintenance of the *status quo* in Syria due to fears that regime change in the Arab neighbor would look a lot more like Iraq in 2003 setting the stage for the state to collapse, and turning into a proxy battle between regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. This likely scenario supports that either a divided Syria controlled by different factions or a new

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[107] Interview with a former Jordanian Foreign Minister, December 8, 2011

the Syrian National Council has extra-reinforced their perception of opportunism.

Second, it is estimated that the political power of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria will be constrained due to the country's population mosaic. Minorities constitute at least 35 percent of the Syrian population and though 75 percent of the population is Sunni, 10 percent of that is Kurdish rather than Arab. The Kurdish population identifies itself more with Kurdish nationalism than with Sunni politics and behaves as part of the minority population of Syria along with the Christians, the Druze and the Allawites.

Most intriguing in any post-Assad government will be its foreign policy approach. According to Ausama Monajed, advisor to the General Secretary of the Syrian National Council, *"Syria's foreign policy will be based on Syria's national interests regionally..... The SNC will not dictate Syria's future foreign policy but will lead the process of democratic change in which all Syrians have a say into Syria's interests and outlook. At the same time, it is natural to expect Syrians to remember who sided with the people of Syria and who supported the Assads".*[110]

The post-Assad foreign policy will indisputably impact the existent battleground of regional influence. To start, the imperial sphere of Iran that extends to the shores of the Mediterranean is expected to be affected and the Islamic Republic may see its projection of power to Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories diminish significantly. For its part, Turkey, that has played a protagonist role for regime change, expects to be rewarded politically and economically by any post-Assad government. Turkey sees any change in Syria as positive to eliminate consolidation of Iranian influence near its borders, and as opportunity to present a soft Islamic model that could

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[110] Interview with Ausama Monajed, November 28, 2011.

influence Islamic-leaning governments which could come to power in the Arab world.

With regards to Lebanon, a regime change in Syria will impact relations depending on the form of the new government. The possible establishment of a "Karzai style" government in Syria will impact directly Hezbollah's strategic environment since the logistics and other support provided for the Shiite organization is expected to curtail significantly. Nevertheless, any new Sunni government in Syria is expected to maintain ambitions in Lebanon, and define its relations with the various Lebanese political actors according to its geopolitical calculations.

Last but not least, the Gulf States may see a kind of restoration of the regional balance of power in their favor, if a new Syrian government weakens its alignment with Iran whose regional influence, the last decade, has risen greatly due to the political transformation of Iraq, the presence of Shiite communities in the Persian Gulf and the cementing of relations in the Levant via Syria and Hezbollah.

Evidently, regime change in Syria poses a series of opportunities, risks and challenges for domestic and regional actors whose presence in the Syrian fray seems the best course of action.

Fourth Scenario: Regime Survival in Syria

The wave of protests that swept rural areas in Syria has stricken like an earthquake that has changed the ground underneath, however, the influential merchant class in Aleppo and Damascus, the two largest Syrian cities, refrained from the protest movement fearful of the sectarian violence that may erupt in the post-Assad era.[111]

The violent crackdown of protests by the Syrian regime and the subsequent high death toll was the main reason that prompted the international community and the Arab League in particular to take a firm position employing various diplomatic tools, from proposing a peace plan for ending the violence to imposing a series of economic sanctions and expressing vague threats of military action against Syria.

Out of all tools employed by the West and the Arab League, the military choice has widely been regarded as the less likely at this critical time, since all options are not still exhausted, despite opposite calls by neighboring countries like Turkey, simply for three reasons. First, NATO, the United States and Europe all suffer from a palpable sense of conflict exhaustion extra reinforced by their crisis-ridden if not, stagnated economies. Second, the domestic Syrian opposition which maintains grass root support does not welcome the military option. Third, Syria differs dramatically from Libya since in contrast to the latter's expansive geography, the former is a densely populated country where the proximity of military installations to major cities makes any military action look risky in terms of civilian casualties.

The Syrian regime's decision to enforce a dual strategy throughout the crisis adopting "an iron fist" domestically, while concurrently searching for a diplomatic settlement through mediation, bore fruit at some level with the

signing of the Arab League protocol that foresaw an Arab observatory team to be deployed on Syrian soil for one month. The conclusion of the Syria-Arab League protocol could provide the basis for the end of the crisis and the start of a political process where national dialogue and national reconciliation would be the dominant components that could turn the Arab country into an example of democracy and plurality. The protocol offered an exit strategy from the evolving crisis to the Syrian regime and a challenge to transform itself peacefully from within, and to accede to parliamentary results for political change if determined by the Syrian electorate. But nothing of this ultimately happened.

The end of the crisis in Syria, if mutually agreed by the regime and the opposition overall, can profoundly guarantee the short-term survival of the former necessitating the promotion of comprehensive reform policies to shore up national unity, strengthen the internal front and firmly establish national dialogue. The commitment to grant amnesty to Syrian political prisoners can be a positive step which can send signals that the country has room for all. Upon this concept, Syrian President Assad in an interview with Russia's *Rossiya 1 TV* on November 1st, 2011, opened a window to the Syrian opposition stressing that "*Being in the opposition or a loyalist or somewhere in between is not translated into differentiation in all major political issues between the government and the opposition with regards to issues like Syria's sovereignty, rejection of foreign interference and confronting terrorism*".

It is true that the Syrian opposition is not monolithic since it includes various ethnicities and political trends varying from moderates willing to participate in dialogue with the regime to extremists not willing to settle for nothing shorter than regime change. The lack of unity between the domestic and the

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[111] Interview with a prominent Jordanian Baathist conducted in Amman, December 3, 2011.

outside Syrian opposition allegedly impedes it to forge a common vision for Syria since there are two major trends; the first argues that Syria should be a democratic secular state with equal rights and duties for all citizens under a parliamentary constitution, while the second trend equals secularism to atheism and advocates for a dominant role of religion in state affairs.[112]

The lack of opposition unity weakens its leverage over the Syrian regime as well as over its dealings with the West and the Arab countries, and this is not a new story. Back in 2005, major Syrian opposition groups came up with the Damascus Declaration which was a statement of unity that criticized the Syrian regime as authoritarian and called for peaceful, gradual reform founded on accord, and based on dialogue and recognition of the other. The Declaration was a five-page document signed by more than 250 major opposition figures as well as secular and religious parties including the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, the Democratic National Group, the Kurdish Democratic Alliance, Committees for the Revival of Civil Society, the Kurdish Democratic Front, and the Future Party. Since 2008, expatriates have proceeded with the formation of Damascus Declaration committees throughout Europe and the United States but little coordination existed, and ultimately the Declaration that aimed to serve as an umbrella organization of diverse groups became handicapped by internal divisions among unlikely allies, most prominent the Kurds and the Muslim Brotherhood.

According to a former Jordanian foreign minister, *"Nowadays, there are indeed grave concerns as to whether the internal opposition is in agreement, and doubts with regards to the degree of cooperation between internal and external groupings. Obviously, there is no viable alternative to the Assad*

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[112] Interview with a former Jordanian Foreign Minister conducted in Amman, December 8, 2011

regime for as long as there is lack of unity between the Syrian National Council and the domestic opposition."[113]

In the context of this reality, a rare opportunity for top-down reform may be offered to Syrian President Assad to lead a democratic process that could engulf the core of the existent political system or, alternatively, to prepare a smooth transition to the post-Assad era. Jordanian King Abdullah identified the pieces of the political puzzle in Syria in his interview with the *BBC News* on November 14, 2011, stating *"I honestly do believe that he (Assad) has reforms in his blood, the vision he has for Syria in many times that I met him is very encouraging. I think the challenge is that, does the system allow for reform? ...The major challenge for leaders in the Middle East is, if there is life after Bashar, what is that? They concern because the unknown in scaring more than the known.... If Assad had an interest in his country, he would step down but he would also create an ability to reach a new face in Syria".*

Evidently, the missing element in the relationship of the Syrian regime and the opposition is trust. Fears and prejudices could be replaced by the promise of collaboration, and animosity could be transformed into a new partnership that could contribute to the acceleration of political reforms and the solidification of national unity. All encouraging, in the midst of the Syrian crisis, President Assad proceeded with a series of political reforms like the issue of decree No. 391 specifying December 12, 2011, as the date to conduct elections for Local Councils; the establishment of the National Media Council; the formation of a national committee that will prepare a draft constitution; the formation of the Parties Affairs Committee; the granting of general amnesty to the persons defaulted from compulsory military service; the exemption of taxpayers from the overdue interests, unpaid fines and late payment penalties; and, the amendment of the Basic Law of State Employees.

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[113] Ibid.

The Syrian regime, in order to survive, is expected to move cautiously in pursuing the domestic redefinition of the political agenda, and in placing Syria in the existent regional framework of countries with their particular characteristics. On foreign policy, the Syrian president is viewed generally as defaulting easily to the Baathist ideology and its reliance on framing all issues through the prism of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but he is considered capable of pragmatism.[114]

It is upon this pragmatism, that though Iran urged Syria to adopt a hard-line policy toward Israel in recent past, it back-sided stating officially that it would respect any Syrian decision to establish official diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv.[115] Truly, Syria held a series of official and unofficial peace talks with Israel since 1991, but negotiations broke down twice in 2000 and 2008 over the issue of the allocation of water resources. Nevertheless, the pragmatist approach of the Syrian president *vis-à-vis* Israel, the US major ally in the region, suggests that in case of regime survival, a Syrian-Israel peace treaty will naturally lead to an agreement between Lebanon and Israel, thereby removing the rationale for Hezbollah's resistance and setting the stage for its transformation into a pure political party. Such a development will definitely impact the Iranian outreach succeeded through the enhanced power of Hezbollah, but it will not alter the strategic character of the Syrian-Iranian partnership that extends from trade to politics.

If the Syrian regime survives, Russia is estimated that will be rewarded for its diplomatic support and will consolidate its naval presence in open seas at the Syrian port of Tartus.[116] On the contrary, the country that is expected to be

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[114] Interview with a former US National Security Advisor conducted in Doha, May 12, 2011

[115] *Iran News Agency (IRNA)*, January 25, 2001.

[116] The completion of the first stage of modernization of Tartus in 2012 will enable the base accommodate heavy warships, including aircraft carriers. *See,* Dilip Hiro, "Why Every Power is Keen on Assad's Survival in Syria", *International Herald Tribune*, December 20, 2011

affected negatively in case of Syrian regime survival is Turkey. Turkey has multiple interests in Syria and while not as strategic as Iran's, Ankara views Damascus as a way to extend influence in the heart of the Arab world. Therefore, the fact that Turkey took the gamble and led the international pressure on Damascus will impact the substance of their once bilateral strategic relationship, which will definitely need time to be mended in substance.

Evidently, the road to democracy has always been rocky if we look at a century of upheavals worldwide, and is a work in progress that cannot be constrained by any timeframe. In the case of Syria, too much diplomatic mobilization has occurred for the *status quo ante* to come to the fore intact, therefore, though the road to Syrian reforms may be winding and like a river taking many curves, it is inevitable for the river to eventually reach the ocean.

EPILOGUE

The regional wave of protests offers a historic opportunity to observe the birth of the new from the old, and provides a momentum of transformation where the patterns of democracy advance as the best solution for politically and peacefully handling multiple and different county-by-country interests and structures.

In the case of Syria where protest tactics have turned into insurgency tactics and intensive diplomatic interventions have failed, there is need of diagnosis of the crisis on solid ground and of finding a common understanding on state-building and reconciliation that will be inclusive.

This monograph endeavored to illustrate that Syria which is strategically located in the Arab word is undergoing a dynamic internal transformation that tends to reshuffle the strategic cards of regional players, and ultimately alter the long-existent regional balance of power. Evidently, we have already entered into a period of imaginary possibilities and eventualities.....

Curriculum Vitae



Ms Antonia Dimou is Head of the Middle East and Persian Gulf Unit at the Institute for Security and Defense Analyses based in Athens since 2010, and serves as *ad hoc* government advisor.

She is also an associate at the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), University of Jordan since 1996, and the Center for Middle East Development (CMED), University of California, Los Angeles since 2006. Concurrently, she is Editor Jordan of the World Security Network Foundation since 2008, and Editor of the Quarterly English Publication *"Middle East Observer"* since 2010.

Previously, Ms Dimou served as Advisor to the President of the Foreign and Defense Relations Committee, Hellenic Parliament in 2007, as Special Advisor on Middle East Issues to the Greek Ministers of National Defense from 2004-2006, and as Middle East Expert at the General Directorate of Economic Planning and Industrial Development of the Hellenic Ministry of National Defense in 2003.

Ms Dimou was Resident Specialist at the Defense Analyses Institute of the Hellenic Ministry of National Defense from 2000-2003, and Middle East Analyst at the Center for Analysis and Planning of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000-2001. She worked as Middle East Studies Coordinator at the Research Institute for European and American Studies, Researcher at the Center for Mediterranean and Middle East Studies of the Institute of International Relations, Panteion University, and as Analyst at the Foundation for Mediterranean Studies based in Athens.

Ms Dimou has received several awards, most prominent, an award by the US State Department as Distinguished Alumni of the Meridian-State Department

International Visitor Leadership Exchange Program in 2010. She received an International Visitor Leadership Program Fellowship by the US State Department in 2004, a Project Interchange Fellowship by the American Jewish Committee in 2007, a Ph.D. Scholarship from the University of Jordan for the period 2000-2004, and a scholarship by the Greek and Jordanian governments for 1994-2000.

She has been the author of two monographs; *Turkish-Israeli Alliance: Attitudes, Responses and Impact*, Defence Analyses Institute, May 2002, and *Post-war Iraq: Regional Implications and Alignments*, Defence Analyses Institute, July 2003. She is also co-editor of the book titled; *The Middle East in the 21st century*, Athens, 2000, and of the book titled; *The Terrorist Attacks of 11th September 2001*, Stamoulis Publications, Athens, 2002.

Ms Dimou contributes numerous Articles and Op-Ed pieces in Arabic, Greek, and English to International Journals and the Press, including: "Spring of Reforms for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan", *Forbes and Worldpress*, 2011; "Israel's Second Disengagement from Gaza", *The Independent*, 2011; "Syria's Arab Spring and Its Regional Impact", *Arab Newsweek*, 2011; "Iran's Nuclear Program at the Crossroads: Greece's Role in Mediation", *International Security Forum*, 2011; "Yemen on the Brink", *Yemen Times*, 2010; "The Status of Jerusalem", *World Security Network Foundation*, 2010; Banks in Jordan Enjoy Healthy Deposits, Profits", *Jordan Times Daily*, 2010; "Alternative Strategies for Gulf Security: Kuwaiti, Iraqi and European Perspectives" by Sami al-Faraj, Mustafa Alani and Antonia Dimou, *Middle East Policy Journal*, Vol XI, Fall 2004; "Behind the Turkish-Israeli Alliance", *Hellenic Studies Journal*, (Canada: Autumn 2001).

Ms Dimou speaks Greek (native language), English and Arabic fluently.

APPENDIX

REGULATIONS

COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No 1244/2011

of 1 December 2011

implementing Regulation (EU) No 442/2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 442/2011 of 9 May 2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria (1), and in particular Article 14(1) thereof,

Whereas:

(1) On 9 May 2011, the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 442/2011 concerning restrictive measures against Syria.

(2) In view of the gravity of the situation in Syria and in accordance with Council Decision 2011/782/CFSP of (2), 1 December 2011 concerning restrictive measures against Syria additional persons and entities should be included in the list of persons, entities and bodies subject to restrictive measures set out in Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 442/2011,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

The persons and entities listed in the Annex to this Regulation shall be added to the list set out in Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 442/2011.

Article 2

This Regulation shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union.*

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels, 1 December 2011.

For the Council

The President

C. ASHTON

ANNEX

Persons and entities referred to in Article 1

A. *Persons*

Name	Identifying information	Reasons	Date of listing
1. Mohammad Al-Jleilati	DoB 1945, PoB Damascus	Minister of Finance. Responsible for the Syrian economy.	1.12.2011
2. Dr. Mohammad Nidal Al-Shaar	DoB 1956. PoB Aleppo	Minister of Economy and Trade. Responsible for the Syrian economy	1.12.201
3. Lt. General Fahid Al-		Chief of Staff. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
4. Major General Ibrahim Al-Hassan		Deputy Chief of Staff. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
5. Brigadier Khalil Zghraybih		14th Division. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
6. Brigadier Ali Barakat		103rd Brigade of the Republican Guard Division. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
7. Brigadier Talal Makhluf		103rd Brigade of the Republican Guard Division. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
8. Brigadier Nazih Hassun		Syrian Air Force Intelligence. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
9. Captain Maan Jdiid		Presidential Guard. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
10. Muahmaind Al-Shaar		Political Security Division. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
11. Khald Al-Taweel		Political Security Division. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011
12. Ghiath Fayad		Political Security Division. Military official involved in the violence in Homs	1.12.2011

B. Entities

Name	Identifying information	Reasons	Date of Listing
1. Cbam Press TV	Al Qudsi building, 2nd Floor – Baramkeh - Damascus Tel: +963 - 11- 2260805 Fax: +963 - 11 - 2260806 Email: mail@champress.com Website: www.champress.n et	Television cbannel which participates in campaigns to spread disinformation and incite violence against demonstrators	1.12.2011
2. Al Watan	Al Watan Newspaper - Damascus – Duty Free Zone Tel: 00963 11 2137400 Fax: 00963 11 2139928	Daily newspaper which participates in campaigns to spread disinformation and incite violence against demonstrators	1.12.2011
3. Centre d'études et de recherches syrien (CERS) (a.k.a. CERS, Centre d'Etude et de Recherche Scientifique; a.k.a. SSRC, Scientific Studies and Research Center; a.k.a. Centre de Recherche de Kaboun	Barzeh Street, PO Box 4470, Damascus	Provides support to the Syrian army for the acquisition of equipment used directly for the surveillance and repression of demonstrators	1.12.2011
4.Business Lab	Maysat Square Al Rasafi Street Bldg. 9, PO Box 7155, Damascus Tel: 9631 12725499; Fax: 9631 12725399	Front company for the acquisition of sensitive equipment by the CERS.	1.12.2011
5.Industrial Solutions	Baghdad Street 5, PO Box 6394, Damascus Tel /fax: 9631 14471080	Front company for the acquisition of sensitive equipment by theCERS	1.12.2011
6. Mechanical Construction Factory (MCF)	P.O. Box 35202, Industrial Zone, Al- Qadam Road, Damascus	Front company for the acquisition of sensitive equipment by the CERS.	1.12.2011
7. Syronics – Syrian Arab Co. for Electronic Industries	Kaboon Street, P.O.Box 5966. Damascus Tel.-No.:+963-11-5111352 Fax:+963-11-5110117	Front company for the acquisition of sensitive equipment by theCERS.	1.12.2011
8. Handasieh – Organization for Engineering Industries	P.O.Box 5966,Abou Bakr Al Seddeq Str. Damascus and PO BOX 2 Moutanabi Street, Damascus and PO BOX 21120 Baramkeh, Damascus \ Tel: 963112121816 – 963112121834 – 963112214650 – 963112212743 – 963115110117	Front company for the acquisition of sensitive equipment by theCERS	1.12.2011

9. Syria Trading ●il Company (Sytrol)	Prime Minister Building. 17 Street Nissan, Damascus, Syria.	State-owned company responsible for the entire export of oil from Syria. Provides financial support to the regime.	1.12.2011
10. General Petroleum Corporation (G	New Sham- Building of Syrian ●il Company, P● Box 60694. Damascus, Syria B●X: 60694 Tel: 963113141635 Fax: 963113141634 E-mail: info@gpc-sy.com	State-owned oil company. Provides financial support to the regime.	1.12.2011
11.Al Furat Petroleum Company	Dummar - New Sham - Western Dummer 1st. Island -Property 2299- AFPC Building P.●. Box 7660 Damascus – Syria. Tel: 00963-11- (6183333), 00963-11- (31913333) Fax: 00963-11- (6184444), 00963-11- (31914444) afpc@afpc.net.sy	Joint venture 50 % owned by GPC. Provides financial support to the regime.	1.12.2011

(Unofficial Translation)

Arab League Resolution 7442

FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SITUATION IN SYRIA

The council of the Arab meeting at the ministerial level in its resumed extraordinary session on November 27, 2011 in Cairo,

After reviewing,

-The resolution no. 1900 extraordinary session dated November 26, 2011 issued by the economic and social council at the ministerial level,

-The outcomes of the ministerial committee concerned with the situation in Syria in its meeting held on November 27, 2011

-Based on the following statements and resolutions of the League's Council at the ministerial level: statement no. 148 extraordinary session dated August 27, 2011 – statement no. 152 regular session no. 136 dated September 13, 2011 – resolution no. 7435 extraordinary session dated October 16, 2011 – resolution no. 7435 extraordinary session dated October 16, 2011 – resolution no. 7436 extraordinary session dated November 2, 2011 – resolution no. 7437 extraordinary session dated November 2, 2011 – resolution no. 7438 extraordinary session dated November 12, 2011 – resolution no. 7439 extraordinary session dated November 16, 2011 in Rabat, Morocco – resolution no. 7440 extraordinary session dated November 16, 2011 – resolution no. 7441 extraordinary session dated November 24, 2011 concerning the developments of the situation in Syria,

-After listening to the presentation by the Secretary General as well as the intervention by the Chairman of the session and the heads of the delegations,

-Bearing into consideration the social and developmental implications – especially on the sectors of health, education and the social services in Syria and the neighboring countries, which would be affected by these measures,

-And in light of the discussions,

Decides

1 – To ban the travelling of top Syrian officials and figures to Arab countries as well as freezing their deposits in the Arab countries. The Executive Technical Committee (referred to in article 13 of this resolution) would be specifying the names of those officials and figures

2 – Stopping transactions with the Central Bank of Syria

3 – Stopping the governmental trade transactions with the Syrian government, with the exception of the strategic commodities that affect the Syrian people

4 – Freezing the financial assets of the Syrian government

5 – Stopping the financial transactions with the Syrian government

6 – Stopping all transactions with the Syrian Commercial Bank

7 – Stopping the funding of any governmental commercial transactions by the Arab central banks with the Syrian Central Bank

8 – Asking the Arab central banks to monitor the bank transfers and the commercial allocations, except the bank transfers send by the Syrian workers abroad to their families in Syria and the transfers by the Syrian citizens from Syria

9 – Freezing the funding of projects on the Syrian territory by the Arab countries.

10 – Regarding the air flights from and to Syria, the Executive Technical Committee will deliver a report within one week – from the date of issuance of this resolution – to the ministerial committee concemed with the situation in Syria to specify the date for stopping the air flights from and to Syria.

11 – Assigning the following entities to monitor the implementation of this resolution, each in its specialization:

-The Arab Civil Air Aviation Authority

-The Arab Monetary Fund

12 – These sanctions do not involve the Arab and international organizations and the universities' centers and their staff on the Syrian territory

13 – Forming an Executive Technical Committee of top officials and experts, headed by Qatar and with the membership of Jordan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Oman, Egypt, Morocco and the General Secretariat of the Arab League. The mission of this committee would be to consider the exceptions concerning the humanitarian issues that would directly affect the life of the Syrian people – as well as the decisions by the Arab countries neighboring Syria. The committee is also to set a list of the strategic commodities according to specific criteria and specifying the names of the top Syrian officials and figures referred to in article (1) of this resolution, and to provide regular reports to the Council of the Arab League through the Arab Ministerial Committee concerned with the situation in Syria.

14 – Keeping the Council in case of permanent session to follow the developments of the situation.

Resolution no. 7442 - Extraordinary session – November 27, 2011

Federal Register

Presidential Documents

Vol. 76, No. 85

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Title 3— **Executive Order 13572 of April 29, 2011**

The President

Blocking Property of Certain Persons With Respect to Human Rights Abuses in Syria

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code,

I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, hereby expand the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13399 of April 25, 2006, and in Executive Order 13460 of February 13, 2008, finding that the Government of Syria's human rights abuses, including those related to the repression of the people of Syria, manifested most recently by the use of violence and torture against, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of, peaceful protestors by police, security forces, and other entities that have engaged in human rights abuses, constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy,and economy of the United States, and I hereby order:

Section 1. All property and interests in property that are in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of any United States person, including any overseas branch, of the following persons are blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in:

(a) the persons listed in the Annex to this order; And

(b) any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

(i) to be responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or to have participated in, the commission of human rights abuses in Syria, including those related to repression;

(ii) to be a senior official of an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order;

(iii) to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, the activities described in subsection (b)(i) of this section or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13338, Executive Order 13460, or this order; or

(iv) to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13460 or this order.

Sec. 2. I hereby determine that the making of donations of the type of articles specified in section 203(b)(2) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(2)) by, to, or for the benefit of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to section 1 of this order would seriously impair my ability to deal with the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 and expanded in this order, and I hereby prohibit such donations as provided by section 1 of this order.

Sec. 3. The prohibitions in section 1 of this order include but are not limited to:

(a) the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order; and

(b) the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

Sec. 4. The prohibitions in section 1 of this order apply except to the extent provided by statutes, or in regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this order, and notwithstanding any contract entered into or any license or permit granted prior to the effective date of this order.

Sec. 5. (a) Any transaction by a United States person or within the United States that evades or avoids, has the purpose of evading or avoiding, causes a violation of, or attempts to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

(b) Any conspiracy formed to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

Sec. 6. For the purposes of this order:

(a) the term ''person'' means an individual or entity;

(b) the term ''entity'' means a partnership, association, trust, joint venture, corporation, group, subgroup, or other organization;

(c) the term ''United States person'' means any United States citizen, permanent resident alien, entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States (including foreign branches), or any person in the United States; and

(d) the term ''Government of Syria'' means the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, its agencies, instrumentalities, and controlled entities.

Sec. 7. For those persons whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order who might have a constitutional presence in the United States, I find that because of the ability to transfer funds or other assets instantaneously, prior notice to such persons of measures to be taken pursuant to this order would render those measures ineffectual. I therefore determine that for these measures to be effective in addressing the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 and expanded in this order, there need be no prior notice of a listing or determination made pursuant to section 1 of this order.

Sec. 8. The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, is hereby authorized to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this order. The

Secretary of the Treasury may redelegate any of these functions to other officers and agencies of the United States Government consistent with applicable law. All agencies of the United States Government are hereby directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of this order.

Sec. 9. The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, is hereby authorized to determine that circumstances no longer warrant the blocking of the property and interests in property of a person listed in the Annex to this order, and to take necessary action to give effect to that determination.

Sec. 10. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

Sec. 11. This order is effective at 1:00 p.m. eastern daylight time on April 29, 2011.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
April 29, 2011.

Billing code 3195–W1–P

ANNEX

Individuals

1. Mahir AL-ASAD [Brigade Commander in the Syrian Army's Fourth Armored Division, born 1968]
2. Ali MAMLUK [director of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate, born 1947]
3. Atif NAJIB [former head of the Syrian Political Security Directorate for Dar'a Province]

Entities

1. Syrian General Intelligence Directorate
2. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Qods Force

[FR Doc. 2011–10910
Filed 5–2–11; 8:45 am]
Billing code 4811–33

International Relations & Diplomacy