THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

SYRIA UNDER GROWING INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

KATE SEELYE
Vice President
The Middle East Institute

Moderator:

MICHAEL DORAN
Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

MURHAF JOUEJATI
Professor of Middle East Studies
National Defense University

ANDREW J. TABLER
Next Generation Fellow
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

ÖMER TAŞPINAR
Nonresident Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SEELYE: Good afternoon. I'm Kate Seeyle with the Middle East Institute. Thank you all so much for joining us today for this very timely panel examining the impact of the growing international pressure on Syria.

I want to thank the Brookings Institute for co hosting this event with the Middle East Institute and for providing this very lovely space. There is coffee in the back that has just arrived. Please help yourself.

It's a great pleasure and an honor to pool our resources and our talents with Brookings and I hope that these two fine institutions will do more events together in the future on Syria and other topics in the Arab world.

In the past month alone there have been unprecedented developments in Syria that beg further analysis and we're very fortunate to have with us today a group of the top, really, Syria analysts in Washington to help us understand the implications of these changes. Who would have thought that just a month ago the Arab League, despite a new, improved version, would have had the courage to impose an asset freeze and an embargo on investments on Syria, the beating hart of Arab nationalism.

Even Turkey's recent actions have been a very pleasant surprise with the Erdogan government finally putting its money where its mouth is, so to speak, by imposing a raft of economic and financial sanctions that have cut deeply into Syrian trade and business with Turkey and have also led to some disgruntlement, I gather, on the part of Turkish businesses.

Of course, it remains to be seen where the conflict in Syria will head. Are we looking at a civil war in the future? Are we looking at the long,

slow collapse of the Assad regime? Certainly that. Or might there be some sudden collapse due to that unknown trigger that we're all trying to understand and figure out?

Of course you probably all have heard the rumors or the purported assassination of Assaf Shawkat, Assad's brother-in-law, the other day. Perhaps something like that could lead to violent infighting and the collapse of the regime.

In any case, there are many new twists and turns in this ever changing dynamic and perhaps it's my bias, but I can never seem to get enough of discussing the matter of Syria, and judging by today's turnout, I think our audience is equally interested. So, I want to thank the panelists today for the very generous contribution of their time. I'm looking forward to an excellent discussion.

And now I'd like to hand the baton over to Michael Doran, who is moderating the event. He is a senior fellow in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution where he specializes in Middle East security issues. He's held several academic positions and has served as a deputy assistant secretary of defense and senior director at the National Security Council. Michael, it's all yours. Thank you.

MR. DORAN: Thanks very much. And I'd like to thank all of you for coming. Just like you I'm very excited to hear our extremely distinguished panel today, so I'll just keep my words very, very short and we'll just jump right into the introduction of our panelists.

To my right we have Dr. Murhaf Jouejati, who is at the Near East South Asian Center at the National Defense University. He's also a member of

the Syrian National Council and he is a lecturer in political science at George Washington University.

Dr. Jouejati brings to us two very powerful perspectives; he has contacts on the ground in Syria and can tell us what's happening with the opposition there. And in addition, through his job at the National Defense University, he is in close contact with the members of the military from throughout the Middle East region. So, we're really looking forward to getting an up to date analysis from him of what's happening within the opposition and regionally.

After Dr. Jouejati speaks, we have Ömer Taşpınar of the Brookings Institution, who also has an affiliation with SAIS and with the National War College. Dr. Taşpınar is an extremely distinguished analyst of Turkish politics and he's going to give us the understanding of the Syrian question from Ankara. I'm particularly excited to hear from him. He gave a very, very subtle and nuanced analysis of the Erdogan policy, just a couple months ago here at Brookings and I can't wait to hear the update.

After that, we'll hear from Andrew Tabler. Andrew Tabler has spent more time with the First Lady of Syria than I think anybody in this room and he, in addition to having a kind of in depth perspective on the regime from the years he spent working in Damascus, he's also just come back from Europe and he's going to talk to us about the United States policy and the Europeans, as well as giving us insights from his years of living in Syria.

So, without further ado, I'll pass it over to Dr. Jouejati. We're going to ask each of the panelists to speak for about ten minutes, then we'll have a little bit of cross-talk between us, and then we'll hand it over to questions. Dr.

Jouejati.

DR. JOUEJATI: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank the Brookings Institution and the Middle East Institute for hosting us.

Obviously, all of you are interested in Syria since you have come here and I bet most of you have seen that historic interview of Bashar al-Assad a few days ago with Ms. Barbara Walters. I watched it. I was next to my son and my son sat there in silence a bit after the interview and he turned to me and he asked me, "What has this guy been smoking?" Others have said that there is a disconnect between him and reality, what planet does he live on, and so on.

My personal view is that there is no disconnect with reality. Bashar al-Assad had not been smoking anything. I think the brief answer, really, to sum it up, is that Bashar al-Assad is a liar and he has lied his way throughout. But whatever is going on in Bashar al-Assad's mind, I extrapolated from the interview that he and his family are quite determined to stay in power. At least it seems to me, there will not be any fleeing into the night abroad or what have you. He is determined to hang on to power because he is firmly of the view that Syria is his family farm, that the Syrian people are his cattle.

Now, Kate Seelye asked me to talk about some of the challenges, some of the pressures facing the regime. Two major pressures come to mind, of course, the sanctions, the sanctions that have been applied against Syria, first by the U.S. U.S. sanctions have had more, I think, a psychological affect than an economic one given that there is such little trade between the United States and Syria.

But it certainly was at least a catalyst to other, more significant sanctions, which are the EU imposed sanctions on Syria, and there are a host of sanctions here by the E.U., but I think the most significant is the ban on Syrian oil, and that is a major chunk of the Syrian economy. In fact, it is about 30 percent of government revenues.

And then Canada and Japan quickly followed, but the major, major blow, I think, to the al-Assad regime was the Arab League. Here, they are not only economically significant, they are to kick in, according to my knowledge, on December 27th. They are going to have a major impact, but it is really the psychological and the political impact that they have.

One is that now even at the regional level, the Assad regime behavior is seen to be unacceptable, and two, Syria is a founding member of the Arab League and has always claimed to be a champion of Arab rights. Well, here is the Arab world suspending Syria's membership and imposing sanctions on it. And, of course, the Arab League sanctions were followed by Turkish sanctions, which also are going to have, I think, significant economic impact.

And it is more than the economic impact itself, it is the multiplier effect that all of these sanctions put together have. The economy of Syria today is in a state of emergency. Other than oil, there was a major revenue earner, which was tourism. Syria loses $2 billion a year out of a $59 billion economy. Where there are protests, there is no more -- people are not paying taxes anymore, people are not repaying their loans anymore putting banks in a difficult situation, 50 percent of business has been frozen.

And, so, these economic sanctions are making a serious dent in

the Syrian economy and are affecting, adversely, the Assad regime.

But you know, we shouldn't wait only for economic sanctions because this could take a long time to seriously hurt the Assad regime. The ones who are beginning to be hurt now are the people. The dollar, for example, against the Syrian pound -- the Syrian pound was at 47 to the dollar, now it is at 67 to the dollar, therefore a major, major loss of purchasing power for Syrians.

Over and above that are things like heating oil. There is very little heating oil now in Syria. The prices have -- are sky high now. Many people cannot afford them, and there are, according to information I received, there is the beginning of some families now having to burn their furniture in order to heat the home.

So, we better find something in addition to economic sanctions to hasten the collapse of the Assad regime.

The second challenge, of course, is the revolution itself. The protest movement, now there is something new to the protest movement, which is civil disobedience, which are strikes, and these have been -- for the past two days have been very effective. They are going to escalate. They are going to escalate to the transportation sector and in a later phase in the coming weeks, to include ministries and syndicates, in other words, the civil service.

The hope is that this is going to paralyze government.

The Syrian opposition movement is embodied in the Syrian National Council. The Syrian National Council is a grouping of seven political forces, many of whom are active on the ground including the local coordination committees, so we are in touch with the street everyday, and the Syrian National

Council has been legitimized by the street. In one of the "Fridays of Wrath" it was called the "Friday of I support the Syrian National Council."

One happy piece of information I'd like to give you is that the Syrian National Council now is increasingly coordinating with what is called the Free Syria Army, which are defectors from the Syrian Army. These folks have defected because they have been order to shoot civilians, shoot to kill. Those who have refused to shoot at civilians were shot themselves. Those others who could escape escaped and are now part of the Free Syria Army.

So, the Syrian National Council is coordinating with the Free Syria Army. The Free Syria Army has recognized the Syrian National Council as the political cover and the political authority.

You will hear in the media, you will hear in the press, that there are differences between the expatriate opposition and the domestic opposition. I don't know what they are talking about. The Syrian National Council, of course, all of its leaders are abroad, *par force*, because if they were in Syria they would be made a head shorter, including myself.

The difference is with another smaller grouping, which is called the National Coordinating Committee, and the difference is over whether to engage in talks with the regime. The Syrian National Council is of the view that the only thing to talk about with the regime are the terms of its departure.

Another issue has been international intervention, and the National Coordinating Committee does not want any international intervention, which brings me to my conclusion.

The economic sanctions, of course, are biting and they have

seriously made a dent in the Syrian economy and therefore in the Syrian regime, and the protest movement and the recent unification of the Syrian opposition are all making dents in the Syrian regime, but this could take a very long time.

Assad has a large Army, 400,000 people. He is employing the Fourth Division and the Republican Guard against an essentially unarmed civilian population using all sorts of brutality in order to crush this uprising, and there is no counterweight, there is no counterforce, and I will second what yesterday the French Foreign Minister said, it is absolutely outrageous that the Security Council keeps on talking and debating or even not, while there is a civilian population that is being systematically destroyed on a daily basis.

We have an average of 30 to 40 Syrian civilians killed everyday simply for calling for freedom. And, so, if there is going to be international intervention, the Syrian National Council is of the view that it should be one to protect civilians. There have been ideas floated, whether by Turkey, about buffer zones and about safe havens, and Ömer might want to talk about that. There have been French proposals about humanitarian corridors.

In fact, we don't care what it is, but there must be some sort of intervention in order to protect Syrian civilians. We need to do something all together in order to hasten the collapse of this Assad regime, and make no mistake about it, it is going to collapse because the divide between the Assad family, now, and Syrian society is far too wide and there is much too much blood on their hands to be able to continue ruling.

So, I leave you with this, again, with an urgent appeal to humanity, we need to save Syrian civilians from a brutal -- a brutal regime. Thank you.

MR. DORAN: Thanks very much. Ömer?

DR. TAŞPINAR: Let me try to put Turkey-Syria policy in the larger context of Turkish foreign policy since the arrival of AKP to power.

I think oftentimes in this city, in context to Turkish-Syrian relations, for the last few months, especially, we ask a simple question, what Turkey can do more in terms of bringing the regime to an end in terms of using coercive diplomacy?

But in putting Syria in the larger context of Turkish foreign policy, I would suggest that we're already at a very interesting point where we should be asking why Turkey is doing as much as it is doing in terms of pressuring Syria, because one could have easily imagined a scenario where Erdogan and Davutoglu or President Gül would say, "Give Assad some time, he is a modernizer. The West should not be really meddling with this." Because when you look at the principle drivers of Turkish foreign policy since 2002 and AKP's overall line in Turkish political culture, that's the big question.

As an analyst of Turkey I'm often perplexed at the Turkish position right now. I admire it, but I'm also surprised that Turkey is willing to go as far as it is in terms of burning bridges with Damascus and burning bridges with Bashar al-Assad.

So, what are the drivers of Turkish foreign policy since 2002? Often we focus on Islam versus secularism in Turkey. Whenever we talk about Turkey it's very interesting to put this dichotomy of the seculars versus the Islamists, but I think this analysis comes at the expense of the most important driver of Turkish foreign policy, which is a sense of national interest, nationalism,

national pride.

In fact, when you look at both the religious conservative narrative about national interest and the Kemalist more secularist alternative, there's a certain anti-Western element in it and Turkey's position on Iraq, Turkey's willingness to broker a deal on Iran, Turkey's policy vis-à-vis Syria during the Bush administration from 2003 to 2010 was very much driven by this sense of Turkish national interests and Turkish national pride, a sense of, sometimes, called Neo-Ottomanism, although my favorite term is not really Neo-Ottomanism, but a sense of Turkish Gaullism, a Turkish sense of grandeur and influence in the region based on the sense of national interest.

The second most important driver of Turkish foreign policy is this independence, the willingness to be an independent actor. I think if today was to Cold War context, Turkey would prefer to be a non-allied country, instead of being with NATO, it would have preferred to have options within the blocks and to try to play basically a role that maybe India played during the Cold War.

So, there is this very important sense of independence in what Turkey wants to pursue. So, in addition to nationalism, I would add as a second driver of Turkish foreign policy the search for independence. And Turkey's position on Iraq in 2003, the decision not to support the invasion, Turkey's position on Iran, Syria, again, are clear examples of that.

The third factor is mercantilism. Turkey has a booming economy and economic interests are driving Turkish foreign policy, Turkish foreign policy in Africa, Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and Central Asia and Russia is often -- I wouldn't say dictated, but often determined by economic interests. So,

there is a very strong element of mercantilism.

When you look at the Turkish reaction, initial refusal to use force in the context of Libya, there is a mercantilist attitude there because Turkey had invested $15 billion in the construction sector of Libya.

Turkey's policy vis-à-vis Sudan, which lacks this kind of moral idealist dimension that it has now on Syria, the willingness to basically engage Sudan economically in the hope that basically the energy deals would come.

There is a very strong mercantilist dimension in this.

Finally, regionalism. At the expense of basically Western intervention, especially in the vision of AKP and Foreign Minister Davutoglu, regional architecture matters, so the Arab League should play a major role. The Middle East should basically come together and find ways out of crises itself instead of Western, NATO intervention.

When we put all these factors together, one could have easily expected Turkey in the context of Syria to adopt a different policy, to say, we're not going to follow the American line, we're not going to follow the NATO line, the European line. We will actually be an independent actor here, yet what we see is a Turkey that is willing to actually follow an American position, willing to follow a European Transatlantic position, a NATO position.

So, the big question is why? Why is Erdogan willing to do this? Why is Davutoglu playing this game? In my opinion there are two factors. First of all, the role of Syria in the kind of zero problems policy that Turkey followed in the last eight years. Syria was the crown jewel of that policy, the zero problems policy, having a regional integration framework with Syria, having major political,

diplomatic, economic relations with Syria to the degree that Syria was considered now part of Turkey in terms of its dynamics, tourism, and regional integration, the visa-free travel. Syria was really, in the eyes of Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, a country where Turkey had brotherly relations and Bashar Assad was someone that he considered as his little brother in many ways.

So, when Bashar decided not to listen to the elder brother, it became personal. The emotional factor of basically Erdogan realizing that he doesn't have leverage over Bashar Assad, was a personal insult to him. The fact that he overall exaggerated, overestimated his influence over Bashar, is perhaps a sign of naïveté, but also a sign that basically he thought that the regime would change, that Bashar was a modernizer and that he would sooner or later understand the need for reform.

The fact that Bashar challenged Turkey's position, the fact that it did not go with Turkey's advice, basically put an end to this perception of zero problems with neighbors and Turkey began to have problems with Syria.

And, by the way, the zero problems with neighbor policy today is in big crisis and that creates a major problem in the eyes of the AKP. Turkey has now problems with almost all of his neighbors. The PKK is on the rise, so there are problems with Northern Iraq, Iraq, there are problems with Iran related to Syria, but also the nuclear issue and Turkey's decision to host the NATO radar missile defense system, and especially the radar dimension of it.

So, there is a sense that on the sovereignty with Syria, Iraq, Iran, there are problems. There are problems continuing with Armenia, there are problems in Cyprus, there are problems basically related to Russia now. Russia

is angry about Turkey's pro-NATO position.

So, we're in a paradigm where we moved from zero problems with neighbors to a situation where Turkey has, as it has often jokingly told, has very zero neighbors without problems. All the neighbors have problems. And in this context, Turkey has discovered that it does not have that kind of leverage, the kind of huge leverage that it hoped that it would have based on this national pride, Turkish Gaullism, Neo-Ottomanism with Syria. And this has been personally frustrating for the prime minister.

So, I would put the kind of emotional dimension, the realization that he has not leverage with Syria, as one reason why he is willing to alienate and is willing to go as far as he's going against the regime.

The second factor is the fact of basically a sense of Sunni solidarity with the people of Syria. Syria is a Sunni majority country in the eyes of Ankara and the fact that the regime, which is perceived now as increasingly as an Alawite regime in the Turkish media, has killed people, has been continuing to cold people, the death toll reaching 5,000 now, and the fact that they continued killing people during Ramadan was a turning point, also, in the Turkish discussions. The fact that he basically had no qualms about continuing the repression, the blood repression during Ramadan, touched the kind of Islamic sensitivities of the government, and I would add this kind of Sunni solidarity and the fact that Turkey, after all, is a Sunni country, to the list.

Now, in terms of what can Turkey do, my sense is that despite the rhetoric coming from Ankara that is willing to play an activist role, Turkey does not want to be perceived as pursuing America's policy in Syria. It wants to be,

again, an independent actor. The last thing Erdogan wants or Davutoglu wants is to be perceived as too pro-Atlanticist, too pro-American, to pro-West. There is a need to play a more independent role. This is why Turkey's not calling back its ambassador, this is why Turkey was overall opposed, until recently, against sanctions.

So, in that sense, I don't think Turkey will be willing to really play a much more activist, especially military role, and a buffer zone may involve some military dimension, and that would be something that the Erdogan government would be very much opposed to. My sense is that there is this realpolitik kicking in in Turkey and realization that this regime may not end very quickly and that Turkey has to hedge, to a certain degree. That doesn't mean it will basically go back to its old policy, but definitely it doesn't want to be perceived as a country that would basically follow America's policy. And in Washington, I think there is a sense that you can outsource this problem to Turkey, Turkey is such a big actor together with the Arab League, that if Turks are on board, miracles will happen in Syria.

Well, that's not the perception in Ankara, in my opinion. Ankara very much wants to see, what is the American strategy here. How does Syria fit in to American grand strategy? How does Syria fit into the United Nations Security Council framework? So, what is Russia saying? What is China saying? Do we have a consensus along the lines of the consensus we found in Libya?

And those are the big questions that are important for Turkey. Turkey will be reluctant to have any kind of unilateralist approach, in my opinion, and in that sense the Arab League is crucial, but it would be even more important

to get Russia and China on board as well for multilateral sanctions for a more effective course of diplomacy.

Now, this is important because Turkey has to balance its position. It has to balance its position because on the one hand Turkey does not want to be perceived as weak in the region. It wants to play this activist role, it enjoys the fact that whenever you have an article now on Syria in the *New York Times*, in the *Washington Post*, Turkey is a big part of the article.

There is this sense of Turkish glory and Turkish relevance, and Turkey is very relevant in this Arab uprising paradigm as a model, so to speak, for political Islamic parties, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, so Turkey wants to be relevant, but it has to balance this position by not being overly activist, not being too pro-American, and the Turkish public opinion, and I think the reaction in Ankara in the following weeks and months, will be more along the lines of looking at Washington, looking at Moscow, looking at the Arab League for signs of what's next instead of Turkey taking unilateralist steps towards the buffer zone or more effective sanctions. I think Turkey will follow more than it will lead on Syria. I'll stop here.

MR. DORAN: Thanks very much. Andrew.

MR. TABLER: Thanks, Mike. Obama administration policy in Syria has been slow to evolve, painstakingly slow. This is a Democratic administration and Democratic administrations tend to look historically at Syria through the lens of the peace process. This administration was no exception to that, and I think in many ways the administration was caught very flat footed by what happened -- obviously, not just by what happened in Egypt and Tunisia, but

also by what happened in Syria.

But as the crackdown by the Assad regime on protestors continued and the protests spread, mostly throughout -- at first throughout rural areas and then to the cities throughout Syria, granted, not in Aleppo and Damascus and the central squares, but eventually even into the environs of those cities where they are today, the administration realized that it had to do something.

The reason why the Obama administration pursued the policy of -- the original policy of a peace treaty with Israel -- between Israel and Syria, was to break Syria out of the resistance axis, and I think that in many ways that strategic goal continues, but of course the administration had to respond to the humanitarian crisis and disaster that unfolded in Syria as the death tolls went up day by day and now reach over 5,000.

It began with diplomatic pressure at the UN, also public statements, and then of course there was the sanctions regime, which included a number of Executive Orders, which dealt with designation of Syrian officials for humanitarian crimes and also human rights abuses. This was the first time that an American administration had done that.

Under the Bush administration a number of Executive Orders had been signed concerning regime corruption, concerning Syria's regional behavior, but under the Bush administration, those did not reach to human rights. So, the scope of those were expanded.

The Syrian Accountability Act was implemented in full, which dealt with U.S. exports to Syria, which dealt with some exceptions, also banking

sanctions on Syria were expanded against the Commercial Bank of Syria, which is the largest bank in Syria in terms of assets, and this was not just in terms of the original designations from 2004, but also included nonproliferation issues as well. And, of course, as Murhaf mentioned, there was the ban on U.S. purchases of Syrian oil products, which accounts -- sale of those products account for about a third of revenue to the Syrian state, they directly accrue to the Syrian state, and this was put into force by President Obama in August when he announced that President Assad had to step aside.

Now, in addition to those measures, the United States began, from the beginning, an outreach to the Syrian opposition. For someone who has spent a lot of time on the ground dealing with the Syrian opposition, granted, not in this particular context, I can tell you, it's a challenge. Syrians are a brutalized people. Anyone who's ever spent any time there knows that. And the reaction to being brutalized and dominated in this way are primarily two things, one is depression, and the other is grandiosity.

When you get over the depression and you swing out of that and you finally assert yourselves, a lot of times it comes out in very egoistic ways, and this is something that is not new in the Syrian opposition, it does not lend itself to coming together over certain issues or working together to achieve common goals. It's very difficult. And it's something that just takes the right touch to deal with, whether you're interviewing a member from the Syrian opposition or trying to get them to come together.

And the U.S. spent a lot of time on this, whether it was Ambassador Ford, who was in Damascus, or the administration here in

Washington who reached out to those who were in exile.

And those parameters, those basic parameters for how to deal with the Syria crisis expanded to other countries. By the time that President Obama announced that President Assad had to step aside in August, the EU and the Canadians immediately followed suit.

So, everyone was more or less on the same page, and everyone was more or less in the same room, and they realized that Assad was not going to hold on in the long term, and that instead of Assad -- and this is fundamental -- instead of Assad standing in the way of his country -- standing in the way of chaos in his country, it was understood that the longer Assad held on, the more bloody and sectarian this conflict was going to become.

And it was with that realization that the administration decided to move and that of the Europeans as well. Over time, though, there were differences in opinions among allies about how to deal with that. There's always this issue about leverage with Syria. It's true. Syria is a trading country. It's geographically central. It's very difficult -- they deal with everybody, even the North Koreans. Right?

So, it's very difficult to -- you know, for one party to isolate them because they would say, aha, well, we will just go and trade with everyone else in the world, and I think the press is full of these kind of articles that you can find.

But over time, this way of looking at things that the longer Assad held on, the more bloody and sectarian it was going to get crept into Turkish thinking on this issue -- which I won't go into in depth, I think Ömer has spoken about -- as well as thinking in the Arab world.

And so those two -- and so Turkey, as well as a number of other Arab countries, Qatar and elsewhere, began their own outreach to the Syrian opposition. Turkey has been reaching out to the Syrian opposition for months, so has Qatar, so have a number of other countries. They've been trying to deal with the same issues that we've been trying to deal with, here, and that the Europeans have been trying to deal with, with limited success, but they all were playing a role behind the scenes because there was this idea, and I think it's probably a pretty good one, that it must be communicated to the Syrian opposition that power is not given to you, it is something that you have to take. You have to take it. And you have to organize in order to take it.

So, over time, Turkey and the Arabs came into -- basically came to the same realization. There were a number of attempts to reason with Assad -- Davutoglu's visit, I think, was probably one of the most famous, I don't recall exactly the date -- and then eventually the Arab League intervention in Syria, they all came away with the same answers, that you get into discussions with the Syrian regime, they begin haggling, they try to talk you down from the number of observers from 500 down to 40 and think somehow you're getting a great deal, I mean, not great.

So, there were two major themes that all the parties had to deal with. One was the humanitarian crisis, as I mentioned, and two, again, gets back to Iran, that Syria was the keystone of the resistance axis, rather, the Iranian axis. And that the Iranians were on their heels, and that this was a great way to weaken that axis strategically. I'm not talking about tactical here, but strategically.

So, what happened, then, as a result of that, and I think this is the situation we're in now, is we are at a crossroads. Primarily we have the opposition of the country, who are out peacefully protesting and come out every Friday. Actually, they come out everyday and if you look at the death tools you can see that actually Syrians are being killed everyday, and many of the groups on the ground, the LCCs, the MCCs, and so on, some of those groups are represented in the Syrian National Council, which is outside of the country. And as Murhaf said, I mean, no wonder they're outside the country because if they returned, they would be shot, or arrested, or worse.

But we have another track now that we have to deal with, that is that one of the bad byproducts of our policy was that we were saying, okay, guys, get it together and remain peaceful, even though the regime is gunning you down. I mean, if you take a look at those videos, I don't know if any of you have ever spent any time in a forward area where there was war going on or even just in hunting, but the amount of gunfire that is in those clips is astounding. It's very difficult to keep yourself together during these.

And so, our policy, in effect, and this is -- the protestors have a tremendous amount of political power by keeping it peaceful, that's totally true, but the problem is, the use of live fire so much by the regime meant that our policy was, not to steal a line from *Charlie Wilson's War*, but was to expect the Syrian opposition to walk into gunfire until the regime ran out of bullets. That wasn't going to happen, right, because they're just too well armed, they're too well stocked.

So, some people decided to take matters into their own hands,

and they were men who had defected from the military. They have currently become what's known as the Free Syrian Army. They are a force of unknown numbers. They have structure. They have an Order of Battle. And these two tracks now define the Syrian opposition as we know them, and more recently there is coordination between the two in the sense that recently Burhan Ghalioun of the Syrian National Council met with Colonel Riyad al-Asad about the nature of what the resistance against regime forces should be, and primarily they should be defensive in nature.

While this is going on, the economy in the country is tanking. The sanctions cost the regime between a half a billion and a billion a month. Some of them -- there are more conservative figures on that, but there are, sort of, multipliers with that. Some conservative estimates are about $350 million per month. And this situation is going to get much worse.

The regime's economics, the basic numbers, are way down. Reserves are estimated at around $8 billion, or so. I realize that in the press it's around 17, we think it's much less. To deal with this, there is a de facto contact group that has been formed on Syria. A number of us publically have been urging that. It is actually functioning and involves the United States, France, the UK, Germany, Turkey, as well as some Arab countries are now thinking about joining the group. And there is -- increasingly this group is realizing that they're going to have to do something. That simply observing what's going on in Syria and helping the opposition organize is not going to be enough. And there have been a number of ideas that have been thrown out there, one is the humanitarian corridor idea, which was thrown out by Alain Juppe recently. There have been

earlier ideas of a buffer zone set up by Turkey, which is akin to previous activities in Iraq.

We're not exactly sure what kind of shape that's going to take or when that would actually happen or if, but it's pretty clear from the interview that Murhaf talked about that there ain't no way that Assad is going to go easily. We should know this by now.

It's very clear from -- look, a reasonable, rational response to what's going on in Syria -- and the Syrian regime always had a high bar for order, okay? Like, you can't have more than three people organizing or you go to jail, okay? Hanging out in the street -- is a reasonable thing is for President Assad to be concerned but confident. That makes sense to everyone, right? I mean, there are YouTube videos everywhere.

But unfortunately, President Assad's response is that of denial, and this has continued throughout. Where is the political plan to get out of this? Oh, we're going to have elections, we're going to change the constitution. But according to those who interviewed President Assad, he and his wife and a number of others are very confident. They just think that there will be elections in 2014, and if President Assad loses the elections then he'll go. And that is exactly where we are.

And I think that now there's just an increasing sense that something has to be done, but what's the best course of action to take? And I think that's where we are, and I know for a fact that the administration as well as the European countries as well as, I think, from the Turkish side as well are very open to any and all ideas on how to achieve that goal.

That's it.

MR. DORAN: Thanks very much. I want, if I might, ask the three of you one quick question and then we'll turn it over to the audience for questions.

I thought that Murhaf did an excellent job of describing the situation to begin with, saying the regime is in a state of slow-motion collapse. It's going to go down, but it's not going to go down anytime soon. There is an opposition in place but it's not really strong enough to do the job. There has to be Factor X from outside to come in and strengthen it.

But what I really heard from both Omer and from you, Andrew, is that Factor X isn't coming anytime soon. This is not exactly what you said, but this is what I heard. And Omer, I heard you to say that Turkey is absolutely the lynchpin in generating Factor X, and the Turks for a variety of different reasons -- some of them practical, some of them psychological, even -- is going to be very reluctant to play the role of the catalyst.

Andrew, you've suggested that we're at a turning point and the United States and France are about to do something, but they're looking for ideas. So with that in mind, if those are the parameters, if Turkey can't be Factor X but we have to have it and there's a strong desire to find it, I'd like to ask each one of you what you think -- what you would say. If you could talk to President Obama, what are the practical things that the United States could do within the limitations that you've all described very well that could actually make a difference?

Why don't we go with you, Murhaf, and then we'll go down the line.

DR. JOUEJATI: Talk further about the French idea. What do they mean by the humanitarian corridors? How is that going to be implemented?

Talk to the Turks. What do they mean by 'buffer zones'? How will they protect the buffer zones? The Arab League. They want to send 500 monitors. What is their mandate? Who is going to defend them, and so on?

Again, there isn't an absence of creativity in the international community. These things are already out on the table. Well, let's pick the best one among them. But let's do it very, very fast because in the interim, there are tens of people dying every day.

Let me say this here. What the regime wants, really, is the further militarization of the revolution. And they are using brutality of such levels that they are forcing people, really, to arm themselves in order to defend themselves. What the regime wants is to take away the moral high ground of the peaceful revolution and to simply go down and crush those defecting soldiers and what have you and say to the international community, justify its actions by the fact that the armed forces need to secure Syrian sovereignty.

But the more lethal force they are using, the more they are militarizing the revolution, the further complicated the solution is going to be. So, in order not to wait for that moment down the road in the long-term, let us use our brainpower now in order to avoid this from happening.

MR. DORAN: Thank you. Omer?

DR. TAŞPINAR: I wouldn't advise President Obama to talk to Turks about the buffer zone. This notion that Turkey wants a buffer zone is something that I think a lot of people are asking questions about, because I don't

think there is a willingness in Turkey in the absence of tens of thousands of refugees and the humanitarian crisis crossing the border to establish a buffer zone. A buffer zone is a very serious undertaking. It requires the Turkish military actually stepping in and establish a corridor at the border. And I don't see such a militarization in Turkey.

What I would advise President Obama is to come up with a clear strategic concept of what can be done in terms of a diplomatic -- a more effective course of diplomacy. What can be done at the United Nations in terms of bringing the Russians and the Chinese to an acceptable consensus, which will allow a more multilateral approach to this. Turks would like to see a more multilateral approach. They're happy with the way the Arab League is playing its hand. They would like to see a more United Nations-led, more Libya-like scenario where there is international legitimacy. And the fact that Russia and China is not onboard is a big factor.

In addition to that, I would also encourage the United States to basically come up with its own strategy. What is the vision of Washington in a post-Assad Syria? What will come up after Assad? Why is Israel not onboard exactly with this scenario? They're concerned about the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. They're concerned about the rise of an Islamic Syria. They look at Egypt, they look at basically Tunisia and Morocco, and they're concerned about this post-Assad scenario.

The notion that somehow once authoritarianism ends you will have democratic governance is something that has been totally discredited in the eyes of Turks because of Iraq. So there is this concern about, okay, let's push

for democracy, let's push for -- and then to violence. But in the meantime, if that push will lead to civil war, we don't want that.

Turkey is also concerned, very realistically, in a real politic dimension about Syria using the Kurdish card. Syria in the past used the Kurdish card. It knows how to play the Kurdish card, and the Kurdish question is the number one issue in Turkish domestic politics. So, talk to Turks about their worries about the Kurdish question. Try to understand the Turkish domestic context better in order to gain leverage.

MR. DORAN: Andrew

MR. TABLER: I think that you basically would have to follow a three-prong approach. I think first, the opposition has tremendous political and moral advantage until now. And it, on a daily basis, throws the regime into dilemmas that expose it for exactly what it is. And that is, as described earlier, a killing machine.

And so, I think there needs to be a real effort -- and these efforts are already underway -- to talk with the Syrian opposition about civil resistance strategies that involve not just protesting, but there are tons of other things that you can do to put Assad into these dilemmas. General strikes are one of them, and they're currently one being put into place. Boycotts, right down the line.

Because obviously, if we have a peaceful opposition and an increasingly armed one, we have to deal with both tracks. We need to maximize the pressure of those that are peacefully protesting in one way, shape, or form.

Two is to focus on sanctions and an overall effort coordinated with the opposition to crack off key constituencies from the regime. I realize there's a

lot of talk in this town about, oh no, the Alawite generals will be the first to go, or maybe it's the Christians, or whatever. I mean, look. My personal point is, I think the minorities will be the last to go. I think the Sunni businessmen are probably the ones who are the most susceptible to monetary inducements.

Maybe in the end this will be something quite different, but anyways we have to try this and we need to focus on that, and we need to coordinate that with the Syrian opposition.

And the third is, what do we do in terms of some sort of humanitarian intervention? And what I mean by that is not the United States invading the country a la Iraq 2003, okay? What I mean by that is, how can we work with Turkey or how can we work with Jordan or how can we work with these countries to try and deal with what seems to be an escalating problem? I mean, the death toll last month was well north of 800. That's the highest in the conflict. Now, we jump in the course of, what? 10 days or 12 days? From 3,500 to 5,000 killed. Okay, this is not getting better and it's not going away.

And so my question is -- and this would be to Turkey -- is that, okay, if the situation is getting worse and we do have these real threats of refugee flows across the border, what are we going to do about that?

A buffer zone, a humanitarian corridor, anything by definition is a military operation. Especially when you're entering someplace like Syria. Or, a no-fly zone, which has one of the densest, you know, air defense systems in the Middle East, if not the world. These kind of things are military interventions and they will be very complicated.

MR. DORAN: Murhaf has a rejoinder, I think, and then we'll turn it

over to the audience.

DR. JOUEJATI: The Syrian National Council has been giving a lot of advice on the foot soldiers, on the people on the ground about different methods of civil resistance and civil disobedience and strikes and so on. These are very, very good. But let us bear in mind here that this protest is not taking place in Sweden or in Luxemburg. (Laughter)

MR. TABLER: Sure.

DR. JOUEJATI: We are talking about the Assad regime. You know, strikes are effective but up to a point, when you are facing a lethal killing machine.

To Andrew, the way you are talking is really reflective of the hesitation of the international community. But should things fester, the Kurdish problem for Turkey will become a reality. The 12,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey now will become even more. The Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Lebanon is on the brink as the result of what is happening in Syria. The Southern Brigades from Iraq already are coming in to help the Assad regime, and this is antagonizing the Sunni Iraqis.

So what I am saying is, let us move fast on this question of international intervention in Syria before we have a situation that is all-encompassing and all-engulfing of the Middle East.

MR. DORAN: Okay, thank you very much. With that, let's turn it over. Kate, would you like to have the first question?

MS. SEELYE: Sure.

MR. DORAN: We've got a microphone coming your way.

MS. SEELYE: I thank the panelists and Michael for this excellent presentation. I was actually going to ask Murhaf about the internal pressures and dynamics and the value of strikes, but you've just answered the question. You don't think strikes are that effective, from what you've just said.

That said, then, if the international solution is the solution, short of Russia and China becoming more engaged, what is really -- what are the specific steps that the U.S. or the international community can take right now if we can't get a resolution out of the Security Council?

DR. JOUEJATI: The -- no. Strikes are effective but, again, up to a point. We shouldn't put all the onus on a civilian, unarmed population. We should also look elsewhere at the international community. At the regional level as well, the Arab League. What they can do to help those civilian protestors. And I am pretty sure that if we all put our heads together we can come up with a solution.

Russia has been a problem, China has been a problem. But certainly, yesterday if the Security Council heard the UN Human Rights Commissioner, despite the resistance by Russia, if she was able to make it to the Security Council then surely the Security Council can come up with ways to convince the Russians that at a minimum, the Assad regime should be referred to an international criminal court because what is taking place are crimes against humanity. And here the Russian government, whether it has interests in Syria or not, is going to have to be forced to recognize that there are crimes against humanity.

We have over 5,000 civilian people killed, 12,000 refugees, and

tens of thousands of people incarcerated in schools and in soccer stadiums. So whether Russia counts on the Port of Tartus for its interests or the Syrian regime is a regular client for Russian arms does not make this not a war -- not a crime against humanity.

MR. DORAN: Okay, the lady in the peach sweater.

SPEAKER: Hi, this is for Mr. Jouejati as well. Has there been -- as a member of the Syrian National Council, can you tell us if there has been any discussion about when the day comes that the Assad regime is toppled, or what would the replacement government be willing to cooperate with IAEA demands? That it be allowed to inspect the Deir al-Zour site? And also, has there been any discussion about what Syria's new government standing would be on Syria's chemical weapons?

And just one follow-up. Is there very much concern within the Council that Assad could use his chemical weapons against protestors?

DR. JOUEJATI: I think here in this question we are too far ahead of ourselves. I will have to remind you that the Syrian National Council was formed on October 2nd. That is two months ago, and is now in the process of building an administrative structure, a hierarchy. In the next few days there will be the first meetings of putting a blueprint of what happens the day after the Assad collapse. And so here, we are more thinking about who is going to distribute the Mazout, who is going to turn on the electricity, and who is going to regulate traffic, rather than to think of the IAEA and so on.

What the SNC does fear, of course, is after the collapse of the Assad regime that there will be continued violence as a result of vendettas. And

as a result of those death squads that Assad has unleashed, that's wont to show, again, and terrorize the population into thinking that Assad was the answer and he was the stabilizing factor.

So, we are not as far as you in the thinking.

SPEAKER: Yeah, what about the issue of --

MR. DORAN: Oh, sorry. We've got a lot of questions here. And we have one up here in the front row.

MR. BAILEY: Yes, George Bailey, Information Center. A question also for Dr. Jouejati.

We hear a lot about the readiness of the Syrian opposition. And as you realize, this is obviously a major factor in the willingness of the international community to assist. What are the real obstacles facing the readiness of the Syrian opposition for a transition period, and for the post-Assad? If you can elaborate on that quite candidly. Thank you.

DR. JOUEJATI: Quite candidly, it has been very, very difficult for the Syrian National Council in order to form to get these different political forces to agree on a common political platform. But this was Stage 1.

Now, one of the major obstacles was when this was announced to the world there had been absolutely no administrative infrastructure whatsoever. So even communicating between members of the SNC was very difficult, let alone communicating with the outside world. You have to understand that this general assembly of 230 people from the SNC are people throughout the world, and you have to communicate with one another and you have to know who is doing what and where and why and when? And getting them all in one or two

days in Istanbul is quite an achievement. So, these logistical issues have truly been very difficult, and again it was formed on October 2.

Communications now are far better, and in the days ahead an administration would have been established. So therefore, communications within the SNC and outside the SNC would become far simpler and the SNC would then be able to present to world governments a vision of the future, a strategy for the future. One which until now is still being prepared as we speak.

MR. DORAN: Let's see if we can get somebody in the back. I see there's a lady with glasses in the very back there.

MS. HARRIS: Hi, my name is Robbie Harris. A quick question. It seems to me -- I've lived in Syria, I've lived in Iraq -- that the longer this goes on the more and more sectarian the entire conflict becomes. Not only within Syria, but across the region. And that has far-reaching ramifications that extend even far beyond the Middle East. I'm sure we would all agree with that.

Having said that, probably would agree that there needs to be something done as soon as possible. However, again having lived in Syria and in the region, it seems that any intervention that comes in from specifically the U.S., the West in general, de-legitimizes any event going on on the ground.

So what from your opinion can be done from a Western perspective, specifically a U.S.-perspective, to be helpful? Not to de-legitimize what the opposition is doing or anything in that matter.

So, thanks.

MR. DORAN: Who would like to take that?

DR. JOUEJATI: Should I allow my colleagues? (Laughter)

MR. DORAN: Let's see if the others have something to say, and then.

MR. TABLER: Well, I mean, what we can do is lead. I mean, every administration has its own style. And I don't think you have to -- you know, there are different ways you can lead. You can help people from behind the scenes.

The administration is already doing that. Granted, it is not doing it, I think, in the fast -- I think the response has been relatively slow. It is a complicated situation. But in this particular case, whenever push does come to shove in terms of the humanitarian effort, that the administration can lead that way diplomatically in terms of working with allies to achieve whatever goal is set out.

But you're exactly right. And this is the problem, right? Not doing anything now is going to cause a far worse conflict, that's for sure. The Assad regime -- what you're looking at here is systemic failure, okay? And this is something that, you know, I've written about in my book or anybody who lived in Syria knew this. The population -- you know, they have the -- during -- after the '82 massacre, you know, Syrians stayed home for a very long period of time. They had a lot of children and they are, I think, the second-fastest growing population in the Middle East outside of the Palestinian territories, okay? There is not a way that -- the regime did not make its capacity any larger to deal with that.

So, it's just going to get worse. And this is the problem we're facing, that if we don't do something sooner rather than later it's actually going to

lead to that sectarian war that we all fear is around the corner and that could spread to neighboring countries like Lebanon and Iraq.

DR. TAŞPINAR: But also on that point, I think what you express as a concern is very much shared by the Obama Administration. I don't think the Obama Administration wants to be in a position where it seems to be perceived as dictating, and it wants to be behind the scenes. And that's why there is such emphasis on countries like Turkey, a neighbor that has its leverage, or the Arab league. There is this perception that the region can do more on this.

And the problem here is that the region is also looking for leadership. The region is also looking for a sense of guidance coming from Washington, and the sense that basically Washington will not really back regional initiatives, and the fear that there won't be an international coalition is real.

I don't think Ankara wants to be the place where the problem is outsourced. I don't think the Turks want to be at the forefront of this crisis, and in that sense there is a very delicate balance here. Let's not forget, I mean, the reflex of the Obama Administration overall is that there is this radioactive reaction to the United States in the region. This is why the Obama Administration was reluctant to support fully the Green Movement in Iran. And now there is, of course, much stronger support for the Syrian opposition, but there is also in the region this fear that there is a lack of grand strategy coming from Washington and a lack of international consensus. This is not Libya. There is Iran in the picture, there is the Sunni-Shiite dimension in the picture.

So, it's a much more complex problem, and I don't see Washington really in this issue having a clear sense of where it wants to go. And

there are limits to what Washington can do, too. It's easy to say, come up with a grand strategy, but there are sometimes circumstances where unfortunately things will have to get much worse before they get better.

Never underestimate the potential for Washington to remain idle. We're talking about 5,000 people dead. This is a tragedy, yes. I share Murhaf's idealism and sense of activism, too. But I mean, remember Rwanda. Close to one million people were killed and it's a footnote now.

MR. DORAN: If I can just follow up on that a little bit, in your initial comments you suggested that there's almost -- you didn't use this word, but I will -- a psychological need on the part of the Turks to differentiate themselves from the Americans. And on the other hand, you're saying that what's needed here is a clear American grand strategy and there's going to be a kind of inherent contradiction there –

DR. TAŞPINAR: There is a paradox in this Turkish position. Turks don't want to be outsourced. They don't want to basically own the problem. On the other hand, they also don't want to have an exclusively Western solution to this. That's why the Arab League is very important. There has to be a regional leg, and the regional leg is right now pretty strong. What is missing, I think, is a multilateral U.N. leg to this. That's why Russia and China is very important. Turkey --

MR. DORAN: But that's a very difficult nut to crack, the Russia-China one, right?

DR. TAŞPINAR: It is.

MR. DORAN: So if we assume that the Russians are going to

continue to do what they're doing and blocking anything, is there anything that you would suggest to the Obama Administration, the kind of initiative it could take with Turkey, that might move things forward, if only incrementally?

DR. TAŞPINAR: I would try to understand Turkey's worries on the Kurdish question. I would try to basically see what kind of leverage the U.S. has with Turkey to induce Turkey to do more. And I think here what Turkey seems to want at this point is, in addition to a stronger sense of strategic leadership coming from the U.S., is also to see the kind of tangible benefits of its willingness to stick with the United States. Remember, Turkey decided to take a very important decision on NATO, which was very unpopular in Turkish domestic public opinion. In return, Turkey's expecting basically U.S. favors, and these favors come usually in the form of stronger intelligence cooperation against the PKK, military sales -- drones, Predators, Reapers, et cetera -- and perhaps a stronger willingness at the U.S. Congress to understand Turkey's position. And the Turkish-Israeli thing is also still very vivid and, in that sense, a more active U.S. leadership for reconciliation between Turkey and Israel would also help.

MR. DORAN: So if I could say it in one sentence, the United States has to have a greater sense of U.S.-Turkish partnership regionally --

DR. TAŞPINAR: Regionally.

MR. DORAN: -- in order to get what it wants on Syria.

DR. TAŞPINAR: Yes.

MR. DORAN: That's fascinating. Murhaf?

DR. JOUEJATI: Just a sentence on this note. Turkey has a great asset here that we did not mention, which is the support of the Syrian people.

And one of the slogans on the streets fairly recently was (Syrian), neither has the minority run, we love you Erdogan. So Turkey needs to know that it has the strong support, too.

DR. TAŞPINAR: Believe me, Erdogan loves this slogan. It's not only a slogan in Syria, it's a slogan all over the region now. Erdogan has become the most popular leader in the Arab world, and there is a sense of Turkish hubris now that basically Turkey is so self-confident about its soft power. But with that comes also a sense of naivety, that Turkey has leverage, that somehow this Turkish model is applicable everywhere, that basically Turkey has this power or leverage. And I think there is an emerging realization of real politicking in Turkey that we cannot really change the region. The region has its own dynamics, and this is not the Ottoman Empire again. But I think Erdogan is very much aware of this exaggerated view of him in the region, and he's also, I think, hopefully aware of the limits of this soft power.

MR. DORAN: Okay, somebody ask a question about Iran, please. Sir, the gentleman here with the glasses who's dying to ask us about Iran.

SPEAKER: I wasn't going to ask about Iran, but you can add Iran to the question. I want to just note that the sense of urgency is very strong, and I share Murhaf's sense of urgency. But that can drive you to policy choices that are incorrect, and in particular drives towards the militarization. And anybody who doubts whether that's incorrect need only read the recent book by Erica Chenoweth and her colleague, which demonstrates unequivocally how incorrect a violent solution will be. It will be a statistical anomaly if it works. I think we're underestimating the importance of the Arab League proposal. I think the

monitors are a great idea. I think it's going to be very difficult to get them in, but it's a worthy proposition for the Security Council, which otherwise will be reduced to a stupid resolution denouncing violence. I don't know if the Arab League has the advisors, and if it doesn't, it's going to embarrass all of us a great deal. But that to me is a proposal that would help sustain the protests, the way the strikes and boycotts will help sustain them rather than street protests. And that's what we've got to worry about, not just the urgency, but about sustainment.

MR. DORAN: Okay, reactions to that? Murhaf?

DR. JOUEJATI: I absolutely agree. Look, I'm not advocating here the use of carpet bombing by NATO forces or this or that, no, no. I think the Arab League Initiative is a great one. And if the Arab League is able to get into Syria 500 monitors, that would be a fantastic step in the interim. We will have to see who protects these 500 monitors, how they can work, and so on; and here, again, the need for creative ideas from the international community. So if the 500 monitors can get in at the end of next week into Syria as the Arab League has been calling for, that would be a fantastic thing. Again, no carpet bombing; we don't want that. But we do want somebody to intercede between this deadly, lethal, force of the Assad regime and the civilian population.

MR. DORAN: Omer, do you have a reaction?

DR. TAŞPINAR: No.

MR. DORAN: Andrew?

MR. TABLER: I think it's the -- the best thing you can do -- I mean, you're right in that we'll have another U.N. resolution and it'll have some language in it, and they'll be haggling with the Russians or the Chinese or

whatever. But the nice thing about this measure is that it puts the Assad regime into dilemma, and it has to choose and it's very public and the observations of others feed into the information. And those dilemmas will define exactly where the regime is.

Now, the question is towards what end goal? If it's towards the end goal of the Assad regime surviving and holding on, no. If it's toward the Assad regime reforming its way out of power and checking out of town, yes. And as long as you make that clear, then I think you're okay. But the problem is, Assad knows that. And so, therefore, that's the reason why he probably doesn't want to be put into this dilemma because no matter what, he's going to look terrible either way.

MR. DORAN: We have a question here in the front.

SPEAKER: I'll ask your question about Iran. My question is based on what I heard from the gentleman. It seems that neither the United States nor Turkey nor anybody in the international community is willing to leave. Everybody is trying to hide behind the others to be in the forefront. If you look at Iran, there are lots of reports about U.N. help for the Syrian regime. The Iraqis, yesterday we heard Mr. Maliki agreeing with the President on Syria. Lebanon is making public statements every day about how they support. What does this say about the strategic composition of the region after? And if the regime survives and manages to quell this push, are people counting only on the Syrian people to do this by themselves? Can they do it on their own?

MR. DORAN: So people in the region are looking at this as a contest between the United States and Iran, and Iran is not losing necessarily.

DR. TAŞPINAR: You turned it into an Iran question.

MR. DORAN: Murhaf?

DR. JOUEJATI: You're saying, what does this mean about the composition? You're absolutely right. It would mean victory of Iranian hegemony, the victory of Hezbollah's hegemony in Lebanon, the victory of a fascist regime in Syria while the West looks helplessly on and regrets. You're absolutely right. And so the devil is in the details, and the Western world shall go to work now before this scenario that you paint becomes true.

DR. TAŞPINAR: But what I really liked in your question is the way you ended, you said "the Syrian people" will have to do this, right? I think we would be talking about different dynamics today if we had one million people in Damascus or Aleppo demonstrating. That's what happened in Tahrir; that's what happened in Tunisia. There are reasons why it's not happening in Syria, but the reasons why it's not happening in Syria are the reasons why Syria is not Egypt and Syria is not Libya. Therefore, to apply the same kind of criteria of "it has been done in Egypt, it has been done in Tunisia, it has been done in Libya," why not in Syria? Because Syria has a different kind of DNA, a different kind of institutional mechanism. Probably the lesson that Bashar Assad learned from Libya or Assad is that you don't check out from the city. You either end up in a cage like Mubarak or you end up in the graveyard. So this is why he is not willing to entertain semi auto-totalitarianism or basically let's not shoot on people. His lesson is you have to shoot on people. You have to do this. And if the West can do something, let's see it. And my fear is that in Ankara, there's this perception that there is still a critical mass supporting this regime because we don't see yet

one million people outside in Damascus and Aleppo. There's still segments of Syrian society who have question marks about what would happen once Assad is gone. And that makes it different than in Egypt or Libya or Tunisia.

MR. TABLER: But that segment is shrinking, and that's all reporting whether it's from the U.S. Embassy in Damascus or wherever else -- I mean I think verifies that. Yes, we don't see a million people out in the squares in Syria, that's true because we don't have -- there's this term metrics that we use in this town. And we use -- the earlier experience is we use the metrics from those experiences to measure conflicts in other countries. And so because the Mubarak regime in the way it did, and Egypt, of course, has an incredibly centralized population especially around Cairo, we imagine that the revolution in Syria is going to look like that in Egypt, when actually it's probably going to look much different. I was just speaking with a reporter who just produced a major piece on the opposition in Syria, was just there, tall blond-haired woman went to Damascus, just went on her own, not with CBS -- wasn't Kate, sorry, maybe next time -- went to Damascus on a tourism visa, went out and it only took a 10-minute cab ride to find a protest, a major protest that she filmed. Now granted it's not in the Square, but it's in Damascus. She found the free Syrian army, too. It wasn't hard. Granted, she's really smart, but she doesn't exactly blend in, trust me.

So I think that we need a greater appreciation for the conflict in Syria, and I think we need to understand a little bit about where these tipping points exactly are. I think we're approaching that now, but again it gets down to what to do about it. I think that's the real hard part.

DR. JOUEJATI: I think we're past that tipping point. Three days ago there was a demonstration in front of the Russian Cultural Center, which is in the Central Bank area which is downtown Damascus. Damascus has a disproportionately high number of Secret Service people, and so the people of Damascus are far more deterred than they would be in say Humus or what have you. I think the same holds true in Aleppo.

There's also the business community, and a lot has been spoken about the business community. It is not that Damascus and Aleppo support Bashar Assad while the rest of the country does not; that is not true. Nobody supports Bashar Assad or at least very, very few people. But the business community has always longed for stability, and the perception was that Assad provided that stability albeit at the expense of freedoms and so on, but now increasingly -- and I agree with Andrew -- this segment of the population is shrinking as Bashar Assad is increasingly viewed as the agent of instability. And so a lot of business is going away and, therefore, a lot of his base is shrinking very rapidly.

MR. DORAN: Is there anything that the United States could do unilaterally to hasten that process?

DR. JOUEJATI: Unilaterally, I agree with the question of the young lady there. The United States should not look too publicly as embracing of the Syrian opposition because it would be the kiss of death for the Syrian opposition in that it is the puppet of the United States. But the United States certainly can do a lot behind the scenes in terms of pressure with Russia, in terms of encouraging further action by the EU, and certainly giving the

confidence to Turkey that Turkey needs to have.

MR. DORAN: Sir?

SPEAKER: Unfortunately, the examples we have of popular movements that have overthrown regimes in the Arab world in those cases either the military split from the regime or outside military force was used to neutralize the military. So you're saying Assad is confident, and I don't think you can crack his confidence unless you somehow neutralize his military power. So my question is I'm not advocating occupying Syria. I'm not advocating carpet bombing. But what military options are there that would shake that confidence?

MR. DORAN: Why don't each one of you take that? Do you want to pass, Omer? Andrew.

MR. TABLER: Well, you'd have to have some sort of intervention that would facilitate the cracking of the regime, which you talked about. I mean, you'd have to take a hybrid approach I think. And the question is what would get people to run away from the regime? And I think probably the answer here is you'd have to give them a place where they could run so they could be safe. And, therefore, people who would break away from the regime would feel comfortable doing so publicly.

Now that then opens up a question. Well, what would that be? In Libya you had Benghazi. In Syria, could it be one of these buffer zones? It could be. A neighboring country could serve as that in the interim. Later on it could be expanded. But it's messy. It's hard, especially when you're talking about businessmen. They have a lot of assets in the country. But you need these public breaks with the regime, and you need to be able to put Assad into these

dilemmas and break some of the cars off of this train. It's not just Alawites who control this regime and who benefit from it. There are also plenty of other heterodox Shia groups, Christians and Sunnis. It is a complex web of associations that we need to break up. I think that would facilitate -- so the question is -- then you have to have a conversation with the Syrian opposition. Okay, what is going to make you feel safe, and what can facilitate these cracks? The two things have to go together. And it has to be part of a strategy that we need to develop with the Syrian opposition on how to achieve this. And I think that's a discussion that's going on right now.

MR. DORAN: And that's going to be very hard to do without Turkey, isn't it?

DR. TAŞPINAR: Yeah, I mean, I think talking about a military option at this point would be the best way of losing Turkey. Turkey doesn't want a military option to this. And my sense is that horrible as it is, the situation is at the low-intensity violence level, yes 15-20 people dying, but it's not at the level where you have hundreds of people killed. And for things to gain a kind of -- what is the military option dimension, they would have to get much worse. Again, something that would tip the balance in terms of a more military dimension would be if there was really a civil war situation, a sectarian conflict at a mass level, and then these talks about a safe haven, buffer zone, no-fly zones, would matter. But at this point, I think we're far away from a military option.

Of course, if diplomacy is the key here and all academic literature about the course of diplomacy refers to the threat of force, the credibility of the threat of force, for a course of diplomacy to be effective. And if I'm Bashar Assad

and if I look at this course of diplomacy measures, I hear sanctions, I hear basically pressure, diplomatic solutions. I don't hear really much military options. So there's not a credible military option at the table yet, which means he can continue with impunity. And that's the vicious cycle we're in right now. It's not a pleasant place to be, but I think we'll be there unless there is mass violence.

DR. JOUEJATI: Without wanting to endanger the security of anyone, there are some senior-ranking members of the Armed Forces that would like nothing more than to defect, but they need to know there are safe passages. And we need to think about these safe passages -- how they are drawn, who protects them, who gives the safety -- and it is then that we would have very serious cracks within the pillar of support for the Assad regime.

MR. DORAN: We have time for one laser-like question. Who can promise me a laser-like question? Can you promise me, sir?

MR. EBNEYOUSEF: Hossein Ebneyousef, International Petroleum Enterprises. Two comments and a question --

MR. DORAN: No, no, just a laser-like question. People want to go home now.

MR. EBNEYOUSEF: Okay. On Iran there seems to be an obsession to kind of turn it into an Iran thing, but the reality is that Iran got involved with Syria when it had no friends in the Arab world, was under attack by Saddam, and it actually picked an Arab nation with Bashar's regime, a neighbor of Syria which was helping Iraq actually export some of its oil. So it created a second front during the Iran-Iraq War, and it deprived Saddam of having that additional income and forced prices to go higher because of that. That was the

initial thing, and it was in a neighborhood when people were turning against Israel -- I mean in favor of Israel -- and also later on it helped a group in Lebanon to stand up to Israel. They even benefited from Syria a great deal in the '80s and '90s. How important that kind of relationship is today when we see Egypt is changing and they are much closer to Iran's position now than they've ever been.

DR. JOUEJATI: How important? Iran is critical to the Assad regime, and I think the Assad regime is very important to Iran as well. It is through the Assad regime that Iran has its reach into the Arab-Israeli conflict. Take away the Assad regime, you have taken away Hezbollah and you have taken away Iran again from the Arab-Israeli conflict.

And so I think the Assad regime is very important for Iran. Iran has very high stakes in Syria, and the opposite is true. Iran is a major supporter of the Assad regime, whether in terms of money, whether in terms of manpower that it has given now including snipers, whether it includes technological things -- Iran is very far away from technology, but in terms of monitoring social media and so on. And so this strategic alliance between the Assad regime and Iran I think is critical to both.

DR. TAŞPINAR: In the spirit of what Washington can do if Iran is so critical -- and Iran is critical for Syria -- then the question in Washington would probably entail what can we do with Iran that would help us and Syria? And if you're sitting in Tehran and you're looking at Washington, you want to use the situation in Syria in your favor.

And there is also a lack of clarity about what the administration wants from Tehran, from Iran. If you're Iranian, you would be legitimately asking

if Washington wants regime change or policy change. If it wants regime change, why should you cooperate with Washington? But if there is a way of putting Iran at the table -- and probably you will not solve Syria without talking to Iran -- then maybe an Iran strategy connected to the Syria strategy is necessary. So in the framework of grand strategy, Washington should also put basically its Iran policy in perspective if it wants to deal with Syria more effectively.

MR. DORAN: Andrew?

MR. TABLER: Yeah, the fall of the Assad regime would be a huge strategic loss to Iran and a number of different reasons in terms of their cooperation on a number of different areas, but particularly in supplying Hezbollah. There are also two areas -- Hezbollah resistance to Israel would not be the same without Syrian support. It's not the small weapons that are, for example, now the problem. Syria provides two weapons which are key to getting over the UNIFIL Solution from 2006. One is the Syrian SCUD-D and the other is the M600/Rs and Ms, and these weapons allow you to hit all of Israel. They're supplied via Syria. They're not -- they don't pull up -- they're not Iranian transfers. They're supplied because they're built in Syria. So that would contain Iran's influence and its ability to project power to the Mediterranean. And this would be a strategic benefit to the United States, its allies, and I think European allies as well.

MR. DORAN: Thank you. I think I speak for everybody when I say this has been a fascinating panel, and I think we have an outstanding understanding of just how complex this problem is. Thank you very much.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012