



## **Issue Brief**

### **Post-Assad Geostrategic Possibilities**

*Dr. Zakir Hussain\**

The 17-month-long Syrian uprising, claiming more than 16,000 lives, including 4,000 security personnel, is apparently approaching a conclusion. The fall of the “Assad Family’s 42-year grip on power”<sup>i</sup> is “finally coming to an end”.<sup>ii</sup> This was symbolised when a security operative “who, apparently, was part of a security team posted to guard the inner circle”<sup>iii</sup>, was motivated to become a suicide bomber. The July 18, 2012 squad bombing killed four high-ranking government officials, including the Defence Minister, Deputy-Defence Minister, Intelligence Chief and the interior minister.<sup>iv</sup> The event clearly underlines two critical undercurrents, which have shaken the invincible image of the Assad regime across the world: Firstly, the growing penetration/influence of the ‘rebel ideology’ in the administrative apparatus, including the intelligence agencies; Secondly, the raising doubt over the current regime’s resolve to withstand and survive the Opposition launched “Damascus volcano”, which aims to spread violence across the country and thin out the security personnel, including the armed forces.

Besides emboldening the morale of the rebel forces, this event has also changed the attitude of the countries supporting the anti-Assad regime. They are now openly backing up the rebel forces. They have now stopped towing the diplomatic lines of action, including the six-point Kofi Annan Plan<sup>v</sup>. The Obama administration has finally come to the conclusion that UN has “utterly failed” on Syria and has decided to employ “all kinds of plans to oust Basher Assad by force”.<sup>vi</sup> It has recently

announced additional \$12 million assistance to the Syrian civilians, on top of the extra \$10 million in “non-lethal assistance”.<sup>vii</sup> The situation in Syria has deteriorated to such a level that Kofi Annan has planned to step down as the UN-Arab League mediator by the end of August.<sup>viii</sup>

Demographically, Syria is a predominantly Sunni majority country; nevertheless, it has been ruled by two generations of secular minority Shia Alawites for the last forty years. Being a liberal Shia-minority regime surrounded by rich Sunni majority Islamists, the founder of the al Assad family, Hafiz Al Assad, had since the beginning understood the geo-political ‘realities’ of the region. Consequently, he built a deep and expanded cobwebs of ‘strategic alliances’ within and outside the region to achieve three strategic goals, bequeathed by Basher Al Assad in 2000: (i) consolidating internal authority; (ii) turning Syria’s difficulty into a source of relevance; and, (iii) its limited quantity of power in the form of strength<sup>ix</sup> to show to his foes and friends alike.

The situation in Syria is tumultuous and fluid. At this juncture, it is significant to analyse the emerging post-Assad geostrategic and geopolitical equation in the region in general and the countries involved, both directly and indirectly, in Syria in particular. Major countries such as Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel as well as the US, etc., have major stakes in the region and busy to reconfiguring and to secure their national interest. Indeed, the Ba’athist regime in Syria has influenced and shaped the regional politics for the last four decades. So its replacement would undoubtedly bring massive fallout in terms of bilateral, multilateral policy transformations.

### **Syria’s Geo-strategic Location: Major Power Interest**

Syria’s geo-strategic location is significant from the Arab Gulf point of view. This has further been enhanced by its fairly long-term alliance with Iran, Lebanon and the two powerful asymmetric forces, Hamas and Hezbollah<sup>x</sup>, determined for the cause of Palestine. Syria has a Sunni-majority population and less than 5 per cent are Shia; the rest are Alawites, Christians and Druze (Table). This makes a fairly good case for the Arab states to win Syria over to their side and compensate for the loss of Iraq,

both in terms of political ideology as well as sectarian dominance and checkmate Iran's nuclear and sectarian ambition. Syria is the last bastion of the Ba'athist ideology in the Arab world. The minority Alawis are ruling the Sunni majority.

### **Sectarian Mosaic in the Syrian Arab Republic**

<b>Sect</b>	<b>Percentage Share</b>
Sunni Muslims	68.7
Alawites	11.5
Druze	3.0
Ismailis	1.5
Christians	14.1

*Source: Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East, Routledge, London, p. 244.*

In the post-Gulf War scenario, Syria's geo-strategic importance has become more pronounced. Territorially, Iraq is on the verge of ethnic and sectarian polarisation and trifurcation into Shia Iraq, Sunni Iraq and Kurd Iraq. In the post-Saddam era, Syria has become a geo-political force in the region by combining the sectarian advantages in the region. The Sunni habitats are contiguous to Jordan and Syria borders, while the Kurds are mostly settled on the western border of Syria and eastern Iran border. The Shia-dominated Iraqi region is on the eastern Iranian border, which gives Iran an easy transnational interplay in the region. In this geo-ethnic-sectarian setup in Iraq, Syria and Jordan hold key significance to the current geo-strategic design of the Sunni Arab Gulf regimes. Jordan has already been invited to join the GCC, while Ba'shar al-Assad of Syria is under pressure to abdicate in the name of the Arab Spring. The new Gulf Game focused on Syria is to obtain twin objectives: *one*, to immediately checkmate Iran and its nuclear ambition; and *second*, to develop a long-term Sunni firewall around the core Sunni states. These territorial arrangements will create buffer states between Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and the Shia-dominant Tehran-Baghdad axis.

Since the survival of the Assad now appears dim, there is need to analyse the possible geo-strategic fallout of the regime's collapse as well as to delineate how future of the region will unfold.

**Iran:** Syria and Iran has been the “brothers in arms” for the last forty years. They are “locked in a strategic, force-multiplying alliance” that has enabled them to resist the US-Israel-Arab Axis pressure since long. Consequently, the fall of the Assad regime would not only jeopardise the geo-strategic advantages to Iran in this part of the region but also overall considerably weaken the Islamic Republic, both politically and ideologically. Politically, Syria has been Iran’s enabler in the eastern Mediterranean, Levant by supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon. Ideologically, Damascus has blurred the line of ‘Arab versus Persian’, ‘Shia versus Sunni’ divisions and has provided a rallying cause to the entire Arab populace on Palestine issue. Fall of the Assad regime will erode Iran’s presence in Lebanon and block its “entry point into Palestinian politics”, besides minimize its asymmetric base in Afghanistan. A weakened Iran in the post-Assad political setup may reconsider its strategy and adopt a conciliatory approach towards Washington-Tel Aviv Axis, minus Riyadh. Iran may consider postponing its nuclear programme for some time. It may continue with its policies in Iraq, Bahrain and Shia dominated pockets in the Persian Gulf, including the eastern oil-rich region of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the tensions between Tehran and Riyadh may keep on boiling for some time to come.

**Russia:** After the fall of Saddam Hussein, indeed the Baathist regime in Syria proved to the last strategic foothold for Russia in the region. Fall of the Assad regime will not only dilute the strategic advantages for Russia but also end its warm water port, Tartus, which gives it an access to the Mediterranean. The replacement of Assad regime, possibly by a variant of the Muslim Brotherhood, may also raise security problems for Russia, particularly in its disturbed pockets such as Dagestan, Chechnya, etc., as Syria provides direct access to these pockets through the Mediterranean Sea.

Economically too, fall of Assad will cost Russia significantly. Syria offers nearly of 10 percent arms market of Russia, besides 3 percent of the total Syrian trade, worth \$ 1.1 billion in 2010 and \$19.4 billion investment capital in 2009. Russia has also been an important partner in gas development plans in Syria. Looking at Putin’s ambition, post-Assad will harden Russia’s geo-strategic stands not only in the region but in the world as well, as Putin wants Russia to emerge as a global powerbroker.

**Saudi Arabia:** As a result of close alliance with Iran and Lebanon, particularly with Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia's relations with Syria has always been estranged. However, post-Assad era may open two possibilities of diplomatic engagements between the two countries. One, formation of a Sunni majority government in Syria will be a strategic compensation to loss of Iraq to the Kingdom. This may provide strategic leverage to the Kingdom to secure its northwestern frontline by building an expanded "Sunni Domain" in the Levant and the Arab Gulf States.<sup>xi</sup> (See Map- green-shaded area shows the possible Sunni domain including the Gulf, Levant and Turkey) Second, the fall of Shia Alawite regime in Syria will considerably reduce Iran's influence; hence, diminish Hezbollah's strategic significance in Lebanon and around. This will give Saudi Arabia a free hand to forge ties with Saad Hariri, whose father, Rafiq Hariri, was murdered in 2005 and Syria was declared complicit in this episode.

Weakening of Iran and its proxy Hezbollah would also relax the Kingdom to manage Bahrain's affairs, which Riyadh views as "Shiite Cuba" and "Iran's protégé" in the Gulf. Shia-majority Bahrain has already given much defame and headache to Riyadh.<sup>xii</sup> Bahrain, which is 20 miles away from the Saudi peninsula, provides sectarian access to Iran in the Gulf politics, including the Shia-dominated oil rich region. Looking at the security-vulnerability on its south eastern front, Riyadh has already taken a pre-emptive step and has proposed to establish a "broad security and economic union" with Bahrain.<sup>xiii</sup> On the similar pattern the Saudi Octogenarian King Abdullah highlighted at the annual gathering at Riyadh: "You all know that we are targeted in our safety and security", and called upon the five other Gulf leaders present to join Saudi Arabia in a single six-nation Gulf union.<sup>xiv</sup>

Strategically, the fallout of the regime change in Syria will immensely satisfy the Saudi rulers. However, Saudi Arabia may encounter another set of problems that may possibly arise from the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is expected to fill the political vacuum in the post Assad Syria. Muslim Brotherhood, indeed, does not see 'eye-to-eye' with the Kingdom on two important issues: one, the continuation of monarchy as a legitimate form of governance according to the Sharia; and second, Riyadh's alliance with Washington-Tel Aviv Axis. This may perhaps ail the Kingdom for some time and force it to possibly further enhance its relations with US-Israel.

Another reason to worry for the Kingdom may be Russia's 'strategic' failure in Syria. The fall of Assad in sight despite Russia's strong support may provoke Moscow to sympathise the Shia population living in the oil-rich eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Already the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergi Lavrov, has shown concerns over the human rights issues of the Saudi Shias living in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Although the Saudi King Abdullah has viewed his statement as 'provoking', future appears to be fraught with uncertain consequences.

Taking the entire strategic canvass of the region into account, it eminently appears that after Iraq, Afghanistan and dethroning of Assad in Syria leading to weakening of Iran, Saudi Arabia seem to be the next in the queue of tumultuous transformations. These political transformations either may be engineered in the form of the anti-monarchical movements or instigating a long drawn fight between Sunni and Shia, by the forces gathering strength in Syria, Iraq and possibly cooperating with their Egyptian counterparts.<sup>xv</sup> Saudi Arabia altogether does not desire that the Syrian flame should come to Jordan and ultimately reach to its own borders.



Map not to scale

**Map: Prospective World of Sunni Islam (Turkey, Gulf and Levant)**

**Turkey:** Turkey has been Syria's closest ally till recently. However, the active support of Ankara to the rebel forces by providing base, arms and material support as well as attempt to create a no fly zone on the Benghazi model, has turned them into bitter foes. Syria's suspicion led the shooting down of Turkey's jet, consequently, brought the NATO to its doorstep, making war an imminent possibility.

The fall of Assad regime will enable Turkey to build a close economic and political cooperation with the new government possibly led by the Muslim Brotherhood, a variant of its own AKP. However, Turkey may be burdened with Palestinian cause, enter into a competing race with Iran and apparently estrange its relations with Israel further.<sup>xvi</sup> Relations with Tehran will be a litmus test of its "zero neighbour problems" policy. Failure on these counts may push Ankara further to depend on US-West support, besides putting Turkey its credibility on trial in Muslim world in general and the Arab world in particular. In addition, instability on its north-eastern border may also accentuate the Kurdish problem as well as ignite century-old dormant Armenian genocide issue. This may offer Turkey's rivals a golden opportunity to clip Ankara's growing strategic weight in the Arab world in the coming years.

In fact, looking at the interest of the major power in the region, it becomes imminent that most likely Turkey would be the last target in the region. These major powers perhaps don't want any regional power to outgrow and start interference in their geostrategic designs in the region.<sup>xvii</sup>

**Israel:** It is said that the ultimate goal of the Washington-Tel Aviv-Riyadh Axis is to weaken Iran by detaching Syria from Tehran's orbit. Fall of the Assad regime will definitely weaken Iran and may force the Islamic Republic to reconsider its nuclear programme as well as active policy of supporting Hezbollah and Hamas. This will relax Israel on multiple fronts such as Palestine and challenge to its only nuclear prerogative in the region. However, Israel may confront two problems: one, the issue of Golan Heights,<sup>xviii</sup> which the Islamists have always viewed as an affront to the Syrian sovereignty; formation of a Muslim Brotherhood government in Syria may bid its takeover, hence, plunging Israel into a limited war. Second, the issue of huge arms reserves. Syria has huge arms reserves, including advance air defence system and the

chemical weapons; this may fall into the hands of groups opposed to Israel, giving Aviv a headache.

Israel may feel some problem in the coming future as the alliances between Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah, including Hamas may germinate against Israel, could not be ruled out.<sup>xix</sup> So, Israel's rejoice may prove short-lived, particularly after the demise of the Ba'athist regime at Damascus. The long-term solution for Israel seems in solving Palestine problem to the satisfaction of the aggrieved.

**US-West:** The fall of the Assad regime will undoubtedly reinforce the US-West dominance at global level, particularly at a time when "US preponderance is declining". The US will enjoy a couple of strategic advantages such as a free hand in Asia Pacific to handle China and ongoing disputes in South China Sea; reduce Iranian influence in Iraq and contain terrorism in the region. This may allow the US to invest in Iraq and try to compensate its trillion plus economic loss in the Iraq war in 2003. A weakened Iran will reduce its leverage in Afghanistan and allow the US to manage Afghan affairs with ease. The US will be able to effectively handle Pakistan and develop close alliance with India on Afghanistan's stabilisation and reconstruction programme, particularly after the withdrawal of the US-west forces in 2014.

### **Future Challenges**

The fall of Assad regime in Syria although appears imminent, it does not seem offering a panacea to all the strategic stalemates in the region. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, US-West, Israel may feel strategically triumphant; nonetheless, the formation of new regime in Syria will undoubtedly fetch another new set of strategic permutations and combinations in the region. In all probability, a variant of Muslim Brotherhood which may fill the political void in Syria in the post-Assad period, may not be liked by the Syrian minorities like Alawites, Christians, Druz, and countries such as the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, etc, who don't see eye-to-eye with the hard-line approach of the Muslim brotherhood. Many are suggesting deploying UN Peace Keeping Force in Syria after Assad to save Alawites and Christians against the vengeance of the majority Sunnis, who have suffered for the last 40 years at the hands of minority Alawite government. In the absence of these assurances, there are speculations that



powerful Alawite leaders, including Assad may build defences, particularly in the northwest, where most of the Alawites are living

The opposition groups in Syria are still fragmented and there are differences among them in ideology and objectives; turning them into a cohesive force is a big challenge in the post-Assad Syria. Indeed, unity among different group is important for restoring peace and stability of the country.

Another important issue of the time is the huge stockpile of chemical weapons, which the House of Assad built under the Russian guidance since it was defeated by Israel in 1982. Now the US and others are making contingency plan to prevent the misuse or fall of these lethal weapons, particularly in the hands of Hezbollah or non-complying Muslim Brotherhood. Sources indicate that Assad regime has been behind Hezbollah's missile capability, which now possesses approximately 50,000 missiles.

Globally the Assad regime is prised as anti-people and non-democratic, it is also reported that the Al Qaida operatives of Iraq are active in Syria. The groups like Al Nusra Front, Abdullah Azzam Brigade and Al Baraa ibn Malik Martyrdom Brigade<sup>xx</sup> are active in Levant; they are keen to hijack the Syrian movement. Managing the growing tide of Al Qaida, which is operating through local people, will be a big challenge in the post-Assad.

In conclusion, although dethroning of Assad augurs well to many, it does not mean that the problems of the region could be resolved altogether. The emerging situation portends few more rounds of "constructive chaos"<sup>xxi</sup> before turning the colonial "blood borders"<sup>xxii</sup> into natural boundary lines.

*\* Dr. Zakir Hussain, Research Fellow, at Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi  
110001*

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Helene Cooper, "Washington Begins to Plan for Collapse of Syrian Government", *The York Times*, July 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/19/world/middleeast/washington-begins-to-plan-for-collapse-of-syrian-government.html?pagewanted=all>. Accessed on July 26, 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> Bruce Riedel, "What Comes After Assad in Syria?", *Brookings*, July 20, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/07/20-syria-riedel>. Accessed on July 24, 2012.

<sup>iii</sup> Atul Aneja, "Syrian security shaken as suicide bomber strikes", *The Hindu*, July 18, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article3653151.ece?homepage=true>. Accessed on July 23, 2012.

<sup>iv</sup> Damien McElroy, "Assad's brother-in-law and top Syrian officials killed in Damascus suicide bomb", *The Telegraph, UK*, July 18, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9408321/Assads-brother-in-law-and-top-Syrian-officials-killed-in-Damascus-suicide-bomb.html>. Accessed on July 23, 2012.

<sup>v</sup> The deadlock at UNSC on one hand and the growing unrest and spate of killings in Syria on the other, the UN-Arab League appointed the former UN General Secretary Mr. Kofi Annan as a joint envoy to Syria and resolve the crisis through peaceful dialogue than invoking non-diplomatic means. On March 16, 2012, Kofi Annan submitted a six-point peace plan to the UNSC. The six-point plan included: (i) military pullout from urban centers; (ii) release of political detainees; (iii) political dialogue between the regime and the opposition group; (iv) establishment of temporary ceasefire; (v) freedom of association & the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed; and, (vi) ensure freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists and a non-discriminatory visa policy for them. Although Assad agreed to implement the plan, it could not take off as a result of mistrust and extra demands of the opposition groups that Assad should step down before any political things takes place in Syria. The situation, particularly after the Tremesh episode, deteriorated to such an extent that the International Red Cross declared 'civil war' in Syria and allowed both parties to achieve their objectives under the Geneva Convention. (for detailed discussion see: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/03/2012327153111767387.html/>). Accessed on July 20, 2012.

<sup>vi</sup> Obama's Syrian Education, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 22, 2012.

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444025204577542993398455980.html?mod=googlenews\\_wsj](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444025204577542993398455980.html?mod=googlenews_wsj). Accessed on July 26, 2012.

<sup>vii</sup> Annan Quits as Syria Envoy: War Intensifies over Aleppo, *The Indian Express*, August 3, 2012, New Delhi.

<sup>viii</sup> "Louis Charbonneau and Hadeel Al Shalchi, "Frustrated Annan quits as Syria peace envoy", *The Reuters*, August 2, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/02/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE8610SH20120802>. accessed on August 3, 2012.

<sup>ix</sup> Emile Hokayem, "Syria and its neighbor", *Survival*, Vol. 52(2), April-May 2012. Accessed July 15, 2012.

<sup>x</sup> Syria and Iran collaborated to create Hizbullah after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982.

<sup>xi</sup> Jordan has already been invited to join the GCC. This further indicates that that Saudi Arabia has detailed plan to build an expanded world of Sunni Islam with an idea to counter the growing potential of Shia influence. However, population-wise the proposed Gulf Union won't be able to counter the numeric strengthen of Shiites. Area-wise this will be a plausible attempt on the part of Sunni Saudi regime to safeguard itself from direct confrontation..

<sup>xii</sup> On account of democratic uprising in Bahrain, under Peninsular Defence arrangement Saudi Arabia along with the UAE sent 1000 armed military force and 500 police to quell the revolt against the minority Sunni regime in Bahrain. The Saudi-led action in Bahrain raised global hue and cry against the human rights violations, even the US also did not fully endorse this action.

<sup>xiii</sup> Saudi Arabia is more concerned about its security, particularly in the light of the recent US policy changes in the West Asia. The kingdom was vexed by how Washington dropped Mubarak so quickly, and Saudi Arabia has begun to declare that it better of with independent foreign policy. David Aaron, F. Wehrey, B. A. Wallace (2011) *The Future of Gulf Security in a Region of Dramatic Change: Mutual Equities and Enduring Relationships*, RAND, National Defense Research Institute, Washington.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer and Alex Delmar-Morgan, "Bahrain, Saudis to Clinch Ties", *The Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 2012,

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<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303505504577401941800223750.html>. Accessed on July 23, 2012.

<sup>xv</sup> Since the Arab Spring started in the West Asia, democratic upsurge has vented out to the long suppressed organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, which kept on spreading its networks beneath the surface since its formation in 1928. Today, Muslim Brotherhood has its variants in almost Arab countries and they are in majority, either it is Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Turkey (AKP), etc. Therefore, Muslim Brotherhood as a political force is now in position to form government and influence national foreign policy.

<sup>xvi</sup> The diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel further strained in May 2010 when the Israeli commandos killed nine Turks who were on *Mavi Marmara* ship, to break the Gaza blockade. Israel refused either “to countenance an apology or to allow Ankara a say in the blockade of Gaza”. The Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Dovutoglu compared *Mavi Marmara* event with 9/11 events. However, now as Assad regime seems entering into final stage, we find that Israel is becoming cordial with Turkey, which is evident from the statement of the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, “Israel and Turkey are two strong and powerful nations in the region”.

<sup>xvii</sup> This author believes that Turkey is baited to side with the allied forces in the name of bringing democracy in the region. However, the actual motive of the US-Israel Axis seems to trap or malign Turkey in the Arab world in general and the Gulf region in particular and scuttle its outgrown geo-strategic stature in the region. This author believes that the US-Israel-West does not want any decisive regional power in the Middle East, particularly in the oil-rich belt. After the end of cold war four powers namely Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey emerged as regional force. Gradually, one after other these three regional powers, Iraq, Egypt, Iran, are on the way of decline. Only Turkey is left, whose downfall seems imminent.

<sup>xviii</sup> Golan (Jawlan in Arabic) Heights was captured by Israel in 1967 war. The area and the strategic location of the Height is very significant. It covers nearly 1,250 square km., including Mount Harmon at its northmost point, making one percent of the total Syrian territory. Golan height is strategically important for two reasons primarily: (i) if Syria controls the Heights it has a strategic advantage looking down upon northern Israel either to initiate an offensive or to launch artillery barrages at northern Israeli towns and villages; and if Israel controls the Golan Heights, its military would be sitting only 35 km away from Damascus; (ii) a major water resource, particularly important to Israel, feeding into Jordan River. (Source: David W. Lesch (2005), *The New Lion of Damascus: Basher al-Assad and Modern Syria*, Yale University Press, London.

<sup>xix</sup> Hezbollah, in fact, is not entirely dependent upon Iran for its existence. Although its origin and sustenance has initially been fostered by Iran, over the period the organization has developed its own powerbase and sustenance capability. So the idea that after Iran’s weakening, Hezbollah will be finished is perhaps politically a hasty inference. Of course weakening of Iran will weaken Hezbollah, particularly on two fronts, finance and state-sponsorship, but the region’s problems, particularly outside interference, Palestine cause or may be Shia-Sunni conflagration, most likely provide the unit logic to remain important regional politics.

<sup>xx</sup> Rod Nordland, Al Qaeda Taking Deadly New Role in Syria Conflict, *The New York Times*, July 24, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/25/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-insinuating-its-way-into-syrias-conflict.html?pagewanted=all>. Accessed on July 25, 2012.

<sup>xxi</sup> Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a “New Middle East” November 18, 2006, <http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=3882>. Accessed July on July 18, 2012.

<sup>xxii</sup> Ralph Peters, “Blood Borders: How a Better Middle East Would Look”, *Armed Force Journal*, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1833899/>. Accessed on July 18, 2012.