

# Secret US 2006 Government Document Reveals Plan to Destabilize Syria by Using Extremists, Muslim Brotherhood, Elections

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*As the Syrian government makes massive gains across the country, many are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel for the Western destabilization and attempt to destroy the secular government of Syria by the United States and the West. However, it must be remembered that the goal to impose hegemony across the world by the Anglo-financier system is not some fly-by-night venture that cropped up in 2011 to be easily abandoned in 2018. Indeed, the plan to destroy Syria has spanned nearly four decades, only moving into high gear in 2011 under the Obama administration.*

While the destabilization initiative did begin in earnest under Obama's watch, the truth is that previous administrations were also heavily involved in the planning of Syria's destruction.

For instance, in 2006, TIME revealed a leaked two-page document circulating amongst key figures in the Bush administration that openly stated that the U.S. was "supporting regular meetings of internal and diaspora Syrian activists" in Europe. The document made no bones about expressing hope that "these meetings will facilitate a more coherent strategy and plan of actions for all anti-Assad activists."

The document also stated, according to TIME, that Syria's legislative elections which were going to take place in March of 2007, "provide a potentially galvanizing issue for . . . critics of the Assad regime." The document expressed an open desire to take advantage of that opportunity by suggesting an "election monitoring" plan where "internet accessible materials will be available for printing and dissemination by activists inside the country [Syria] and neighboring countries."

The document also advocates for providing money to at least one Syrian politician who was allegedly intending to run in the election against Bashar al-Assad. The document also called for the funding of and implementation of "voter education campaigns" and "public opinion polling," the first being "tentatively scheduled in early 2007."

As TIME reported in December 2006 in the article "[Syria In Bush's Cross Hairs](#),"

American officials say the U.S. government has had extensive contacts with a range of anti-Assad groups in Washington, Europe and inside Syria. To give momentum to that opposition, the U.S. is giving serious consideration to the election-monitoring scheme proposed in the document, according to several

officials. The proposal has not yet been approved, in part because of questions over whether the Syrian elections will be delayed or even cancelled. But one U.S. official familiar with the proposal said: “You are forced to wonder whether we are now trying to destabilize the Syrian government.”

Some critics in Congress and the Administration say that such a plan, meant to secretly influence a foreign government, should be legally deemed a “covert action,” which by law would then require that the White House inform the intelligence committees on Capitol Hill. Some in Congress would undoubtedly raise objections to this secret use of publicly appropriated funds to promote democracy.

The fact that “critics in Congress and the administration” believed that the plan should be labeled a “covert action” means clearly that the plan was kept from members of Congress legally obligated to be informed of the plan. That doesn’t mean that certain members of Congress or all members of the “intelligence committees” were not aware of the plan but that these individuals were simply never officially informed of the plan’s existence.



Khaddam, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, with [Prince Saud al Faisal](#), [Ronald Reagan](#), and [George Shultz](#) in 1981 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Nevertheless, TIME reports that the document advanced a proposal to fund the destabilization efforts through the National Salvation Front and, of course, the Muslim Brotherhood. TIME reported,

The proposal says part of the effort would be run through a foundation operated by **Amar Abdulhamid**, a Washington-based member of a Syrian umbrella opposition group known as the National Salvation Front (NSF). The Front includes the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist organization that for decades supported the violent overthrow of the Syrian government, but now says it seeks peaceful, democratic reform. (In Syria, however, membership in the Brotherhood is still punishable by death.) Another member of the NSF is **Abdul Halim Khaddam**, a former high-ranking Syrian official and Assad family loyalist who recently went into exile after a political clash with the regime. Representatives of the National Salvation Front, including Abdulhamid, were accorded at least two meetings earlier this year at the White House, which described the sessions as exploratory. Since then, the National Salvation Front has said it intends to open an office in Washington in the near future.

“Democracy promotion” has been a focus of both Democratic and Republican administrations, but the Bush White House has been a particular booster since 9/11. Iran contra figure **Elliott Abrams** was put in charge of the effort at the National Security Council. Until recently, **Elizabeth Cheney**, daughter of the Vice President, oversaw such work at the State Department. In the past, the U.S. has used support for “democracy building” to topple unfriendly dictators, including Serbia’s **Slobodan Milosevic** and Ukraine’s **Vladimir Kuchma**.

The plan to make “election monitoring” work to America’s benefit, the document states clearly that the plan to do so would have to be kept secret. It says, according to TIME, that “Any information regarding funding for domestic [Syrian] politicians for elections monitoring would have to be protected from public dissemination.”

TIME adds,

But American experts on “democracy promotion” consulted by TIME say it would be unwise to give financial support to a specific candidate in the election, because of the perceived conflict of interest. More ominously, an official familiar with the document explained that secrecy is necessary in part because Syria’s government might retaliate against anyone inside the country who was seen as supporting the U.S.-backed election effort. The official added that because the Syrian government fields a broad network of internal spies, it would almost certainly find out about the U.S. effort, if it hasn’t already. That could lead to the imprisonment of still more opposition figures.

Any American-orchestrated attempt to conduct such an election-monitoring effort could make a dialogue between Washington and Damascus — as proposed by the Iraq Study Group and several U.S. allies — difficult or impossible. The entire proposal could also be a waste of effort; **Edward P. Djerejian**, a former U.S. ambassador to Syria who worked on the Iraq Study Group report, says that Syria’s opposition is so fractured and weak that there is little to be gained by such a venture. “To fund opposition parties on the margins is a distraction at best,” he told TIME. “It will only impede the better option of engaging Syria on much more important, fundamental issues like Iraq, peace with Israel, and the dangerous situation in Lebanon.”

Others detect another goal for the proposed policy. “Ever since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which Syria opposed, the Bush Administration has been looking for ways to squeeze the government in Damascus,” notes **Joshua Landis**, a Syria expert who is co-director of the Center for Peace Studies at the University of Oklahoma. “Syria has appeared to be next on the Administration’s agenda to reform the greater Middle East.” Landis adds: “This is apparently an effort to gin up the Syrian opposition under the rubric of ‘democracy promotion’ and ‘election monitoring,’ but it’s really just an attempt to pressure the Syrian government” into doing what the U.S. wants. That would include blocking Syria’s border with Iraq so insurgents do not cross into Iraq to kill U.S. troops; ending funding of Hizballah and interference in Lebanese politics; and cooperating with the U.N. in the investigation of the assassination of Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. Senior Syrian government officials are considered prime suspects in Hariri case.

According to the document, money for the “election-monitoring” proposal would be channeled through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a State Department program. TIME wrote,

According to MEPI's website, the program passes out funds ranging between \$100,000 and \$1 million to promote education and women's empowerment, as well as economic and political reform, part of a total allocation of \$5 million for Syria that Congress supported earlier this year.

MEPI helps funnel millions of dollars every year to groups around the Middle East intent on promoting reforms. In the vast majority of cases, beneficiaries are publicly identified, as financial support is distributed through channels including the National Democratic Institute, a non-profit affiliated with the Democratic Party, and the International Republican Institute (IRI), which is linked to the G.O.P. In the Syrian case, the election-monitoring proposal identifies IRI as a "partner" — although the IRI website, replete with information about its democracy promotion elsewhere in the world, does not mention Syria. A spokesperson for IRI had no comment on what the organization might have planned or under way in Syria, describing the subject as "sensitive."

U.S. foreign policy experts familiar with the proposal say it was developed by a "democracy and public diplomacy" working group that meets weekly at the State department to discuss Iran and Syria. Along with related working groups, it prepares proposals for the higher-level Iran Syria Operations Group, or ISOG, an inter-agency body that, several officials said, has had input from **Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns**, deputy National Security Council advisor **Elliott Abrams** and representatives from the Pentagon, Treasury and U.S. intelligence. The State Department's deputy spokesman, **Thomas Casey**, said the election-monitoring proposal had already been through several classified drafts, but that "the basic concept is very much still valid."

A plan to destabilize Syria by means of funding political "opposition" as well as physical "opposition" in the form of Sunni Wahhabists and the Muslim Brotherhood is incredibly familiar. And it should be.

As journalist **Seymour Hersh** wrote in his article, "[The Redirection,](#)" in 2007,

To undermine Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, the Bush Administration has decided, in effect, to reconfigure its priorities in the Middle East. In Lebanon, the Administration has cooperated with Saudi Arabia's government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shiite organization that is backed by Iran. The U.S. has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.

"Extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam" who are "hostile to America and sympathetic to al-Qaeda" are the definition of the so-called "rebels" turned loose on Syria in 2011. Likewise, the fact that both Iran and Hezbollah, who are natural enemies of al-Qaeda and such radical Sunni groups, are involved in the battle against ISIS and other related terrorist organizations in Syria proves the accuracy of the article on another level.

Hersh also wrote,



The new American policy, in its broad outlines, has been discussed publicly. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January, **Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice** (image on the right) said that there is “a new strategic alignment in the Middle East,” separating “reformers” and “extremists”; she pointed to the Sunni states as centers of moderation, and said that Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah were “on the other side of that divide.” (Syria’s Sunni majority is dominated by the Alawi sect.) Iran and Syria, she said, “have made their choice and their choice is to destabilize.”

Some of the core tactics of the redirection are not public, however. The clandestine operations have been kept secret, in some cases, by leaving the execution or the funding to the Saudis, or by finding other ways to work around the normal congressional appropriations process, current and former officials close to the Administration said.

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This time, the U.S. government consultant told me, Bandar and other Saudis have assured the White House that “they will keep a very close eye on the religious fundamentalists. Their message to us was ‘We’ve created this movement, and we can control it.’ It’s not that we don’t want the Salafis to throw bombs; it’s who they throw them at—Hezbollah, Moqtada al-Sadr, Iran, and at the Syrians, if they continue to work with Hezbollah and Iran.”

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Fourth, the Saudi government, with Washington’s approval, would provide funds and logistical aid to weaken the government of **President Bashar Assad**, of Syria. The Israelis believe that putting such pressure on the Assad government will make it more conciliatory and open to negotiations. Syria is a major conduit of arms to Hezbollah.

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In January, after an outburst of street violence in Beirut involving supporters of both the Siniora government and Hezbollah, **Prince Bandar** flew to Tehran to discuss the political impasse in Lebanon and to meet with **Ali Larijani**, the Iranians’ negotiator on nuclear issues. According to a Middle Eastern ambassador, Bandar’s mission—which the ambassador said was endorsed by the White House—also aimed “to create problems between the Iranians and Syria.” There had been tensions between the two countries about Syrian talks with Israel, and the Saudis’ goal was to encourage a breach. However, the ambassador said, “It did not work. Syria and Iran are not going to betray each other. Bandar’s approach is very unlikely to succeed.”

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The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, a branch of a radical Sunni movement founded in Egypt in 1928, engaged in more than a decade of violent opposition to the regime of **Hafez Assad**, Bashir's father. In 1982, the Brotherhood took control of the city of Hama; Assad bombarded the city for a week, killing between six thousand and twenty thousand people. Membership in the Brotherhood is punishable by death in Syria. The Brotherhood is also an avowed enemy of the U.S. and of Israel. Nevertheless, Jumbblatt said, "We told Cheney that the basic link between Iran and Lebanon is Syria—and to weaken Iran you need to open the door to effective Syrian opposition."

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There is evidence that the Administration's redirection strategy has already benefitted the Brotherhood. The Syrian National Salvation Front is a coalition of opposition groups whose principal members are a faction led by **Abdul Halim Khaddam**, a former Syrian Vice-President who defected in 2005, and the Brotherhood. A former high-ranking C.I.A. officer told me, "The Americans have provided both political and financial support. The Saudis are taking the lead with financial support, but there is American involvement." He said that Khaddam, who now lives in Paris, was getting money from Saudi Arabia, with the knowledge of the White House. (In 2005, a delegation of the Front's members met with officials from the National Security Council, according to press reports.) A former White House official told me that the Saudis had provided members of the Front with travel documents.

Hersh also spoke with **Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah**, leader of the Shi'ite Lebanese militia, Hezbollah. In relation to the Western strategy against Syria, he reported,

Nasrallah said he believed that America also wanted to bring about the partition of Lebanon and of Syria. In Syria, he said, the result would be to push the country "into chaos and internal battles like in Iraq." In Lebanon, "There will be a Sunni state, an Alawi state, a Christian state, and a Druze state." But, he said, "I do not know if there will be a Shiite state." Nasrallah told me that he suspected that one aim of the Israeli bombing of Lebanon last summer was "the destruction of Shiite areas and the displacement of Shiites from Lebanon. The idea was to have the Shiites of Lebanon and Syria flee to southern Iraq," which is dominated by Shiites. "I am not sure, but I smell this," he told me.

Partition would leave Israel surrounded by "small tranquil states," he said. "I can assure you that the Saudi kingdom will also be divided, and the issue will reach to North African states. There will be small ethnic and confessional states," he said. "In other words, Israel will be the most important and the strongest state in a region that has been partitioned into ethnic and confessional states that are in agreement with each other. This is the new Middle East."

The trail of documentation and the manner in which the overarching agenda of world hegemony on the behalf of corporate-financier interests have continued apace regardless of party and seamlessly through Republican and Democrat administrations serves to prove that changing parties and personalities do nothing to stop the onslaught of imperialism, war, and destruction being waged across the world today and in earnest ever since 2001. Indeed, such changes only make adjustments to the appearance and presentation of a much larger Communo-Fascist system that is entrenching itself by the day, particularly in the Western world.

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