HRH Prince Saud al Faisal, Saudi Arabia's long serving Foreign Minister, talked to Defence Viewpoints in Riyadh today. He's calling for greater efforts from the international community to resolve the Syria crisis, but "nobody is asking for a military force to conquer all of Syria." Read more below.

He sees Russia as a key player which could be used as a pressure point on the Bashar al-Assad regime – but the Syrian issue " must not be a vehicle for competition among permanent members " of the U N Security Council. "Pressure has to come from all sides"

The Prince detects some slight change in the Russian position following a meeting with members of the Gulf Co-operation Council. He believes that they are now ready "to ask the Syrian regime not to use heavy weapons against civilians" and perhaps change their stance further "to add to pressure to Bashar to leave the country" and if a safe haven were required they might provide it.

He noted that President Putin had today arrived on a state visit to Turkey, who have been equally forthright. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu had said 48 hours previously : "The Syrian Government had lost its legitimacy after 20 months of conflict that started with peaceful protests against the regime and had evolved into a civil war. It has turned into an armed militia power that resorts to all kinds of brutal methods just to stay in power. The Syrian regime, which is a serious threat to the future of its own people and country, with each passing day increases the threat it poses to the well-being of our region, through its actions that target peace and security beyond its borders." Turkey had earlier called on the United Nations for an internationally protected buffer zone inside Syria which would protect civilians, but which would probably require military action to secure it, including a no-fly zone.

Bashar "can never be part of the solution" as he "continues to be believe he can solve the situation militarily" Syria "united and prosperous" will have to come to a solution with the international community, said Prince Saud. This might not happen "if we don't give them the weapons to defend themselves" Defensive weapons would .increase pressure on the Syrian Army if they were to suffer "some significant losses."

"Syrian themselves must make an approach to Alawites that what Assad is doing is a threat to them" They have to be assured "they will not be pursued or persecuted" when the regime falls.

Syria is not a new country, so nation building isn't necessary and reforms could be instituted quickly – electing a Parliament, choosing a Government, "giving all its citizens the same rights and obligations" without double standards. They have a variety of religious and ethnic groups who need to "return to the habit of living with each other" as they had done for so long before.

The Christians, who are working with the Syrian National Council, could "perhaps be the

arbiters of bringing Sunnis and Alawites together. They are the ones who could do it." He concluded by saying "excesses are not acceptable in the Middle East any more."

The firm stance by the two major powers in the region is not supported at the moment by the Arab League, whose current chairman, Lebanese Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour is on record as saying "there should not be any external military or any other kind of intervention" while advocating dialogue as the only solution to the crisis.

UK Defence Secretary Philip Hammond was also in Riyadh today for talks with the Saudi Arabia Defence Minsiter.