



By J.D. Gordon

In a video gone viral, 13-year old Syrian Kinan Masalmeh pleads with a television reporter outside the Budapest central train station, “The Syrians need help now. Just stop the war. We don’t want to stay in Europe. Just stop the war.”

He’s at least half right. If we really want to help Syrians, we must stop the war.

That would be working on the right problem — a far better solution than hand-wringing about how many Syrians to resettle of the 4 million who’ve already fled. President Obama has already promised to take in 10,000, and even though it’s a drop in the bucket, still gambles with our security. Congress should just say no.

Because blindly accepting migrants and refugees who can’t be reliably vetted for ties to terrorism is playing with fire. We’ve already reached epidemic levels of attacks and plots on both sides of the Atlantic, and we know jihadists can easily infiltrate migrant and refugee groups.

So what should we do?

First, correctly identify the root cause of today’s Middle East implosion. And that’s the Saudi vs. Iranian proxy war over who’ll dominate there and serve as Islam’s leader globally, ancient rival branches Sunni or Shia. They’re pumping in billions of dollars, weapons and most importantly, extremist ideology — all fueling chronic violence.

Second, a candid discussion about the Middle East and North Africa. Many countries like Syria, Iraq and Libya are de facto artificial states, cobbled together by European powers in the 20th century, after the Ottoman Empire fell apart. That forced rival ethnic and religious factions to live under one local rule where harsh oppression is the norm. Once the dictators are pushed aside, chaos reigns.

Third, we must understand Syria’s reality. The Al-Assad regime has ruled with an iron fist since the early 1970s. Even though Bashar and his fellow Alawites make up just 10 percent of the population, their branch of Shia Islam has brutally oppressed the 75 percent Sunni majority. Today the Islamic State, a Sunni terror network, has taken their revenge by capturing the major Sunni areas of both Syria and Iraq, an area the size of Indiana. Bloodthirsty as they may be, as fellow Sunnis, they’ve got more legitimacy than the



Shia regimes which rule Damascus and Baghdad.

Fourth, and most importantly, we must work with our European and Arab allies to compel Russia and Iran to either coax Al-Assad out of power, or accept a partitioned Syria. Three mini-states could allow the Alawites and other minorities like Christians and Druze to co-exist in their homelands of the Mediterranean and along the Lebanon border; Kurds in the north along Turkey's border; and Sunnis throughout most of the rest, bordering Iraq and Jordan. In other words, the battle lines can basically remain frozen in place.

Ditto for Iraq. Unless there's a ground combat force willing and able to re-conquer the Sunni areas in the northern and western parts of the country, Baghdad's Shia-led government, considered the enemy by locals, doesn't have a prayer of ruling it again. And why should U.S. ground troops risk their lives to help when a decade of Shia oppression fueled the Islamic State's rise in the first place? Just placing Sunni areas back under Shia rule in Baghdad would be doing Iran's bidding.

Sure, this strategy leaves some tough decisions.

How to destroy the Islamic State? How to create an independent Kurdish region? How to convince Russia and Iran to do anything?

A mix of visionary leadership, military toughness, economic power and diplomatic resolve for starters.

If Sunni and Shia have autonomy in their respective regions and aren't being oppressed by the other, there would be less incentive for Saudis and Iranians to keep pouring gasoline on the fire.

Sunni powers like Egypt and Jordan could then get engaged to take out the Islamic State, both in Syria and Iraq, with boots on the ground and moderate ideas to stamp out extremism. A moderate Sunni state can replace the self-appointed "Caliphate," again freezing the battle lines in place.

And if the Turks finally get serious to solve the ills associated with 2 million Syrians who've flooded their country, they might relent on a Kurdish state — even if across their border.

As for Russia and Iran, they only understand strength. That's why they do whatever they want. They know that weak leaders from the White House to European capitals like Berlin, Paris and Stockholm are mostly just talk, especially good at lecturing others about refugees. And lousy at training Syrian opposition fighters or sending their own troops.



Want to help Syrians? End the war

So instead of the White House subjecting Americans to vulnerable masses from war torn regions like the Tsarnaev brothers from Chechnya who blew up the Boston Marathon, or Mohammed Abdulazeez from Kuwait who attacked our Marines in Chattanooga, they ought to start looking out for our safety first. Congress must demand it.

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