

To Withdraw Or Not To Withdraw

by Nonie Darwish



President Trump decided to withdraw US troops from Northern Syria and as usual with everything there is an outcry on all sides. Republicans are split and Democrats are finding yet another opportunity to criticize the President.

Senate Majority leader McConnell, Marco Rubio, Nikki Haley and Lindsey Graham are all vehemently against the pullout as '*a stain on America's honor.*' Much of the fear of withdrawal from Syria was mainly regarding the following:

- 1) Protecting the Kurdish troops in Northern Syria from possible annihilation at the hands of the Turkish military.
- 2) Since the Kurds helped us against ISIS we must stay in Syria to help Kurds.

- 3) The possibility that ISIS could return to Syria.
- 4) Russia could establish itself once again in Syria.
- 5) Syrian pro-Shiite tribes could allow Iranian or Hizbullah power in Syria.

All of the above are possibilities. But there are lessons from history that we need to remember. The British and to a lesser degree the French controlled the Middle East for over 70 years when the Mideast was more divided by tribal identity than a national state.

After WWII the British wanted to leave the Middle East and were faced with a much worse predicament than what America is facing today. The British understood that there was no way they could make every tribal, religious and national group, happy. Even Egypt, which was probably among the few established nation states in the region, still had some disputed territories on the Eastern borders with Saudi Arabia and what is now Israel.

One of the casualties of dividing the Mideast into functional nations, were the Kurds.

Now the Kurds, who identify themselves as an independent ethnic and national group, are divided and fall under the rule of other nations, some Sunni and some Shiites, in Northern Syria, Eastern Turkey, in Iran and in Iraq. The rivalry and bloodshed between Kurds, Arabs and Turks have gone on for hundreds of years. Not to mention the bloodshed between many other sects such as Shiites and Sunnis.

The reason the US went into Syria was never to save the Kurds, it was to destroy ISIS. The Kurds, many of whom are socialists, were helping the US in Syria against ISIS because ISIS was a Sunni Arab group hell bent on destroying the 'infidel' Kurds.

Historically and for decades, the Syria's Baath party relied on Russia. Again, US presence in Syria was never meant to

prevent the return of the Russian presence in Syria. As to Iran's influence in Syria, that is something that the Sunni World and Turkey should handle and not the US. Shiite and Sunni hot fronts exist in several areas of the Middle East and again America cannot dedicate its military to put off fire between these eternally hostile religious groups.

There is a good possibility that an Islamic group like ISIS, perhaps under a different name, might use Syrian territory for their operations. But isn't that what has always been happening in the Mideast whenever a weak government exists; in Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan etc. Jihad terror groups have always existed in the Middle East under many different names, from the Muslim Brotherhood to Al Qaeda etc.

President Trump is perceived by the Middle East as a powerful leader and that is a good leverage we could use on Turkey, Iran and violent Islamic groups who might venture to the power grab in Syria. The message should be clear to all these groups that America will not stand for any group that will bring down Syria during its fragile condition today after a brutal civil war.

The existence of America in Syria or any other Muslim nation cannot continue forever and sooner or later we must leave. But the longer we stay the more dependent these factions will be on American for their protection. The British were there for over seventy years and until today the World is still blaming them for leaving a messed up Mideast map with minorities who cannot survive with one another. The truth is that Middle East religious and ethnic factions have never learned to live peacefully with one another and it is time for them to start learning how to.

We cannot stay in Syria just because the Kurds need protection and if we stay for that reason, sooner or later the balance of power will shift and we will develop more and more dependency on American presence in Syria and the region.

America will never gain Arab appreciation, blessings or approval even if we remain on their land just for their own protection like we do in Europe and Japan. These are totally different cultures. When it comes to the Arab world we are damned if we do and damned if we don't. America is begged for help and protection when Arabs are under attacks by other Arab countries, like in the case of Kuwait against Iraq or Saudi Arabia against Iraq or Iran. But sooner or later the Islamic rejection of the infidels will win and US soldiers will never be looked upon as allies for their own safety but as occupiers and enemies of Allah. That was the reason Bin Laden wanted to terrorize America because American soldiers, in his mind, were occupying Saudi Arabia. If we remain in Syria sooner or later many of these fighting factions will hang up against the infidels.

President Trump is not the kind of president who would rather kick the can down the road for the next administration, but he is brave and wise to make the right decisions to pull our troops out of Syria. The reasons are many in favor of pulling out, but it is important to note that the tribal culture in the Arab World needs to be weaned of dependency and should be allowed to solve their differences on their own in a 21st Century world. The longer America stays in war ravaged Middle East nations, the harder it will be to withdraw US troops.

Just like the British, history tells us that it is America that will be blamed at the end for any solution, peaceful or not.

Nonie Darwish, author "Wholly Different; Why I chose Biblical Values Over Islamic Values."