A global security crisis of historic proportions is raging in the Middle East, and spreading by the day, as millions of refugees flee Syria and Iraq. The crisis is now affecting not just all of Syria’s immediate neighbors, straining their resources and exacerbating social and ethnic tensions; it now directly involves all of the current permanent members of the Security Council except China. It is time for all would-be permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – namely, Germany, India, Japan, Brazil, and Egypt – to step up.

The desire for a political settlement that could end the Syrian civil war is palpable; but just what that settlement would look like remains open to debate – or to further conflict. Indeed, Russia and the United States are circling each other like boxers before the contest actually begins, supporting different factions and trying to ensure that their allies in the multi-sided conflict are advancing, or at least holding ground.

The need for broad cooperation – and the support of the entire UN Security Council – is apparent. That is why US Secretary of State John Kerry is talking to the Russians, the Saudis, and the Turks to build support for a new round of international talks. And the UN and Arab League’s special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has created a set of working groups, chaired by Europeans, to “create a framework for concrete talks between Syria’s government and opposition.”

In enabling a peace deal, a coalition of countries that are not yet directly involved in the crisis could be very helpful. Such a coalition – involving, say, Germany, India, Japan, Brazil, and Egypt – could increase the pressure on President Bashar al-Assad to negotiate by convincing Russian President Vladimir Putin that the world is watching his deal-making efforts closely and that his prestige is on the line.

Moreover, coalition members could convince other relevant regional players to push for a lasting peace. Germany, for example, already recognizes that the only long-term solution to Europe’s refugee influx lies in eliminating the need to flee, and has begun to make some moves. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier traveled to Turkey in September to help broker a deal on keeping refugees in Turkey, in exchange for restarting talks on Turkish accession to the European Union. A leading German foreign policy expert, Volker Perthes, is chairing one of de Mistura’s working groups.

The other countries have yet to take action. But they, too, have plenty of motivation – and plenty to offer.

India – as well as Pakistan – has a great deal to gain from strengthening Southwest Asian trade, energy, and investment ties. Since the signing of the Iran nuclear deal, India has been contemplating renewing the plan for an Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, with the participation of
China and Russia. But that will be impossible without a settlement in Syria and a decision by Iran to stop supporting Hezbollah.

India has a strong relationship with Iran, underpinned by long-standing cultural, social, political, and economic ties, with India now funding an overhaul of the Iranian port of Chabahar, which will give it direct access to Afghanistan. This places India in a strong position to push Iran to put pressure on Assad. Likewise, India can leverage its relationship with Russia – it remains a major importer of Russian arms – to help drive progress.

Japan’s potential contribution also involves Iran, with which Japan has lately been pursuing a closer relationship – not least because Japan needs Iranian oil and gas. Earlier this month in Tehran, the Japanese and Iranian foreign ministers agreed to begin negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty. Japan also wants to speed up implementation of the Iran nuclear deal, so that it can take advantage of the business opportunities that will result when economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic are lifted.

But if Iran is truly to rejoin the international community, it must play a constructive role in its region. Japan, which now aspires to enhance its own role on the world stage, must not shy away from making that clear. A bonus here is that Japanese and Indian interest in the Syrian peace process could spur China to play an active role in reaching, rather than blocking, a solution. Brazil, despite confronting plenty of domestic problems right now, is also in a position to help. Not only does it have substantial ties with Russia; it is also linked to Turkey, exemplified by the two countries’ 2010 effort to broker a deal with Iran over its nuclear program.

Moreover, in 2011, Brazil put forward a concept paper at the UN outlining how countries seeking to implement the “responsibility to protect” doctrine should behave. With the Syrian government – through its murder of tens of thousands of civilians with barrel bombs and poison gas – having more than fulfilled the criteria for triggering the international community’s obligation to intervene, Brazil could suggest what an intervention that reflected the principle of “responsibility while protecting” might look like.

Finally, Egypt – a perennial candidate for a permanent or rotating African seat in a reformed Security Council – has important relationships throughout the region, particularly with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries that are directly supporting some Syrian opposition groups. The government of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who has emphasized the need for a comprehensive political settlement, is tacitly supporting Assad, but is also deeply concerned about the Islamic State. Egyptian diplomats are thus excellent candidates to exert pressure for compromise.

Many of these countries’ governments might say that the Syrian conflict is too far away to affect them directly. But global leadership does not simply mean enjoying the prestige that accompanies presumed power. The UN Charter requires countries to use their power to identify “any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression,” and to decide which measures must be taken “to maintain or restore international peace and security.” The Syrian crisis is a major “threat to the peace,” and the world must address it together.