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How a bomb and a quake shifted Arab sentiments

Two interesting incidents occurred within less than half a day of each other. An explosion, which killed three people, in an American city and a terrifying earthquake that struck Iran and shook the entire Gulf region.

We all know that for the past 11 years, since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US has been living in a constant state of apprehension and alert. It was able to protect itself on the security level throughout this period.

As for Iran, it kept enhancing its nuclear capability despite warnings of such a program's political, military and environmental threats against the region.

People's changing vision

If terrorism and the Iranian nuclear program are nothing new, then what is?

What is new is people's vision and their automatic reaction to both incidents. When the September 11 attacks happened, the Islamic and Arab public opinion was more inclined towards adopting an apologetic approach. There were some who justified the attacks and others who defended these crimes.

Iran and its nuclear program were admired and accepted by a huge segment of Arabs, including those in the Gulf. But as the years passed by, and as incidents occurred, the Arab narrative changes completely. Fear and anger took over people in the Arab world following news of the Boston explosion.

The majority of Arabs hate terrorist groups and hate to be linked to them after some enthusiastically defended them in the past. The general public's conception of these groups has changed regardless of whether these groups are responsible for the Boston attack or not. Additionally, a while before the Boston incident, most Syrian religious institutions, as well as Syrian Islamic figures, rushed to condemn Al-Qaeda's announcement that it is linked to the Al-Nusra Front.

Who expected such frank, automatic, condemning stances 10 years ago? Back then, only few of us condemned Al-Qaeda and its crimes. Fear of public opinion, which was brainwashed by extremist groups, made it hard to find someone who dared express his rejection of Al-Qaeda back then. Today, however, the majority frankly expresses that it is against the armed groups whose policies and intellect are suspicious. This explains why jihadi extremist groups in Syria, like the Al-Nusra Front, instructed their fighters not appear in the media and not reveal their nationalities. These groups are aware that extremism is a detestable and a rejected characteristic that may turn the public opinion against them.

As for Iran...

As for Iran and its nuclear program, Arabs regarded the country with admiration and appreciation. But that was in the past. Today, however, Iran is the most detestable country for Arabs because the truth has been revealed.

Iran is a country seeking to dominate the Arab world by using Islam and the Palestinian cause to infiltrate and control. Iran's nuclear program has become a source of anger, especially for people in its neighboring Arab Gulf. After the earthquake struck Iran, tens of thousands of residents in the Gulf were evacuated to the streets due to powerful tremors felt across the region. But Gulf residents' fear was not of the earthquake itself but of the Bushehr nuclear plant and its potential to fall prey to the earthquake. Fallout from Bushehr and other Iranian facilities could prove catastrophic. There is real fear of Iran's nuclear program, the main aim of which many believe is military nuclear supremacy that targets the Gulf. Many believe this desired nuclear supremacy does not target Israel and definitely does not aim to provide electricity to Iran as the regime alleges.

What a strange coincidence! An explosion in Boston followed by an earthquake in Iran. Both incidents revealed authentic emotions and a new political vision across the Arab diaspora.

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