

Monday, 8 April 2013

Why terrorism is a double-edged sword



Yesterday, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad spoke of neighboring countries, including Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, which support terrorists who enter his country. He decreased the gravity of the accusation against the "brotherly" country, Lebanon, due to its domestic divisions. He did not speak of his people who revolted against an authority that ruled for forty years since the era of his father and that dominated all the country's resources along with a limited number of relatives and men. He did not speak of the reasons that pushed the Syrians towards revolting against the rule of the intelligence. He spoke of foreign factors as if the Syrian people support him. He spoke of foreign parties fighting his army in cities, towns, neighborhoods and alleys. His speech was far from reality as if the 70,000 or the 100,000 who died until today are foreigners and strangers to Syria.

Working with Assad or against him?

He did not speak of the Islamists fighting against his regime and how an organized group under his authority trained and armed these Islamists to send them to Lebanon at some point or to Iraq at another. He did not speak of how these Islamists turned against him after they became powerful and well-trained and how they returned to fight him. He thought that by using these Islamists he will defeat America in Iraq and that he will force the U.S. administration to negotiate with him. His plan backfired. He and the very same intelligence apparatus of his are thus incapable of controlling the situation.

I do not aim to gloat to anyone by this introduction. And we, in Lebanon, prefer not to interfere in Syrian affairs. We support the Syrian people's right to decide their fate and live in democracy that has been absent for them for over 40 years. But we want the Lebanese to take what happened into consideration. A Lebanese group empowered themselves with the Syrians during the war and after it. Many cheered president Assad's decision in January 2011 to topple premier Saad Hariri at a critical time as he was about to enter the White House. Assad defied the international community to once again hold control of the Lebanese situation. He got what he wanted for a while. Then his efforts all went towards controlling the basis of his ruling that has been staggering for two years. And the fig leaves fell in all directions. Lebanon today makes a step again towards restoring balance after the Syrian "fall." Damascus' allies feel that their power and influence is falling back. The Shiite party fears sectarian strife that destroys the power it built a long time ago. So it named Tammam Salam as premier-designate to form the new cabinet. The first phase succeeded. There are now the next phases which are more difficult and more complicated especially that the region is still going through dramatic and complicated changes which repercussions are more likely to increase. Terrorism in its warlike and political forms is still knocking the doors. Its effect is the same for those who work through it or tamper with it. It benefits them one day and harms them in many other days. We can see this around us. So will the Lebanese take this into consideration and make use of the opportunity of agreeing over the premier-designate and take Lebanon towards safety defying all storms and crises?

This article was first published in Lebanon daily Annahar on April 8, 2013.

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