

Tripoli, Lebanon, Under the Microscope: What Lies Behind the Opening of Qlayaat Airport?

(Translated)

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In recent years, the city of Tripoli, Lebanon has witnessed remarkable transformations in media discourse and political and economic decisions concerning it. After years of deliberate marginalization and the unjust labeling of the city as “Lebanon’s Kandahar” and a stronghold of extremism and terrorism, the image has suddenly shifted to that of “the bride of the revolution” and a city of coexistence and peace.

This transformation didn’t stop there. Major initiatives and projects have followed in quick succession, beginning with the announcement of the operation of Qlayaat Airport in neighboring Akkar starting next September, continuing with projects to develop the Port of Tripoli, and culminating in the announcement of a project to revive its international railway. Faced with this striking scene, a fundamental question arises: Are we witnessing a belated humanitarian awakening from the ruling regime in Lebanon, or does the truth lie in integrating Tripoli into a geopolitical and investment map that extends far beyond its geographical boundaries?

Economic Recovery: A Foreign Agenda, Not a Local Awakening

It is politically naive to believe that these developments are the product of an independent Lebanese will aimed at redressing the historical injustice inflicted upon northern Lebanon, specifically Tripoli and its surrounding geographical and demographic areas. At a time when Lebanon is suffering devastation and nearly a million people have been displaced from their homes, the initiation of such massive infrastructure projects seems perplexing. In reality, what is happening is the fruit of an American political decision that places Tripoli at the heart of an investment and economic map encompassing the entire region of Ash-Sham (the Levant). This falls within what was previously termed the “New Levant” project, extending from Egypt through Ash-Sham to Iraq, and closely linked to regional and international investments and energy supply projects from the Gulf states to Europe.

The early and prominent presence of the American ambassador at the inauguration ceremony of Qlayaat Airport was noteworthy, as he declared that these steps put Lebanon on the path to recovery. These projects, of course, coincide with the accelerated efforts to end the conflict in the region and integrate the Jewish entity into this new economic map through the “Abraham Accords.”

Infrastructure Projects: An Eye on Syria’s Reconstruction

The choice of Tripoli as a hub for these projects is not arbitrary. Its deep waters make it one of the most important ports in the Eastern Mediterranean, capable of accommodating huge container ships that cannot dock at any other port. This port, along with the nearby Qlayaat Airport, the oil refinery connected to oil pipelines from Kirkuk, Iraq, and the city’s large international exhibition center, all combine, given their proximity to Syria, to form an ideal platform for the anticipated reconstruction of Syria, particularly the coastal regions, Homs, and the Ghab Plain. Furthermore, the waters off the northern coast of Lebanon hold promising gas reserves, attracting the attention of oil companies. This also explains the growing talk of a massive railway planned to run from Berlin in Central Europe to Tripoli in Lebanon, traversing Turkish and Syrian territory. This integrated infrastructure aims to facilitate the flow of foreign investments and companies, especially American ones, to seize the enormous wealth represented by the reconstruction process, expected to be financed by Gulf and local oil revenues. One of the traditional colonialist methods is the “destroy and rebuild” policy, whereby the country and its infrastructure are destroyed, allowing powerful financial corporations to then reap enormous profits through reconstruction.

Perhaps what hastened the decision to launch the Qlayaat Airport in Tripoli was the plan to isolate the areas controlled by the Iranian-backed Hezb, where the only functioning airport in Lebanon is located, until the Hezb of Iran submits to the American model for Lebanon.

Soft War: Erasing Islamic Identity

To create a suitable environment for these Western investments and for businessmen arriving from the West to Tripoli and its surrounding areas, it was necessary to alter its cultural and religious character, a city long known for its piety and deep engagement with the issues of the Islamic Ummah. Therefore, in recent years, we have observed concerted efforts to penetrate the social fabric of the city.

One of the most prominent of these steps was the announcement in Tripoli in 2023 of a version of the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” which was signed in the UAE in 2019 by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and the Pope of the Vatican. It was dubbed the “Declaration of Human Fraternity of Tripoli,” sponsored by dubious European organizations in collaboration with equally dubious local ones. This declaration aims to strip the city of its Islamic identity and replace it with a secular, Western “humanism.” The ceremony for this declaration featured an orchestra that blended the call to prayer with church services. Most alarmingly, it proclaimed a “new hero” to replace Salahudin, the Ayyubid ruler of Egypt, Al-Kamil, who returned Al-Quds to the Crusaders after Salahudin had liberated it.

In addition, attempts to infiltrate Tripoli society through international organizations, such as UN Women, have intensified. UN Women signed a cooperation agreement with the Tripoli municipality to promote the ideologies of feminism and genderism, but this agreement was thwarted by the aware, vigilant observers of Tripoli, Alhamdulillah.

It now appears clear that the US administration is adopting a new strategy in its dealings with Muslims in the Eastern Mediterranean. Having realized that direct warfare has only fueled resistance, it is now attempting to distract the region with economic recovery, investments, and financial prosperity. The plan is based on keeping Muslim youth occupied with job opportunities to create an environment where material comfort leads them to turn away from Jihad, Islamic political activism, and the willingness to sacrifice. Naturally, we are not displeased that young men and women are gaining employment opportunities that raise their standard of living and help them cope with life’s burdens. However, the danger lies in the intoxication and illusion that these projects are a lifeline, forgetting that the Western capitalist machinery is only revitalizing the region to a limited and temporary extent to serve its own interests, not to build a sustainable, independent economy that would fortify the country economically and politically.

In Conclusion: Awareness Is the First Line of Defense

Amidst these complex plots being hatched for the region as a whole, Muslims face a historic responsibility. Geopolitical shifts, attempts at division, and the use of economic development as a tool for political subjugation all demand a high level of awareness. The Shariah obligation today is to expose the conspiracies aimed at erasing identity that are infiltrating neighborhoods, alleyways, schools, and institutions; to confront all attempts at cultural penetration and the corruption of innate human nature; and to raise awareness about the nature of the Islamic economic system and the independent economic policy that fortifies the Ummah economically, politically, and culturally. The fundamental solution to our crises does not lie in waiting for crumbs of conditional foreign investment, but instead in the Ummah regaining its independent decision-making power, expelling the influence of the colonialist, and resuming the Islamic way of life that guarantees us dignity and a truly independent economy.

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