

Commentary

IN THE FACE OF WAR, THE UAE STANDS FOR CONTINUITY

HH Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

As Emirati children growing up in Dubai, it was natural for us to attend school alongside classmates of more than a hundred different nationalities. We had friends who looked different, heard English spoken in many accents, and shared meals from around the world. Nobody stood out as ‘different’, and we did not question where anyone came from. We simply shared a classroom, a playground, and the innocence of childhood. The attacks we have witnessed over the past two weeks stand in sharp contrast to this model of tolerance and coexistence.

Thinking back, I now realise how extraordinary that environment truly was, particularly in a world today that often feels rife with fear and polarisation. What felt ordinary to us was, in fact, something carefully nurtured. I recall listening to members of my parents’ generation speaking fluent Urdu, Hindi, and Persian, shifting seamlessly between languages depending on who they were speaking to. This was never presented as something extraordinary; it was courtesy, a sign of acceptance, and a willingness to meet others where they were.

Openness and tolerance have been core values of our collective society as Emiratis. These values represented key pillars of our communities, for whom prosperity depended on connection, and that connection required respect for others. You see, the life of our forefathers in this arid desert was never easy. Dubai’s journey, from a small village by the Creek, where people made their living through fishing, trade, and pearl diving, to a metropolitan crossroad of commerce and culture, has taught its people the meaning of hope, loss, and the need to rebuild from the ground up. We do not take for granted how far we have come, because we understand what it took, and we know what it will continue to take to safeguard our way of life and advance further. Because of our history, we have a knack for thriving in challenges; adversity does not break us, it strengthens us.

Over the past two weeks, the Arab Gulf countries and beyond have come under a barrage of reckless and blatantly hostile attacks from Iranian missiles and armed drones. The UAE has borne the brunt of these strikes and confronted them with a precision defence system that has intercepted over 95% of incoming threats. In doing so, the country demonstrated that, while it is known to have one of the most effective governance models, dynamic business ecosystems, and unique frameworks for flourishing coexistence, it also possesses one of the most advanced air defence and emergency response capabilities in the world.

At the core of our nation’s vision is a simple yet clear priority: to ensure the highest possible quality of life for the people of the UAE. That means guaranteeing safety and security, access to opportunities, quality education and healthcare and, above all, human dignity. For us, leadership is personal. It is built on trust and a deep sense of duty. The country’s leaders are driven by a powerful sense of responsibility for the

nation and its population's well-being and prosperity. In return, they are met with respect, trust, and great esteem by their people.

This model has deep roots. Our leaders were raised among their communities, observing their fathers and grandfathers host majlises that welcomed people from all walks of life to discuss matters of state, conduct trade, resolve conflict, and celebrate milestones. The majlis is still an integral part of our governance and community. It reflects our social fabric and the solid connection between our leaders and their people.

It is now clear that one of the core reasons the UAE is receiving the majority of Iran's egregious attacks is because it presents the world with a model of harmony that stands in stark contrast to the realities of our attackers and their ideologies, which thrive on the region's chaos. Our country has set a shining example of tolerance, where people of nearly 200 nationalities prosper in an environment of mutual respect and with a deep commitment to human dignity. Here, we believe that individual success strengthens the collective, and when one nation in our region thrives, it creates momentum and possibility for its neighbours as well.

What has struck me most of all since this war began is the resilience of the Emirati people, and the solidarity of the UAE's residents. I have witnessed collective endurance and a genuine rallying around our leadership in a beautiful expression of belonging. Such sentiments were conveyed by people who have found safety, security, and space to build meaningful lives in this country.

A few days ago, His Highness President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan said in an interview with absolute conviction that our country will emerge stronger from this challenge. His words reflected something deeply rooted in our national character. We have always chosen wisdom over impulse, and dialogue over escalation. We believe that prioritising the safety of our people and the stability of our country is not a concession but a responsibility. To remain composed in the face of provocation and to persist with resilience is strength in its truest form.

In the UAE and in Dubai, we do not claim perfection; we are continually learning. What defines us is our commitment and daily effort to refine our systems, strengthen our institutions, and make decisions that serve the people who place their trust in us. We will come out of this challenge stronger and move forward with confidence, continuing to develop and strengthen what we have created. We will unite and build a better future, despite the forces that seek to divide and destroy our present.

About the Author



Her Highness Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum is Chairperson of Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, Member of the Dubai Executive Council, and Member of the Dubai Council. She plays a pivotal role in advancing Dubai's cultural vision and strengthening the emirate's position as a global cultural centre, an incubator of creativity, and a thriving hub for talent.

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