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The Hejaz Railway: Using Religion Commercially to Serve the Goals of the Ottoman Agenda

Perhaps the most important characteristic of political Islam currents is their exploitation of the Islamic religion and the endeavor to use it to achieve political and mundane goals. These groups have worked to weaken the feelings of Muslims in the mobilization operations that appear to be religious, but the truth is that they serve political and military purposes. This fact finds justification in the behavioral structure of the masses and the common people, who cannot be moved by resorting to rational and logical discourse to justify political choices. This is due to the fact that the masses, as sociologist Gustave Le Bon decided, cannot be moved and influenced except by violent emotions and slogans, which is why these organizations depend on religious slogans in their framing and directing processes.

In this context, the countries' strategic decisions were linked to two fixed things, "The objectivity of strategy and self-implementation". This is what prompted the work to persuade the popular base of the major choices of states by moving away from engaging in technical matters and focusing on emotional axioms to create consensus around the political decision. Even if this matter is acceptable at some level, it contradicts the conditions of the religious text, which prohibits the exploitation of the constants of the text to serve worldly goals, especially if the goal is purely "political" and has no relation to the service of the Islamic religion in its purity and impartiality.

If we relate this matter to the research point related to the Hejaz railway project launched by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II in the year 1900 AD, the objective writings that dealt with this project from a methodological angle and historical control agreed that the political and military motives were decisive in launching this project. They have resorted to the Islamic religion to exploit it to mobilize Muslims around the world to contribute financially to the completion of this project, which exceeds the financial value of eight million lira.

The change made by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in the expansion strategy from the West towards the Islamic Arab countries is consistent with the choices of the new Ottomans, who were pushed by their failure to join the European Union. All this is to divert the compass towards the south to extend their control over the Arab countries by reviving the old sayings of Abdul Hamid associated with the mobilization around the concept of reviving the Islamic caliphate that was used to convince the ordinary Arabs of the need to submit again to Ottoman rule, given that Erdogan is the best person to represent the Muslim caliph.

Historically, although the center of the Sultanate moved between Istanbul and Constantinople, they did not form or reflect any religious depth or Islamic symbolism. The legitimacy of the "caliphate" was limited to its subjection to the countries of the Two Holy Mosques and Jerusalem. This made Sultan Abdul Hamid II aware that the independence of these areas from the rule of Astana means the end of Ottoman rule. This made him want to impose military control over the Arab regions, especially the Hijaz region.

At the level of the Hejaz railway project, it is proven that the huge expenses came mainly from the money of Muslims who voluntarily and sometimes forcibly, contributed to financing this huge project. This is what Suleyman Kocabas and Abdullah Ahmed Ibrahim confirm in the book "Sultan Abdul Hamid II: His Character and his Politics," where they mention the following: "Izzat Pasha was the best and trustworthy advisor to the Sultan on the implementation of this project. Izzat Pasha was a pioneer in this regard, as the Sultan admired him for the success that he had achieved in a short period of time to raise the necessary funds to implement this way for the benefit of the Islamic world". This recognition that Muslims bear the costs of constructing the Hejaz Railway is confirmed by all Turkish writings. Metin Hulagu confirmed the same thing in his book, "The Hejaz Railway: The Gigantic Project of Sultan Abdul Hamid II".