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The history of the Kurds: between the hammer of occupation and the weakness anvil of the revolutionary arrangement

The study of the Kurdish issue constitutes a strong historical material through which we reveal the suffering of this people in the face of regional colonial powers, in light of the Kurds' misfortune which made them victims to the dirty conflict between the Ottomans on the one hand, and the Safavids on the other hand. This is what made them pay the geography tax and the arrogance of the colonial powers in the region. Despite the Kurds' attempts to defend their right to human existence after they lost their political entity, a group of subjective and objective factors weakened their position and made them the victims of the bloodiest terrorist entities, so that the Kurds' suffering continued, along with their social and cultural demands, as one of the colonies of the twenty-first century.

The definition of history according to Ibn Khaldun, in its hidden dimension, is an attempt "to scrutinize and justify beings, and to know how the facts are, and the reasons for their occurrence, so that history is ancient, deep, and worthy of being a science that informs us about the news and morals of past nations". Considering this definition, the study of the history of the Kurds must go beyond the always apparent dimension (as Ibn Khaldun mentioned) to try to understand the details that prevented this people from achieving the political goals set by some of those who led the revolutions against the Ottoman domination. As a result, historical lessons are absorbed and acted upon, and the collective material consciousness is multiplied to achieve the legitimate demands for which the Kurds have fought for centuries.

In this context, the objective factors that contributed to perpetuating the Kurdish "crisis" were added to the subjective factors that prevented the establishment of a Kurdish movement under which all clans and tribes that represent a demographic and ethnic extension of the Kurds would unite. This fact is confirmed by the internal struggles between many Kurdish groupings, some of which refused to unite under the banner of one leadership that could form the revolutionary vanguard that leads the Kurdish people towards liberation from the shackles of Safavid and Ottoman colonialism alike.

Despite these internal and external obstacles, the revolutionary activity of the Kurds has not abated since the Ottomans entered their lands as a strange, landless race that succeeded in subjugating a self-existing political entity, comprising of a people steeped in history, on a land and a sky that speak pure Kurdish. This Turkish incursion was helped by the "naivety" of some Kurdish elements that, since the eleventh century, made themselves at the disposal of the Seljuk Turks and after them the Ottomans. This caused the Kurds to be exploited in the expansionist policies of the Turks, especially during the Ottoman era.

It seems that the Kurds, at one time, were compelled to ally with the Ottoman Porte, especially during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I. This was in order to prevent the danger of the Sunni and Shiite Turkmens who controlled the entire Kurdish lands to the point that their leader, Hassan Al-Taweel, saw in himself Tamerlane, who would unite all the lands under his leadership and establish a Turkmen political entity with Diyarbakir as its capital.

Based on this situation, the Ottomans will exploit the Kurds to achieve a set of military gains, as they were the cornerstone of the Ottoman army, in addition to their role in putting down the internal revolutions carried out by some other ethnic groups. This complex reality, which may constitute - for some - a point of severe criticism against the Kurds, but the constraints of the stage may not have left them much room for maneuver given that the Ottomans, the Safavids and the rest of the important ethnic groups (Turkmen) wanted to find a foothold for them at the expense of the Kurdish presence. Hence, if they had a set of alternatives and choices, they would resort to them to realize the great Kurdish dream in certain historical periods in the light of a complex and hostile internal and external strategic environment.

The review of the history of the Ottoman-Kurdish confrontations refers to a set of conclusions, perhaps the most important of which is that the "overall" of the Kurdish movements was a reaction to the Ottoman colonial policies. We can exclude from this some initiatives (the Bedirkhan revolution), which had a self-starting and tried to overcome the dangers of the previous revolutions, which lacked revolutionary maturity, self-coordination and ethnic control, and then gave the opportunity for an experienced colonial power to put an end to these uprisings and eliminate the revolutionary ambitions of the Kurds.

In the face of these historical facts, we find ourselves intersecting with what the researcher Hussein Jammo said in his article "The Ottomans and the Kurds... A Confused Alliance and a Renewed Bloody Legacy". He describes the Ottoman Kurdish alliance by saying: "In 1514 AD, Galdiran was an opportunity to establish a new Turkish-Kurdish relationship that transcends the resounding blow that the Kurds received at the hands of the Seljuks and those who followed them. On the other hand, this was an opportunity for the Ottomans to get rid of the headache caused by the nomadic Turkmen tribes, who rejected the principle of the imperial state itself. With this, Selim I strengthened his power with the Kurds against the Safavids, and strengthened them against the Turkmen, who were among the undesirable subjects of the Ottoman Empire at that time, for their refusal to become subjects in the prevailing concept.

The Ottoman malice would push the invaders to turn against their allies once the ambitions of the Turkmen were extinguished and the Safavid enemy was weakened. They attempted to perpetuate the reality of the political subordination of the Kurds by emphasizing the Ottoman sovereignty over the Kurdish lands, and turning the Kurds into a military reservoir to be resorted to in the expansionist campaigns of the Ottomans, or to quell any rebellion within any area under the rule of the Turks. This is in addition to making them a tax reservoir that supplies the Ottoman treasury with a mass of money that has never been spent on development projects for the benefit of the Kurds. In the face of their rejection of this class reality, the Ottoman Porte resorted to the method of wrecking and deception and trying to break up the unity of the Kurds. In the event of failure of these attempts, they would resort to the hard-coarse methods to quell the Kurdish revolutions.

The historian Ahmed Taj Al-Din describes some of these Ottoman conspiracies and intrigues in his book "The Kurds: History of a People... and a Homeland Issue" by saying: "From that day on, all his focus (meaning Prince Bedirkhan) was focused on sparing the emirate the intrigues of the Ottoman Porte and attempts to wreak havoc between the Kurdish clans in order to kill each other and eliminate the weak, then they bring to the strong one who is stronger than him in order to destroy him as well". It seems that this malicious method was a lethal weapon in extinguishing most of the revolutionary ambitions of the Kurds.

Perhaps the most important revolution was the one of Bedirkhan Pasha, who was the closest and most capable of defeating the Ottomans and establishing a large Kurdish state, were it not for the treachery led by Izz Al-Din Bashir, the commander of the Kurdish army. Izz Al-Din Bashir joined the Turks during the battle and occupied the Emirate of Prince Ali Bedirkhan, which led the latter to divide his army and return to preserve the political leverage of the Kurds. This affected the continuation of the battles, ending the confrontations with the defeat of the armies of Bedirkhan and the elimination of the great hopes that made the Kurds had attached to this revolution.

Despite the failure of all the revolutions carried out by the Kurds to free themselves from the misery, poverty and backwardness caused by the Ottoman occupation, the revolutionary accumulation contributed to creating a collective material awareness about the need to change the strategy of the conflict. This is done by boycotting traditional revolutionary methods, moving away from the logic of tribal centralization, and working to prepare revolutionary cadres capable of leading revolutionary action and directing the bases according to tactics based on accurate readings of the strategic environment and the changing balance of power in the region.

In general, it can be said that the Kurds at the present time have become more able to defend their historical demands through their extensive presence outside the sphere of Turkish control and their spread in more than one country (especially Europe). This is what made their war on the "back lines" characterized by ferocity and intensity, especially in light of the international awareness of the Kurdish issue, as well as the Kurds' involvement in the international strategy to eliminate terrorism and their efficiency in confronting terrorist organizations. It seems that the way things are managed in Iraqi Kurdistan and the stability that the Kurdish regions enjoy there alone, has led a group of politicians to be convinced that betting on the Kurdish race may be a way out to eliminate the phenomenon of insecurity in the region. This is on the grounds that dealing with the Kurds in Syria and Iraq has proven that they are a people imbued with the logic of the modern state, and that the establishment of a Kurdish state will contribute to achieving strategic balance in the region away from the post-Cold War calculations, which proved to be failed and transgressive choices.