

Erdogan's Turkey... Covetous with Guns Nozzle!



Justice and Development Party (AKP), under Erdogan's leadership today, only changes masks and discourses, in terms of its policy's staleness towards Arab countries. This time it is certainly interested as a party and behind it the Turkish government, or vice versa, in Syria from many angles, all serve the Turkish strategy: Ottoman politics and this is normal according to the same power logic. The logic of justice, democracy and other concepts are only to invest inside and outside Turkey. This necessitates that we study the Turkish expansion today inside Syria, through the relationship between the Islamic ideology held by the MB (the neo-Ottomans) and the Turanian military after Erdogan recently managed to de-secular it and re-contain it by re-engineering it in line with Erdogan's own vision.

This paper discusses the Turkish strategy towards Syria, through the following aspects

- Othmanism in the AKP's politics
- Turkish investment in others' mistakes!
- Suleiman Shah's tomb is the Turkish Juha's nail in Syria
- Operation Shah Euphrates
- Erdogan's recent threats of war on Syria
- Conclusion

Othmanism in the AKP's politics

Othmanism[1], which AKP has fully adopted and announced in its speeches in an updated form, comes from a revision made by the party to Turkey's contemporary history and approaches related to the "Turanian" Turkish identity in a world where questions of nationalities are rising, and dangers of national wars are heightened by the escalating savagery of imperialism and its transformation into transnational imperialism.

Until 2014, Turkey had several reasons to move south and occupy areas adjacent to its international borders with Syria. Those borders changed several times between 1918 and 1939, during which Turkey seized an area estimat-

ed at about 20% of the new Syrian state's area. ([2]) It was approved by the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Sevres (1923) signed between the new state of Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal and the victorious countries in the First World War.

In practice, this means that Turkish policies have not changed according to the Geo-strategic perspective, despite Turkey losing its multinational and one religion empire largely, and expansion is still the goal of every country that thinks it is strong. ([3])

AKP, under Erdogan's leadership today, only changes masks and discourses, in terms of its policy's staleness towards Arab countries. This time it is certainly interested as a party and behind it the Turkish government, or vice versa, in Syria from a number of angles, all serve the Turkish strategy: Ottoman politics and this is normal according to the same power logic. The logic of justice, democracy and other concepts are only to invest inside and outside Turkey. This necessitates that we study the Turkish expansion today inside Syria, through the relationship between the Islamic ideology held by the MB (the neo-Ottomans) and the Turanian military after Erdogan recently managed to de-secular it and re-contain it by re-engineering it in line with Erdogan's own vision.

Turkish investment in others' mistakes!

On October 9, 2014, Mevlut Cavusoglu, Turkish Foreign Minister, declared that his country "cannot lead a ground operation alone" in Syria against ISIS, and called on the US-led coalition against the organization to mobilize ground forces to fight it. Recently, he has threatened to implement the Adana Agreement on the pretext that the PKK poses a real threat to Turkish national security, and this is what makes the agreement enforceable by intrusion into the Syrian borders.

In general, this message to the international community meant that Turkey would lead a ground operation in Syria on its own. International ground intervention is not possible on the one hand, and on the other hand it is a call to support the Turkish intervention, and on the third hand it is a call for the

international coalition led by Washington to use the air force and artillery to facilitate the way for the Turkish forces.

Turkey is the biggest beneficiary of the Syrian crisis, at all economic, political and social levels. Most of the Syrians who sought refuge in Turkey were naturalized in the non-Sunni south, where the AKP has no electoral weight. A recent study says that in 2040, two-thirds of Syrian children born in Turkey and naturalized will be part of the AKP bloc. In practice, this means that Ankara knew to exploit the Syrian regime's mistakes in order to achieve its hegemony and its Ottoman project, as did Iran and Russia as well, as these powers struggle to inherit what is left of Syria, and are also wrestling among themselves for influence in the region.

It is not just the Syrian issue that Ankara is lurking on to realize its ambition. Turkey is also waiting for all the Arab and Middle Eastern policies' mistakes to invest in: Qatar's need for protection today, Sudan's need for money, Somalia's need for security stability, and Iraqi rule's contradictions that allow it to find Turkish positions in northern Syria, once under the guise of war against ISIS, once under the guise of war on terrorism, this means PKK, and sometimes under the guise of protecting Turkish national security.

Ultimately, this means that Turkey is determined to achieve its project in any way, and it is working towards this by developing a practical strategy that it will implement step by step, so that the mistakes of Arab, regional and international policies come, helping it to go further than it expected. This is what we notice in the failure of the European/Western intervention in Syria, which prompted the latter to abandon the overthrow of Assad and seek rapprochement with Moscow and Tehran, while we note today that it has returned to its old tone after the Western intervention revived its hopes.

Suleiman Shah's tomb is the Turkish Juha's nail in Syria

The circulating accounts, whose accuracy is uncertain, say that the founder Suleiman Shah was killed on the Euphrates River banks near Ashma village, north of Aleppo, and was buried on the banks of the river, and remained there unknown throughout the founding period of the new Ottoman Em-

pire.

Sultan Selim I was the first to pay attention to Suleiman Shah's Tomb in 1517, where he established a shrine called the Turkish shrine. Interest in it continued throughout the era of the Ottoman Empire, and on the role of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, it was renewed and expanded the surrounding area and it remained so until the Ottomans left Syria in 1918.

During the French occupation of Syria, the mausoleum became part of an agreement stipulating that the tomb of "Suleiman Shah" would remain under Turkish sovereignty and allow the Turkish flag to be raised over it, provided that it would be protected by some Turkish soldiers.

According to Article 9 of the Treaty of Ankara signed between Turkey and France in 1921, it was agreed that Suleiman Shah's tomb would be under Turkish sovereignty. Currently, this shrine is the only Turkish sovereign territory outside the state's borders, and Turkish soldiers watch the protection of the shrine. It was the custom to set up a Turkish military garrison at the site, and to change it once on the seventh day of every month, and a Syrian police station was built next to the site. ([4])

The Syrian authorities have not approached the shrine throughout its history. However, in 1973, after the Syrians began constructing the Euphrates Dam, the Syrian authorities requested that the shrine be moved, which would have been submerged in water as a result of the dam's lake level rising to more than thirty meters. Turkey responded with a decisive memorandum, blocking the flow of water from the Euphrates River to Syria by closing the cover of the Kiban Dam.

After a period of these political skirmishes, Turkey sent architectural experts and staff from the Water Works Directorate to the area, and they were asked to ascertain where the tomb could be moved. After a period of continuous skirmishes between the two governments that lasted for a long time, an agreement was signed. According to that agreement:

The mausoleum will be moved with all its annexes to a place near the village of Qara Cossack, 25 km from Turkey, with an area of 8,797 square me-

ters within Aleppo Governorate via Aleppo / Al-Hasakah.

A memorial shrine will be carved from alabaster on the dam's borders at the site nearest to the shrine's place.

A raft will be placed on the lake to determine the shrine's location today.

In 1973, the shrine and the police station were moved to the village of "Qara Cossack", which is east of the Euphrates River, 123 km from Aleppo and 92 km from Şanlıurfa.

In 1995, the discussions were restarted again, this time because the Syrian government started building the Tishreen Dam on the upper coordinates of the Euphrates River, which again required moving Suleiman Shah's tomb to an area other than the village of "Qara Cossack" or to Turkey. At the end of the talks between Turkey and Syria, it was decided to go to arbitration to protect the shrine from the negative effects of the dam reservoir.

In 2001, with the completion of the dam, Syria requested this time from Turkey to relocate the tomb in accordance with the previous agreement, but the Turkish government undertook initiatives to protect the shrine's site.

On January 23, 2003, the Main Protocol on the Suleiman Shah Mausoleum project was signed. In this context, the tomb was granted ten acres of land, the mausoleum was restored inside and out, the police station was re-established, and the mausoleum was reopened for visits again.

The problems of the shrine, which is the only Turkish land outside Turkish geography, are not over. In 2010, the Joint Committee of the Syrian/Turkish Regional Cooperation Program decided to develop signs indicating the location and maintenance of the road leading to the shrine as a tourist destination for Turkish visitors. During Turkish President Abdullah Gul's visit to Aleppo in 2010, an official Turkish delegation visited the shrine and decided to establish maintenance and restoration work. ([5])

In August 2012, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was prime minister, warned all parties to the conflict in Syria that any action against Suleiman Shah's tomb would be considered an attack on Turkish territory

and NATO.

According to the Turks and the Turkish media's claims, ISIS surrounded the mausoleum with the intention of detonating it.

This was preceded by skirmishes in March 2014 between ISIS and the Free Army militia, which ended with the Free Army's withdrawal from "Qara Cos-sack" and ISIS taking over the area, including the shrine without approaching it in the presence of 40 Turkish soldiers in it.

On the twentieth of the same month, through a video clip, ISIS threatened the Turks that it would demolish the shrine unless it was moved within 3 days, and stipulated that the Turkish flag be lowered. On March 24, Erdogan said in response to a question about the seriousness of the ISIS threat, "If such a mistake occurs, it will be dealt with as it should. These lands are our lands, and whoever attacks them attacks us."

Meanwhile, Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkish Foreign Minister, declared that Suleiman Shah's shrine is Turkish land under international law and that it is a dangerous issue, and any attack on it will be answered in all ways. On March 26, 2014, the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Forces announced in a written statement that there are no Turkish units in Syria except those in the Suleiman Shah shrine. On the 28th of the month, Ismet Yilmaz, Minister of Defense of Turkey, said that the place was reinforced with special forces, and that "all necessary measures have been taken, and that the Turkish armed forces are on full alert."

Operation Shah Euphrates

On February 22, 2015, the Turkish forces, consisting of a military convoy of 573 soldiers, twenty armored brigades with fifty M-60 Patton guns and F-16 aircraft, penetrated into Syrian territory to the site of the Suleiman Shah shrine with the aim of returning 38 Turkish soldiers to Turkey .

The tomb and the station were blown up after the coffin and other intangible items were exhumed. Then, the Turkish soldiers returned to Turkey via Şanlıurfa. One soldier was killed in a vehicle accident during the operation,

according to Reuters on February 22, 2015.

The operation did not provoke any Syrian reactions, and the Syrian media mentioned it as a matter of the Turkish military aggression on its lands without mentioning the reasons for the action itself. The Turks who carried the coffin celebrated. The Turkish government has indicated that the relocation of the shrine is only temporary, to prevent its destruction, and that this move will not affect its status and the agreements concluded with Syria regarding it.

Operation Shah Euphrates constituted the first announced operation of direct Turkish intervention in Syrian territory, a process that Turkey will not receive in this case any international blame – if any at all – because it is largely an internal Turkish affair, despite the presence of the tomb on Syrian soil.

Turkey cooperates with the opposition Free Army

Turkey changed its position on the influx of militants into Syrian territory after ISIS launched two attacks inside Turkish territory, killing more than 35 civilians, and publicly admitted them.

On July 27, 2015, Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkish Prime Minister, declared in a press conference that Turkish military operations against ISIS and the PKK rebels could lead to a “change of balance” in Syria and Iraq.

“The presence of Turkey, which is able to use force effectively, could change the balance in Syria, Iraq and the whole region, and the world should be aware of this,” he added. Davutoglu said in a press conference attended by editors and chief editors of Turkish media that his country will not send ground forces to Syria, according to the official Anadolu Agency.

Davutoglu justified the military operation against the jihadists with the suicide attack in Suruç a week ago, which the Turkish authorities attributed to the jihadist organization, and the killing of a Turkish soldier by jihadists. “We want to make sure that the organization is paying a heavy price for the killing of 32 people so that it will never do it again, and the killing of the soldier has accelerated our response,” he continued.

These statements denied Ankara's intention to enter Syria by land, but the reality confirmed the exact opposite. However, this contradiction has become common in Turkish policy and its declared statements. An official in the Turkish government announced that the military operations carried out by Turkey in Syria and Iraq do not target the Kurds of Syria, after Kurdish fighters and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that Turkish tanks bombed two villages controlled by Kurdish forces in northern Syria.

Reflecting on the issue of the Ottoman shrine through Turkey's recent intervention in Syria puts us before many questions, including: Why did Turkey keep the shrine inside Syrian territory for so long as it could have been transferred? Why has ISIS not attacked the shrine for so long? And when Turkey recently transferred it, why did it keep the shrine within the Syrian borders and not move it inside Turkey? Is it Turkish *juha's* nail in Syrian geography?

Answers to this type of question can only be found in the depths of the Turkish mind that is looking for expansion. The dreams of the empire have never left Turkey. Rather, we may find within every Turk a nostalgia for that empire that once managed to extend east and west.

This means that Turkey was well aware that one day the shrine would be useful, and that it could be used for intervention, this is what actually happened. In addition, the analysis of the events we talked about previously indicates that there is a relationship between Ankara and ISIS, because the latter, which blew up the ruins of Palmyra, and did a lot to Syria and its people during the recent years, complied with the Turkish president's threat not to approach the shrine!

We need to overlook reason a lot, in order to be convinced that ISIS was afraid of Erdogan's threat. Because ISIS relies on events that are able to attract attention within the framework of its strategy of intimidation, such as burning the Jordanian pilot, for example and that is why any action against the Turkish shrine would have attracted the kind of attention it favored.

As long as it did not do this, this means that there is a close relationship be-

tween the two parties, which means that Ankara did not hesitate to invest in ISIS also when it was present within its expansion strategy today. It is a strategy that will allow it once to fight whoever it wants under the guise of ISIS, and once against the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration in northeastern Syria under the pretext of the PKK, as in recent Turkish statements.

Therefore, a group of Syrian political, intellectual and media elites issued a statement, rejecting the Turkish threats and the war on Syria, because of its catastrophic humanitarian consequences and for its role, if it happened, in tearing the already torn Syrian fabric.

The Autonomous Administration (AANES) under its leadership (the SDF and the SDC) must not make a mistake and give Turkey a pretext for war on and against Syria. This requires a courageous decision from AANES to announce its disengagement from the PKK, and that its project is Syrian, not Kurdish.

All of the above is being employed within the military strategy that Ankara is working on. ISIS, terrorism, and the shrine are only tools to facilitate the process of military intervention, and the PKK today and the AANES are nothing but pretexts. The wounded Syrian body cannot bear a war. Unfortunately, Syrian political Islam gives it religious legitimacy, and thus we are actually facing the new Janissary military in the Arab world. Will it succeed?

[1] Othmanism is a term given to the Erdogan policy that wants Turkey to return to its influence over the Arab region and Europe; The politics of the Ottoman Empire was also at the height of its power.

[2] Natural Syria stretched from the Taurus Mountains in the north to the Gulf of Aqaba in the south and east to the Euphrates River. This term has been known since ancient times between coastal Syria and interior Syria.

[3] Islam occupied the majority of the Ottoman demographic

[4] The agreement was signed during the French mandate over Syria.

[5] A large part of this documentation was copied from Wikipedia and the BBC.