

Al-Furat center for studies

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Introduction:

The Middle East region languishes on a hot tin plate; its fire has never subsided for a long time, but it has caught more fire since 2003, and it is still ongoing in burning the political map of the region.

What is being very clear the fact that the Middle East lives a new and difficult rebirth; this lies in the resistance and aspiration of its peoples to build new systems that represent values of freedom, equality and the social justice versus authorities who are violently working to maintain on their outdated systems and are proceeding against the mainstream of change.

This phase of the region's history is largely similar to what Europe has been through; during the transitional phase from the middle Ages to the Enlightenment or the Modern Ages, but the question that comes to the mind is: who will ultimately be successful or victorious in the end?

On the basis of the universal law, in which the age of everything is defined; the species' life starts from birth, childhood, maturity, and then, followed by old-age and declining, and this is the process of life and could also be applied on the political systems, in which every system begins from arising, developing, flourish, and expansion, and then, to be followed by crisis, decline, and falling. But, what we cannot find is the explanation for this issue that these systems and the decision-makers in the Middle East have failed to recognize this reality and their adherence to this form of an outdated power, instead of opening a space for the winds of change which is being blown on peoples based on their wishes and aspirations.

Have the stones of Dominoes started actively to fall in the region?

There is no doubt that the ruling regimes in the Middle East, in particular, the geographical area that is called the heart of the region (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria), and despite their differences over many issues, but there are some issues that they resonate closely In addressing many challenges facing them, and the most prominent internal challenge that these four countries perhaps face is the existence of a Kurdish issue on their lands and even constitutes the common denominator between them, and if it has not existed, the dismantling of this system would have been easier.

The series of events that began from 2003, until today show the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in strengthening ties with the above-mentioned countries, and it is clear that the fall of the Dominoes is closely linked to Iran's state and its future.

Iran and the Challenges facing it

Iran is one of the pivotal states in the region. It has a diverse cultural heritage and history, but after the revolution with the participation of the majority of society in all their ideological orientations against the Iranian Shah Reza Pahlavi, in 1979, it was quickly dominated by the religious mainstream and they established a Theocratic Regime. Iran turned into a Shiite nation-state, far from the Iranian people's aspiration for freedom, equality, and justice.

A_ The Iranian Regime's Strengths

We can sum up the Iranian Regime's strengths in several points:

- 1- The Iranian Regime's adoption for the concept of "velayat-e faqih", (from the Arabic term stands for " the authority or governance of the jurist"), imposition itself as a leader for Shia, exploiting their injustice, building a Shiite Crescent in the region and promoting itself as a protector for them from "an extermination" that they might be exposed to.
- 2- Creating affiliated factions for Iran in the region and fighting the "enemies" of Iran on its behalf, and supporting them with; weapons, funds, and using them to ignite hotbeds of tension outside the borders of Iran when it is needed.
- 3- Consolidation of its ties with the neighboring states; Syria, Iraq and Turkey and establishing a regional alliance with them.
- 4- The armament race, in which Iran's development of its missile system in the near future is considered a strong point.

B_ The Iranian Regime's Weaknesses

Iran's spending huge amounts of money on its affiliated factions; Hamas movement, Houthis, and Hezbollah and other movements, lead to the creation of strong reactions among the Iranian people who suffer from poverty and the spread of unemployment as a result of these policies. These peoples have sought, of course, for a decent living on its land that is full of natural resource and this is reflected in the chants were being launched by

The revolutionary Iranian people during demonstrations when they say: "Neither Gaza nor Lebanon, My soul is sacrificed for Iran."

- 2- American sanctions which have crippled the Iranian economy, as well as the state of vulnerability that is being experienced by countries that are considered deeply related states to Iran (Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen), and the inability of these countries to reduce the burden of these sanctions imposed on Iran, all that put Iran in front of a very difficult economic situation.

3- Iran is spending considerable funds on the armament race, which has led internally to its weakness on a long-term basis. No matter whatever was the force of these defenses could have reached which is guided to the outside, as long as the interior remained suffering from neglect and marginalization, this force would not be able to prevent the collapse of the Authority.

and resolve the internal issues, especially, the issue of 4- Failure to carry out reforms in a timely manner ethnicities and nationalities that exist within its borders, such as the issue of Al-Awaz, Kurds, Baluch, and other peoples.

5- Iran's ambition to become a strong regional power competing with the super-powers, at the expense of many countries of the Middle East and the world, has led to the formation of a broad hostile front against it in the world and the region.

Did the Zero Hour Start for Iran?

However, Iran's expansionist goals under the name of Shiite Crescent have created many enemies to itself in the region.

Where these goals are considered a clear threat to the security of the Israeli state, the security of the Arab Gulf states, in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular; in addition to the security of Egypt, as well as, it is a clear threat, globally, to the interests of the hegemonic powers headed by America and Britain.

Subsequently, Iran has put itself in front of a wide hostile front at the level of the region and the world, because the pressure has become tougher after America withdrew from the nuclear agreement with Iran, which was tantamount to a declaration of an indirect war on it.

The Repercussions of External Pressures and Iran's Options in this

Situation

The pressures on Iran began with America's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement and the imposition of strict economic sanctions on it, which put it - internally - in a severe economic conditions, which would create a strong internal front for the people who struggle to get a livelihood, and led to the formation of a sufficiently disorganized opposition for Iran's internal and external policies, as a result of the oppression that is being practiced on all segments of society by the Iranian regime. The most affected segments by this regime in Iran are women and youth who aspire to an opened life on the outside world, the internal pressures altogether with the external ones push Iran to choose two things, sweetest of two choices is bitter, which are :

1- Withdrawal from the region, abandoning its expansionist ambitions, its insistence on building a Shiite Crescent, and not to support its affiliated forces abroad, which is something that Iran has not yet responded to, despite the stress of pressures imposed on, in which have led to the outbreak of demonstrations in its areas of power; in each of Lebanon and Iraq, in which they have a realistic and rightful demands, of course, because the people of these countries can no longer live under political systems closely related to the Regime of Iran and its proxies, the demands of the people in both Lebanon and Iraq are clear in terms of their calls for eliminating the sectarianism of the authority that works to protect the interests of Iran, these interests, which were meant nothing, one day, for the people of the two countries, and we can consider these demonstrations as the beginning of a war on Iran, and open fronts that would be enough to exhaust it, in the same way, as has just happened in Yemen, but what is apparent is that Iran has not yielded to the demands of the demonstrators, and it is possible that Iran will push things in Lebanon and Iraq into a civil war. These demonstrations have recently been extended to the Iranian interior, but the

repression and violence that the regime confronts the demonstrators will probably lead to the control of the demonstrations. The realities confirm the difficulty of the regime's change by means of peaceful demonstrations and economic sanctions, and any disciplinary strikes are launched against the Iranian objectives in Syria without the existence of an aggressive external interference, this change will not be achieved. In general, we can say that the current situation in Iran is similar to a great extent to the situation of Iraq in the late rule of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The overall of the abovementioned motivates us to ask the following question:

What is the other possibility that Iran could face, if all of these pressures have not worked, which seek to reduce its expansion and influence within its established borders, according to international law?

The pressures imposed on Iran were aimed at avoiding the war's scourges by parties involved in Iran's case, but Iran's compliance with these pressures means "a double poison" for Iran as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei described because this will undermine and refrain considerably its role as an influential regional force, consequently, this would result in catastrophic consequences, and it would probably lead to increase its internal problems more than ever, and possibly even, pave the way for its division, and this is what Iran is afraid of, and will not accept it.

2- However, all things and developments indicate that the region is on the brink of a fierce war and parties involved in the conflict would go beyond the proxy war, and the superpowers' face to face struggle would begin in the region, it seems clear that the affected and concerned states from the Iranian expansion have joined the coalition against this expansion (Egypt, Jordan, the Gulf states except for Qatar, and Kuwait, which will be committed to neutrality in this war, in addition to, Israel, America, and Britain), and it is apparent that there is American pressure on the European Union countries to join this alliance whereas the other party who is against this alliance is Iran and its affiliated forces.

Furthermore, Qatar would probably line up along with Iran, but without waging direct war beside Iran. Turkey, as well, will initiate to provide the material and media support for Iran without direct actual participation in this war. Syria, which has been exhausted by internal war for nearly nine years, will also stand by its ally.

3- As for Russia, according to the facts and attitudes that it shows towards the crises and the issues of the region, and its ways of dealing with, that it does not have the intention to exhaust its capabilities in this war, it is likely would prevent such as this war from occurring through diplomatic action, but will not interfere effectively, the same way just as the United States did during the two world wars.

The anti-Iran front is superior to Iran in all fields such as; military technology, the economy of war, and even in the diplomacy of war. As for the strength of Iran lies in extending the battlefield to include roughly all the region starting from Afghanistan to Iraq, Syria, Israel, and Yemen, but in all cases, it seems very clear, that the consequences of this war will be disastrous for all parties of the conflict in varying degrees if it occurs.

Possible Conditions Facing Iran's Allies

1- Lebanon

Lebanon lives a peaceful uprising in this period of its history, and the announced goal throughout the slogan of this uprising is represented in the shout that the demonstrators launch (everyone means everyone, Nasrallah one of them), and it expresses a refusal of the Iranian's role in managing Lebanon's internal affairs, but the question remains: Can this uprising and peaceful demonstrations cut off one of the arms of the Shiite Crescent in Lebanon and bring back the sovereignty to the Lebanese?

The Lebanese demonstrations have begun on 17th of October and still ongoing at the same pace, nothing much has been changed in the Lebanese political scene; the resignation of Prime Minister Sa'ad Al-Hariri did not mean a lot for the demonstrators, and it is most likely when Iran and its backed forces figure out that these demonstrations cracking down on them, especially, since these demonstrations have regional and international support, they will resort to violence and ignite a new civil war; as the signs of this war appeared with the storming of Hezbollah and the Amal movement into demonstrators' camp and using violence against them, thus, Lebanon will enter a new stage of conflict, and it will be a significant war front for Iran, by virtue of its proximity to its "sworn enemy"

2- Iraq

The American military intervention against the Ba'ath government in Iraq and the elimination of Saddam's regime in 2003 was not only eliminated the Regime, but rather the state's complete collapse, so that, Iraq has lived and still lives in a state of chaos up till now, as America was unable to establish a close government of its and to make Iraq a "model" country in the region although of its preparations for that.

The most two organized segments, as the result of the injustice that was being practiced upon them by Saddam's regime, are the Kurds who adhered to federalism and was officially recognized by the new Iraqi constitution in 2005. As for the second segment; the Shiite, they benefited from the collapse of the Ba'ath regime, which rejects cultural and ethnic diversity, and they organized themselves in a party with several names after a time, it was being blocked on them, and by virtue of their ideological and faith-based ties to Iran, which was able to take advantage of the new existing situation and to interfere in the interior affairs of Iraq, thus, it has seized the reins of power in its hand, till it has made of the state of Iraq as an Iranian province.

How could we Read the Demonstrations Taking Place Currently in Iraq?

What is remarkable in this demonstrations that it has started from Baghdad: the Capital and the majority Shiite southern provinces; the Shiite are divided into two segments: the beneficiary and Iran-backed segment, and it is called "Masters", it is considered the upper-class of the Shiite, and the other segment is the crushed and working class, which has been struggling over the ages and has got the spirit of the resistance, and it is a class that is always opposed to Power, where this class was suffering a great deal of oppression by the Baathist Regime and just like the Kurds, they have seen much of the unjust at the time of the former regime, and they have a sense of belonging to Iraq as a homeland, they have participated effectively in these demonstrations that have occurred in these provinces, and they have dusted themselves off the fear that has been left by Saddam Hussein's Regime. This generation who has strongly participated in these demonstrations is the one who has not lived directly the oppression of the former Regime and has grown without understanding the horror that has been left by the Baath Regime. Along this segment, the crushed class of the Baghdad's locals and its surroundings, those who do not accept the dependence of Iraq to Iran and turning their country to an Iranian state.

The question remains here, whether these peaceful demonstrations that are being confronted by bullets can be productive and lead to the building of Iraq as an independent and sovereign state in the region.

Iraq is being an important and a decisive link, just like Syria, in the chain of Iranian Shiite Crescent, will not easily escape from the Iranian regime, to define its determination by itself, in the light of this fact, it is probably things would move towards escalation, neither the Iraqi people will leave the squares and give up on their legitimate rights, nor Iran will leave the Iraqi people alive as they wish, by resorting to their affiliated factions.

This arena also will most likely witness a civil war, one of the parties would be Iran and their affiliated forces from People Mobilization Forces (PMF) and the other factions, and the other party would be the Iraqis resisting youth who would also receive external support and assistance.

3- Syria

For nearly nine years, Syria has been living in the furnace of a war that has exhausted the people and the regime alike; but why has not the Syrian regime fallen despite all these pressures and challenges that it has suffered over these years and despite the penetration of corruption in its joints? Besides, very strong internal reactions, who stands behind preventing the collapse of the regime and its fall?

Many believe that Russia's entering the battlefield and supporting the regime militarily is the reason behind the extension of the Regime's life, but in fact, the reason is the Iranian Regime, who has stronger ties with the Syrian regime, by standing with the Syrian regime, as Iran considered the Syrian square as back-front to protect its interests and its Sectarian System, and it has interfered to manage the crisis by extending its power over all the joints of the reign. This war has clearly demonstrated the sectarian face of the Regime in Syria, the actual participants of this war and those who were killed to defend it, were not units of the "Syrian Arab Army"(SAA), but rather groups linked to Iran, Hezbollah and the Alawite Sect, which linked its fate with the Regime's.

More than eight years have passed, and the mystery still remains, and there are no solutions looming on the horizon concerning the Syrian case. While some parties seek to put pressure on the Regime to reach an initiative formula to reach a solution that satisfies many parties, the absence of the solution is harming the interests of some actors in Syria, and these parties are:

a- The Syrian Regime

In spite of the scourges that this Regime has been through, but it is convinced that there is no need even for the term of solution, and all the reasons that have led to this situation are external causes and are not related to the practices of the state, which are far from the values of democracy, therefore, it still believes in the military solution that would eliminate anyone who violates the State and opposes its system, and a "safe" return back to the situation before 2011 as if nothing had happened.

b- Iran

Iran wishes for the stabilization of the situation in Syria in this way; the situation is being remained as it is in Syria, would be in the interest of Iran in the first place, Iran has benefited from the conditions of war, which is intended to take a greater share of investments and reconstruction, otherwise, it will not be in its favor, therefore, we can conclude that the hidden power that impedes all of the solutions at the present time is Iran's strong influence within the Regime.

c- Russia

It is clear that the Russian Federation is trying to reach a formula by proposing some solutions, and this is through its support in writing a new constitution for the country, it is well aware that the current state of the country cannot remain as it is, and therefore it is trying to introduce some sort of solutions, what is remarkable is that Russia does not have enough leverage to impose solutions on the Regime, as it is being encountered with the powerful force of Iran. Therefore, expecting Russia's imposition of an appropriate solution, which it sees and plans for it, seems unlikely to happen in the current situation.

There are other parties have got a role in the Syrian situation and who are:

1- The United States of America and the International Coalition

America has actively participated in the fighting against ISIS in the region, and it will also have the final decision in the expected solutions in Syria because it is unlikely, that America's power will not be taken into account and the final solution will be considered in Syria without it, many monitors and political analysts see that America's policy in Syria is a mysterious policy, but James Jeffrey: the American special envoy to Syria in the late of 2019, clarified the policy of the United States and the solutions that it planned for. the United States has not decided until now that this country will remain with its current Regime in the future, so it has not given, up till these days, any attention of the political solutions that are being discussed about the Syrian situation and it is not seriously concerned with the issue of writing the constitution, and it has put the pressure on the Arab League, to postpone the return of Syria's membership, which had been suspended. The United States encourages the Autonomous Administration and Kurds, in particular, on dialogue with the regime, but it impedes at the same time a final solution that will maintain this system and contribute to strengthening it. In addition, the Regime's survival also means, "the survival and strengthening of the Iranian regime", and this is what America and globally dominant powers do not want to. And here comes to our mind the most important question:

When will the superpowers, including America, participate in imposing their influence to reach a final solution in Syria?

The only and an important condition to reach a solution, for these forces, is Syria's exit from under the guardianship of Iran, and the exclusion of Iran and its backed-forces from Syria and this condition is being also called for by some Arab countries, for example, the Saudi veto is also against Syria to be returned to the Arab League, is also in conjunction with this condition, which is also difficult for the current government to implement, because the one who decides instead of the Syrian Regime is the Iranian Regime, Do we expect that the latter would make a decision against his presence in Syria!? It looks like this is impossible for the time being.

2- Kurds and the Solution Represented in the Autonomous Administration

The peoples of the region in northern and eastern Syria pioneered by Kurdish people have benefited from the situation that the Syrian Regime has turned into. After they had fought the most powerful terrorist organization on one hand, and building a democratic system different from the narrow-minded traditional Regimes, on the other hand, they were able to prove their existence and competence as an alternative force to the traditional Regimes in the region, and they announced, on their part, without any international and regional recognition, an alternative form of administration instead of the administration and authority of the State. After they had been able to eliminate the last strongholds of the Islamic State, the people of the region waited for the world to acknowledge their System, in a gratitude of them for their favor and those who fought on behalf of the whole world, but the reality of Kurdistan being partitioned between four Countries impedes the emergence of the solution in this part either; the Autonomous Administration is trying very hard to solve its problems within the borders of the State, in which it is related to, i.e. the Syrian State to be settled as a semi-independent entity and to be accepted in the new Syrian Constitution, but there are many obstacles; one of these obstacles lies on the Syrian Regime who is, on one hand, refusing any democratic change, on the other hand, the existence of Syria within a regional alliance, which includes; Syria, Iran, and Turkey, and it is an alliance that has been formed in its essence on the basis of denial of the Kurdish issue that is one of the most important issues in the region. The stability of the region is largely mandated by it.

We must not miss mentioning that the globally Dominant Powers do not intend to solve this issue for the time being, and we cannot expect to reach a solution within the borders of this State and within these conditions, and it is important at this stage to preserve the Autonomous Administration gains, whatever the price is, because solutions in the Middle East region, as it seems, would come all at once, and the region map will be redrawn.

The Result

We cannot expect to see stability in the region within foreseeable future, reaching the final solutions in the region is very complicated, and working to find out a solution apart from the other countries in the region is a very difficult for the time being, because of to the problems of the region are interconnected with each other, and so are the solutions. These regional states continue to maintain their existence, despite the difficulties that they have confronted during the last decade and the survival of the Domino stones being fixed and compacted, due to Iran not being involved effectively and directly in the events that taking place in these Countries within their borders, and what Iran has done is just keeping on its existence In the neighboring Countries.