



Directing the Public Opinion in Baghdad during the Era of Al-Nasir La-Deen Allah

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This research deals with a leader's ability to move public opinion towards the desired destination. Our model leader was the Abbasid caliph al-Nasir al-Din Allah. Forming a public opinion is not easy. There are many complicated factors involved. The major coups that precede the transformation of civilisations seem at first glance as if settled by huge political and military transformations, but a closer examination of these events often reveal that the real reason behind these apparent causes is the profound change that afflicts the ideas of the people. Therefore, it is not the historical coups and the mega events covered in history books that surprise us. Instead, the visual and variable effects that affect human emotions are unpredicted. However, these emotions appear on the surface rarely, because the genetic stock of emotions of a human race is nothing but the most stable element, according to Gustave Le Bon. If leaders and officials embark on a project to lead the country, they must study the culture of the people, with its various political, economic and social currents. A careful civilised study will produce a realistic knowledge of their reality. Therefore, this study's basis lays with how leaders can achieve their plans. This research, will answer many questions like: Did the caliph Al-Nasser La-Deen Allah realise these factors? Did he have a personality that enabled him to understand the mentality of the Baghdadi community, so that people would be a tool for implementing the reform projects that he had drawn for society at that time?

Key words: *Leadership, Baghdad, Public opinion, Iraq.*



The First Section: The Public Opinion Concept

The term public opinion has been used recently, but the phenomenon of public opinion is an old one. Society presented, as the prevailing regimes at that time, consideration of people's opinions, arguably so important to reaching peaceful decisions. Ancient civilisations such as the Mesopotamia and Egyptian civilisations have known forms of political and social systems that have left traces throughout the ages. Since these civilisations were not devoid of concepts related to the public opinion, the archaeology of ancient Egypt revealed a clear awareness of public opinion, and revealed sophisticated methods used to influence it and direct it to the desired destination. Such as the sanctification Pharaoh, and priests. These were advanced methods utilised to influence public opinion (Al-Shammari, 2019).

The term public opinion has a historical depth until it becomes a common term for use and circulation, because things exist first and then their names are known. (Al-Hamdani, 2012) Public opinion is one of the means of expression that people have known since ancient times, because it represents popular opinions that belong to a group of people. The public opinion is considered one of the influencing elements in many areas of human political, economic, social life, because it is concerned with the public expression of an opinion, and popular support for him. (Al-Shammari, 2019) Public opinion also represents the spontaneous reaction of people without justifications or explanations for what they believe in. (Al-Shammari, 2019) There are many factors that affect the formation of public opinion. They are many and complex, so that they will not be mentioned in this research. The aim of this research is to examine the influence of the leader on public opinion. The focus will be on exploring the impact of leadership on directing public opinion and how he uses the elements and tools that can be used to benefit his project.

Second: Al-Nasir's Policy Towards the Social Classes to Win Public Opinion

There is no doubt that internal politics is one of the most prominent factors that affect the lives of all societies in the past and present. The stability and security of political conditions gave the government a chance to make social reforms, care for public facilities, and achieve the social welfare of the people. On the other hand, the political conflict leads to social conflict that disrupts social unity and scatter the efforts of members of one community (Al-Attarji, 1982).

Social life and public opinion have been linked to the personality of the Caliph and political life during his reign. If he has a strong personality and a look towards reform, it is reflected in his society. We can say that the era of the Caliph Al-Nasser La Deen Allah (575 - 622 AH / 1225 AD) was a period of political and social stability to some extent, as he was relieved of

the Seljuk control over the country, so his era was known as the era of liberation from foreign control (Al-ward, 1984).

He was described as "a brave, intelligent, and magnificent. He was respectful and loved by his people. He leads the caliphate as it should".(Ibn Katheer, 2009)

Historians have agreed that he revived the Abbasid caliphate and restored its influence and power. Therefore, he became so famous in Egypt and Syria. (Ibn Katheer, 1983) Therefore, leadership has a major role in shaping public opinion. Sometimes, leadership has the ability to move public opinion more than religious man. Leadership can be defined as the ability, effectiveness, and ingenuity of a political leader, with the help of the political elite in defining and arranging community goals ascending according to its priorities and choosing the appropriate means to achieve these goals consistent with the true capabilities of all, and an estimation of the attitudes facing society. (Badr)

Al-Nasir al-Din Allah has realized with his skill and political acumen the importance of the religious men in moving public opinion. Religion is an essential component of forming public opinion as it affects and imposes broad influence even on those who are not adhering to it. Religion is not only an element but a source of public opinion, and one of the main determinants, including the teachings, values, moral foundations, orders and intentions, as well as the spiritual and emotional aspects, experienced by the individual. (Al-Shammari, 2019)

Religious values act as motives and stimuli for the group's behaviour in society, because religion constitutes an important performance in proving or changing opinion within the group. So, it is difficult to persuade a person who adheres to his established religious beliefs to accept an idea or invitation that contradicts his religious beliefs. (Al-Atragji, 1982)

If this is the strong influence of religion in all societies, then what about the Islamic society in which religion is the basis of their civilisation? And the Arab Muslims have always drawn the spirit of their social and intellectual lives from the Islamic faith. The Abbasid society is subject in its social systems, morals, traditions and customs to Islamic rules, and everyone who deviates from these rules is seen as deviant, atheist, or heretic. (Al-Atarragji, 1982)

As it is known that the Abbasids established their political state system on a religious basis, the caliphs coloured their state with a visible religious character. (Al-Atarragji, 1982) The clerics represented the religious authority of the Muslim Abbasid community. People listened largely influenced by the fatwas and statements of the clergy, because the clerics are the leaders of thought and opinion in society. One of the principles of Islam is to glorify the science and scientists. As God said in his book AL Quran "May God raise those who believe

in you and those who have taught knowledge degrees” (The Holy Quran) and also, say: Are those who know and those who do not know equal? (The Holy Quran). Therefore, we find that the Caliphs themselves are students of the Islamic Sharia. One of the conditions to be a caliphate is to have a full knowledge of Islam Sharia, so the Abbasid Caliphs worked to educate themselves and their sons with those sciences. They assigned the task of educating their sons to senior scholars to qualify them to bear the burdens of the state and ruling later. Some Caliphs worked with authorship and narration, especially Al-Nasir al-Din Allah, who classified a book called *The Spirit of the Knowledgeable*, which contained seventy Hadiths. (Ibn Wasil, 1972)

For these reasons, the Abbasid Caliphs paid special attention to the clerics, especially the Nasser Caliph, due to their awareness of their influence in society. In addition to religious functions, they were assigned higher administrative and political functions such as the ministry, taxation, and the work in the Diwans. When Al-Nasir al- Din Allah ascended to the throne of the caliphate, he employed Abu Al-Mudhafar bin Al-Hassan bin Heba Allah Bin Al-Muttalib (578 AH / 1182 AD) as Minister because he had an important place in religion and knowledge. (Al-Ayoubi, 1968) and he also assigned to the Hanbali jurist Abd al-Wahhab bin Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (593 AH / 1197 CE), an administrative task, as he was responsible for the Diwan of Grievances. (Ibn Rajab, 1398)

He also called the most prominent scholars of his time to hold preaching councils in the House of Caliphate, such as Radhi Al-Din Al-Qazwini (Abu al-Khair, 1966), (590 AH / 1194 AD), the Shafi'i jurist and one of its prominent figures. Likewise, Sheikh Ibn Al-Jawzi (Abu al-Faraj) (597 AH / 1201 AD), the preacher, Sheikh of Hanbali, was very influential on people, especially scholars who differed in their doctrine or those who agreed with him both. Ibn al-Jawzi used to speak one day and Al-Qazwini spoke one day at the Badr room, which is part of the House of Caliphate. And Al-Nasir La_Deen Allah used to attend their lectures of preaching. (Ibn Khalkan) Al-Nasir La Deen Allah also used the clerics as ambassadors, such as the embassy headed by Abu Jaafar Omar bin Ibrahim bin Othman al-Turkistani (602 AH / 1204 AD), the preacher who lived in Baghdad and had travelled frequently to the Hejaz and the island and Diyar Bakr and Khorasan and sent by the caliph Al-Nasir as a messenger to Shihab al-Din Muhammad bin Bassam Al-Ghoury. However, the sources did not mention the nature of that embassy. (Ibn al-Sa`i, 1959)

Al-Nasir asked for the help of Sadr al-Din Ismail bin Ahmad al-Nisaburi Hajib al-Mosul for the role of mediating between the caliph al-Nasir and Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, whose forces had surrounded Mosul, so he succeeded in his mission and the forces of Salah al-Din left Mosul. (Al-Ayoubi, 1968)

And Al-Nasir's focus on this group of society did not stop at assigning political and administrative positions to them, but continued to draw closer to them. The clerics enjoyed the Abbasid era in general, Al-Nasser era in particular, and many social services such as health insurance. So, if one of the scholars falls ill, he will be transferred to the hospital and treated by the senior doctors, and the treatment will be supervised by the Secretary of State. If he recovers, he will give him the money. (Ibn Abi Osayba, 1965)

In addition to what was given to scholars from gifts and salaries that continued after their death to their children, it was like a retirement salary, as Abu Al-Fath bin Al-Tawaidhi Muhammad bin Abdullah (583 AH / 1188 AD) was a writer and poet. He lost his sight at the end of days, so the caliph Al-Nasir made him a salary from the Diwan. (Al-Hamwi)

Nasser La Deen Allah was not only concerned with the cleric's class, but also took good care of all classes of society because he knows that this affects society and people's view of the caliph. He paid special attention to the class of merchants and capitalists. Despite the fact that the merchants are from the general public, the abundant money that their trade brings to them is considered by some to be private. Caliph al-Nasser economically, realized the importance of this class, because their influence is strong and effective. During his reign, they had a prominent position in which they were providing services to the caliphs, as well as obtaining jobs in the state, such as Al-Nasir Ali bin Ahmed Al-Naqid, who took over the agency of Zumurd Khatun, the mother of Al-Nasir, La Deen Allah in the year (582 AH / 1186 AD), and then added the agency of one of the princes of the house. (Muhannad, 1973)

Likewise, the brothers Abdullah and Abdel Aziz, the sons of Najm al-Din, who became merchants for the Caliphate Bureau, also called the service of Al-Nasser Baraka bin Mahmoud Al-Sa'i, who was a wealthy man. (Al-Suyuti, 1952)

As for the public category represented by the employers of craftsmen and the rest of the professions, they also took a large part of the attention and care of Al-Nasser. He did not neglect their aspirations and their material and psychological needs, especially in this period when there was an appearance of public opinion for this class. The views of the public and the implementation of their desires were often taken into account, especially that they used violence as a means to express their views to the authorities. They often attacked the guards and killed them, as happened in the year (597 AH / 1196AD), when the Basra people attacked the guards, killing four of them and dragging them and throwing them into the Tigris River. (Ibn al-Sa'i, 1959)

This incident indicates that the anger of the masses was directed at the authority itself and not against city guards. In addition, the social and environmental dimensions of Baghdad have resulted in a class of people called "Alshutar" or "Al-ayareen". They are the landless, the

poor, the hungry, and the unemployed. (Al-Najjar, 1980) They are a rebellious, non-aggressive and benevolent social segment, but they have sometimes used violence as a means to lift injustice, take their social rights, and achieve social justice and economic balance for the rest of society. (Al-Jumaili, 1990)

When the differences between them increased and their views differed and their corruption increased, the Abbasid Caliph Al-Nasir la Deen Allah commanded “Alfityan” and took care of them and organised their rights under the name of the Fitwa. The caliph himself wore the same uniform of Fitwa, as well as those who belonged to the Fitwa. (Ibn al-Sa`I, 1959)

Thus, the caliph Al-Nasir transferred this energy for the benefit of society, for his awareness of the role of youth and its importance. In this period, the category of Al-Shatar and Al-Ayyarin was distinguished by a special feature, namely the participation of notables, and senior citizens in their decisions and was no longer limited to the general category, and the caliph Al-Nasser was considered the head of the Fitwa. (Ibn al-Sa`i, 1959)

Thus, during the Nasser era, the youth became a movement for social reform and emptied the physical forces of the youth through the means of psychological sport. The youth became famous for throwing nuts and hunting birds, and the caliph himself was fond of throwing nuts and hunting birds also. (Al-Safadi, 1911)

Step by step, the Fitwa acquired legal and ethical rules, and it gradually began to take shape, because in the beginning there were no conditions until the caliph set conditions for membership of the Fitwa and whoever contradicted it would nullify his Fitwa (Ibn al-Sa`i, 1959). One of these conditions is that if one of the Fitwa members kills someone, retribution is taken and his Fitwa falls. These conditions were applied in the year 604 AH / 1206 CE. (Ibn al-Sa`i, 1959)

Third: Economic Policy to Win Public Opinion

There is no doubt that the economy is the basis of the life of every country, and therefore, the economic conditions of Baghdad affected both its political and social life. Economic prosperity is the main way toward prosperity for civilisation, and the high level of living is beneficial to citizens and society (Ibn al-Sa`i, 1959). Consequently, a positive public opinion on the authority of government is formed. So, the caliphs tried to give charity and reduce the burden on them by dropping taxes. Ibn Katheer (Al-Atragji, 1982) narrated: “The caliph Anasir La Deen Allah dropped all the taxation.”

The role of the Caliph Al-Nasir’s economy was very tangible in public life, represented by charity to the people and the establishment of social institutions to perform their cultural and



social services for society to benefit from it. There were many services that Nasser was providing with the intention of securing the public interest and advancing society.

Among the charity works was building mosques, as the Holy Qur'an urged: "in the mosques good willing is raised and mention His name in the morning and evening". (The Holy Quran) And also: "those who build the mosques of God and who pray to help the poor. They don't fear from anyone except God." (The Noble Qur'an)

The main reason for building mosques is to be close to God Almighty and follow the Prophet (PBUH). Not only were there religious reasons that prompted the construction of mosques but there were other reasons, such as political and personal reasons. (Salem, 198) The mosques have played a great social and cultural role in Baghdad, as it was a centre for the convergence of different classes of Muslims, a place for worship, meetings, and harmony among themselves, and a haven for the destitute and the poor. (Ibn Sa'd, 1957) We can only imagine the extent of its influence on Baghdad public opinion. That is why the Abbasids took interest in constructing and building mosques throughout their rule. Not only that, but they also allowed their women to build mosques. Al-Nasser's mother, Zumurda Khatoon, built the Al-Hadayer Mosque, which is located east of Baghdad, and overlooks the Tigris River. This mosque is still inhabited to this day and its location in the market called years ago Kababiyeh near Khan Murjan. (Raouf, 1990)

As for building schools, many researchers wrote about their role and dealt with them extensively. Perhaps what concerns us in this research is to show the extent of its impact in improving the image of the caliphs, and directing the opinion of the public in their favour. In addition to the educational role of schools, it played an important social role, especially those schools that provided social services for students and teachers. Baghdad contained about thirty schools. These schools have great students, teachers and clerics. (Ibn Jubair)

Al-Nasir la Deen Allah gave great attention to schools due to his knowledge of their influence on the life of society. Historians said: In the year 0583 AH / 1187 AD Al Nidhamya school was burned. (Ibn Jubair) Al-Nasir rebuilt it immediately and provided it with a large library that contained a number of precious books. (Ibn Jubair, 2013)

His mother, Zumurdah Khatoon, also opened a School that she called "Friends" in 589 AH / 1192AD near the grave of Sheikh Marouf al-Karkhi. She employed the best teachers and jurists and provided salaries for all. This school was considered one of the greatest Shafi'i schools in Baghdad. (Raouf, 1966)

Also, Nasser did not neglect the memorials(Al-Mashhad, 1968) and places for guards. (Jawad, 1955) He ordered the construction of a memorial to his father, the caliph, and appointed servants and guards in it. (Al-Ayoubi, 1968)

In the year 580 AH / 1185AD, Zmurda Khatun ordered the building of a mosque for a man called Sheikh Al-Hiti. She made him a fantastic building dome. She also built a link next to it to guard the mosque. She provided this mosque with brushes, lamps, and furniture, to meet the needs of those in charge of the shrine from the poor. (Al-Ayoubi, 1968)

Seljuqa Khatoon, the wife of Nasser also built a grave on the western side of the Karkh, beside the graves of Aoun and Mu'in, the sons of Imam Ali. She also established a large library that contains very precious books. (Ibn al-Sa'i, 1959) And the Caliph Al-Nasir Din Allah established in 584 AH / 1186AD, the Alkhalatyya fortress. In the year 586 AH / 1188AD, he established another fortress known as Alfalaq in the House of Caliphate close to the Tigris. Likewise, his mother Zumurda Khatun established Almamoonya fortress, in 579 AH / 1183 AD. (Al-Ayoubi, 1968)

As for the guest houses, their establishment in Baghdad dates back to the era of Al-Nasser la Deen Allah, who took great care of them. He ordered the construction of a guesthouse for pilgrims, jurists and the poor to provide them with meat, flour and gold in Ramadan. (Ibn Katheer, 1983) The Caliph also spent money for charity in the month Rajab in Iraq that is nearly four thousands dinars. (Fahd, 1973)

The Caliph and the women of the Caliphate House made an abundant contribution to people's livelihoods, investigating the destitute and needy groups, raising the standard of living for members of society, and ensuring a decent life for them. This has been demonstrated by spending a lot of money on charity and charitable projects and providing aid from foodstuffs that were represented in providing food to the poor or giving money to men or women. All of this was only to reflect positively on the opinion of the Baghdadi community and improve their view of the Caliphate House, where they appeared in the appearance of benefactors to their people. So the elements were directed to the public opinion of Baghdad for the destination that Al Nasser wanted.

Conclusion

'Public opinion' is a term that has a historical depth, but it has been used recently. A public opinion is closely related to civilisations. Public opinion is one of the oldest methods of expression that people have known. Leadership has a great role in raising public opinion, even more than religious leaders sometimes, and this relates to the leader's personality, ability, effectiveness, and skill in determining society's goals accurately and choosing



appropriate methods for these goals consistent with the true capabilities of society. The caliph Al-Nasir was able to win over the scholars and jurists next to him because he was aware of their importance in winning public opinion and their ability to direct it to the destination they adopted. Gaining attention from all classes of society from merchants, the public, the poor, and the workers to his side, he also established the movement of Alayyri and AlShutar that he called Fitwa and he was the head of this movement himself. The caliph bestowed gifts on private and public members of the community, building mosques, schools, shrines and guest houses. He also allowed the women of the Abbasid house to contribute in the field of charity and alms because he realised the importance of the economic side in gaining the satisfaction of the masses from the poor to the rich alike.

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