



Lessons from Ertugrul Ghazi's Era

The Turkish series Dirillis Ertugrul has shattered viewership records in Pakistan and is coveted by many in the Islamic world. The central theme of the drama is about the life of Ertugrul set in the 13th century. Ertugrul fights infidels and unifies Turks to lay the basis for his son Osman to establish the Ottoman state. The drama has caught the imagination of the Muslims of Pakistan to the point that some have erected monuments in Ertugrul's honour, while others have published songs praising him.

The small secular elite of Pakistan remains baffled by the success of Dirillis Ertugrul, and cannot fathom the show's appeal to millions of Muslims in Pakistan. Some have reacted strongly by calling for the strengthening of Pakistani nationalism. Others have suggested that more money must be poured into Pakistan's entertainment industry, so that quality Pakistani dramas can compete with foreign ones. Yet the simple truth is that Dirillis Ertugrul has ignited the Islamic feelings of the Muslims of Pakistan to binge watch the show and pay homage to the Ottoman Caliphate.

The Muslims of Pakistan no longer remain captivated by imported Hollywood and Bollywood productions. These productions are full of despicable Western values such as wrecked families, exploitation of women, individual narcissism, dereliction of responsibility, disrespect for elders, sexual promiscuity and debauchery. In contrast, the Muslims of Pakistan are captivated by the pull of Islamic values, which consists of protecting the family unit, honouring women, longing for communal welfare, fulfilling pledges, respecting elders, and practicing morality rooted in Islam.

Episodes of Dirillis Ertugrul routinely convey such messages and this resonates with its Pakistani viewership. Additionally, the show goes further by drawing a straight-line between infidel and believers, extolling jihad and punishing traitors. All of this has aroused in Pakistanis the desire to return to a state of dignity and honour enjoyed previous generations of Muslims.

However, when the Muslims of Pakistan view their country through the prism of these feelings they become extremely sensitive to prevalent Western ideas and solutions, inciting them to change their situation. The Muslims of Pakistan know that democracy has divided them and subjugated them to Western domination. They long for a leader like Ertugrul, who will unify Balochi, Pakhtoon, Punjabi and Sindhi into a single polity, liberating them from the shackles of Western colonialism. Yet, some simultaneously tolerate traitors amongst them who stand in the way of realizing their dream. The Muslims of Pakistan lament the impact of western capitalist solutions on their lives and know that Islamic solutions will safeguard their property, wealth and livelihood. Yet, some are prepared to give their Western imposed leaders more time in the vain hope that their lives will improve. The Muslims of Pakistan yearn for the liberation of Kashmiris from despotic Hindus, and they crave for a leader like Ertugrul to perform Jihad, crush the Hindus and annex Kashmir. Yet, some remain mute towards the stasis of their powerful army, which is more than capable of seizing Kashmir from the Hindus.

Staying quiet and hoping for change runs the risk of living under Western domination for a long time. The Quran warns us about being passive about changing our situation, **﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾** **“Allah will not change the circumstances of the people, unless the people change.”** [TMQ: Al Raad: 11]. To ensure that the incitement of pure Islamic feeling by Dirillis Ertugrul leads to the restoration of Islamic rule, one needs to take a fresh look at Ertugrul's era and draw important lessons for Muslims to implement in their political lives to produce the desired change.

The historical context of the 13th century in which the drama is set has seven major actors: the Crusaders (European powers), the Byzantines (Romans), the Mongols representing the infidel colonialists and the fragmented Muslim powers—the Ayubids, the Saljuks and the Abbasids. The

Turkish tribes escaping the tyranny of the Mongols in Central Asia and looking for a new homeland constitute the seventh actor. Against this background, the following points can be extracted and applied to our situation today.

1. There is very little difference from the Muslim powers then and the Islamic countries of today. In the 13th century the Ayubids, the Saljuks and the Abbasids, came increasingly under influence of the Crusader kingdoms (Principality of Antioch, County of Edessa, County of Tripoli and Kingdom of Jerusalem) and the Mongols, until a point was reached that they became vassal states of the infidel powers. The situation then demanded liberation from the infidel colonialists and today the same ruling is applied. Pakistan is not an exception to this rule, as the country's internal and foreign policy is controlled by America. Subsequently, it is incumbent on the Muslims of Pakistan to liberate their country from the American Raj by working with the Pakistan Army to accomplish this feat.

2. The Crusaders restricted themselves to establishing four forward operating bases (FOBs) or four kingdoms in the Levant but never ventured deep into the heart of Al Sham. These kingdoms were close to the East Mediterranean Sea and they received regular supplies from Europe. Additionally, some of these kingdoms received support from local Muslim powers and this aided the crusader kingdoms to cement their rule in Al-Sham. Today, the West has adopted similar tactics to recreate another foreign entity known as the Jewish state in Al-Sham. This entity is protected by the West and can only exist in collaboration with regional Muslim states such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and other Islamic countries. Back in 13th century the Mamelukes used Egypt as a base to cut the supply lines to the crusader kingdoms, and subsequently proceeded to eradicate the crusader influence from Al Sham.

A similar action is required today, as the peace process is a false dawn that aims to consume Ummah in a cheap struggle for 70 odd years. The Muslims of Pakistan must resist all attempts by their rulers to normalize Pakistan's relations with the Jewish entity, and they must actively support the liberation of Palestine from the tyranny of the Jews. Furthermore, the Muslims of Pakistan must expunge US's forward operating bases on Afghani and Pakistani territory established by Musharraf and his successors in connivance with the US.

3. During the 5th Crusade (1217 to 1221) the Saljuks under Kaykaus I allied with crusaders against the Ayubids. Although the Ayubids won, the divisions of the Muslim world into numerous factions allowed the crusaders to stay in the region for another 50 years. Likewise, the same divisions allowed the Mongols under Gengis Khan to defeat Khwarazemia in 1221 and this weakened the Abbasid Caliphate.

Our situation today, is very similar. The infidel powers joined hands with Muslim states to destroy Iraq during successive Gulf wars. Over Syria, the infidel powers allied with Muslim states to put an end to the Islamic opposition against Assad. As for Pakistan, the infidel powers colluded with sell out Muslims and India to dismember Pakistan into two, and later collaborated with a coalition of Muslim countries to invade and occupy Afghanistan under the auspices of ISAF. It is vital that the Ummah learns from the painful history to stand together as one against the infidel powers. Hence, the Muslims of Pakistan must spearhead endeavours to break down artificial nation-state borders and unify the Ummah under the shade of the Caliphate.

4. Before Ertugrul and his son Osman could established the Ottoman state, they worked tirelessly to expose and punish the traitors amongst the Turkish tribes and amongst the Islamic powers. The Muslims of Pakistan must reject traitors in their midst, especially those in the civilian and military leadership. It is a great sin to remain quiet about their crimes and their alliances with infidel powers.

5. Ertugrul and his son Osman were able to exploit the weakened Byzantine forces, to take much of present day Turkey from the Eastern Roman Empire. The early Kayi tribe had a global vision and its leadership was acutely aware of the differences between the Infidel colonialists, and exploited these differences to establish their state on the ruins of the Eastern Roman Empire. Therefore, it is important for the Muslims of Pakistan to recognize their own strength, develop a global view, and understand the strength and weakness of regional and global infidel powers.

For instance, both America and China are dependent on Pakistan to establish their regional hegemony. America relies on Pakistan to secure Afghanistan by leaning on the Taliban leadership to enter into peace talks with Washington. Also the US is contingent on Pakistan's support to foment or cool down the Kashmiris uprising to keep India firmly in America's orbit. Meanwhile, China is reliant on Pakistan to counterbalance India, and prevent Islamic movements from using Afghanistan to destabilize Xinjiang. In addition, China requires Pakistani assistance to complete CPEC, so that valuable goods and raw materials (including crude oil) can be transported from Gwadar to Kashi thereby circumventing primacy of America's navy in the Malacca straits.

6. The Crusaders ransacked Constantinople in 1204 and occupied it for 57 years. They committed unspeakable horrors and atrocities against fellow Christians. The Byzantines were able to take it back after the Mamelukes finished off the crusader kingdoms in the Levant. This also created bitter feelings between Europe and Constantinople, which Sultan Muhammad exploited 200 years later to liberate Constantinople. Likewise, there exists deep distrust between Europe and America, as well as between America and China that dates back to the opium wars of the 19th century. Rather than ally with either America or China as the current Pakistani leadership envisages, why cannot Pakistan employ its strength to exploit palpable tensions between the two infidel powers and establish supremacy for Islam.

7. It is claimed that when Pakistan becomes a Caliphate, it will not be able to contend with the great powers. Did not the Mamelukes take on the Crusaders and the Mongols simultaneously (two great super powers of the 13th century)? Did not the Mamelukes unify the ranks of the Muslims in Al Sham and hastened the retreat of the Byzantine forces to their barracks? A nuclear Pakistan has more than enough capability to establish dominance for the Caliphate, but first the people of Pakistan must work hard to establish it.

The Ummah of the Messenger of Allah (saw) has been blessed with many leaders like Ertugrul who sought only to establish the supremacy of Islam by foiling the evil plans of infidel powers. Aladdin Khalji ruler of the Delhi sultanate and a peer of Ertugrul defeated the Mongol hordes a record five times (1297-1306), and kept the Indian subcontinent firmly in the grasp of Islam. During Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707) the Mongol-Tibetan alliance was defeated in Ladakh Kashmir. Aurangzeb worked assiduously to bring the whole of India under Islamic rule, and the economy of the Mughal sultanate overtook China to become the world's largest. And when the Mughal sultanate declined new heroes like Tipu Sultan rose to defend the honour of Islam against the British.

The Muslims of Pakistan have a rich tradition of Islamic heroes who have unequivocally shown how to defend the Islamic ummah in the sub-continent from the despotism of the infidel powers. The time has come for the Muslims of Pakistan to fully realize their aspirations and start walking in the footsteps Ertugrul, Aladdin, Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan. It is now the turn of the Muslims of Pakistan to break another record. The Muslim world has been without the Caliphate for 96 years, and the Muslims of Pakistan have the unique opportunity to emulate the Sahaba (ra) by establishing the Rightly Guided Caliphate. Imam Ahmed narrated that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «ثُمَّ تَكُونُ...and then there will be Caliphate upon the Prophetic method.»

The Muslims of Pakistan must prioritize this duty above everything else even their own lives. ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ انْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَنَاقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَاعِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ﴾ “Oh you who have iman! what is the matter with you, that, when you are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth? Do ye prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter.” [TMQ: Al-Tawba: 38]. Those who strive and accomplish this task will be remembered in the heavens and earth and earn the pleasure of Allah (swt).

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Abdul Majeed Bhatti