



Why Nabih Berri today?

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A lot can be said about Speaker Nabih Berri. Indeed, he is one of the warlords whose rise coincided with that of militias and who benefited - like others did - from the Syrian tutelage. Afterwards, he took advantage of the institutional and political paralysis and equally contributed to causing this paralysis. This holds without mentioning his alliance with Hezbollah, which rallied the Shiite community behind the party, its methods and its weapons.

Yet what can also be said about Nabih Berri is that Shiite political opinions, which do not get along with Hezbollah and do not wish to sacrifice self and country for the delusion of “liberating Palestine,” will find their expression only in him. Many Shiites are opposing Hezbollah from clearer position and more transparent backgrounds, but none has the strength needed to compete with Hezbollah. Since Lebanon cannot be without the Shiite community and since there can be no civil peace without Shiite involvement in it, dealing positively with Nabih Berri has become a pressing necessity.

In spite of everything, the current parliament speaker is bound to resort to politics and incurs damage as a result of the unilateral [control of] weapons, which has forced him to adopt stances that defy political logic. He is Hezbollah's only reserve competitor and the main objective beneficiary of Hezbollah's retreat or demise. More importantly, the Amal Movement's orbit and horizon is Lebanese - i.e. non-Iranian - and its sole condition is to have a country that provides decent living conditions regardless of the serious divergences about the nature of this country.

This Lebanese horizon and orbit is no stranger to broad social interests that were underlying Sayyed Moussa Sadr's movement ever since its inception in the early 1970s. These interests transcend the Shiite bourgeoisie, which developed abroad, and is seeking to settle down and invest, or the top civil servants and cadres who have crossed over to the private sector. They now concern large numbers of middle- and lower-class individuals who do not want their homes to be destroyed or their families to be displaced or forced into exile once again. The number of those people is disproportionate with the shyness of their expression, which is understandable given the fear and intimidation inspired by Hezbollah. Nevertheless, the transformation initiated by the Syrian revolution, one that is bound to impact on Lebanon, will overcome the current fears and pave the way for greater boldness and initiative.

In this sense, it would be a mistake to weaken Berri and to abstain from helping him when such help seems possible. At the end of the day, politics is not about revenge and the useless settlement of old scores.

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