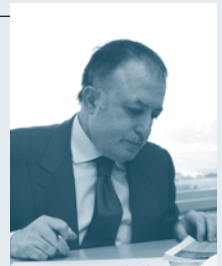


The Tent Part 8 or The Tent of Tents



We have visited the various tents of the Lebanese jungle, but the scene would not be complete without the tent of all tents – the so-called international legitimacy or Western powers, or American foreign policy.

Are we by nature backward, violent and destined for disasters? “Life unexamined is not worth living”, has been the drive for the *Information International* team, who are constantly diagnosing, dissecting issues to determine what is wrong with “us”.

Our team has accumulated a wealth of accurate data over the past 12 years to demonstrate that we are responsible for our own ills and should not blame “others”. But are the “others” blameless?

Let us imagine that we are in the 19th Century and that the Jumblat family, prosecuted by other leaders, had not been adopted by the British. Would we today be witnessing za’amat Jumblat?

Let us move on to the 20th Century when Nazira Jumblat changed the course of her family’s history, abandoning the British, and allying with the French. Had she not done so, would we today be witnessing za’amat Jumblat? Let us follow Kamal Jumblat, who was awarded the Order of Lenin and praises by Nasser and Arafat.

Let us remember what happened during the Harb al-Jabal (the war of the mountain) civil war and its aftermath. If Walid Jumblat had not allied with the Syrian regime – thus biting the wound of his father’s assassination, as he himself states, – would we today be witnessing za’amat Jumblat?

No wonder that the writings and thoughts of Shakib Arslan⁽¹⁾, in particular those opposed to western meddling, did not transform him to a za’im. But the words and deeds of his grandson have maintained the za’ama.

Let us also imagine that we were not occupied by the Ottomans, and that their local supporters were not swift in shifting their loyalties to the French and British; would we be hearing today about the aristocrats and zu’ama of Lebanon, Syria and the Arabian Jazeera, and titles like Pasha, Fakhamat, Bey, Dawlat, Sa’adat, his Highness, Majesty and others?

What if international powers did not concoct the Balfour Declaration and did not go back on their word to King Faysal, on the establishment of a unified Arab State; would we be hearing today about “demarcation of borders”, “wars of liberation”, “Sheba’a Farms” and “peace talks on the Golan Heights”? Would we have witnessed successive coups d’état in Syria and Iraq?

What if the United States did not launch a coup against the democratically elected government of Mohammad Mosaddeq in Iran in the 1950s and bring the Shah to power; would we have witnessed the rise of the Islamic Republic in Iran? Would Khomeini have become the spiritual leader of the Shia’a and send volunteers to liberate South Lebanon? Would we today be hearing about the resistance arms and international legitimacy?

Let us imagine that the West did not discover the Middle East’s oil and that oil rich countries have not emerged as nations; would we today be witnessing the emergence of Salafi groups and would “Ahlu as-Sunna” in Lebanon, inspired by Dick Cheney and Eliot Abraham, be fighting the “Shia’a Crescent”? And would Saddam Hussein have invaded Kuwait?

Let us imagine that Sanioura’s government, in the person of the Prime Minister, did not shower Condoleezza Rice with kisses, when she reassured all of us that the war will continue; would we now be witnessing this wide gap between Sunni and Shia’a, between resistance and government?

Let us also imagine that the Syrian regime acted responsibly in regard to their own and Lebanon’s affairs and that Iraq was not invaded; would we today be witnessing regional and Arab tensions? And would we be seeing divisions worse than those of the Sykes-Picot Agreement?

Let us imagine that the Sultans of Lebanon and the Arab world acted wisely and fairly, would we be seeing this gap between citizens and the State?

Let us imagine that we never considered communism to be our first enemy. Would we be seeing the rise of the Bin Laden “empire”? What if Iran was not regarded as an enemy today by the United States; would we be witnessing the destruction of Iraq and what is left of Palestine, tensions in Lebanon, and marginalization of Egypt and Syria?

Would it have been possible for the Syrian regime to spread its control over Lebanon, had it not been given the green light by the United States?

Would the current Lebanese government have been formed if the Syrian President had not visited France? Would the Lebanese system of waste and corruption have been able to survive without Paris 1, 2 and 3 and the money of Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States?

Perhaps one can argue that the Lebanese and Arab politicians, Sultans and their followers are responsible for their and our current demise; but one can also make an analogy with a hostage situation, whereby followers are hostages of their zu’ama, and zu’ama are hostages of the U.S. and the system. And therefore, all their tents, from 1 to 7, would not have been possible without the Tent of Tents, from Balfour to Bush.

Although zu’ama are sometimes legitimate leaders of their own confessions and areas, their za’ama could not have been maintained without foreign support.

It is neither about Cleopatra’s Nose nor about the ostriches’ head in the sand, but it is high time international powers recognize the damage they have caused. Perhaps it is not about “the Arab mind”, but about “western” greed and hypocrisy.

— Jawad N. Adra

⁽¹⁾ *Shaqib Arslan (1869-1946), prominent Lebanese writer and grandfather of Walid Jumblat*