

Elizabeth Warren vs. Michel Aoun

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Elizabeth Warren electrifies. You need to just spend 30 minutes to hear her make a full-rounded, precise and eloquent argument about “the thin-skinned,” brainless “racist” and “bully” that is Trump, and undermine his assault on the rule of law in America.

Warren is the positive, dominant novelty of a crass political campaign in the U.S. Now that the field is clearly split between two presumptive nominees, each with his and her own cupboard full of nasty skeletons, only Warren restores faith in a system threatened by Trump’s fascism and Hillary’s nepotism. The buzz last week is that Clinton will choose Warren as her Vice President. We can only hope she does, so that the spirit of decency and courage comes back to America.

Like every four years since America won World War II, we are all observing the U.S. scene with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension. When Washington sneezes, we catch a cold, witness the impact of a visit by a low-level official of the Treasury Department on the entire Lebanese financial system. There are many ways to observe America, unfortunately there aren’t many ways to influence it from outside. So best is to emulate what is best in America, and the best today is Elizabeth Warren, an accomplished scholar with moral values, and a voice of courage, which is so wanting in the world.

Everywhere we look there are bullies à la Trump. No need to mention the entrenched old dictators of the Assad family style, Khamenei, Bashir and the gerontocrats of the Gulf. As for the new leaders, they also suffocate us with their bullying, self-satisfaction, and violence. Sisi and Erdogan are Trump replicas who have succeeded. In the Philippines, a man who is proud of death squads he organized to kill over 1,000 people is at the helm. In Austria last month, we averted with only a few hundred voices the rise of a Hitler replica almost a century after the Anschluss.

So the Trump phenomenon is generalized, and the axis of bullies is consolidating. The Trumps of the world recognize and reinforce each other. The honest, nonviolent, educated (yes educated, and not at Trump University), law-abiding citizens of the world are on the defensive. Putin kills in Moscow and in Aleppo, while the line of visitors from the similar-minded Netanyahu keeps growing.

Almost single-handedly last week, Elizabeth Warren put a stop to all of this. We need Warrens everywhere. God forgive me, but the Trump phenomenon across the world has emerged in large part because of the isolationist retreat of Barack Obama. I will have to elaborate on this seemingly

outlandish reading another time. Let me just briefly note that since Obama retreated on Syria back in 2011, and let the local Damascene bully win against an overwhelming nonviolent revolution, while rallying around him the other bullies which our Middle Eastern revolutions had put on the defensive, the world has been witnessing the seemingly unstoppable rise of fascism and racism, of which Trump presents today the clearest danger. What is pressing now is how to stand up to the Trumps of the world, and Elizabeth Warren is giving us the cue.

The local Lebanese Trump is Michel Aoun. He is single-handedly preventing the election of a president. Evidence is that the second he gives up on the plague of “me or no one else,” a narcissistic Trumpism typical of bullies and dictators, we will have a president in Lebanon. It is not the first time this happens. In modern Lebanese history, the putschist general has done it time and again. We have been without a president since 2014 because of Aoun not wanting to allow the country to move forward, but he did it twice before. In 1988-89, the country was torn asunder by his coup, followed by the large scale bombing of mostly Shiite neighborhoods in Beirut, in a reckless bid for power, which also led to the Syrian dictator taking over the whole of the country. And in 2005, shortly after the Cedar Revolution allowed him to come back from exile, Aoun prevented the dislodging of his clone Emile Lahoud because he could not take over from him at the presidency.

Like Trump, Aoun and so many local politicians are not worth one’s pen to be sullied by their mere mention. But since Barack Obama retreated on Syria back in 2011, and went AWOL on the whole region (in his own terms, “all I need in the Middle East is a few small autocrats”), the world has been the prey of various forms of Trumpisms. We need Elizabeth Warrens “to stand up,” as she concluded in that epic speech, to make law and decency prevail again.

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