



Middle-East New-Media • A Weekly Coverage • Editor: Orit Perlov

13-20 May 2012

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Egypt

Presidential Elections – An Unclear Game



Arabist

Egyptian politics are a game of chess without a king

*"You can tell it's election time in Egypt again, and not just because of the proliferation of billboards, bumper stickers and leaflets touting this or that candidate. It's something in the air" [.....] "Unfortunately, such a happy outcome does not really appear likely. The risk is that much like the parliamentary elections in late 2011 and early 2012, the election of a new president will simply add one more piece to a complicated game of chess, with rules that are strangely elastic" [.....] "**Much like the recent violence in Cairo, the purpose of the game is unclear. What are the pieces and what might amount to a "victory"? This murkiness will probably be with us for some time**"*

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Presidential Candidates – Aren't They All Marvelous?!



Mahmoud Salem

*In final analysis, and after lots of thinking back and forth, I've reached a conclusion: **Everything will end up being OK! :)***

Egypt will be fine, the economy will bounce, our life will not be greatly affected, security will be an issue, but that's about it.

If an Islamists government comes, more people will turn secular, a strong underground will be created & the resistance will begin.

Either way, things will be fine, money will come back in September, economy will get accustomed to protests, all will be well :)

Abulfotouh: The ex-MB, now Salafi-backed "Centrist" who wants to shut down alcoholic drinks factories, all 2 of them.

Hamdeen: A revolutionary candidate from the 1952 revolution.. which is close enough for most people, since we are doing a re-do of it.

Morsy: What can be said that wasn't said about this insignificant man? Why even bother?

Khaled Ali: The workers' rights lawyer who doesn't have the support of the workers, revolution candidate that couldn't get half the tawkeelat (signatures)

Shafiq: Ex-Military..drunk... not really sure of he is going senile or if he is stupid. Super entertaining though.

If **Amr Moussa** wants a parliamentary system, how much power will he have at stopping the Islamists exactly? Is anyone paying attention?

Have we covered them all now? Aren't they all just marvelous? I am so happy I get to choose one of them to represent me. Yay..



Washington Institute

Egypt in Transition: What Happened to the Liberal Youths of Tahrir Square?

"On May 9, Mahmoud Salem addressed a Policy Forum at The Washington Institute. Mr. Salem, a renowned Egyptian blogger better known as "Sandmonkey," is a longtime analyst of Egyptian political affairs and advocate for free speech and democracy. He ran as a parliamentary candidate last year on the ticket of the Free Egyptians Party. The following is a rapporteur's summary of his remarks"

[Read More](#) & [Full Lecture](#)



Mohamed ElBaradei

As elections approach masks are dropped & true colors revealed. With nation divided and no constitution in place road ahead remains bumpy.

Fifteen months after the revolution there is no regime change, only change within the regime: same mindset, same methods and same people.

SCAF to define powers of president in supplement to constitutional declaration two days before elections, bypassing parliament. Questionable legitimacy.

A New Hunger Games - #MODHunger



Ahmad H. Aggour

The detainees of the Battle of Abbasiya of May 4th will go on a hunger strike starting tomorrow. #MODHunger.

On Sunday at 12 pm a 1-day hunger strike begins in solidarity with the Abbasiya detainees at the Journalist Syndicate. #MODHunger



Leila Abou Ragab

So far 228 on hunger strike at the journalists syndicate in solidarity with military trials detainees



Ebaa Rezeq

I'm Palestinian & tomorrow, May 20 I'll be on a hunger strike in solidarity w more than 12000 Egyptian detainees behind SCAF bars

**#May 20 Hunger Strike Campaign in solidarity with the detainees
in Abbaseya events #MOD**



GCC Unity – Talking In Two Voices: Kings Pro & People Against



Saqer S Al Khalifa

GCC Unity and Monopoly?

*"Many in Bahrain and the GCC have been exceedingly for this union because of the ongoing regional political tug of war. Also, many have been dreadfully against the union because they see it in a way as if Bahrain is being handed over to Saudi Arabia. **Let me tell you all one thing, in***

***such a union, politics plays a large role, but it always takes a back seat to economic and social benefits. So, remove your political spectacles and put on the economic and social ones for now"** [...]*

"One single army is much stronger and better capable of providing security services than two or more single cooperative armies. In simple terms, we all know that a person can break one stick at a time, but when placing all the sticks together, he cannot. This approach does apply in the real world and especially to this region's security"



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Abuhatem

Every Friday sermon in Bahrain is about GCC union: Shia Islamists say people have right to referendum, Sunnis say its religious obligation.

Noon Arabia

Tens of thousands of protesters against the unity plan with Saudi Arabia chant "Bahrain is not for sale"

Dr Ala'a Shehabi (Lecturer, writer, activist, driven by the ideology of social justice)

Deep historical tribal rivalries, fear of Saudi hegemony by small states, border disputes have prevented GCC cooperation & unity in the past



MOI says any slogans used against GCC Union will be considered a violation & have made Wefaq promise that they will not be used in 2days marc



Abdullah k AlShayji (Kuwait University Analyst-Columnist)

The escalating war of words btw Iran & GCC states over the proposed GCC unity is symptomatic of Iranian show off & meddling in our affairs.



Hussein Ibish

Four GCC states favor closer union, Kuwait, UAE have reservation



Abdulkhaleq Abdulla (Professor of Political Science
Dubai)

GCC states fail to agree on union at Riyadh summit

*"Closer political integration among the six GCC states and the potential future inclusion of Jordan and Morocco into such a union is part of a much broader defense strategy to counter Iran's influence which many Gulf states see interfering with their own domestic affairs. [.....] **"A future union would result in an army of 360,000 soldiers and would cover 2.8m sq km, Asharq Al Awsat reported today"***

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Emile Hokayem

Re: Gulf Union. A Gulf official told me recently that should the Bahrain-Saudi union go ahead, it will likely set back other GCC ventures

Amazing: Hundreds of Thousands refusing Bahraini Saudi Union

[YouTube Video](#)

Parliamentary Election - Poll Farce



Brian Whitaker

Syria: voting for what?

"To describe today's parliamentary election in Syria as "cosmetic" would probably be over-generous. Nobody expects it to change the political reality and it's unlikely to change appearances much, either" [.....] "Turnout in the 2007 election was officially put at 56.1% (of 11.96 million eligible voters). Turnout figures in Syrian elections are rarely believed (some estimates in 2007 put the real figure as low as 10%) but it will be interesting to see what turnout figure the regime comes up with this time, given the turmoil on the streets"



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Jane Kinninmont

Syria's poll farce could lead to more unrest

"Middle Eastern rulers are well acquainted with the arts of cosmetic reform. But Syria's electoral charade is only likely to anger the opposition. On May 8, the UN peace envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, gave a sobering press conference saying that torture in Syria was worsening, that the government still appeared to be using heavy weapons, and that there is a high risk of civil war. His spokesman added that there are credible reports that Syrians who speak to the UN observers — who number just 60 — are at risk of being arrested or even killed"

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Jihadis – Fact or Fiction ?!



AlAyyam English

Assad's Fourth Division Jihadis

The Syrian regime's ongoing media campaign aiming to frame the now year-old uprising challenging its rule as an al-Qaeda-sympathetic Islamist

insurgency" [.....] ***"The fact that the Syrian regime follows a policy of deliberate disinformation, even going as far as manufacturing fake "Salafi terrorists" in order to feed to the media – and perhaps even the UNSMIS observers – highlights one of the less-mentioned weaknesses of the monitoring mission – its vulnerability to the regime's distortion campaign aimed at the Syrian opposition in general, and its armed wing – the Free Syrian Army (FSA) – in particular"***

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Emile Hokayem

Fact or Fiction: Jihadis in Syria?

*"Just as unsurprising is the opposition's accusation that the bombings were the work of Assad's manipulative and nefarious security services. This is not entirely implausible, given their record and Assad's previous sponsorship of jihadi outfits operating in Lebanon and Iraq out of bases in Syria. However, a more likely scenario is that **those jihadi outfits, which never had much in common with the Alawite Assad beyond an anti-American agenda, have simply turned against their former patron**"*



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Dr. Burhan Ghalioun - Step Down. Now



👑 The 47th 👑

Burhan Ghalioun won the SNC Presidency with 21 votes; George Sabra came in second with 11 votes - SNC Media Center



Um Farouk

Burhan Ghalioun's Fiefdom

"The SNC voted 21-11 to renew his term of presidency for a fourth time despite calls for months now for him to step down from various independent activists and opposition parties [.....]"I call on all activists to support the

*campaign to force Burhan Ghalioun into a resignation and call on the Syrian National Council to conduct emergency open elections to choose a President worthy of the respect of the Syrian people. The same people who daily continue to protest, who daily are slaughtered and who daily prove there are no braver souls on Earth. **Mr. Burhan Ghalioun, the Syrian people ask you to step down. Now**"*

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Shakeeb Al-Jabri

Many are interpreting Ghalioun's "offer to resign" as a maneuver akin to those practiced by Ali Abdallah Saleh

The SNC has been under tremendous pressure to reform, from both, the people on the ground and the international community.

While Ghalioun does not bear personal responsibility for the SNC's failure, he has become a symbol of its continued failure.



Dr. Burhan Ghalioun re-election sent the wrong signal to all observers. The elections were utterly Baathist

There will be maneuvers to extend Ghalioun's presidency while the #SNC is reformed but if this takes too long the body will fail.

The SNC is not an established institution that's firmly rooted in. Any serious blow from either side and it will tip over.



Malik Al-Abdeh

SNC was plagued by internal divisions. Ever since money came thru though, there's been an eerie silence: members just stopped complaining.

Somehow I think the right replacement will never be found. There's too much invested in Ghalioun for him to walk away

As I tweeted earlier, Ghalioun was not genuine in his offer of resignation. He is trying to turn tables on DD/Sabra (his main rivals)

#SNC is experiencing civil war at the moment. Backed by MB votes, Ghalioun feels confident enough to play dangerous brinkmanship game.



Anas Al Hourani

Not only have the #MB hijacked the Syria revolution using many mediums including official Facebook page but they run the #SNC to the core!

#LCC have already spoken very strongly against Ghalioun and will suspend its membership if he remains

The MBs Are Taking Over the SNC



Abu Hatem

Muslim Brotherhood gets to make decisions and escape accountability without heading the SNC. Makes sense they get next turn to chair it.



Abdulrahman Alhaj (Writer, academic professor, member of the General Secretariat of SNC)

Ghalioun calls for a white coup on the traditional parties; he invited the General Body of SNC for elections to the General Secretariat

Ghalioun may push the Syrian National Council to divide and traditional parties to withdrawal from #SNC



Iyad El-Baghdadi

The FSA (Free Syrian Army), SNC (Syrian National Council), and LCC's (Local Coordination Committees) are kinda in the same "ecosystem" but aren't under one "organizational structure"

The SNC is a political front but has been fraught with disagreement & controversy. It's an umbrella with nothing much under it.

The LCCs to me are the spirit & soul of Syria's revolution; they plan the protests and nonviolent events.

The FSA itself is struggling to form a unified front or chain of command. For a while it was more an address than an army.



EA WorldView

Lessons from the Resignation of the Syrian National Council's Burhan Ghalioun

"Burhan Ghalioun, the President of the Syrian National Council, resigned today. He was re-elected on Tuesday to a three-month term by the executive board, but simultaneously accused of weak leadership by other members of the Syrian opposition" [.....] "The resignation is not immediate, suggesting that perhaps Ghalioun will not stand down if the adequate "replacement" is not discovered"

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Syria Tracker

14,887 documented killings in Syria, March 18, 2011 thru May 18, 2012

[For The Full Repot & Graphs](#)



AlAyyam English

Students Make History at Aleppo University

*"Today, Thursday the 17th of May, 2012, was a historic day for Syria in general and Aleppo in particular. United Nations monitors — part of Annan's plan to bring the "crisis" in Syria to a peaceful resolution— visited the University of Aleppo. They were received by thousands of students chanting against the regime and demanding the release of detainees" [.....] **"This is the classroom of the Syrian revolution, and it's taught Bashar Assad a lesson: the educated youth are refusing you, they saw through your nonsense and they are unimpressed. This is the University of Aleppo, where the Baath-designed, Assadized educational system broke down and screamed back at the regime, declaring that the battle on the higher planes of knowledge has been settled"***

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Tripoli: Syrian Crisis Has Crystallized the Existing Divides in Lebanon



NOW Lebanon

Rage and arms in Tripoli

*"Sunni Muslim Shadi al-Mawlawi's arrest on Saturday, which triggered the violence, is not convincing. He was detained by officials from the Lebanese General Security, an institution that is controlled by Hezbollah and Amal and that is not usually involved in this kind of arrest. It is as if the stage was being set to ignite rage among Islamists in Tripoli, and that's exactly what happened" [.....] **"The Facebook groups' posts called for jihad, lobbying Muslims "to join their brothers in the streets and never go home before all Islamists prisoners are released from Roumieh Prison."** The issue was not about Shadi al-Mawlawi; they wanted to defeat the state and "end the injustice."*



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Alakhbar News

Trouble in Tripoli: Syrian Crisis Shifts the Stage

"The events in Tripoli, North Lebanon over the weekend in which seven people were killed and over a dozen injured have exposed the city's many fault lines" [.....] "The operation began at 1pm. The mission was completed in three hours: Tripoli fell to the so-called Salafis. Conservative Islamists make up only 20 percent of the residents of Lebanon's second largest city. But, in a moment of official neglect, the Salafis took control of Tripoli"



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Hariri Brings Down the Regime

"Saad Hariri has explained, from behind his computer screen, what he meant in his earlier televised speech, which left everyone confused, when he declared that he wanted to bring down the regime" [...] "From now on, and on every day until election day - he had said - action must be taken to overthrow the regime. On Thursday, he came back to clarify what regime it is that he wants to topple"

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Octavia Nasr

Syria's Pain in Lebanon's Neck

"Today, Lebanon's divisions over Syria are not the same as a year ago. Tripoli today is not the same as the one of 1990 or 2005 or 2008 or even 2011. As many of the same suspicious players would spare no time or energy to create havoc in Tripoli and spread the tensions beyond Lebanon's north in the hope of distracting the attention from Syria's troubles, as many new and fresh voices and able bodies are willing and capable to fight back"

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Algeria

Parliamentary Elections #10MaiToz – Powerlessness & Widespread Disillusionment



Egypt Independent

The Arab Spring and Algeria's shrinking Islamist Bloc

"Algerian voter turnout proved to be significantly higher than predicted by most observers. 42.91 percent of registered Algerians participated – seven percent more than in 2007. Second, and possibly with region-wide ramifications, Algerian voters bucked a major trend of the so-called "Arab Spring": Islamist victory at the urns. Islamists won neither a majority nor did they come close to winning a plurality of seats in the new parliament. In fact, the five-party Islamist bloc won a combined 59 seats in the new parliament, one less than in 2007, with an overall loss of three percent of total parliamentary share" [...] "What seems clear, however, is that the elections bucked two expectations: low participation and relative Islamist gains.

How this affects the rest of the region remains to be seen, though embattled secularists in the region surely feel they have been given a lifeline"

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Brian Whitaker

Algerian election: disillusion prevails

"What the vote does reflect is not so much public apathy as a sense of powerlessness, and widespread disillusionment with Algeria's supposed "progress" towards democracy. There is a fin de siècle air about the regime but no real possibility of change until President Bouteflika goes – which should be in 2014 unless ill health forces him out of office earlier"

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Ufuk Ulutas

Algeria's election was a fraud

"Allegations of electoral fraud have been widespread since the government announced on May 11 that the turnout was 42.9 per cent, with the government's ruling parties winning an overwhelming majority of the votes. The Green Alliance of Islamist parties accused the government of "perpetrating widespread fraud". Similar allegations were made by the secular Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD). The Algerian National Front said it would challenge the results in the constitutional court over what party leader Moussa Touati called "blatant fraud", while Ali Laskri, leader of the opposition Socialist Front Forces (FFS), said that Thursday's vote "was riddled with irregularities"

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Arabist

Dispatch: The Algerian Exception?

"As it turns out, asking Algeria experts why there was no "Arab Spring" in Algeria, could possibly be the equivalent of asking the inane post 9/11 query of "why do they hate us?" They do get tired of that. One answer is that Algeria had its spring in 1988 when angry riots over a failed system broke out around the country necessitating a massive army crackdown that killed 500 people — roughly proportional to the numbers that died in Tunisia and Egypt's 2011 revolutions. The result was a multiparty system ahead of its time, some fairly free elections and then... well, the military coup, the Islamist rebellion and 10 lost years of grinding bloodshed as the military that built that country made sure it didn't have to let it go"

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weddady

Algeria Now 'Anchor of Stability' in Region

"Algeria has voted, and nothing has changed. As always, the National Liberation Front (FLN) of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was the clear winner. Bouteflika has been in office since 1999. Together with the RND, the party of Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, the mildly conservative FLN earned a comfortable absolute majority in parliament, which anyway is largely powerless. The Islamists ended up relegated to third place"

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Palestinian

It's All About the Rights



Electronic Intifada

Palestinians in Egypt insist on right to return by Rami Almeghari

"Said Mohammad al-Shorbajy wants to die in Palestine. "That is my only wish, which I hope God will grant me," he said. An ailing man in his late sixties, he is originally from Jaffa, a Palestinian city now in Israel. He has lived in the Egyptian coastal city of Alexandria for the past four decades. His

father, Mohammad, was a fishmonger in Jaffa. During the Nakba — the wave of ethnic cleansing that led to Israel’s establishment in 1948 — his family was forced from their home. At that time, Said, who is also known as Abu Mohammad, was only three years old"

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#PalHunger – Game Over

Details emerge of Israeli concessions that ended historic Palestinian mass hunger strike

The written agreement contained **five main provisions**:

- the prisoners would end their hunger strike following the signing of the agreement;
- There will be an end to the use of long-term isolation of prisoners for “security” reasons, and the 19 prisoners will be moved out of isolation within 72 hours;
- Family visits for first degree relatives to prisoners from the Gaza Strip and for families from the West Bank who have been denied visit based on vague “security reasons” will be reinstated within one month;
- The Israeli intelligence agency guarantees that there will be a committee formed to facilitate meetings between the IPS and prisoners in order to improve their daily conditions;
- There will be no new administrative detention orders or renewals of administrative detention orders for the 308 Palestinians currently in administrative detention, unless the secret files, upon which *administrative detention is based, contains “very serious” information.*

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Addameer

Progress for Prisoners' Movement: Palestinian Prisoners' Mass Hunger Strike Concludes After Agreement is Reached

"After nearly a full month of fasting, around 2,000 Palestinian political prisoners ended last night their mass hunger strike upon reaching an agreement with the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) to attain certain core demands. Addameer lauds these achievements of the prisoners' movement and can only hope that Israel will implement any policy changes in good faith.

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New Voices from Gaza



Amr Ezzat

Must Read! Ice cream in Gaza

"I learned from Gazan bloggers that their freedom of expression and movements are closely watched by the Hamas government. Some of them were arrested for content they posted on Facebook, while others were beaten and detained for taking part in marches that were staged without obtaining permission from Hamas, whether the purpose was to end divisions between Fatah and Hamas or to protest deteriorating living conditions"

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All Roads Ultimately Lead Back to the Negotiating Table



Ibishblog (Senior Research Fellow at the American Task Force on Palestine)

Beware "Creative Alternatives"

As Israel's experiences in Gaza and southern Lebanon demonstrate, when there isn't a party on the other side with a vested interest in making an arrangement work, unilateralism in this conflict provides no solutions whatsoever. By contrast, Israel's peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt have been maintained by all sides, because they all have a stake in making them work" [.....] "Whatever "creative alternatives" might seem appealing during the current interregnum, remember all roads ultimately lead back to the negotiating table"

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