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Egypt Presidency Race – First Round

Days Before: A Second-Best President for Egypt



CFR

Why Are Egypt's Presidential Elections Significant?

Bassem Sabry (Egyptian writer and blogger):

If what Egypt ends up becoming is a beacon of inspiration, the rest of the Arab world won't be long to follow. If Egypt fails, a new reactionary phase might just take hold.

Abdel Monem Said Aly (Columnist, *Al Ahram* Newspaper):

1. *It will define the "democratic path" of the Egyptian revolution. After fair and free legislative elections, having another one for the president makes democratic practice a tradition.*
2. *It will configure the political balance in Egypt between democratic and Islamic rule.*
3. *It will do what Egypt always does: spread the word of democracy, rule of law, influence of the media, etc. for the rest of the region*

Dalia Ezzat (Egyptian commentator on Middle East affairs):

***Two years ago we were psychologically preparing ourselves for Gamal Mubarak to become our next president**. The upcoming elections which came as a direct result of the revolution have introduced a concept that has been foreign to the Egyptian political scene over the last thirty years. And this is why **regardless of the outcome, it will be historic**.*

Ehab Elzelaky (Managing Editor, *Al Masry Al Youm* Newspaper):

*If the election came by a pro-revolution president then we will move forward in building our new country based on freedom, justice, and social improvement. If nothing else, most of us think that this will start another round of revolt. [...] Finally**, this is the first election which results we do not know in advance**.*

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Mahmoud Salem

Ok, so if we end up with a run-off that has Either Morsy, Shafiq or Fotouh, who would you rather win? And think long-term here.

If Abulfotouh wins, it's the beginning of the truly Islamic presidential project: if he is good, then why not a more Islamic candidate?

And if Abulfotouh ends up bad, the argument could be made that he wasn't Islamist enough, with the MB getting another shot at the presidency

If Shafiq wins, he will get the support of Felool and Kanaba, but will have the revolutionaries; Salafis & MB's opposing him. **Back 15 months.**

We will end up, yet again, where we started last year, with the **secularists divided, with a more severe battle this time with same results**.

Shafiq will be removed, another election will take place, the Islamists will roll over the revolutionaries & secularists will be over.

If **Morsy wins**, he will unite the secularist camps: Revolutionaries, Kanaba and Felool against him, alongside the Noor Party. **Open war**

In that case**, reconciliation** between the secular forces would be inevitable, & they will **alongside the Salafis attack the MB for fun**.

Once the MB is destroyed, you will have a unified secular camp, and a strong Salafi Camp. Then we'll have clear competing visions. A balance.

I want the culture war; I want clear defined lines between 2 camps instead of six. I want the battle of ideas to finally begin in earnest.

I want secularists to stop being wussies and state that they want a secular state, and absolute civil rights & freedoms. Not this bullshit

So just to make it clear, before this election is decided, I say it loud & proud: **I am a secular person & want no religion in politics EVER!**



Sara Labib

The War of Words in Egypt

"In this delicate time in Egypt's history, it's important to consider the implications of what we say and how it could set a trend that would greatly

harm Egypt in its quest to become an open, tolerant and free country, not only politically, but also, and most importantly, socially and culturally"

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Khaled Al Khamissi

"The truth is, this election is worthless, for it is being conducted in a society that lacks a healthy political life, one that lacks genuine parties and political powers. This election will bring a useless president who will be unable to change the structure of the old regime" ***Hope lies in the revolutionary and social mobility. Change will come from the bottom, at the hands of the hundreds of movements, coalitions and blocs that emit hope. It is this that will change the face of Egypt****"*



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During: Cautious Optimism - Historical Moment



Nadia El-Awady

Why the 2012 Egyptian Presidential Elections Make Me Want to Barf

"I still don't know who to choose for president. I think that each of them is as bad as the other. I'm not even sure I want to go and vote at the end of this week. When I vote, I want to know why I'm voting for x, y, or z. I don't want to vote for the sake of voting. If I can't decide who to vote for by Thursday, I'll wait to see the results of the first round of elections. Maybe when the results come out I'll have some sort of a revelation as to whom I must go vote for when the selection is only between two. All I can tell you right now is that my current sentiment towards the Egyptian presidential elections is: BARF"

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Bassem Sabry

Final Thoughts before These Inspiring and Depressing Presidential Elections

"I will go as an Egyptian to the polling station with both an inspired and elated mind, and a genuinely heavy heart. Perhaps there is too much bleakness in these words above, and perhaps much of it is an expression of frustration with the more negative sides of democracy as it exists in the world, but believe me when I say that I remain hopeful. I truly remain hopeful not just out of a survivalist need to be hopeful, but also out of true conviction that there is so much to be hopeful for, and so much to be hopeful from"

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Quick Guide: The lowdown on Egypt's presidential frontrunners

With days to go before Egypt goes to the polls in the country's first credible multi-candidate presidential elections, Bassem Sabry gives a rundown on what people in the street say for and against the main candidates

Read The Full Rundown



Hatem Rushdy

Presidential Elections: Two Thoughts

"Two thoughts go through my mind when I see all these people lined up for an election WITHOUT a pre-determined winner: 1. WE'VE ALREADY WON! and 2. This is a game-changer for the Middle East"



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Andrew Hammond

Eyes Wide Shut: Egypt on the Eve of #EgyElex

"Ultimately no one really has a clue though. The polls released have all been suspect: limited groups of people, held at early stages and military-security possible messages intended to the public on the inevitably of a Moussa or Shafik success. And we don't even know what powers the winner will have, which makes a bit of a mockery of the programs they've put forward and argued over. But there's no question this is exciting; people sense this is a historic moment not just for Egypt but the region"



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David Kenner

"I've voted…God help us."

"It's done. I walked into the school where my voting station is. I said a short prayer to God before proceeding. "God, if there is good in this choice of mine, then make it easy for me. If there is no good in this choice of mine, then make it difficult for me. You, alone, know where our best interests lie." [….] "It's done. I'm still going to avoid my friends' political Facebook statuses for a while. I'm going to do my best to take the weekend off from politics and relax. I'll be interested to follow the results. ***But whoever wins in this round, it will not be a life-changing event for me. I will continue to observe. And hope. And pray"***

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Arwa Salah Mahmoud

I Voted for President. It Made Me Remember

"We need a president that will help us build that system. That solid rock hard system that will assure that a corrupt president will be put on trial. If we have that system I don't care who nominates themselves in the next round. *Thoughts rumbling around in my head, beating each other for my attention. No we're not there yet. But*

we have nothing but our vote so we cast it, hoping that we've made the right choice. Now all I can do is pray that the right person for the right moment would win, WHOEVER that person maybe"

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Mahmoud Salem

*"**Egypt's presidential election has one last achievement to add to the list of the revolution's accomplishments so far: it has killed all ideologies.** We have leftists supporting an Islamist candidate and liberals supporting a Nasserite leftist. There is a revolutionary workers-rights candidate who didn't get the support of the workers and ended up only getting nominated by M.P. signatures from parties that he considered anti-revolutionary. And there are revolutionaries who bitterly opposed strong executive powers who are now begging for a constitution that doesn't turn Egypt into a parliamentary system now that the Islamists have taken over the parliament. **It's a fine mess with a million and one questions, all begging for black-and-white clarity. So far, the answers are clear as gray**"*

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Lauren E. Bohn

Christians in Egypt: A storm within the storm.

"Copts have suffered discrimination throughout hundreds of years of history in Egypt. Individual Copts have also been great Egyptian nationalists and leading thinkers, industrialists and artists who are frequently quick to point out that Muslims and Christians are like brothers in Egypt. It's a complex relationship – as fraught as any sibling rivalry. But what is clear as Egypt takes its first faltering steps toward electing a civilian president, is that a democracy and the constitution upon which it is based are defined in how the rights of minorities are protected. Today Copts are left wondering and worrying about their place in a new Egypt"

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The Day After: Disappointment & Depression & Pessimism



Michael Hanna

After Egypt Elects a President, What Happens to SCAF?

"Following the hand over, SCAF will be forced to operate in more discreet fashion and its ambitions will be challenged by other political actors. But its approach to the presidential election should serve as an indication that SCAF will continue to exercise power selectively from behind the scenes and that limiting its political role and influence will be among the key tests for whether Egypt's multi-year transition will be deemed a success"

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Arabist

My Belated Take on Egypt's Elections

"This election is the beginning of the end of the transition period (if defined as return to civilian government). Its outcome will be a new president for Egypt, and — apart from the writing of a new constitution — the bizarre interregnum launched by the referendum on constitutional amendments that took place in March 2011, a little over a month after Mubarak stepped down. The electoral process is attracting a lot of media frenzy inside and outside Egypt, and a not inconsiderable (if often mixed) level of enthusiasm among Egyptians, since it is the first election in which the outcome is not obvious to all. No doubt turnout will be high, and hopefully the voting process itself not too flawed since one would think the military regime now in charge can't afford to blatantly rig the poll. But, ***globally, we'll see Egyptians excited about having a real choice before them rather than an obvious outcome, and a real sense of uncertainty about who might win****"*

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Elazul

Don't panic and carry a Bashkeer: The results of the Presidential Elections

"Egyptian politics are not clear cut; the reason for the vast difference in trends between the referendum, parliamentary elections, and presidential

elections are due to the complex network of ideologies, loyalties, and thought processes that overlap and diverge on different points" [.....] "If each candidate represents their ideology, then the MB has a 26.38% approval rating, The Military and former regime have a 23.00% approval rating (four times lower than what various polls have been stating for over a year, then again, almost every poll conducted in Egypt so far has been completely wrong, so why wouldn't this one be?), and the ideals of the revolution have a combined approval rating of 50.62%"

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Iyad El-Baghdadi

Complete Tabulated (preliminary) Results - Here

Atheism from "Non-Percent" to a Growing Phenomenon



Fouad

The Arab Spring and the Coming Crisis of Faith

"In fact, there are many narratives that predict the failure of the Islamist project. In Egypt, Islamists face a weak economy, high unemployment, a collapsing public health sector, a power struggle with the ruling military and exaggerated post-revolutionary aspirations. After an embarrassing performance in Parliament, the Islamist majority have encountered mounting public criticism, internal defections and a deteriorating legitimacy. One report has already found that 45% of those who voted for the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party candidates would not do so again"

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Is It Really Have To Be A Zero Sum Game?!



Bassem Sabry

One Way The Morsi - Shafiq Runoff Could Be Good For Egypt?



"The first round of the Egyptian presidential election results has left both the Islamist and revolutionary political camps with a sense of pride

and horrid disappointment" [....] "There is now a sense of heavy-hearted confusion as more progressive and secular-leaning revolutionary Egyptians find themselves torn between three painful options" [.....] "If Muslim Brotherhood responds with this turn towards the center of the spectrum, then Egypt as a whole and the revolution in particular would have won one crucial victory: the country's current most dominant political power transforming, at least for a significant and painfully urgent while, into a more moderate and reconciliatory force"

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Bahrain



The Bumpy Road To The Union



The Gulf Blog

The Gulf Union that Never Was

"The leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council met on 14 May in Riyadh to discuss the formation of a new Gulf Union. This Union was to entail even closer relations between the states. In particular there were high expectations that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain would form some kind of a deep Union, potentially as a pilot before the other states joined. Or so it was thought. Instead, essentially nothing has emerged from this key meeting. This highlights that while the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) States have common histories and common problems today, there remains key, perennial, and divergent opinions as to the best way to assuage these concerns"

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BHPoliticsBlog

The End of Pragmatism

"As I see it, this phenomenon, toward which Bahrain's ruling family has now decisively shifted, involves two main elements: a political calculation, and an ideological orientation. The political calculation is that the entire economic and political reform model represented by post-1999 King Hamad and Sh. Salman is fundamentally flawed; ***that political stability in Bahrain or elsewhere will never come as a result of placating dissatisfied***

citizens with the promise of economic and (to a lesser extent) political benefits, but by repressing them--if possible with the help of like-minded neighbors"

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Syria

Kurdish Syrian Council: Decentralized Political System



Al-Monitor

Kurdish Syrian Council: Key to Stability is Decentralization

"Abdul-Hakim Bashar is the president of the Kurdish National Council of Syria (KNCS), an organization that gathers 15 Kurdish parties. During an interview with Al-Hayat, he expressed his confidence that the regime of Bashar al-Assad will eventually fall. After his meeting with US officials in Washington last week, Bashar told Al-Hayat that the Obama Administration "welcomed" the positions of the KNCS"

For the Full Interview

#HoulaMassacre

Link to leaked Annan report to Security Council on Syria (May 25th) following the #Houlamassacre



Harald Doornbos

Syria Good map of Houla (area within blue lines): Tanks=army, green=opposition towns, red=pro-Assad, yellow=neutral



Free Syrian Translator

Testimony of Activist Hadi Abdulla on Al Jazeera, speaking about the massacres committed by the Syrian Regime against civilians on 25 May 2012

Three massacres were committed in Hawla City, and more are being committed now 92 martyrs are confirmed in Hawla alone, and more than 300 wounded.

Shakeeb Al-Jabri

In my life I've been too close for comfort to many explosions. Lebanon Civil War, many Israelis strikes, terrorist explosions.

I've seen horrible things & I've lost friends. None of that ever made me feel as angry & helpless as I feel now. #HoulaMassacre

AnonymousSyria

#SOS please stop #Assad and his death gangs by any means. PLEASE PLEASE. :(



Syrians Caught in Crossfire! *Between the Syrian Army and FSA*

Lebanon

The Sunni/Salafi Militia is the Cause Behind Current Tension



Nadim Houry

Lebanon: Elnashra reporting that Judge Saqr approves release of Shadi al-Mawlawi. So is he or is he not al-Qaeda?

Lebanon Either no evidence on al-Mawlawi & General Security has a lot of explaining to do, or evidence but political pressure on judge

Lebanon: Mawlawi's arrest left some 10 dead and at least 70 wounded in Tripoli.



Zeina Khodr

Lebanon interior minister: Mawlawi was released because there were "weak accusations against him"; his arrest sparked tensions/ fighting

Christian leader Aoun says Syria government allegations that north Lebanon is "terrorist hub" are true

Alakhbar News

Beirut Battle: One Night, One Street

"Street battles in Beirut overnight left two people dead; however the Lebanese capital was largely quiet on Monday morning."During the night, groups of young men cut off the road in the Tariq al-Jdideh district and street battles followed," a security official said. "Two people were killed and 18 were wounded," he said, adding that machine guns had been used in the battle. Supporters of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri's Future Movement clashed with their former allies at the Arab Current Party, with fighting continuing until 3.00am. There was also extensive material damage to the area, including the burning of the Arab Current Party headquarters"



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Assad exporting Civil War From Syria to Lebanon



Octavia Nasr

Lebanon's War Never Ended to Start Again



We can learn three lessons from Beirut's Sunday night of violence. The war never ended to fear it starting again. Everyone in Lebanon has arms and is still at war with themselves and the "other." While other Arabs are burning

themselves to demand freedom, in Lebanon people are still "playing" the war "game" where you burn tires, shoot at anything that moves, terrorize innocent people but never demand or achieve Freedom!

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Sami Moubayed (A Syrian university professor, historian, and editor-in-chief of Forward Magazine in Syria)

Lebanon's New Wild Card: Shaker al-Barjawi?

*"The handwriting had been on the wall for weeks, signaling that Lebanon might explode - at any minute.The reason was Syria. For more than a year, battlelines have been clearly drawn between pro-Bashar al-Assad and anti-Assad politicians in Lebanon, with the March 14 Alliance desperate to see regime change in Syria, and Hezbollah and its allies willing to fight until curtain-fall with Syrian officialdom" [....] "**The wild card in the complex Lebanese scene, however, is Shaker al-Barjawi, a veteran of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) who seemingly emerged out of nowhere and is now on everybody's radar**. He has all the credentials needed to lead a Sunni militia that could serve as Hezbollah's proxy in Lebanese domestics. **Little is known about Barjawi beyond the narrow web of Beiruti politics, apart from the fact that he is a staunch supporter of the Syrian regime.***

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A Small Joke - Lebanese Hatred against Syrians



Georgia Paterson Dargham

When One Prejudice Hides Another

*"A Lebanese, a Syrian, and a black man are in a hospital waiting room. All of their wives are in labour. The men are talking anxiously to one another trying to stay calm. Then the doctor walks in and announces that all of their wives have given birth to healthy baby boys all within minutes of each other. The men start celebrating and congratulating each other, but then the doctor says, "But I have a bit of bad news". The men fall silent. He continues, "The nurse got confused and we don't know which boy belongs to whom". At that the Lebanese man runs into the maternity ward and grabs the black baby, yelling, "This one is mine!" The doctor runs after him and objects, "But sir, both you and your wife are white." **The Lebanese man looks at him and***

replies, "Listen, one of the other two is Syrian, I am NOT taking any chances!"

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Iran

Iran and 'Divided' P5+1

CS Monitor

You're So Naïve by Reza Kahlili

"It's hard to overestimate the degree of naiveté on the part of the West as it heads toward another round of nuclear talks with Iran in Baghdad on Wednesday" [.....] "Iran has ruled out the closure of Fordow, even announcing that it will increase the number of centrifuges at that facility. And so far, its strategy of expanding its nuclear program while wearing down the West has already proved successful" [.....] "It is clear that after a decade of negotiations and sanctions, the leaders of the Islamic regime will not accept a full halt to their nuclear program. But given that Iran now has the know-how to make a bomb, that is the only outcome that should be acceptable to the West"

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Iran/Hezbollah Changing Policy towards Israel

Tehran Bureau

Soleimani to Nasrallah: Don't Attack Israel

Major General Ghasem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force (the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps division) further stated to Nasrallah, **"The Zionist regime has become isolated and is facing a crisis of legitimacy, [but] any attacks on it will make it a nation to which injustice has been done, and make us the aggressor and oppressor. This will generate sympathy for Israel that is not in our interest. To free the Al-Aqsa Mosque [Islam's third holiest place, in Jerusalem], we must rely on informing people, not our guns."**

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No Revolution In Sight



Arabist

DISPATCH: ALGERIA'S "NIF"

"Algerians are wary of abrupt political change, but as anyone can attest, Algerians do not shy from confrontation. There was no Arab Spring in Algeria not because Algerians were afraid. ***There was no Arab Spring in Algeria because Algerians did not want it****. Yes, they protested against the state, as they have every week and every month for the last decade, and eventually the state acquiesced to enough of their demands. Yes, Algerians bemoan "le hogra" – the dismissive attitude of state officials to their complaints and petitions – but they see themselves as prideful citizens of the state and the messy, unruly protests in Tunisia and Egypt are unbecoming of them. It is impossible to imagine the scene from December 2011 in Cairo when supporters of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces urinated from the rooftops on to protestors below being reenacted in Algiers"*

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