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Bassem Sabry

Fight club: A concise guide to the controversies over Egypt's new Constitution

"Egypt's second Constituent Assembly is racing to finish the first integral draft of the constitution before the Islamic Holy Month of Ramadan ends three weeks from now. Below is a quick breakdown of the major controversies that the constitution-drafting body still faces: Dissolution, Saluting the flag, Article 2 - "Principles of Legislation", Article 2 - "Other Religions", Freedom of Religion and Divine Religions, Ethnicity, Form of Government, Identity of Egypt, Sovereignty, Workers and Farmers, Free Education and Healthcare, The Military, Bicameralism, Egypt is a "Consultative" State, Egypt is a "Civil" State"

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H.A. Hellyer

The Battle for Al-Azhar

"Many questions remain. Did the first post-Mubarak, civilian led government consider changing the religious establishment in this manner, especially with this kind of appointment? ***Does this represent a deepening of influence of purist Salafism within the Muslim Brotherhood? Does the MB intend to use its partisan political power in the future to accomplish "religious engineering"****[...]"Clearly, the Egyptian revolution is not over yet, and its outcome will not only affect Egypt"*

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Khalil al-Anani

Islamists and Arab Constitutions

"Many had hoped that the process of drafting a new constitution would serve as a means to restructure and cement political and social relations within the framework of a new and balanced social contract. Unfortunately, it appears that the blinkered vision of some Islamists is turning the process into a

minefield of discord that will entrench the ideological and political polarisation of Egyptian society"

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'Egyptian Third Current' & The Need for Consensus



Bassem Sabry

Egypt Moving Forward

*"**Progressive political groups should unite under an umbrella that allows them to better coordinate their efforts and play a more effective and needed role in national life**" [....] "These progressives must develop a discourse that can reach the people, and they have to establish a true presence on Egypt's streets and rural areas that can allow them to become a popular movement"*

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Michael Hanna

An Elusive Quest for Consensus

*"The Egyptian people are exhausted with the political process and its attendant crises, this understandable fatigue might have the unfortunate effect of masking the grim realities of the political process that will inevitably undermine the possibility of sustainable reform if no alternatives are produced by the country's political leadership. **As ever, Egypt is in desperate need for a consensual approach to politics and change**" [....] "One that can sustain a workable political process while fending off the encroachments of the Egyptian military. This pattern has played out enough to now be very clear: if the Egyptian political class remains divided amongst themselves, consumed with narrow agendas, the SCAF will reap the rewards"*

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New Old Government



Arabist

Cairo's new Cabinet proves how little has really changed



"This new government may not last. New parliamentary elections are expected within weeks, and an unstable political and constitutional backdrop suggest this cabinet is merely a stopgap measure. The appointments buy time for the various actors, big and small, to put their own houses in order and maximise their influence.In a sense we've now seen a return of real politics, unmediated by the micromanagement of security officials. Unfortunately, Egypt can ill afford to wallow in a swamp - or risk wading into quicksand"

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Omar Ashour

Egypt's New Old Government

*"Overall, only ten of the 35 ministries went to pro-change forces, with the other ministers a combination of old-regime figures and technocrats without any publicly declared political affiliation. But the choice of the ten ministries was strategically clever, given the Muslim Brotherhood's coming battles with SCAF. All of these ministries represent low-cost, soft power: official institutions that can enhance pro-change forces' capacity to mobilize, give them religious legitimacy, and remove the threat of judicial repression as they strengthen unofficial networks on the ground" [....] "**The struggle for Egypt thus continues. The "Second Republic" is yet to be born"***

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'Mirage', 'Failed-State', 'Broken-State', No Man Land' 'A Swamp"



Mahmoud Salem

The Mirage State of Egypt

The definition of 'Mirage':

1. An optical illusion caused by atmospheric conditions.
2. Something that appears real or possible but is not.

*"Some people have used terms such as failed state, or a broken state, but neither of those effectively portrays the very unique condition that the country is going through right now. So I made up my own term, to be added to the never ending heap of bullshit political terminology: **The Mirage State. Ladies and Gentlemen, congratulations: you are living in a mirage state"** [.....] "**The good news is that the first step in ending the Mirage State is to recognize it for what it is and demand it to***

be changed, which didn't use to happen before, but is happening now. *The people of the Mirage State of Egypt have just stopped being that, and started to become actual citizens.* ***Hopefully the rest of the state will follow suit****"*

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Entropy

"The Americans always said that an armed society is a polite society, but that notion is being challenged by the sons of pharaohs who are now armed to the teeth and who do not intend to be polite any time soon*" [.....] "We are making history, again, despite our deepest and most sincere wishes not to, or at least not like this.* ***Oh well... I am getting a gun. I suggest you get one too"***

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Egypt-Israel Relation: The Letter That Never Was



The Big Pharaoh

The Sweetness of Giving Power to the Brotherhood

If you want to weaken the MB, give them power! Once the MB turn from being the oppressed political group into the ruling class, their holy halos start to disintegrate. People see them as they truly are: a group after its own self-interests just as any other political entity. During Mubarak, they have promised that "Islam is the solution", today many people are starting to see that religion to the MB is simply a bridge they use to reach their political goals, just like any other religion-based right wing party. During Mubarak, the MB's have championed the cause for Palestine. A few days ago, Morsi sent Shimon Peres a letter. Voila.

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Steven A. Cook

Egypt-Israel Relations: Between Morsy and Peres (Perez)

"One of the stranger episodes of Egypt-Israel relations in the post-Mubarak era occurred yesterday with the emergence of a letter. The letter states, "I am looking forward to exerting our best efforts to get the Middle East peace process back to its right track in order to achieve security and stability for all

*peoples of the region, including that Israeli people." [...] "**If Morsy and his team are not willing to own up to even routine communications with Israel's leadership, it is not a good sign. The bilateral relationship cannot possibly be in the black forever**"*

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Tarek Radwan

The Thank You Letter that Never Was: A Brief Breakdown

"There can only be three possibilities to this story: A rogue instigator "fabricated" the letter to create a diplomatic kerfuffle. A member of the Egyptian diplomatic corps responded on President Morsi's behalf.Morsi ordered the letter written, or wrote it himself, but later denied sending it. The last possibility is the most likely, and truly the most troubling" [..] "If one assumes he did indeed write the letter, his spokesman's adamant denial that he ever wrote a response to an ordinary diplomatic communiqué reflects a disturbing conflict within Morsi. It portrays a man unsure of his position, whether as an objective statesman or an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood in the office of the executive"

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#Sinai – What's Next?



Lina Attalah

Sinai contested: Outlaws, Islamists, Israel and army

*"**The relationship between the army and the Bedouins is so strong and it is showcased in the current campaign**," says Delh, who sees in it a beginning for a potential attribution of more security functions to the tribes. "Outside cities, the Bedouins should be given legal authority to maintain security within their tribes, as was the case before [the Israeli occupation in] 1967," he says. Saad also sees no real threat from Islamists. For him, unlike the Bedouins, the real threat "**lies in the lack of proper state institutions in Sinai." He goes on to express his desire for a civil renaissance in post-revolution Sinai**, saying that with no civil state, "Sinai will be tossed to the winds."*

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Nervana Mahmoud

A Road Map for Sinai

*" Here is my suggestion—a six-step action plan to save Sinai from another gloomy fate: Step One—Acknowledgment, Step Two—Public Engagement, Step Three—Containing Gaza, Step Four—Change the Mindset, Step Five—Logistics, Step Six—A Gaza fund" [....] "**Many in Gaza benefit from the cheap prices of smuggled goods- taxed by Hamas- and it is not in their interest to stop this lucrative trade, that is why a joint economic projects between north Sinai and Gaza is a must plan for the future. The fund I suggested is a short–term solution. Long term, Gaza need a new political dynamics and long-term economical projects**"*

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Arabist

On The Attacks in Sinai

*"Egypt needs a comprehensive Sinai policy alongside a clear policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that makes clear its commitment to justice for Palestinians, Palestinian reconciliation, and refusal to be dragged into a confrontation with Israel or Hamas. **Ending the blockade of Gaza, pushing for Palestinian reconciliation, restoring order in Sinai and addressing its inhabitants' grievances: this is what has to be done to avoid a repeat of this. One fears that Egypt, being so politically divided, is hardly in a position to take up this challenge**"*

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The Egypt Monocle

Morsi's Sinai Front

"The Sinai effect, however, was not only external. Indeed the crisis has served to justify a much overdue shuffle in sensitive strategic political positions, just as "Operation Eagle" promising to quash Sinai militants threatens to further embroil Morsi in a more inflamed internal conflict; one that may in fact require a bulletproof vest"

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The "Kurdish Spring": Between the KNC-PYD-PKK- SNC

NewsFeed

Ankara Looks to Iraq's Barzani Amid the "Kurdish Spring"

*"Before Davutoglu left for Erbil, he said **Ankara would not accept Syria becoming "another Lebanon"**. He added that **Turkey would have "no red lines" about a settlement, provided the plans dealt with the position of the Kurdish Democratic Union (PYD),** the Syrian branch of the outlawed Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)"[....] **"Ankara faces its recurring problem: in its search for a post-Assad settlement in Syria involving the Kurds, it cannot escape the situation of the Kurds inside its borders**"*

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Rudaw



PYD Leader (Salih Muslim) Denies Turkish Claims that His Group Works with Syrian Regime

"It [Turkey] has revealed its worries concerning this matter, because we have the same complex with the Kurds in Turkey, and the Turkish government is afraid of any potential decentralized Kurdish rule in Syria. That will absolutely affect the Kurdish situation in Turkey and will represent a threat to the unity of Turkey."

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SNC Leader (Abdulbasit Sieda): Erbil Meetings Were No Coincidence

*"The Arabs and Christians in Hasaka acknowledge that a great injustice has been committed against the Kurds and the traces of that injustice need to be resolved. These representatives, who are also representatives of the SNC, have a special role among the Arab tribes and Christians of that area. Their visit to the Kurdistan Region is meant to **emphasize that the Kurdish question will be resolved within the broader Syrian national project**"*

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HÜSNÜ MAHALLİ

Turkey: Cornering Syria's Kurds

"Turkey opens talks with neighboring Kurdish leaders in a bid to ensure that Syrian Kurds do not become a threatening force. Meanwhile, fierce battles continue in eastern Turkey between government troops and fighters of the Kurdistan Workers Party" [....] "The Turkish military has long used pilotless drones bought from the US and Israel to track Kurdish fighters in the border area and inside Iraqi Kurdistan"

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Al-Monitor

Syrian Kurds' Lack of Unity Hurts Their Political Options, Strategies

"Given its repeated withdrawals from ***Syrian opposition conferences, the Kurdish National Council (KNC) in Syria is set to act as an independent political body which represents Syrian Kurds at the internal, regional and international political levels****" [...] The KNC expresses this inclination through its full "consensus on schizophrenia" with the Syrian National Council (SNC), reached since the Istanbul meeting on March 27, as a result of the escalation of its internal political conflict with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian-Kurdish affiliate of the PKK "*

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The Untold Story



Samar Yazbek

An Alawite woman on her time with FSA fighters in Syria

"Saraqib was one of the first towns to come out against the regime. The punishment was severe — siege, bombing, arrests and killing. Now it has five groups of FSA battalions to protect it. Still, there are government snipers in the middle of town, with their headquarters inside the state radio and television building. There are nine in all; each works a four-hour shift in the building, which is protected by a tank that shells the town from time to time. Once, when the F.S.A"

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Arabist

Syria: The Untold Story?

"We are getting only the vaguest possible references to the description and sources of all that new weaponry, the training of FSA cadres, and how much it is costing to build a new army from scratch. Since the folks doing it are generally friends, not enemies, and therefore much more accessible, wouldn't you think that our enterprising media would be coming up with exclusive reports almost every day about how it is being done? Is this simply a tacit agreement to avoid embarrassing allied governments? It seems to me that a curtain of silence has been drawn over this very important aspect of the Syria story. Am I missing something?"

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#Aleppo



Mary Fitzgerald

The Syrian Rebels' Libyan Weapon

*"Sitting in an empty classroom flanked by several Syrian and Libyan fighters, a **soft-spoken Libyan-born Irish citizen named Mahdi al-Harati explains how he came to be the leader of Liwa al-Ummah**. The brigade emerged, he says, after several Syrians, aware of his experience as commander of the Tripoli Brigade during the Libyan revolution, approached him about founding a similar outfit in Syria" [.....]"There are so many different factions, objectives, and ideologies." Harati nods before sighing: "**The complexity of the situation here makes me feel like we were just playing games in Libya last year**."*

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Mike Giglio

The Battle for Aleppo: Assad Regime's Black Eye

"As Aleppo burns, Syria's regime is gradually losing its image as a well-oiled and organized military machine—and Assad may be more vulnerable than many once thought"

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Syria's Number One Man in Lebanon was Arrested



Al-Akhbar English

The Arrest of Michel Samaha: A Bold Mysterious Move

"Former minister and intelligence operative Michel Samaha was arrested. Many see his detention and the still-unknown accusations against him as punishment for his extraordinarily close ties to the Assad regime"[.....] "Regardless of his leadership and official posts in some parties, an informed source describes Samaha as Syria's number one man in Lebanon. Certainly, in the last five years, he was the one with the greatest knowledge of what was being concocted in Damascus' halls of power"

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Elias Muhanna

Syria's Man in Lebanon Arrested: Three Reasons to Pay Attention

"The silver-tongued politician, well-known for his close ties to the Syrian government and its allies in Lebanon, was arrested Thursday morning at his home in a Beirut neighborhood" [...] "There seems to be a hidden war taking place between Lebanon's military-intelligence branches. So far, there have been few public casualties of that war, but if the stakes keep rising as they did today, that may change rapidly"

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The Fight against the Transfer of Weapons



Nasser Charara

Riyadh to Beirut: A Post-Assad Ultimatum

In a letter sent from Riyadh to the Lebanese government regarding weapons smuggling out of Syria, the Saudi authorities are in effect asking Lebanon to join the pro-opposition "Friends of Syria" group under Washington's leadership" [....] ***it should be noted that the fight against the transfer of weapons from Syria to "rogue and terrorist" groups, under any circumstances, is normally the responsibility of the coordinating***

committee between the Lebanese and Syrian armies. *This should be the case, unless the Lebanese government also agrees that Syria is a failed state, based on the criteria of the "Friends of Syria."*

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Saudi Arabia

Media Battle: Al Jazeera's vs. Al Arabiya – Head to Head in Syria



Sultan Al Qassemi

Breaking the Arab News

*"**A large segment of Al Jazeera's and Al Arabiya's audiences, appalled by the Syrian regime's brutality, no doubt genuinely believes that this is strictly a battle of good versus evil**. For the Saudi and Qatari governments, however, Syria's fate directly affects their political future -- they want to see the fall of the regime for either personal or strategic reasons. The looming end of Assad's Syria is yet another chapter in the transformation of the old Arab state order, which began with the fall of Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the end of Hosni Mubarak's Egypt. **It is a story that is simply too important to be left in the hands of media outlets looking to advance their own narrow interests.**"*

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Monira AlQadiri

Arab Spring Overdose?

***During the Arab spring, Al Jazeera's popularity exploded because it was the only channel that continuously broadcast the entirety of the revolution from Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen to Libya" [...]** "It was sensational, moving, and shaped the imagination of its viewers about current events **(Al Arabiya was also quick to copy these inserts to catch up on the "drama" that it was missing out on**). In other words, the agenda was already there for everyone to see. Al Jazeera already had a completely pro-revolution, one-sided biased position by all standards. Neutrality never existed. The only difference was that if you – the viewer –*

were for or against the revolution when you tuned in. At the time, a regime sympathizer or "felool" would not watch Al Jazeera, in the same way a pro-Israeli would not watch it either.

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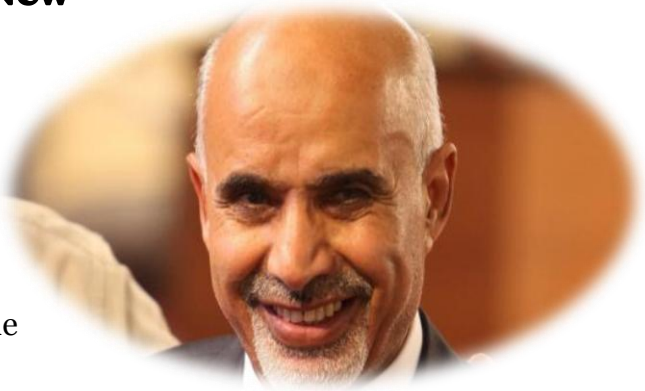
Libya

Dr. Mohammed Al-Migariaf: The New Head of #NGC (National General Congress)





Dr.Mustafa Abushagur

Congratulations to Dr. Mohammed Almigariaf for being elected Chairman of NGC. This is a culmination of his struggle against the former regime.



Umar Khan

Mohammed Magarief: From Libya's most hunted man to National Congress speaker

"The journey from being the most hunted man by the Qaddafi regime to the head of the Libyan Congress also affected Magarief's personal life. His family was made to relocate several times following constant threats to their lives. Magarief's son Asma recalls living in constant fear of being spied on, but feeling proud of his fathers' work. "Because of his line of work, we had to relocate a lot and lose our friends in the process but we knew that he was working for the country and we always felt proud."

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Rana Jawad

New Libya parliament elects Mohammed Magarief as head

"Libya's newly elected interim assembly has elected former opposition activist Mohammed Magarief as its president, a day after it assumed power.Mr Magarief is from Libya's second city, Benghazi, where the uprising against Gaddafi originated. He spent two decades in exile in the United States"

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Libyan Tweep Forum

Head of Libya's new national assembly pledges neutrality

"The head of Libya's newly-empowered national assembly Mohamed al-Megaryef pledged on Friday to remain neutral and seek to unite ranks in the country, where post-revolution divisions are still deep. "My main duty is to stand aside, away from political, regional and tribal considerations," Megaryef said as he presided over the first official meeting of the General National Congress"

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Palestinians



Egyptian Policy toward Gaza: 'Open-Rafah'

Sameeha Elwan

Do Palestinians expect too much from Egypt?

"Today, there is again a talk of a permanent opening of the Rafah border. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been pinning their hopes on the new Egyptian president, Mohammed Morsi, to put an end to the frequent closures which frequently take place under the heading of 'security reasons', i.e., the Hamas government. However, talk of the permanent opening of the Rafah border does not indicate that those previously mentioned restrictions shall be lifted. The Rafah border is still closed to trade and to the import of some basic construction materials which means that the 5-year-seige is still in effect. It also means that people will still be using the alternative tunnel trade which has now become the alternative means of getting to and from the Gaza Strip"

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Rana B. Baker

Why are we in Gaza being punished for Egypt border guard killings?

"Tantawi and his supporters need to be reminded once more that Palestinians have always demanded that our dignity be respected. Neither the closure of the tunnels nor any political decision in the world can break

our determination and belief in our right to freedom, return and equality. Tantawi and his ilk need to contemplate the steadfastness of our hunger strikers in Israeli jails to understand that Palestinians are dying to live"

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