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Egypt Draft Constitution: The Debate Continues!



Zaid Al-Ali

Egypt's Draft Constitution: An Analysis

*"**Egypt's draft constitution is firming up. It includes 231 articles, and includes most of the sections that one would expect (such as fundamental rights, separation of powers, and decentralisation).** At this stage, it has become likely that the draft will be complete by December 2012 - which is when the assembly is due to complete its work, in accordance with the interim constitution - and that a referendum will take place shortly thereafter. While the results of the referendum are uncertain, the draft (and the process through which it was prepared) provide a good indication of how the Egyptian state is likely to evolve in the short to medium term"*

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Ashraf Khalil

The Document That May Define the New Egypt: Why the Constitution Matters

*"At the heart of the controversy is the Constituent Assembly, a 100-member body formed earlier this year by the since-disbanded Egyptian Parliament. The Assembly's work has been fraught with drama from the very start. Secularist members staged an almost immediate walkout claiming the assembly–like the parliament that formed it–was dominated by Islamists. A second, more diverse, assembly was formed but the same core issues have heldsway. Once again, most secularist voices have boycotted meetings, and the small handful that remain (such as former Foreign Minister and failed presidential candidate Amr Moussa) are facing accusations that they're only lending legitimacy to an unfair process. **At this point, it seems impossible to imagine that the document that emerges will reflect any sort of widespread societal consensus**"*

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Bassem Sabry

Egypt's Ten-Year Constitution?

"In a recent Op-Ed In Shorouk, Abdel-Fattah floats the idea of a temporary ten year constitution that - more or less - would include largely only what all forces agree on. After ten years, a new one would be drafted or this one would be extended. Abdel-Fattah then goes on to discuss long-duration and problem-filled constitution-drafting experiences from around the world that would supposedly support his argument.While some criticised Abdel-Fattah for potentially "confusing" and derailing the constitution-drafting process with such ideas, other see the idea itself as useful as a potential way to move the country forward and focus on actual national reconstruction for a while until we sort some of our constitutional stumbling blocks over a comfortable distance of 10 years, Others see the benefit in being a pressure tool against the assembly to finish its work in a more reconciliatory tone"

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Tawadros – The Copts New Pope



Zeinobia

Coptic Conclave



"The Coptic Orthodox Church's conclave to choose the 118th Pope of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church Alexandria has started from an hour ago in the St.Marks Church in Cairo. President Morsi is nowhere to be seen. To be honest I expected not to see him there"

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Morsi': No Plan, No Tools, No Real Executive Power....



Mahmoud Salem

Letter to the president

"When the people elected you they didn't do so in order to watch you make a mockery of the national symbol of the presidency by having you touch your privates, nor did they do it so that you can give us religious sermons that are

*not only boring, but are falsely interpreting the Quran**. They elected you so that you can make things better, fix the country, and create a functioning government. They basically elected you to work, your excellency, but you are not doing your job at all, and it's starting to show. Not only that, but the people are slowly getting the message that this is a government without vision, plans or tools to execute their laws and decisions, and will start ignoring you.** And then the question won't be whether or not the opposition will be able to unseat you or your party in the next elections, but whether there will be a point to another election in the first place, because nobody wants to be part of a government that has no power of execution"*

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Bassem Sabry

Do Morsi and His Government Have a Plan?

"The gist of the problem isn't the shopping-hours law at all, as I mention in the introduction to this article. Rather, the problem is that much of the general governmental performance has been widely criticized for sharing many of the same flaws and uncertainty, especially on economic policy. I will give the government credit for genuinely reaching out in many cases to experts, policy men and technocrats from across the spectrum rather than solely relying on Muslim Brotherhood and Freedom and Justice Party manpower, and for being thus far substantially pragmatic rather than primarily ideological in their approach. This is undoubtedly a vital part of the requisite spirit of governance in this particular time. But the concern remains that much of the government's effort appears to be ad-hoc and isolated initiatives that lack depth and preparation"

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The Pro-Sharia Protest: Is This the Return of Abu-Ismail?!



Zeinobia



#Sharia_Friday: What Sharia are you speaking about!?

"The main parties participating in this Friday are The Salafist Front and its newly found People Party and Al Gamaa Al Islamiyaa and its political Party Building and Development Party. Other Islamist parties like Al Asala are participating as well other Islamist groups like Hazem Abu Ismail related groups. "Hazemoon and Lazm Hazem.. etc."

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The Big Pharaoh

Understanding Yesterday's Pro-Shariah Protest

"This explains what happened in Tahrir. It was much more than a group of parties calling for Shariah. What we saw yesterday was a show of power by those fringe Islamist parties that did not benefit much from post revolution Egypt. It was their way of telling us "hey, we are here. Don't think the MB and Nour are the only big guys here, we are big too and we managed to fill Tahrir". Yesterday's crowd included Hazem Abu Ismael, the presidential candidate who got delisted because his mother held dual nationality. Yesterday was his come back"

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SNI: "Riad Seif Initiative"





Shane Farrell

Divisions emerge at Syria opposition conference

The Syrian National Council (SNC), the main opposition group and once-great hope for proponents of regime change, has long been marred by infighting, defections and accusations of Muslim Brotherhood dominance, as well as of being out of touch with Syrians on the ground. In its lieu as the main opposition body, leading Western nations and many opposition activists outside the SNC have pushed for the creation of the Syrian National Initiative (SNI), a coalition of representatives from different opposition groups. The proposal, put forward by prominent opposition activist Riad al-Seif, has grand aspirations to channel foreign assistance to fighters in Syria, administer liberated territories, secure international recognition and lead the country through a transitional period"

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The Syrian National Initiative Plan - Full text



Syrian News

Syrian National Initiative" (SNI) - The next staged "Syrian" government in exile

"The "Syrian National Council" (SNC), largely dominated by the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, has hinted that it rejects the U.S. approach, but it did not clarify whether it completely rejects the approach, or just rejects it in order to haggle for a better deal with Washington. The U.S. State Department has indicated that it is willing to give the "Syrian National Council" (SNC) fifteen of 50 seats in the new leadership, which is cobbled together by Washington. This new leadership, the "Syrian National Initiative" (SNI), will hold a meeting in Doha on Wednesday and Thursday"

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Joshua Landis

Clinton Effort to Create Syrian Government in Exile Collapses

Shortly before the Doha effort to put together a Syrian government in exile collapsed, Ambassador Ford, the State Department's ambassador to the Syrian opposition, inisted to exiles that Syrians must find a "political solution and not a military solution to their problem." He reportedly told Syrian Opposition leaders that the international community will not create a "no fly zone" over Syria and that it will not support the Free Syrian Army militarily." "There is no military solution to the Syrian problem," he insisted. There is only a political solution."

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George Sabra: SNC 's New Head



Malik Al-Abdeh



George Sabra: A man for all seasons?

"What does Sabra think of the Free Syrian Army and its potential role in bringing down Assad through force of arms? He is matter-of-fact about the "militarization of the revolution", regarding it as a natural consequence of the regime's brutal crackdown. Crucially, he does not feel threatened by the boys with Kalashnikovs. "When the military solution takes centre stage there will need to be political solutions to accompany it. Guns eventually will fall silent and will be put aside while politics continues." Guerilla fighters may join the ranks of the unemployed but never the politicians"

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Joshua Landis

Syria Disintegrating

"Various FSA militias are fighting among themselves for checkpoints and border crossings. Car bombs and kidnappings abound. An Islamist car suicide bomber, reportedly from al-Nusra Front, drove into a center used as a base by Syrian security forces and pro-government militia in Hama

province, killing at least 50 people. The poor are plundering the rich. The rich are fleeing in every greater numbers in order not to become targets of the poor. Everyone has a price-tag on his head. Wow to those who have wealthy relatives in the West. The cousin of a friend just went down stairs in Aleppo this morning to find, "You are next. Allahu Akbar" written on the windshield of his car. He called wealthy relatives in the US. They are flying him and his family from Aleppo to Beirut on Friday. Their thinking is that they will spend much more on him when he is kidnapped. It is less expensive to pay for him to leave today than ransom him tomorrow"

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Syria MB's: 30% or Less ...



Hassan Hassan

How the Brotherhood builds power in Syria's opposition

"In Tribal and Kurdish areas have over 30 per cent of the population and are loyal to their local leaders and increasingly to Salafi Islam. Non-Sunnis form 30 per cent of Syria's population and Kurds 9 per cent. ***These bases of ethnic and religious minorities, plus the tribes - altogether making up at least 70 per cent of the population - have been outside the MB's influence in the past and will remain so.*** *Add to that the business community in Aleppo and Damascus, which has historically had social ties with moderate religious clergy and whose interests lie in a secular-leaning government. When the Brotherhood was part of Syria's democratic politics in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the organisation's vote support never rose above 6 per cent (even as it allied itself with other Islamist groups). The MB was perceived as moderate, preaching more about socialism than about Islam. It then alienated minorities when it successfully campaigned to change the constitution to be more Islamic, and engaged in sectarian violence. Finally, it had been subject to a systematic cleansing for over three decades by the Baathist regime"*

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Wissam al-Hassan's Assassination Aftermath



Mustapha Hamoui

How do you Get a Tired Man to Fight?

"I had drifted to the centrist and stability camp, fearing the impetuousness of Hariri and holding my nose at Nadim Koteich's senseless and irresponsible sensationalism. It took time, but I'm now coming around the idea that the choice between chaos without a government and stability with a flawed government is a false choice, and one that is based on fear mongering and the appeasement of a killing machine that wants to rule by intimidation. So how do you get a tired man to fight? You present a plan, you communicated calm, resolve and unity. Today March 14's leaders achieved exactly that"

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Antoine Haddad

Lebanon after the Assassination of Wissam al-Hassan

"The Syrian regime was for decades the main power broker in Lebanon. It started with military means then extended to politics through intimidation, assassination, imprisonment and repression. With the Lebanese state weakening and the social fabric desegregating, sectarian divisions and mistrust became stronger. The Syrian regime was very successful in this game, to the point that nowadays sectarian mistrust may occasionally appear stronger than national solidarity"

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Jordan

#JOReform & The MB's: Worrying Contradictions



Deema Alam Farraj

Worrying Contradictions

"Some classic opposition groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood, call for democracy and want to participate in the Jordanian political decision-making process, yet they would only join the parliamentary elections if they do get majority seats through an Elections Law designed to their liking. So they choose to boycott the elections, go to the streets and create chaos in an attempt to change the law to their benefit by force"

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Kuwait

Kuwaiti Opposition and Musallam Al Barrak



Mona Kareem

Kuwait's Bahraini Scenario

*"Following the recent arrest of Kuwaiti opposition front man Musalam al-Barrak, one can only wonder what the authorities think they're doing. Is this an act of political suicide for the small Gulf emirate, which has always bragged about its relative democracy? Barrak's was not the first arrest of former opposition MPs on charges of defaming the Emir of Kuwait – an act criminalized by the country's 1962 constitution" [....] "**The Kuwaiti authorities are simply failing to realize the dangerous implications of their actions; the more oppression they practice, the more power they grant to the opposition. The authorities are surely fearful of how far the opposition can go with its demands every time they're permitted more space and dealt with diplomatically**. Unfortunately, the authorities have made their choice already by making this a clash with tribes; it is the classical mentality of 'divide and conquer"*

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Gulf News

Who is Musallam Al Barrak?

"Musallam Al Barrak, a former lawmaker and trade union leader, is one of the most vociferous voices in the recent parliaments of Kuwait where he represented the Fourth Constituency. Al Barrak, 56, graduated from the University of Kuwait with a degree in geography. He worked for the Municipal Council and was the head of the employees' trade union.He was named member of the executive board of the Kuwait trade union and was at one time the deputy secretary general of the Arab trade union for municipality employees. Al Barrak, the son of former MP Mohammad Hamad Al Barrak, made his debut in the parliament in 1996 and gradually rose to prominence as a member of the Popular Action Bloc. Political parties are banned in Kuwait"



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Kristin Diwan

Kuwait's Opposition Crosses the Government's Red Lines

On Monday (29.10), Musallam al-Barrak, a prominent opposition leader in Kuwait, was arrested after making comments critical of Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, ruler of the Persian Gulf state. The arrest comes against a backdrop of heightened tensions in Kuwait. The Arab Spring uprisings have worsened relations between Kuwait's ruling family and the elected parliament, and in recent weeks a set of electoral reforms expected to diminish the power of the opposition has been met with violent protests"

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Dignity March 2

Storify

#Kuwait Protests: Second Dignity March

"Kuwait witnessed the second of the anonymously planned Dignity March "Karamat Watan 2" protest against the emergency Amiri decree that changed the electoral law. Security was heightened in the country as police, special forces and army were called in"

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Fundamental Problem: Lack of an Independent Judicial System as Mandated by the Constitution

"Kuwait's Constitution clearly outlines the separation of powers, and their independence, yet the government continues to operate in conflict of the constitution and has thus far made no effort to correct the issue, nor other unconstitutional practices. While the 1962 constitution guarantees an independent judiciary, the executive (government) branch retains control over its administration and budget. The Amir appoints the Prime Minister, who then forms the government including the post of Justice Minister, who then recommends to the Amir the appointment of judges in the regular courts. Kuwaiti nationals receive lifetime appointments; non-Kuwaiti judges receive renewable terms (decided by the executive branch of government) of one to three years. "Kuwait lacks an independent judiciary. The emir appoints all judges, and the executive branch approves judicial promotions. Authorities may detain suspects for four days without charge. The Interior Ministry supervises the main internal security forces, including the national police, the Criminal Investigation Division, and Kuwait State Security"

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Mona Kareem

Anonymous Twitter Account Leads Major Protests in Kuwait

"After witnessing its biggest protest, the anonymous organizers of the "Dignity March" called for another one. Tens of thousands showed up in the areas of Mishref and Sabah Al-Salem protesting the Kuwaiti ruler's amendment of the voting law, which now allows a citizen to vote for one candidate instead of four. Protesters did not find the Amir's decree constitutional and believe the new law is made to play with the coming elections in December and to weaken the opposition that won most of the parliament's seats earlier this year. Like the previous march, Sunday's [Nov. 4, 2012] protest witnessed smoke and tear gas bombs and several arrests of protesters, who were later released"

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Saudi Arabia

Succession Battles: The Final Four



Ahmed Al Omran

10 Saudi Royals Who Could Become The Next Crown Prince

"The recent promotion of Prince Mohammed bin Naif to the position of Interior Minister has rekindled speculation over the Saudi monarchy's succession plans. Will Mohammed bin Naif follow the steps of his father to become the next second deputy premier and later Crown Prince? He is certainly a strong contender for Position No. 3 in the Saudi royal power structure, but he is not the only one vying for the spot. Here is a list of ten princes who could be named a second deputy premier then crown prince, and maybe become king one day"

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Abbas: Lack of Legitimacy



Nervana Mahmoud

Abu Mazen Pressured By New Hamas Alliances

"An Islamic Spring in Palestine and Jordan would put further strain on King Abdullah II. Islamic agitation in Jordan would soon become correlated with Palestinian anger against the Israeli occupying forces, under an Islamic banner. Abandoning Mahmoud Abbas out of spite, negligence, or the whiff of a deal with Hamas could be a tragic Israeli strategic error. The Jordanian river was once the route for the Israelites heading to the Holy Land; it can now serve a new front in the Arab-Israeli contest. This once far-fetched scenario has its patrons; if it happens, only then would Netanyahu yearn for the days of Abbas and the negotiations for a two-state solution"

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Jadaliyya

Draft Resolution Requesting Palestine Upgrade from Observer Mission Status to Observer State Status

"On 8 November 2012, the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations submitted a draft resolution to the UN General Assembly requesting an upgrade from Observer Mission status to Observer State status within the United Nations. Such an upgrade would represent the will of a majority of UN member states (132/193). It does not alter, however, the application for statehood still before the UN Security Council and at its ultimate discretion. The resolution is not final and there is no set date upon which it will be considered"

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Palestinian Youth Statement from Lebanon

We demand that the leadership of the PLO:

1. Hold Mahmoud Abbas accountable for his statements that are detrimental to the national spirit among Palestinian people worldwide;
2. Pressure Abbas to issue a public apology to all Palestinians, and Palestinian refugees in particular;
3. Reaffirm the *Right of Return*;
4. Immediately halt all processes of security coordination with the Zionist entity and cut off all channels of political, security and media cooperation;

5. Immediately release all Palestinian political prisoners and activists currently held in the prisons of both Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza;
6. Seek unity and take meaningful steps towards ending the Palestinian political division;
7. Immediately set in motion a process for electing a new Palestinian National Council involving all Palestinians worldwide;
8. Revive and reactivate the PLO, constructing a Palestinian National strategy that upholds the original spirit of the Palestinian Charter and guides the struggle of all Palestinian political groups;
9. Hold accountable any party that compromises historically enshrined Palestinian rights, creating internal division

Full Statement





