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Newsletter - Issue No. 28

Egypt:

The MB's/Morsi Political Wilderness

YES/NO Draft Constitution

Egypt's Democracy Growing Pain

#Dec15 Round 1 - Constitutional Referendum: Controversial Articles, Polarized Society & Rigged Votes

The Future The Constitution, The Revolution, The Opposition

Syria:

Jabhat al Nusra: A Legitimate Islamist Armed Opposition or A Terror Group

Jordan:

Fast Fixes and No Long Term Strategy

The King and Youth

Palestinians:

What is Stronger Hamas's 'Victory' or Abbas's UN Bid?

Reconciliation or Confederation

The MB's/Morsi Political Wilderness



Sandmonkey

Game Over

"Tomorrow is the Referendum on the MB's constitutional draft, which the great President Morsy wishes to pass on two phases with a week in between the results of the first phase and the second, which makes no sense in terms of security and Voter manipulation. But for him, and his people and allies, this is it. ***This is the end Game. In their silly little mind if they pass this referendum by hook or crook they have won everything. I am of the argument that they have already lost****. Here are my reasons: They don't have the votes: Given that the secular side in Egypt has finally unified itself, and are all against the referendum, there is no way the Islamists can win this vote fair and square. Their numbers are 7.5 million votes, the combined votes of the secular voters is beyond that of 14 million (sabahy, moussa, shafiq and abulfotouh votes, all saying NO). Which is why they will attempt voters fraud..and about that.. "*

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Tarek Radwan

Egypt and a "Failure of Leadership"

"With regard to President Morsi, one might say that his "failure of leadership" has led to a deeply polarized political environment and a dismal excuse for a constitution*. But the phrase means nothing other than "it's his fault." Depending on the person hearing it, one could infer that the Muslim Brotherhood's Supreme Guide and his Bureau reign supreme in setting Egypt's policies, and Morsi's subservience to the group makes him a failed leader, subject to a higher authority. Alternatively, the phrase may also inspire the thought of Morsi as an "evil genius" so bent on creating his caliphate that it made him deaf to dissenting voices. Or possibly, that Morsi's (and/or the Muslim Brotherhood's) lack of governing experience led him to believe that legitimacy is claimed at the ballot box, and with it the right to rule as he sees fit. Or it may even mean that the person using the term is simply an anti-Islamist, Orientalist, foreign spy, political agent with "invisible hands" trying to destroy Egypt's revolution. It depends on who is listening" "*

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Khalil al-Anani

Dictatorship Dons Revolutionary Mantel

"The sad result of the constitutional declaration was that it plunged Egypt into a dark tunnel of escalating tension and verbal and physical violence that could threaten domestic peace. Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood have driven a sharp wedge into society and stoked what now might become a relentless conflict between the executive and judicial branches of society. They might think that the constitutional declaration was a political victory, but the real loser from this authoritarian diktat is Egypt, the Egyptian people and our especially new generation, the generation of the martyrs Gika and Islam"



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Wael Eskandar

A Note on Military Personnel as Law Enforcers

"A decree issued on 13 June now allows military personnel to act as police. The judiciary arresting authority granted to the military allows them to arrest and detain citizens in cases of threatening national security, possession or manufacturing of explosives, assault on authorities, destruction of public property, blocking traffic, hindering work or production and thuggery" [....] "The law enforcement decree is enabling a mafia to act with impunity on the streets of Egypt. It is a vital part of the soft military coup that has just taken place. Update: On Tuesday 26 June there was a court ruling that halted the military judicial arresting authority. The decree was found illegal by an administrative court but remains in the constitutional annex and can be turned into law. Update II: On December 10, Morsi re-instated military judicial arresting authority until the referendum on December 15"

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Salama Moussa

The Foundering Brothers

"The litany of comical errors is deliciously long. The Central Bank governor seems to have little interest in overseeing a program of "Islamic banking", probably because he has too many problem to manage without adding an

invented problem to his docket. The entire staff of the Public Prosecutor office rose up against the new Ikhwangi-appointed boss and forced him out. The new provincial governors, drawn from the ranks of the Brotherhood and with the approval of the Guidance Bureau, have proven to be largely inept. Most have taken their queue from President Morsi and took to preaching as their favorite activity. The ineffectual attempt at rigging the referendum vote was done without either finesse or cynicism, and as a result, showed both weakness and lack of moral standing. Even the simple details, such as publishing the text of the vote in the official press at the appropriate date, have gone unnoticed, leaving them with the option of either invalidating the vote or persisting in its lawlessness. Their public spokesmen, mostly drawn from the presentable sons and daughters of the leaders, muttered gibberish incessantly and with such conviction and vehemence that one came to doubt their sanity or even their very existence. Such drivel can only be generated from a poorly programmed computer"

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Nervana Mahmoud

Egypt's Public Prosecutor

Tonight resignation of Talaat Ibrahim as Egypt's public prosecutor is part of long and complicated dynamics that Egypt is currently witnessing" [....] " in a nutshell, Morsi replaced Mubarak man with his own, Judges stood firm, rejected a prosecutor who was directly appointed by Morsi, and defended their independence and forced the public prosecutor to submit his resignation. What's next? Who knows?"

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Zeinobia

The problem of the Muslim brotherhood "1"

"The MB is facing a huge problem now, it officially rules the country through a president and Shura council yet it does not want to act as a transparent political party open for criticism as well to renew its ideas or its methods and techniques. This problem is resulted from the fact we are speaking about a political religious underground organization that managed to survive in Egypt for 80 years thanks to its secrecy"

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YES/NO Draft Constitution

Ramy Yaacoub

219: A Detailed Cultural Translation of Egypt's Draft Constitution's Most Controversial Article

"In conservative Muslim communities the aforementioned theological theories are used to approve or disapprove all sorts of actions within the community, from governance to the simplest of day-to-day actions like purchasing certain goods or deeming personal and private norms to be halal (allowed/accepted) or haram (sinful). Approving an article with such language is practically giving future legislative bodies the authority to infringe on all aspects of personal freedoms, business practices, banking, tourism industry, etc. Social-Islamic-Jurisprudence could affect almost every aspect of daily life, incorporating within it matters of economics, politics, marriage, crime, theology, hygiene, etiquette, health, and Jihad, among many others. In fact, Egypt's draft constitution would not only allow for legislation to be passed based on Sharia law, it would also allow the judiciary to issue verdicts on that basis. Inherently, the problem of subjectivity arises and is compounded when this problem is passed over to a legislative body that is drafting laws for a multi-cultural society. While Egypt's Shi'a Muslim minority come to mind first when this article is read, in all reality Sufi, secular and moderate Sunni Muslims also face grave threats when this article is considered. Needless to say that other minorities in Egypt could face a major change in their way of life should this article be accepted within the patched-up constitution up for a referendum on Saturday"



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Mohamed Magdeldin

Let's Give Them NO For An Answer!

"I'm here to ask you to engage in politics and go out to say NO. Its an undebatable fact that this referendum is no where near bringing any form of stability to our nation. The state will essentially retreat to national dialogue to resolve our problems, Liberal opposition like it or not will be forced onto a negotiation table with the Islamist led state to figure out how to co-exist away from street protests that regular Egyptians are almost fed up with. It will not be the first national dialogue and it will follow the same rhetoric of the ones before. Islamists pushing for their political agenda and bullying liberals with the leverage of a ballot box victory. ***I for one am growing tired of this unfair battling field. As much as we deny it, popular vote is still the strongest card on the table. Islamist have exploited it for almost a year and liberals need to level the field them****. We need to make sure that when the time will come for replacing stand-offs with sit-downs, liberals won't have only the leverage of street movements but also could depend on a strong showing in ballot box numbers"*

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Sara Ɣbib

Constitutional Highway to Theocracy

"This constitution puts the power to interpret things related to the shariah with the "Committe for Senior Scholars" thereby putting them not only above the courts, but also above the legislator. A group of religious men from Al Azhar will have a say in how the country is run and how laws are applied and those who claim to be for the independence of Al Azhar must be aware that no such thing can exist when they are so close to power. So both religious texts (including human interpretations thereof, obviously) and certain religious scholars are intentionally placed above the law and the constitution. Now, ***call me alarmist for saying that this constitution paves the way for theocracy...*** *This article doesn't contain all the reasons why this constitutional draft should be rejected, the draft contains many dangers in other chapters about private property, the separation of powers and judicial independence for instance. However, I hope it does give a clearer view on the actual meaning of this draft and its possible consequences "*

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Mahmoud Salem

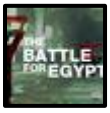
Imagine

"Imagine that with this referendum being 4 days away, and the presidency has no judges to supervise it, doesn't have the schools to host it, did not open the door for journalists or observers to go in and observe the process, and gave no way for the voters to find out where they are supposed to vote. Your country's constitution. Imagine that the secular side is the majority for the first time, with people in the streets all over Egypt viewing this as a referendum on the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsy and want to vote No on both and teach them a lesson. Imagine them finally rallying behind a unified opposition front, called the National Salvation council, who just yesterday issued that they will boycott the first referendum they actually have a great shot of winning, because they think it's an illegitimate referendum and we shouldn't dignify it with our votes, despite it being the country's constitution and everything"

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Egypt's Democracy Growing Pain



Amin Elmasry

What is Democracy?

"So what does this tell us about the situation in Egypt today? First, a constitution passing by a slim majority, forcing its will over the rest does not provide legitimacy to a regime. Second, a semi-authoritarian regime like this will not maintain stability or trigger prosperity; but is likely to create more instability and economic turbulence. Third, this is not a stable regime, and is likely to collapse, simply because it lacks legitimacy"

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Koert Debeuf

To Safeguard Democracy in Egypt, Postpone the Referendum

"The soap of the last days is of almost mythical proportions. From the opposition side as today it is totally unclear what its position is. They said yesterday that they are against all presidential decrees. But at the same time some parties are campaigning for a no in the referendum. It is still unclear if

the opposition (or a part of it?) will boycott the referendum or not. Some say Morsi has to go, others that he has to change his decrees and change the constitution. The chaos from the president's side however is much more confusing. The day after he gives his (much delayed) speech in which he says nothing is going to change, the Vice-President said something might change. Even more, VP Mekki said the President might delay the referendum, while Al-Awa said after the negotiations that a delay is impossible" [...] "One week before the referendum the President issues a law that increases taxes on a lot of things, but he cancels the law the same night at 2.30 am. The government wasn't informed. And there is also the question of the organisation of the referendum. Some judges decided to boycott, others said they will overview. What is the army going to do? Who is going to count the votes? Who is going to supervise the counting of the votes?"



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Michael Neumann

Freedom versus democracy in Egypt

"The problem this raises for liberals doesn't reduce to Mubarak redux. Perhaps they thought they were for freedom and democracy, but they have shown themselves to be against democracy because what they really want is freedom. Nothing unreasonable or unjustified about that: democracy, properly understood, isn't all it's cracked up to be. But not admitting it, not even recognizing it, doesn't seem to have served the liberals well. Their polemics are full of bogus claims about dictatorship, and, what is worse, pretenses that they are the innocent victims of violence rather than perpetrators as well. It's not clear why this talk can be expected to expand their political base. Their allies of convenience have become the partisans of the old régime, without whom the liberals have no chance of overcoming democracy. They needn't be told, though, to be careful of what they wish for. What's the alternative? To convince enough of the majority that liberals will do better by them than the Islamists. This probably doesn't mean promising more civil liberties! It probably means demonstrating a real commitment to improving the lives of the poor. In other words it means doing what brought the Islamists to power in the first place. There don't seem to be any shortcuts to acquiring popular support, and allying with the felool has apparently made Morsi's supporters even more distrustful of the liberals. Fighting for freedom in a democracy is no easier than doing so in a dictatorship -just different"

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#Dec15 Round 1 - Constitutional Referendum: Controversial Articles, Polarized Society & Rigged Votes



Nervana Mahmoud

Egypt's Constitutional Referendum

According to most updated figures, it seems that three big governorates (Cairo, Alexandria, and Gharbia) were deeply divided between the Islamists, who support the new draft constitution, and non-Islamists, who reject it. *All media outlets, including the Brotherhood Web site, confirmed that Cairo clearly voted NO to the constitution, which, in my opinion, is a huge blow to President Morsi. The president, who recently changed his home address from Sharqyia to Heliopolis in Cairo, has to live in a constituency that rejects his vision for the country. Graffiti over the presidential palace walls tells the story more bluntly than any in-depth analysis" [....] "**Regardless of the final outcome of the referendum; this is not the result President Morsi and the Brotherhood should celebrate**" [....] " It has exposed the myth of the Brotherhood's high popularity, particularly in urban areas, and its dependency on Salafi support in rural areas. A sad state of affairs for Egypt as a country, but it could be the beginning of a much-needed political awakening for many ordinary Egyptians. Morsi should wake up from his delusions and start to seek much-needed consensus to prevent Egypt from spiraling down the path of a failed state"*



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Mostafa El-Hoshy

Analysis of Round 1 of December 2012 Constitutional Referendum

"The voting results are compiled from the Ikhwan website (given their accuracy in presidential elections, I will use their voting data for now). The registered voters for this referendum comes from Egypt Independent "

[For More Tables & Graphs]



Alaa Bayoumi

The many faces of Mohamed Morsi

Some analysts, however, think the problem could be bigger. Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed, a socialist political science professor at Cairo University, told Al Jazeera "the way decisions are made show that [the] president does not surround himself with [the] right or capable advisers". El-Sayed fears that Morsi's presidential team lacks needed specialization and expertise, depends on advisers who are loyal to Morsi's religious-political project, and does not rely on expertise within ministries and state institutions. Morsi, he argues, acts more on ideology than on clear-headed policy. Amr Hashem Rabie, head of the democratic transformation unit at Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, shares similar concerns. He worries that Morsi does not have enough experience as a president, has too many advisers who disagree with one another, and depends increasingly on a set of "unofficial advisers" from the Muslim Brotherhood. Nevertheless, Rabie retains some optimism, pointing to Egypt's previous president, Hosni Mubarak. "Let's remember how Mubarak acted in his first two years in power. He lacked expertise and understanding on many issues, But, he learned over time"

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Bassem Sabry

Egypt's Referendum: Reviewing the First Round

"There is a growing number of Egyptians, many of them quite conservative, who are increasingly worried about the President and the Islamist movement, and by voting "No" on the constitution they hope to halt that what they see as the continuing "Brotherhoodisation" of the state. For many of them, it was actually a "No "vote to the MB, perhaps even more than a "No" to the constitution. Additionally, many people claimed to have also voted "yes" this time as well for the sake of stability and due to them not finding any genuinely troubling aspects about the draft constitution, despite simultaneously having negative feeling about the MB and the Islamists. Perhaps even more interestingly, more people voted "No" this time around in these primary ten



governorates despite how the "stability" argument applies much more pressingly now on all levels, especially as the country's economy continues to approach the edge of the cliff, while the security situation continues to deteriorate following recent ground clashes between supporters of the Islamists and the opposition, with the situation in Sinai and the Jihadist presence there remaining a dark and troubling mystery. But what is stunning is that — contrary to anecdotal evidence — participation in those 10 governorates has actually dropped from 9.5 million in 2011 to a little over 8 million voters in 2012, with a participation rate of just around 31-32% (data is still being officially finalized). This means, especially if you add data from previous parliamentary and presidential votes, that for all the polarization and amassing of supporters over the past few weeks, most of the country appears unaligned politically in any staunch manner and remain composed primarily of swing and/or disinterested voters, with less citizens feeling the desire to cast their votes. This is perhaps an expression of growing frustration with the entire political process"

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Rebel Economy

Egypt's Constitution and Why The Wheel Won't Turn

"When Mr Morsi captured the presidency in June by a slim margin, he signalled magnanimity by formally quitting the Muslim Brotherhood and appointing a largely technocratic government. Egyptians cheered in August when he removed the domineering generals who had shakily guided the post-revolutionary transition. But Mr Morsi has proven equally erratic and domineering. The Brotherhood, meanwhile, has infiltrated state institutions. It has tried to shape the message of the state-owned press, arranged for its members to distribute government-subsidised goods, and quietly scaled back family-planning programmes"

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The Future The Constitution, The Revolution, The Opposition



H.A. Hellyer

Shape Up or Ship Out

"I was with one of those few, rare examples who was deeply active in civil society organizations prior to the revolution. He was not particularly

*enamored with Brotherhood-style political Islamism – he was more of a secular leftist, by his own appellation, although not anti-religion by any means. Like many, if not most, civil society activists in the days before the 25 January revolution, his stance vis-a-vis the Brotherhood in those days was quite straightforward"[....] "**In the aftermath of the uprising, he was sure that the Brotherhood represented a "moderate understanding of political Islam", even if it was not quite what he thought Islam was all about, and would be a welcome, positive force on the Egyptian political stage**. He's not anti-Muslim (he's Muslim). He's not feloul (he's a leftist who was deeply against Mubarak before the revolution). He's not anti-Islamist even (he defended them, and encouraged their participation in the National Association for Change, that ElBaradei lead, and which once upon a time, the Brotherhood were a part of. How long ago those days seem...). Today, that same civil society activist confided in me that he received an incredible amount of satisfaction by throwing rocks at Brotherhood forces in the confrontation in front of the presidential palace. **The level of animosity towards the Brotherhood that he now has might be matched only by his disgust with Mubarak's regime: and perhaps exceeds that"***

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Sandmonkey

Victory

*"How is it a victory you ask? Well, let's see. **The guidance of Religious leaders and Mosque sermons no longer works**, with at least two very famous Salafi Sheikh's who got trapped in their mosques by angry mobs for trying to guide people to vote "Yes" for the constitution in Alexandria and Delta. **Within less than two years, we have finally broken the final figure of authority in the Egyptian state: The religious authority**. And not just in Cairo, but all over the First phase governates, where people were rejecting all kinds of religious pressure to vote "Yes", and even got a "No" vote in impoverished, illiterate Qaliubiya governate. The only place their message was effective was in Upper-Egypt, where they had to rely on a very sectarian message "The 'No' voters are all Christians who want to rule you all" to get a high turn-out. One look at the electoral map and you can't help but think that this is a very bad start for a budding Islamist state, especially after their previous numbers. **Secondly, they have thrown** everything but the kitchen sink to get this one to pass, promising billions of investments and blessings from God once we establish his law in this economically struggling land. **This won't end well, because Shari'a doesn't feed hungry mouths"**[....] **"Shari'a states have survived in***

Iran and Saudi mainly due to oil revenues that are used to feed and placate the poor, and while we have many hungry poor, we don't have oil, and we are very quickly running out of cash. *While the country won't go bankrupt, the government will in an estimated 2-3 months, which means that the millions of impoverished Egyptians who rely on its salaries, pensions and subsidies to survive will one day find themselves with nothing, which isn't a great recipe for stability"*

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Hatem Rushdy

The Four Futures of Egypt

"Perhaps the MB will not be able to weather the storm but the revolutionaries/liberals/Mubarakists will be unable to wrest power from them. Maybe neither side will moderate their position and explore the middle ground. Those yearning for a return to Mubarak's Egypt would love to see such a scenario unfold. Their interests would go unharmed, they will revive their pre-revolution situations and all's well that ends well. To push in this direction they could well foster continuous unrest on Egypt's streets, more bloodshed, more deterioration in the economic and security situations hoping that at some point, the army will yell: "Enough!"

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Khaled Fahmy

The Constitution, The Revolution

"I have faith that we, as a society, can withstand this serious challenge. My faith derives partly from the institutions of the modern state itself. While this state had been founded on despotic principles, I have a deep belief that, like the police commissioner in 1858 whose self-respect and sense of professionalism impelled him to stand firmly in front of serious abuse of power, there are thousands of judges, army and police officers, lawyers and bureaucrats who believe in their institutions and who would be ready to defend them against the maverick politics that the present government seems intent on pursuing. Above all, ***my belief derives from the millions of people who are taking to the streets, sacrificing life and limb to defend their basic rights, and demanding a constitution that upholds these rights.*** *In their collective wisdom, these millions know that they are part of a long struggle against tyranny, foreign control and fascism. Their slogans are simple but profound; their tactics witty and imaginative; their ideals lofty and sublime. With their self-confidence, wit*

and imagination they brought down a mighty tyrant. I am confident that they can also heal the rift that is now threatening the very cohesion of our society"

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The Big Pharaoh

Why I Am Worried About Egypt's Future And Why I Am Still Optimistic

"I am optimistic because, thanks to their mistakes and greed for power, I can see the tide shifting against the Islamists; add their economic policies, and the tide is expected to shift even more. Judging from the last presidential elections figures and round one of the constitutional referendum, it is quiet obvious the Islamists have lost nearly all of the middle class and lower middle class and the urban areas in general. They have even lost the Cairo urban poor. Two years ago, it was unthinkable that an area such as Matariyah would vote against the Islamists. And who would have imagined that the day would come when thousands of Alexandrian youth would chase away Salafis and MB who were bused in from outside Alex? This happened yesterday and I was startled indeed. We are witnessing a changing Egypt and we have to admit that in spite of the gloomy cloud we're seeing on the horizon"

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Bassem Sabry

Rethinking Egypt's Opposition

"There remain, however, quite a few questions regarding the future of Egypt's opposition. For example, whether or not the NSF can hold it together until the end of the current conflict over the constitution, and if they can come out of this as an even more tightly-integrated group that would then proceed as one front in the coming parliamentary elections (previous smaller co-operation attempts, such as "The Third Current," had largely proven to be without impact.) Moreover, the NSF needs to bridge the gap between them and other more centrist forces, especially moderate Islamist and fourth-place presidential candidate Abdel-Mon'eim Abul-Fotouh and his party, Strong Egypt. Abul-Fotouh and his party's positions in particular have significantly mirrored those of the NSF's and their comprising parties throughout the recent crisis, but have remained independent of the NSF both by some choice (Abul-Fotouh's platform is largely founded upon non-

polarization and upon being a potential third way between traditional Islamists and the civic opposition) and due to what is speculated by some as a lack of profound eagerness in their official membership of the NSF"

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Vivian Salama

Egypt Constitution Passes Amid Allegations of Fraud

"Overshadowing the president's latest victory was the resignation of his vice president, Mahmoud Mekki, on Saturday as voters lined up at the polls, which analysts say points to discord within the house of Morsi. In his resignation letter, Mekki wrote, "I have realized for some time that the nature of the political profession contradicts my nature as a judge," and added that he had delayed resigning in an effort to resolve "the current state of political polarization." The new constitution does not stipulate any requirements for a vice president in the government. Reports had also circulated that the country's Central Bank governor, Farouk el-Okdah, resigned, a report the government quickly denied. Reports of el-Okdah's resignation led many to fear a potential blow to the economy, which has suffered a significant decline since the popular uprising began nearly two years ago" [...] "Still, while many of the country's most vocal secular activists may have been silenced by this latest chapter in Egypt's revolution, it is driving others to rally supporters more passionately than ever. "I am very hopeful because I know this constitution won't last and it's a farce—believe in the power of the people, in the revolution, and continue," activist Gigi Ibrahim wrote on Twitter"

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Mustafa Salama

Constitution approved, now what?

"People like to elect politicians who have achieved something, those who can improve the day to day lives of common Egyptians. ***Egypt now, unfortunately, is a junk yard. The playground is open for anyone to do something constructive which will stand out.*** *It is not as though Egypt has numerous ongoing positive activities that one who is striving for political significance will only standout by creating something unique. In the coming months any economic initiative will be unique. It is commonly said that Islamists do not have experience in governance, perhaps a good reason why the decision making process has been very shaky in the*

last few months. Similarly, liberals have no experience of a constructive opposition maneuvering in a free environment. Thus, even when concerns are legitimate they are obscured by their poor presentation and lack of political consistency. ***It is a good idea that politicians refresh their intentions these days, and ensure their actions do serve the public good. You can fool some people sometimes, but you cannot fool all the people, all the time****"*

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Syria

Jabhat al Nusra: A Legitimate Islamist Armed Opposition or A Terror Group



Mustafa Salama

Post Bashar Syria: Local, Global and Regional Players

"The United States has probably started on the bad side of Syria by putting "Al-Nusrah Front" on the list of terrorist organizations. There are legitimate fears and concerns that neighboring countries and the west have over the destabilization of an already volatile region. However, insisting on delegitimizing Al-Nusrah will only complicate matters worse" [....] "It is probably best for the US to stay away from direct intervention in the conflict and let Turkey, Qatar and other Arab states settle Syria for a transition that is acceptable to its people and producing a system that will stabilize the country and guarantee Syria does not export any woes to its neighboring countries. As Bashar is about to face his demise, either fleeing or getting killed; the coming days will show how the scattered groups will solidify into bigger organized gatherings. The region is certainly volatile and it is crucial that the appropriate mediators intervene and do not allow inappropriate ones to be part of the problem"

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Balint Szlanko

Jabhat Al Nusra's New Syria

"The emergence of such extremist groups has greatly concerned some of Syria's minorities, such as the Christians and the Alawites, many of whom still support the Assad government as a result. Abu Ahmed said the minorities had nothing to fear, pointing to a long history of Christian presence in Muslim countries. "As for the Kurds, they will have no need for autonomy – they are Muslims, too, so we can live together," he said. Yet in its communications, Jabhat al Nusra has embraced a fierce sectarian message. According to an analysis by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the group routinely refers in derogatory terms to "the Alawite enemy" – the main support base of the regime – and its "Shiite agents". Jabhat Al Nusra also has a slick media operation, distributing YouTube videos of their attacks"

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Hazem al-Amine

Jabhat al-Nusra and the Syrian Opposition's Failure

It has become legitimate to accuse the Syrian opposition of behaving badly, since there have been mounting concerns, not insignificant concerns about groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra. The experience gained from places like Iraq, Yemen and Pakistan — reaching to the Gulf and Somalia — have all proven that Salafism-jihadism can never be included within the framework of national aspirations, and that these groups will inevitably turn against any consensus or formula in relation to a modern state. The experience has also proven that postponing a resolution to the crisis — represented in such groups — before a resolution matures will kill it in its infancy" [....] "Rushing to believe that clashing with Jabhat al-Nusra will not serve the revolution seems to be a failure at more than one level; it is a failure in distinguishing between the people's values and upcoming ideologies and a failure in examining the experiences of neighbors and the resumption of bloodshed from where it ended in Iraq, Somalia, Pakistan and Yemen. As for the biggest failure, it is reflected in neglecting what these groups represented for global awareness"

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Mohammed Aly Sergie

The Ripples of Naming Jabhat al Nusra a Terrorist Group

After months of Syrian and U.S. reports that Iraqi Qaeda affiliates were operating in Syria, Jabhat Al Nusra emerged on to the scene in May with a video claiming responsibility for the twin suicide bombings of a security building and the Military Intelligence Directorate in Aleppo on Feb. 10. Those attacks killed 28 people and injured more than 200. Earlier bombings in Damascus, which targeted the State Security Directorate on Dec. 23 and a police station on Jan. 6, were also attributed to the group. Opponents of the Assad regime, including the nascent armed militant groups, vehemently denied government accusations that they were responsible and accused Syrian intelligence agencies of faking these attacks. False flag operations are common in the region, and the Syrian regime was suspect because had been reportedly releasing senior Qaeda operatives from prison and has long been tied to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and al Qaeda in Iraq. The regime's history with car bombs in Lebanon also piled on suspicion" [....] "On a practical level, opposition leaders tell Syria Deeply the terrorist designation complicates their work on the ground. They say many Syrians have fought with Jabhat al Nusra, men who aren't themselves extremists but wanted to be part of what had arguably become the most effective fighting force on the ground. Now they'll have to explain to Syrians that the U.S. doesn't really think they are terrorists — they just meant to single out the real bad guys. In the fog of Syria's war, it's hard to convince the people of Syria where to draw that distinction"

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Lara Setrakian

Interview with Robert Ford: The Terror Stamp on Jabhat al Nusra

"The US sees Jabhat al Nusra as a direct affiliate of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Ford said the group's leader, Maysar Ali Musa Abdallah al-Juburi, has pledged his Islamic allegiance to Al Qaeda in Iraq. He also said its leaders have learned from Al Qaeda's experience in Iraq, where the population turned against it for brutal attacks on civilians. Instead, they've approached this conflict with a softer edge. In parts of Syria, Jabhat al Nusra's brigades – some more moderate than others – have helped local communities with food, supplies, and social services. That's partly why Syrians have bristled at the US terror stamp: they see Jabhat al Nusra brigades doing some good on the ground. U.S. officials see that as window dressing, savvy PR. This week State Department Spokeswoman Victoria Nuland described Jabhat al Nusra as a

branch of Al Qaeda, cloaked in the Syrian revolution. She sees it as "an attempt…to hijack the struggles of the Syrian people for its own malign purposes." "We know who they are, we know what they represent," said Ford. "Nusra has a particularly narrow and extremist agenda, that's why we singled them out."

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Tom A. Peter

Jihadis Bankroll aid Efforts in Syria to Win Followers

"Jabhat al-Nusra, One of the many groups fighting against the government of President Bashar al-Assad, Jabhat al-Nusra is a hardline Islamist organization that was officially classified as a terrorist organization by the US State Department on Wednesday and that is looked upon by many Syrians with trepidation" [….] "In this vacuum, a number of groups have risen to provide aid, inspired by interests more Machiavellian than charitable. Extremist groups from both sides of the political spectrum are now using aid to attract supporters, but a number of Syrians say that conservative Islamist groups have been among the most aggressive. Jabhat al-Nusra even includes informational brochures and CDs in some of their aid packages"

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Hassan Hassan

Story of a Massacre Tells of The Alawites Caught in The Middle

"On December 9, nearly 200 people were killed in the small Syrian village of Aqrab, which is about 40 kilometres west of Hama. The village has a population of 13,000 people, most of whom are Sunnis, with a minority of about 3,000 Alawites. Related Anatomy of a massacre that bodes ill for Syria's future The causes of this massacre still need to be independently investigated, but what evidence exists has grim lessons for minority groups and the area as a whole. The region around the village - a triangle between Hama, Homs and Tartus - represents an explosive sectarian mix. This is where Alawites, Sunnis and Ismailis have lived side by side for hundreds of years, but the regime has successfully pitted groups against each other since the start of the uprising, recruiting thousands of Alawite villagers into the Shabbiha militias"

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Fast Fixes and No Long Term Strategy



Impatient Bedouin

Egypt and Jordan: Is It Really All Resolved?

"At the meeting Morsi and Qandil were said to have discussed the issues of Egyptian gas supplies and Egyptian laborers working in Jordan, and Egypt agreed to maintain the flow of natural gas according to the agreement. Qandil also held discussions with King Abdullah and gave him an invitation from President Morsi to visit Egypt. So, apparently, all issues between Egypt and Jordan will be resolved now that the flow of gas has been restored, but is it really that simple? First of all, given the numerous disruptions that have occurred due to attacks against the pipeline since the Egyptian revolution, it is not clear how long, exactly, the supply will actually be restored for" [...] "This is another example of the precarious economic situation that Jordan faces, that has been exacerbated by the regime's continued failure to implement reforms. The regime is facing major problems and rather than implementing political reform that could give a new, democratic, government the mandate it needs to tackle them it is instead pressing forward as though these difficulties have all been resolved due to an agreement that in fact resolved only the immediate short-term chill in relations"

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Explaining the Jordanian Regime's Strategy

"As the parliamentary elections scheduled for January 23rd, 2013 continue to approach, the regime's behavior in the face of public disapproval triggered by decisions such as the fuel price increase may seem puzzling. King Abdullah's reaction, in his interviews and public speeches indicate that the regime's actions may be part of a broader strategy to retain the greatest possible degree of political power following the elections. The regime's strategy, in short, appears to be to win the greatest possible legitimacy for the upcoming elections while marginalizing both the Islamist and reformist opposition groups. This would likely attract the strongest degree of popular support. In particular, they seek to marginalize the IAF by portraying the political situation as a binary one with the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood as the two main political alternatives"

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The King and Youth



Deema Alam Farraj

'On My Behalf'

"His Majesty is not running for elections and does not need our votes, yet he definitely made us feel the way no other politician in Jordan came close to achieving. We felt we could make a difference to the future of the country. We felt he believed in us and in our abilities to make the changes we wanted"[....] "No party or person represents my views at this time, but I do know that His Majesty does speak on my behalf and I trust his vision. I can only hope to have politicians in Jordan with some of His Majesty's charisma, tolerance and acceptance"

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Palestinians

What is Stronger Hamas's 'Victory' or Abbas's UN Bid?



EMAJ Magazine

UN bid – political theater or first step? By Lena Odgaard

"As the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stepped onto the podium and addressed the UN General Assembly Thursday evening around 500 excited Palestinians followed the event on a screen put up in the Yasser Arafat square in the de facto capital of West Bank, Ramallah. But the scene is far cry from that from the gathering a year ago when thousands were standing on that same place as Abbas requested the UN Security Council to grant Palestine full membership. Then the city was buzzing with excitement while flags fluttered from every window, car and along the main street. On Thursday, only the large number of international journalists who desperately looked for people or "good mood pictures", testified that something significant would happen. ***The everyday mood and apparent indifference among the city's residents were clear signs of Abbas' failure in convincing the Palestinians that the new UN membership status will improve their situation. A perception which was widespread on Twitter****"*

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Hussein Ibish

Palestinian cause redefined as Hamas spins Pyrrhic victories

Even Hamas's limited gains may prove Pyrrhic. Over 175 Palestinian deaths in the recent conflict aside, longer-term realities are starting to bite in Gaza. The damage to the infrastructure and the economy of the fragile, overpopulated area is significant. And the reported easing of the blockade, on both the Egyptian and Israeli sides, does not appear to be either tangible or sustained. Yet ongoing intoxication at the quixotic "victory" over Israel is politically significant. Palestinians have been starved for anything that resembles proactive agency. They know lobbing rockets in the general direction of not only southern Israel, but now also Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, is almost entirely symbolic. Any damage done is random, unlike Israel's relatively precise and highly damaging attacks. Yet Hamas has been able to spin the confrontation as some kind of open-ended "victory". [....] "Palestinians by every poll and every survey, like Israelis, want a two-state solution. But, like the Israelis, they do not believe in the other side's sincerity, and they do not believe it will happen. As long as this is the case, quixotic militarism and maximalist demands by Hamas and other militant groups will reap domestic political dividends"

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Reconciliation or Confederation



Linah Alsaafin

PA Mass Arrests Include Democracy Activists

Hamas has seen a boost in its popularity in both the West Bank and Gaza after its declared victory over Israel's eight-day offensive in Gaza last month. The Fatah-backed Palestinian Authority in the West Bank even granted permission for Hamas to hold its annual anniversary rallies for the first time since 2007, which encouraged prospects of ending the division to be seen as more feasible than before" [.....] "The Palestinian Authority, an institution built upon the basis of the Oslo Accords, is the complex function between security and service. These two hostage roles are built on the terms of donor



countries, and have no independent political decision, whether in the West Bank or in Gaza. Until that equation can be resolved, and until the Palestinians no longer fear getting arrested by the security apparatus of a government that claims to represent them, national unity is still set to be an unlikely prospect"

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Noha El Badry

Hamas committed to Cairo for reconciliation talks

"The two sides signed a reconciliation deal last year in Cairo, pledging to set up an interim consensus government of independents that would pave the way to legislative and presidential elections within 12 months. But implementation of the deal stalled over the make-up of the interim government, and a February deal signed by Abbas and Hamas's Khaled Meshaal in Doha and intended to overcome outstanding differences was opposed by Hamas members in Gaza. After the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in November, the Palestinian Authority, which is dominated by Fatah, allowed Hamas to host a rally in the West Bank, marking the first such gathering since 2007 and suggesting a possible resolution"

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Daoud Kuttab

Is Jordan-Palestine Confederation Back on Negotiating Table?

"Suggestions for a Jordanian-Palestinian agreement as a way of ending the Israeli occupation have fluctuated. The idea of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation was negotiated at the summit level without any conclusions. The late PLO leader Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) was quoted as saying that Palestinians want "five minutes of independence" before agreeing to confederate with Jordan. At the Madrid peace talks, Palestinians acquiesced to an Israeli request to have a joint Palestinian-Jordanian team to negotiate the status of the Palestinian territories. But when the issue of confederation became an Israeli precondition, the late King Hussein said that he didn't want to ever hear the term "confederation" again" [....] "But while a plan to enter into a confederation with Jordan will put many Israelis at ease,



it is unlikely to play well in most nationalist Palestinian or Jordanian circles. Palestinians might reluctantly agree to any process that will ensure the end of the four-decades-old Israeli occupation, East Bank Jordanian nationalists will strongly oppose it, fearing that it will further erode a unique Jordanian identity because of the fact that more than half of Jordanian citizens are of Palestinian origin"

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