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The MB's: A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)



Tarek Radwan

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood: Out of the Frying Pan and into the Fire

*"**Given the blurred lines between the Morsi government and the Muslim Brotherhood, the group is betting on its ability to control the interpretation of the impending NGO legislation, but antagonistic forces could easily turn it against the organization if it loses executive or political control.** Between the Muslim Brotherhood's frosty relations with the Egyptian judiciary, the government bureaucracy, and the political opposition, any number of power brokers could turn this law against the group. One the one hand, it subjects the Brotherhood to an unprecedented degree of transparency that may help expose long held questions surrounding sources of funding. On the other, it eviscerates civil society – and with it the prospects of independent checks on power. The railroading of the draft law through the Shura Council suggests a bizarre, ad hoc approach to governance that could further damage Egypt's transition. Perhaps before he signs the draft into law, President Morsi will realize that a more progressive, open, and independent civil society will benefit everyone. Especially, the Muslim Brotherhood"*

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The Downward Spiral & The Hope/Fear of Army Intervention



Bassem Sabry

Could Violence in Egypt Spin Out of Control?

*What is even more troubling is **that the country's political forces often seem ambivalent about the growing scare of wide political violence**. Sure enough the Muslim Brotherhood and the NSF are both publicly renouncing violence to be sure, and they're both making effort to control their base, but also qualify that with exchanges of blame. **The Brotherhood in particular appears to be in growing pains to control a base in which many are fuming and want to reprise against what they see as organized pro-opposition violence** against them" [....] "Most worrisome is **that some seem to hope for something of the sort, whether as a pretext for an army intervention to take power or as a pretext for sweeping moves against the opposition**.*

*Either way, it would be a disaster for Egypt. Strangely enough though, it is also appears most likely that the country would just limp along like this for months until elections, which would then open another set of problems" [.....] "**The downward spiral could nonetheless be stopped, and the sense of continuous worry and dread many of us feel could end**. Egypt quite urgently needs an immediate and sweeping national reconciliation deal. Its political forces need to create mechanisms, accords and a legislative agenda that could politically and economically stabilize the country for at least a few of years. National trust in the judiciary as a neutral arbitrator needs to be restored. Anger against the police needs to be addressed. And justice for all the recent violence is required. Assuming none of the country's political forces are pushing toward one of the several radical scenario that aim to erase the other from the map, they mainly have one of two options: Reconcile now, or regrettably reconcile after something horridly indelible takes place"*

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H.A. Hellyer

Military Intervention and Egypt's Future

"A new intervention into governance by the Egyptian armed forces is something that many in the political, social and economic elite are clamouring for. They're not all on the same page in that regard, and people ought to be honest about that. Some people just have it in for the MB, and always would have had – regardless of whether or not the MB had been successful in taking Egypt forward along the transition towards a second republic" [.....] "If public order diminishes to the point that the military feels obliged to step in, it is hard to see how they could do so while remaining acquiescent to President Morsi. On the contrary, it might be easier for the military to simply place him, and other members of the MB leadership, under house arrest. In such a scenario, can anyone really envisage that the MB would simply say 'OK'? What would their response be? Would it turn violent? No-one knows for sure – but everyone does know that Egypt is now a country that is armed on a far more widespread level than it was in the past"

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Sandmonkey

Myths

"From everything we have seen in every major clash with the MB and its member, this myth is also simply false. The MB is organised and can mobilise its members, but its members are mostly educated middle class and are not trained in militant warfare, which leaves the most impoverished members of the MB from outside of Cairo to do their fighting, which is why they keep getting heavy defeats despite their numerical superiority in any clash. Even the notion that their Islamist allies have militias and can recreate the Iranian Basij is also suspect and dubious. ***Even if they did, they are nowhere near the size necessary to either engage in prolonged armed conflict or control the country by force, because if they could, they would have by now. The truth is they don't and can't, and the even more uncomfortable truth is that even the army, with its troops and weapons, can't control the country at this point****"*

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Hani Shukrallah

The Muslim Brotherhood's Samson Option

*"****Too many Egyptians are simply no longer afraid; police terror doesn't send them back home, it makes them angrier****" [.....] "The Egyptian people could be stratified into three categories: the Pashas and Beys, who were by and large above the law, the Effendis, who lay whimsically within the boundaries of a highly restrictive and repressive law, and the "rabble", the great majority of the people, who were wholly outside the law, a subject population ruled over by a lawless and savage militia that calls itself a police force" [....]* ***"For SCAF, bent on maintaining as much of the Mubarak state structure as possible, dismantling the police state was tantamount to dismantling the state itself****" [....] "****And while the police hold no particular love for the Brotherhood; certainly, there is an alliance of convenience between the two. Like their SCAF forebears, the Brotherhood has provided the police with what they most desperately require in a post-revolutionary Egypt: reliable protection from being brought to account for past and present crimes****"[.....] "Like that compulsive gambler, the Brotherhood – fervently bent on capturing Egypt's state and society in one fell blow – are inherently unable to cut their losses, but rather*

*are constantly and with growing desperation betting on the next hand, the next throw of the dice, the one that will compensate them for all their losses, and 'lead [them] to fortune**". Meanwhile, their chips are dwindling fast, their debt to the House piling up, and the pit-bosses are hovering in the background. The pit-bosses in that little metaphor are of course the military**"*

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Moqattam: The Many Shades of Violence



Evan Hill

The Bad And The Ugly: Political Violence In Moqattam

"Many images of brutal violence committed by both sides emerged from the fighting in the capital's Moqattam district, perched on a plateau overlooking the city from the east, but none so striking as the attack on the bearded man. ***Never before had someone associated with the anti-Brotherhood opposition been so clearly caught in an act of lopsided aggression****. "When the protester becomes the thug," read a caption written by activist Ahmad Aggour, one of many who reposted Khaled's photograph on Facebook. According to a complaint filed by top Brotherhood lawyer Abdel Moneim Abdel Maksoud on Sunday that accused 169 "thugs" and political leaders of sparking and participating in the violence, one Brotherhood member died and dozens were wounded in the fight. Some of the Islamists' opponents responded to Khaled's image with disbelief, seizing on claims by others who said they knew the attacker personally and that his gun, with its simplistic design, was a toy. More likely, the weapon was a flare pistol or homemade fard - an illegal single-shot handgun with a widened barrel made by blacksmiths using scrap metal and typically loaded with shotgun cartridges. Such guns proliferated after the revolution, but their use in and around street protests has escalated in recent months. The trademark boom of the fard, followed by the clattering shower of its pellets, has become the soundtrack to an ongoing political battle that grows more out of control every day. In Muqattam on Friday night, many Brotherhood protesters showed a journalist the bloodied welts where they had been hit by fard pellets."*

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Nervana Mahmoud

When Fecklessness is An Attitude

"The so-called citizen's arrest power is just one example of this "creative fecklessness." ***The decision of the public prosecutor to grant citizens the right to arrest vandals was warmly welcomed by nearly all Islamist political groups and parties, who passionately defended it as "an effective" alternative to secure Egypt in the absence of a "reliable" police force.*** *Their argument appealed to some Egyptians, who already distrust the police and the entire security apparatus, while many others have raised the alarm bell, citing the dangers of such a move. For example, al-Gamaa al-Islamiya now deploys its members in the city of Assiut, south of Egypt to "maintain security." Ironically, that is the same group that killed 21 policemen in the same city in the early eighties"*

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Egyptian Aak: Week 12

*"The frivolous violence continues to unfold in Egypt; this week's episode took place in Moqattam, near the main headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood" [.....] "****The difference in this episode is what were seemingly pre-emptive attacks by some non-Islamist protestors on the Brotherhood's buses*** *(that usually bring their supporters from other provinces), parked away from main building in Nafoura square; this seemed to take the Brotherhood by surprise, and hence, there were several casualties among their ranks" [....] "****Although many groups called for Friday's protests, the National Coalition Front (NSF) did not call for Friday march to the Brotherhood headquarter, therefore, it is unfair to classify the NSF as "spoilers" in the current complicated scene in Egypt****. Nonetheless, their silence is morally and politically damaging, as it can cost them their integrity and credibility among the public. Therefore condemnation of violence by the April 6th Movement, and by opposition figures like Amr Moussa, and Sabbahi should be welcomed, although it came a bit late" [.....] "On the other hand****, some activists still justify the violence as understandable, as this quote from Egypt Independent: "If you think our moves should respect the rule of law, or at least seek the rule of law, then you will have to find a way to pressure the state, the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood to respect the law****."***

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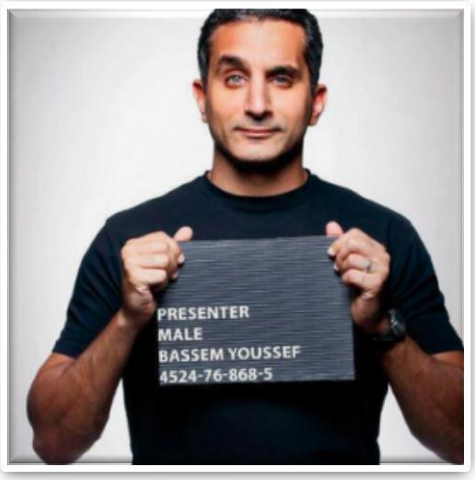
Bassem Youssef: Everything Is Laughable & "Freedom of Expression"





H.A. Hellyer

Bassem Youssef : A Valuable Egyptian Voice That Will Not Be Silenced

"Early on Saturday morning, I received a message that Bassem Youssef, the Arab world's answer to 'Jon Stewart', had been issued a compulsory summons and arrest warrant by the prosecutor-general. The prosecutor-general's office wanted to investigate two charges against him: 'insulting Islam' and 'insulting the president'. All I could do was smile -- because I knew that was exactly what Bassem would be doing as soon as he heard the same" [....] " Bassem Youssef isn't an enemy of the Egyptian presidency – he is simply an Egyptian patriot. For that, he ought to be congratulated by supporters of the government – not chastised. If tomorrow morning, when Bassem shows up at the courthouse, he is arrested by the Egyptian state, it will not be Bassem Youssef that loses out. It is going to be this government, and its supporters – because all it is really likely to do, in the final analysis, is give Bassem yet more material. Because one way or the other, he will walk out a free man – and his commitment to the 25th of January revolution will just be more intense"



Nervana Mahmoud

Diary of Aak, week13: The Kaboos

A closer look at the details of ***the Bassem Youssef case could shed some light at the dark side of Egypt justice system****: The prosecutor office has "allegedly" summoned Youssef last week, but Egypt's most famous public figure, whom his address cannot be missed has denied in a TV interview that he received anything. This is the oldest trick in the Egyptian legal system; alleged miss of the summons, followed by arrest warrant. Regardless, Bassem arrived at the prosecutor's office donned in an oversize academic hat mocking one, which Mr Morsi wore recently when he received an honorary doctorate in Pakistan. The defiance of Bassem Youssef, it seems, did not go well, the mood has changed after initial welcome by lawyers and policemen at the office who wanted their picture taken with him, according to al-Misri al-Youm news portal, the judge asked him to remove his tweets written during the questioning, and released him on bail for 3 legal cases, and a fourth one is still ongoing.* ***The real crime of Bassem Youssef is not***

insulting President Morsi, or denigrating Islam, but his ability to challenge old attitudes and mindsets. *His arrest warrant is, in my opinion, a form of legal bullying, and as Abdullah Kamal wrote:* ***"It is a sign of a regime in quandary****."*

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Mohamed El Dahshan

Bassem Youssef and the Sultan

*"The modern-day Sultan, Mohamed Morsy, didn't enjoy having his hollowness mercilessly exposed by satirist Bassem Youssef. Commonly referred to as "the Arab Jon Stewart," Youssef has frequently put the government and its president in the crosshairs on his weekly show, El-Bernameg (The Program), which is broadcast by a private channel every Friday evening" [.....] "****The attempts of the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters to silence dissent and criticism are not only futile, but painfully counterproductive. The intense media coverage and outpour of global support highlight the ridiculousness of a president trying to imprison a comedian — especially a comedian the president used to support his political campaign. Already the fiasco is rapidly backfiring****. A U.S. State Department spokesperson accused Egypt of muzzling free speech and suggested that Egyptian authorities were selectively prosecuting their opponents. The U.S. Embassy in Cairo has also gotten in on the action"*

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Sarah Carr

Get with the programme

"The cases against B. Youssef filed by private actors absolutely NOT affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood accusing him of insulting religion and insulting the president are ***unambiguously political and about silencing him****, but if the Imbaba sample and other anecdotal stories I have heard are anything to go by,* ***there is a sense that Youssef has crossed a line of respectability that has nothing to do with politics, and the idiots behind these charges are banking on that.*** *That for me is the most interesting part of this case and not the dreary, Mubarakist attempts at censorship. Maybe it will force Egyptian society to challenge these staid ideas of "respectability" and the inconsistencies in the strange moral code that doesn't so much govern as strangle its behavior. Maybe it will be the first step towards its accepting that foul language deployed*

intelligently does not detract from a person's moral standing and that sex continues to exist even in the presence of one's mother or sister because we are all adults"

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Bassem Sabry

Bassem Youssef and the Fate Of Independent Media in Egypt

*"There **are three questions at the heart of this debate**. The first and most immediate is **media freedom from political pressure**, especially in the midst of the current national conflict. The second is a debate over **the professional standards of the industry**. The third, and most complex, appears as a real conservative-liberal philosophical disagreement over paradigms, norms and values pertaining to **how the media should conduct its business**" [...] "Islamists themselves will also have to come to some necessary realizations: T**he media can be biased, and they will have to coexist with a strong media that has little fondness for them. The days of patriarchal political regimes are over, and the Islamist leadership will have to convey such facts to an increasingly unhappy base**. Worldwide, fiery opinion-driven media is growing" [....] "political satire of the kind that Bassem Youssef does has become a key element of modern democracies and freedom of speech, and everyone will have learn how to live with it. Those who are dissatisfied should perhaps produce their own brand of it, and accept that Youssef has a massive audience that wants what he does. Instead of trying to just clamp down on the media, the Brotherhood and its allies should perhaps instead try to create a model of what they think good media should look like. But one is thing for sure: **all the pressure is only making the media more defiant, and will rally more people around it**"*

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Hani Sabra

Egyptian Tragicomedy

*Comedian Bassem Youssef is really funny. Hilarious, in fact. Thousands of Egyptians stay in on Friday night to watch his satirical program—modeled after Jon Stewart's Daily Show. However, **even more (tragi)comic is the set of charges that the prosecutor general levied against Bassem after his show ridiculed the increasingly gaffe prone President Mohamed Morsi**. Bassem is facing accusations of insulting the president and and insulting Islam. The case is flimsy and Bassem will not see the inside*

of an Egyptian jail cell. But it represents a depressing microcosm of much that has gone wrong with post-Hosni Mubarak Egypt. How is it that in a country where protesters ousted an aging autocrat and demanded "freedom", individuals can still be charged with "insulting the president" and potentially imprisoned? (For context, a hat Morsi wore in Pakistan that Bassem ridiculed was only slightly less foolish than the speech he gave when he received his honorary degree.) There are three culprits"



[*Read More*]



H.A. Hellyer

J'accuse

"Bassem Youssef's case rests on three points: that he insulted the Egyptian president, insulted Islam, and spread false news that was aimed at disrupting public order. Well, I have known Bassem Youssef for quite some time. I have worked with him, and I have a new case to raise against him, which ought to cancel this other one out, but I have some ideas about what direction to point that other case in. ***Ladies and Gentlemen: J'accuse! Bassem Youssef stands before you, guilty of insulting the status quo. He stands before you as someone who publically and openly couldn't support voting for the likes of Ahmad Shafiq in the presidential elections, because Bassem wanted the status quo to change and for the situation not to revert to the pre-25 Jan era****. Ladies and Gentlemen, I have firm evidence to that effect, and I think you ought to convict him accordingly"*

[*Read More*]

US-Egypt Affairs: Urgent Call to Change Policy



Salama Moussa

The Policy And The Program: The Bassem Affair

"The US policy toward Egypt since January 25 2011 has been a makeshift affair, improvised and circumscribed by a desire for "responsible" statesmanship. It left the US seeming to be in a position of support for the Islamists parties in Egypt, especially the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). *It is doubtful that this is the intention of the policy. As often the case in the complex world of power politics, a minor affair can shed light on complex issues, even at the risk of oversimplification. There are many reasons why the "Bassem Affair" will alter US policy toward Egypt"*

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The Stubborn Brothers

"The US foreign policy today is largely a reflection of the temperament of President Obama, a sensible man and a Harvard lawyer, who always tries to chart a middle course. This temperament is especially ill-suited to deal with the current situation in Egypt, and more specifically with the Muslim Brotherhood*. The Brothers possess the legendary Egyptian stubbornness in undiluted form. For Egyptians, stubbornness is both a virtue and a vice. For the Brothers it has been a survival mechanism. There is a common theme of alarm about the near collapse of the "state" in Egypt. The truth of such a possibility should not blind us to the more important imperative of seeking long term stability and prosperity for Egypt. The response from the US has been to propose a series of incremental and reasonable sounding measures to stave off the collapse. The Brothers see this as simply another tool to strengthen their grip on power.* ***By refusing to enact any measures that might dilute their popularity but point the country toward long-term stability and progress, they are holding it hostage to further their political fortunes. Trying to meet the Brothers half-way is a fool's errand****"*

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Sandmonkey

Strange Days...

"Think tankers and policy researchers working on Egypt in the States do not know what to make of all of this, nor what to make of the Muslim Brotherhood's rhetoric when they come for their monthly Washington visit, which is identical to the NDP's rhetoric: Egypt is a democracy, human rights are being respected, there are problems but we have started a national dialogue, and only 4 or 5 non-influential parties haven't joined in, Egypt and the US have a strong and strategic partnership, the security of Israel is the security of Egypt, etc... **Some of those think tankers have confided in me that they feel as if they are in Bizarro-world during those meetings, and the feeling intensified when those same think tankers meet with US state department officials, who tell them that they believe the Muslim Brotherhood. Why? Well, because they want to believe them. Why? Well, because the alternative to believing them is terrifying. What? How would the alternative to believing lies be terrifying? And then the answer comes: "Well, are you trying to tell us that the Muslim Brotherhood, the rightful rulers of democratic Egypt according to known DC-based un-biased academics like Shadi Hamid and Marc Lynch, the force that emerged from the Arab Spring, the organisational behemoth with grass-roots operations, hugely supported, winning every election, cannot control or govern Egypt, and that Egypt is failing under their rule? AND THAT THERE IS NO ONE ELSE?**"

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Syria

FSA vs. Jabhat al-Nusra: Fighting Two Wars - One against Assad One for Legitimacy



Hassan Hassan

One fighter's story reveals the challenge Syria faces

"I have often written about the worrying rise of hardline groups during the uprising. And yet I am aware that people like Abu Abdullah are admired in

their communities, for good reasons. It is very hard for their communities to turn against such leaders. Of course, there are groups that menace the future of the country, regardless of their honesty. But there are people like Abu Abdullah who do not have grand plans to take over the country. They emerged from their own communities to defend them, and thereby won love and admiration. ***The real challenge in rebuilding Syria after the Assad era will be this: to find ways to respect the rebels' sacrifices, even though they are motivated by politics that many Syrians - including myself - find troubling. These people are organic parts of their communities, and cannot be dismissed. The question is whether they can be outshone****"*

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Clashes between Jabhat al-Nusra and local militias in Deir Ezzor underline significant trend

Jabhat al-Nusra fighters are still trying to get the villagers to hand over the killers to face 'qasas' justice according to Islamic rules. The clan leaders in Masreb, on the other hand, issued another video saying they cannot hand over the killers because that would go against tribal traditions. In the first apology video, the village notables warn that any attacks on the village might "scare off women and children", and in the second apology video, the notables get "Islam Battalion" to read the statement that includes emphasis on Islamic teachings and quotes from the Quran -- clear attempts to discourage Jabhat al-Nusra from attacking them. One of the videos uploaded above includes a message saying that the issue is now left for Al-Fateh Al-Joulani, the leader of Jabhat al-Nusrah, to solve. The episode underlines two issues involving Jihadi fighters in the province, and elsewhere: the first is that Jabhat al-Nusra fighters tend to exercise restraint when it comes to disagreements with the communities where they operate, a clear distinction from fighters in the Free Syrian Army or other groups, as part of the jihadists' strategy to win hearts and minds; it also underlines the fact that local communities are increasingly relying on jihadists to help them to maintain law and order. This is clear through several examples in which local leaders or residents appeal to jhadists for help, a result of the jihadists' discipline and conduct in the region and again in several areas across the country"

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Koert Debeuf

"The Free Syrian Army Does Exist" by Koert Debeuf & Response by Aron Lund

The Riad Al Assad era or the former structure of the FSA. Up until a year ago, there was no structure at all in the Syrian armed rebellion. Every little group was called a battalion, whether it consisted of 20 or 200 fighters. The creation of the FSA by Col. Riad Al Assad in July 2011 was just as symbolic (but also as important) as the creation of the Free French Forces by De Gaulle in 1940. On 23 October, the FSA merged with the Free Officers Movement, becoming the main organization for military defectors. Pure branding or not, it deserved the credit of at least trying to do something about the fragmentation. It gave the signal to the many battalion commanders that co-operation is the only way to go. That is exactly what happened the next year. From July 2011 until September 2012, there were many initiatives in order to create larger entities. We saw the birth of brigades like Liwa Al Tawheed and Farouk. We saw the creation of military councils, administrative councils, revolutionary councils and civilian councils. Some initiatives were pushed by the Friends of Syria or by individual countries. Aid, money or weapons were promised if the resistance would only get organized" [.....] "The Salim Idriss era or the new structure of the FSA. On 7 December 2012, 260 officers of the FSA gathered in Antalya in Turkey. They elected a Higher Council of Revolutionary and Military Forces and a Chief of Staff, Dr. Brigadier General Salim Idriss. General Idriss defected in June 2012. The main reason why he was elected is his talent for persuading people in a softly-spoken way. Col. Riad Al Assad wasn't present at the meeting. They decided he would keep the title of General Commander of the FSA, but this would be a symbolic, rather than an operational title. His era is over now"

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The King Speech: Damage Control

Naseem Tarawnah

King Abdullah: One Jordanian's Perspective

The picture of the King that emerges is one of a leader who, at heart, is a reformist and a modernizer but has been unable to carry out his agenda for 14 years because the General Intelligence Department and tribal conservatives (the "dinosaurs") have been too powerful a force, working against him or rejecting his changes*. In other words, the portrait of a leader the West can sympathize with emerges. It's an image that sells well in the Western hemisphere but if you simply live in Jordan, you probably recognize the holes in that picture" [.....] "Just like the King,* ***I'm pretty fatigued with the system. Our inability to be honest about who we are and how we got to this point is really holding this country back.*** *We barely acknowledge the problem, but when we do, we just blame it on "the realities of the country" despite the fact that many of these realities are of the state's own creation" [....] "While the King does indeed enjoy a great deal of support from the population for a wide variety of reasons, the article and his own words suggests that he doesn't have the kind of support he's looking for, or the kind he wants. And given the environment that was created and continues to be largely sustained, that comes as no surprise"*

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Impatient Bedouin

King Abdullah's Post-Interview Damage Control Begins



"From a PR standpoint it was a disaster. After Turkish diplomats complained about his comments regarding Ergogan, the regime has moved into full damage control mode. King Abdullah posted on his facebook page that the interview was "inaccurate and dishonest." Jordanian officials have said they will give a "public general explanation" regarding the interview. What could such an explanation entail? Either King Abdullah made these remarks about the leaders of neigboring or nearby countries such as Egypt or Turkey or he did not. Either Jeffrey Goldberg is a fabricator (which would require a substantial amount of evidence to back up) or perhasp, as might be more likely, King Abdullah thought his comments

were off the record. Even if this is the case it overlooks a larger point – even if King Abdullah did not expect these comments to be published, they were still what he said and still what he thought" [.....] "What is clear from this interview is this: even if some of the things that King Abdullah said are arguably true, they should not have been said by someone who has stated he aspires to be a constitutional monarch. It is also, regardless, imprudent to damage Jordan's relations with states in the region and damage its diplomatic position without any corresponding gains"

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Jadaliyya

King Abdullah II of Jordan, World Statesman?

"Despite this image of the king, which Goldberg supports (although his own bias bursts through this piece so strongly at times, that the piece often reads like he is mocking Abdullah), ***the reality is that any serious political organizing in Jordan has been regularly met with repression. In the lived world of Jordan, one finds little evidence that the Jordanian authorities would allow any serious attempt at establishing an independent reform-minded political party.*** *Constitutional reforms are minimal at best, and the regime passed a new repressive press law just last year, aimed in part at censoring online journalism and critique of the regime. The constant refrain that Abdullah wants to establish a constitutional monarchy on the British model is little in evidence when one gets outside the royal palace. Despite these monarchical and state prohibitions, the last few years have seen an eruption of political organizing among groups all over the country. This organizing is not just by the Muslim Brotherhood—who get discussed in most international media. It is also by students, workers, and those supposedly moribund tribes. Many of them are the people who are now moving the quotes from this interview into debate in Jordan, even with the threat of punishment they face because of the press law. But for Abdullah's brand to work as a cohesive description of Jordanian life and politics, these Jordanians must be made invisible. Abdullah must be considered the only voice allowed an audience. Abdullah's quotes and Goldberg's context perform this magic act together"*

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Mikati's Resignation: "Clinging On for Life"- Lebanon at A Crossroads



Jean Aziz

Mikati's Resignation Puts Lebanon at A Crossroads

"The reasons for Mikati's resignation go beyond Tripoli and the Sunni community. One reason was ***the inability of Mikati's government to conduct parliamentary elections before June 20,*** *the date when the current Parliament's mandate ends, because the Lebanese political forces have failed to agree on a new electoral law. The election law under which the 2009 elections were conducted has been agreed upon by the Lebanese parties under Arab and international sponsorship, which resulted in the Doha agreement in May 2008. That agreement came after the situation flared in Beirut between Sunni and Shiite gunmen on May 7, 2008" [.....] "Also among the reasons for Mikati's resignation is* ***the deterioration of the situation in Syria and the oft-heard accusation that Mikati had accumulated a massive financial fortune only because he was supported by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime since the mid-1990s.*** *It is an accusation that Mikati has always denied, asserting that he is completely independent from what is happening in Damascus. He came up with the "dissociation" policy toward the Syrian crisis in the Lebanese, Arab and UN contexts. There is also* ***a larger international context for Mikati's resignation, as it came only days after a statement by the Security Council president with regard to the situation in Lebanon and after a series of Western statements about holding the parliamentary elections on schedule according to any law, even the Doha law****. This is something that most political forces in Lebanon reject, including almost all Christians, all Shiites, and a minority of Sunnis and Druze" [.....] "The equation has become clear.* ***The resignation of Mikati's government has put Lebanon at a crossroads. That may pressure the Lebanese political forces to agree on restoring the state's institutions according to a comprehensive deal that includes a pact on an election law, a government that would supervise the elections and conduct them within six months at the***



latest, and an agreement on the government that will follow the elections. *That would allow Lebanon to overcome the explosive situation in the region until at least May 2014, when the president's mandate ends. The second possibility would be a spreading power vacuum that may lead to the deterioration of the security and military situation"*

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Elias Muhanna

Mikati's Resignation Signals the Collapse of the Lebanese Idea, Renewed Civil War, and the End of the World as We Know It

*"**The real danger of Mikati's resignation is that it places Lebanon on a familiar precipice, where the mandates of its political authorities will soon expire without any mechanism in place for their renewal**. Crudely speaking, without a prime minister, there can be no cabinet. And without a cabinet, there can be no electoral law. And without an electoral law, there can be no parliamentary elections held this summer when the current parliament's term ends. And without a new parliament, there can be no appointment of top governmental positions, foremost among them the new president, whose term will begin in May 2014. And without a new president… well, maybe that's not such a big deal. But you get the point"[….] "**The source of Lebanon's current kerfuffle is not "Sunni rage" or "Shiite militarism" or "Christian division" but the fluidity and ambiguity of its political institutions and protocols**. Under normal circumstances, it should not be that big a deal for a prime minister to resign when faced with the intransigence of the political coalition that put him in office. What is a big deal, however, is that there is no automatic set of procedures that must be followed when a governmental breakdown occurs"*

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The Zako

Najib Mikati's Resignation – A Masters Class in Jumping Ship



"Walid Jumblatt, Najib Mikati and Michel Sleiman have enough MPs to switch sides and screw Hezbollah in the new government but they will never dare to do it. The likelihood is that they come back to Hezbollah with a higher price tag, unless Hezbollah had enough combined with its

focus on Syria…in which case, political vacuum is in front us which Hezbollah shouldn't mind it now. As for Mikati himself, he is much better prepared for the upcoming elections than three days ago in whatever way it goes. He proved himself to be an opportunist – and not dump at all – by exiting this government in the same way he joined it. He is big enough now to make himself available for a new "unity government"

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Ali Hashem

Lebanon Premier's Resignation Exposes Lebanon to Instability

"Hezbollah didn't comment on the resignation, but sources close to the party revealed that Mikati called Hussein Khalil, Hezbollah's secretary general political adviser, and told him he was going to resign unless his demands were met. According to the sources, the adviser told him, "Do whatever you want to do." This might be an indication that Hezbollah could be starting to implement its "Plan B." One of the suggestions is that there will be a new candidate that they'll try to convince Druze Leader MP Walid Jumblatt to back in the forthcoming parliamentary consultations that will be called by the Lebanese president. In Lebanon, the president names the PM after consulting the parliamentary blocs. The March 8 and March 14 blocs are the two main ones in Parliament, but lack the majority. Therefore, Jumblatt will be the kingmaker, as his bloc will give the majority to whomever he decides to back"

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The New PM Tammam Salam: One Size Fit All?



Moulahazat

How Tammam Salam Became A Consensual Candidate

"Tammam Salam was nominated as M14's candidate, and Jumblatt endorsed him, after refusing Rifi. Tammam Salam won't participate in the elections if he's nominated, which means that his success (If he succeeds) won't be a direct threat to Mikati and Hariri. Tammam Salam visited Saudi Arabia - whose ambassador in Lebanon ironically said in the same day that the Saudis do not interfere in Lebanese Politics - where he got the blessing he needed. Also, after the Saudi ambassador - who ironically said that the Saudis do not interfere in Lebanese Politics – visited Mikati, Mikati said he doesn't want to be Lebanon's next Prime Minister. Tammam Salam came back to Lebanon. Here you go, Saudi Arabia's support" [….] "Now's here's the

tricky part. Hezbollah lost Mikati. Hezbollah also lost Jumblatt. And Hezbollah is losing Syria. Hezbollah can't also repeat what he did in 2011. The elections are way too close. He made that mistake on the 7th of May 2008 and lost the 2009 elections because of it. So what does Hezbollah do? He plays it smart. M8 can endorse Karami, Tabbara, Abdul Rahim Mrad, or anyone else, but the M8 coalition will probably lose because Jumblatt won't give his support. Instead of fighting a lost battle, they take M14's achievement, make Jumblatt's swing votes look useless – while they're not at all – and push with Tammam Salam making him a consensual candidate. That's how M14 don't exactly look like winners, and Saudi Arabia's increasing influence (while Syria is on fire) doesn't look that important because Salam is suddenly everyone's candidate. And he can be everyone's candidate. Check the background part again"



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Mustapha Hamoui

Bending With the Wind

"In lebanese politics there is no such thing as a knockout blow. Parties largely retain their popular support, but the external conditions dictate whether or not they get the spoils of ruling. Members of the March 8 alliance are now faced with a choice: Adapt to the new environment or wait it out. Their choice will depend on the prospects of the situation in Syria. One person who seems to be adapting is Mr. Nabih Berri. He is portraying his political pivot to the "center" as a "shielding lebanon from the neighboring war". Like Mr. Jumblat, Mr. Berri's overriding concern is his network of patronage and political fiefs (like his everlasting hold on the ministry of Foreign Affairs). A little distance from Hezbollah can also be sold as an effort to reconcile Sunnis and Shiaas. Hezbollah are playing the wait-and-see game. They did this before when they survived (and thrived) after Syria's humiliating exit from Lebanon in 2005. Hezbollah play a long game, and they're probably going through some strategic assessment (alongside Iran) regarding Syria"

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Hamas: The Egyptian Patronage & The Qatari Sponsor



Hussein Ibish

Shifting Regional Alliances put Hamas 'up for grabs'

Qatar recently launched a $1 billion fund, supposedly to preserve "Islamic sites" in Jerusalem. In response, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and King Abdullah of Jordan publicly reiterated Jordan's long-established but recently downplayed role as "a custodian" of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and its role "in preserving them". Most ominously, the contest over influence among Palestinians isn't restricted to the Sunni Middle East, as seemed possible after the Syrian uprising started. Iran has been able to retain strong military ties - as evidenced in last year's exchange of rocket fire between Gaza factions and Israel - with Hamas's military wing and, even more closely, with Palestinian Islamic Jihad. For Palestinians, all of this raises two crucial questions. First, ***what kind of independent state are they trying to build: an exclusivist Islamist autocracy, or a pluralistic nationalist polity? And, second, how can Palestinians navigate a new political landscape in which regional forces are once again able to exercise a degree of influence in their internal political affairs - a situation they once hoped was a thing of the past?***

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Dr.Adnan Abu Amer

Hamas' Changing Role in Egypt



Hamas made a mistake from which it is still attempting to recover: in the post-Mubarak era, it failed to properly exploit its room to maneuver in the Egyptian provinces*. That is, it did not take the trouble to communicate effectively with the other elements of the Egyptian revolution --- the secularists, the leftists, and the nationalists. This caused its stock to fall somewhat in the Egyptian street, even among those supporting a military posture toward Israel. Without intending to do so, it appeared that Hamas had injected itself into an internal Egyptian political dispute" [.....]* ***Hamas' greatest embarrassment lies in that while it once confronted a hostile regime in Cairo, it was embraced by the Egyptian people. Now, however, it feels that situation has been reversed****. Just when the Muslim Brotherhood ascended to power, and*

Hamas felt that its grandest ambitions had been achieved, it began to notice cracks in its once sterling image among the Egyptian public" [.....] "Hamas must brace itself for scenarios that today may seem far-fetched. If conditions in Egypt should deteriorate with major or severe consequences, Hamas might be forced to appear less sympathetic toward its original founders --- the Muslim Brotherhood --- and closer to its rivals, not out of Machiavellianism --- though, in politics, there are worse things — but out of a simple desire to maintain its network of ties with Egypt as a whole, from one end to the other. This applies in a geographic sense, a political sense, and an ideological sense"

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