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Brotherhood-Salafist Rivalry: The Honeymoon Is Over

Hicham Mourad

How far Egypt's Brotherhood-Salafist rivalry will go

"The FJP-El-Nour rivalry is expected to continue and even intensify progressively as legislative elections approach, which auger to be a major test of popularity for both Islamist movements. The scope of this power struggle, however, is dependent on the strength or the threat posed by the secular opposition to Islamist forces. Salafists still regard the Muslim Brotherhood, despite their ideological and political differences, as part of the Islamic project. The continued weakness of the liberal opposition will result in the intensification of inter-Islamist rivalry, while a possible rise of the opposition will push El-Nour and the Brotherhood to constrain their power struggle and coordinate to defeat the liberals"

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The MB's & Sawiris Family: The Return of The Tycoons

The Big Pharaoh

*"Last March, the Brotherhood appointed General Prosecutor placed Egyptian billionaires Onsi Sawiris and his son Nasif on the travel ban and arrivals watch lists. The government accused their company, Orascom Construction Industries (OCI), of evading taxes worth \$2.1 billion." [...] "I believe the target of this whole ordeal was not the 82 years old billionaire-who is not running any of his businesses today – or his son Nasif. The target was Naguib Sawiris and his political activity. Naguib, who literally sold everything he owns in Egypt, including the private satellite channel ON TV, was the major financier behind the Egypt Bloc, the loose coalition of liberal parties that ran against the Islamists during the last parliament elections. Now that the MB is rapidly losing popularity because of their dreadful way of running the country, having a billionaire on the opposition side is pretty dangerous for the regime. He had to be neutralized. He had to be intimidated. Since Naguib got rid of the vast majority of his assets in Egypt, they has to find another weak spot: his family. They went after his old father who could very much spend the rest of his life in a mansion on the French Riviera, instead he returned to Egypt yesterday after settling the tax issue with the government (OCI will pay \$1 billion over 7 years)" [...] **"So if the MB appointed General Prosecutor had targeted a whole list of companies, including Islamist owned companies, I might have believed the whole issue was about trying to collect money from***

any source possible. But the whole saga has the word politics written all over it. The MB is using the same dirty tactics of the Mubarak regime to ensure that money does not go to their rivals"

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Sendmonkey

The Price

"The Brotherhood now understands that alienating more than half of the country in order to maintain their alliance with the Salafis is not a viable long term strategy for survival, since the Salafis will continue to push them for more extreme positions than they would like and will always accuse them of selling out religion when they don't comply" [...] ***"The presidential reception of Naguib and the Sawiris family- both anathema to the Islamists- means that the honeymoon between the Brotherhood and the extremists in the Salafi camp is over"*** [.....] "Here are a few things one should expect: 1) **More settlement cases will be made by the government, opening the door for many of the businessmen who were in exile to return to the country once again,** 2) **The next Cabinet reshuffle –after the one happening right now– will bring in technocrats and old regime faces,** with a strong possibility that it will include a neutral figure to replace current PM Hesham Qandil, both to reassure the population and have at least one competent person in charge of the executive, instead of the two incompetent ones we now have; and 3) **The Islamists' internal political war is about to start,** and it will be one that will split and splinter it severely, with Al-Nour Party being ahead of the game as always. And last but not least, 4) **there will be a price to saving this country economically,** and what I just mentioned will be just the beginning. Have no doubt about it, **everyone will pay"**

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The Copts: A Second Class "Citizenship"?

Salama Moussa

Egypt Between The Brothers And The Church: Old Fears And New Challenges

Responsibility for any attacks on the Copts will now rest squarely on the Brotherhood shoulders, even if they neither seek nor support such attacks. A halfway sophisticated effort by external Copts will bring sizable pressure to bear at a time when Egypt needs massive external aid. Qatar, the sponsor of

last resort, might feel the pressure from its American protectors. Against the crossed swords of the Brotherhood, Tawadros holds his shepherd's staff and the Copts' treasured shield of their painfully acquired Egyptian identity. Collectively the Copts may be the one Egyptian group able to match the Brothers in dedication to cause as well as sheer stubbornness. The situation recalls the American Civil Rights movement where religious leaders stood against discrimination by the powerful, elevating both those who discriminate and those who are victims of discrimination." [.....] "The idea that Egypt would reject all legal innovations since the 1800's and return to pre-Napoleonic status, as proposed by Khairat El Shater in his now famous address to the Brotherhood in March 2011 depends on the Copts' acceptance of second class "citizenship" in exchange for a modicum of physical protection. **The Copts' willingness to fight back is a reversal of twelve centuries of practice and has caught the Islamists off guard. The Brotherhood may find itself with little assistance from other Muslim countries and facing fellow Egyptians who uphold their Egyptian identity without compromise or apology. If the Copts hold fast, and commit to peaceful means, then they, and Egypt, will have come through this ordeal the better for it"**

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Nervana Mahmoud

By snubbing Copts on their holiest day, Egypt's Morsi failed as President

"To greet or not to greet Copts – that is the current debate among Islamists in Egypt. It may seem a trivial issue, a courteous gesture that should not be sullied by theology. **But in Egypt, the rise of political Islam into power has pushed theology onto the fault line of politics and inflamed the already growing sectarianism in a society that was once known for its harmony and tolerance**"[.....] "President Morsi seems to be stuck between a rock and hard place: any compromise with the Copts would be viewed negatively by his supporters and could be exploited by rival Islamists, particularly the Salafis. A successful Egyptian leader is one who demonstrates shrewdness and the ability to navigate between rivals to secure harmony in society. The Egyptian president has a historic opportunity to amend the religious discourse in Egypt, fight extremism, ensure equality, and celebrate diversity. Thus far, however, he has consistently failed to grasp the opportunity"

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Egypt is Stuck: Emergent Need for Unity, Integration & National Reconciliation



Nervana Mahmoud

Revolving Doors

Since the resignation of Justice Minister Mekki last Sunday, and the wave of resignation has continued: The president's advisor, Fouad Gadallah; the Deputy Finance Minister, Demian; and here is another one that has not been documented much in English media—Essam Sharaf, the first Prime Minister of Egypt post-revolution. [...] **"The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) doesn't seem to be much concerned with the growing resentment against its rule, as it enhances the MB's unity and solidifies its leadership's grip on the organization.** The question still remains: **Can unity be enough to save the Brotherhood as a ruling party? The answer would depend on the Brotherhood's opposition and their capability to stir the anti-Ikhwanism into real steps on the ground to defeat the MB" [...]. "The MB is aware that their unity is enough for the survival of the group, but the unity of their opponents is the detrimental factor that can tip the balance against them"**

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Bassem Sabry

Eight Questions on 'Purging' Of Egypt's Judiciary

"The increasing politicization of Egypt's judiciary — whether through continued political involvement of the Judges' Association or the growing number of high-profile political cases being sent its way (e.g., parliamentary dissolution) — does not help Egypt or the cause of justice. The Brotherhood will only further polarize the country, and turn everyone (including former allies) against it, if it attempts to unilaterally reform the judiciary, even if, theoretically, well intentioned. Any controversial moves by the judiciary will further erode confidence in the legal system and the economy at an inopportune time. **Reforming Egypt's judiciary should only take place after true national reconciliation and a proper national dialogue on the subject and consensus on the way forward. It is unlikely the country's political leadership does not know this"**

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Khalil Al-Anani

Perestroika at the Brotherhood

"Is it possible to reform the MB? And if so, how can that be done and what type of reform is needed? Perhaps these questions are not to the liking of the MB which sees itself as a reformist movement due to its origins, composition and rhetoric, or even to the liking of its opponents who see no alternative but to get rid of the MB even if the price is a return to what is worse than Mubarak's era" [...]. **"Reforming the MB means addressing three issues: organizational restructuring (perestroika); changing the value system (glasnost); and embedding institutional democracy. These three ideas are derived from the transformation that took place in the last days of the Soviet Union before it disintegrated and collapsed at the end of the 1990s – but without jumping to conclusions about whether the fate of the MB will be similar to the former Soviet Union"** [.....] "An important difference is the MB lacks, at least right now, a central leadership figure such as Mikhail Gorbachev to lead these reforms or changes. Accordingly, the wager now is on the collective leadership inside the group that could decrease the possibility of fractures and collapse similar to the USSR – although anything is possible"

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Bassem Sabry

The Future of Egypt's Opposition

"One likely question is whether the NSF should become a full long-term political alliance, a predominantly electoral alliance with a very limited shared platform (the NSF officially stated it will work together, whether on elections or on a boycott campaign), or to largely go separate ways before the elections once (possibly) core demands have been addressed. **I, for one, believe in the necessity of long-term deep organizational and political integration, no matter what the chosen format is. There are just too many liberal and leftist parties out there whose sizes do not afford them any real impact on their own"** [...]. **"Of course, one other common critique of the NSF is that it has focused largely on criticizing rather than presenting detailed policy alternatives.** At times perhaps it is good policy to do just that when you're in the opposition, so as maintain the critical focus on the ruling administration. But the **public also needs regular signs that this opposition has ideas to fix the country if it were to assume power today,** something the opposition appears to have been taking steps lately to address" [...]. **"The opposition will need fresh faces** to appeal to the

public, as well as **better understanding of public opinion** and how to respond and engage with it. **The NSF will have to get its internal house in order, create more solid internal cooperation and effective decision-making mechanisms**, further ensure unified political stances, build grassroots networks (whether as individual parties or as the NSF as a whole), consider the integration of smaller similar parties, reach outside of more traditional strongholds to the less urban areas and offer more policy alternatives"

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Dr Mohamed A. Fouad

The popular myth of the unpopular Ikhwan!

"The National Salvation Front (NSF) which has surfaced as the most eligible suitor for this loss in popularity is in a perpetual state of disarray. While former presidential candidate Amr Moussa alongside other leaders venomously reject the notion that **the NSF is crumbling, the front has walked away from several opportunities to score any significant advances or offer viable alternatives to the situation. Furthermore, this makeshift coalition is destined to be torn at the ideological level as it is comprised of all the currents of the political spectrum** from leftist, to social democrats to conservative right-wing. **The other remaining forces of opposition such as the Salafis are dealing with their own demons.** On one end, they are seeing their support base splintered between the emerging Al-Watan Party and the Hazem Salah Abu Ismail supporters, just to list a few. Moreover, **the group cannot lead a staunch opposition, which would risk them appearing as siding completely with NSF, for fear of alienating their own support base" [...]** **"Politics firmly remains a game of numbers and mobilisation. You have to win an election to get a mandate.** Winning elections is all about brunt work and field campaigning rather than loud rhetoric, talk show appearances and meetings behind closed doors. There are not many options on the table but to engage in the electoral process to prove or debunk the myth. Many people have regrettably become disenchanted with this process because it has failed to deliver them the results they expected. **The new reality is however not about who has the best vision but rather who can control the crowd"**

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FJP/MB: The Cabinet Owners

arabist

On Egypt's Cabinet Shuffle

One result of this cabinet shuffle is that **it will become markedly more difficult for anyone to accept the FJP/MB's improbable claim that the government did not represent it and that it is effectively still in opposition.** (Indeed, the MB's claim that even this latest cabinet only has 1/3 MB/FJP members is rather moot, Egyptian cabinets have long contained "technocrats" with no partisan affiliation.) The FJP/MB's claim for a presence in the cabinet stems from its electoral success, and it can argue that it still has less of its own in the cabinet than its 45% share of the dissolved lower house of parliament might entitle it to. And, in any case, if the cabinet were supposed to be representative of the political balance, one might ask where are the Salafi cabinet members (some 25% of the dissolved lower house of parliament) and the non-Islamists (another 25% or so). **The reality is that the composition of the cabinet remains, as under Mubarak, a presidential prerogative. Morsi and the FJP/MB increasingly "own" this cabinet, and thus its handling of the country in the time remaining to elections** [...] "In short, **this is a shuffle to tackle short-term issues facing the government rather than one that changes its direction.** There are skirmishes to fight on the way to the big battle of the next elections, and dealing with the opposition (ranging from Salafi to secular, since they are all against this shuffle) will be left until after the elections, suggesting confidence that the FJP and its allies will dominate in the elections"

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Nervana Mahmoud

Egypt's New Cabinet: More of the Same

"Tuesday's Cabinet reshuffle [May 7] shed little light on Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's leadership and what the Muslim Brotherhood's plan is for Egypt, at least for the next few months" [...] "This view is based on the assumption that the reshuffle is aimed at addressing Egypt's political and economic woes. It is not — the current leadership has three goals from the new reshuffle: 1) to create a false perception that it is tackling Egypt's problems, particularly on the economic front; 2) to portray the opposition as uncooperative by keeping Qandil as prime minister and thus successfully managing to put many off from joining the government, justifying appointing more Muslim Brotherhood cadres as ministers; and 3) The

Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) is working according to party logic, where members want to maximize their personal power that correlates with the Muslim Brotherhood's wider logic of placing its faithful in positions of influence" [...] "**For Morsi, the new government is a win-win policy: If the government fails, he can claim it was only a short-term government, while if it survives, it can ensure an election victory for his party, the Muslim Brotherhood, in the next parliamentary election**"

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Syria

MB's Shrinking Power vs. Jihadists Rising Power



Joshua Landis

New report on the Muslim Brotherhood

The Syrian Brotherhood is not as strong as commonly believed. The incessant focus on the Brotherhood by the Assad regime, Western nations, and rival opposition groups has helped it build a fearsome reputation. Its actual political and organizational capability appears to be far more modest. ***The failures of others have benefited the Brotherhood.*** The real reason for the group's success in the exile community is the extreme disorganization of the rest of the opposition. As long as rival actors cannot get their act together, the Brotherhood will win by default. ***The Brotherhood tries to distance itself from extremism.*** Despite its theocratic ambitions and a past history of sectarian violence, the Brotherhood now promotes a moderate Islamist approach and seeks to accommodate concerns about its ideology. Since 2011, it has consistently cooperated with secular groups, spoken in favor of multiparty democracy, and worked through mainstream opposition frameworks such as the Syrian National Council, the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, and the Free Syrian Army. ***Several armed groups linked to the Brotherhood fight in Syria.*** The leadership refuses to admit to having an armed branch, but Brotherhood exiles have been funding armed groups since late 2011. The organization now controls or sponsors dozens of small paramilitary units inside Syria.

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Koert Debeuf

Not the Jihadists, but we are the problem

*"Each time I travelled to Syria during the last months, I saw Jihadists taking the same plane and the same bus as I did and following the same illegal way to enter northern Syria. What drew my attention and worried me each time is the self-confidence in their eyes, the acceptance that they will die in Syria. Above all, they are proud of it. They know they are going to be at the front line of the battle and that some people will admire them for that. And for them, this is exactly what they missed in their lives; admiration, guidance and heroic acts" [.....] **"Should we be surprised then that those who fight for a better Syria are getting more and more angry and frustrated with the West? They have to witness how the only thing that comes from the West are Jihadist fighters – whatever small and insignificant their number is – while the secular forces and the Syrian people are being left on their own.** It is of course justified to feel uncomfortable and even fearful for "our boys" who go to this far away and unknown Syria to fight for the sake of forming an Islamic State. However, we will not solve this problem by trying to stop them. We will only solve them if we start to engage in Syria itself. It's less difficult than we might think. We just need to do an effort"*

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Sectarian Cleansing



Hassan Hassan

Lessons from a massacre that Assad looks to exploit

The narrative is that the regime's forces are driving Sunni families from Alawite areas, in Homs and elsewhere, for the purpose of paving the way for a potential statelet on the coast. But that narrative is inaccurate because such moves are not systematic or universal. Sunni families were welcomed in the Alawite heartlands and Alawite families are similarly leaving their areas in the country's middle when there is violence and heading to the coast. These moves, therefore, suggest that sectarian cleansing is not being conducted for the purpose of establishing a potential state but for other strategic reasons to ensure the flow of Alawite fighters from and into this area. As the rebels close in on the coastline, the regime probably feels that such massacres will deepen sectarian tensions and pit Sunni and Alawites against each other, thereby convincing the Alawites they need to fight alongside the Assad regime for their survival" [.....] "Alawite fighters have been steadily suffering losses; if

these losses come closer to home, that might push many of them to realise a victory for the rebels is possible. And this is a scenario the Assad regime seeks to avoid"

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Michael Young

New phase in Syria's war will bring blood to the coast

"The massacres in the predominantly Sunni city of Baniyas and the nearby town of Bayda came after a relatively rare outbreak of fighting in the coastal region, the stronghold of the Alawite community. The coast is where Alawites may decide to fall back to and set up a mini-state if the regime of President Bashar Al Assad were to flee Damascus" [.....] **"If the Alawites ever decide to create a rump state, one of their objectives will be to ensure that Sunnis do not challenge this plan. That means Sunnis must either be terrorised into silence or, in the worst case, forced out of coastal areas.** The Baniyas and Bayda killings, while extraordinarily brutal, seemed primarily designed to achieve the first aim. Thousands of Sunnis reportedly left the city in fear, but appeared to be heading toward other coastal cities, namely Tartous, south of Baniyas, and Jableh, to its north" [....] **"This may be the best the Assad regime can hope to achieve, since wholesale ethnic cleansing would be a major endeavour. There is still a significant Sunni population in coastal cities such as Tartous and Latakia, and in the latter, Sunnis form a majority. Even if they were driven out for some reason, the consequences could be disastrous for the city itself, which would lose not only a large portion of its population, but many of its most dynamic economic actors"**

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Game Changer 1: Radical Sunnis vs. Radical Shiites

Nervana Mahmoud

Lebanon's New War of the Bearded Enemies

"For a long period, Nasrallah succeeded in transitioning his party from a small Shiite group to the most dominant party on the Lebanese messy political scene. He also attracted a bigger Arab crowd to support his resistance against Israel. No more – the



bearded man, with "God is Great" written on his flag, has new competitors, with even longer beards and fiercer Islamist slogans, but with one difference: they are Sunni, not Shiite Muslims, and Lebanon has



started to taste stronger, more assertive Salafi movements." [.....] "Nasrallah's

shortsightedness on the internal front, and his stubborn insistence to support Assad may cost his group dearly. Now the genie is out of the bottle, the Lebanese Salafists are here to stay, and they should

not be underestimated. The spillover from Syria may not necessarily lead to a full-blown civil war in Lebanon, but it would slowly undermine the already-fragile Lebanese state and damage Hezbollah's internal interests. Welcome to Lebanon's new war of the bearded enemies"

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Mustapha Hamoui

To All Jihadis in Lebanon

"Please, please, please, go die in Syria. Let us once and for all get rid of your idiotic backwardness and medieval worldview. The sooner you die, the better. It's a win win situation: You get your virgins in the sky, and we get to live without people who are fighting a pointless religious war that is thousands of years old. Please prove to us that there is a God, a merciful god that cares for the rest of us who find your antics distasteful and your moralizing obnoxious. Go ahead and show us the genius of natural selection that separates the fit from the clueless; the clueless who fight in wars that are not theirs, who win for their masters and die for themselves and their families"

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Elias Muhanna

What Separates Assir from Hizbullah & Hariri?

*"Everyone is wringing their hands over Lebanese Salafist leader Shaykh Ahmad al-Assir's call to send jihadists to help Syria's rebels. On Monday, he announced the formation of resistance battalions that were prepared to join the side of the uprising, saying: "There is a religious duty on every Muslim who is able to do so... to enter into Syria in order to defend its people, its mosques and religious shrines, especially in Qusayr and Homs." [.....] **"What is the difference between Ahmad al-Assir sending a few dozen Lebanese jihadists to die in Syria and Hariri or Hizbullah playing the roles they are playing? Are they not equally as destabilizing to Lebanon? I'm knocking on every piece of wood in my office as I type this, but **I'm a little amazed that we haven't seen more significant spillover of violence into Lebanon already, because of the extensive involvement of its parties in Syria**"***

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Game Changer 2: Hezbollah's New Toys & The Golan Front



Nervana Mahmoud

Hezbollah and the Golan

"It is also worth noting that Golan is not south Lebanon; it took Hezbollah years to build his underground bunkers in the south of Lebanon; therefore, fighting in Golan could prove to be harder and trickier. However, if Nasrallah manages to drag the Israelis into the fight, the rest of his job would be a lot easier. Any deeper Israeli involvement would force the international community to favor a less-than-favorable settlement that could help Assad survive in one way or another. Nothing is certain about Syria, but it is highly probable that we might listen to and hear from Nasrallah in the near future, and I doubt that what we will witness or hear will be pretty or peaceful. The fight in Syria has more to do with the selfish



interests of each player involved, and less to do with the real interest of Syria or the Syrian people"

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Elie Hajj

Hezbollah's Opponents Filling Power Vacuum

"It seems the forces aligned against Hezbollah rushed to denounce the words of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, after his televised speech on April 30. Looking a little deeper, they then developed worries that prompted former minister Mohammed Shatah, adviser to former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, to ask who among the Shiite community could extend a hand to the rest of the Lebanese people for a meeting on common ground. Such worries are surfacing as alienation among the Lebanese appears to be on the rise, preventing a new government from being formed and delaying parliamentary elections, with no hope of holding them even after a six-month postponement" [...] **"According to some, the only option available for Lebanon is to cut its losses. The question is at what cost? So far, opposition forces do not appear to have an answer to this question. Thus, Lebanon, despite the anxiety of officials, will continue with its power vacuum, which can only be filled with another vacuum, in the government and parliament, and probably all leading security and military positions in the coming months"**

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Riad Kahwaji

Hizbullah-Iran Military Involvement in Syria:A Calculated Move or a Trap?

"Hizbullah's actions in Syria will pose the biggest security challenge for the new Lebanese Prime Minister designate Tammam Salam and his next government. Some security sources believe Hizbullah will try to limit the damage from its intervention by attempting to achieve as many quick military gains as possible in Syria, and then hand over territory it seizes from the rebels to the Syrian regime's Alwaite militias trained by Iran. The sources also believe Hizbullah will minimize damage by carrying out quick effective military interventions and exits and will avoid prolonged fights that could stir up problems back home. *"Attack swiftly, seize, sweep, handover and pull out will be Hizbullah's*

strategy in the Syrian war to avoid a major backlash and spillover into Lebanon," one intelligence source said. However, history has often taught the lesson that getting into a war is easy, while the tough part is getting out"

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Ali Hashem

Nasrallah Threatens Golan Front with Israel

"According to a source close to Hezbollah, borders dividing Lebanon and Syria in any new war will disappear and "the resistance will be fighting and launching rockets from anywhere. **The Golan will be part of any new war. To be clearer, the next confrontation with Israel will be over 195,000 square kilometers rather than only 10,000.**" When I asked whether "game-changing" arms mean air-defense systems or missiles, our source suggested, "It might be air defenses, and might be long-range missiles with bigger warheads. It might be anything the Israelis might think, or might not think of." [...] "Nasrallah has declared that the next escalation will include Israel's Golan border, linking the party's struggle in Syria against its longstanding opposition to Israeli occupation of Syrian and Lebanese lands"

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H.A. Hellyer

Arab Dictators Can No Longer Monopolize Resistance

"As the Egyptian revolution unfolded, however, and other uprisings and revolutions began in other parts of the Arab world, the honeymoon with Hezbollah quickly ended. The Syrian people engaged in their own peaceful uprising against a regime that was far more brutal than Hosni Mubarak's – and Bashar al-Assad's regime responded with overwhelming force. **If Hezbollah was truly a 'resistance' movement for the autonomy of Arabs, Muslims and oppressed peoples everywhere, it would have supported the Syrian uprising. It didn't"**

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