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The Terror Cells Reached The Outskirts of Cairo



Ramy Yaacoub

Question: Are Jihadi Groups On The Rise In Cairo?!

"Here is my question: Why are terrorist cells feeling comfortable to hide in Cairo with explosives and weapons? Additionally, if there is one cell, which is of high strategic importance to the US, that was uncovered in Cairo, how many other cells that are not so high on the strategic list that are just hanging out in the capital of Egypt? In other news, AMAY also reported that there are increasing threats from terrorism cells in the Sinai peninsula, threats that involve carrying out attacks utilizing 'car bombs.' Regardless, all vigilant observers know that the situation in Sinai is contained to Sinai. However, is Cairo starting to enjoy increased comfort on the part of radicals, who are starting to view it as a safe zone?"

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Zeinobia

Terrorist cells, corrupted intelligence officers and possible assassination plots ... welcome to Cairo Action!!

"Last Wednesday news broke out in the media that a terrorist cell was arrested in Nasr City and that a terrorist was killed during the operation" [....] "It is not a big secret that like in any corrupted third world country many arms dealers have been former army officers or police officers or intelligence officers. Al Hayat also claimed that the Egyptian intelligence is investigating the whole affair"

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Draft Constitution – More Conservative Less Revolutionary



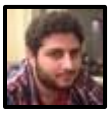
Bassem Sabry

A Close Look At Egypt's Draft Constitution

"Two features are the most striking at the surface. For one thing, it pretty much reads as an ***expanded, updated and somewhat more conservative version of the 1971 constitution,*** *with many of the*

previous articles incorporated largely verbatim and in the same order. The second feature is ***the large absence of anything outright "revolutionary" about it, in text or in substance****. For example, there is no magnanimous preamble of the sort you would expect of an Egyptian constitution in this context. There are, according to what I have seen, only two mentions of the word "revolution" in all 231 articles of the draft. The first pertains to the state's role in honoring war veterans, revolutionary martyrs and injured, and caring for them and their families. The other is simply a time stamp specifying all that post-revolution presidents could become members of the revamped upper house of parliament"*

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Ahmed Aboul Enein

English translation of the constitution draft – Part 1: Basic Principles

"Overall, the first section of the constitution establishes a state and society that are discriminatory towards minorities and those who do not adhere to mainstream views, whether in religion, language, culture, family values or even schools of thought"

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Analysis of constitutional draft- Part 2: Freedoms, duties, and rights

"The article on human dignity, the rights section's first article, is a double-edged sword. Although it states human dignity is a right and that the state and society have to respect it, it also stipulates, "under no circumstance may a citizen be insulted or disrespected" which can be interpreted to allow for legislation which limits freedom of speech or even lead to imprisonment, in the ilk of contempt of religion laws"

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Analysis of constitutional draft - Part 3: Parliament

"The section about parliament in the draft constitution shows worrying signs of presidential interference with the legislative authority, however. The houses of parliament have been given new names with the lower house, the People's Assembly, being renamed the House of Representatives and the upper house, the Shura Council becoming the Senate. The assembly opted to

keep a bicameral parliament and not cancel its upper house, the Shura Council, despite widespread demands from political groups for a unicameral parliament"

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The president and the constitution - Part 4: The President

*"**Military leadership** - The draft constitution contains two versions of Article 152 which both declare the president Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The first version allows him to declare war following the approval of the lower house of parliament and consulting the National Defence Council. It allows him to send troops abroad with just a majority approval of the lower house of parliament. The second version is similar but requires the president to consult the National Defence Council on sending troops abroad in addition to declaring war thus compromising the principle of civilian control of the military"*

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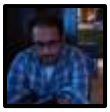


Ragab Saad

Egypt's Draft Constitution Opens the Door to a Religious State

*"**If this constitution passes, it will be the first Egyptian Constitution that adopts a specific religious doctrine for the state**. It also means that ancient texts on Islamic jurisprudence, and others that may not even exist anymore, will become sources of Egyptian legislation from which a parliamentary majority may select what it wants from its provisions, instituting authoritarianism in the name of religion. This scenario is the driving force behind the insistence that the constitution provide for a democratic regime in Egypt based on the principles of "Shura" (or consultation)"*

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Basil El-Dabh

In Egypt's Draft Constitution, Ambiguity of Article 9 Susceptible to Dubious Interpretations

"Article 9, which defines the state's role as it pertains to the Egyptian family, stands out as a controversial article that has garnered the attention of several human rights groups. Article 9 reads, "Family is the basis of society

and its foundations are religion, morality and patriotism." It goes on to say, "The state and society ensure the authentic character of the Egyptian family, its cohesion, stability, and protecting its traditions and moral values." ***The article is ambiguous as to the state's actual role in "ensuring" these aspects of the Egyptian family, as well as what specific traditions and moral values it seeks to uphold****."*

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Ali I

Crucial Issues for Egypt Obscured Amid Uproar Over Constitution Draft

*"**According to legal specialists, some articles within the draft constitution would take the country back in time to before the 1971 constitution**. Regarding the freedom of the press, the draft constitution allows the government to close down a newspaper or press publication based on a court order. This was cancelled in 2006 under Mubarak's rule and is not something worthy of the revolution that erupted to rid Egyptians of tyranny. The articles that regulate the conduct of the judiciary were completely rejected by the Supreme Constitutional Court, which will determine the fate of the Constituent Assembly"*

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Between Two Choices: Going Forward vs. Dark Ages



Nervana Mahmoud

Our Own Mongols

In the post-Arab-Spring Middle East, there is an ongoing contest between two forces: those who want a new, dynamic, progressive, free society and those who want to drag the society back to the Dark Ages. *The key factor that may decide the fate of the contemporary Middle East is the policies of the so-called moderate Islamist parties. Once in power, they have the responsibility to enforce the rule of law and fight extremism from within. The "soft spot" for fellow Islamists should not be a barrier that prevents their accountability under the law. Ruling Islamic (or semi-Islamic) parties also have to fight rogue imams who easily issue fatwas against nearly everything; they also have a duty to restore a dynamic approach to faith and life under a more articulate, clearer vision of the*

purpose of Islamic laws—the same dynamic approach that once made Baghdad the capital of knowledge in the medieval era.

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Salama Moussa

Copts: Between Exit and Voice

"So if "Voice" is not an option, and "Exit" is possible only for a minority. What of the rest? What of the poor Copts, or the struggling middle classes working in state enterprises or services. Whither their future? A more severe form of internal isolation or exile, or something more radical? Such is Coptic skittishness and Egyptian paranoia that honest debates are almost impossible, especially when they are most needed"

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Syria

Waiting For Godot: What Will Turkey Will Do Next?



Nervana Mahmoud

Turkey, Syria, and the Cyprus Scenario

"The worst-case scenarios are many: the continuation of fighting between the free Syrian army and the Assad regime with the Turkish army becoming directly involved, PKK operating inside Turkey from its Syrian bases – even if most Kurdish factions reach a deal with Turkey, the ones backed by Iran will not, as Cagaptay admitted in his piece. The PKK, however, would not be the only spoilers in town; Assad, Hezbollah, and Iran's agents would also be around. A North Iraq option might not be easily secured, and Turkey might end up dragged into the deep end with Assad"

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Achrafieh Explosion



Patrick Baz

Beirut, I'm sorry

"Today I walked through the streets of Achrafieh, streets I've walked through my whole life. And they were darkened by evil. They were wrapped in smoke, stained with blood, screaming in fear. And I realized as I walked in front of these places where I order my food every other day, watching them sweep the broken glass from their windows just barely an hour after the blast, was that they were the places I knew the most"

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A Separate State of Mind

The Lebanese Hurt of the Achrafieh Explosion

"One minutes was all it took. The trendy square got turned in sixty seconds into what it was more than twenty three years ago. Sixty seconds was all it took for fifteen people to lose their lives. Sixty seconds was all it took for a hundred people to get injured. Sixty seconds was all it took for children to become orphans, for wives to become widows, for mothers and fathers to become bereaved. Sixty seconds is all it took for the entire country to turn teary eyes and heavy minds towards its heart. Achrafieh, bleeding, crying, hurting"

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Angie Nassar

The Real Tragedy For Lebanon and Achrafieh

"Given the violent history and openly violent language of Lebanon's leaders from across the political spectrum, we must demand as citizens that those with more rational voices who want to change what we have for the better, be heard. And we must put an end to these two very toxic and erroneous beliefs which continue to sow deep divisions among us: that people who disagree with you are somehow less human than you, and that the people who disagree with you are not simply wrong or misguided, but instead bent on destroying this country from within. These two ideas have led us to a diseased sort of disposition: a distinct lack of empathy, the kind we witnessed on Sunday when protesters capped off Hassan's funeral and paid

their respects by violently running at the Grand Serail with sticks and stones to call for PM Mikati's removal"



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Who Is Wissam al-Hassan?

Who Is Wissam al-Hassan?

"Brigadier general Wissam al-Hassan, killed Friday by a large explosion in Beirut's Achrafieh district, was a top security official and a mysterious, controversial player in the Lebanese political-security arena since 2005.His last posting was as the head of the Internal Security Forces' (ISF) controversial Information Branch, considered a divisive security apparatus because of the strong backing it enjoys from the opposition March 14 coalition, and a number of raids it conducted against people affiliated with the ruling March 8 coalition. He was in charge of the ongoing investigation against former Lebanese Information Minister Michel Samaha. Samaha was arrested in August over allegations that he was plotting to plant explosives in the northern city of Akkar at the behest of the Syrian government"



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Mustapha Hamoui

Amateurs and Pros – Who Killed Wissam el Hassan?

"Two ways to interpret the conclusion: The first is that the entire Samaha episode was a setup and that the Syrian-Iranian axis is as powerful as ever (as demonstrated by today's killing). The other explanation, which I find more plausible, is that Assad has weakened greatly in Lebanon and he now only influences fools like Samaha, Sayyed and Wiam wahhab. The Iranians and their proxies on the other hand are as powerful and precise as ever. Many Lebanese have a habit of instinctively blaming

Assad whenever something bad happens in Lebanon. It is perhaps time to revisit this assumption and do what the Special Tribunal for Lebanon did long ago: Focus on the real source of terror in this country"

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The Zako

Wissam Al-Hassan Joins The Assassination Saga

"Both sides of Lebanon mainstream politics are as usual quick to conclude. March 14 accused the Syrian regime, while March 8 went for their usual suspect, Israel or contemplated Al-Qaeda. It's difficult to judge when facts are not parts of the ingredients of these conclusions, but at the same time it's silly to conclude something that contradicts the normal course of the political routine. Some, especially some of March 8 conspiracists, actually address the Lebanese people on the assumption they have two digit IQs. They are actually the same people who mocked the news of the foiled assassination attempt against Wissam Al-Hassan last January"

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Tony Badran

Who killed Wissam al-Hassan?

"For Iran, Hassan represented the confluence of its enemies in the regional Sunni pro-American bloc. Moreover, he stood atop the only security apparatus not controlled by Hezbollah. As Iran seeks to shore up its proxy's grip on the Lebanese state, as a hedge against a critical setback in Syria, it has to eliminate all threats, while also leaving the Sunnis in disarray. To quote Samaha once more, "you must be ready for anything. Along with Iraq … and Lebanon." Iran is conducting a region-wide drive with an eye on the regional balance of power. This is what's at stake in Syria, and what's playing out in Iraq, the Kurdish Regional Government, Lebanon and Turkey. This Iranian power play best explains why Hassan was killed"
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Syria's Weakness and March 14 Loss of Focus



Ana Maria

Sunni-Shia conflict in Lebanon: deterrence, stalemate and escalation

"The Sunnis of Tariq el Jdideh did not go out last night to shoot randomly at Amal Movement and Hezbollah offices because they were angry about Wissam al Hassan's assassination. It's pure theory:There is deterrence. An armed force so strong that the state barely dares to bother its leaders with a question, let alone ask it to disarm, the rest of the communities will also arm, organize and get ready to fight it, although there is no open conflict. In ancient Greece, there was Athens rising as a great power, so Sparta got ready for war. In Lebanon in 2012, there is Hezbollah with a well organized army built over three decades and the Sunnis, who are mobilizing around the threat rather than a political entity"

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Lebanon Sense

Syria's Slippery Slope: The Danger of Clichés in Lebanon



"I understand how journalists fall into the trap of seeing Lebanon purely through the easy, read-made lens of Syria. But there is a real danger to this approach if publics and governments begin to see it in the same terms, and act on the basis of this. Words, as we are often told, have power. Lebanon's political problems need addressing if it is to remain stable in the face of its current troubles, but discussing these problems as an inevitable consequence of another country's war will do nothing to help this process"

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Qaph

March 14 Loss of Focus: Mikati, the Cabinet or Syria?

"March 14 leaders started gradually shifting their attack from President Assad and Hezbollah towards the moderate prime minister. Even when Mikati declared that al-Hassan assassination is related to his role in discovering Smaha-Mamlouk plot which actually meant Mikati was accusing Syria and its allies of the murder (a brave declaration indeed from

the man in power), March 14 leaders were more fiercely attacking him and demanding he resigns. None of them further talked about the role of Syrian regime. The battle of March 14 moved from the Syrian Muhajereen Palace to the Government Palace in DT Beirut. Whether it was an arbitrary loss of focus or a planned trial to exploit circumstances and make some political advantage, the results were grave for both March 14 and the country as a whole"

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Hanin Ghaddar

2012 is Not 2005, But The Terror is The Same



"March 14 should do two things: go back to the drawing board and start thinking of a strategy as an opposition, while at the same time making sure its supporters in Tripoli, Beirut and Sidon stop fighting immediately. *The Syrian regime wants to see more violence in Lebanon, and the Lebanese should not give in. More clashes and violence in Lebanon would be a great service to Assad and co"*

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Kuwait

The March of Dignity



Mona Kareem

Kuwait: The Country's Biggest Protest?

"The call for the Karamat Watan (A Nation's Dignity) march, which took place on Sunday, was made on Twitter, and attracted about 150,000 out of the country's population of 3 million. Media outlets considered this number to be the biggest in the small Gulf emirate's history. The protest came in

reaction to the Amir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah decree to change the electoral law, making a citizen vote for one candidate instead of four, as it used to be in the elections of Kuwaiti parliament. The protest was not only an objection for making such a change but more importantly to protest the change of a law without the parliament or the people having their say in it. Since last June, Kuwaiti parliament has been frozen by the Amir and then dissolved by the constitutional court for 'wrong procedures' in dissolving the parliament before it. The opposition has been protesting since but was never able to gather such a huge crowd; even the liberal "Tahalof" and Pan-Arabist "Manbar" took part in Sunday's demonstration despite their disagreement with the Islamist-Conservative opposition"

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A Roadmap to Kuwait's Dignity March

"If one imagines voting for one candidate instead of four in a country of four electoral districts, then one can understand how a candidate might win with few thousands of votes due to the small population of the Emirate, and thus will not be fairly representative of the majority of his/her district. Before 2006, Kuwait had 25 electoral districts, but with the demands of the "orange youth movement," it was changed to five. The movement rightly campaigned that this change would decrease deals of buying votes and of candidates winning because their bases consist of their tribes, families, or sects. Meaning, the operation was made more political than social"

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David B Roberts

Kuwait enters an uncertain and more violent era

"Aside from the immediate concerns as to the upcoming political, rhetorical, and literal skirmishes between the opposition and government supporters, the escalation of the opposition in reaction to the Government's policies has had more profound effects. Previously the Emir was an almost politically untouchable figure. However, this taboo, which had been under pressure for some months if not years, has been thoroughly broken with speeches and marches explicitly criticising his decision to change the electoral law. Any notion that the Emir could remain above the fray is finished. While monarchy as a concept is still resolutely the preferred system, Kuwait is entering a new era. Exactly what this new era will construe is difficult to predict, but it is certain to be more violent as the Kuwaiti elite faces its most significant challenge since the 1990 invasion."

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Jadaliyya

A Boiling Kettle: Kuwait's Escalating Political Crisis

"Only two things are certain: (1) The battle to redefine the country's power-sharing arrangements is getting hotter, making predefined limits through which power is tenuous at best; and (2) Tensions between the government and opposition will continue to escalate until something eventually gives. However, with both sides regularly engaging in practices that are questionably democratic, it is hard to envision an alternative arrangement in which power will be effectively redistributed to the ultimate benefit of the Kuwaiti people and not primarily for those who claim to represent their interests either by ballot or birthright"

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Libya

The Fight Ahead for Ali Zidan



Libyan Youth Movement

Libya's Congress Elects Interim Prime Minister

"Libya's national congress elected a human rights lawyer as interim prime minister on Sunday, a week after his predecessor was dismissed for failing to present a cabinet lineup that political factions could agree on.The new prime minister, Ali Zidan, a former independent member of the General National Congress, received 93 votes, edging Mohammed al-Harari, the minister for local government, who received 85. Mr. Harari appeared to be the Islamists' choice for prime minister"

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The Fight Ahead for Ali Zidan, Libya's Newest Prime Minister

"Aside from forming a government, Zidan's immediate challenges include pressing on with an investigation into the Sept. 11 assault on the U.S. consulatein the eastern city of Benghazi that left Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans dead. With political pressure growing in the United States for answers and the Obama administration facing

relentless criticism from Republicans over security lapses, senior U.S. officials have expressed frustration at the slow pace of the Libyan inquiry"

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Challenges of Democracy



Hafed Al Ghwell

Moving Forward on Economic Development: Policy Recommendations for Libya's Next Government

"At this stage, efforts at re-establishing security are a priority. Otherwise, the instability witnessed since the revolution's success in toppling the Qaddafi regime will continue to undermine efforts to attract investment, both foreign and domestic, and to rebuild the economy. While serving a heroic role during the revolution, the country's various militias are increasingly playing a destructive role by undermining the authority of the government, decreasing public security and engaging in criminal activities"

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Mohamed Eljarh

The Challenges of Democracy in Post-Revolution Libya

"For Libya's democratic transition to succeed, it is essential to communicate to public that democracy does not solve all the problems, but it is the best way to get problems sorted. Consensus is integral to Libya's transition and issues such as reconciliation and the constitution have to be inclusive and protect the rights of all parties including minorities. In addition, it is crucial to empower local authorities and local political representation and participation, as well as, empowering youth and encouraging them to remain politically active and take their place in rebuilding the country"

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Bani Walid: A State Within A State or Violence Ahead of Reconciliation



George Grant

Magarief condemns Bani Walid assault as 48-hour ceasefire declared

"With tomorrow (21/10) marking the first anniversary of Qaddafi's death, however, momentum on the ground looks to be moving definitively towards a forceful resolution of what those involved see as the final chapter of the revolution. "We are here to finish this problem", said Laith Mohammed. "Bani Walid is like a state within a state and it needs to stop." Another soldier, Ibrahim Bin Saud, echoed the sentiment. "God willing, this will be the last battle against Gaddafi. Libya will be at peace after this."

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Global civilians for peace

Bani Walid: 'Where is the international community, why have they forgotten us?'

"Hours after taking control of Bani Walid, a former stronghold of Muammar Gaddafi, Libyan militias from the rival city of Misrata fired ferociously at its empty public buildings" [....] "With 70,000 people, Bani Walid, some 170 km (105 miles) south of Tripoli, was one of the last towns to surrender to rebels last year. Gaddafi's now-captured son Saif al-Islam staged a last stand there before fleeing into the Sahara"

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Umar Khan

Bani Walid Operation: A Necessary Evil?

"The officials and elders from different cities were wrong to think that Bani Walid would respond to dialogue and reason and surrender those they harbouring. They not only resisted calls to hand over criminals to the state. They also hesitated in responding to calls from the national army and revolutionary brigades, under the ministry of defence, to maintain presence inside the town. The revolutionaries refused to listen to the demands of Bani Walid this time. Their experiences of broken talks over the last 12 months meant they wanted concrete actions"

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