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What's Next for the MB's and Egypt's Political Islam?

Abdullah Kamal

A new secret alliance with Egypt's Brotherhood?

"The formula was an alliance established since almost 2005 among leftist parties, groups which consider themselves liberal, a number of parties opposing Mubarak's regime and the Brotherhood. This formula sought to eliminate Mubarak's regime until it succeeded. The same alliance had the desire to eliminate the entire system of the July 1952 governance. But the January 25 circumstances forced both religious and secular groups to accept the presence of the army as a major factor in the new formula. They didn't accept this because of their love for the army but because there was no other alternative" [...] "This attempt will fail, and no such alliance will be established. These attempts may have pushed Egyptian national movements to categorize the leftist movements and what's around them in the same position as the Brotherhood and its allies. Most importantly is that the Brotherhood - or whatever is left of them - are not ready to seek this alliance. These leftists and those around them will be the first victims of any new empowerment of the Brotherhood which proved, after many years of deceiving many, that it, and no other, is the source of terrorism"

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Wael Eskandar

Why Ikhwan Protests Won't Work

*"Today, after they were removed from power, the MB's obstinacy continues to push a narrative that is implausible and unacceptable is hardening people's hearts against them. **MB supporters seem to have strict instructions: It's about the coup, it's not about our crimes...keep pushing that rhetoric. The nail in their coffin however can well be the revolutionary forces that they've come to alienate, not only during their rule but the ones that have sided with their rights as humans following Morsi's removal.** There are many who have been openly critical of the police for the brutal dispersal of Rabaa. They are met with an onslaught of attacks for not siding enough with the Muslim Brotherhood. One such example is Khaled Dawoud, the spokesman of the National Salvation Front (NSF) who was later stabbed by 'anti-coup' protesters. All the Brotherhood had to do is offer the one thing that can*

possibly placate these forces, the truth in the form of an honest apology. Yet the Muslim Brotherhood stubbornly clings to illogical arguments and evasions"

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Alfred Raouf

Five Reasons Brotherhood will Continue to Lose in Egypt

"The Muslim Brotherhood needs to get rid of the leadership that has brought it to its lowest popularity in 80 years. The group as it was known for so long will surely be dismantled, but it can still try to survive as a political party and not as a secret organization. The younger generation must revise its doctrine, practices and strategic aims, and realize that its only means of survival is to drop the dream of hegemony. For once, it needs to let go of arrogance and all-or-nothing strategies, and stop its three-year-long series of miscalculated steps"

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Mohamed A. Fouad

Contemporary Egyptian Nonsense: The Demise of Political Islam

According to many pundits, 30 June has dealt a virtual knockout to the so called political Islam. With the millions who protested against the Brotherhood regime and the imprisonment of their leadership, it is safe to assume that we have seen the last of them. The Reality: While political Islam is suffering a regional setback, it will be imprudent to discount it from ever coming back. [.....] ***"The game is not over for the Muslim Brotherhood. We must not expect an organisation of this magnitude to roll over and die. What we have in the Brotherhood and political Islam at large is not merely a defunct political party, but a deep-rooted social movement with a large cult following. Indeed, they have failed miserably at the helm, but that will not deter them from carrying on in their quest. The tide may be too high for political Islam at this stage, but without fundamental changes, it will be wishful thinking to count it as dead"***

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Hani Shukrallah

The Brotherhood and I

*"We should staunchly resist the authoritarian mind set and practice of the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership, and yes we should relentlessly fight, and act to inhibit, their fascistic bent. Yes, we should continue to resolutely battle in defence of each and every one of our civil liberties, and yes we should carry on the struggle for realizing the aims of the revolution: Bread, Freedom and Social Justice. **And yet, we should take great care not to fall into the trap of looking at the whole Brotherhood or Islamist trend in Egypt as the enemy, merely a new NDP.** The Egyptian revolution has shown glaringly that the Egyptian people have not the slightest interest in the secularist-Islamist divide, which – in an age of the eradication of politics – was the concern of a tiny political and ideological elite embroiled in an ultimately futile ideological contest. For in the absence of the testing ground of politics, ideology becomes religion"*

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The Trial of Dr. Morsi

Timothy E Kaldas

The Trials

*"The trial of deposed President Mohamed Morsi will almost certainly be a show trial and is of little consequence. His supporters will dismiss the legitimacy of the court and trial while his opponents will largely be looking for vengeance over his year of misrule. **If Morsi falls victim to more severe convictions than those that befell deposed autocrat Hosni Mubarak it will only confirm to more neutral observers the utter lack of integrity of the judicial process"***

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Bassem Sabry

Another Egyptian president on trial

"For many in his base, almost everything that Morsi was seen to have erred in was largely justified, perhaps even the only thing he could have done. And for the non-Islamists who previously supported Morsi, he represented a shot at



change, at rolling back the darker chapters of Egypt's past and iron-fisted security state in favor of the progressive mantras of the revolution, a shot at a society in which everyone from Islamist to secular could co-exist, a bet that the Brotherhood and other Islamists would further move towards the left under the influence of politics and compromise. Clearly, all of these visions are not exactly in their strongest position at the moment. **Morsi's trial is the apex of the clash between the two (if not three) increasingly irreconcilable narratives of where Egypt was and is, what (and who) was and is wrong with it, and what it needs to do, and where it needs to go"**

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Sendmonkey

The Trial

"In my own estimation, the aim of those trials is not to reach a verdict against Morsi, but rather, to drag him in the courts forever. There will be a thousand charges levied against him indefinitely to tire out MB protesters in the process. **The lack of solid cases against Morsi signals that the security apparatus wants to have a way out in case at some point, they might reach a deal, which is highly unlikely since there is no one now who would make that deal with the MB.** The interim government will not conduct the trial of Morsi for any real meaningful charges because that's too much work. **The option of dragging him through the courts forever, until everyone forgets him, is far easier and will serve as a distraction for the people, which is not necessarily against their interests. As for "Rule of Law", it will be as meaningful a concept to this regime as "democracy" was for the MB; as in, not at all"**

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Salamamoussa

The Trial of Dr. Morsi

"Anyone who hoped that Mubarak's trial would be a moment of "truth and reconciliation" was disappointed. **Egypt at the moment can't handle the truth and is in no mood for reconciliation.** Mubarak's crimes were vague, for in truth he was no monstrous dictator, but a wily operator of the knobs offered to him by the state he inherited. He was, in the words of Fouad Ajami, a civil servant with the rank of "President". **If the only crimes Mubarak was guilty of were petty under the existing law, Morsi's crimes maybe major only because of the lack of law.** In reality, the

one entity that should be on trial is Egypt, and the leaders who remade it in the last decades. **Both Mubarak and Morsi are quotidian products of the system, and placing them in the dock clarifies little. A trial can be an excellent idea if used in the literal sense, as a forum to try out different ideas and views to enlighten and explain. But Morsi's trial will be as muddled as Mubarak's"**

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Ursula Lindsey

Presidents on Trial

"The trials of the two ousted presidents have the same atmosphere of violence and farce: chants breaking out inside the courtroom, lawyers coming to blows, enraged supporters outside attacking journalists. The chaos during Mubarak's trial seemed to signal, perhaps intentionally, that it was all just theatricals. Less so this time. Morsi and his fellow-defendants haven't been allowed to meet family or lawyers. Some told journalists today they have been tortured. And Morsi's trial isn't being televised: the government is too worried about providing him a platform. This morning he refused to wear prison garb and told the presiding judge: 'I'm still your president.' The trial has been adjourned till January"

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Ziad A. Akl

Morsi's political trial

"The real problem is not the rule of law; it is how irrelevant the law is to the crime committed. There is so much more that Morsi is guilty of besides encouraging the killing of protestors in front of the presidential palace last December. **In fact, due to legal technicalities, Morsi might end up walking out of court not guilty, simply because how limited the law he is being tried according to is.** We are simply repeating the same mistakes we did in the Mubarak trial, where Mubarak was not even questioned about all the wrongs he has done and the pains he has caused over the course of 30 years. Until now, our judiciary is incapable of putting Mubarak on fair trial for what he has really done; why should it be successful with Morsi? **If the purpose is to co-opt public opinion and appear democratic, then Morsi's trial is more an aesthetic process than a legal one.** But if the purpose behind this trial is to deliver justice to the Egyptian people who have suffered from Morsi's corrupt political and economic administration, then the laws themselves need to be reconfigured. Otherwise, Morsi's trial will always remain a

political process that aims to boost the post 30 June legitimacy, regardless of any legal considerations"

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The Sisi Bubble



Sendmonkey

On popularity and bubbles

"We are living in the age of the internet, where Bubbles- due to the 24/7 scrutiny of social media- have incredibly short lives. Entrenched personality cults of yore are no longer possible for this exact reason, no matter who the person is. The politicians in Egypt get this, so they are acting the way politicians do: by riding the bubble to their maximum benefit. This is why many are all openly supporting the Sisi nomination; over the short term it endears them to the Sisi fanatics, while over the long term puts him front and centre in the seat of responsibility for what's going on, when he seems intent to be in the shadows as much as possible to further extend his popular shelf-life, because even he must know how little time he has. Bubbles burst from overexposure, popularity is a two way street that is contingent upon consistency and quality, and personality cults are too twentieth century to survive in our day and age, especially Messianic ones, because the age of miracles is over. The only constant in our day and age is disillusionment. Remember Obama mania and how long it took for the shine to wear off? Exactly. However, the military critics shouldn't bring out the champagne just yet, for the popularity of Al-Sisi may come and go, but in a weird way, it will never affect the popularity of the armed forces. Some popularities are more entrenched than others"

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Nervana Mahmoud

Egypt's Tale of Two Generals

"It's still unclear whether Anan will go ahead and run for presidency or not, and whether his Facebook support page, or the mocking counter-campaign are



any indication of the level of his popularity. However, the assumption that Egyptians just love their top brass is simply wrong. Anan was once described in the US as thoughtful and astute, but his cautious — and arguably poor — management of the post Mubarak transitional period (along the side of ex-Defense Minister Tantawi) has earned him less enemies, but also failed to win him the hearts and minds of many Egyptians. Nonetheless, the journey to next summer's presidential election could be full of surprises. No one can predict whether Sisi's popularity will continue to rise or gradually fade, and whether Anan can bounce back and convince Sisi to stay in the shadows. Nothing is predictable in Egypt other than its unpredictable politics"

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Egypt's Bankrupt Civil Elite/Non Islamists

Dr. Khalil al-Anani

El-Sisi and Egypt's Bankrupt Civil Elite

"The intellectual bankruptcy of the civil elite is similar to their moral bankruptcy. Since the January 25 Revolution in 2011, they have not presented a genuine political vision that can push the country towards democracy. Their sole battle was how to get rid of the Islamists at any cost. It is astonishing that they impose such guardianship over the Egyptian people under the pretext that they are more aware and capable of deciding the people's political choices, something they do in a piercing arrogant tone that contradicts the fundamentals of a genuine civil state built on the free choice of the citizenry. **They forget that the Muslim Brotherhood were overthrown because of their attempt to impose their vision on society, which means the fate of the civil elite that is allied with the military will not be much different from their predecessors"**

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General Sissi is No Savior for Egypt's Non-Islamists

"The weakness of the non-Islamists in Egypt is quiet spectacular, considering how their Islamists opponents insist on perpetuating their own self-defeating policies, continuous protests and disruption, and the absence of any articulation of a "clear-end-point." In fact, they have even rejected mediation efforts by Professor Kamal Abu El Magd, whose suggestions could have provided a true reconciliation path. Are Non-Islamists truly committed to fulfilling the

aspirations of the millions who protested on June 30? If the answer is yes, then they must have a serious look at their dismal performance post-June 30, and understand that the army chief general Sissi will not save their political careers. **They must stop their lazy approach to politics, put in sweat and labor at the grassroots level, fight against repression, injustice, radicalism, and rebuild a new, strong civil society, otherwise Egypt will remain subdued by regressive forces fighting over its ruin and wreckage"**

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Reflections on Al-Warraaq

Salamamoussa

Liturgy Of The Dead

"Three months after the July 3 events it is still impossible to criticize Pope Tawadros II presence on the stage with General Sisi and Sheikh Al Azhar. It is, however, possible to think of an alternative history. In that history the Pope would have indicated his support privately but refrained from the public display to lessen his political burden, one that he insisted he did not want in the first place. He could have also indicated privately that while disapproving of the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, and not wishing them an exclusive role in running Egypt, he could not sanction the killing of either the innocent or the guilty. In doing so he would have assumed the role of a father to the Muslim Brothers, of whose behavior he surely disapproves, but whom he must love as children of God. It is a tough task, fit only for a Patriarch" [.....] **"There is no doubt of the risk of such actions toward the Copts of Egypt, but maybe it is time for the Coptic Church to aim wider than just Egypt, and higher than just its needs. It would also have been Christian in the literal sense; the sense that Christ's ministry aimed for the fallen and deluded"**

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Ziad Akl

Another church down: The progression of terrorism

"Violence against Copts is one of Egypt's ugly social realities. The truth is, there will always be, just like there has always been, discrimination against Copts. Sometimes, this discrimination is not a matter of radical religious discourse as much as it is a matter of majority-minority interactions. This disturbing fact is the reason why discrimination needs to be clearly defined and blatantly stated

in different legal texts, starting with the Egyptian Constitution and ending with an inclusive anti-discrimination law. Although last night's attack does not signal discrimination against Copts as much as it signals a progressing national threat, Coptic symbols have indeed become more prone to terrorist attacks within the current context" [...] **"Egypt needs to re-asses its counter-terrorism strategies and develop a multi-dimensional strategy to face the rapidly growing threats. Otherwise, things will be uglier than they already are"**

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Mai El-Sadany

Reflections on Al-Warraaq

"Al-Warraaq is not the first incident of sectarianism, nor will it be the last. Rather, it is a stark reminder that the issues plaguing the disease that haunts Egypt's villages and now, even greater-Cairo, have not been contended with" [...] **"Sectarianism will only be dealt with head-on. By the state, in its investigation and prosecution of the guilty. By the police and army, in their guarantee on**

security. By the Islamists, in their rejection and alienation of scholars and leaders who blatantly incite against religious minorities. By liberal parties, in their inclusion and incorporation of all elements in society. By the Constituent Assembly, in their embrace of religion-



neutral constitutional provisions. By schools, in their adoption of curricula that highlight Coptic history. By traffic police and government workers, who do not distinguish between Copt and Muslim after a glance at the ID. By families, in their rejection of sectarian rhetoric at the dinner table. Whether we are able to confront the reality or not, **sectarianism runs deep in our history, in our societies, and in our institutions. And unless we confront it and this reality head on, we will continue to fail the likes of Miriam Ashraf, Miriam Nabil, Samir Fahmy, and Camilia Attiya, who ultimately become an RIP tweet, a newspaper article, and at the end of the day, a fading memory"**

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H.A. Hellyer

Crosses flanked by Crescents won't cut it

*"Since the ouster of Morsi, churches, priests and ordinary Christians have been targeted – and one cannot simply put the anti-Christian discourse that has been allowed to perpetuate itself on the side when considering that" [....] "The question is: what to do about it? **There are 3 measures that are vital.** 1. The first is on the level of **positive discourse itself**, which is necessary from the broader Muslim religious establishment" [....] 2. Much of that would take place anyway if **educational standards were renewed within the religious educational sector – but it needs to be focused upon. That sort of focus also needs to have an effect within wider educational structures – what does the average Muslim Egyptian child really know about the Coptic community that he or she lives with and among? What can be done in wider educational structures to assure cohesion and cohesiveness in society? This is a question that needs to be addressed, critically.** 3. None of that, however, is going to be particularly useful without considering **the legal framework within which freedom of speech operates in Egypt**"*

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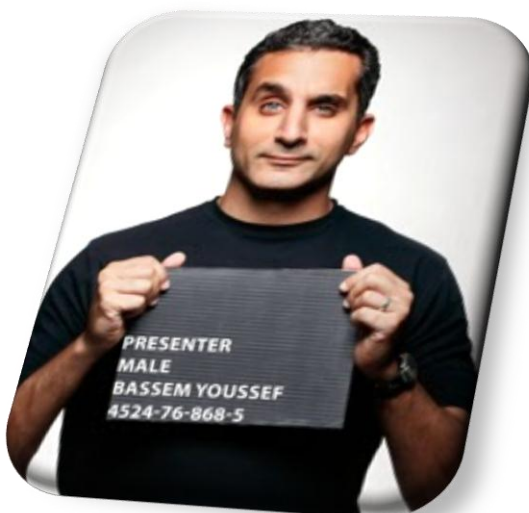
The Bassem Youssef Hypocrisy



Wael Eskandar

The Bassem Youssef Hypocrisy

"There is a lot of hypocrisy about the Bassem Youssef show. The amount of double standards highlighted by the show is worrying.



The thing is that the hypocrisy is not coming from within the show, but from outside it" [....] "What is truly shocking are his fans. They were happy when he criticized their opponents but were not happy when he criticized them" [....]"In a way, we find ourselves with Bassem fighting the same old forces we were fighting from the start. The old interest networks of the feloul and army along with their Islamist allies. Even though

*they're not allies anymore we still have to take both of them on again. Every day that passes, Bassem exposes hypocrites and fascists. I'm not deifying Bassem, I'm not saying that everything he does is correct and that he's on to the truth, I'm saying that his critics expose themselves through what they choose to criticize. **His show is like a mirror that some of the ugliness cannot bear to look into**"*

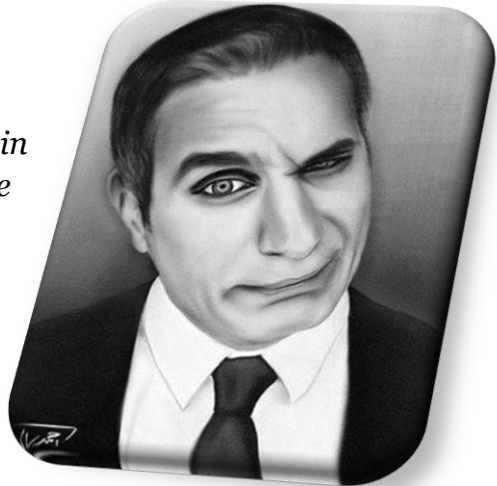
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Nervana Mahmoud

Egypt and Political Satire

*"I do not know if political satire will survive in Egypt or not. I hope it will. Some have blamed Youssef for rushing his return, suggesting that his timing was bad, and that he should have waited a bit longer. I think they are wrong; **Youssef's return is a tough test of our desire for democracy. We Egyptians should not let our profound insecurity control our mindset. In January 2011, we demanded bread, justice, and equality. This must include equality in satire. No one should be exempted from mocking, even the beloved man in uniform, no matter how worshipped he is**"*



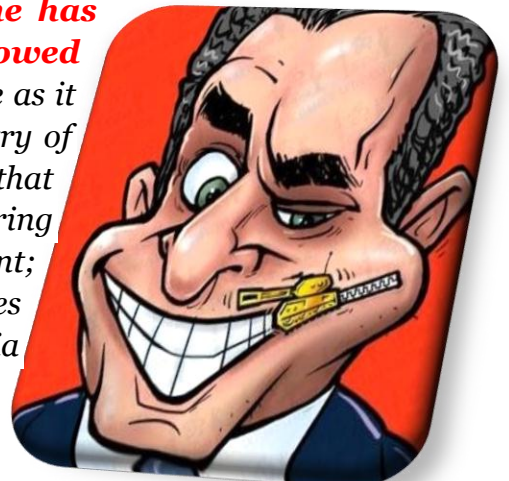
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H.A. Hellyer

When it comes to protest, Egypt's lost its sense of humour

"The attention over the past week is concerning for many reasons, not the least of which is that so many Egyptians are talking so much about a single television show. For the past week, Youssef's El Bernameg programme has become the story that has overshadowed everything else. Egypt's story, however, is the same as it has been for the past three years. It remains a country of great promise, which seems incapable of fulfilling that promise without tackling three key issues: restructuring the security sector; reforming the judicial establishment; and rethinking the national economy"[.....] *"It is issues like these that the Egyptian media and intelligentsia*



ought to be discussing and proposing solutions to, rather than focusing on Youssef's show. **There is a silver lining for Youssef in all this. Those who seek to criticise him have provided his team with more than enough material to make a whole episode based on mocking and pillorying the attacks he has endured"**

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It's All About the Economy, Stupid!



Wael Nawara

Egypt's Real Challenge: Reviving the Economy

"The solution, in my opinion is multifaceted: 1. **Minimize the gap**: The government must take the appropriate measures needed to reduce the budget deficit through streamlining expenditures. 2. **Pumping money into infrastructure projects**: These savings, among others, should be directed to curing the economy's real illnesses. 3. **Stimulating the economy itself**: the Egyptian government must prepare and present investment plans in joint national projects, such as the Suez Canal zone development project, that would appeal to our investment partners in the Gulf while passing legislation that would better protect Arab and foreign investments. 4. **An Arab Development Fund**: Egypt must take the initiative, provide studies and commit to governmental investment in the establishment of an Arab African Fund for Development that would invest in Egypt, Sudan and other Nile basin countries, which would stimulate Egypt's private sector. 5. **Smart Crisis Management**: The government needs to apply prudent crisis management strategies and strike a balance between the benefits and negative repercussions of any decision 6. Openness: Egyptians need to be sobered with the truth and asked to take responsibility in pulling out their country from the bankruptcy abyss. 7. **Expanding the political alliance**: Care must be taken to avoid measures that would splinter it or hand the Brotherhood with new allies, which could expand the scope of confrontations and protests" [...] **"Shortsightedness and playing a "rotating card" game as a financial policy where new borrowings pay old debts can only lead us into continuously suffering from recurring fires and escalating crises, until the day comes when no one would be willing to lend us a dime or even offer us a bucket of water to put out the blaze"**

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Bassem Sabry

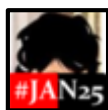
8 pillars to Egypt's Economic Recovery

1. **Subsidies.** Successive Egyptian governments have been afraid to dramatically touch the subsidies for fear of public backlash, especially at a time of economic difficulties. 2. **Security.** Both in terms of general security situation as well as concerns from violence and instabilities arising from political reasons, with clear ramifications on tourism and foreign investment. 3. **An inclusive democratic process** was another key decisive factor, both as a political and a realistic argument. 4. **Sufficient public and political buy-in** of any national reforms was also an obvious necessity. 5. **Addressing red tape** and the need for effective and efficient one-stop shops for handling the establishment and operation of businesses. 6. **Stability of the regulatory and economic framework.** Refers to sufficient certainty regarding the future of taxation levels, key regulations pertaining business conduct and establishment, and whether or not substantial populist policies, would be taken regardless of whether or not they would make sense. 7. **Attracting investments to less urban and rural areas**, in an effort to bridge the widening wealth gap and improve geographic wealth parities. 8. **Improving vocational training and education** so as to provide a more capable workforce within today's globalized environment" [.....] **"Beyond technical issues, which are approachable and debatable, the key question will be whether this or even the coming Egyptian government would have the political capability to engage in public dialogue over what it deems necessary and make the case for it"**



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#MohammadMahmoud: Accountability & Justice are Still Missing



Zeinobia

#MohamedMahmoud: Whitewashing our own Egyptian Karbala

And as our people in Upper Egypt say ***“We do not accept condolences in our men who are killed except after retribution”*** and indeed one of ***Egypt’s main problems now is retribution aka justice. Simple justice!! Since 25 January 2011 no policeman accused of killing or***



injuring the protesters was found guilty except may be one: El Shennawy, the eye hunter of Mohamed Mahmoud Street who is serving three years only!! Oh yes three years only!! ***This is a farce indeed. The right commemoration of Mohamed Mahmoud clashes is through***

justice, true justice.. Anything else is just a farce. That farce was expected as there were introductory signs paving for it. Already all the Pro-Mubarak/ Pro-Military TV hosts and channels were calling the Pro-army supporters to go to Tahrir square in order to protest against terrorism and to commemorate the martyrs of the army , police and revolutionary activists on the 19th November. Al Ahram newspaper warned last Friday from some cosmic conspiracy against police and army on that day!!

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Mohamed A. Fouad

The Saga of Mohamed Mahmoud

"I am not sure we should be keen on commemorating an event which we do not understand fully. In doing so, we develop an acceptance that it is OK for people to die on the streets with no justification. We accept those catastrophes to pass and be forgotten. ***As Mohamed Mahmoud comes upon us, one hopes that we won't continue politicising the cause***

by a dull sit-in or marches attempting to hijack the event. Out of respect to those who perished we must, for once, hold ourselves accountable to find out what happened and why it happened. Alas, the idiom “get away with murder” has become an everyday reality”

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Rana Allam

*"You cannot take Mohamed Mahmoud to yourselves. You cannot give it to those who choked them with tear gas, fired rubber bullets, buckshot and live ammunition at them. Nor can you protest against the army under the Rabaa banner after your sheikhs and leaders not only left them for dead, but also slandered and attacked them. **No one should think they can take Mohamed Mahmoud from the revolutionaries, even if no one but uniforms or beards took to the streets this coming 19 November, the revolution owns this day... and beware the rage that follows if you attempt to!**"*

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H.A. Hellyer

Accountability is a joke in Egypt

***"Revolutionary progress in Egypt will be judged by reform of the security sector – it will not be judged by the security sector reforming the revolution. The same issues that brought people out on the streets in January 2011, and onto Mohammad Mahmoud later that year, still exist in Egypt – and the only way to avoid further instability in Egypt is to begin, finally, a serious, and comprehensive, process of transitional justice.** Otherwise, Egyptians will just have more levels on that smart-phone game and the tragedy of Egypt's transition will continue to deepen. Egypt has earned the right, through the blood of those who died in Mohammad Mahmoud and hundreds of others, to do so much better"*

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Hizbollah's Weaknesses



Hanin Ghaddar

A History of Blood and Death

*"Let's do the math. 20.8% out of 814,000 Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon are males between 18 and 59 years old. This is around 170,000. Even if only 10% decide to take matters in their own hands following Hezbollah and Assad's victory in Syria, that's 17,000 mostly Sunni men ready to carry arms and fight Hezbollah and the Shiites. Recruiting them won't be difficult, especially as living conditions are poor and continually deteriorating. All of this is a recipe for civil strife. Now that Hezbollah is fighting al-Qaeda in Syria, the party may seem more favorable to the US. **But as long as Hezbollah and Iran back the Assad regime, more al-Qaeda fighters and support will prop up across the country. A Hezbollah-Iran-Assad victory in Syria will therefore only lead to stronger al-Qaeda networks in both Lebanon and Syria"***

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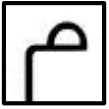


Rami G. Khouri

Hezbollah's strengths create weaknesses

*"**More and more Lebanese might argue that if Hezbollah is working primarily on Syrian, Iranian, Palestinian and anti-takfiri issues, it would be best for it to base itself in the epicenter of those resistance challenges on frontier territories among Syrian-Iraqi-Iranian lands.** The more Hezbollah accentuates its military actions abroad in the service of preserving the Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah Resistance and Deterrence Front, the greater will be the criticism it generates inside Lebanon accusing it of being mainly an agent of Iran" [.....]"**Hezbollah's fighting days in Syria may be just beginning, which will only increase the criticisms and pressures on the party in Lebanon, the Middle East and worldwide "***

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Leadership Vacuum

Moulaahazat

The War For Centrism

*Any agreement between Future Movement (the Harirists) and the Free Patriotic Movement (the Aounists) is bad for all the other parties. Nabih Berri might never become speaker again. The Lebanese Forces and the Phalanges would be even more marginalized in the M14 coalition. Mikati would lose it all. M14 would control the majority of the MPs, leaving M8 with less than 30% of the seats in the parliament. M8 wouldn't be able to constitutionally block the presidential elections by lack of quorum, while the major Christians parties, united under the banner of March 14, would choose their president without questions of his legitimacy. After all, he has the backing of practically all the Christians and half of the Muslims. Hariri might become Prime Minister again – and who knows, under the presidency of a Aounist president?. **An FPM-FM alliance is probably the most logical alliance one can think of in Lebanon. Together, they hold the absolute majority in the parliament. They both started as secular parties, they both have a certain sectarian identity, and they are the parties that least participated in the 1975-90 civil war.** Aoun is appealing to the Christian electorate and Hariri for the Muslim one. That's roughly 90 Members of the parliament under FPM/FM control. **70% of the Parliament. No LF, no PSP, no Kataeb, no Amal, no Hezbollah needed. 70% via the votes of the FPM and the FM, only"***

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Mustapha Hamoui

What Politicians Can and Can't Do About Tripoli

"I find it absurd that people are asking politicians to fix a situation they are completely powerless to fix. Saying politicians should do something about the war in Tripoli is as absurd as saying that politicians should do something about the war in Syria. The situation is too complex to be "fixed"; all politicians can do at the moment is to back one horse or the other, warlords on the streets answer to higher forces than some powerless man in a suit" [...] **"The one thing politicians can do to show that they really care is to make a grand gesture and move to Tripoli. Baabda, Ain el Tineh and the**

Seraile are quite far from the action" [.....] "Mr. President, Mr. (acting) Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Mr. politician who likes to make hollow statements on TV. **Move to Tripoli, listen with your own ear to what's going on. See what it really feels to be there. After that, we'll start believing in whatever actions you decide to take regarding the situation**"

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Syria

"Expect a Whole New Breed of Terrorists"

Sara Assaf



I Am Not a Terrorist... Yet

Today I can't help thinking that if the whole world let us down and if the only way left to stand against Assad is empowering those jihadists, well then yes, what other choice do we really have? Today I understand why many across the Arab world share this same sentiment. Today I grasp why Sunni terrorism is prospering so quickly to fight Shi'ite terrorism. The atrocious images stemming daily from Syria are simply fueling a sense of injustice stronger sometimes than any voice of reason. The West has in parallel failed to effectively support the moderate forces across this region. **Extremism and radicalism are thus gaining momentum over tolerance and moderation. The "guy next door" who suddenly disappears – only for his parents to know days later that he's fighting inside Syria – is becoming more and more of a common story here.** The Sunni mainstreamer who used to cheer moderate leader Saad Hariri and who now follows a jihadist sheikh is also a pattern we see more of in Lebanon. To the West I say: **Expect a whole new breed of terrorists in the decades to come. Because of your inaction, and somewhat complicity, terrorism is blossoming inside Syria and the whole region. And it won't remain "inside" for long**"



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Could Bashar Al Assad Stay?

Faisal Al Yafai

Syrians ask the Unthinkable: Could Bashar Al Assad stay?

*"The argument for Mr Al Assad being part of any peace deal is that, without him and his security apparatus, the country would implode. And since Iran has shown itself unwilling to countenance any removal of Mr Al Assad, attempting to start negotiations with the precondition of his removal is pointless. **Moreover, what is at stake is more than merely who governs Syria, but whether there is a Syria left to govern. Syria is perilously close to becoming so divided, so riven by conflict, that it cannot be put back together**" [.....] **"Without a political solution, that fragmentation will continue, possibly splitting Syria into several statelets, threatening new trouble for Turkey, Iraq and other neighbours. For now, the only viable political solution appears to be one that includes Mr Al Assad in some form"***

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Libya



The GNC and the Militias: Deepening Power Struggle

Mohamed Eljarh

Libya's Deepening Power Struggle

"Each day, Libya's General National Congress (GNC), the highest political authority in the country, draws closer to a looming existential crisis that could lead to a total power vacuum and the collapse of Libya's democratic transition" [....] "The groups are demanding that the legislative body end its mandate on Feb. 7, 2014 -- a date calculated according to the deadlines set by the country's constitutional declaration (the transitional roadmap), which was drafted by the National Transitional Council in May 2011" [.....]

"Libya is now confronted by a significant failing: the inability of civil society activists and organizations to



work together as a unified front to wrest the country from the grip of polarization. Any change in the current political roadmap must ensure the continuation of the democratic process. Abandoning or breaking that process will leave Libya with only two options: to remain mired in an indefinite transition or to fall back into another dictatorship"

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A Bloodbath in the Streets of Tripoli

*"On Nov. 15, hundreds of Tripoli residents answered calls for peaceful demonstrations issued by the city's council, the Grand Mufti, and civil society organizations to protest against the presence of armed militias in the city. The protesters carried white flags as a sign of peace. However, when the crowds marched to the Gharghour area of Tripoli" [....] **"Libya is increasingly finding itself in a no-win scenario. The situation is too unstable for the government to achieve any meaningful progress beyond this transitional phase. Yet the situation is not bad enough to warrant attention from the international community, which might otherwise intervene to help the Libyan authorities to restore order"***

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