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Egypt's Legislations: Islamists Win the Majority in the Second Round

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Introduction

The second stage of the Egyptian parliamentary elections was held in nine other provinces in two rounds: the first on Wednesday and Thursday, 14th-15th December, and the second a mere week later, 21st-22nd December 2011. The competition in this stage was for 180 seats (in contrast to 160 seats in the first stage) but the complications of the electoral process – as experienced in the first stage – led to the delay of the elections in party-list seats, in the whole of the Aswan governorate as well as two other districts which entails that the announced results covered only 170 seats. Voter turnout was 64 percent, significantly exceeding that of the first stage.

Once again, Egyptians have refuted expectations of bloody and unsafe elections as the elections ended in all districts without a single security incident, even in urban and rural districts that witnessed severe competition. Contrary to the first stage, the over takings of parties and party-lists were limited but doubts marred the screening process and the announcement of results in a number of sites especially in Ismailia and Sharqia governorates for expectations indicated great victory for Freedom and Justice Party candidates of the Muslim Brotherhood and their allies. The belief that a faction in the state does not want the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies to win more than forty percent of the votes prevails within Brotherhood and non-Brotherhood circles.

It is not easy to resolve these doubts but, in any case, it has been noted that even if some results are manipulated, the manipulation will be minor and is not likely to affect the final results. The nature of the electoral process allows for manipulation in party-list results but it remains difficult for individual seat results that are announced in district centre's, are supervised, and do not require the transfer and calculation of the number of votes in the Supreme Electoral Committee as is done for party-list results. Certainly, the second stage of elections presents more evidence that there is no desire to systematically counterfeit the elections in any district of the state regardless of mistakes and limited manipulations here and there.

Results

Saturday, 24th December, witnessed the circulation of many numbers within parties and political forces when the Supreme Electoral Committee announced official results, as was expected. The complexity marring the calculation of party-list seats is hindered by the acquisition of accurate numbers for the results, which are not likely to be known before the end of the electoral process including those of the third stage of elections and districts in which the first and second stages of elections were postponed. Individual seat results, however, were settled without the slightest speculation.

It is thus estimated that the Freedom and Justice party-list received a little over 90 seats, 40 of which being in individual parishes from a total of 60. Accordingly, the party-list won 158 out of 320 seats in the first and second stages, as per the expectations of the Freedom and Justice Party's sources, noting that the total number of seats in the next People's Assembly will be 498. This estimated result implies that the Freedom and Justice party-list has won 49 percent of the seats so far.

The Al Nour Party is expected to win 39 seats in the second stage, 13 of which being individual seats. Thus, the party-list will have won nearly ninety seats in the first and second stages as per the party's sources i.e. over 25 percent of the seats competed for so far.

In this stage, the Wafd party-list achieved relatively better results than in the first stage in comparison to its main liberalist rival, the Egyptian Bloc, as they won only 11 and 8 seats respectively. With this result, they have equally won a total of 32 seats in the first and second stages each. As demonstrated by first stage results, the party-list results of the Centre Party and the Revolution Continues Alliance were disappointing as they received a mere three and two seats respectively in the second stage. Accordingly, the Centre Party won a total of seven seats in the two stages combined while the Revolution

Continues Alliance won six. The remaining number of seats in the two stages went to small parties, some being completely new and others formed from remains of the National Party, and a number of independent candidates.

Indications

With the announcement of the second stage results, the two main Islamist currents – the Muslim Brotherhood, represented by the Freedom and Justice Party, and the Salafis, represented by the Al Nour Party – unquestionably reinforced their positions in the People's Assembly. The Brotherhood and the Salafis together won over seventy percent of the seats competed for in both stages; and there is no longer much doubt that this will be the final results of seat distribution in the People's Assembly when its elections are completed in mid-January. The greater party qualified to dominate the next assembly and form a centre of influence is the Freedom and Justice Party and its allies which are very likely to exceed the 50 percent limit of the assembly's seats after it became content with anything over forty percent.

However, this does not mean that the Freedom and Justice Party is completely safe. The party's leadership as well as a large faction of observers of the performance of Salafis and their allies were staggered not only in the first stage but also in the second. A probable explanation for this phenomenon is the distancing of Salafis from the political scene in the last two decade and the previous regime's desire to provide an opportunity for competition with the Muslim Brotherhood to gain the loyalty of the religious faction of Egyptians may have helped the Salafi current to achieve vast expansion throughout the country.

It is certainly not easy to expect the course of the phenomenon of Salafi prominence in Egypt may take democratically and pluralistically especially because the current is new in the political arena. However, there are surely a number of factors that will directly influence the future of the Salafi role, including the performance of Al Nour Party, the Freedom and Justice Party's ability to reach a satisfying level of achievements in case they assume government leadership in the next stage. It is probable that the leaders of the Freedom and Justice Party will think carefully before deciding to ally with the Salafi bloc in the People's Assembly not only because of what negative impressions may come out of such a great Islamic alliance but also because no one knows the nature of Salafi demands and expectations from such an alliance.

On the other hand, the second stage results restored the influence of the Wafd Party and its electoral party-list after it was on the verge of disappearing completely behind the Egyptian Bloc, which appeared to have won most of the Egyptian liberalist-secularist votes in the first stage. Nonetheless, the sudden improvement in the Wafd Party's performance, in any case, remains relatively limited, and there is no evidence, after determining about two thirds of the seats in the People's Assembly, that it is a critical rival to the Freedom and Justice Party or even to the Salafis. In fact, the Islamist voice in these elections is rather prominent as it appears that the first People's Assembly after the Egyptian revolution will be an arena for Islamist competition.

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