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Egypt's elections: Mubarak in prison and the Islamists in the streets

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The Following recent political developments in the country, Mubarak's fate is intimately associated with that of his associates who are running the country now. Mubarak's trial remains a symbolic representation of the trial of the fate of the political system he adopted in the last three decades. Although his military and political associates remain in power and were forced to put him to trial, the Muslim Brotherhood poses an increasing threat to "Mubarak's system". Given that the judiciary in Egypt is closely connected to the ruling elite of the country, the court's decision about Mubarak's case was a calculated effort of the military to balance the public demand for the punishment of Mubarak and the plans of the ruling elite to influence the outcome of the forthcoming elections in favor of the presidential candidate Ahmad Shafiq at the expense of the Islamist Muhammad Mursi. In brief, the ruling elite tested the resolve of the demonstrators and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular. Now what comes next?

Apparently some of the secular-bourgeois voters will be affected and satisfied with the outcome of Mubarak's trial. Some of them are expected to vote in favor of Shafiq but it is uncertain whether the majority of the secular voters would do so. It is estimated that the majority of voters in Egypt are not pleased with the Mubarak's sentence. Islamists in the urban centres and the rural areas are expected to invest politically on Mubarak's sentence and demand both the death penalty for Mubarak and the completion of the ongoing revolution in Egypt.

Depending on political developments, the fact that there is the option of appeal for the reverse of the sentence could be used both for improving the sentence in favor of Mubarak and for the imposition of the death penalty. Given the circumstances, it is expected that the sentence will not be altered because the current regime will not seek the death penalty for Mubarak or the change of life imprisonment for a more lenient sentence. Anyhow, altering the sentence is not going to take place prior to the 16-17 elections, unless dramatic developments erupt on behalf of the Brotherhood in terms of civil disobedience, developments which would threaten the existence of the regime *per se*.

The timing of the announcement of Mubarak's sentence is going to boost Muhammad Mursi's candidacy. For the ruling elite the decision to announce the sentence prior to the elections was a tactical move, for they aimed to assess the resolve of the demonstrators and plan their moves accordingly. No doubt, the demand for the completion of the revolution in Egypt is not going to diminish.

In this regard, provided that free elections are held throughout the country, it is very difficult for the military to prevent the Brotherhood from winning the forthcoming elections. In any case the military will not accept such a result and the forthcoming elections will become a turning point for the modern history of Egypt. The case of Algeria in the 1990's suggests that a possible victory of the Brotherhood in Egypt will not mean the end of the existing regime. Yet Mubarak's sentence and fate will be an important episode in Egypt's post-revolution era...

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