



## **View Point**

### **Egyptian Revolution One Step Forward Two Steps Backward**

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The much awaited Presidential election in post-revolutionary Egypt has been forced into second round as no single contestant was able to get 50% of the votes. In the second round, which is to take place on 16-17 June, Ahmad Shafiq, Mubarak's old loyalist and last Prime Minister during his regime and Mohammad Morsi, President of Justice and Freedom Party will be contesting.

The result of the first round of country's first ever free presidential election was almost unexpected. There were three major political blocks representing different ideological streams in Egypt: Islamist blocks represented by Abdel Moneim Aboul Futuh and Mohammad Morsi; the nationalist-left-liberal, and the Nasserite's block represented by former Egyptian Foreign Minister and Arab League General Secretary Amre Moussa and Sabah Hamdin who secured only 12% and 22% of the votes respectively. Ahmad Shafiq represents the military regime and never shied away from terming ousted President Mubarak as his role model. He consistently denied that there was any Egyptian revolution. Immediately after entering the second round, his spokesperson told reporters of New York Times and Guardian that "now the revolution was over".

The rise of Shafiq, who has entered the final run off alongside JFP candidate, has raised eyebrows across the political spectrum. The exit of Amre Moussa and Abdel Moneim Aboul Futuh was equally shocking. Shafiq secured 24.9% of the votes

largely because of the split among the revolutionary forces and large numbers of Coptics who voted in his favor. He had good voters support from among the state employees who voted either because of the instructions from their bosses or feared the creeping influence of Muslim Brotherhood on the bureaucrats. Not only this, Ahmad Shafiq won in Alexandria, a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in other governorates were more due to the non-performance of JFP in the past few months since they entered the Parliament. JFP could not succeed in forcing the Supreme Council of Armed Forces to transfer power. Army's nominee Kamal Ganzouri continues to be the Prime Minister.

Mr. Ahmad Shafiq is alleged to be involved in multiple cases of corruption and repression including controversial episode of running camels to disperse the crowd at Tahrir Square on Feb 02, 2011. The announcement of the result of the election and the entry of Ahmad Shafiq in the second round has sent shock waves among the common revolutionaries. One of the protestors has remarked that, "his place is in jail and not the top post of the country". His election office in Alexandria was set on fire.

The second round of election will be the real test for both the political alliances and factionalism in Egypt. The two candidates are trying to woo the voters from among the other blocks who had been ousted in the first round.

Dr. Raza Hilal, professor of Political Science at the University of 6<sup>th</sup> October said that all the secularists, socialists, leftists, liberals and those who voted for Moussa of Wafad party would be voting for Shafiq, while rest of the voters could vote for JFP to rescue the revolution. There are speculations that voters of Sabah Hamdin along with Coptic Christians would like Ahmad Shafiq to be the country's President because of their old animosity towards the Islamists. There are speculations in the political circle that Ahmad Shafiq could promise Vice Presidency to Hamdin to win over his voters, while JFP is chanting the slogans that those who went along with Shafiq are against the revolution and who want to rescue the revolution must vote for JFP candidate Mohammad Morsi.

The role of the army has been very crucial and instrumental in the politics of Egypt during last seven decades. The January revolution failed to change that

dynamics. The Army does not want to see any political structure devoid of its prominent role in the governance. It is interesting to note that so far the army has not shown any sign of ceding power in favor of the popular legislation. First, the army fielded Mr. Omar Suleiman, former Vice President and national Intelligence Chief but his candidature was rejected by the Election Commission and he was replaced by Ahmad Shafiq.

Given the strategy of the Army in last few months, it is plausible that the Army is leaving no stone unturned and is resorting to all means to remain in power. Army's decision taken only last week to revoke the emergency law, which has been in effect since last three decades, is a strategic ploy to appropriate the agenda of democratic and revolutionary forces and win over the supporters of Islamists. This decision may change the image of the Army and benefit Ahmad Shafiq. It also shows the Army's temptation for the power and non-commitment to allow the Islamist a free hand.

Likewise, sentencing of former President Mubarak to life imprisonment may not be devoid of manipulation by the Army to dilute the political agenda of the opposition forces. This verdict will send a message to the nation that they were very much with the mission of the revolution. The revolution in Egypt has completely failed to remove the army from the helm of the national affairs.

While people were still dreaming of the success of the revolution, they have been once again pushed for a narrow choice where they have found themselves between a General and a Sheikh. The Egyptian politics has gone once again in the mode of confrontation that Egypt has been experiencing for the last seventy years. The result of the Egyptian revolution is heading towards a big failure and balance of power in Egypt again seems to be shifting towards the army.

Ahmad Shafiq, who is believed to have orchestrated the camel episode, which killed many protestors in the Tahrir Square, is ready to take on the Islamist. His victory might take the people again to the same era of oppression against which revolutionaries sacrificed their lives. Both sides are ready to settle their scores and once again Egypt might see the same confrontation between the army and the Islamist

in which entire politics of Egypt has been trapped for almost seven decades. In case of victory, the Islamists will face great obstacle in challenging the *status quo* owing to the dominance of the Supreme Council of Armed Force. However Egypt's lurching transition has opened up doors for democracy but it is difficult to guarantee it. The future will tell whether the revolution becomes a democratic transition or it moved towards instability and renewed authoritarianism.

At this crucial juncture of Arab politics, the role of India becomes very important as India is the largest democracy of the world. India, being one of the old friends of Egypt, can offer the service of its past experiences in the promotion of liberal and secular democracy. The politics of the Arab region is in flux and India cannot be indifferent to the development taking place there but should act in a very positive and decisive manner.

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