

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Anne-Marie Slaughter <[redacted]>
Sent: Sunday, April 15, 2012 11:28 AM
To: H
Cc: Abedin, Huma; Jacob J Sullivan (SullivanJJ@state.gov); Cheryl Mills
Subject: very detailed analysis of Egyptian presidential race by very well-informed blogger

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It's hard for me to keep all these candidates straight, but the author, Bassem Sabry, actually predicted a number of the exclusions. I of course know him through Twitter, where he bills himself as a writer on Egyptian and current affairs, but he has written for The Atlantic, so he is certainly respectable. Here is the link to the actual post.

<http://anarabcitizen.blogspot.com/2012/04/abul-fotouh-morsy-and-moussa-who-will.html>

Best,
AM

Who Will Become The President Of Egypt?

Nearly 10 days ago I made a statement on Twitter that said that Mohammed Morsy (head of the FJP Party) had a very solid chance to become the next President of Egypt. I was, well, criticised (to put it politely.)

But now, after the preliminary exclusion of ten candidates (they have 48 hours to appeal their exclusion), my statement was taken perhaps a bit more seriously.

My argumentation and line of logic was very simple. First, Khairat El-Shater and Hazem Abu-Ismaail, two extremely powerful candidates, were most likely set for disqualification for known reasons, which I outline in this post confirming their current exclusion, freeing a significant base of voters to choose other candidates.

Omar Soleiman (assuming he returns to the race), who many do want to vote for (I also outline why in this Ahram-Online op-ed) mainly seems to have support predominantly within major cities and more developed areas rather than rural and less developed ones, which are a big part of the vote. However, it is very hard to assess at the moment the extent of his true reach as a candidate, and how the previous short period wherein the FJP and Al-Nour have dominated parliament and politics has reflected on them in the cities and outside of them, and by extension how people might compare them to previous regime. One recent poll published in AMAY actually put Soleiman at 20%, the highest for any candidate, while giving Al-Shater only 3%. The poll's reliability is regrettably in question, nevertheless, as are most Egyptian polls. Of course, there is also the possibility that he would eventually be forced out of the elections using the Political Disenfranchisement Law - PDL (**Background on the PDL:** Al-Wasat MP Essam Sultan presented a draft law to Parliament, banning top ranking Mubarak Regime and NDP figures from running for office, particularly to fight the nomination of Essam Sultan; law suffers from potential violations of the Constitutional Declaration though.)

Former PM Ahmed Shafiq's base of support as a candidate is also generally concentrated within major cities, though he has been venturing heavily outside of the cities to gain greater support. Of course, he also could face exclusion through the PDL. But most importantly, Shafiq's chances, as a personal observation, seem to have also dropped considerably after some disappointing recent media appearances that have left a negative-to-weak impression with audience. Another major blow to his chances came after much of his potential voter base (e.g. the unaligned, those worried from the Islamists, those feeling that the country was more stable under Mubarak) seem to have shifted their votes towards Soleiman predominantly, towards Moussa to a lesser extent, and some even a bit to Abul-Fotouh (albeit to an even much lesser extent, being more of the unaligned variety.)

Nasserist Hamdeen Sabbahy and "Moderate-Islamist" Selim El-Awwa both have very limited support as first-choice candidates. Sabbahy is seen as a genuinely patriotic figure, but has very little dedicated support base, and that does not seem likely to change soon. El-Awwa's fan base has also considerably dropped throughout the past several months after failing anchor himself to the Brotherhood, the Salafists, or the Revolutionaries, and for failing to position himself as a candidate within the public sphere. Ayman Nour, assuming he makes it back into the race after his recent exclusion, also suffers from the lack of a dedicated base of supporters that is large enough to form a considerable electoral mass. As things stand, left-wing candidates Abul-Ezz El-Hariry and Khaled Ali also currently have very limited mass appeal and dedicated public support, and are expected essentially to attempt to leave an impact on the level and quality of discourse in the elections and bring awareness to oft-avoided issues rather than realistically seek the seat.

This essentially would leave the race between Abul-Fotouh, Mohammed Morsy and Amr Moussa.

Abdel-Mon'eim Abul-Fotouh's campaign is gaining traction and is developing into quite a respectable effort, but support remains relatively limited at the moment. Nevertheless, with the exception of Abu Ismail's much older campaign, I would argue that Abul-Fotouh's base of support is the fastest growing in the country as well, gathering around him quite a collection of extremely diverse and contradicting individuals and groups, a testament to his widening appeal. His campaign is also proving to be a source of attraction for younger and well educated individuals as well. The dropping out of Khairat Al-Shater and Hazem Abu-Ismael would also lead to a still-hard-to-identify number of traditional Islamists voting for Abul-Fotouh, a definite boost to his base.

Amr Moussa, however, is a tricky calculation. The assumed frontrunner, according to one view, was never the certain victor media often presented him to be. Moussa's chances were arguably much higher right after the revolution, when people needed an immediately reassuring and non-controversial figure, and had little time to better know other candidates. But the problem with Moussa's campaign is that few people seem "passionate" about Moussa. In a very Mitt-Romneyesque manner, one friend described him as "the ultimate safety candidate; someone who could do the job, but you still want to wait a while longer before committing to." Thus, while Moussa seems to be ranking highest in a few polls, it is quite premature to sound the victory bells. Also, one should remember that during the parliamentary elections non-Islamist parties polled at a higher number than what they eventually got, and remained so until right before the elections when voters began to "make decisions." I also expect a vicious negative-campaign attack against Moussa, whose speculated details I will not elaborate on at the moment to avoid the potential "putting of ideas into people's minds."

That leaves, of course, the MB's Dr. Mohammed Morsy, head of the FJP. Despite his incredibly high organisational profile and political credentials, Morsy seems to have eluded becoming the public figure he could have become by now. This engineering professor, who completed his PhD in the States, was a Brotherhood MP in 2000 and the speaker for the MB block in Parliament then, might have not immediately come to mind several weeks ago as a front-line candidate. But Morsy, who entered the elections as a backup candidate for Khairat Al-Shater, will nevertheless have the support of the entire MB and FJP membership bases and organisational structures, which have incomparable effectiveness and efficiency as demonstrated during the parliamentary elections (one friend, working as an observer for a competing campaign, spoke at length to me in bewilderment of the "complex" food-delivery and member-swapping-and-resting strategies during the parliamentary elections). It is also widely expected, and perhaps most critical to highlight, that much of the aligned and non-aligned votes that went to the FJP and Al-Nour in parliament would also go to Morsy, who will now have a bit over a month to try and become more of a household name. At this moment, this makes Morsy possibly the strongest candidate, quite ironically. Some will disagree, naturally.

There is, of course, one more possibility.

Following the announcement of Omar Soleiman's entry into the presidential race, Hamdeen Sabbahy and others presented an initiative which seems to be gaining more traction than expected. The "Revolutionary Candidate" initiative consisted mainly of bringing together all the candidates that were considered to be aligned with the revolution, and for them to agree on one main candidate that they would all unite around (with one or more other candidates serving as potential VPs). Yesterday morning, the MB/FJP's Mohammed El-Beltagy also said he supported the initiative (in his personal capacity), which is a very significant given El-Beltagy's profile within the MB (though he is also known to be his own man). It is widely expected that such an initiative would end up resulting in Abul-Fotouh's selection as the frontline candidate, practically handing him the Presidential seat if the MB also drops out of the race and joins the initiative (which is unlikely). Some speculate that the consensus candidate could be Selim El-Awwa, and rumour that the Brotherhood already is already considering the option. But his increasing decline in appeal seems to have grown too significant to be ignored even by the MB, and Abul-Fotouh would be a much better and more appealing consensual candidate. Of course, if Soleiman remains out of the race, this initiative would end up most likely as scrapped due to lack of *raison d'être*.

One final note: a recent AMAY poll said about 40% of Egyptians were undecided with regards to who they would vote for. I believe that number, and I think it is even higher.

(EDIT 1: I made edits to the top portion of the article to add more information.)

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