

SISI AGAIN: ON THE RESULT OF EGYPT'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

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For [Abdel Fattah El-Sisi](#), the Egyptian President who captured power through a military coup in 2013, winning a reelection was the easy part. In Egypt's presidential elections, sitting Presidents always win with huge margins. In the December 10-12 elections, Mr. Sisi, a former general, faced three little-known candidates, while his most vocal opponent, Ahmed Tantawy, was barred from contesting. State-affiliated media ran a campaign-like coverage, touting the President's achievements. [Mr. Sisi, unsurprisingly, won 89.6% of the votes](#), extending his rule to 2030. The tougher part, however, is to govern the most populous Arab country, now struggling with economic and geopolitical crises. When Mr. Sisi toppled Egypt's first freely elected President, Mohamed Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood leader, the military's narrative was that the Brothers had violated the spirit of the 2011 "revolution" that brought down the regime of dictator Hosni Mubarak. But Egypt slid back to the Mubarak years under Mr. Sisi's rule. The regime, which killed hundreds of pro-Brotherhood protesters on August 14, 2013 to restore 'order', has tolerated little criticism and dissent since then. But Mr. Sisi also projected himself as a source of stability and a bulwark against terror, and launched ambitious debt-funded infrastructure projects, including a new desert capital city outside Cairo.

When he starts a new term, what requires Mr. Sisi's attention is the economy. Hyperinflation, at 35%, has already pushed many Egyptians into poverty. External debt stood at \$162.9 billion in December 2022, some 40% of the GDP, according to the central bank. Egypt, which is facing some heavy repayments in 2024, is already in talks with the IMF and other foreign creditors for further assistance. What has made matters worse has been Israel's war on Gaza, which shares a border crossing with Egypt. Pro-Palestine sympathies have historically been high in Egypt, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. While Israel's relentless bombing pushed thousands to the border, Mr. Sisi tried to walk a fine line: publicly condemning the bombardment and calling for a ceasefire but stopping short of drastic measures that would endanger peace with Israel. Mr. Sisi has also said he would not be complicit with any Israel plan for mass eviction of Palestinians from Gaza. But if the war drags on, he will come under greater pressure to let Palestinian refugees in, which may have economic and political consequences. Between a calamitous war next door and worsening economic conditions at home, his challenge is to offer a stable rule in a country that has seen regime-changing street protests and a coup in the recent past.

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