

# The New York Times

## In Egypt, Back to Rule By a Strongman

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Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the former general who led the military takeover in Egypt nearly one year ago, was sworn in as the country's president on Sunday. The reactions to Sisi's election ranged from downright joyous to cautiously optimistic to unapologetically cynical.

At home, the Cato Institute's Ted Galen Carpenter [dismissed](#) Sisi's victory as "predictable as the Crimean 'referendum' that ratified Russia's takeover." Ninety-five percent of Egyptians voted for him, but turnout was spectacularly low, less than 50 percent, Carpenter notes. "There was a time when U.S. leaders routinely castigated bogus elections in communist countries that produced wildly lopsided majorities for the incumbent regime," he writes, criticizing the Obama administration's ostensible acceptance of election results. "No such criticism was forthcoming in this case, just as Washington didn't denounce the earlier balloting for the new Egyptian constitution that produced a 98 percent favorable vote."

Shadia Nasralla and Maggie Fick of Reuters [point to](#) a cool reception for Sisi from the West. The State Department's decision to send only a senior adviser to attend inaugural festivities, with most European countries sending only ambassadors, indicates that Western leaders are wary of the new Egyptian president, they write.

Yet Sisi appears to enjoy enthusiastic support from many Middle East monarchies. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia congratulated Egyptians on their presidential choice and urged them to embrace his policies of anti-Islamism while separating themselves from the "strange chaos" of the Arab Spring. "Sisi's win was undoubtedly a boost for Saudi Arabia," [writes](#) Yara Bayoumy, also for Reuters. They had "watched with horror as the Arab revolts toppled authoritarian leaders and brought President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt." Likewise, The Gulf Daily News [reports](#) a message of support for Sisi from King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain: We are "fully confident in your ability to achieve stability, progress and prosperity and lead Egypt to assume its strategic and pivotal regional role in championing Arab and Islamic causes."

But not all regional leaders are necessarily happy with Sisi's rise to power. Nervana Mahmoud, a blogger who specializes in Middle Eastern politics, thinks the silence from Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, [is especially telling](#). Turkey is "left as the only country in the region that did not congratulate Sisi," she tweeted. "Erdogan would rather die!" The election of a

military strongman in Egypt obviously worries a statesman like Erdogan, who has engineered his political career on a platform of reducing military influence in Turkey.

Ibrahim Munir, a senior leader of the ousted Muslim Brotherhood party who resides in Britain, casts blame on the West for standing by as Sisi took power in what he sees as simply an extension of last year's military coup. "The results of the elections were false and the British government knows that," he [said](#), according to The Guardian. "Congratulations reduce the diplomatic credibility of the British government by giving support to the military coup even after thousands of innocent protesters were killed."