

Will Egypt's Constitutional Change Usher In Extremist Government?

In what was supposed to be a move toward democracy, Egypt voted on constitutional amendments over the weekend. The vote appears to pave the way for Islamic extremists to take over a youth-inspired freedom-seeking revolution.

More than 14 million Egyptians, or 77.2 percent of eligible voters, chose to accept proposed constitutional amendments, which were drafted by lawyers and judges Egypt's military sponsored.

The new amendments would limit the presidency to two four-year terms and ease restrictions on independent political party participation, according to the Wall Street Journal. The former works to prevent a dictatorship. The latter, however, could open the door to political rule by organizations that sponsor terrorism.

The Muslim Brotherhood was among the groups that supported the amendments, which signal to many onlookers that Egypt could be heading for a more extremist future. By contrast, many youth movement leaders—the very group that launched the revolution—opposed the amendments.

“The referendum, while it was free of fraud, was not free of ‘influence’, especially by the Muslim Brotherhood and the religious trend in general,” Suleiman Gouda, a liberal commentator, wrote in the independent Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper. “The mosques were used by these groups to influence the voters.”

Elections are set to be held within months. Analysts says there could be a showdown between the Muslim Brotherhood's

newly-formed Freedom and Justice Party and the National Democratic Party of Hosni Mubarak, who stepped down on Feb. 11 in the midst of the revolution.

What will be Egypt's fate in the wake of the elections?