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It was remarkable that in the midst of an extensive talk on the challenges facing the new Chief of General Staff of Israeli Army Lt. General Aviv Kochavi, there was warnings for “not ignoring the reality that the situation in Egypt is unstable” and that Cairo is likely to change its policy toward Israel if the Muslim Brotherhood return to power!

This warning came from several former senior officers and strategic researchers who have developed what can be described as a “road map” for the likely risks that Kochavi is required to deal with and address: starting from Iran through Syria and Lebanon, up to the Gaza Strip. However, talk about Egypt requires in-depth consideration.

Despite security coordination and political cooperation between Tel Aviv and Cairo have reached an unprecedented level, a number of military and security reports and assessments on the Israeli-Egyptian relations indicate that Israeli military circles are concerned over continuation of US military aid to Egypt, especially under the administration of President Donald Trump, that gave the regime in Cairo a political and diplomatic cover – which requires accurate assessment by decision-making circles in Israel in light of Israel's concern over the security and political instability in Egypt.

A broad segment of the Israeli academic elite believes that the continued military support and armament of the Egyptian army by the United States arouses concern to Israelis, which requires keenness on maintaining a qualitative superiority over the Egyptian army. This concern has not only limited to the research community, but it found its way to US-Israeli talks. Although this would provoke a protest in Egypt,

however it would not cause a decline in the level of joint coordination between Tel Aviv and Cairo.

The US military aid to Egypt has remained relatively stable since the signing of the Camp David peace agreement with Israel in 1979, until the overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, when former President Barack Obama announced a temporary freeze on military assistance to Egypt. However, the US administration announced two years later that it lifted its hold on the supply of military equipment to Egypt, which was frozen when the military took power in Cairo in 2103.

Also, January 2018 saw renewal of US military support, covering four key areas: fighting terrorism, securing borders, improving security capabilities in the Sinai Peninsula and maritime security, and providing US weapons systems to the Egyptian army. [In January 2018, with little fanfare, the United States and Egypt signed a bilateral communications security agreement known as the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA), which protects and regulates the use of sensitive American avionics and communications systems.]

According to Israeli military reports, the Egyptian army possesses 24 to 36 French Dassault Rafale (a multirole fighter aircraft) and over 200 F-16 fighter aircraft. Amid a state of instability in the region, Israel finds itself in need not to turn a blind eye to any likely changes in the future.

It is strange that in light of the current common interests between Cairo and Tel Aviv, Israel expresses reservation on resumption of US military support to the Egyptian army, which is likely to anger the Egyptians, but it could not lead to freezing relations or obstructing existing cooperation, especially in the security and military fields.

**Here is a list of the most important weapons and military arsenal acquired by the Egyptian military institution, according to Israeli data:**

- 1- Germany has agreed on selling two new MEKO A-200 frigates, each weighing 3,400 tons, twice the Israeli-made Sakar 6, weighing 1,800 tons
- 2- Egypt possesses four French 2,500 Gowind Corvettes. Two of them have been already supplied while two others are still under construction in Egypt under supervision of French engineers.
- 3- Egypt possesses an arsenal of 6,000-ton FREMM, four advanced German naval submarines of the 209-type, two 21,000-ton Mistral helicopter carriers and 48 Russian advanced attack helicopters.
- 4- Egypt possesses four US rapid cruise ships of the Ambassador type, each weighing 600 tons, and 550-ton Russian-made P-320 rocket-propelled grenades, the first of its kind to be possessed by the Egyptian navy.
- 5- The Egyptian Air Force possesses aircraft of various types and different industries: French Rafale, Russian MiG-29, US F-16; and the Egyptian infantry is equipped with armored personnel carriers of the US Abrams type.

Israeli military and security forums indicate that such Egyptian military deals raise the question of who is the virtual enemy for which Egypt stores all these weapons, especially in its maritime field. As long as Egypt suffers from poor living conditions, why does the regime spend all these billions on purchase of weapons as long as there is no external threat.

Among the Israeli concerns about the Egyptian army's acquisition of these weapons is that the Egyptian regime is unstable, which again raises fears about likelihood of

Islamists' return to power in Egypt, and thus arrival of these qualitative and sophisticated weapons to the hands of Israel's old enemies!

