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EGYPTIAN INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES

Articles

30 JULY 2019

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July 30, 2019

President Morsi & Doctrine of the Egyptian Army

Mahmoud Gamal

From the early moments of his access to power as President of Egypt and the Supreme Commander of the Egyptian Armed Forces, it was clear that Dr. Mohamed Morsi adopted a military approach that relied on the Egyptian military doctrine instilled and adopted by the historical military leadership of the Egyptian army – although some observers wrongfully thought it had changed after the Camp David Accords signed between Egypt and Israel. In fact, the claim that there was a “change” in the military doctrine of the Egyptian army towards Israel after the Camp David Accords (suggesting that Israel is no longer Egypt’s strategic enemy) relying on President Sadat’s words: “The October War is the last war between Egypt and Israel” and “Peace is a strategic choice of Egypt” – is totally incorrect.

Dr. Mohamed Morsi adopted the approach that was adopted by many commanders within the Egyptian army that used to see Israel as the strategic enemy of the Arab and Muslim nations, such as Lt. General Saad al-Din al-Shazli, Field Marshal Mohamed Abdel Ghani el-Gamasy, Field Marshal Mohamed Abu Ghazala, Lt. General Mohamed Fawzi, and Lt. General Mohamed Sadiq. These army commanders believed that the conflict with Israel is an Arab-Israeli conflict, not only a Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

During celebrations of the 39th Anniversary of the October War victory in 2012, Dr. Morsi highlighted his attitude towards Israel. For the first time, he issued a presidential decree honoring the late Lt. General Saad al-Din al-Shazli and awarding him Order of the Nile posthumously in recognition of his great role in the October 1973 war. Family members of al-Shazli who received the award from Morsi at the Presidential Palace were his widow Zeinat Mohamed Metwalli and his three daughters Shahdan, Samia and Nahed.

It should be noted that Lt. Saad al-Din al-Shazly was abused because of his views and his differences with former President Anwar Sadat, where Shazli believed that Sadat did not have a real will to engage in clashes against Israel for the liberation of the occupied Egyptian territory.

President Mohamed Morsi was aware of the nature of these differences and the injustices that Lt. Saad al-Din Shazly was exposed to, where he was not honored over the past years although he was one of the prominent leaders of the October War. President Morsi was also aware of Shazly’s view

July 30, 2019

regarding Israel: In one of his interviews, Shazly said: "Certainly, there will be coming wars between the Arabs and Israel ... and sooner or later the Arabs will win over [Israel](#)," which clearly explains Shazly's vision and military doctrine.

Dr. Mohamed Morsi's military approach towards Israel was also clear in his [speech](#) during the October War celebrations in Cairo Stadium on October 7, 2012, when he said that Israel is a usurper and occupier that threatens the security of the region.

A few months after President Morsi took office as the first elected civilian president of Egypt, Israel launched a military aggression on the Gaza Strip, and President Morsi's reaction was completely different from that of the former Egyptian military regimes. After the eruption of war, Morsi sent his Prime Minister Hisham Qandil in a visit to the Gaza Strip on Friday, 16 November 2012. During the visit, Qandil said that his government was working to achieve calm in the Gaza Strip, confirming that Egypt supports the Palestinian people that are suffering as a result of Israeli military operations. In a joint press conference with Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, Qandil said, "Egypt's revolution stands with the Palestinians until all their legitimate rights are gained," adding that the Palestinians need to unite together, and that his country was working with the parties concerned to stop the Israeli military operations in the [Gaza Strip](#).

In a short [speech](#) after Friday prayers on November 16, 2012, President Morsi condemned the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip and described it as a "blatant aggression against humanity". President also Morsi said that "Egypt will not leave Gaza alone," adding, "I warn and repeat my warning to the aggressors that they will never have authority over the people of Gaza ... I say to them on behalf of the entire Egyptian people that Egypt today is different from Egypt of yesterday," warning Israelis of the anger of the Egyptian leadership and people.

Egypt also asked the [Arab League](#) to hold an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers to discuss the developments in Gaza and [summoned](#) the Egyptian ambassador to Israel at the time, Atef Salem. However, we have not found any statements by the Minister of Defense of the Egyptian army at the time, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi commenting on Israel's attack on Gaza.

Meanwhile, Tzipi Livni, the former Israeli foreign minister, explained the secret of Israel's hostility towards President Mohamed Morsi in Egypt and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey

July 30, 2019

in a [lecture](#) at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) on November 17, 2012. During her lecture, Livni said: "Every leader or country in the region need to decide whether they are part of the camp of terror and extremism or the camp of pragmatics and moderation ... If a state or leader is choosing another path, there is a price for it ... It is true that we have more extremist leaders in the region, leaders that are trying to choose their own path and way ... We have Morsi in Egypt, that represents the Muslim Brotherhood ... But I cannot accept the idea saying that there is nothing to do against this; I cannot accept the idea saying (I'm talking about Israel) that the world is against us, Erdogan is Islamist, and no hope for any change, and do nothing, I think it's wrong, I think it's not the right policy of the state of Israel – We should stick together, unite together against those who stand against us ..."

On the other hand, the words that President Mohamed Morsi said during the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in 2012 illustrate his view of Israel as an occupation state that is hostile to all Arabs, and that the Egyptian state would not remain idle if Israel did not stop its aggression on the Palestinians. However, the words of Livni show the Israeli view of Morsi and his regime as enemy of Israel along with some other leaders in the region.

The sound and correct attitude of President Morsi towards Israel, which was in line with the views of any national free man, whether military or civilian, led Tel Aviv to work actively for overthrowing his regime, considering his survival as a direct threat to its existence.

In fact, the policy that was adopted by Morsi towards Israel was identical to a great extent with the literature of the commanders of the Egyptian army in times of war with Israel (1948-1956-1967-1973), considering Israel the strategic enemy of Egypt and the whole Arab nation. Although the political and military atmosphere after the October 1973 war prompted the Egyptian state to conclude peace agreements with Israel, but it was firmly rooted in their strategic military doctrine that it was a temporary and unstable peace, and that sooner or later there would be other wars with this occupying expansionist enemy which has not ceased to impose its control and achieve its objectives in the region, including his "Greater Israel" plans – and that the Egyptian state, as well as the Arabs as a whole should join together, unite their efforts, and stand ready for facing this strategic enemy.

July 30, 2019

Therefore, Israel worked with the counter-revolutions alliance in the region, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, to overthrow the regime of President Mohamed Morsi for two reasons:

First, for fear that President Morsi, having an Islamist background, may establish a successful democratic model, posing a direct threat to all regional repressive regimes and the American and Western interests in the region.

Second, due to President Morsi's view of Israel as an occupying entity that is in conflict with Egypt, being an Arab-Israeli conflict.

In fact, this alliance succeeded in finding partners within the Egyptian army, especially that the Egyptian military doctrine has radically changed (towards Israel) with the arrival of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi at the head of government in Egypt.

Rapprochement and alliance with Israel has been the policy that Abdel Fattah al-Sisi adopted since he led the military coup against Morsi on July 3, 2013, sending a message to the international community that Egypt is experiencing a new phase in relations with Israel that has reached unprecedented levels militarily and politically, and that changing the doctrine of the Egyptian army towards Israel was the first step in this new phase.

Indeed, after the departure of the regime of Morsi, Israel has become a strategic ally of the Egyptian regime, amid the services provided by the Egyptian army to Israel, including its fight against the so-called political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood – as the Egyptian army and the Egyptian state's new "enemy" – that is considered by Israel the parent of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in Palestine.

So far, we have not heard any voices within the Egyptian army – the biggest and most powerful Arab army – opposing this dangerous shift of its military doctrine towards Israel that seeks to destroy it completely and dismantle the Egyptian state as a whole.

Will Sisi maintain his support and rapprochement with Israel politically and militarily in order to preserve his position and strengthen his rule, depending on the internal crisis that Egypt is going

July 30, 2019

through, shifting from a doctrine that considers Israel the strategic enemy of the Egyptian army to a new doctrine that considers Israel the strategic ally of Egypt?

Are there still military commanders within the Egyptian army whose military doctrine is still on the footsteps of the military approach of Field Marshal Abu Ghazala and Lt. General Saad Al-Din Al-Shazli, that reject this shift and work to repair what Sisi has spoiled regarding the doctrine of the Egyptian army?

Are there still military commanders that see that the weapons of the Egyptian army should not be directed to the Egyptian people at home or part of that people, as Sisi has done?

Unfortunately, Sisi has used the Egyptian army for the first time in Egypt's history as a tool in the face of the Egyptian people, killing thousands of them since July 2013.

