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## Sisi and the Army - Military Scene in June 2019

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From the early moments of assuming power, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has worked to impose full control over the military institution as well as all other security institutions. He has also been keen on maintaining continued restructuring of the military junta. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) that cooperated with Sisi in the military coup against President Mohamed Morsi (4 July 2013) has almost been completely changed – with only two members of that council remaining, namely, Lt. General Mohamed Farid Hegazi, the former Secretary General of the Ministry of Defense and current Chief of Staff, and Maj. Gen. Mamdouh Shahin, the assistant Minister of Defense for Constitutional and Legal Affairs.

Sisi has also conducted a series of changes and repositioning of leaders within the Army, the General Intelligence Service and the Ministry of Interior, so that he could have the upper hand over these institutions. He occasionally dismisses military commanders seeking others who might be more loyal to him to occupy their positions; hedges some commanders that were removed from their positions; and sometimes honors others that may be appropriate for new positions, albeit outside the Egyptian army. In fact, Sisi follows the “carrot and stick” policy in dealing with army commanders, and he has recently issued “Law on Treatment of Some Senior Armed Forces Commanders”, which provided unprecedented privileges to military leaders.

Sisi knows that his regime entirely depends on the military institution; so, he is always keen on pleasing the military in general. Since his military coup against

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President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, up to now, Sisi has approved significant increases in the military salaries and pensions.

*In this context, the military institution witnessed during June 2019, several developments, as follows:*

### 1- Dismissal of Maj. Gen. Mohamed Amin Nasr

During June 2019, Sisi approved a reshuffle of military commanders (usually taking place twice a year – once in June and once at the end of the year).

The June reshuffle included many changes in military ranks, most prominently the removal of Maj. General Mohamed Amin Nasr, head of the Armed Forces' Financial Affairs Authority (He was appointed in the post in February 2014). However, Nasr, who was also trustee of Tahya Masr Fund and one of the prominent figures of the Egyptian SCAF, has been appointed as adviser to Sisi for financial affairs for one year starting from June 14, 2019.

With the dismissal of Maj. General Mohamed Amin Nasr from the military junta, only two leaders are remaining from members of the military junta that participated along with Sisi in the military coup against Egypt's first democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, namely:

a-Lt. General Mohamed Farid Hegazi, current Chief of Staff of the Egyptian army and former Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense, who is likely to be removed from office soon because of his failure to stop armed operations in the Sinai Peninsula.

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b-Maj.General Mamdouh Shahin, assistant Minister of Defense for Constitutional and Legal Affairs.

General Al-Sisi has adopted a policy of conducting changes among senior army leaders at an accelerated pace, contrary to the policy followed by former President Hosni Mubarak of maintaining stability in the military institution by keeping military commanders in office for a long time.

Sisi is keen that military leaders do not remain in office for a long period (a maximum of two years) to foil any effort to establish influence among military ranks, which may threaten his rule in the future.

Sisi is working on transformation of the regime from the 'rule of the military institution' to an autocratic rule that controls the military institution as well as all other security institutions.

This may explain Sisi's successive changes of senior commanders, but on the other hand, he is keen on pleasing the dismissed military by appointing them in administrative positions in the army or in government bodies.

## 2- Raising military pensions for 11<sup>th</sup>. time in a row

Sisi has issued Law No. 75 of 2019 on raising military pensions as of July 1, 2019. According to Article 1 of the law that has been published in the Official Gazette, the pensions due prior to July 1, 2019 shall be increased by 15%. This rise is the eleventh one in a row that have been approved by the Egyptian regime.

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Sisi generally works to please all members of the military institution, being the main base on which he relies in government. Therefore, the salaries of military personnel as well as military pensions have increased significantly since the military coup of July 3, 2013.

The military pensions used to be relatively low under the rule of former President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak. One of the most important demands of army officers at the time was to improve military pensions. Being director of the military intelligence from 2010 to 2012, Sisi was aware of the problems that army officers suffered from. Soon after he assumed power, he solved all these problems to avoid any anger arising from within the military ranks, including retirees.

Through his "carrot and stick" policy, Sisi harasses anyone he believes would be threatening his survival in power, and at the same time, he increases the financial gains of all those who belong to the military institution to win their loyalty.

### 3- Appointing retired army officers in ministries and govt. bodies

The Sisi era has witnessed appointment of thousands of retired army officers in ministries and government bodies, as well as state-owned and private enterprises, with the aim of strengthening their loyalty to the regime. According to circulated media reports, hiring retired generals has reached those who retired in 2008, which means that military pensioners since 2008 up to date have been appointed in thousands of jobs, enjoying large wages, in addition to the monthly pensions and benefits that they receive, such as medical insurance and opportunities for performing Hajj and Umrah and others. According to these

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reports, some retired senior officers do not prefer to work in areas that are located far from their place of residence after retirement, unless they have the opportunity to serve as governors, heads of city councils, or managers in some ministries and major corporate.

The primary objective that the military institution in Egypt wants to maintain and never abandon for any reason is the totalitarian rule that it adopts, especially that the army considers the Egyptian state as its private property.

In order to preserve and protect such rule, the army coordinated with the presidential institution during the eras of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak to control all aspects of political, economic, security and societal areas all over the country. However, this control further expanded under the reign of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

In the era of Mubarak, the army tended to participate in development projects through its industrial bodies, especially major projects that the private sector companies refrain from due to their size or their low returns, taking into consideration that the army employs conscripts for free in these projects, which enables them to achieve great profits. In the Sisi era, the military have almost dominated all aspects of the country's economy.

The political leadership is keen on keeping the army preoccupied with economic activities and achievement of big financial gains rather than engagement in political any action (that may be a threatening factor to the regime).