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Egypt: Integration into Military Colleges & Change Requirements

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Egypt Youth & Military Academies: Bet. Integration & Segregation

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A review of the experiences and examples of Islamist movements that aimed to change the ruling regimes in their countries would reveal that some of them had got clearly defined plans that helped them achieve their goals and sometimes remain in power for decades.

One of the most important factors that have led to the success of some Islamist movements experiences in access to power was their integration into the State's military, security, information and judiciary institutions. Individuals belonging to these movements were incorporated within the State's sovereign institutions with the aim of closely understanding the way of running these entities on the one hand, and carrying out their own plans to control the regime at the proper time on the other.

Integration experiences

1- Sudanese Experience

Reading the Sudanese experience, where the Islamic movement succeeded to reach power in 1989 through a military coup led by loyal officers, we find out that the movement had prepared itself to take such step many years before.

In June 1969, Colonel Jaafar Muhammad an-Nimeiry, the Sudanese army chief of staff, staged a military coup in alliance with the Sudanese Communist Party, arrested the then President of the Republic Ismail al-Azhari, and founded the Sudanese Socialist Union as the sole political party in the country.

During this period, Hassan al-Turabi, the leader of the Islamic Movement in Sudan at the time who adopted a slow-change approach, convinced the Islamists to enroll their children in military academies and colleges to enable them to join the Sudanese army and the police. Two years before the an-Nimeiry coup, specifically in 1967, a new batch of students graduated from the military academies including [Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir](#), who later became President.

Nimeiry continued as President of Sudan until 1985, when popular protests, led by Islamists of various parties in cooperation with the Leftists, erupted against his military rule. Nimeiri was overthrown and exiled, while the military junta, led by Field Marshal Abdel Rahman Suwar al-Dahab, took over the political scene during a year-long transition period until the first civilian President Ahmed al-Marghani came to power.

The marginalization of Islamists under Ahmad al-Marghani angered the Islamic movement and provoked Islamists to start planning for a military coup against al-Merghani, especially that they had had installed about 150 loyal officers with different military ranks within the army. On June 29, 1989, army officers belonging to the National Islamic Front were summoned for a meeting, where Colonel Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir was chosen to lead the military coup and read its first statement. Undoubtedly, the Islamic movement in Sudan had not taken such a serious step except after integration into the military institution over a period of about 20 years.

2- Sayyid Qutb supports the integration approach

It is noteworthy that some observers believe that the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb's literature had supported the idea that members of the Egyptian Islamist Movement should integrate into the military institutions to be able to bring about the desired change at the proper time. Supporters of this view argue that as a result of this approach adopted by Qutb, he was accused the military regime in case No. 12 of 1965 that he, together with other defendants, formed an organization that was "... aimed at changing the existing regime [by force](#)."

3- Military Technical College Organization

Karem Anatoly, a Military Technical College student who was in charge of the Islamist students at the college in 1974, said that the execution of Sayyid Qutb [fuelled](#) his and his military friends' struggle against the repressive regime. He added that his cause is the same cause that was adopted by Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the same cause that led to the execution of Youssef Talaat, Ibrahim al-Tayeb, Mohamed Farghali, Abdel-Qader Odeh, Mohamed Hawash and Abdel Fattah Ismail at the hands of the military regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

It should also be noted that Talal al-Ansari, a member of the Military Technical College Organization, said that Sheikh Mohamed Bassiouni used to encourage young people to join military colleges and

academies, adding that a group of young people had already joined some Egyptian [military academies](#).

The Military Technical College Organization, that was led by Saleh Serriyah, was primarily aimed at changing the Egyptian regime through staging a military coup. One of Serriyah's first concerns was to convince some students at the military academies of his ideas so that they would later be the executive tool for carrying out the organization's plan. Serriyah was able to communicate his ideas to some of the students of the Military Technical College and later the [Air Academy](#). Some Islamist students at the Military Technical College attempted twice to assassinate Sadat but did not succeed, which led to their arrest and trial before a military court.

4- Sadat Assassination Plan

When the Islamic Group planned to assassinate Sadat in 1981, they used some loyal officers in the army to carry out the operation. Therefore, those who carried out the [assassination](#) of Sadat were army officers with Islamist orientations, including Khaled al-Islambouli, an army officer and the main perpetrator of the assassination (executed), Aboud al-Zomor, a military intelligence officer, Hussein Abbas, a brilliant sniper in the armed forces (executed), and Atta Tayel Hemeida, a first lieutenant reserve ([executed](#)).

5- Gulen Organization in Turkey

Reviewing Turkey's failed coup attempt staged by the Fethullah Gulen group, classified as a terrorist organization in Turkey, the Turkish government announced on July 15, 2016 that the coup d'état was dependent on individuals belonging to the Gulen organization within the army, the police and the judiciary. The Gulen organization used to install its members within the State institutions and organs over decades, to be its executive tool for carrying out their plan at the [zero hour](#), as the Gulen organization was seeking to control power by force.

So, what?

The military institution in Egypt has established approximately sixteen military academies, colleges, and institutes through which students can join the Egyptian army, including: the Military Academy, the Air Academy, the Military Technical College, the Naval Academy, the Air Defense Academy, the Armed Forces College of Medicine, the Armed Forces Technical Institute, the Armed Forces Non-

Commissioned Officers Institute, the Armed Forces Technical Institute of Nursing, and the Armed Forces Health Institute.

Over the past years, Islamist movements in Egypt used to warn their members against joining the military or the police institutions for fear of the likely bad effect of these institutions on the ideas and orientations that they have instilled into their members since childhood.

Some believe that this view was more harmful than beneficial, given that these movements are supposedly advocates of change and reform as they describe themselves; so what is the benefit of isolationism and withdrawal into their own cocoon, preventing their members to join the institutions that they want to reform and change?

Some argue that one of the prerequisites for change and reform that these groups and movements seek is to invite their members to integrate into state institutions, especially military institutions, as the Islamic movement in Sudan did.

Each year, about 100,000 to 120,000 students apply to join military colleges in Egypt while only 3,500 students are admitted. Those who have a strategic plan for change are supposed to encourage some of their trustworthy individuals to enroll in such military colleges to be the nucleus of change within these institutions in the future.

To conclude,

Isolation from the State's sovereign institutions, such as the army, police and judiciary will ultimately ensure survival of the regime for a longer time, as they allow the current government to tighten control over these institutions and raise part of Egypt's young people on loyalty to the repressive military regime that governs the country through muzzling its critics and blocking all avenues for calling for freedom and transitional justice or demanding a rational civil rule that can ensure return of the army to practicing its basic function of protecting the country.

Change has requirements that must be met so that it can ultimately be achieved, including enrollment in military colleges, something which some consider necessary for those who seek adoption of a well-thought-out plan for change within the Egyptian state – to prevent access of a new Sisi following any likely change, and to avoid the army's manipulation of components of change as it has recently done.