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# Sidelining Sisi's Eldest Son and the General's New Map

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## Sidelining Sisi's Eldest Son and the General's New Map

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In November 2019, press reports revealed that a decision was issued to reassign Mahmoud al-Sisi, the son of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and a General Intelligence Service officer, to a long-term position at Egypt's diplomatic delegation in Moscow, Russia, after his increased influence had negatively affected the image of his father, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and the current regime. Moreover, Mahmoud Al-Sisi has failed in managing several files that he had assumed, especially the media file, according to these [reports](#).

Some see the move to sideline Mahmoud al-Sisi currently, as an indicator that Abdel Fattah al-Sisi after the popular protests that broke out on 20 September 2019, is completely different from Abdel Fattah al-Sisi before – from 3 July 2013 to 19 September 2019. Sisi, who used to ignore the advice of sovereign institutions, has now realized the danger threatening his regime and started to back down from his position in many files, according to a new policy he has adopted to face this critical situation.

Does this indicate the beginning of a new phase in Sisi's rule, or is it just a reordering of priorities and objectives?

### Sisi and sovereign institutions after the coup

Sisi has made many enemies within the military institution over the past eight years. He has fired nearly 50 military commanders from the military junta for domination of power, turning the regime in Egypt, from the rule of the military institution as a whole – as established by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954 – to the rule of the military individual. Indeed, Sisi has harassed anyone who tried to change his policies even those who sought change through running for presidential elections, such as Lt. General Sami Anan, Lt. General Ahmed Shafiq and Col. Ahmed Konsowa who attempted to run against Sisi and peacefully compete with him in the presidential elections that were held in the first quarter of 2018 against.

Add to this the hostility that Sisi created in his struggle with the General Intelligence Service (GIS), which he has completely dominated since 2018, after dismissal of Maj. General Khaled Fawzi from

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the GIS leadership along with hundreds of GIS agents, and appointment of Maj. General Abbas Kamel as the GIS new chief and Mahmoud al-Sisi, General Sisi's eldest son, as his assistant.

Since the early moments of the 3 July coup (2013), Sisi has worked to dominate the General Intelligence Service, which had enjoyed independence in management of several files away from the military institution. Some observers note that Sisi has realized the GIS strength, influence, and danger since he was appointed as director of the military intelligence in January 2010 during the Mubarak tenure. Therefore, when he assumed power in 2014, he started to dominate the GIS and bring it under his control to avoid any likely threats against his new regime.

According to some observers, there have been several change attempts that some from within Egyptian sovereign institutions have sought since the 3 July coup (2013); while some adopted constitutional and legal means, through running for elections, others sought change through adoption of a violent approach against the current leadership.

The protests of September 20 came after cessation of protests against Sisi since November 2016, during the so-called "revolution of the poor". However, this time Sisi had to respond to protests lest they be exploited by some figures within the military that oppose his policy to achieve their goals. Only after failure of mobilization for these protests, Sisi started to re-impose his control again after dismissal of 11 military commanders from the junta.

The anti-Sisi party within the sovereign bodies in general have taken advantage of the September 20 protests to impose their demands and achieve their goals that they had long sought over the past years; and perhaps negotiation was an initial stage to achieve such goals.

The protests of September 20, 2019, were different from previous protests both in form and circumstances, considering the following:

1) Sisi's crisis in international and regional relations, especially with the United States because of the Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jet deal with Moscow, which Sisi has worked to conclude with the Russian side despite the [U.S. warnings](#), as well as Sisi's strained relations with Saudi Arabia because of his abstention from actively participating in the military operations of the Arab coalition against Houthis in Yemen.



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2) The revolutionizing factor and mobilization that the Egyptian contractor and actor Mohamed Ali, has called for, unlike previous calls made by the political Islam groups and movements.

3) The death of President Mohamed Morsi put an end to the legitimacy scarecrow, which had been used by Sisi to silence any dissenting voice within the military and sovereign institutions.

The September 2019 protests gave the anti-Abdel Fattah al-Sisi party within sovereign bodies a new opportunity to practice pressures for achieving their goals. According to some observers, the departure of the Sisi regime was not a major objective of the anti-Sisi party, for several reasons, most notably awareness of the strength of Sisi both internally and externally, which he has boosted over the past six years, unlike the situation of the Mubarak regime in 2011.

One of the most important goals of the anti-Sisi party within the sovereign institutions is to restore the rules of governance to the pre-July 2013 state, where the military institution and the president used to be partners in government. The anti-Sisi party also demanded appointment of a vice-president from within the army to boost the military institution's position in government. Also, the anti-Sisi party wanted to diminish the roles of certain officials around Sisi, including Maj. General Abbas Kamel, Brigadier Mahmoud Al-Sisi, Col. Ahmed Shaaban, and director of the GIS chief's office, Maj. General Staff Mustafa Sherif, director of Sisi's office, and others.

## Indicators and Signs

The sidelining of Mahmoud al-Sisi in the current period, albeit temporarily, may have come within the framework of the new procedures that Sisi is currently working on. Sisi, who used to ignore the advice of sovereign institutions, has realized the danger threatening him and started to adopt a new policy and back down from his positions in several files. He is now developing a new map of his regime re-assigning some old guard officers whom he had previously dismissed in prominent positions in sovereign institutions. Sisi has realized the real danger facing his regime and began to listen to the voices of dissidents within these institutions, in attempt to redraw a new map for his regime so that it will allow him to last in power for many years to come. Therefore, Sisi has recently taken several steps that may prove this hypothesis, including:

1- During November 2019, Major General [Nasser Fahmy](#), the deputy GIS director, took over the files that had been managed by Mahmoud El-Sisi, especially the file of the opposition moves in general

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and improvement of the image of the Egyptian regime overseas. Although Fahmi was deputy GIS director, i.e. the second man in the general intelligence service, however, he did not exercise his full powers on the ground, as most of his powers were in the hands Mahmoud al-Sisi. Anyway, Fahmy's role is expected to become more prominent and active in the coming period. It is noteworthy that Fahmi is considered one of the intelligence officers who were close to former GIS director Maj. General Omar Suleiman, during the Mubarak era.

2- According to many reports, Col. Ahmed Shaaban, director of GIS chief's office, has recently been dismissed from his powerful position. Shaaban had been assigned by Major General Abbas, the current GIS chief, to manage the media file with the assistance of Mahmoud Al-Sisi. Shaaban was unfavored within various circles in the sovereign institutions because of his significant control over the media scene. However, Ahmed Shaaban has recently been sent to join the Egyptian diplomatic mission in Greece, like Mahmoud al-Sisi who was sent to Russia, according to reliable sources inside the GIS.

2- Sisi has recently appointed Maj. General [Mustafa Shawkat](#), former commander of the thunderbolt forces, who enjoys wide-range acceptance within the Egyptian army, as commander of the Republican Guard instead of Major General Staff Ahmed Ali, who was appointed as head of the Presidential Court instead of Major General Mustafa Sherif, who had been unfavored within the army ranks because of his proximity to Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

3- One of the demands of the party opposing Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in sovereign institutions was to appoint a vice-president from within the military institution to restore the rules of government again and enable the military institution to be a real partner in government along with the president. In this regard, there are reports from within the military institution about likely appointment of Lt. General Ahmed Khaled, commander of the Egyptian navy, as vice-president. According to some reports, the position of Lt. General Ahmed Khaled on the 20 September 2019 events was ambiguous, given that he did not attend the meeting that was held prior to Sisi's travel to the United States on 19 September 2019, according to a picture during the funeral of Chief of Staff Ibrahim El-Orabi on 19 September, as leaders who attended the meeting went directly to attend the funeral immediately after the end of the meeting.

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The meeting was reportedly attended by Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, former Minister of Defense Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, and leaders of the main branches of the armed forces, to discuss developments in Egypt only one day before the 20 Sept. protests, in the presence of former Defense Minister Lt. General Sedki Sobhi and former Chief of Staff Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazy, who has recently been assigned to take over some important files again.

This may also be an indicator of the new policy adopted by Sisi in relying on the [old guard](#) once again.

4- Sisi has recently returned Maj. General Mohamed Raafat el Dosh to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) again after assigning him to command the forces of the east of the canal area, succeeding Maj. Gen. [Yehya Taha El Hemeili](#). El Dosh had been the Third Field Army Commander before he was dismissed in 2017. Instead of taking command of the Unified Command and remaining as a military junta member, Sisi appointed him head of the Inspection Panel, a subsidiary body that does not enable its head to become a SCAF member.

Maj. General El Dosh had had strained relations with Sisi because of the wrong policy adopted by the Sisi regime in the fight against the armed insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula, and also because of his close relationship with Maj. General Osama Askar, who had also been excluded and harassed by Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi.

5- Since his dismissal from his post as commander of the Unified Command for the Area East of the Canal and Counterterrorism in December 2016, Lt. General Osama Askar has almost disappeared from the scene; and, as some believe, the dismissal of Osama Askar along with 11 other military commanders in December 2016 was due to disagreement with Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's policies. However, Osama Askar has recently become assistant to the Minister of Defense for Projects and Development. His pictures started once again to appear in government-owned newspapers while making official [inspection tours](#), most recently on Monday, 25 November 2019.

## Conclusion

Sisi after 20 September 2019, is completely different from Sisi before that date. General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has realized the danger that is threatening him and is currently redrawing a new map for his regime. He started to listen to voices of dissidents within his sovereign institutions, whom he currently considers a real threat to him and to his regime. Therefore, Egypt's General Sisi is now trying to redraw a new map for his regime so that he can remain in power for many years to come.