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Mahmoud Gamal



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TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: info@eis-eg.org

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During January 2020, the Egyptian military institution witnessed several significant developments, most notably:

- On 22 Jan., an opposition TV channel aired a leaked recording belonging to a member of the military junta that took over in the wake of the January revolution that led to toppling the regime of former President Hosni Mubarak in 2011.
- On 15 Jan., Abdel Fattah al-Sisi inaugurated the Bernice military base in Egypt's strategic southern direction, in a ceremony attended by Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

1) The Leak of Major General Hassan al-Ruwaini

Mekameleen, an Egyptian opposition TV Channel based in Istanbul on 22 January 2020 released a [leaked](#) recording belonging to Major General Hassan al-Ruwaini, the commander of the central military zone during the January 2011 revolution. Most of Al-Ruwaini's leaked comments while talking to some army officers and soldiers were aimed at sending a message to the effect that 'revolution' means devastation and that the January revolution aimed to destroy the Egyptian army. Al-Ruwaini was also keen on distorting the entire political situation in attempt to persuade army officers that the military is the best in managing the State.

The members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) moved, from the early moments of the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution on January 25, 2011, according to a well-thought-out plan in order to eventually end up with repositioning the military and taking control of the situation in Egypt again. Although the military institution acted positively at the beginning of the revolution and practiced pressure on Hosni Mubarak to abandon government due to the interests the army leaders had sought before the revolution, however, those steps were carefully calculated.

The reasons that led the military leaders to positively deal with the January revolution during its early days include:

- 1- The protests were not directed against the army, as it had not been a tool of the regime for suppressing the people or the opposition, even though it was, in fact, the protector of the regime.
- 2- The fact that the army was against Mubarak's plan for succession of power (to his elder son Gamal), because it violates the principle of the 'ruler with a military background', in addition to threatening the army's privileges, where the army leaders expected that the protests will only stop Mubarak's succession plan.
- 3- The popular nature of the revolution since the Friday of Anger, January 28, 2011, and its peacefulness was an indication that it was not attributed to a specific faction and that various Egyptian parties and groups across the political spectrum participated in the mobilization.
- 4- The Egyptian army was keen on preserving its historical national image in front of the Egyptian people.

All 24 members of SCAF during the January 2011 revolution supported the departure of Mubarak in order to get rid of the succession plan that he was preparing in favor of his elder son Gamal. However, there were two different views within the junta towards the January revolution:

While the first point of view was to use these popular protests as a pretext to get rid of Mubarak, the second view was that Mubarak's exit at that time would encourage people to challenge the military rule system and probably move against it in the future, posing a real threat to the military rule in general and the army's privileges in the short and long term in particular; therefore they suggested to use force in confrontation of these protests, and Major General Hassan al-Ruwaini was among those leaders who adopted that view.

Although the educational seminars for officers and soldiers are held on a regular basis, however in certain situations, the army leaders intensify these seminars in order to send certain messages to officers and mobilize them with or against certain issues. Among the most important messages circulated at that time in educational seminars were expressed through the comment of Hassan Al-Ruwaini in the released leak, i.e. that the revolution means devastation, and that the revolution was aimed at destroying the Egyptian army, the same view expressed by Sisi in the aftermath of his 2013 military coup, and also the content of the educational seminars currently held, specifically after the

protests of September 20, 2019, but the fact is that all these messages are completely groundless. During the January revolution, the revolutionaries never chanted against the army, and their objectives have never been to destroy the army; therefore, the claims of Hassan al-Ruwaini are completely untrue. Everyone knows that the demonstrators during the January revolution welcomed the army forces which were deployed in Egyptian squares and streets and chanted in support of them.

It is also worth noting that the demonstrators who participated in the protests of September 20, 2019, did not chant against the Egyptian army, but chanted only against Sisi and his management of the country's affairs which they saw was behind the deterioration of conditions in Egypt in general. Sisi is the one who has abused both civilians and military and changed the army's mental image in the minds of Egyptians. The army has been appreciated and respected by the Egyptian people throughout history and was not a tool for suppressing them; but of course, this situation has changed since the July 3, 2013 coup due to the policies of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

2) Bernice Military Base

On 15 January 2020, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi inaugurated Bernice military base, the largest in the region of the red sea, according to the Egyptian official media, after developing it. The inauguration ceremony was attended by several Arab and foreign officials and ministers, including the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces, Mohammed bin Zayed Sultan Al-Nahyan.

Within the Egyptian state, there are approximately 50 military bases, distributed in all strategic southern, northern, western and eastern directions:

The Berenice military base has been existing in Egypt's southern strategic direction for years, but has recently been developed, specifically since the mid- 2018, as it is the case with the Mohammed Naguib military base that Sisi inaugurated in the west of the country in 2017, after it had been only a military school in the city of Hammam but was later developed and its name was changed into the 'Mohammed Naguib Military Base'.

The Abdel Fattah al-Sisi regime focuses on developing military bases located in the western and southern strategic directions, while ignoring establishment or development of any military bases in

the eastern strategic direction that had represented, according to the Egyptian combat doctrine over the past decades, a major threat to the nation's security, given that the enemy (Israel) was coming from the east, and therefore was massing military bases in that direction. The locations of those military bases that the Sisi regime is developing in the south and west reveal transformation of the Egyptian military doctrine over the past years that no longer consider "Israel" as Egypt's enemy. Since 2013, the Sisi regime's enemy has become the so-called 'political Islam'; therefore, Sisi has been developing the military bases in the west towards Libya, which he views as a source of threat to the "Egyptian National Security" as well as to his regime, in light of the current chaos in Libya, and for reportedly being a refuge for some armed groups that have carried out armed activities inside the Egyptian state since the events of July 3, 2013. In the south, towards Sudan, Sisi was also keen on developing the Egyptian military bases to face the Al-Bashir regime in Sudan before its downfall, as he had viewed the al-Bashir regime as an incubator of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Although the US does not have military bases in Egypt, it currently uses the Qena air base for providing logistical support for its air force. But perhaps the development of the Bernice base in this way at a time when the region is experiencing turmoil in several areas, could be useful for the American forces in securing the US interests in the region in the coming period.

Also, one of the most important reasons behind developing the Bernice base that overlooks the Red Sea is to support the United States and the Saudi-Emirati axis in the face of Iran in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa in general, and also to secure the Zionist entity that has distinguished relations with the Sisi regime, through blocking any Iranian support to the resistance movements in the region, given that the Red Sea is an important corridor used by Iran to support its regional allies, including the resistance movements against the Israeli occupation.