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# Egypt's Military and Jan. Revolution Policies and Transformations

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## Egypt's Military and Jan. Revolution – Policies and Transformations

### Mahmoud Gamal

#### Introduction

The Egyptian military has dealt with the January 25 revolution (2011) from the early moments of its outbreak, according to a well-thought-out plan in order to achieve repositioning and ultimately re-establish its control over power again.

Although the army dealt with the Egyptian revolution positively at its early stage and pressured former President Hosni Mubarak to force him to step down, this act came within the framework of the military's pursuit to prevent Mubarak from transferring power to his elder son, Gamal Mubarak.

Since the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) headed by Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi took over on February 11, 2011, the army sought to foment discord and provoke division between various revolutionary forces and worked to break them down. This was evident in the way SCAF conducted the referendum on the constitutional amendments in March 2011, the parliamentary elections in late 2011, and then in the presidential election in May-June 2012.

The army maintained implementation of that plan even after President Mohamed Morsi assumed power in the country, as the first elected civilian president in Egypt's modern history, in June 2012. The Supreme Council for the Armed Forces was keen on placing obstacles in the way of the elected president and fabricated various crises to create a state of public boredom against his government and enable the army to intervene for the removal of the elected president and regain power again. This policy has always been used by the army to exploit the people's taking to the streets as a cover to move forces and achieve their goals; as it happened in the 1952 coup, the soft coup against Mubarak in 2011, and the bloody coup in July 3, 2013.

However, the public boredom and the people's mobilization in streets and squares was real in 2011, but it was completely fake in the July 2013 coup; as the army worked to create a popular backing that would justify its intervention to overthrow the elected government, where the military intelligence undertook formation of "Tamarod" (rebellion) movement, which was also funded by the UAE, to lead the situation as a popular cover and enable the army to achieve its goals and seize power again.

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This paper seeks to provide an explanation of some of the most important events at this important stage in the history of the Egyptian state, specifically the period following the January revolution, through the July 2013 coup, up to May 2014, when Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi assumed power as “head of State”, and the resulting consensus and differences inside the military and sovereign bodies.

The paper also tries to explore the paths adopted by the commanders of the military institution for eventually eliminating the first democratic experience in Egypt in the modern era.

The paper has relied on interviews with some former military personnel, both directly and indirectly, for obtaining most of the information that will be addressed in the following lines:

### First: The Army and January Revolution

There are some important points that in my view had a clear impact on determining the army's attitude towards the Egyptian January revolution, most notably:

- 1- The army realized that the protests were not directed against the military in the first place, especially as it had not been one of the Mubarak regime's tools for suppressing the people or the opposition, despite being the protector of the regime.
- 2- The army did not support the transfer of power to Gamal Mubarak that was orchestrated by Mubarak because such step would remove the military from power and threaten the army's privileges in the country, against the principle of “the ruler with a military background”, and its assessment that the protests would stop the transfer of power to Gamal Mubarak only, and that it is able to regain control and power again.
- 3- The revolution's popular aspect that was prominent since the Friday of Anger on January 28, 2011, in addition to its peacefulness<sup>1</sup>.

Those reasons, as well as the presence of clear signals from the United States that it is not against change in Egypt, were the main motives behind the army's support for the January revolution at its

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<sup>1</sup> Review of the book of “Civil-Military Relations and Democratization in Egypt after January 25 Revolution”, Noon Post, published on July 03, 2016; visited on September 10, 2018, [Link](#)

early stages. The military junta which was composed of 24 members during the January 2011 revolution, were all with the departure of Mubarak in order to get rid of the transfer of power to his son, Gamal Mubarak.

However, there were two views within the junta:

1- Some commanders wanted to use the protests as a means for getting rid of Mubarak and the file of the transfer of power to his son altogether.

2- Other commanders believed that Mubarak's departure at that time would encourage people to resist the military regime in the future, fearing that taking to the street would become a habit for the Egyptian people, which poses a real threat to the military rule in the short and long term. Accordingly, they saw that the protests at the time of the January 2011 revolution should be suppressed by force. It is noteworthy that Maj. Gen. Hassan al-Ruwaini, the commander of the Central Military Zone at the time, was among the SCAF members that adopted this view<sup>2</sup>.

After Mubarak stepped down and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was authorized to manage the country's affairs on February 11, 2011, SCAF members went ahead with carrying out their robust plan to regain power again through conducting a "soft coup" against the January revolution through the following:

1- Implementation of the strategy of "fomenting discord" between comrades of the Tahrir square, including Islamists, liberals and all other civilian forces. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) worked to break up these forces in implementation of the principle of "divide and rule". That strategy primarily relied on the army's rapprochement with the Islamic forces, notably the Muslim Brotherhood, at the beginning of events, as happened in the March 2011 referendum on the constitutional amendments, where the military institution portrayed the matter as understandings and consensuses between the army and Islamists in general on approving the constitutional amendments that were rejected by the majority of the civil and revolutionary forces, to force a rift between the Islamists and other civil forces. After creating that crack, the military institution started gradually to diverge from

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<sup>2</sup> Military Observatory - January 31, 2020, Mahmoud Jamal, Al Marsad, [Link](#)

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the Islamists and converge with the other civil forces to stand together against the Islamic forces that have become alone. The well-meditated plan of the military institution in dealing with the political file aimed first at eliminating the largest political faction that had participated in the January revolution, and then getting rid of the remaining revolutionary forces one after the other, which actually happened.

2- Imposition of supra-constitutional declarations and documents that give the military limitless authority and privileges that would enable it to manage the transitional stage unilaterally. SCAF also issued a supplementary constitutional declaration in June 2012 that was considered a coup against the revolution, after the Ali a-Silmi document that was issued in the second half of 2011 – which was drafted “in coordination with the army” and was aimed at “constitutionalizing” the military control of power in the country.

3- Disruption of the elected institutions after the revolution, as SCAF dissolved the democratically elected People's Assembly (parliament), to ensure maintaining the military institution's control over the legislative power, in attempt to prolong the transitional phase and keep the executive and legislative powers in the hands of the military.

4- Attempting to resolve the presidential elections in favor of a candidate supported by the military, provided that such candidate would have a military background. According to military sources, the military provided all kinds of support to Lt. General Ahmed Shafiq to win the presidential elections in May 2012. However, the presidential election result was in favor of Dr. Mohamed Morsi, due to the popularity of the Brotherhood in the Egyptian street at the time and because of Ahmed Shafiq's association with the Hosni Mubarak regime. Some believe that the military institution saw at that time, and perhaps with external pressure, that rigging the presidential election would be a strategic mistake, and would enter the State into a state of chaos, that would be more damaging than beneficial to the military. They also believed that the region was still going through a revolutionary situation, and therefore they decided to postpone the confrontation with the Brotherhood for some time, being sure they will end Morsi's rule as soon as possible.

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## Second: The military and the rule of President Morsi

From the very first moment of President Mohamed Morsi's rule, the military institution did not accept that fact, and started to plan for reaching the decisive moment to end that experience, and give a lesson to those that may attempt to take the same path in the future.

In an interview with one of the former military personnel, he said that August 2012 was an important date to the military in their struggle with the democratic experience, particularly when President Morsi removed Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi from his post as Minister of Defense, and Lt. General Sami Anan from his position as Chief of Staff, as well as commanders of the main branches of the Egyptian army. Although there have been much debate about the reasons for these dismissals, specifically the dismissal of Field Marshal Tantawi and Lt. General Anan, however, the correct narrative that prompted President Morsi to dismiss Field Marshal Tantawi has not been told so far, in my view.

According to what was mentioned by some former military personnel, the decision to dismiss Field Marshal Tantawi caused great boredom within the Egyptian army, at various levels, "commanders, officers" due to Tantawi's popularity in the military institution. It is to be mentioned that Tantawi, remained in his position as Minister of Defense from 1991 to 2012, the largest period that a defense minister in Egypt had spent before. Therefore, the army commanders considered that President Morsi had gone too far with regard to his decision to fire Tantawi. Also, the military leadership used Morsi's decision to promote the discourse that they had been repeating after the January revolution, including Field Marshal Tantawi himself and Maj. General Hassan al-Ruweini<sup>3</sup>, that the revolution aims to demolish and dismantle the army. After that decision, educational seminars for the army officers focused on promoting their allegation that President Morsi and the Brotherhood aimed to control or destroy the army, and that Morsi's decision to dismiss Tantawi and others came in that context, and that the army leaders would not allow this to happen.

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<sup>3</sup> Full leak of junta member Maj. General Hassan al-Ruweini, [Link](#)

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So, most of the army commanders supported the decision to end the rule of President Mohamed Morsi, and Morsi's "ill-advised" decision to appoint Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the director of military intelligence at the time, as Minister of Defense in August 2012, contributed a lot to further tightening the screws on him. According to some military experts, this decision was a precedent in modern Egyptian history to appoint the director of military intelligence as the Minister of Defense. Rather, the security and military advisors usually advise that former intelligence directors should not assume tasks such as minister of defense or chief of staff, due to the detailed information they have about the State, that enable them to move against the political leadership in time of difference if they were assigned to senior executive positions (such as minister of defense or chief of staff); but Morsi and his aides unfortunately did not have such perception. However, this was exactly what Sisi did against President Mohamed Morsi on July 3, 2013. Anyway, the rationale for choosing Sisi specifically to occupy this sensitive position has not been undisclosed yet.

Evidence and information available from our sources indicate that the army made their final decision to overthrow President Morsi and his government in early June 2013 and set a timetable for this, but according to a military source, the 24-member SCAF in June 2013, agreed that the alternative after the overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi would be a military man, and that Sisi was never proposed by the SCAF members to take power after the coup.

### Third: Post-3 July 2013

After achieving the main goal on July 3, 2013 and overthrowing the elected president, the seeds of differences between commanders of the Egyptian army emerged, and it appeared to SCAF members that the real, undeclared July 2013 plan was only known to Sisi, Tantawi and only a few SCAF members. The undeclared plan included promoting Sisi, and not anyone else, to become "president", which some SCAF members (present or summoned) did not welcome later, believing that they are entitled to this position, or that Sisi did not have anything to justify preferring him.

The prevailing view was that Sisi would remain in his position as defense minister and ensure that he would not be replaced, and therefore a law was passed at that time guaranteeing the defense minister to remain in office for two terms (8 years), but Sisi maintained his plan until he finally achieved his dream to become "president" as he told Yasser Rizk, a pro-Sisi journalist, in a leaked audio interview with him, "I dreamed that I was talking to President Anwar Sadat and he told me: I

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knew I would become president, so I told him: I also know that I will become president”, Sisi told Rizk. Some observers viewed Sisi’s interview with journalist Yasser Rizk at that time came in the context of preparing the public opinion in Egypt to accept the fact that he (Sisi) intends to run for presidential election and will certainly become the next president, although he had confirmed more than once that he never coveted power<sup>4</sup>.

The differences between the SCAF members at that time was not about the control of military rule, as most of them believed that they should work to restore the military control over power in Egypt, either directly or behind curtains, but the difference was over who was the ruler that would take over. Some believe that the dispute between the two parties, the pro-Sisi and the anti-Sisi parties, immediately started a short period after the coup on July 3, 2013, where Major General Ahmed Wasfi, commander of the Second Field Army at the time, said in an interview with Amr Adib, a pro-regime TV presenter, after July 3, 2013, “if Sisi was promoted or nominated for the presidency, so you can call what happened on July 3 as a military coup.” Some believe that this was a message to Sisi that they are determined to implement the declared agreed plan that he (Sisi) would not be the one to succeed President Morsi<sup>5</sup>; and they were keen to send this message through the media so that they would embarrass him before the Egyptian people if he wanted to maintain his plan for running for presidential elections. It is noteworthy that Lt. General Anan was one of the figures proposed by the anti-Sisi party to take over in 2014, which led Anan to announce candidacy for the 2014 presidential elections; but he retreated due to the pressures exerted on him by SCAF members.

In 2014, SCAF voted in favor of Sisi to run for the presidential elections, and not in favor of Anan, based on a major role played by Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and his popularity with both parties, where he was able to persuade most of the SCAF members at the time to vote for Sisi to become the institution’s candidate to the presidency in 2014.

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<sup>4</sup> Sisi dreams that he will become the next president, [Link](#)

<sup>5</sup> Maj. Gen. Ahmed Wasfi in a previous interview: If Sisi was promoted to a higher rank or ran for presidency, this would prove that it is a military coup, [Link](#)

#### Fourth: Sisi and conflict management within the military

From the first moment of his assuming power, Al-Sisi adopted an abuse and repression policy against his opponents, whether military or civilian, to completely dominate power and turn the governance system 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 dominant military dictator, exploiting international and regional support that he has enjoyed from the early moments of his rule.

Al-Sisi has made many enemies within the military institution over the past eight years. Al-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.

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.

The abuse also reached those who tried from outside the military institution to support some military candidates against al-Sisi in the presidential election, such as Dr. Hazem Hosni, councilor Hisham Genena, and political activist Hazem Abdel Azim, who were arrested by authorities for backing Lt. General Anan in his presidential election campaign. Likewise, those who tried to follow the coup model as a means of change within the military institution after 3 July 2013 were also harassed, where hundreds of officers were tried on charges of trying to change the regime by means of a military coup<sup>6</sup>.

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

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<sup>6</sup> Egypt: Trends of Change in the Military, EIS, Mahmoud Gamal, [Link](#)

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.

There have been several change attempts that some individuals (groups) from within Egyptian sovereign institutions have sought since the 3 July coup (2013) for several reasons, most notably the turbulent political situation in the Egyptian State; the wrong policies pursued by the regime, where the armed forces alone have borne responsibility; the way in which the regime addresses the military situation in the Sinai Peninsula and the successive losses and casualties suffered by the army in these confrontations; the waiver of the Egyptian islands of Tiran and Sanafir; and ceding Egypt's rights to Nile water and natural gas.

Monitoring the change attempts that some have sought from within Egyptian sovereign institutions since the 3 July coup (2013), we find out that were multiple, repeated, and having several forms; while some adopted constitutional and legal means, through running for elections, others sought change through adoption of a violent approach<sup>7</sup>.

The anti-Sisi party including those that he had abused within some sovereign bodies, specifically the military institution and the General Intelligence Service, have been monitoring the situation in general and trying to engage in or create a state of mobilization to effect change, or at least achieve parts of its goals, especially returning to participate in the government system again. These attempts included the following:

### 1) Sisi leaks

After Sisi's repositioning of the agents of the General Intelligence Service, some of those who had been abused from within the sovereign body adopted a strategy in resisting Sisi and his regime, a

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<sup>7</sup> Egypt: Trends of Change in the Military, EIS, Mahmoud Gamal, [Link](#)

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strategy that is commensurate with their strength and capabilities, i.e. “a strategy to expose corruption”, with the aim of inciting the people to revolt against the Sisi regime corruption. That strategy started in 2015, basically with leaks for prominent figures of the Sisi regime, thinking that they would lead to a state of public boredom if they were properly used. However, this approach only lasted until the first half of 2018, specifically before the dismissal of Major General Khaled Fawzi from his position as GIS director; where Sisi completely controlled the General Intelligence Service by appointing his office director Maj. Gen. Abbas Kamel as the new GIS director.

## 2) Waiver of Tiran and Sanafir

The agreement that Sisi signed with King Salman in April of 2016, according to which Egypt completely ceded the two islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Riyadh, aroused mobilization in the Egyptian street, being a unifying national issue around which all the national forces gathered. Some military leaders were not far from this important event, where Lt. General Sami Anan, Lt. General Ahmed Shafiq, and Lt. General Magdi Hatata announced at the time their rejection of Sisi’s waiver of the two islands, insisting that the two islands are Egyptian, and that “those who cede the land must prove his Egyptian identity”.<sup>8</sup>

## 3) The November 2016 ‘revolution of the poor’

The demonstrations of November 2016, known as “revolution of the poor” came after a SCAF meeting in October 2016 that witnessed some tensions due to the mismanagement of the country that could pose a threat to the military as a whole. During the meeting, some commanders demanded that the regime policies must be modified in some issues, and stated that if anger increased toward the military institution, the interest stipulates that Sisi and his administration must leave after one presidential term, which extremely angered Sisi. Some believe that the regime's fear of the 2016 ‘revolution of the poor’ and the military deployment carried out by the rapid deployment forces that are considered “Sisi’s protection forces” was not fear from demonstrations but rather from likeliness of being

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<sup>8</sup> Military and political figures criticize waiver of Tiran and Sanafir, Al-Jazeera Net, published June 15, 2017, visited March 17, 2020, [Link](#)

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exploited by some figures within the army. After Sisi succeeded in controlling the 'revolution of the poor', he fired 11 members from the Military Council<sup>9</sup>.

Al-Sisi does not deal with those who have different points of view from the military and others except with abuse, even if they had strong or family relations with him, as it was in the case of dismissal of Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazi, the former chief of staff of the Egyptian army, in October 2017 (Al-Sisi is father in law of Hegazi's daughter) due to differences in views between Sisi and Mahmoud Hegazi, specifically on the Sinai insurgency issue and the counterterrorism in Egypt in general.

Mahmoud Hegazi headed to the United States on Oct. 22 upon an invitation from the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to attend a conference on counter terrorism joined by chiefs of staff of 43 countries. The conference focused on coordinating regional and international efforts to eliminate terrorism. During the conference, Hegazi delivered a speech at the conference and held meetings with the US chief of staff and other chiefs of staff, where he demonstrated the weakness of the Egyptian army in combatting terrorism. Accordingly, it became very clear to Hegazi's audience that the Egyptian regime's approach to combatting terrorism, which only relies on military confrontation, has not achieved any success over the past years<sup>10</sup>, especially that the conference came immediately after the Al-Wahat incident. In addition, some sources have reported that Sisi was informed of the hospitality with which Hegazi was received in the United States, an indication that Hegazi might be the US likely alternative to Sisi – which prompted the latter to decide to dismiss Hegazi, even before he returned to the homeland.

#### 4) The 2018 presidential election

The anti-Sisi party was keen to participate in the 2018 presidential election, as a new attempt to get rid of Sisi, so Lt. General Sami Anan, who is believed to be the leader of the anti-Sisi party, coordinated with some of the military commanders within the army, including General Sami Diab, the former Republican Guard commander and others, to prepare a plan for nominating Anan for the election.

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<sup>9</sup> Names of the commanders who were dismissed after the 'Revolution of the Poor', [Link](#)

<sup>10</sup>Dismissal of Hegazi: Dimensions and Interpretations, EIS, Mahmoud Gamal, [Link](#)

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Anan tried to obtain SCAF approval this time, but the junta did not resolve the matter quickly as had happened before when they rejected Anan's candidacy in 2014; and accordingly the anti-Sisi party understood that ignorance does not mean rejection, so Anan decided to declare his intention to run for the presidential election. However, Al-Sisi urgently faced the move and abused Anan under the pretext of violating the military rules, being a "summoned" SCAF member which requires obtaining the approval of the military council before announcing his candidacy. The abuse of Anan was supported by Field Marshal Tantawi and SCAF members in January 2018, who were described as "Sisi's men", after he had got rid of almost all the 2013 SCAF members (except for two members, Lt. Mohamed Farid Hegazi, the current chief of staff of the armed forces, and Maj General Mamdouh Shahin, the assistant Minister of Defense for constitutional and legal affairs). Some military experts in one of the interviews stated that "Tantawi and Anan have been in continued conflict since 2006, when Anan was appointed as chief of staff; and therefore, Tantawi does not accept the idea that Anan can be the military man that can become President."

This is added to what Lt. General Shafiq attempt to run for the 2018 presidential election against Al-Sisi, but he was also met with threats and extortion, which led him to quickly retreat for fear of abuse.

## 5) The September 2019 Mobilization

Before we answer the important question: Did Mohamed Ali who led the September 20 Mobilization act on his own or was he guided and moved by the anti-Sisi party?, we have to state that the Mohamed Ali case confused the Sisi regime, and it was logical for the anti-Sisi party to contact with him in order to achieve some goals. As I stated earlier, the anti-Sisi party inside the army and the General Intelligence Service knows very well that the current situation of Sisi is not similar to that of Mubarak in 2011, in terms of of potentials and capabilities<sup>11</sup>.

The anti-Sisi party knew the strengths of the Sisi regime, so they did not work from the beginning to engage in a "zero-sum battle" against it, but they laid out a strategy of exerting pressure to achieve some of their goals, foremost among which the active participation in governance, restoration of the

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<sup>11</sup> Mohamed Ali Recordings: Reading between Lines, Egyptian Institute for Studies, [Link](#)

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status of the army as during the era of Hosni Mubarak, and reducing the roles of some figures that Sisi mainly relies on, including Maj. General Abbas Kamel, and Brigadier Mahmoud Sisi, Sisi's son, and Maj. General Mostafa al-Sherif

The researcher has reached important information that Mohamed Ali was supported by the anti-Sisi party to leave the country for Spain a year and a half ago, in order to implement the plan of September 20, 2019, which may explain Mohamed Ali's assurances to all civil parties that contacted him, that Sisi's end will be in January 2020. However, Sisi understood the danger facing him after September 20, 2019, and met with representatives of this party after his return from the United States late September 2019, with mediation from Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and at the behest of Mohamed bin Zayed of the UAE, which pushed those parties to stop taking further agreed against Sisi, reneging on their promises to Mohamed Ali.

After the September 20 mobilization, Sisi realized that he was facing a danger from within the military institution, so he worked to contain these parties, and took several measures to build consensus with them, including:

Lt. General Osama Askar was appointed as the head of the Military Operations Authority instead of Major General Mohamed al-Masry, Sisi's close friend. Askar was removed from his post as commander of the Unified Command in North Sinai in December 2016 after the events of the "revolution of the poor" in November 2016.

1- The return of Lt. General Osama Askar to the membership of the Military Council as head of the Military Operations Authority replacing Maj. General Mohamed al-Masry, Sisi's close friend. Askar is known for his opposition to Sisi's policy and according to some reports, Lt. General Osama Askar was among supporters of Lt. General Sami Anan presidential election bid in the first quarter of 2018. Askar was removed from his post as commander of the Unified Command in North Sinai in December 2016 after the events of the "revolution of the poor" in November 2016.

2- It is also noteworthy when reading the reshuffle of top army officers in December 2019, that some military figures, known to be close to Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, were excluded from their senior positions within the army, such as Major General Staff Mohamed Abdallah, who was dismissed from the position as Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense and Secretary of the Military Council that was replaced

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with Major General Staff Imad Al-Ghazali, who was in charge of the Central Military Zone during the demonstrations of September 20, 2019, and rejected the army's deployment in streets and squares during these protests, believing that the army should not go to the streets and face demonstrators again, which may explain the space that was left to some masses to demonstrate that day.

3- The dismissal of one of the military commanders who was described as closely related to Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Maj. General Staff Ayman Abdel Hamid Amer, who was dismissed from the position as Director of the Infantry Department and Major General Staff Khaled Bayoumi was appointed in his place. This was interpreted by some observers as part of the decisions that Al-Sisi worked on in the December 2019 top officers reshuffle, to please some parties inside the military.

4- The most important thing that the December 2019 top officers reshuffle witnessed is the appointment of a new General in an important and sensitive position within the Military Council, a position that Sisi was keen to assign to a person extremely close to him, because he is considered the actual Minister of Economy of the military institution, but rather the Minister of Economy of the Egyptian State as a whole. Maj. General Mohamed Amin Nasr, known within the army as very close to Sisi, was Chairman of the Financial Affairs Authority of the armed forces for nearly five years in addition to appointment as advisor to Sisi for financial affairs in June 2019, however in the December 2019 top officers reshuffle Sisi decided to assign a new brigade to that position, namely Maj. General Ahmed Bahgat El-Demerdash, known within the military as an independent character, distancing himself from entering into any conflicts.

5- Sisi's release of Lt. General Sami Anan, former chief of staff of the Egyptian army, two years after his arrest and detention in poor conditions, can be considered one of the steps of the understandings between Sisi and the parties opposing him inside the military institution in particular, as the file of Sami Anan's detention was among the most important issues that aroused the anger of the anti-Abdel Fattah al-Sisi party, taking into account that Lt. Sami Anan was one of the most important symbols of the anti-Sisi party within the military, if not the top symbol.

6- Sisi 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

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of Major General Mustafa Sherif, who had been unfavored within the army ranks because of his proximity to Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

It is customary within the Egyptian army that the commander of the Republican Guard is appointed as chief of the presidential staff. Therefore, appointment of Maj. General Ahmed Ali as head of the presidential staff is not an innovation. For example, Zakaria Azmi had been one of the commanders of the Republican Guard before he was appointed as head of the presidential staff under former President Hosni Mubarak.

7- During November 2019, Major General Nasser Fahmy, the deputy GIS director, took over the files that had been handled by Mahmoud Al-Sisi who was sidelined and reassigned to a long-term position at Egypt's diplomatic delegation in Moscow, Russia, especially the file of the opposition moves in general 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, where he served as head of the GIS administrative affairs and member of the National Council for Combating Terrorism.

On the other hand, some suggest that Mahmoud Al-Sisi was sent to the Russian Federation to receive professional training so that he can be well-prepared to handle important files in the general intelligence service because he failed to address the file of the media and opposition moves that he had been assigned before, in addition to his increased influence that had negatively affected the image of his father, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The proposal of sidelining Mahmoud Al-Sisi was reportedly an advice from UAE's Mohamed bin Zayed and the former Egyptian Minister of Defense, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi. Other observers believe that sending Mahmoud al-Sisi to Russia was because Sisi considers relations with the Russian Federation one of the most important current files to secure Moscow's support to his regime in the face of any threats in the event of a decline in relations with the United States, specifically after the departure of the Trump administration, in addition to coordination with Russia regarding the Libyan file and the support provided to retired

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general Khalifa Haftar, where Mahmoud al-Sisi is supposed to take over that important file at this specific timing.

8- The dismissal of Col. Ahmed Shaaban from his powerful position as director of GIS chief's office. 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. Some interpret the abuse that Yasser Selim, the businessman and former intelligence officer, has recently been exposed to came as a result of Sisi's new policy within sovereign institutions. Yasser Selim has recently been arrested on charges of issuing checks without bank credit, based on judicial notices filed against him<sup>12</sup>.

9- 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, which enables him to be member of SCAF. 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-Sis<sup>13</sup>.

10- Sisi's 2019 cabinet reshuffle witnessed the dismissal of Lt. General Younus al-Masry, the former commander of the Air Force from his post as Minister of Civil Aviation and appointment of pilot Mohamed Manar Enabah in his place. Al-Masry had been appointed commander of the Air Force in

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<sup>12</sup> Arrest of Yasser Selim, deputy head of the "Egyptian Media", [Link](#)

<sup>13</sup> The Armed Forces opens an integrated civilizational development complex in Central Sinai, Al-Masry Al-Youm, published on 3 November 2019, visited on 1 December 2019, [Link](#)

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August 2012 by a decision from the late President Mohamed Morsi, and remained in that position until mid-2018, when Sisi appointed him as Minister of Civil Aviation to appease him. Some observers say this step is consistent with Sisi's current policy after the recent understandings reached with the parties opposing him within the army and sovereign institutions, given that Al-Masry is known for being extremely close to Sisi and a strong supporter of his policies which aroused many hostilities among the army ranks over the past. Dismissal of al-Masry at that time was seen as a step to calm down the situation with the commanders opposing him in the army.

## 6) Post-December 2019

The interviews that we conducted with some influential military figures, in addition to our information from various other sources, indicate that the measures taken by Sisi in December 2019 only mean that he undertook a "strategic deception" plan that resulted in carrying out only a formal change; and the anti-Sisi party may have realized that they were only contained after September 20, 2019, and that they did not get real benefits until now, as what was agreed upon at the time has not been fulfilled. It has become clear the anti-Sisi party that they will not get anything in the future, except for the formal participation that Sisi worked on in December 2019.

There were promises that Sisi did not fulfill, including that Lt. General Sami Anan would be free in the full sense of the word, but Anan has been under house arrest since his release from prison, and his request to attend the funeral of former President Hosni Mubarak was rejected. In addition, there were promises to appoint a vice-president to Sisi provided that he must be a consensus military figure, but this has not taken place until now, and the Sisi regime still practices the same policies as before, whether with regard to the management of the files of the Sinai turmoil, the natural gas, the Tiran and Sanafir, and the Renaissance Dam; and therefore there is no change in the philosophy of its rule.

Al-Sisi is proceeding with the targets that he has been working on since July 2013, which is tightening his control over all institutions, and that the anti-Sisi party has not gain any real or tangible benefits since September 20, 2019, according to the agreement that was reached between them, i.e. the actual participation of the military institution in governance as a real partner, which has not happened and is not likely to happen under Sisi.

The anti-Sisi party still has tools and potentials to use in the inevitable confrontations that may happen in the future, other than the cards it used during the mobilization moved by Mohamed Ali, that can be used in future rounds. In addition, that party has contact with the Mubarak State, which was replaced by the Sisi State and deprived of most of their privileges and powers; therefore, the Mubarak State figures are interested in reducing the severity of Sisi's control of the government, or even his complete departure once and for all, so that they may be able to restore their advantages and influence again.

However, the anti-Sisi side's external relations and networks, particularly with the United States, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Israel, are not as strong as those of the Sisi regime that is currently in power.

### 7) Paths of coming conflict:

The next confrontation will be completely different from the confrontations that had taken place between the two sides before. The coming confrontation from the researcher's point of view will be a "zero confrontation", and those parties that wish to change within the army and the sovereign bodies will mainly engage in any upcoming mobilization, whatever its form, and will not stop in the middle of the road as it did in January 2020, because it will not enter into a state of negotiation with Sisi again.

The stage that we had previously described as the stage of feeling the pulse and negotiating between two important parties within the armed forces has already ended from our point of view, and we have now entered the stage of decisiveness and imposition of control, according to which it will become clear which of the two camps is stronger, and which one has more influence and more pressure cards to use.

The Sisi regime, over the past years, has proven unable to cope with the crises it faced, most prominently the economic crisis facing Egypt, which has been worsening over time.

During the next stage, it is likely that the Sisi regime will face two crises, which may greatly increase public anger against it, namely:

1- The deteriorating Egyptian economic situation that is likely to get worse during the coming periods, especially after the impact of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic both in Egypt and worldwide.

The worsening economic situation will increase the state of public boredom against Sisi and his regime, which is likely to be exploited by the anti-Sisi party inside sovereign bodies<sup>14</sup>.

2- There is likeliness of outbreak of a state of great public anger provoked by the crisis of the Ethiopian "Renaissance Dam" and the Sisi regime's inability to properly administer it to protect Egypt's water rights and limit its "dangerous" effects on Egyptians. During the negotiations between the Egyptian government and the Ethiopian side, the Egyptian government completely "failed" to impose its conditions or even compel the Ethiopian side to take its remarks into account regarding construction and operation, particularly the filling of the dam.

Moreover, based on the poor performance of the Egyptian government, Ethiopia has started to launch political and military warnings and threats against the Egyptian government. Moreover, the Ethiopian side was sometimes absent from negotiation meetings attended by the Egyptian side, as happened during US-mediated negotiation meetings in Washington late February 2020<sup>15</sup>.

## Conclusion

Based on the above, the study reached the following findings:

1- The potentials and capabilities of the anti-Sisi party do not qualify them to carry out a military coup against Sisi at the present time, and they also do not target changing Sisi through a rough military coup, believing that the optimal departure of Sisi would be similar to Mubarak's departure in February 2011. But the potentials of this party allow them only to engage with an upcoming state of change, not initiating it; and their role will be based on leaking documents that embarrass the regime in order to pressure the ruling institution from inside – in the event of ignition of well-organized and guided popular mobilization in streets and squares.

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<sup>14</sup> Repercussions of the Spread of COVID-19 on Egyptian Economy, EIS, Dr. Ahmed Zikrallah, [Link](#)

<sup>15</sup> After Ethiopia's absence .. Egypt: We will defend our interests on GERD, Al-Arabiya Net, published on 29 February 2020, visited on 21 March 2020, [Link](#)

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2- The Sisi State did not inherit Mubarak's State entirely; and Mubarak's State still has some influence on some files. Therefore, the anti-Sisi party within the sovereign bodies coordinate with figures from the Mubarak State that are willing to take revenge.

Mubarak's death did not compel his men inside institutions to surrender, but rather they are likely to seek another prominent figure to be at the forefront. One of the most important strengths of the Mubarak State is their widespread presence in various Egyptian governorates, as "members of Mubarak's former National Democratic Party (NDP) and heads of families" that Sisi has not succeeded to include so far. They have the ability to mobilize masses when needed and provide support for parliament or presidential candidates, as they did when Lt. Gen. Sami Anan announced his intention to run for presidential elections in 2018.

3- Sisi's departure was not the primary goal of his opposing insiders during the protests of September 20, 2019. However, things have changed and Sisi's departure is likely be on top of their goals in the upcoming confrontations, given that the anti-Sisi party inside sovereign institutions have realized that the "battle" against Sisi has become a "zero-sum battle" and that surrender means more abuse and harassment against them.

4- The external relations of the anti-Sisi party are not as strong as the foreign relations of the pro-Sisi party; and the present situation of the Sisi regime is not similar to that of the Mubarak regime in 2011, given that the external parties, particularly the United States, are still backing the Sisi regime that is performing important functional roles in the region, most notably the "deal of the century", the strategic cooperation with Israel, countering political Islam, the Libyan file, and the illegal immigration to Europe.

But it is important to emphasize that those external parties have strategic foreign relations with the military institution, not with Sisi as an individual, and are betting on the institution, not on the individual; and therefore the United States could deal with another person other than Sisi if needed, especially when the situation worsens.

5- The anti-Sisi party is seeking possession of more tools and potentials in preparation for the coming confrontation, in the context of achieving a soft and calm change from within the army, backed by an angry popular mobilization, as they strongly believe that Egypt must be run by a military ruler.