

Civil-military relations and their impact on the path of democratic transition in Egypt

Aoumeur Allout¹, Dr. Nabila ben Yahia²

¹Doctoral Student, University of Algiers 3 (Algeria).

²Assistant Professor, University of Algiers 03 (Algeria).

The Author's E-mail: allout.aoumeur23@gmail.com¹, nabilabenyahia007@gmail.com²

Received: 05/2024

Published: 12/2024

Abstract:

The Egyptian experience of democratic transition, especially after the events of 2011, has become a focal point for researchers and politicians in the Arab world and globally. Compared to previous democratic transitions, the Egyptian experience of democratic transition has gained significant importance among theorists and political researchers in Arab countries, particularly after the events of 2011. Compared to other democratic transition experiences, the Egyptian experience has emerged with unique characteristics, making it a model that is intensively studied and analyzed, thus contributing to shaping theoretical discussions about the future of democracy in the region, coinciding with a wave of political transitions in some Arab countries.

The Egyptian military institution enjoys a prominent centrality in the Egyptian political system, and in political life in general. This is due to its long history and pivotal role in shaping the political system since the 1952 Revolution. Since then, the military institution has controlled the reins of power in the country, as military leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak held the presidency, thus establishing a close connection between the military and political power.

The coalition of civilian forces, including political parties and youth movements representing the popular voice that demanded change, succeeded in shaking the foundations of the ruling regime. This prompted military intervention through the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which played a significant role in influencing the country's overall political landscape during and after the transitional period. Particularly, with the military's openness to the protest movement that led to the victory of the first civilian president in Egypt's history and the return of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, a sharp polarization and tensions between the military establishment and President Morsi ensued. Instead of political forces agreeing to end the military regime and initiating the institutionalization of civilian control, some of these forces

called on the military to intervene, take center stage, and resolve the country's political conflict. They carried out a coup against the first democratically elected civilian president, returning the country to a situation similar to that before the uprising (revolution).

Keywords: civil-military relations, democratic transition, Egypt, military, January 25th Revolution, role of the military in politics, civil society, elections, constitution.

Introduction:

The Egyptian experience of democratic transition has gained importance among theorists and political researchers in Arab countries, compared to the experiences of democratic transition witnessed by the world in the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century. This importance increased following the popular and political protests that Egypt witnessed starting in 2011, coinciding with a wave of political transformations in some Arab countries.

The coalition of civil forces from political parties and youth forces representing the popular voice demanding change succeeded in destabilizing the structure of the ruling regime, prompting the intervention of the army as the most cohesive institution capable of maintaining stability, especially with the army's openness to the protest movement that demanded the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak's regime, amid increasing pressures from the internal, regional, and international environment. This resulted in a set of repercussions that cast a shadow over the course of the democratic transition process and the general political scene of the country, the most prominent of which was the loss of the military institution of the presidency to civilians for the first time since the declaration of the republican system, and the Muslim Brotherhood (banned) reaching the helm of power in the country, bringing back the discussion about political Islam.

The political and youth forces entered a state of sharp polarization, and instead of the political forces agreeing to end the military regime and start institutionalizing civilian control, some of these forces worked to call the army to intervene by taking the lead and resolving the political conflict in the country. Here, we can pose the following problem: What was the position of the

Egyptian military institution in the January 2011 revolution, and to what extent did this position affect the course of the democratic transition process and the shaping of the Egyptian political scene after January 2011? From this, the following questions arise:

- What are the mechanisms and means that govern civil-military relations?
- Is the intervention of the Egyptian army a political matter incidental or an inevitable necessity?
- Why did the army return to power in Egypt in 2013?

To answer these questions, the following work plan was proposed to clarify the nature of civil-military relations and the reasons and motives for the army's political intervention as follows:

- 1- The most important theoretical frameworks addressing civil-military relations.
- 2- The impact of the army on the Egyptian political system.
- 3- What are the motives for the military's return to power in Egypt in 2013?

This division came to clarify the nature of civil-military relations, to identify the reasons for the army's political intervention, and to try to understand the real motives that make it intervene politically and prefer to remain in power. This research paper used the descriptive-analytical method as an appropriate approach to describe and analyze the events that characterized the political transition in Egypt before and after January 2011, its circumstances, and its results, and the impact of the internal environment factors, especially the military institution, with its various stages. The problem was addressed through three axes:

The first axis: The most important theoretical frameworks that addressed civil-military relations and democratic transition.

Politicians and researchers interested in the role of the army in politics almost unanimously agree that civil-military relations are not a modern political phenomenon. They are linked to the existence of a regular army to defend the state, managed by a military leadership, and it is a phenomenon associated with the beginnings of human society. Despite this, most specialists

attribute the crystallization of these relations to the emergence of the modern nation-state, which tended to form an army based on the compulsory conscription of citizens. Major changes in international relations have contributed to the development of the subject of civil-military relations, and World War II and its aftermath represented a pivotal stage in the development of studies on this subject. The newly independent states and their governance experiences emerged as a problem in the traditional direction of the concept, leading to the emergence of more modern theoretical trends to explain these relations.

With the development of events witnessed by the theory of international relations and the emergence of the theory of securitization,¹ as well as the development of the movement of international relations during the last decade, theoretical trends in studying the concept are reviewed, based on the complexity of challenges and security threats at all local, regional, and global levels, which confirms the strong interconnection between all levels of analysis.

The first theoretical definition of civil-military relations was presented by Samuel Huntington, who defined it as: "A system of interactions between military leaders and political leaders in the government, involving a clear separation of roles, areas of work, authorities, and duties of both parties based on constitutional rules derived from the popular will."² However, this definition focused on leadership, meaning that the nature of civil or political-military relations varies with different leaderships, which contradicts the stability of the political system.

Therefore, these relations were redefined after considering the governing institutional and military characteristics to become civil-military relations as: "A system of interactions between

¹Zaalouk, A. A. (2022). Securitization theories in international relations: From the Copenhagen School towards a proposed communicative theory for studying securitization. *Journal of Politics and Economics*, 15(14), 566-593.

² - samuel p. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations*, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957, p.p.80-95

civil and political institutions and military institutions in the political system."¹ These interactions have several levels that can be imagined as a straight line connecting two ends, and between these two ends, there are varying levels of governance applications that may approach the democratic pattern or the praetorian pattern², reaching seven patterns according to eight criteria³.

1- Theoretical Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations

There are two primary theoretical perspectives on studying civil-military relations, based on a fundamental criterion: the extent of the non-military role played by the military institution. These perspectives are:

1.1- The Traditional Institutional Perspective: Adherents of this perspective focus on the legal constraints governing the military institution within a democratic political system. Given the civilian nature of such systems, there is a strong emphasis on civilian oversight of the military, political neutrality of the institution and its leaders, and the complete compliance of these leaders with decisions made by elected politicians. Samuel Huntington is considered a pioneer of this perspective, as he emphasized the concept of objective civilian control over military activities, thereby imparting a civilian character to the military and subjecting it to political control by elected institutions.⁴

The work of Clausewitz on war can be considered the foundation upon which the institutional perspective on theorizing civil-military relations rests. He asserted that war is nothing more than "the continuation of politics by other means, and that it is merely a political tool to achieve a goal set by the political leader". Therefore, it is imperative to strike a balance between the

¹ - Arjana Olldashi, Civil Military Relations in Emerging Democracies, South West Texas State University, Spring, 2002, p.p.11-15

² - Arjana Olldashi, Civil Military Relations in Emerging Democracies, South West Texas State University, Spring, 2002, p.p.11-15

³ The Praetorian system is a system in which the military is the sole source of political support and legitimacy. The historical basis for this phenomenon dates back to the political role of the Roman Imperial Guard, which was a small group tasked with protecting legitimacy in the Empire by safeguarding the Senate against any rebellion from outside Rome.

⁴ samuel P Huntington, Op,Cit

independence of soldiers in managing military operations according to the requirements of the battlefield and their subordination to the control of the political leader. As Clausewitz put it, "While the political leader makes the decision to wage and end war, the military determines how to implement those decisions on the battlefield without political interference."¹

Among the main criticisms of this approach are:

- It is almost exclusively focused on Western systems that adopt liberal democracy, which accept civilian leadership of the military institution. Therefore, this approach has failed to explain the non-military roles (economic, social, service) that the military institution plays in some countries that adopt Western democracy.
- The military institution in democratic countries possesses societal, moral, and perhaps political influence due to its responsibility for protecting and enhancing the national security of the state, and due to its characteristics and general role in the state. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the assumption of its complete non-intervention in non-military fields at times, as it will at least intervene to protect public security from any threats, whether military or non-military, that affect the national security of the state.
- Proponents of this approach contribute by assuming the stability of relations between the military institution, civil and political institutions within the political system. They ignore some influential variables that leave their impact on these relations, such as the personal characteristics of leaders, whether political or military, the level of economic development and its returns, and the level of political stability in society.²

1.2 – The Modern Approach: This approach is based on the principle of the "function" of the military institution, which primarily revolves around defending the national security of the

¹ Hugh Smith "On Clausewitz: A Study of Military and Political Ideas", New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p.p.99-101

² Henery Bienen, civil Military in the Third World, International Political Review, Vol.2, No.3, 1981

state. According to the United Nations Development Program's definition, security is a broad concept that is not limited to the military dimension. Therefore, supporters of this approach have acknowledged the criticisms directed at the traditional approach and presented their main argument, which recognizes the political role of the military institution in the political decision-making process, especially regarding internal and external national security. Given their direct connection to it and their responsibility to protect the state from threats, they rejected the idea that the military institution's role is limited to implementing political decisions, even in matters of national security or in formulating the state's defense policy, due to the difficulty of separating the political from the military in national security matters. In the case of international crises, it is not feasible to exclude the military institution from crisis decision-making. If we consider the military institution a stakeholder group, it is difficult to exclude them from decisions that may affect them.

Therefore, civil-military relations can be viewed as an equal partnership between peers, not a relationship of subordination and obedience from the military institution. This institution has several sources of power that make it comparable to civil institutions, such as the loyalty of conscripts to their leaders, military professionalism, and information that can be withheld from political leaders to push them to make decisions that align with the military institution's interests.

Several criticisms have been directed at this approach, the most important of which are:

- Ignoring the possibility of the political leadership having a military background and knowledge, which makes the role of military leaders relatively limited.
- There is no guarantee that political leaders and institutions will adhere to the visions presented by the military institution.
- The political role of the military institution in decision-making does not mean that it sets the goals, but its role remains in participating in decisions that political institutions want to make.

The functional approach to theorizing civil-military relations is closest to the current reality in international relations. However, when looking at different political systems worldwide, it becomes clear that civil-military relations show a non-military role for the military institution that differs in its scope and breadth. This confirms that there are relative factors influencing the limits of this role, which vary in nature from one state to another. Among the most important of these factors are the nature of the political system, the state's constitution and the laws stemming from it that organize state institutions and their relationships, the security challenges and threats faced by the state that affect its survival and stability, and finally, the prevailing societal culture that implicitly determines how society accepts the non-military role of the military institution.

2– Motivations for Democratic Transition and its forms:

Despite the clear variation in the internal environment and the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions, as well as the historical and civilizational context that characterizes countries and their political systems, there is a near consensus among politicians regarding the main motivations for democratic transition, which can be classified into:

2.1- Internal Motivations:

- The low level of political legitimacy derived from societal approval and the freedom of choice of the people as the source of authority and legislation in modern political systems. The legitimacy from which political systems draw their strength is contingent on fulfilling obligations to society. Therefore, a decline in the functional performance of the system leads to a decline in its legitimacy. Among the causes leading to a legitimacy crisis are:
 - A change in prevailing societal values that become less accepting of authoritarian rule, thus causing the political system to lose its legitimacy as new values emerge and spread within society.

- The political system's inability to incorporate new segments of society and provide them with opportunities for participation.
- The weak role and status of parliament within the political system, creating a gap between the system and society. so, the weakness of the legislative institution becomes a direct cause of the legitimacy crisis that the system may suffer from.¹
- **Economic and Material Motivations:** There is a relationship between the variables of economic growth and democratic transition. Productive economic growth facilitates political change. Economic growth meets societal needs, builds trust among citizens, and creates new values and orientations, leading them to reject all forms of authoritarianism.² It also helps provide non-governmental alternatives for wealth and power and expands the scope of the urban middle class, which plays a crucial role in political life. Transitioning towards a democratic political system is easier in societies that achieve a balance between social interests, i.e., achieve a minimum level of fair social wealth distribution, allowing for social cohesion and preventing contradictions that may lead to chaos, violence, and political instability.³

2.2- External Motivations:

The intertwining of political units, the scientific and technological revolution, and the development of means of communication and transportation have turned the world into a small village under globalization. This has created a complex network of interactions and relationships, increasing the process of influence and being influenced between these political units, especially by major countries, international financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations and associations for development and human rights, which impose certain pressures on political systems. These pressures take different forms:

¹ Iman Ahmed, Democracy and Democratic Transition, March 20, 2024. See: www.eipss-erg/2/0/528

² Abdel Hamid Al-Ansari, "Towards an Arab-Islamic Concept of Civil Society," *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi*, Issue 272, October 2001, p.97

³ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Translated by: Abdel Wahab Alloub, University of Oklahoma Press, p.121

- **Peaceful Pattern:** This occurs when transitioning from one political system to another without resorting to violence or violent revolution as a tool for change. For example, leaders of the totalitarian regime might for some reason initiate deep political and economic reforms, or the authorities may negotiate with the opposition to reach a political consensus between the two parties.¹
- **Violent Pattern:** In this case, the transition occurs by resorting to violence as the only available means to express demands and protect interests. Violence occurs due to the inability to change the existing situation through peaceful means. Proponents of this view argue that when change becomes urgent and cannot be achieved, its realization is dependent on force, i.e., a violent revolution.²
- **Partial Transformation:** This involves reforming and improving the general situation of society, whether politically, economically, or socially, through mechanisms of economic or constitutional reforms.³
- **Radical Comprehensive Revolutionary Transformation:** This starts with changing the dictatorial leadership after its failure to face various challenges and development requirements, then extends to include other aspects of the system—economic, social, legislative, judicial, educational, etc. It involves reviewing the system's form and establishing new political and cultural traditions.⁴

Axis Two: The Relationship Between the Egyptian Military Institution and the Political System

Historically, although the Egyptian army was an extension of the nucleus of the Ottoman army before the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1818-1848), British intervention afterward

¹ Mohamed Belkhira, *Political Changes in the Soviet Union and Their Impact on Arab Countries*, Algeria, 2004, p.12

² Same reference, p. 14

³ Thita Fouad Abdullah, *Mechanisms of Democratic Change in the Arab World*, Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1997, p.192

⁴ Same reference, p. 157

reshaped the foundations of the army ¹, and distanced it from politics until the end of the monarchy and British mediation following the July 1952 Revolution.

The relationship between the military institution and the political system in Egypt, which has increasingly strengthened its political roles, has witnessed three main stages and periods:

1. The Free Officers' Revolution and the Declaration of the Republic:

The goal of establishing the Free Officers Organization in 1939 was to resist British colonialism in Egypt. The British occupation ordered King Farouk to form a government composed of members of the “Wafd” Party, headed by the party's president, Mustafa al-Nahhas, during the period from 1950-1952, which the officers considered an insult to their military and political system. This led to divisions within the party. In the face of difficult circumstances and challenging political, economic, and social conditions experienced by Egyptian society at that time, the officers carried out a military movement on the night of July 23, 1952. They took control of the military headquarters, the radio station, and the most important main facilities. King Farouk was forced to abdicate and leave the country. On July 18, 1953, a decision was issued by the Revolutionary Command Council to abolish the monarchy and declare a republic. The Revolutionary Command Council was considered the main institution for making political decisions, according to the constitutional declaration issued in February 1953 during the transitional period. After the intensification of disputes among the members of the Revolutionary Command Council, Muhammad Naguib resigned and Gamal Abdel Nasser was appointed president of the council and prime minister, then president of the Egyptian Republic from 1956-1970.

2. The Military During Anwar Sadat's Period:

¹ Azmi Bishara, *The Military and Politics: Theoretical Issues and Arab Models*, 1st ed., Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2017, p.20

After the death of Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat assumed the presidency through a referendum, as he was the vice president and one of the free officers who carried out the July 1952 Revolution. During his rule, the percentage of military personnel in civilian administrations decreased, contrary to what it was during the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser, as Sadat tried to return the army to its natural place, the barracks, and that its main role is to defend Egypt's entity and protect its borders.

With his visit to the Israeli Knesset in 1976, and then his signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979, he faced a wave of criticism that led to his assassination on the day of the military parade commemorating the October War on October 6, 1981.

3. The Military Institution During Hosni Mubarak's Era:

His rule was characterized by a certain level of political stability, as he maintained its cohesion in exchange for a significant margin of military involvement in the Egyptian economy through agreements that allowed the Egyptian army to receive a larger share of public expenditures. Additionally, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was formed, with the Vice President of the Council being the General Commander and Minister of Defense.¹ The loyalty of the officers increased due to promises of early retirement, accompanied by retirement salaries and the allure of comfortable positions in military-owned commercial companies that emerged after 1979. This led to a smooth reduction of the military's role in political life by granting them economic privileges. Mubarak, within the agreements with the military leadership, allowed the establishment of military-owned economic projects, such as the military-industrial complex and other privileges in various fields. According to many observers, this was the main factor that ensured Mubarak kept the military institution at bay throughout his 30-year rule.²

¹ Ali El-Din Hilal, *The Evolution of the Political System in Egypt 1805-2005*, Cairo: Arab Book Foundation, 2006, p.209

² Ahmed Hashem, *The Military and the State in Egypt: The Intertwining of Military and Civilian*, Translated by: Mohamed Al-Harthani, Doha: Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2018, p. 13

Egypt's streets witnessed unprecedented demonstrations and protests calling for the overthrow of the regime and demanding changes in various aspects of life. This was due to the widening gap between the people and the authorities, the loss of trust in the ruling elite, and the rapid expansion of the protest movement. The methods of intervention by security and police forces at the beginning of the protests exacerbated the situation and increased the pace of violence and counter-violence. The security and economic conditions deteriorated due to the chaos that engulfed the country, incidents of looting, theft, and assaults, and the formation of groups of thugs under the pretext of protecting private property. This resulted in an unprecedented security breakdown due to the complete withdrawal of security and police forces from their positions and the escape of thousands of prisoners.

Despite Mubarak's concessions to some demands, he implemented the following changes:

- Appointing ¹General Omar Suleiman as Vice President, officially delegating him to exercise the powers of the President on January 10, 2011.
- Initiating an open national dialogue with all opposition forces.
- Continuing political and economic reforms according to a roadmap announced by Mubarak, delegating Omar Suleiman to achieve them.
- Appointing Ahmed Shafik as Deputy Prime Minister to manage the national dialogue.
- Proceeding with constitutional amendments to articles 198, 93, 88, 77, and 76 of the Egyptian constitution.
- Establishing two committees: the National Dialogue Committee and the Fact-Finding Committee composed of senior judges.
- The ruling National Party made structural changes and replaced the party's Secretary-General.

However, the protesting masses did not welcome these reforms and amendments made by President Mubarak. The discontent and tensions escalated as the people in major cities continued to demand Mubarak's resignation.

4. The Military Council's Position on the Transitional Phase:

Mubarak's resignation was announced on February 11, 2011, less than a month after the protests demanding his ouster began. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took over, but it could not control the sharp division that prevailed in the country. Everyone was against everyone, and the conflict almost turned into a struggle among the revolutionaries themselves, especially between the secular and Islamist factions. The situation was exacerbated by the military council's observation that it should oversee the transition to democracy and be aligned with everyone. However, it adopted a policy of classification and alignment with those working for foreign agendas and opposing the council, and those who supported it, considering that Field Marshal Tantawi was secretly seeking to run for the presidency. This implicitly indicated that the military institution was not fully prepared to hand over power to civilians, and there was an agreement among its leaders on this matter. Azmi Bishara points to the role played by the judiciary during this phase to help the military council eliminate candidates who posed a threat to them.¹

It seemed that the Egyptian military institution was supporting one civilian faction against another. The protests did not end, and Dr. Kamal Helbawy attributed this to the desire for dominance and control, which was clearly manifested, primarily due to ideological reasons². It was expected that some stability and calm would prevail after the election of the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, as the first elected civilian president.

¹ Azmi Bishara, *Egypt's Revolution Part Two: From Revolution to Coup*, 1st ed., Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2016, p. 236

² Kamal Helbawy, *Interim President: Ongoing Revolution*, 1st ed., Cairo: Egyptian Lebanese Publishing House, 2014, p. 160

5. President Morsi and the Military Institution:

The relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian political system has always been characterized by constant conflict since the era of King Farouk, and similarly with the successive presidents of Egypt within the framework of the republican system, starting with President Gamal Abdel Nasser, through Anwar Sadat, and then the era of President Morsi. The first elections after the January 25, 2011 revolution were held, and the results were announced on January 21, 2011. The most prominent feature was the strong return of the Muslim Brotherhood to the Egyptian political scene, with the Freedom and Justice Party winning 235 seats, representing 47.2% of the seats. As for the Shura Council elections, they were held in two phases, competing for 180 seats out of 264, with the remaining seats to be appointed by the next president. After the presidential elections, the coalition formed by the Freedom and Justice Party won 105 seats, representing 58.3%. Amid the political struggle with the Muslim Brotherhood, the Supreme Constitutional Court in Egypt ruled that the People's Assembly elections were unconstitutional, and that the formation of the council was invalid since its election. The court also ruled that the Political Rights Law, known as the Political Isolation Law, was unconstitutional. The Secretary-General of the People's Assembly stated that the secretariat received a letter from Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the Supreme Commander of the Egyptian Armed Forces, stating the dissolution of parliament in implementation of the Supreme Constitutional Court's ruling, concentrating all legislative powers in the hands of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Regarding the presidential elections, the first round was held on May 23 and 24, 2011, with none of the thirteen candidates able to secure a decisive victory. The second round was held on June 16 and 17, and the election dates were set according to the announcement by the Supreme Election Committee, following a response from the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to expedite the transfer of power. The runoff election resulted in the victory of the Freedom and Justice Party candidate Mohamed Morsi with 51.73% over his

independent political rival Ahmed Shafik, who received 48.27%. This was one of the major milestones of the transitional phase, which was the election of the President of the Republic and the transfer of power to the first elected civilian president on June 29, 2012. Despite the military's reluctance to have Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in power for reasons summarized by "Ahmed Hashem" as follows: there is a remaining secular trend among the officers, and the fear that the Islamists would push for radical and revolutionary changes internally and externally, and the fear of the influence of Islamists within the ranks of the armed forces at the lower levels.¹

With the increasing economic and political demands on President Morsi, he was unable to achieve political stability to ensure the fulfillment of the promises he made during his election campaign.

It is worth noting that the Constitutional Court, with the support of the Military Council, thwarted a presidential attempt to reconvene the dissolved parliament. Many analysts believe that this move was intended to allow the Military Council to maintain a concentration of all legislative powers and control, ensuring that the presidency remained weak.²

In a bold and unexpected move, President Morsi issued a series of decisive decisions on August 12, 2012, ending the dual authority and governance of the country. He assumed full presidential powers, reduced the political role of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) as an overseer of the post-January 25, 2011 transition process, and by issuing a new constitutional declaration, he annulled the supplementary constitutional declaration issued on July 17, 2012. Consequently, the president assumed sole executive power, as well as legislative power until a new parliament was elected. He also reclaimed his authority as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and retained the right to reconstitute the

¹ Ahmed S Hashim, *The Man on Horseback : The Role of the Military in the Arab Revolutions and in their Aftermaths*, Singapore : MEI perspectives series, 2015, p.11, on <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/313739034>, visited on : 01/09/2024

constituent assembly in consultation with national forces, should any obstacle prevent it from completing its tasks.¹

After the killing of 16 Egyptian soldiers in Sinai by an unknown armed group, President Morsi seized the opportunity to oust some of the most influential generals in the military institution by issuing decisions to dismiss them and appoint their replacements². This series of decisions was met with popular acceptance and support, in contrast to the concern of the military and judicial institutions. Then came the major step in his struggle with the military institution: the constitutional declaration in November 2012, which transformed tensions into outright hostility. The aim of the declaration was to remove the public prosecutor appointed by former President Mubarak in order to protect the remaining elected institutions from being dissolved by the Constitutional Court, which was dominated by individuals from the Mubarak era. It also aimed to retry security leaders who had been acquitted and to compensate victims of violence and repression during and after the revolution. Given the deep polarization and lack of trust between political forces, this declaration pushed President Morsi's opponents and military leaders into a serious confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood, who were determined to secure their rule.³

There was no clear reaction from the military until the protests expanded significantly on June 30, 2013. The intensity of political violence increased with the emergence of a movement called "Tamarod",⁴ which sought to organize protests against his rule. The military issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the political forces,⁵ and on July 3, 2013, Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi announced the removal of Egypt's first democratically elected president, 61 years after the overthrow of the monarchy. Dr. Azmi Bishara suggests that the

¹ Bashir Abdel Fattah, *The Egyptian Presidency After Mubarak*, Arab Policies, Issue 10, March 2013, p.91

² Steven Cook, *Morsi's Dismissal of Military Leaders and Its Implications for Cairo-Washington Relations*, Foreign Readings, Issue 48, October 2012, p.218

³ Mostafa El-Bakry, *The Army and the Brotherhood: Secrets Behind the Curtain*, Cairo: Egyptian Lebanese Publishing House, 2013, p. 433

⁴ An opposition movement against President Morsi, which began in April 2013, demanded his withdrawal and a vote of no confidence, and called for the reorganization of early presidential elections. It included prominent opposition figures, movements, and the Bar Association, considering themselves part of the opposition with the goal of reclaiming the revolution.

⁵ Hani Suleiman, Same reference, p. 65

Egyptian military institution was not isolated from the events, implying that everything that happened was deliberate to justify the intervention of the armed forces.¹ The head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Judge Adly Mansour, assumed power, and a roadmap was announced with the following key points:

- Temporarily suspending the constitution.
- Holding early presidential elections, with the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court managing the country's affairs during the transitional period until a new president is elected.
- Granting the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court the authority to issue constitutional declarations during the transitional period.
- Forming a national competence government with full powers to manage the transitional period.
- Forming a committee comprising various factions and experts to review the proposed constitutional amendments to the temporarily suspended constitution.

On July 9, 2013, Adly Mansour issued a constitutional declaration containing 33 articles as a timeline for the transitional period. It was also announced that Mohamed ElBaradei was appointed as Vice President and Hazem El-Beblawi was tasked with forming the interim government during the transitional period.

On the ground, in response to the protests against President Morsi, demonstrations and sit-ins in support of him took place in several squares, most notably Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in Cairo and Nahda Square in Giza. These continued until August 14, 2013, when police, security, and military forces forcibly dispersed the sit-ins, resulting in a large number of casualties and injuries.

¹ Azmi Bishara, Same reference, p. 348

On September 23, 2013, the Cairo Court for Urgent Matters banned all activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, all affiliated institutions, and confiscated all properties, assets, and funds owned by its members. The Egyptian government declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization and decided to prosecute its leaders and members on terrorism charges. The ousted President Mohamed Morsi was tried in several cases filed against him. El-Sisi announced his resignation from the military and his intention to run in the presidential elections held in May 2014, with El-Sisi and Hamdeen Sabahi as candidates. The election results were announced by the Election Committee in early June, declaring El-Sisi the winner with 96.9% of the vote. Sherif Ismail was tasked with forming the government, which was sworn in on September 19, 2015. Amid the rapidly evolving events on the Egyptian political scene, it seemed that the political landscape had returned to what it was before President Mubarak's resignation. The military institution once again took center stage in Egyptian politics, holding the reins of power after the presidency returned to it, and the Muslim Brotherhood was banned from any political activity, with all its leaders arrested.

Axis Three: The Motives Behind the Military's Return to Power in Egypt in 2013

There has been much debate about whether what happened on July 3, 2013, is considered a military coup or a revolutionary response. This may be due to the political stance taken by those arguing over this issue. From a scientific perspective, it is not possible to find explanations that do not align with the characteristics of political action, indicating that what happened in Egypt was a complete military coup. A more influential factor in the scene is the cohesion and strength of the Egyptian military institution, in contrast to the weakness and division among civilians, which persisted even before the revolution and continued thereafter. This division is one of the main reasons for the military's continued dominance in the hierarchy of power, while civilians remained mere supporters or opponents who found no way to rid themselves of its guardianship.

The transition from military to civilian attire does not necessarily mean that a soldier has become a civilian. This process is insufficient for transforming military rule into civilian governance, as demonstrated by the events of June 23, 1952. Military rule persisted for decades, with all presidents of Egypt since then coming from the military establishment, except for Mohamed Morsi. Wearing civilian clothes does not signify a shift to civilian governance; rather, it marks the beginning of the militarization of society.

When the armed forces learned that Mubarak was moving toward handing power to his son, Defense Minister Hussein Tantawi and Chief of Staff Sami Anan began to pressure the president to halt the succession plan. However, Mubarak believed he could rely on state security forces to advance his agenda and keep the military out of politics. The protests in Tahrir Square ultimately derailed this plan, as the military supported the demonstrators by refraining from intervening to disperse the sit-ins. The pro-Mubarak security forces failed to dismantle the protests, creating an opportunity for the military to reassert itself by exploiting the political divisions among the various factions.

The military represented the deep state apparatus that sought to undermine the Muslim Brotherhood's experiment—or rather, the democratic transition in Egypt. The military appeared as the only stable institution among the other political entities and began to attract other social forces looking to establish common ground with the new authority. Each faction sought the respect of the military institution. The military's 48-hour ultimatum to the conflicting parties was, in reality, a warning directed at President Mohamed Morsi. The military aligned itself with those opposing the elected government, and the calls for protests against Morsi were orchestrated by the military to create a pretext for deposing the legitimate authority¹.

Some have likened this coup to Augusto Pinochet's overthrow of elected President Salvador Allende in Chile, where Pinochet was appointed Commander of the Armed Forces in 1973.

¹ Hani Suleiman, *Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Transition in Egypt After the January 25 Revolution*, Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2015, p. 65

Similarly, Sisi's coup in Egypt represents a return of the old regime to the political scene. It is an internal coup designed to protect the military's interests, disguised as a revolution to save the country from danger, revive the economy, achieve stability, and improve living standards¹.

Observing the situation in Egypt, one can notice that events seem increasingly orchestrated, leading to a specific outcome. When the military sensed a threat from Mubarak's plan to pass power to his son, it pushed the masses into the streets to oust the president and dismantle his regime, thereby thwarting his succession ambitions. Many predictions indicated the beginning of a break from the past, envisioning a new chapter with a civilian government independent of military influence. This could mark the start of a second republic in Egypt, with the military relegated to a constitutional role focused solely on defending the country's borders².

Subsequently, the decision was made to transfer power to an elected civilian leadership, creating the illusion that the military had fully withdrawn from the political arena and adhered to the will of the ballot box. Following the emergence of the April 6 Youth Movement, which condemned the Muslim Brotherhood's rule and accused it of passing its ideologies through unconstitutional means, these groups aligned themselves with the military. This provided the justification for military intervention to topple the elected government. The defense minister acted as if he were a national hero, stepping in to rescue Egypt from the Brotherhood, reminiscent of the Free Officers' coup. Just as Jamal Abdel Nasser rose from a coup leader to a national hero heralding a revolution against oppression and deprivation³.

It is also noteworthy that these events unfolded under the watchful eyes of Western powers, with the United States, which professes to support democracy and democratic transitions,

¹ Azmi Bishara, Same reference, p. 98

² Osman Tariq, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser's Revolution to the Millions in Tahrir Square*, Translated by: Antoine Basil, Beirut: Dar Al-Matbouliat for Publishing and Distribution, 2012, p. 298

³ Same previous reference, p. 294

implicitly showing its approval by remaining silent about the coup. Even neighboring countries did not take any stance that suggested opposition to the coup.

Returning to the end of Mubarak's rule, characterized by unjustified violence, violent clashes with protesters resulted in serious injuries and even fatalities. The military remained silent and neutral during this turmoil. At that time, Omar Suleiman was appointed Vice President, a position that had been vacant since 1981. Faced with increasing pressure and casualties reported by foreign media, Mubarak had no choice but to resign and hand over authority to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. This marked the first time the military assumed power directly after years of Mubarak's rule, during which analysts argue that he attempted to sideline the military through his succession plan.

What occurred was essentially a repositioning of the military, which felt threatened by the rise of Mubarak's son, who was outside the military establishment and displayed liberal tendencies that did not serve the military's interests. It was as if the military staged a coup within the palace by mobilizing the streets while choosing not to intervene, allowing their new allies to face the crowds that filled the squares. This included judicial actions taken against the president, his sons, and key figures behind privatization policies.

The prevailing belief is that the military institution played a crucial role in Mubarak's downfall and in escalating tensions during Morsi's rule, positioning the militarization of Egyptian society as a national demand that would allow the military to re-enter the political arena. After the events that weakened Mubarak's regime, senior military officers became convinced that this system was part of the past. An agreement among the members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was reached to seize power and oust the president. The military did not suffer from any internal divisions and remained one of the most powerful and cohesive forces in the region, supported by a complex network of interests and loyalties that ensured unity during the upheavals.

The close relationship between the defense minister and the president did not protect him from the military's decision to remove him; the officers rejected the idea of Mubarak's son climbing the power ladder¹, and opposed any shift toward favoring the security forces outside the military's purview².

The foreign factor played a significant role in determining Mubarak's future. Despite its initial rejection of the coup, discussions emerged about divisions within President Barack Obama's administration, especially following pressure from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel to accept the coup and support the new regime, which continued under Donald Trump.³ Once the Obama administration decided to abandon Mubarak, who no longer represented a "strategic asset," U.S. strategic interests aligned with those of the generals seeking to protect their political positions and privileges. They received the green light to proceed with their plan, leaving the president isolated and positioning themselves alongside the protesters, which created a significant level of public trust in the military⁴.

The violence during and after the coup was pronounced, as protest movements faced brutal repression. Clashes between protesters and security forces resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries. The clearing of Rabaa Square, where the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters had staged a sit-in, led to a massacre. The country witnessed the arrest of many political opponents. Military rule typically relies on security solutions to address challenges, and a result of the Geneva Conference on democratic oversight of armed forces indicated that prospects for economic recovery and social stability in Egypt would be slim unless the relationships between civilians and military institutions were redefined to become more harmonious.⁵

¹ Zoltan Barany, *How Do Armies Respond to Revolutions? And Why?* Translated by: Abdel Rahman Ayash, Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Studies, 2017, p. 240

² Same reference, p. 240

³ Bilal Al-Khalidi, *Analysis of the Most Important Revelations by NYT About Obama's Position on Sisi's Coup*, 28/07/2018, available at: <http://cutt.us/sBk7S>, accessed on: 05/09/2024

⁴ Same reference, p. 242

⁵ Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, *Conference Report: Governance of the Security Sector in Egypt: Civil-Military Relations Under the Microscope*, Switzerland, April 2-3, 2014, p.18

Conclusion:

The examination of the stages of study related to civil-military relations in Egypt clearly shows that military intervention falls within the frameworks and patterns established by pioneers in this field. The military's possession of material power, its relationships with external entities, its degree of cohesion, and the weakness and fragmentation of civilian authority are primary factors driving the military towards political intervention. The military coup led by the Minister of Defense against the legitimate authority signals a return of the military to power with intentions to remain there for an extended period. Here, the military does not intervene merely to govern others; its exclusive control over coercive power within society drives its ambition to manage state affairs.

Many assert that the military's return to power through a coup was a well-prepared scenario. The military initially supported the protesters and refrained from intervening, even deploying its forces to protect demonstrators from the violence of police forces and thugs attempting to disperse sit-ins. The military chose to abandon the president and align itself with opposing factions. When an agreement was reached between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood to maintain privileges and avoid governmental oversight of financial allocations, elections were organized. Subsequently, the military decided to move into a second phase and seize power by force.

Thus, it is difficult to envision any political scene in Egypt in the medium term without a significant and essential role for the military institution under current external relations and international commitments, particularly regarding peace treaties with Israel and surrounding security and water threats. This situation precludes any civilian entity, regardless of its nature, from assuming political power for any reason.

References :

1. Ahmad Hashem, "The Army and the State in Egypt: The Interconnection of Military and Civilian," translated by Mohammed Al-Harthani, Doha: Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2018.
2. Zoltan Barani, "How Do Armies Respond to Revolutions? And Why?" translated by Abdul Rahman Ayash, Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Studies, 2017.
3. Bashir Abdel Fattah, "The Egyptian Presidency After Mubarak," Arab Policies, No. 10, March 2013.
4. Fouad Abdullah Thata, "Mechanisms of Democratic Change in the Arab World," Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1997.
5. Stephen Cook, "Morsi's Dismissal of Army Leaders and Its Implications for Cairo-Washington Relations," Foreign Readings, No. 48, October 2012.
6. Suleiman Hani, "Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Transition in Egypt After the January 25 Revolution," Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2015.
7. Samuel Huntington, "The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century," translated by Abdul Wahab Aloub, University of Oklahoma Press.
8. Adel Za'louk Antar Ali, "Theories of Securitization in International Relations: From the Copenhagen School Towards a Proposed Communicative Theory for Studying 9. Securitization," Journal of Policy and Economy (Egypt: Beni Suef University, Volume 15, No. 14, April 2022).
9. Abdul Hamid Al-Ansari, "Towards an Arab Islamic Concept of Civil Society," Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, No. 272, October 2001.
10. Othman Tarek, "Egypt on the Brink of the Abyss: From Nasser's Revolution to Millions in Tahrir Square," translated by Antoine Basil, Beirut: Printing and Publishing Company, 2012.

11. Azmi Bishara, "The Army and Politics: Theoretical Issues and Arab Models," 1st ed., Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2017.
12. Azmi Bishara, "The Egyptian Revolution: Part Two from Revolution to Coup," 1st ed., Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2016.
13. Ali Al-Din Hilal, "The Evolution of the Political System in Egypt 1805-2005," Cairo: Arab Book Foundation, 2006.
14. Omar Ashour, "From Cooperation to Repression: Islamic-Military Relations in Egypt," Doha: Bronzes Center, 2015.
15. Kamal Helbawy, "Transitional President... Continuous Revolution," 1st ed., Cairo: Egyptian-Lebanese House, 2014.
16. Mustafa Al-Bakri, "The Army and the Brotherhood... Secrets Behind the Curtain," Cairo: Egyptian-Lebanese House, 2013.
17. Mohammed Belkhira, "Political Transformations in the Soviet Union and Their Impact on Arab Countries," Algeria, 2004.
18. Mohammed Abdullah Younis, "Civil-Military Relations on Israeli Defense Policy 2000-2007," Master's thesis, Cairo University, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, 2012.
19. Ahmed S Hashim, *The Man on Horseback : The Role of the Military in the Arab Revolutions and in their Aftermaths*, Singapore : MEI perspectives series, 2015., on <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/313739034>, visited on : 01/09/2024
20. Arjana Olldash, *Civil Military Relations in Emerging Democracies*, South West Texas State University, Spring, 2002.
21. Henery Bienen, *civil Military in the Third World*, *International Political Review*, Vol.2, No.3, 1981

22. Hugh Smith "On Clausewitz: A Study of Military and Political Ideas", New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

23. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations*, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957.
