



## Authoritarian Regimes' Approach to National Security: Egypt as a Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

*The security dilemma in the third-world states in terms of the existence of nonrepresentative regimes is the key factor in the configuration of the national security approach.*

*Authoritarian regimes define threats to national security from the perspective of regime security in the sense of maintaining authority and absolute control.*

*Since the military coup in 2013, Sisi abused the issue of national security and addressed most political, economic, and social crises from a security point of view. Regime security was the priority reference unit to decide about all other aspects of national security, even if such measures contradict the country's higher interests. The army's deep involvement in economic and political affairs had serious negative repercussions on national security. Under the pretext of national security, human rights violations were practiced on a large scale.*

**KEYWORDS:** Human rights, Military coup, Securitization, Third world, Security concept, Regime survival, Foreign policy, Interventions.

### Introduction

Security is usually defined as freedom from threats to core values, according to realists the primary focus is national security referred to as military capabilities. Contemporary debate continues about the conceptualization of security whether the security agenda should be expanded to include other non-military issues and whether it should be extended away from a state-centric viewpoint to add other internal and external dimensions.

Threats to third-world countries stem mainly from within. External threats exist, but they remain marginal. Security problems in Third World countries are largely internal due to their history of state formation and the pattern of elite recruitment and regime establishment and maintenance. Both differ widely from Western countries.

In authoritarian countries, the national security and the security of the regime are confused to the extent of equating the national security of the state as an (entity, institution, economy, or society) and the person of the ruler and regime. Therefore, the frequent use of this term in such countries usually refers to keeping the ruler in power and protecting his authority even if it poses real risks to the country's security.

In recent years, Egyptian national security has been facing increasing challenges and pressures at the internal and regional levels. This has accompanied the army's involvement in matters outside the scope of its main tasks as politics, trade, construction work, and food industries, which in turn exacerbate threats and undermine the ability to confront them, push the regime to make concessions in national security issues in exchange for political gains to maintain power and control.

### Conceptual framework

Contemporary debate continues about the conceptualization of security whether the security agenda should be expanded to include other non-military issues and whether the agenda should be extended away from a state-centric viewpoint

to add other internal and external dimensions. Security is usually defined as freedom from threats to core values, according to realists the primary focus is national security referred to as military capabilities (Baylis, 2008).

Barry Buzan and Copenhagen scholars' approach was characterized by dealing with all aspects of the security phenomenon, in addition to the inclusion of the social factors of security. Buzan presented an expanded concept of security to include new sectors besides the military one (political, economic, societal, and environmental), he believes that these five sectors do not work in isolation from each other, but they weave together a strong network of interdependence (Buzan, 1991)

Copenhagen scholars argued that the "national" security problem turned out to be a systematic security problem in which individuals, states, and the regime play a role, and in which economic, social, and environmental factors are as important as political and military factors (Stone, 2009). According to Buzan, the state is formed by three components, the idea of the state (nationalism), the physical base of the state (people, resources, and technology), and the institutional framework of the state (political and administrative system). According to this definition, the strength of the state is not measured by material factors only but also by the extent of its political and social cohesion, and internal and institutional stability, which refers to the complex interrelationship between internal and external contexts on which Buzan's theory was built (Stone, 2009).

**Securitization theory** which considers security as a speech act gaining more importance in contemporary security perspectives. The basic argument is once something is labeled as a security issue, it will be. Weaver referred that something represents a security problem when the elites declare it as such (Weaver, 1995).

Accordingly, any issue becomes a security issue when it is discursively framed as constituting an existential threat that



requires urgent measures outside the normal limits of political action. The success of this theory requires first, a coherent discourse presented by an influential actor such as the government, parliament, or any political authority as well as thought leaders and bureaucrats as they can persuade public opinion and influence the masses. Second, suitable historical context and political environment. Success also depends on the nature of the risks and the targeted urgent measures. As Buzan described, such speech should persuade that “If we do not address this problem, then everything else will be meaningless because we will not exist or we will not be free to deal with it in our way, and he calls this step the securitization move” (Taureck, 2006). For example, after the events of September 11, the citizens of the United States accepted the restriction of some of their civil liberties in the name of preserving the integrity of the American territory.

### Security Dilemma in the Third World

Many scholars consider that the threats facing third-world countries are mainly internal, this does not exclude external threats, but the latter gained its effectiveness from the exploitation and employment of the former. Internal threats are dominant mainly due to the recent formation of modern states in the third world and the nature of the elites and ruling regimes, which is fundamentally different from the West (Ayoub, 1983).

This is due to two main reasons, the first is that Western countries were able, after centuries of bloody conflicts, to reach a social contract and agree on basic principles in the intellectual, political, social, and economic fields, which gave the ruling regimes a kind of unconditional legitimacy, which provides stability in the system of governance, while young countries in the third world did not have enough time to mature and make agreements on basic matters and to build strong state structure (Ayoub, 1983).

The second reason is that the absence of consensus about the basic principles and the absence of democracy made the regimes in the third world not representative of the vast majority of their people, and they rule often based on military force and the support of a narrow section of elites whose interests are linked to them (Ayoub, 1983). These regimes do not allow the alternation of power or effective political opposition. In addition, the global economic system, and the resulting widening gap between the classes of society exacerbate the lack of confidence between people and rich elites which threatens the structures of the state itself (Ayoub, 1983).

Since these regimes and their bureaucratic and ideological parties determine threats to national security on their own, they have defined them primarily in terms of the security of the system rather than the security of society (Ayoub, 1983). Security has traditionally been defined as the protection and preservation of core values. However, in the case of most third-world countries, the fundamental values of the system often conflict with the core values espoused by large segments of the population. (Ayoub, 1983).

The wide contradictions in the definition of the basic principles and core values and security itself, growing class disparity, societal and ethnic conflicts, and the non-representative and oppressive character of most Third World regimes, all these factors increase internal threats to the security of the regime and the state structures.

### Regime survival policy in Egypt: Historical background

The ruling military regime in Egypt since 1952 has adopted nearly similar strategies to maintain the security of the regime in the sense of survival and monopoly in power.

The first is the *containment* of the pressures on the regime, with different tactics between successive regimes. In the Nasserist era, containment strategies involved creating institutional structures designed to include nearly the entire community. But the centers of power were too large to be contained in this way, so Nasser turned to containment by balancing centers such as the army and the Arab Socialist Union against each other. Sadat worked to eliminate the Nasserite elements in the state, dismantling the unions and syndicate structures, and taking advantage of the erosion of their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Sadat was then forced to turn toward political and economic liberalization to restore legitimacy and release pressures. Such efforts continued under Mubarak but were met with great public derision (due to unfulfilled expectations regarding the scope of "democratization"). It seemed that Sadat and Mubarak did not see democracy as a means to broaden the base of political participation, but rather as a tool to contain opposition to their rule (Ryan, 2001).

The second strategy is *repression*, Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak turned to suppress the opposition when various maneuvers to contain social and political pressures failed. Repression became the first strategic option rather than the last resort. Abdel Nasser was credited with establishing and approving this approach, while Sadat changed it to some extent at the beginning of his rule, he returned to it in the late 1970s when the regime was besieged by political crises and social and economic demands. At the beginning of the Mubarak era, the dose of repression declined, although the coercion against opponents did not disappear (Ryan, 2001).

The third is the *external diversion*, Nasser and Sadat succeeded in distracting attention from domestic issues through Egypt's dramatic intervention in regional and global affairs. On the contrary, Mubarak avoided such maneuvers nevertheless he did not reject Egypt's active role in international affairs. Egypt is considered to be of high geopolitical importance by various "great powers", which provide the regime with opportunities for such strategy but while this tactic may be beneficial in the short term, it is risky in the long term, as domestic social and economic problems persist after the dust has settled from the international crisis (Ryan, 2001).

Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak have a clear and well-defined strategy to contain, suppress and divert political pressures. They successfully used it to consolidate their power and develop the presidency as an institution, but none of them



succeeded in developing or institutionalizing other state institutions. As Migdal argued, "Keeping the leaders of the state afloat may paradoxically involve the systematic weakening of state apparatuses, a kind of deinstitutionalization." (Ryan, 2001).

Failure to develop state institutions, loss of political legitimacy, and lack of political participation perpetuate the system's insecurity and limit its overall political effectiveness. Leaders and officials pursue short-term survival strategies at the expense of long-term development strategies. Focusing on the survival of government is a constant obsession in authoritarian states that may keep the leader's survival, but the ultimate losers are the people.

The January 25 Revolution represented a major threat to the ruling military regime since 1952. The regime used its ordinary strategies to contain it for a while, but it returned quickly to violent repression when its survival and control were under threat. This culminated in the military coup in July 2013 against the first elected civilian authority in the history of Egypt. The regime succeeded in a strategy of "divide and rule" with the political forces to weaken and divide them. It also used deception with the liberal and civil forces to gain their support in the coup in exchange for a share of power.

#### **National security and counterterrorism as a pretext for human rights violations**

In 1994, United Nations Development Program discussed the concept of security and argued that it has been interpreted on a narrow scale for decades as it was mainly a state-centric concept not related much to the people (UNDP, 1994). The term "human security" was first defined in 1994 by UNDP Human Development Report. This report provides a broad definition of human security, including safety from seven categories of threats: economic, Food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political, consisting of the two components of "freedom from fear and freedom from want" (UNDP, 1994). Such a broad definition has been criticized by some scholars, suggesting a narrow proposal plan emphasizes "freedom from fear" and relates to physical and military threats (Liotta and Owen, 2006).

On July 24, 2013, Sisi requested a popular mandate to combat potential terrorism, and then announced the launch of what he called the "war on terror". It is the war that he used to justify a wide range of repressive measures and laws under the pretext of maintaining stability and protecting national security. The wave of repression reached its peak with the arrest of 3070 persons in May 2015 alone (Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2018).

A large number of deaths were also announced since the coup until the beginning of 2018 reaching more than 7097 people in what was called (anti-terror operations in Sinai), without the number of deaths in the events of Rabea, Ennahda, and the Republican Guard during the suppression of anti-coup demonstrations in the summer of 2013. The Egyptian regime also adopted the method of forced displacement, as former Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab issued a decree with the succession of

armed clashes in the Sinai, to vacate a buffer zone on the border with Palestine with an area of about 79 square kilometers, and which includes the city of Rafah (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Within the context of the regime's efforts to eliminate any dissenting voices, it launched a set of laws and legislation under the pretext of combating terrorism, most notably: the Military Judiciary Decree of October 27, 2014, which considered that all attacks on public facilities would be considered attacks on military institutions and would therefore be considered judicially before the military courts. The Military and Terrorist Entities Law issued on February 24, 2015, gave the Public Prosecution the power to issue a list of terrorist entities and terrorists, as well as granting relevant government bodies the power to dissolve any terrorist entity, freeze its activities, close all its buildings, ban meetings and membership, stop its financial activities, banning all associated slogans, temporarily depriving an individual or organization of political rights, as well as another package of laws aimed at censoring social media and limiting media freedoms (Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2018).

Since the military coup in July 2013, the Egyptian regime was characterized by adopting blurring boundaries of political activity. Red lines changed frequently, as a plethora of presidential decrees restricted the public sphere more than ever. State security agency and judicial bodies increasingly abused their powers against representatives of civil society. Torture, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance have become frequent phenomena. Suffering from state security, a politicized judiciary, and administrative restrictions on their activism, human rights activists are less able to fulfill their role. They turned from mere witnesses to human rights abuses and violations by the security forces, to be the main targets of those violations (Grimm, 2015).

Under the pretext of combating terrorism, the state systematically targeted journalists, preventing them from delivering news freely and openly to the population. Journalists and bloggers are subject to many forms of human rights violations, including censorship of freedom of expression, prolonged detention, imprisonment after unfair trials, unjustified raids, confiscation of their equipment, and even physical attacks. New laws have been issued since 2014 to strengthen the state's control over the media and the press. Article 35 of the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015 criminalizes publishing information on terrorist operations that differs from the official state narrative and Article 36 stipulates that permission must be obtained to record or broadcast any court proceedings related to terrorism charges and Law No. 180 of 2018 on blocking websites (UPR, 2019).

#### **National Security and social cohesion**

The Egyptian nation is characterized by great homogeneity between its components in terms of religion, language, race, and sect, this extended for thousands of years and did not change with the succession of internal or external regimes. However, contemporary Egyptian society suffered increasing division since 2013, mainly the secular Islamic division. The military regime



has worked to inflame this division to achieve political gains by classifying any Islamist as a terrorist and by raising the slogan “We against them,” which in turn fueled the sectarian conflict manifested in the attacks on churches in Alexandria and Tanta in April 2017, and the attacks on pilgrims in Minya in May 2017 and November 2018 (*Achrainer, 2020*).

Sisi adopted a totalitarian approach to reformulating the identity of the state and society based on radical nationalism and patriotism, worked to force everyone to adopt it, and considered the violators as a threat to national security. This strategy further divided society and led to the emergence of new divisions such as civil-military, social class, and generational divisions. The regime did not fulfill its promise to integrate the various segments (*Achrainer, 2020*). The obstruction of the political sphere exacerbates the case as these different perspectives are not allowed to express themselves, the regime only allowed a protocol opposition that corresponds to its orientations.

The government did not respond to repeated calls to open serious independent investigations into the mass killings since 2011, including the massacres against Morsi supporters in the summer of 2013. Instead, it accused the participants in the demonstrations of terrorism and the killing of policemen and used the official media machine to mobilize the street against them and brand them as terrorists in a major fraud that turned victims into perpetrators in the eyes of a large section of society (*Achrainer, 2020*). The regime was able to manipulate the principle of patriotism and national security to exclude its opponents and label them as terrorists and treason, and incite the public against them, to maintain the security and stability of the regime, and in turn, overlooked the catastrophic effects of that policy on the unity of the society and the security of the country.

#### **National security and foreign policy of the Sisi regime (The Conflict in Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean)**

On January 2, 2020, the Egyptian National Security Council, headed by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, met to discuss the current developments in the Libyan file and what he called the threats arising from foreign military intervention in Libya, shortly after the Turkish parliament’s response to the request of the internationally recognized government to provide the necessary military support for it. After this meeting, the Egyptian presidency announced that “a set of measures will be identified at various levels to address any threat to Egyptian national security.” (*Gomma, 2020*).

There is no doubt that the continuation of instability and domestic wars in Libya poses a potential threat in terms of the spread of terrorism to neighboring countries, including Egypt. Although the Egyptian regime is working to market this argument to justify its political agenda in Libya, the actual performance of the Sisi regime seems to contradict the path of stability and settlement through the support of retired General Khalifa Haftar, who refuses submission of the army to civilians’ authority, which exacerbates internal divisions and conflicts and attracted External interventions as well. It is known that Haftar has used fighting groups from the Salafist movement, supporters

of the former regime (Gaddafi), and mercenaries from Chad, Sudan, and Russia, which represents an imminent threat to Egyptian national security (*Gamaty, 2019*).

These contradictions raise questions about the Egyptian regime’s approach to national security and its real priorities. These contradictions can only be understood in the context of the priority of the Egyptian regime to fight the so-called “political Islam” its arch-rival and the primary threat to its monopoly in power in Egypt. (*State Information Service, 2018*). From the Egyptian regime’s perspective, the success of a neighboring country in establishing a democratic system, building state institutions, and achieving economic prosperity is a threat to national security, as it arouses the appetite of Egyptians for similar democratic changes in which the Sisi regime will not have a place, and this explains why Cairo is trying to copy Sisi’s experience in Libya by supporting General Haftar to be the custodian of the country under the pretext of fighting terrorism (*Mahmoud, 2018*).

On November 27, 2019, the Government of the “National Accord” announced that it had reached two memoranda with Turkey, one related to the demarcation of the maritime borders in the Mediterranean and the other related to security and defense cooperation. The Egyptian authorities immediately objected and denounced these agreements especially the maritime ones (*Bakir, 2020*), without going into the legal controversy over that agreement, what is remarkable is that it allowed Egypt to obtain an additional maritime space estimated at thousands of square kilometers if it decides to demarcate its maritime borders with Ankara and Tripoli instead of Athens, which demanded Cairo to relinquish these areas in its favor (*Aljazeera.Net, 2019*).

The Egyptian Foreign Minister partially retracted and declared during an interview that: “The agreement between Turkey and the Tripoli government does not affect our interests in Egypt.” (*RT, 2019*). Despite the Egyptian minister’s acknowledgment that the agreement does not affect Egypt’s rights, Cairo did not accept the Libyan-Turkish maritime agreement, because it necessarily means recognition of the legitimacy of the security and military agreement that gives Ankara a major role in Libya, which is not appropriate for Cairo, which considers Ankara an arch opponent and sees Libya as an arena of influence (*Bakir, 2020*).

The agreement allows Egypt to increase its maritime area, but it will cause it problems with Greece Cyprus, and Israel, after Cairo had previously ceded sea areas to them in exchange for pushing for an alliance in the Mediterranean basin “Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum” (a political and economic alliance), aim to isolate Turkey in its territorial waters, deprive it of benefiting from resources in the eastern Mediterranean (*Bakir, 2020*).

The regime’s position on the Turkish intervention contrasted with its position on the intervention of many countries there, such as Russia, France, Italy, and the UAE. This shows duplicity and contradicts the regime’s announcement of its



rejection of foreign interference in Libyan affairs. The biased position of the regime on the Turkish intervention in Libya, which was carried out according to official agreements that were not available to other foreign interventions in this regard, can be interpreted as a political and ideological position in the first place against the Turkish regime with Islamic backgrounds, which took a position against the military coup in July 2013 and refused to recognize it. The Turkish government was always denouncing the human rights violations committed by the Sisi regime against its opponents, allowing them humanitarian asylum in Turkey.

The position of the Egyptian regime regarding the division of the maritime borders in the eastern Mediterranean represents a clear model of its foreign policies towards national security when it contradicts (from the regime's point of view at least) the security of the regime and its absolute control.

#### **National security and military involvement in politics and economy**

Under Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the military worked hard to establish its strong position and absolute control. The Army is applying several strategies to achieve this goal, including allocating a large number of important and sensitive positions to senior officers, legislation giving the military unlimited powers, suppression of opposition, and implementation of a public relations campaign to increase public confidence in the army (Transparency International, 2018).

In September 2016, only eight of the country's 27 governors had civilian backgrounds (Reuters, 2016). Retired officers occupy a larger proportion of positions in ministries, public utility organizations, and national companies. The purpose of such a strategy is to control these bodies which include the supervisory bodies to protect the army from accountability, in addition, to provide a luxurious life for senior officers in a way that ensures their loyalty to the regime (Transparency International, 2018).

In general, the salaries of officers in the Egyptian army are not high, so rewards and grants play a major role in strengthening loyalty but in return, they raise discontent among the lower ranks and raise questions about the justice of the military system and the extent of the sincerity and integrity of the combat doctrine. In addition, such a strategy contradicts the principle of the advancement of competencies, allowing the unqualified officers to occupy sensitive positions if they enjoy the necessary loyalty to the authority which represents threats to the cohesion and efficiency of the military institution, the main pillar of Egyptian national security.

The position of the armed forces has also been strengthened by the issuing of extensive legislation, which grants the military wide-ranging rights. The military's isolation from civilian oversight is enshrined in the new constitution of 2014. During the absence of Parliament in 2015, Sisi seized the opportunity to issue Law No 89 gives himself the power to dismiss the heads of the supervisory bodies, he took advantage of this law in the same year to dismiss Hisham Genieh, head of the Central Auditing Organization, because of his talk about the

massive corruption in state agencies and his criticism of the executive authority's approach to dealing with the problem (Fahmy, 2016).

The wave of political repression was not limited to the Muslim Brotherhood, the Sisi government systematically targeted any sort of opposition, protesters, civil society groups, and the media were in the focus of targeting. After the military coup, the new laws gave the security services unprecedented powers to prevent demonstrations and arrest protesters and stipulated several broad charges. All presidential candidates in 2018 were excluded from the competition by arrest or intimidation, which indicates the repressive approach of the Sisi regime towards any competition (Transparency International, 2018).

This approach was not limited to civilian politicians only but also extended to military leaders as Sami Anan, the former commander of the military armed forces, who was arrested after declaring his candidacy for the presidential race on the pretext of violating the military law, in addition, Hisham Geneina, head of the Central Auditing Organization, whom Anan called his deputy in the presidential competition, was attacked and beaten in the street by unknown assailants (Al Jazeera, 2018).

The insistence of Sisi and the military regime to impose absolute control over the political and social aspects of the Egyptians, while closing all avenues of expression and the peaceful transfer of power, has serious repercussions on the country's national security, especially with the spread of poverty and the presence of some organizations that promote the idea of violent confrontation with the regime.

After 1979 and the Camp David Accords, the economic practice of the army began to expand tremendously. The military gained unprecedented competitive advantages such as exemption from taxes, access to direct attribution contracts, free labor from conscription, and staying out of the power of regulatory and supervisory agencies. There is very little available information about the trading empire of the Egyptian army, the army budget is included as a total number in the state's general budget, as it is considered a national security secret, and even the details of non-military economic activity are not allowed to be discussed by Parliament (Transparency International, 2018). The absence of official information has led to a sharp discrepancy in estimating the army's share of economic activity in Egypt, as some experts estimate the military's share as 40 percent, while the armed forces and Sisi claim that does not exceed 1 to 1.5 percent (Saleh, 2016).

Under the pretext of national security, the army refused to submit its military and non-military budgets to any kind of control or expand its economic empire to enhance influence and control over the domestic political sphere. In 1979 the military established the National Service Projects Organization (NSPO), with a budget independent of the Department of Defense, NSPO set up a group of companies in multiple sectors such as mining, food production, chemicals, agriculture, plastics, and home



appliances, no information is available about the revenue, profits, or tax arrangements (Transparency International, 2018).

Sisi argued that economic interventions by the military and allocating major national projects to army companies would help in reviving the Egyptian economy (Saleh, 2016). But this approach led to damage to the private sector and effectively eliminated it from the competition because of the clear competitive advantages of military companies over the private sector (Transparency International, 2018).

Despite some short-term benefits that citizens achieved from the military providing basic commodities at relatively low prices, the erosion of the private sector and weakening of the competition in the economic environment carry a real threat to the country's economy, as one of the determinants of national security.

The military's focus on economic goals decreases its ability to provide security. In 2015, Egyptian security forces mistakenly killed twelve people, including eight Mexican tourists, believing them to be terrorists (BBC, 2015). The running military rebellion by extremists in the Sinai Peninsula for about ten years represents the most significant challenge to Egyptian national security, resulted in hundreds of civilian victims in a series of terrorist attacks, worst in November 2017 by killing 305 people including 27 children in a Sufi Mosque (Hamdi et al, 2017).

Journalists are not allowed to enter the affected areas. There are many criticisms of the strategy of the armed forces in the Sinai in terms of its lack of the necessary combat skills for this type of unconventional confrontation, in addition to ignoring the political, social, and economic dimensions of the rebellion, as well as the widespread violations of human rights that caused the expansion and fueling of the conflict.

The armed forces do not suffer from a shortage of equipment, as military spending rates have increased significantly since 2013, some statistics indicate an increase in the percentage by two-thirds between 2012 and 2016 from the previous five years (Aude et al, 2017). This failure of security strategy may exacerbate by increasing military involvement in politics and the economy at the expense of maintenance of security.

### **Sisi regime and securitization theory**

**According to Securitization theory**, just labeling something as a security issue makes it so. Securitization means that an actor tries to move a topic away from politics into an area of security concerns, thereby legitimizing extraordinary means against the socially constructed threat (Stone, 2009).

The term "national security" appears in the Egyptian Constitution seven times, mostly about Article 205 which was originally established in 2014 and stipulates the establishment of the National Security Council headed by the President of the Republic. The term has also been mentioned twice about information security, media, and freedom of information, where the text requires the press's commitment to "national security requirements" (Egyptian constitution, 2019).

Sisi in his frequent talks believes that Egypt facing serious and diverse challenges with economic, social, political, and security dimensions. However, he constantly stresses that the most serious challenge is not an external one, but rather an internal challenge related to the integrity of the Egyptian state and the preservation of its survival as the Egyptian state, since the January revolution, has been under a real threat, as Sisi claimed. In this context, Sisi stresses that he is fighting a war of existence to preserve the state so that it does not collapse like other neighboring countries (BBC, 2014).

Since the July 2013 coup, the term national security has become one of the most commonly used terms starting from the president and government officials through to those who are named "strategic experts" and advocates of conspiracy theorists, as well as the media and citizens. The term has also become a topic for many seminars and conferences organized by representatives of the state and security and military authorities to discuss the "unresolved dangers" that threaten Egyptian national security (El Aswad, 2016) and how to confront them through unifying the home front, which in their opinion means silencing dissenting voices and condoning human rights violations including the right to freedom of expression and the right to information.

Sisi regime used a securitization strategy excessively, helped by absolute control of traditional media and research centers. The security factor was exaggerated, and the political, economic, and social crises were addressed from a security perspective to suppress any debate about the official solutions and to justify the punishment of opponents as providing threats to the country's national security.

### **Conclusion**

Contemporary perspective in security studies argued that national security represents an interaction in which individuals, states, and the regime play a role, and in which economic, social, and environmental factors are as important as political and military factors. The state's strength is not measured only by material factors but also by the extent of its political and social cohesion and internal and institutional stability.

Security problems in Third World countries are largely internal due to their short history of state formation and the pattern of regime establishment with narrow base support that results in a loss of consensus around fundamental issues and defects in ruling regimes' legitimacy. Contradictions in the definition of core values and security concepts, large and growing disparities in wealth and income, societal and ethnic tensions, and the non-representative and oppressive character of most Third World regimes, are the main challenges of national security.

The ruling military regime in Egypt since 1952 has adopted nearly similar strategies to maintain the security of the regime. These strategies include containment of pressure and allowing limited and controlled public participation away from vital decisions. Repression remains to be the strategy of choice for military regimes even if it decreased periodically in certain



circumstances usually due to external pressure. The regime used the external diversion to distract external and internal attention away from domestic crises and demands.

Since the military coup in 2013, Sisi has adopted a national security approach characterized by prominent features. First, Expanding the use of the issue of national security at the level of official discourse and advocates of the regime, and addressing most political, economic, and social crises from a security point of view, in a manner that prevents controversy over it and considering violators as a threat to national security.

Second, dealing with the issue of regime security in the sense of maintaining authority and absolute control as the main pillar of national security and as a priority reference unit to decide about all other aspects of national security, even if such measures contradict the country's higher interests, such as

tampering with societal unity or compromising maritime borders and natural resources.

Third, the army's deep involvement in economic and political affairs to maintain the security of the regime had serious negative repercussions on national security, as it distracted the army from its main mission of protecting borders and preserving the country's security. It also threatens the military efficiency and cohesion of the army.

Fourth, using national security as a pretext to violate human rights on a large scale, including physical integrity rights, political rights, freedom of opinion and expression, in addition to nationalizing the media, stifling civil society organizations, and targeting activists, through an arsenal of laws and legislation to justify these repressive measures.

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