

## Egyptian foreign policy after the 2013 coup...the destruction of location and status

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Foreign policy serves as a basis for the legitimacy of a government. When foreign policy reflects the values and traditions of society and is an extension of a strong and proactive domestic policy, it can strengthen the legitimacy of the political system. If the regime can exploit foreign policy to strengthen its legitimacy, whether by mobilizing external resources for development by confirming the state's prestige and status in the international community, or by mobilizing the masses behind external issues and diverting their interests from internal issues, then the foreign policy can be a source of trembling and deterioration of the legitimacy of this regime. .

A political system can rely on its foreign policy as a source of legitimacy when the general direction of this policy reflects the values and interests of the masses. However, foreign policy cannot confer strong and continuous legitimacy on a regime suffering from a crisis in its legitimacy. When foreign policy is successful, it supports the legitimacy of the regime, but it does not create it out of thin air.

Geographical determinants impose specific directions on the Egyptian foreign policy maker, moving in their circles, with complex calculations in relation to their connection to the state's national security. On the one hand, Egypt

depends on the waters of the Nile River for its survival, which originates outside its territory and affects all forms of life in Egypt. Since it is a downstream country, its policies are affected by the policies and positions of upstream countries. Therefore, the Nile Basin circle is considered one of the most important circles of Egyptian national security. The significance of this issue has grown in severity and impact due to the numerous Ethiopian water initiatives on the Blue Nile, particularly the Renaissance Dam project, and its potential adverse effects on Egyptian national security.

On the other hand, Egypt has coastlines extending along the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and this location had an impact on three intersecting circles:

The first is the Arab circle, About the Red Sea, which is viewed as an Arab lake, except for the area occupied by Eritrea in its southwest and the Zionist entity that occupies the Palestinian territories. This occupation had repercussions on Egyptian national security, whether with the presence of the first strategic enemy of the Egyptian state on its eastern borders, or its occupation of the Sinai Peninsula after the 1967 war. The threat increased after the coup regime ceded the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in April 2016. This increased the strategic significance and risk of this area due to its connection between the Bab al-Mandab Strait in the south and the Suez Canal in the north. Therefore, any threat in the south will have an impact on the north.

Second: The African circle, where the Red Sea represents a strategic depth for a number of important African countries, such as Ethiopia, which lost its ports on it after Eritrea's independence. In addition, the Red Sea is connected to two central circles of Egyptian national security, the Horn of Africa and the Nile Basin.

The importance of the intersecting circles around the Red Sea increased with regional and international competition over ports and military bases in the countries bordering it, whether in Yemen, Djibouti, or Eritrea, all the way to Sudan, and even targeting Egyptian ports and seeking to control them by some parties that supported the existence and survival of the post-July 3, 2013 regime. The strategic importance of the Red Sea is linked to the central location of the Sinai Peninsula. There are regional and international ambitions to control it, which has repercussions on Egypt's foreign policy and its various alliances.

Third: The Mediterranean Circle, which connects Egypt with the Levantine Arab countries (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine) and the countries of Southern Europe, and through it, multiple threats and challenges, whether in successive colonial waves or extended crises and conflicts. This circle became more complicated after the July 3 coup, with the "ruling regime in Egypt" demarcating the maritime borders and economic zones with the Zionist entity, Cyprus, and Greece, and giving up huge areas, which include enormous natural gas wealth. This situation led to a conflict with Turkey regarding demarcation and gas exploration activities, and it also allowed various regional and international parties to become involved in the gas field. This was facilitated through the establishment

of the 'Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum' in January 2019.

In the presence of fixed factors such as geographical location, cultural heritage, population, and natural resources, which are relatively stable, there are several variable factors that affect foreign policy. These variable factors include: political leadership, the political model of the state, the role of political and partisan forces, the role of security and military institutions, political and cultural elites, and civil society, as well as external challenges... the extent of their impact depends on the weakness and strength of the internal conditions, the strategic location of the state, and the nature of the political system and political leadership.

The presidential institution in Egypt was solely responsible for making foreign policy and determining its general direction in a way consistent with the ruling system's interests. The presidency has monopolized many of the files it deems vital. The method and strategy of President Mohamed Morsi after the January 2011 revolution, and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi after the 2013 coup, differed in dealing with the management of the foreign policy file. During President Morsi's tenure, he aimed to establish relationships with other nations based on principles of equality and mutual benefit, with the priority being Egypt's interests. However, Al-Sisi's shifted Egyptian foreign policy towards dependency and a lack of independence, benefiting certain regional and international partners who supported his military coup. As a result, Egypt became more like a functional subordinate used by those who financed the regime to carry out their agendas in the region.

During his presidency, President Morsi aimed to give equal attention to the Arab, Islamic, and African aspects of Egyptian foreign policy. He worked to build trust with influential Arab countries and pursued a strategy of openness with the Islamic world rather than aligning countries against each other.

On the other hand, post-coup politics suffered from a lack of vision and independence. Which caused Egypt to lose its role as a major actor in the region, and made its interests revolve in the orbit of the regime's financiers, and the regime's interests were linked to the extent of its relations with the Zionist entity at the expense of the state's national security. Although Egypt possesses all the elements of true regional power and an effective regional role, the current reality of Egyptian foreign policy, 11 years after the 2013 coup, indicates a decline not only in Egypt's regional and international standing, but also in its balance of hard and soft power in the face of many political, economic, social, cultural, media, security and military practices carried out by the coup regime to enhance its security at the expense of state security.

Egypt possesses all the elements of soft power. Its rich history is a significant cultural asset, and its location and demographic weight in the heart of the Arab nation, in addition to having the most important religious institution in the Islamic world and its strategic extension into the heart of the African continent, make it a highly desirable destination. It also has a huge human force with all the elements of scientific advancement, intellectual and cultural



leadership, and civilizational experience in the world and not just in the region.

But these assets have eroded in the face of the consolidation of the structure of tyranny under a ruling regime that does not want to give up its centrality, not only in managing the political process, but also in controlling the lives of Egyptians and the aspects of their survival as a people and a land.