

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY**

**US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT POST
2013 A COMPARISON OF OBAMA AND TRUMP
ADMINISTRATION**

Master's Thesis

ROFAIDA MOGAHED MELEGY ABOTITY

İSTANBUL, 2020

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY**

**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
GLOBAL AFFAIRS MASTER'S PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

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Rofaida Mogahed Melegy Abotity

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Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Deniz Tansi

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The US Foreign Assistance Act is a foreign policy tool, used by Washington D.C. since World War II, to enhance the capabilities of allied states against any ideological, political, or strategic threat. Egypt enjoyed the military assistance from the US under respective Act since 1979 Peace Treaty with Israel. After the military coup of 2013, Egypt experienced a shift in the US policy of military assistance in terms of multiple suspensions. Both Obama administration and Trump administration suspended military assistance to Egypt after observing failure to compliance with conditionality. Furthermore, the assistance resumed by both administration with any significant progress from Egyptian side. This study examines the failure of Egypt to fulfil the conditionality of the US Foreign Assistance Act and restoration of military aid by both administrations. The study also evaluates the similarities and differences experienced by Al- Sisi regime during Obama and Trump administration respectively, in terms of military assistance. Moreover, offshore balancing has been used as a theoretical framework to analyze the shift in the US policy towards Egypt post 2013.

Key Words: Military Assistance, Aid Suspension, Human Rights Violation, NGOs, Russai, Sinai, Terrorism, Obama Administration, Trump Administration.

ÖZET

2013 SONRASI MISIR'A ABD ASKERİ YARDIMLARI OBAMA VE TRUMP YÖNETİMİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

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ABD Dış Yardımları, Washington D.C tarafından 2. Dünya Savaşı'ndan beri müttefik devletlerin herhangi bir ideolojik, siyasi veya stratejik tehdide karşı yeteneklerini geliştirmek için kullanılan bir dış politika aracıdır. Mısır, İsrail ile 1979 Barış Antlaşması'ndan sonra sürekli ilgili Yasa uyarınca ABD'den askeri yardım aldı. 2013 askeri darbesinin ardından Mısır'a karşı ABD'nin askeri yardım politikasında bir takım değişiklikler yaşandı. Hem Obama yönetimi hem de Trump yönetimi, bazı koşullara uyulmadığını gözlemlediği için Mısır'a askeri yardımı askıya aldı. Daha sonra, konu hakkında Mısır tarafından önemli bir ilerleme kaydedildiği için, her iki yönetim tarafından yardımlar yeniden başlatıldı. Bu çalışma, Mısır'ın ABD Dış Yardımlarının koşullarını yerine getirememesini ve her iki yönetim tarafından askeri yardımın yeniden başlatılmasını incelemektedir. Çalışma ayrıca Al-Sisi rejiminin sırasıyla Obama ve Trump yönetimi sırasında yaşadığı benzerlik ve farklılıkları askeri yardım açısından değerlendirmektedir. Ayrıca, 2013 sonrası ABD politikasının Mısır'a doğru kaymasını analiz etmek için off-shore dengeleme unsuru teorik bir çerçeve olarak kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Askeri Yardım, Yardımların Askıya Alınması, İnsan Hakları İhlali, STK'lar, Russai, Sinai, Terörizm, Obama Yönetimi, Trump Yönetimi.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis
CFF	: Cash Flow Financing
DSCA	: Defense Security Cooperation Agency
FMF	: Foreign Military Finance
FMS	: Foreign Military Sales
FY	: Fiscal Year
IMET	: International Military Education & Training
ISIL-SP	: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant– Sinai Province
ISIS	: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ITAR	: International Trade in Arms Regulation
LOA	: Letter Offer and Acceptance
MESA	: Middle East Strategic Alliance
NADR	: Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related
NGO	: Nongovernmental Organization
RPG	: Rocket-Propelled Grenades
UN	: United Nations
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VBIED	: Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of Cold War after World War II, foreign aid has become one of United States of America's top priorities and included it in its national budget under the title of maintaining national security. Moreover, it is an important foreign policy tool for promoting the US interests around the world. Military assistance is one of the US foreign aids that contain aid for several programs like Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales, International Military Education and Training, and Transfers of Excess Defense Articles. The US grants that assistance to different countries in order to maintain regional and global stability which enhances its national security and raising the combat capabilities of its allies and friendly countries and building a close relationship with these recipient countries to achieve its interests and improve their military capabilities to respond different international crises. It also supports the militaries of some states in purchasing the US defense materials and services that give them greater capabilities in self-defense against any aggression. Also, it helps in improving the US defense industrial complexes which are extremely important to its national defense strategy that leads to reduce the costs of acquisitions of the Department of Defense. The last reason is to keep support for the democratic governments and human rights in countries that share the same values with the US. The United States of America provided Egypt with annual military assistance for more than 30 years. Meanwhile over the years, the military assistance kept at the same level i.e. USD 1.3 billion but the situation has dramatically changed after 2011 and there were a lot of troubles on the domestic and regional sphere in Egypt that eventually led to tensions in the relationship with the US resulted in the suspension of aid.

For the US national security, there is a firm belief regarding the importance of Egypt due to its important geopolitical position in the Middle East. Geopolitically, Egypt has the Suez Canal, from where 8% of all global maritime shipping passes through annually. The US benefits a lot because of its privilege to access the canal. Furthermore, the Suez Canal also provided the safest route for the maritime navigation of the US Navy during its invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Egypt grants the US the right to expedite passage for its Navy ships through the Canal, which provides the US a huge

strategic benefit to access its forces in the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf to deploy or commit any operation in the region. On the other hand, Egypt has a crucial role in defeating Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) besides the American war against terrorism in the Middle East and securing the Israeli border from terrorist groups in Sinai.

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty 1979 was the cornerstone of the regional peace and it was considered a significant diplomatic achievement for the US foreign policy. Similarly, it was the beginning of normalization and cooperation on several spheres between Egypt and Israel. Recently, Egyptian and Israeli forces increased their cooperation in Sinai against jihadist militants. Therefore, the Egyptian authorities worked to construct a wall on the border with the Gaza Strip. In recent years, the forces have demolished the tunnels linking the Egyptian city of Rafah in Sinai with Gaza, having a length of 14 km in order to prevent the infiltration of militants and extremists by using Sinai as a stronghold and threatening the security of Israel. The "Egyptian Armed Forces Engineering Authority" supervises the construction of this wall. The construction of this wall came after the army deported the citizens to establish a buffer zone that extends for about 5 kilometers to the depth in Sinai and removed the homes of many Sinai citizens in the city of Rafah and its villages.

Egypt's geopolitical position is vital for the US to keep intact its hegemonic designs in the region. Therefore, internal stability of Egypt is also a concern of America. It was first time during Obama regime that the US military assistance was suspended due to the internal dynamics of Egypt and restored. The interesting point is not suspension of military assistance but restoration. According to the US national security, the military aid recipient state will share the same political and strategic goals as the US. Therefore, in case of failing in fulfillment of commitment will result in suspension of strategic support from the US. Whereas, in case of Egypt, the US administration amended its laws to facilitate Cairo, instead of building a pressure.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This thesis discovers the reasons behind the suspension of military aid by the US to Egypt during the Obama administration and Trump. The military took over charge in Cairo and toppled down the elected government of Mohammad Morsi in 2013. Oval office was monitoring these non-democratic developments in Egypt but did not respond even when the two-years-old democracy was under authoritarian threat. The US responded after the Raba and Nahda massacre out of frustration after analyzing the severe human rights violation by security forces. Washington had many concerns about internal stability that has affected regional security because a stable Egypt is the backbone of the United States' interests and regional policy, but an unstable Egypt may halt the geopolitical ambitions of the US. The suspension decision was a compromise between American's objection about the military coup and the preservation of its interests. Moreover, second reason was the Egyptian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) law, which violates and restricts the civil society in Egypt, in addition to jailing the civil workers whether they are Egyptians or foreigners and some of them were even US citizens. Human rights violations and NGO's problem remained the same in Trump's presidential era besides the Egyptian-North Korean relations which led to a suspension for the second time. All these events made the United States administration review its military assistance policies towards Egypt and take many crucial decisions regarding the whole situation. The policies reviewing led to two important decisions, first Ending Cash Flow Financing that features which Egypt enjoyed since signing the Peace Treaty. Second, the assistance would be for four categories only, these decisions would enable the US to take more aggressive and effective steps in case of violation of any condition related to foreign assistance. In addition, it also helped the US to deflect its previous responsibility regarding constant support to Egypt in terms of its defense purchases. Therefore, the internal political situation of Egypt in terms of human rights specifically was further deteriorated because of the ignorance expressed by the US administration for the sake of its own larger security interest. Moreover, at an external level, the suspension led Egypt to find other international actors to gain their support to get recognition for the new regime and try to build pressure on the US to restore the assistance again. Egypt extended its relations with Russia and France and got unprecedented Gulf support that enabled it from signing many defenses deals in the

absence of the United States. Finally, Washington released its military assistance again because of the internal instability of Egypt in terms of terrorism that was spilling over towards Israel, especially in the Sinai Peninsula which effects the Israeli national security. The emergence of Islamic State in Sinai Province (IS-IP) compelled the US to reconsider its suspension on Egypt. Meanwhile, Egypt was receiving aid from oil-rich Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates and tries to be close to new suppliers like Russia and France. Therefore, the US amended its conditions second time regarding military assistance for Egypt as an exceptional case to enhance the capability of its forces to fight against terrorism. Moreover, the US was also concerned regarding the tilt of Egypt towards Russia and France i.e. loss of a historical consumer for its military-industrial complex. As a result, the US restore its military assistance to Egypt and resumed all defense agreements including the supply of modern military hardware.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Examining the theory of influence by examining the way that US leverage from (FMS) the Foreign Military Sales and (IMET) the International Military Education as tools for influence (Scott Charles, G. 1996). by using the "model of influence" to identify different three types of "impacts" influences: bargaining, structural, and hegemony. Bargaining the most direct way to gain leverage over certain issues which it concerns the donor. Hegemony is the choice of the decision-making elite in the client state. The structural effect, the donor attempts to create a structural restriction to change the weapons recipient's behavior.

Sending assistance to Egypt makes it completely dependent on American weapons in arming, therefore American dominating not let the country take any decision against the US policies and interests of its allies. Also, the IMET program creates a constant class effect by American culture in the Egyptian army, they believe in the importance of the American military aids. The thesis does not agree with the conclusion that the FMS and IMET programs are not suitable for long term goals, which is wrong especially with continue strong relations in Trump's presidential period and after the revolution under all this fog the relationship keeps going well. In addition to it, the IMET always build those leaders who try to keep the assistance and strength relations with the US in

addition to the role of Mubarak administration in keeping peace and regional stability by peace with Israel and still his predecessors are still taking the same approach. Evaluating the factors in the period of the post-Cold War that affected or would affect the US security assistance to Israel and Egypt, through three factors; its strategic interests, and its financial concerns and developments in the Middle East (Clarke, D. 1997). The US security assistance programs, began in 1946, have established to contain the Soviet Union's influence. But the assistance that garnered to the two countries could not change unless both Congress and Lobbyists play crucial roles.

If the military aid continued to Israel it would be also continued to Egypt, while if the economic aid or other non-military aid to Israel declined it would also fall to Egypt. In 1996, in a report for the internal State Department, in recommendations of this report, it suggested reducing the ESF aid in the late nineties. Second, if the aid to Egypt were not tied to aid to Israel, it would have been cut off long ago, but to maintain peace between the two countries and the stability of the region, aid is still sent. On the other side, reducing the economic aid would not have an appreciable impact on the peace process but the military aid would continue to flow at the same level. It is an old article and the military aid keeps at the same level \$1.3 billion while the economic aid had been reduced from the mid-90s to \$250 million till now, which means the article prediction is true. Also, the article focused on Israel and made Egypt as dependent on Israeli deservedness while both countries gained this assistance for keeping in peace.

Analyzing the way that the United States and the Middle East receiving countries aid benefited from military and security assistance, and the consequences of receiving such military aids on the domestic policy of the recipient country, and how the United States achieves many of its strategic goals through the military aid. Figuring out how granting military aid reinforces authoritarian regimes in recipient countries, while keep providing assistance do not compatible with American principles sometimes, Egypt as a case study (Axelrod, M. C. (2011), through interviews with governmental officials from the US and Egyptian government. In addition to it, the experience of the job of the writer as a director in the office of the Secretary of the Egyptian Minister of Defense "2005-2007" and academic resources. The regional armies played a pivotal role under

continuous political unrest in the Arab World. The Arabic generals had received aid and many training from the US. In the end, foreign influence did not bring political improvement in Egypt, but the domestic political actions bring the reform. The American government believed that the Egyptian military could avoid the disruption of Egyptian politics after the removal of President Mubarak in February 2011. After the revolution, the new Egyptian military leadership has pledged to respect its political obligations abroad, and this means its permanent peace with Israel. In fact, the Israeli leaders expressed their satisfaction with the border security measures in that period. Obviously, the Egyptian army is no longer separate from politics during the transitional period. Accordingly, the military and strategic relations between Egypt and the United States are going to enter a new stage.

Analyzing the way each administration "Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak" with the regional and global challenges by examining its foreign policy goals and decisions. And focused on the leadership of Morsi regarding his present foreign policy challenges and prospects, he described how Morsi's administration takes the decisions and how the future can be affected by these decisions (Khawaja, N. 2013). Egyptian foreign policy basically revolved around specific issues such as economic stability, security, relations with powerful countries, and Arabic and regional influential states since Nasser until Morsi. While Nasser policies were successful in maintaining strong relations with the Arab world, he was anti-Israel, anti-West, and pro-Soviet policy. Sadat reversed that to reconciled with the West and maintained friendly relations with Israel. Consequently, the Arab countries cut off their relations with Egypt. Also, Mubarak followed the same Sadat pro-West policy, but he succeeded in restoring relations with the Arab countries. Morsi adjusted his predecessors' policies because of the changing circumstances in the region and adopted diverse methods. he revival relations with Turkey, China, the EU, and Saudi Arabia that new ties made the United States uncomfortable. In addition to the Egyptian proposal of forming a collection of four countries, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, that raised more worries in Washington.

But the Egyptian foreign policy did not change much during the rule of President Morsi from his predecessor. Morsi maintained friendly relations with the United States despite of its continuing fears towards him because he was a president from an Islamic background, but he committed to the US red lines in their relationship. He continued obligated to the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty, even he had a prominent role in the Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation. The relationship also permeated several tensions, but it did not affect the strategic dimension.

Focused on continuity and changes in the United States foreign policy and analyzing the role of realism and Globalization in formulating the US foreign policy towards Egypt between 1970 and 1981(Muhammed Ahmed, M. 1983). By following the historical roots of the US foreign policy towards Egypt, focusing on motivations that had affected the relations since Abdel-Nasser, and studied the rapprochement with Sadat and the following growth politically, economically, and strategic interests. The United States' efforts to build regional alternatives be able to maintain regional order and stability through constant military and economic aid. The US focused on the factor of continued economic aid to Egypt to achieve peace with Israel and enhancing Sadat's economic policies i.e. "open-door". Accordingly, continuing economic and military aids from the US contribute to the backwardness of the Egyptian economy and increase the Egyptian dependent on the United States, while always there are continuous contraventions of human rights in Egypt. The thesis focused the most on the economic side and only mentioned the historical military side between them.

The United States way to preserve the strategic partnership and a strong relationship with Egypt under the Egyptian political changing, and the US adhering by its values if the people in power are not sharing the same strategic goals with it. The thesis analyzed the developments in the Egypt from January 2011 to August 2012 (Aftandilian, G. 2013). Therefore, to keep good strategic relations, Morsi should not interfere in drafting the new constitution or elections of parliamentary that allow all political parties to fair competition. Second, the US military assistance should not be cut off but increase economic aid. Also, the administration officials have to not oppose to linking assistance to democracy terms as it is a US important value. Third, the United States continues to

assist the Egyptian army in dealing with the extremist in the Sinai. Regarding the US Army, leaders should encourage Egyptians to keep attending in the US professional military educational institutions and keep the military-to-military contacts, participating with Egypt to face the regional threat, and reconducting the Bright Star exercises.

The US Egyptian relations did not suffer that much during the Morsi's ruling period, he committed to the US conditions for assistance and he did not remain in power for more than a year. As military-military ties remained strong and very close and the US passing the Suez Canal remain accessible. When there is a military coup of a leader democratically elected, it should be cut off aids immediately. whether continued US aid to Egypt after the ouster of an elected president is lawful and consistent with US law or not, analysis of legal and political relations between Egypt and the United States in the latest decades (Schmitz, E. 2013), and mentioning some cases where the foreign aid should be cut with analyzing the aid disbursements law that governs US foreign assistance applies to recent events in Egypt by its army and then compared the contradiction to other cases, because the US needs to keep its national security, humanitarian concerns, and Commercial interests with Egypt.

The issue was discussed from a legal side, his aspect was different from political. Although, the orientation of this study is also related to the same topic, he dealt with laws and provisions of law. But the most important is that the assistance mainly affected by the political side and policy consideration, not the legal side. Besides the United States' attempts to fill the legal loopholes and continue to send the aids to Egypt to keep her loyal ally safe. The US-Egypt security cooperation in the aftermath of 2011 and the legal framework and related legislation in the light of President Morsi's removal in July 2013. The US had used the national security waiver since 2011 to evade the legislative requirements for US security assistance to Egypt. In general, The United States hesitates in using its close relationship with Egypt to pressure it in order to support political reform and human rights. As some of the State Department and defense officials fear that any suspending or reconditioning of aids may anger the Egyptian government and lead to loss of the US leverage over Egypt in the future (Tavana, D. L. 2014). On a previous three occasions, the US has successfully conditioned its aid. one, under Bush

Administration in August 2002, Second, in February 2011 during the revolution protests when US military officials cleared that the aid would be cut if it continues the repression campaign and demonstrators dispersed by force in Tahrir Square. Third, in February 2012 after the Egyptian authorities raided several NGOs offices and bringing them to trial. The United States has always warned cutting aid, since Mubarak and even after the 2011 revolution, but it has not already cut it. It just used this card to pressurise Egypt to achieve improvements in the Egyptian domestic situation. The paper analyzed the issue from a legislative approach more than political and explained how the US reconditioned the aid and enacted subsequent laws to be enabled to keep sending aids. Holding up aids was not an effective way to promote democracy in Egypt (Hawthorne, A. 2014), there are difficulties of dealing with the FMS program in general because of the complex requirements of the US military appropriations law. The 2014 law considers as a compromise between two camps of different interests in Congress and administration. The Obama administration had linked Egypt's restoration of military purchases to the implementation of democracy and electing a new civilian government with free and fair elections. Obama's new aid policy in arming was that weapons for progress in democracy and peace instead of peace with Israel, but the administration failed in that. that's why the administration would not take a stricter decision about democracy promotion especially after failing to achieve its goals by aid suspension at that time, and oppression under Sisi's harsh rule can create instability in Egypt or it will worsen the terrorism situation in the region which the United States seeking to combat. The Obama administration failed to pressure Egypt by withholding aids and could not take a strong action to impose democracy. preferable for some in the US, the oppressive Sisi's rule is better than violence and terrorism in Syria Iraq and Libya.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Why US amended its Foreign Assistance Act regarding Egypt post 2013?

- a) Why Obama and Trump Administrations suspended Military Aid to Egypt?
- b) Why US military assistance policy changed towards Egypt?

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

Geopolitics of Egypt compelled the US to change its foreign assistance act.

The study has evaluated the answers regarding questions i.e. why the US suspended its military aid to Egypt and why released it again? Moreover, why the US made significant changes in its military assistance policies towards Egypt? The study has maintained this hypothesis that geopolitics of Egypt compelled the US to amend its military assistance act. The hypothesis is supported by Offshore Balancing Theory by John Mearsheimer. Egyptian involvement with Russia and France regarding arms deal and its relations with Saudi Arabia and UAE for financial assistance threatened the US security designs. Egyptian geopolitical location also played a key role in restoration of US military assistance.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Offshore balancing theory has been used to analyze the questions related to suspension and restoration of US military assistance to Egypt. Offshore balancing states that the hegemon does not has to participate militarily, to keep regional balance according to its desire. According to John Mearsheimer, the US as a hegemon could strengthen its regional allies to safeguard its vital national security interests. As Israel's security is considered a vital security interest by the US therefore, peripheries of Israel must be secured and stabilized. Moreover, Egypt and Israel fought three wars and ended in signing a peace treaty but to ensure this status quo, the US provided Egypt military aid. Therefore, the suspension of respective military aid and Cairo's quest for new financiers and suppliers compelled Washington D.C. to reevaluate regional dynamics. Also, the theory interprets the need of the Egyptian army to defeat IS-SP in the American war against terrorism in the Middle East, and the most important is maintaining the security of the Israeli border by securing the Sinai and assist Egypt to fight against terrorism. While some US regional allies -like Israel and Gulf Arab monarchies- have sought to pressure the US to return the aid again to Egypt. Also, US-Egyptian cooperation still seen as vital to US national security interests in the Middle East. Furthermore, the

importance of the Suez Canal to the American interests in the region and depending on it in the emergency and deployed its forces in the Persian Gulf in case of any threat.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The research is based on qualitative research method where content analysis of secondary data has been incorporated. Qualitative research in its nature is exploratory, it helps to understand the information in detail. In addition, it provides rich information about any topic. The study used qualitative method to gain in-depth information about suspending the United States military assistance to Egypt in two different presidential periods under Obama and Trump during the Sisi regime. Also, the suspension of military assistance by both administrations has been evaluated by using qualitative research method. International relations specifically the diplomatic relations are dependent on various factors specifically national interests or national security imperatives therefore, it is hard to predict any future course of action regarding the US-Egypt relations. But, by analyzing the contemporary scenario with respect to historical ties between two states, the study has interpreted the projectile of these terms. The change in the US policy towards Egypt after the suspension of military assistance is exceptional. International relations have experienced this phenomenon first time in Middle Eastern politics that aid donor amended its act for the sack of larger national security interest.

Moreover, the study has used comparative method to analyze the reasons for the suspension of the military aid to Egypt under both administrations; the Obama administration and the Trump administration during Sisi regime. The thesis has investigated the reasons that led to cut off the aid and how it impacted the relations. First, by analyzing relations in general during the rule of each president and how the two administrations dealt with the Egyptian situation and their priorities. Second, the study has analyzed reasons behind the decision of withholding of military assistance and what were the administration's ambitions. Third, the role of each administration in taking suspension decision and the role of the US Congress in enacting laws related to the Egyptian situation. Fourth, the Egyptian respond regarding this suspension and how the aid restored again.

The thesis has evaluated reasons for suspension such as Egyptian violations of human rights and NGO law in both administrations and the Egypt-North Korea relations during the Trump administration. Also, the study followed the consequences of suspension of the "Cash Flow Financing" that features only a few countries benefit from. Furthermore, this thesis examined if the amount of military assistance had affected by the suspension or not. Finally, this research concluded with a special focus on the differences and similarities regarding both administrations.

The essence of every research is its methodological mapping. Therefore, qualitative comparative case studies methods will be used to study the research subject which is also known as Small n Design. John Stuart Mill introduced a systemic logic in social sciences to study the causality of multiple variables in case studies research. Small-N comparisons are guided by Mill's methods of agreement and difference, also known as the most different versus the most similar research design. These are commonly used methods in comparative research which was later followed by Lijphart De Meur and Berg-Schlosser etc. The comparative case studies method is normally preferred when two or multiple cases are under investigation. The subject to be studied or unit of inquiry can be institutions, events, policies or decisions, nations or alliances, etc.

1.7 STUDY DESIGN

- i) Introduction
- ii) Theoretical Framework
- iii) The Suspension of Military Aid to Egypt during Obama and Trump Administration
- iv) Shift in Foreign Assistance Act and Release of Military Aid to Egypt
- v) Conclusion

The study is comprised of three chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. In first chapter, the hypothesis of study has been examined by a theoretical framework i.e. Offshore Balancing. The US security imperatives across the globe to maintain unipolarity in terms of military and the extension of its defense program to enhance the capability of its allies, can be understood by the interpretation of John Mearsheimer. The era of military advancement beyond Pacific and Atlantic oceans is about to end.

The US administration since President Barrack Obama, avoiding any active military involvement in Middle East and Asia Pacific. Therefore, the US is militarily empowering its allies to counter both traditional and non-traditional threats. In the following chapter, the study examined the suspension of military assistance to Egypt during Obama and Trump administration. The direct and indirect reasons are analyzed to understand the different positions of Washington D.C. and Cairo. Also, the justification by the US and reluctance from Egypt is examined academically to understand the circumstances faced by decision makers on both sides. Moreover, in the last chapter the restoration of military assistance is analyzed during both Obama and Trump regimes. The amendment in the US foreign assistance act to facilitate Egypt is examined in the respective chapter. The geopolitical significance of Egypt for the US national security has influenced both Obama and Trump administration to ignore traditional conditions of foreign assistance act and consider Egypt as an exceptional case. Moreover, as long as Egypt maintain its Peace treaty with Israel and don't violate it the United States will keep granting its assistance -this condition didn't violate by any Egyptian regime, because the US policy toward Egypt is aimed to maintain regional stability, continuing military cooperation, sustaining the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and improve bilateral relations.

2. THE US-EGYPT RELATIONS POST 2013- A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 OFFSHORE BALANCING

Offshore Balancing was used for first time by Christopher Layne in his article titled “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America’s Future Grand Strategy” (Layne, 1997), he articulate the depth of his idea in his work “Offshore Balancing Revisited” (Layne, 2002) that was published by the Washington Quarterly. But basically, the main proponents of the theory are Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, two political scientists that published their paper “The Case for Offshore Balancing” (Walt et al., 2016). Furthermore, Stephen Walt articulated this strategy with more detail and in his work, "The hell of good intentions: America’s foreign policy elite and the decline of US Primacy” (Walt, 2018).

Both John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt are well-known theorists and scientists of political science and international relations, they are belong to the realist perspective of politics and in particular to the neoclassical realism stream with its defensive (Walt) and offensive (Mearsheimer) sides, the realism always considered as the mainstream in this political field. The two researchers consider this theory the best strategy for perpetuating the US supremacy in the future. This strategy is based on an important pivotal principle that Washington D.C. can abandon its ambitious efforts to shape the rest of societies and focus on what really matters to them, namely: preserving the hegemony of the United States in the western part of the world and confronting potential hegemons in Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Gulf region. The United States relied on "Offshore Balancing" this long-term strategy after its victory over the allies in World War II. The strategy continued even with the threat from the Soviet Union due to the absence of any hegemon that could exclude the US from some areas or prevent it from investing in other states.

2.2 THE US FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT AND OFFSHORE BALANCING

The theory elaborates that the United States should be concerned with certain regions: such as Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Gulf region, and primarily relies on the regional actors to support local power balances, while the function of the local allies is to prevent any state from controlling these areas and prevent any "individual hegemony", in exchange for political and logistical support. The theory does not prevent the US from directly interfering at times; however, it limits this intervention to situations in which the allies are unable to achieve a balance, and they stress that this intervention must be limited and rapid.

Under the umbrella of offshore balancing strategy, the United States can balance the deployment of its army based on the distribution of power in the three main regions. If there is no regional hegemon in Europe, Northern Asia, and the Persian Gulf, there is no need to deploy ground or air forces there. The first two regions are considered the main centers of industrial power in the world in which the rest of the world powers exist, while the third region produces about 30% of the global oil. For example, in the Gulf, the US has its stakes in blocking any dominant rise that could intervene to prevent the flow of oil from the Gulf and harm the global economy and threaten the US hegemony. The US has to deal with the regional powers as the first line of defense of itself, letting these states with their mission of maintaining the balance of power in their respective neighborhood. Despite the US can aid its allies and pledged to support them in case they come under threat. On the other hand, Washington D.C. must also curb its deployment of large numbers of its forces abroad according to John Mearsheimer, the proponent of offshore balancing. However, sometimes the presence of troops is important to preserving secure overseas assets, such as small-sized military units, facilities, intelligence gathering, pre-prepared equipment, but in general, Washington D.C. should transfer responsibility to regional powers, as long as these forces have a great interest in preventing any state from controlling them. In the event of a threat to any pivotal state in one of these three regions, the US can intervene if these countries are unable to contain the potential hegemon in their neighborhood, by deploying combat forces to the region to maintain the balance in its favor. Sometimes this may mean sending its forces before the outbreak of a war. During the Cold War, for example, the United States

maintained large numbers of its ground and air forces in Europe, believing that Western European countries could not contain expansionist designs of the Soviet Union. The crux of this theory is that the goal is to stay away from the external realm as much as possible while realizing that sometimes it becomes necessary to intervene in this region. But if that happens, the United States should make its allies do their best to shoulder the heavy burden and withdraw its forces as soon as it can.

The offshore balancing strategy has several advantages, by reducing the areas that the US forces are committed to defending. It minimizes the number of resources that the US must allocate to defense and allows more investment and consumption at home. Moreover, it reduces the foreign threat to Americans' lives. For example, the allies of the United States depend on it for protection, and this problem has grown since the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, the United States accounts for 46% of NATO's allies' total GDP, contributing around 75% of the NATO military spending. Thus, relying on offshore balancing theory reduces the US defense spending and protects it from engaging in foreign wars.

The strategy also can reduce the terrorist threat. Contrary to the "liberal hegemonic" approach where the US committed to spreading democracy in the world, which sometimes requires a military occupation, and always involves interference in the local politics of the occupying state. Consequently, these efforts are constantly reinforcing national discontent in occupied countries where the opponents are so weak to confront the United States directly, so they sometimes resort to terrorism. For example, the attacks of 9/11, the attackers were motivated against the US due to the presence of its forces on their homeland. Accordingly, the theory alleviates this problem by reducing the US military presence offshore, and the presence of US military forces on any foreign land is in the case of existing a vital region is threatened by another hegemon. However, the theory has many positives, it is subjected to criticism in the academic field for several reasons:

The first criticism of the theorists is that they are isolationists: they believe that the United States should withdraw from the world and focus only on defending its lands.

On the contrary, the pioneers of this theory believe that the United States should remain actively involved with other nations, economically, diplomatically, and even militarily in some cases. They respond to this argument by stating that they do not believe that the US always staying within its borders, especially when there will be moments when its intervention becomes necessary in other regions, to prevent the rise of a potential hegemon that could threaten the country's security in the long run. Most advocates of the theory believe that the US should have a military presence in Asia to counter the rise of China and preserve its existing ability to intervene in other regions. The second criticism is that the theory does not fully anticipate threats: The proponents of the theory recommend shifting responsibility to local forces when possible, to keep the US away from unnecessary problems. But they are criticized if in some events that the US misread the balance of power and did not respond with the required speed. Therefore, if such a case happens, can Washington wake up to a nightmare and discover that the time for intervention is too late and that the later intervention will be more costly. The advocates of the theory respond that it is very easy to notice the potential hegemons, as is happening now with China or as happened previously with the Soviet Union in World War II, and also that the US administration must weigh the amount of risk and know whether the event requires a low reaction or that the risk is severe and requires prompt and binding intervention. The third criticism is that if the US applied this theory, its competitors would seek to fill the void it will leave. Critics of the theory claim that reducing the US commitments and overseas military presence, signals a shameful retreat that would create opportunities for US adversaries to increase their own global influence. However, this is unrealistic and completely unrealistic, and there is no current policy.

The fourth criticism is that the advocates of the theory do not care about values. Some argue that had the United States acted with greater restraint in the past, it would have abandoned the liberal principles on which the country was founded. For liberal internationalists, American power, including military force, should be used to spread democracy, defend human rights, and ultimately make the rest of the world look like us. The attempt to remake the world in the American image is a mission that failed abroad, and instead, it helped undermine those same values here at home. According to the

proponents of the theory, the best way to promote and spread liberal values is by setting a good example by using the power and wealth of the US to create a just and prosperous society that attracts the admiration of others and seeks to emulate it on their own. The proponents of the holding back approach do not "take down" the values, as they believe in a different strategy that can promote these values more effectively.

The fifth criticism is that applying this theory will encourage the issue of nuclear proliferation. There is a common assumption that if the United States stops protecting many foreign countries, some current beneficiaries will race to acquire nuclear weapons. It is not certain that any or all these countries will choose to cross the nuclear threshold, even if the United States decides to withdraw its nuclear umbrella. The decision to acquire nuclear weapons is subject to many complex calculations, and concerns about the potential for the rapid spread of nuclear weapons have turned out to be exaggerated. Moreover, the unfettered exercise of American power has not prevented some countries from acquiring nuclear weapons in the past. Accordingly, it is likely that some countries will possess the nuclear bomb in the future, regardless of the strategy pursued by the United States. Critics argue that adopting that theory would revive persons like Hitler, Stalin, or worse. Some critics claim that global US engagement is the only way to prevent the return of intense rivalries between major powers as they were in the past. The theory proved the illusion of this claim because events indicate the presence of US forces in a region that does not guarantee peace, as happened in the wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, South Asia, and the Balkans. The truth is that wars and conflicts are always possible, regardless of how the US decides to deploy or use their military forces.

Furthermore, in the Gulf, the United States should return to the offshore balancing strategy that has served it well since the dual containment strategy. There is now no power in the region capable of dominating the region, so the US can move its forces back across the horizon. Despite, Iran has a larger population and much greater economic potential than its Arab neighbors, and it could ultimately take on the status of dominance in the Gulf. In the event that it began moving in this direction, the United

States should help the rest of the Gulf states to balance against Tehran, examining its own efforts and its regional military presence, given the magnitude of this danger.

Regarding ISIS, the US leaves the regional powers there to deal with this group and worked on providing those regional powers with weapons, intelligence support, and military training. ISIS is a serious threat, but it is considered a small problem for the United States, and the only long-term solution to this problem is to establish better local institutions, which is something Washington D.C. cannot provide. Moreover, in Syria, the United States should let Russia take the lead. A stable Syria under Assad's rule or divided into competing small states would pose little threat to US interests. Both Democratic and Republican presidents have a rich history of working with the Assad regime, and a divided and weak Syria will not threaten the regional balance of power. If the civil war continues, it will be a major problem for Moscow, although Washington D.C. should be prepared to help broker a political settlement.

Egypt is an important country in the Middle East region, it has a significant position historically, politically, and culturally in the Arab world, and has geographical and demographical importance generally in the world. It controls the Suez Canal, one of the world's most important maritime chokepoint. Although it may not play the same role of leading in politics and military in the Arab world today as it did in the past, it still retains some of the soft power. Egypt and Israel are also bound by the 1979 peace treaty between them. This treaty considered an achievement of diplomacy promoted the Arab-Israeli peace in the region. Recently, the two countries have increased their cooperation to eliminate the Islamic militants and the instability in the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip.

Accordingly, to the Peace treaty 1979, the United States has provided military and economic assistance to Egypt over USD 83 billion in bilateral foreign aid since 1946 till now. (Sharp, J. M., 2019) All successive US administrations have justified their assistance to Egypt as an investment in regional stability, based on long-term cooperation with the Egyptian military and the preservation of the peace treaty. Therefore, if the US pulls its assistance it would affect the Middle East peace process,

while Washington works on to secure Israel in the region so it keeps sending the assistance.

Egypt is also important for the US because it controls the Suez canal, it is a vital road for more than 4% of the world supply of oil and around 8% of seaborne trade. Therefore, if there is any threat of Egyptian security because of the increased violence it would effectively affect global trade as a whole and, it will end with losses in the Americans in their pocketbook. Also, The US has helped Egypt over decades through military to military cooperation. For 30 years, it contributed to the rehabilitation, training, and equipping of the Egyptian army to be a strong army, with the ability to contribute to keeping the stability of the Middle East. Egypt also helps the US through the preferential passage to the Suez Canal and overflights its territory, which would facilitate the movement of American military assets across the region, as in the invasion of Iraq.

Israel has become the representative of the Western and American camps in the region, the protector of their interests in the Middle East, especially after the rise of the Soviet Union, and Arab nationalist calls, such as Nasserism and Baathism between 1978 and 1982. Israel had received significant US military and economic aid. Especially after the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran and America's loss of its most important ally in the region. Therefore, Israel has become the United States' primary agent in the region and has enjoyed great immunity from academic and media criticism inside the US, and both the Democrats and Republicans did not disagree on supporting Israel. Also, one of the most powerful influenced lobby inside the US is the Israeli lobby. The largest institution of this lobby is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) organization, which has been operating in the US since 1951 with great efforts to influence political decision-making in the interest of Israel through its members in various American institutions. In addition, Israel enjoys the US security guarantees for military superiority in the region and strengthening its deterrence capability. However, Iranian nuclear program represents a threat to the Israel's existence and to the US' interests in the Middle East as well, and there is no country that can deal with the Iranian nuclear program and confront it except the United States.

According to the offshore balancing theory, the United States has restored and reshaped military assistance again to keep sending weapons and provide Egypt with its needs to defeat the terrorism in Sinai and maintain the Israeli border security. Egypt is still vital to the US national security interests in the Middle East however, many observers and advocates of democracy and human rights argue that the continuous military support is a contradiction between the US security interests and the democratic values it calls for. Accordingly, as a middle ground, the administration withheld the military assistance to Egypt and reviewed it by taking a lot of significant decisions; gradually get rid of cash flow financing and use the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) on Sinai Peninsula security, border security, counterterrorism, and maritime security programs. Nevertheless, the aid will continue to be granted in view of the mutual security interests of the two parties and Egypt's commitment to the peace treaty with Israel, as well as to continue to enhance the joint effort against the violent extremism that Egypt faces.

3. THE SUSPENSION OF MILITARY AID TO EGYPT DURING OBAMA AND TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

3.1 OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND THE AL-SISI REGIME IN EGYPT (2013-16)

After a one-year coup, Egypt held a presidential election. And as result Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi became officially elected president after a flawed election. In 2013 the Egyptian army ousted the first elected Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi. The military had arrested the president and his presidential staff in an unknown place since 2013 and brought him to trial until his death in 2019 without a fair trial. After that Egyptian American dramatic relation of tension began. Directly the US canceled the Bright Star exercise and keep calling Egyptians administration to promote democracy and stop violence against protesters. But the Obama administration never defines what happened in Egypt as a coup in order not to stop sending assistance to Egypt specially the military aid.

The Egyptian military carried out a military coup led by the Minister of Defense "AL-SISI" on July 3, 2013. After that Morsi's Supporters objected and they initiated a sit-in at *Rabaa* square. But the military committed three massacres and bloody evacuation of *Rabaa* and *Al Nahda* square killing around 1000 protesters. During that massacre, Al Sisi oversaw the ministry of Defense and giving all orders to the military. The state entered a transitional period for a year then an election had been held. The US cut assistance to Egypt and called for restoring democracy. Indeed, the elections were held, but in a repressive atmosphere with the exclusion of all opponents of Sisi and military rule. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi became an official president in 2014 until 2018 his first presidential period. The first presidential period experienced change of the US administration i.e. from Barrack Obama to Donald Trump. Moreover, the tensions between Obama and Al Sisi started soon after the military coup in 2013. When Sisi led the coup, he was the head of the Egyptian armed forces. And he appointed Adli Mansour -the Head of the Supreme Constitutional Court- as interim president for the country.

Since the military coup in July 2013 and the following events, Washington D.C. had many concerns about internal stability of Egypt and continuous repression has affected domestic security. A stable Egypt is the backbone of the United States' interests and regional policy, but an unstable Egypt is a disaster. So, the return of the authoritarian rule was a trap for the US policymakers and the Obama administration because the negation of human and political basic rights creates conditions auxiliary to growth the violence and extremism. After the presidential election, the Egyptian and US administration tried to normalize bilateral relations but unfortunately, Obama and Al-Sisi had a strained relationship. But the military cooperation in combating terrorism field was going well. Obama administration attempted to redefine the relationship, but the administration was preoccupied with defeating the Islamic State in the region and the agreement of nuclear with Iran, which make the Egyptian situation less priority for it. However, the administration had taken important actions. In President Obama's speech in May 2014, he stated that the relationship with Egypt is based on security interests, it is starting from the Israeli peace treaty until our joint efforts to combat terrorist extremism. That's why the United States did not prevent its cooperation with the new Egyptian regime. (Sharp, J. M., 2015)

3.1.1 Aid Suspension

The Obama administration tried to formulate a policy toward Egypt seeking a compromise, with the continuation of strong military ties without condoning Egypt's campaign against their opposition. Following the 2013 coup, the Obama Administration had frozen its assistance and had partial suspension of 1.3 billion dollars in its annual military assistance, moreover, it conducted a long review of its foreign aid policy in general towards Egypt. As well as the Obama administration refused to recognize what the Egyptian army did -by overthrew the former President and taking over the power- as a coup. Because that would have cut the aid altogether, so, it is avoiding the legal obligation of cut off all military assistance for countries where the legal government is bypassed by the armed forces.

In October 2013, the Obama administration announced that it withheld the delivery of particular large scales military systems, such as the F 16s fighter jets, Apache

helicopters, Harpoon missiles, and tank kits M1A1 to Egypt. The administration declared that it will not release the assistance until the Egyptian government show progress toward democracy in the country. Also, President Obama canceled the "Operation Bright Star" exercise, a joint US Egypt military exercise because of the Egyptian regime's security crackdown after the Rabaa and Nahda massacre.

The military coup in July 2013, put the US policymakers in a dilemma after returning the authoritarian rule because US law prohibits the aid of any government that toppled its elected president through a military coup or decree, it has raised many questions about the legitimacy of constant aids to the Egyptian government. There was a debate between two points of views in Washington, one camp believes in the importance of incorporating the values that the United States adopts in its relationship with Egypt. This wing within the US administration led by National Security Adviser Susan Rice and a large number of members of Congress in addition to the most important international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch. In the other camp, they believe that the US interests first, such as the Department of Defense and the Department of state, and some of the United States' traditional allies like Israel and the Arab Gulf. In addition to another important factor related to the previous factors, which is the strong relations between the Egyptian military establishment and the United States since the signing of the peace treaty with Israel. Most of the army's weapons and the training of the Egyptian leaders are by Americans, and Washington was uncomfortable with Egyptian turning toward Russia and France in order to obtain weapons, that would affect the United States' supervision of the Egyptian weapon. But most of them believed that it is time to reassess US strategic interests in Egypt.

3.1.2 Provisions in Law

According to US law, it is prohibited from sending any foreign aids to the country ousted its elected president by military action. The United States has enacted several laws regarding the conditions for sending assistance to Egypt, although it overlooked the 7008-law act in order not to stop sending the annual assistance taking into consideration its values and calling for democracy, and respect the law. One of them is

the 7041-law following the 2012 fiscal year, the state department and foreign operations appropriations law- it gave The Secretary of State waiver authority.

Subsequently, Congress has passed legislation in January 2014, after Egypt's military toppled of the elected president "Mohamed Morsi" in July 2013. Both the Obama administration and Congress did not want to completely halt military aid, as required by the "coup condition" according to the US Appropriations Act. The 2014 appropriations law contained special exempting for Egyptians from provisions of the "7008" clause as it allowed some foreign military finance to Egypt to move forward. But also, it led to an unprecedented disruption of the FMF program and the detention of some military aid. The US foreign assistance law prohibits sending aids to any country when a democratically elected government is overthrown by a military coup. The law stated that:

Section. 7008.

"None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available pursuant to titles III through VI of this Act shall be obligated or expended to finance directly any assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup d'état or decree or, after the date of enactment of this Act, a coup d'état or decree in which the military plays a decisive role. But this provision has an exception for Egypt:

Provided, that assistance may be resumed to such government if the Secretary of State certifies and reports to the appropriate congressional committees that a democratically elected government has taken office. (CRS In Focus, 2020)

The restriction applies to select types of aid like "Foreign assistance funds" including military assistance and economic assistance. In the case of Egypt, the conditions met the situation in Egypt that means the US has to cut off all aid because there was a Coups d'état. First, the Egyptian army has toppled the legitimate government. Second, the president who had deposed was duly elected by free and democratic elections. The US administration didn't invoke Section 7008 in case of Egypt, The State Department did not issue a determination the situation was a coup to avoid applying the law.

3.1.3 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Egypt

One of the reasons led to cut off the aid is the Egyptian government actions against the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) especially after the 2011 revolution which started in December 2011, when Egyptian government imposed a travel ban on 7 Americans after raiding their local offices in Cairo, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and Freedom House. In February 2012, the Egyptian authorities announced that they would prosecute them. Then in a flawed trial the court convicted 43 people, 17 of them are US citizens work as international NGO staff and the rest are Egyptian citizens. This action disturbed Washington and spark a crisis between the two countries. After a while, the military lifted the ban of the American citizens and allowed them to leave , and the continued attacks on NGO workers are indications of increased pressure on the local Egyptian workers as well. Some of those NGOs are working on human rights violations in Egypt, they documenting violations and abuses that the Egyptian regime commits and defending the freedoms enshrined in Egypt's constitution. But these organizations have only a marginal impact on Egypt becoming a democratic state or respecting freedoms and human rights.

All the Egyptian successive governments treated with the foreign NGOs and their local Egyptian partners by suspicions in their activities and it had periodically suppressed them. For example, one Egyptian news newspaper "Al Masry Al Youm" published names of more than 150 individuals and civil society organizations -American and European organizations- in public. They were under investigation for receiving foreign funding, organizations such as the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the Center for International Private Enterprise, the Solidarity Center, Transparency International, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, CARE, and AMIDEAST. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities had closed a prominent anti-torture organization called "the Nadeem Center" it is an Egyptian well-known center working since the Mubarak era, the authorities summoned staff from many human rights organizations for interrogation. Besides harassment and threatening human rights activists with arrest and violence, and banning some human rights advocates from traveling abroad.

As a result of all of these violations, there was a Working Group visited Egypt and issued their report. They sent a letter to President Obama and stated that they tried to remind President Obama of what he said in September 2014 in his Presidential Memorandum about civil society. When he pledged that the United States even, he personally would be on the side of people who work in civil society if their governments treated with them by pressure or harassment while they doing their jobs. But during the past 5 years in Egypt, The Egyptian authorities' dealing with NGOs was full of persecution and restrictions, so it is challenging to the US policy toward the situation in Egypt. Therefore, what happens to NGOs in Egypt is a test of your pledge to stand by the civil society (POMED, 2016). Furthermore, it was important to President Obama to stand up for human rights more and call president Al-Sisi for increasing freedom of association and the rights of local and international civil society organizations to work. plus, keeping assaulting and harassment of US organizations it will harm American investment in Egypt and cutting the financial assistance to the Egyptian military and the government.

Continuing the line of violations in 2016, an Egyptian court ordered freezing assets of five human rights activists and three of NGOs. Also, there was a try to freeze bank accounts and other assets of two international human rights defenders -Hossam Bahgat and Gamal Eid- because they accepting foreign funding from organizations where they work. The Egyptian parliament approved a new law for associations in November 2016, it also called the NGO Law, this law restricting civil society activity in Egypt, so it had been intense criticized. The law includes creating a new government entity that includes a number of representatives from various security agencies to oversee the law implementation and monitor the performance of organizations. In addition to the requirements for international NGOs to obtain prior approval before accepting any foreign funding or operating work inside Egypt with local Egyptian organizations. Moreover, increasing the penalties prescribed for violating this law.

3.1.4 Human Rights Violation

The US concerns over human rights violations in Egypt reached the peaked after the military coup 2013 and continued after that during Sisi's rule. Under Sisi's regime, Egypt witnessed new methods of human rights violations used for the first time in the Egyptian state against the protesters and Sisi's opponents. Even, he committed a massacre, around 1,000 people were killed in the Rabaa square. He continued to persecute all spectra -Islamists, and secularists as well as independents- by imprisoning and torturing them and uses of excessive.

3.1.4.1 Rabaa and Nahda massacre

On August 14, 2013, the Egyptian security forces are backed by the army under the command of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi committed a bloody evacuation from sit-ins Rabi'a al-Adawiya and al-Nahda in Cairo besides some other squares in different cities. While the supporters of President Mohamed Morsi and opposers of military coup d'état site-in, the sit-in continued for six-week. The military deposed Morsi and detained him at an unknown site for weeks with ten of his top presidential advisers. Finally, he was transferred to the court, his first trial session on November 4, 2013, then he transferred to a regular prison until his death in 2019 during a session on the court.

The systematic and widespread killing to dispersing demonstrators from Rabaa Square by Egypt's security forces according to some human rights activists it is probably considered a massacre and amounted to be a crime against humanity. According to human rights watch Rabaa massacre considered one of the largest killings of demonstrators in the modern world in a single day.

Prime Minister Hazem al-Beblawy announced that there were close to 1,000 protesters were killed in the dispersal on August 14. It was the bloodiest day in Egypt since the 2011 revolution even this number of casualties did not happen during Mubarak's rule. Following the August 14 events, the Egyptian police had arrested thousands of demonstrators including children and women. However, the government rejected to admit any offensive on the part of security forces, it also did not prosecute any officer or a senior official who engaged in the killings or doing judicial investigations.

According to Human Rights Watch report, it has identified;

"more than a dozen of the most senior leaders in the chain of command who should be investigated for their roles in these killings, including Interior Minister Ibrahim, then-Defense Minister and current President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and the Special Forces head and commander of the Rab'a operation, Medhat Menshawy. Where there is evidence of responsibility, these individuals should be held individually accountable for the planning and execution or failing to prevent the anticipated widespread and systematic killings of demonstrators."

instead, a statue has been erected to honor the police at the sit-in site "Rabaa Square" where the police killed hundreds of innocent people.

The Egyptian regime under President Sisi got involved in unprecedented repression in human rights. The regime did arbitrary detentions and collective torture, there were around 22,000 detainees during the years of 2013 and 2014, and they were denied basic rights to a fair trial. Also, there were collective sentences of long-term imprisonment on trumped-up charges. And death sentences for opponents were issued by judges, many trials violated Egyptian law as well as international standards. The number of detained reached more than 41,000 at the end of the Obama period and the police officers routinely torture most of them. 209 detainees had died due to medical negligence after Sisi ruled till 2015. Moreover, the justice system also participated in human rights violations through routinely renewed detention periods for months and more without charge or trial in collective trials without proving individual guilt for criminal offenses. Egypt becomes such a huge prison after travel bans and restricted the rights of political opponents and free assembly and others basic rights, and mass death sentences that unwarranted.

3.1.4.2 Military trials

The regime continued to prosecute the civilian in military courts and expand on that. The Egyptian 2014 constitution allowed military trials for civilians, there were at least 3,164 people charged or sentenced in military courts between January and September 2015. The numbers of military trials had raised under President Sisi even it included

men and women. as well, two Sinai journalists were sentenced due to their work as journalists.

3.1.4.3 Enforced disappearances

This was a new method that has been used by the Egyptian authority to compel its opponents to admit crimes they did not commit and take information from them by force. The numbers of enforced disappearances increased in that period and before, as security forces rely on this approach to intimidate opponents of Sisi. While the repressive regimes confront its critics by disappearing them, they are held for extended periods while no one knows their place or having a fair trial. Some of detainees are tortured where others killed without even an official record of their deaths, or the authorities claim that the security officers were in the crossfire with those people who enforced disappearances while they were under the authorities detention. The US officials periodically expressed their intensive concern over the Egyptian authority's continued violations. In September 2016, National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice said that Egypt has increasingly relied on enforced disappearance tactics to intimidate and silence all of the government critics. So, the country has witnessed an unprecedented rise in enforced disappearances cases.

3.1.4.4 Torture and murder of an Italian student in Egypt “Regeni”

Giulio Regeni is an Italian student, was a visiting scholar at (AUC) the American University in Cairo. He found killed beside a road in Cairo in February 2016, his body has signs of torture, it was full of bruises and knife injuries, also burns by a cigarette. Mr. Regeni was a Ph.D. student at the University of Cambridge in the politics and international studies department. Regeni came to Cairo to conduct research on -trade unions and labor rights in Egypt- and it was a danger in recent years to do such research or other researches related to a domestic situation under a repressive regime in Egypt. He disappeared near a week, from 25 January until February 3, then found a half-naked with signs of torture. 25 January 2016, it was the fifth anniversary of the 2011 revolution and there were tight security measures by the Egyptian security forces. Mr. Regeni's torture and death spotted the light about the academic freedom in Egypt plus

other human rights violations. Inhuman violence that Mr. Regeni faced, exactly like the regularly of torture faced on Egyptians.

3.1.4.5 Detention of an American Egyptian Aya Hijazi

Aya Hijazi is an Egyptian American citizen "Alexandria-Virginia", she was detained on May 2, 2014, she was running an organization to help homeless children in Egypt, but the authorities imprisoned her without trial. She accused her of paying children to demonstrate against the government and children sexually abusing. The Obama administration has demanded more than once the Egyptian authorities to release her, and the charges against her were politically motivated because of its NGO activity.

3.2 TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND THE AL-SISI REGIME IN EGYPT (2017-19)

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was the first president in the world calling phone President Trump to congratulate him after his winning the United States presidential elections. Trump's arrival at the White House marked as a revival of Egyptian-American relations. The Egyptian government had expressed its high hopes for good relations with the Trump Administration. Immediately after Trump took over, he did a call phone with President Sisi On January 23, 2017, both discussed how to improve the bilateral relations.

President Trump wanted to improve the US Egyptian relations as the relations were strained during three years under the Obama Administration. On the other side, during the 2016 Trump presidential campaign, he announced his different approach in relation to Egypt, he personally praising Mr. Sisi, and he vowed to strengthen the two countries bilateral relationship if he becomes the president. Trump actually did that, under his administration he and his high-level US administration officials refrained to criticize Egypt in public because of its poor records on human rights. On the contrary, the US officials publicly praised Egypt for its role in combatting terrorism, reforming the economy, empowering women, and other things, although the reality in Egypt is very dire. While the Trump Administration was more open than its predecessors in admitting

that the authoritarianism of the Egyptian regime does not deny it from US support. The tone of the relationship was cordial because of Egypt's cooperation with the United States on countering terrorism. One of the differences between Obama and Trump administrations in the United States Egyptian high-level dialogue, where Trump met with President Al-Sisi three times and conducted at least five official phone calls in 2017. Both friendly interacted with Egyptian regime. Even Trump called him "My Favorite Dictator" (Nancy, 2013).

According to records of their meetings, both Egyptian and American administrations focused on bilateral issues like continuing US foreign assistance to Egypt, expanding trade and investment in the United States, and the Egyptian facilitation in the Palestinian reconciliation. The United States considers Egyptian stability is the key to the Middle East's stability. President Trump emphasized the importance of cooperation with Arab leaders -like president Sisi- to combat transnational terrorism, and containing Iranian influence in the middle east. And his administration wants from Egypt improving its counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts in Sinai and participating in a new collective security coalition of Arab states, in addition, play an effective role in the region for peacemaking between Palestinian and Israeli. On the other side, Egypt also wants some privileges from Trump such as increase military assistance they get, continuing granted the cash flow financing, and classify the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization.

According to "Michele Dunne "an academic researcher of Carnegie Institution for International Peace, according to some sources that closely connected with the government: Egypt's wishing list contained several requests; a visit for president Sisi to Washington and also Trump's visit to Cairo, increasing the military aid to the Egyptian military, Provides of several billion dollars in loan guarantees, sending the economic aid that unspent in cash, classifying the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, and the United States extradites the Egyptians wanted by the Egyptian government (Sharp, 2017).

In the end, despite the desire of the two presidents to convergence, the relations are governed by a set of laws and institutions not going according to the personal desires of both presidents.

3.2.1 Emerging Tensions Between the US and Egypt during Trump Regime

In August 2017 the Trump administration has suspended 195\$ and reduced the FMF obligation by \$65.7 million of the military aid to Egypt because of the Egyptian-North Korean relations, where Egypt had purchased North Korean weapons and allowed the North Korean diplomats to use its embassy in Cairo as a headquarters in the region for military sales.

After the United Nations published a report the US suspended its military aid, that report revealed a cargo of North Korean shippers intercepted off the Egyptian coast in 2016. The North Korean ship was carried about 30,000 rocket-propelled grenades; its value is estimated at about \$26 million. In addition to another similar incident in 2013 when they intercepted a shipment contained spare parts for Scud-B missiles were sent from the North Korean Embassy in Beijing to a company controlled by the Egyptian military in Egypt.

On July 5, 2017, according to a White House, President Trump had called President Al-Sisi, they

“discussed the threat from North Korea, the need for all countries to fully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions on North Korea, stop hosting North Korean guest workers, and stop providing economic or military benefits to North Korea” (White House, 2017).

In the call, Trump focused on allegations of Egyptian North Korean cooperation, if is Egypt trading and dealing with North Korea in arms transactions that violate the United Nations UN resolutions. Also, as the Security Council held an emergency session to condemn the North Korean threat a few hours after the Trump phone call, it seemed that Trump urged Sisi to support the United States' resolutions in Security Council against North Korea, as Egypt is a non-permanent member in the Security Council. Egypt's trading in illegal weapons with North Korea has breached the friendly relationship that

Al-Sisi built with the new Trump administration, which led to cut military aid and continuous inspection by the United Nations to ensure that there is no cooperation again with North Korea. According to a news conference in Cairo with Secretary of State Tillerson, the Egyptian Foreign Minister responded that: Egypt has severed all its military ties with North Korea, and there is no economic cooperation or any other areas of cooperation, and the relation limited to the diplomatic representation only (Dawoud, 2018).

US officials said that the North Korean diplomatic representation in the Cairo embassy had doubled, where the deepest problem is that Egypt is a regional arms dealership for North Korea. The US Concerned over this relationship because of North Korea a longtime supplier of ballistic missile technology to Egypt and still doing it, according to Andrea Berger, from "the Middlebury Institute of International Studies" a specialist at North Korea relations. That raises concerns and suspicions of the United States from about the scenario that North Korea still providing Egypt with parts of these missiles. Also, the Cairo embassy has become a crowded arms market for secret North Korean missiles sales and military equipment from the Soviet era at discounted rates through a gang from North Africa and the Middle East, according to United Nations inspectors and North Korean defectors (Walsh, 2018). Finally, there are doubts if Egypt acquired the North Korean Nodong missiles, the US concerns over that because Nodong missiles could strike Israel from the depth of Egyptian lands. The main motive behind the suspension aid decision is related to the matter of relations between Egypt and North Korea, as the United States sought during this period to isolate North Korea completely militarily, economically and diplomatically, to take such a decision against one of its most prominent allies in the region.

3.2.2 Egyptian North Korean Relations

In August 2017, the military assistance held because of the Egyptian relations with North Korea Despite the United Nations sanctions on trade and the prohibition ban of arms transactions in addition to the US tensions with it. The US reports discovered that a North Korean army ship in Egypt. North Korean pilots fought with Egypt in the 1973 war and some of them died. By that, Egypt North Korea relations earlier even before

restoring and strengthen Egyptian American relations after the 1973 war. With regard to military cooperation between them, after North Korea helped its friend Egypt in the war against Israel, it received a number of "Scud B" missiles from Egypt between the years 1976 and 1981. Later North Korea provided Egypt with technical assistance and experts to extend the accuracy of the Scud missiles. President Kim Il Sung met the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Pyongyang between 1983 and 1990 on four different occasions, which means there were strong relations between the two countries. Pyongyang regularly honored Mubarak before his ousting. In addition to the economic cooperation between the two countries. Naguib Sawiris -is an Egyptian businessman who was one of Mubarak's businessmen regime- had built North Korea's primary cellphone network.

Now, relations under President Sisi are different. Despite the Egyptian-North Korean relations still close, but it is going on behind closed doors. Because of Egyptian fears of the United States' anger, as well as its fear of UN sanctions. Thus, there is no way for cooperation between Cairo and Pyongyang except in secret.

3.2.3 Aid Suspension

The Trump administration withheld \$195 million military aid to Egypt in August 2017, this amount had frozen because of many reasons: concerns over Egyptian North Korean cooperation in weapons, Lack of progress in human rights and democratic standards, and crackdown of the regime against civil society. The administration had required three conditions for releasing the military assistance, first ending military, diplomatic and economic relations with North Korea, second, a complete acquittal of all 43 defendants -employees of US and German NGOs convicted - in the 2013 NGOs trial, along with the abolition of the investigative mandate under which charges were filed in this case, third, repealing or amend the repressive Law that regulating the work of NGOs - the 2017 NGO Law-.

The administration had taken this action because of Egypt's failure to meet the US requests regarding support its interests of the national security, such as ongoing Egyptian North Korean relationship, failure to solve the problem of convicted NGO

workers in 2013 and approving the latest law in 2017 that restricting NGOs in Egypt, this law probably make sending aids in the future are very difficult, according to Tillerson the State Department.

In the fiscal year 2017, the administration withheld 195 million dollars until getting a certification from Secretary of State that Egypt met the Human rights requirements, and it reduced to \$ 65.7 million in FMF. These actions were taken especially because of the behind the doors relations between Egypt and North Korea and the NGO law. human rights violations kept going along through Sisi's ruling, it has exceeded violations during Mubarak's era, even civil society activities had been effectively criminalized, and the regime uses the “enforced disappearances” method as security services detain individuals incommunicado for weeks or months. Moreover, there are more than 60,000 political prisoners in Egyptian prisons. Therefore, Congress expressed its dissatisfaction with the human rights situation and tried to pressure it by cutting assistance besides other reasons.

The United States responded by announcing a series of punitive measures to compel Egypt to abandon its behavior in these areas. In August 2017, The Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced two measures. First ordered a \$95.7 million, it was previously dedicated in aid for Egypt (\$30 million in FY16 ESF and \$65.7 million in FY17 FMF funds) in order to reprogram it for other countries, in fact, it was a step to reduction Egypt’s assistance package. Second, Tillerson used the national security waiver of the 15% (\$195 million) FMF funds for FY2016 to prevent the money from expiring -the 15% appropriated for human rights certification- but he ordered to refrain from using Egypt’s military funds in the account of Federal Reserve, until Egypt achieves progress regarding the US concerns.

So, Egypt has to reduce or stop the activity of the North Korean embassy in Cairo, repeal the NGO Law or amend it, and abolish sentences of all 43 defendants in the 2013 case. in addition to senator Leahy's conditions that Egypt permits military access to Sinai to observe the use of US equipment and compensation to an American citizen who had a bad injury by an Egyptian airstrike in Sinai in September 2015.

The decision of withheld surprised the Egyptian government. The Egyptian regime thought it will be on a honeymoon with the United States of America after the victory of Donald Trump. But the US president is just one stage in a long chain to issued assistance for any country. The United States had announced withholding USD 290 million in aid to Egypt because it hadn't made any progress on human rights and democracy. The administration considered that the direct cause is the poor situation of human rights in Egypt.

In April 2017, the Congress held a discussion session on American aid to Egypt, chaired by Republican Party member Lindsey Graham, congress demanded to reassess assistance received by Egypt and re-direct it to the interests of the Egyptian people and people's relationship with the United States, not only the Egyptian military. Moreover, Congress added a condition to stop extrajudicial killing, torture, and enforced disappearance by the Egyptian regime, which happened because of the murder of Italian student Giulio Regeni.

The US administration's decision to withhold part of the military aid to Egypt was based on the American "Leahy" law, which bans the provision of aid to any country if it is involved in serious violations of human rights. Congress had suspicions that the Egyptian army used united states equipment and weapons in its operations in the Sinai, which targeted civilians and violates a lot of human rights rules. The US law stipulates that the United States government commits to suspend 15% (\$ 195 million) of US military aid to Egypt if it does not meet progress on human rights. But at the same time, the law contains a clause that gives the US State Department the right to issue a decision to exempt Cairo from the human rights requirement, if it is in the interests of US national security. Tillerson was unable to issue. Instead, the US administration must report to Congress the reasons for that exemption. But Tillerson failed to convince Congress.

3.2.4 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Egypt

After the recent passage of the NGO law, there were several concerns about this new law. The law imposed severe restrictions on civil society organizations in Egypt that would undermine Egypt's international obligations to the principle of freedom of association. And the series of American citizens detention in Egypt will keep going. One of the reasons for cutting US military aid to Egypt is Al-Sisi signing the new Law 70 of 2017 of NGOs working in Civil Work in Egypt. In May 2017, the law was passed after the president signed it while the Egyptian Parliament passed this bill six months ago. But both passage and signing of the Law were condemned Internationally. This law requires restricts NGOs' prior approval from the Egyptian internal security before accepting foreign financing and limits the scope of permitted NGO activities. In addition, the law provides for increased penalties due to any violation for up to five years imprisonment for even if that violation is any probable.

The US felt extremely disappointed because of the Egyptian association law after it was issued by President Al-Sisi that registered and prevented some NGOs from working and they were discussing the way they solve that. According to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's statement to the legislators in June 2017. That, the Trump administration felt offended by President Sisi's approval. The law will have a negative impact on civil society activity in Egypt, as well as criminal charges that may be imposed on workers in NGOs. The Egyptian government defended itself by justifying that it is preserving the sovereignty of its state, but eventually Egypt acquitted the 43 accused in December 2018.

3.2.5 Human Rights Violation

Egyptian regime human rights violations caused aid suspended in 2017. President Sisi's government adopted violence as a tool as long as he rules. The Egyptian regime continued detention of the political opponents, they estimate 60,000 detainees accused them of criminal offenses, they are in very poor prison conditions under torture and quite a number of them die of health neglect. Forced disappearances going on without any questioning and the regime increasingly relying on it. Also, the regime uses the

death penalty without a fair trial in military courts, it issued tens of sentences of civilians with denial of their rights of re-trials. Civil society activities have been criminalized and names of hundreds of people put on terrorism lists and grabbed their assets without following the due process. Domination and censorship on the press and control over all alleged independent media. Egypt considered the third-worst prison of journalists worldwide, it was representing for 10 percent of all journalists incarcerated globally, moreover, the government imposed a media blackout on counter-terrorism operations in North Sinai. The detention of American citizens in Egypt still to be a problem in the US-Egypt relations even under the Trump administration.

3.2.5.1 Case of April Corley

April Corley, she is an American citizen Survived an Egyptian deadly attack in the Egyptian western desert, on September 13, 2015. An Egyptian Apache helicopter, supplied by the US, attacked a group of tourists, killing 12 people and injured others, including Corley.

This attack caused in Corley's severely injured that resulted in extremely bad psychological and health effects besides the expensive medical bills. Egypt offered compensation to her, based on ongoing medical treatment and her dangerous injured but she refused. And she called for withholding of US aid to Egypt till she could be justly compensated and modify the "Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act" to be able to sue Egypt because the current Act prevents citizens suing other countries in the United States courts. Some lawmakers supported Corley like Senator Leahy and they asked for withholding \$105 million from FY2018 FMF funds. In a letter to President Sisi from Nita Lowey the Chairwoman of the House Committee on Appropriations, she sent that: No additional upgrades or sales of any AH-64E Apache helicopters will send to Egypt because she will object to it until Egypt grants American citizenship April compensation until Egypt compensates the American citizen "April" with appropriate compensation for the health and psychological suffering and losses. Unfortunately, April Corley, an athlete former professional, she will never be able to compete again.

4. SHIFT IN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT TOWARDS EGYPT AND RESTORATION OF MILITARY AID

4.1 SUSPENSION OF MILITARY AID TO EGYPT- A QUEST FOR NEW SUPPLIERS

The suspension of US military aid to Egypt prompted the later, to restore its relations with Russia again. The Egyptian regime sought to find alternatives to form new alliances for its own security, a place away from American pressure. The direction of the Egyptian regime towards Russia coincided with the Moscow's desire to penetrate in the Middle East and fill the absence of Washington D.C. The compatibility of Egypt and Russia emerged which expanded to multiple spheres i.e. militarily, politically, and economically and Cairo wanted to achieve its interests through this rapprochement. Since the Egypt-Israel peace treaty (1979), the former has relied on the US armament. Therefore, the primary goal was to diversify the arms supply that was suspended by Obama administration post-2013 coup. The Egyptian regime extended its hands towards Russia, to fill in the vacuum with high expectations. Similarly, Russia reciprocated with same yield of geostrategic expectations due to the location of Egypt. Both states increased military cooperation including joint military exercises to balance the power equilibrium.

4.1.1 Russia

Historically, the Egypt-Russia relations began in 1943, when the later called Soviet Union or Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Moreover, this relation has experienced several ups and downs in the past until the rapprochement process that began after the suspension of US military aid. In 1960s and 1970s, USSR was the primary arms supplier to Egypt during Gamal Abdel Nasser regime. After Nasser's visit to Moscow in 1968, several agreements were concluded especially the military accords regarding air forces and missiles technology. A new era began with President Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat and ended with the complete severing of relations between the two countries, despite the weapons used by Egyptian military in October 1973

against Israel were supplied by USSR. Furthermore, Sadat also cancelled the friendship agreement with USSR signed in 1972 and expelled Soviet experts from Egypt. Meanwhile, rapprochement with the US began in the wake of post- October 1973 negotiations. Regardless of his predecessors, President Hosni Mubarak tried to maintain the balance in relations with both the US and the USSR. He also paid official visit to Russia in 1997 that resulted in signing of various agreements for cooperation between two states. After the resignation of President Mubarak because of January 25th revolution, Mohamed Morsi Issa Al-Ayyat became the President of Egypt. During Morsi's tenure, the relations with Russia remained moderate whereas on the other hand, Russia was also cautious about the internal dynamics of Egypt. Furthermore, when President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi took charge of the Arab Republic of Egypt, relations with Russia strengthened because of deteriorated relations between Egypt and the US. During 2014-18, Egypt remained the third largest importer of arms globally and its primary suppliers were Russia and France.

The Egypt-Russia relations witnessed a new era under President Sisi's regime specifically in realm of defense cooperation. The official visits from both sides have been significantly increased. In 2013, then minister for defense now President, Sisi visited Moscow and signed bilateral agreement to modernize military arsenal of Egypt according to contemporary standards. Russia also assisted Egypt for the training of military personals by organizing joint exercises.

Since then, cooperation between Egypt and Russia has grown significantly, especially military hardware and training, also visits between the two countries had increased. Moreover, in February 2014, Field Marshal Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the Minister of Defense at that time, visited Russia and was welcomed by Vladimir Putin, President of Russia. Then in August 2014, after he took over the presidency, Sisi visited Russia again for the second time, during this visit the two parties agreed to intensify their efforts between them to fight terrorism in the Middle East region. Also, they discussed the ways to develop bilateral relations in all fields. Accordingly, in February 2015 Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Egypt. During this visit, the two presidents signed agreements in fields like military, economic and political, and they also

discussed the future of the peace process in the Middle East. In addition to it, El-Sisi called on the Russian side to increase their investments in some specific projects of vital fields in Egypt, such as the energy, oil and gas, and agriculture. In a great step from the Russian side in May 2015, President Sisi responded to Putin's invitation to participate in the celebrations of the 70th anniversary the Victory Day of the Second World War in May 1945.

One of the most significant areas that improved the Egypt-Russia relations is the defense cooperation through agreements like arms deals, developing the air force and the air defense system, and training by organizing joint exercises. Russia also provided Egypt with new and advanced aircrafts so, there were various types of weapons, ammunition, and technical requirements for aircraft. In addition, Egypt has upgraded its old fleet of MiG-21 aircrafts to the 4th generation of MiG-29M variant, that deal was signed in 2014 and delivery started late 2017. Besides purchasing 46 standard Russian Ka-52 attack helicopters, Egypt also purchased a marine version of the Ka-52 Kamov designated for the two French Mistral helicopter carriers which Egypt bought from France in September 2015. Further, Egypt developing its air defense by purchasing the S-300VM surface-to-air missile defense system. This system is the strongest response system to all types of aircraft and missiles as a long-range air defense system. Also, updating its short-range air defense system to the Tor-M2 system, and the medium-range air defense system to the Buk-M2 system. Moreover, Egypt also started to buy the Russian T-90 tanks. In November 2017, Russia and Egypt signed an agreement regulating the use of airspace for each other.

Additionally, the two countries expanded their cooperation in the field of nuclear energy. In 2015 Egypt enacted a deal with a Russian energy firm "Rosatom" to build a new nuclear power plant in "Daba'a" on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, by Russian lending USD 25 billion over 35 years to finance the construction of the new nuclear power plant. In April 2019, Sisi approved the plans for the construction of this plant to provide Egypt with a substantial amount energy.

Egypt and Russia engaged in several military joint training after signing protocols of cooperation. Joint exercises to improve the armed forces' combat capabilities by sending missions of the armed forces and technicians to be trained on the latest technologies in conducting strategic maneuvers, and military joint exercises. Accordingly, Egypt hosted the first joint military exercise "Protectors of Friendship 1" with Russian paratroopers, and they conducted the second of this joint exercise in Russia the "Protectors of Friendship 2", last joint exercise "Protectors of Friendship 3" in October 2018 held in Egypt. The training involved exchanging the experiences in training of Special Units in both countries, implementations of different forms of atypical shooting, and training the Special Forces for fighting and combating terrorism. As a sign of good relations, the Russian side sent a missile vessel so-called Molniya B-32 to Egypt as a present to participate in the opening ceremony of the new branch of the Suez Canal in August 2016, one of the most modern Russian naval vessels. Also, in August 2018 the Egyptian Minister of Defense participated in the opening ceremony of the "ARMY-2018" Russian International Military-Technical Forum. Moreover, Sisi has approved a very important agreement to establish a new Russian Industrial Zone in the new Suez Canal Economic Zone, in the year of 2019. Egypt had launched an observation satellite "EgyptSat-A" by a Russian rocket.

Therefore, relations between Egypt and Russia were prosperous again, some political analysts interpreted this rapprochement as a historic recurrence while others considered it as a political choice to get close to the East instead of the US after the tension in the US-Egypt relations. But in fact, the revival of their relations mainly depended on the mutual interests between them, where both countries share many strategic goals and interests in the region and have a similar vision in some issues like Syria and Libya. On the other hand, the Egyptian regime was in need of international support after the 2013 coup for gaining the international legitimacy of its rule and to diversify its external options and achieve a balance between them.

Finally, Russia's motivation to consolidate its relations with Egypt was because Egypt is one of the cornerstones of stability in the Middle East and important to restore and strengthening the Russian influence in the region. For instance, Russia seeks to expand

its influence in the warm waters, and it will not be possible without a foothold in Egypt or Libya.

4.1.2 France

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has sought to build a good military and diplomatic relationship with France. He tried to improve his relationship with France in parallel with strengthening his relations with Russia. For over five years Egypt-France relations witnessed a new era of cooperation, both sides have developed their relations through several military purchases and official visits.

- i) Egypt made many deals with French defense contractors to purchase major air and naval defense systems which includes following:
- ii) In July 2014, both countries signed a deal for four Gowind Corvettes produced by Naval Group and as a part of this deal some of the Corvette construction started at the Alexandria Shipyard in Egypt.
- iii) Purchasing 24 Rafale multi-role fighters manufacturing by Dassault Aviation according to an agreement signed in 2015.
- iv) Also, in 2015 Egypt had received one vessel (named the Tahya Misr it was Sisi's slogan in his election campaign), it is a FREMM multi-mission Frigate produced by Naval Group, this vessel participated in the annual joint Egyptian-French naval exercise, known as Cleopatra.
- v) In 2015 Egypt signed an agreement to buy Mistral-class helicopter carriers for \$1 billion, it can carry 16 helicopters, 13 tanks, and 4 landing craft.

In 2018, French officials announced that the United States was concerned about transferring sensitive technology to Egypt and it would not allow France to export the SCALP air-launched land-attack cruise missile used on the Rafale to Egypt under the agreement of International Trade in Arms Regulation (ITAR).

4.2 TERRORISM IN SINAI “EMERGENCE OF ISIL-SINAI PROVINCE”

Sinai is the Egyptian Peninsula located between the Suez Canal and the Arabian Peninsula. Although Sinai is geographically isolated, it links key states such as Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Owing to its geopolitical importance, it remained a battleground in every war between Egypt and Israel from 1948 until 1979. The 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel returned Sinai to Egypt in 1982 and it has prevented large-scale Arab-Israel military confrontations for more than 30 years. Also, the importance of Sinai came from its border with Israel, and it is the only exit for the Palestinian people of living in Gaza. Unfortunately, Sinai subsequently became a stronghold of jihadist and terrorist groups since the early 1990s, during more than 30 years these terrorist groups have inflated and expanded and increased their terrorist attacks since 2011 especially after the 25 January revolution, the army and police forces are trying to eliminate them because of this insurgency in Sinai threat the Israeli national security. The most remarkable terrorist groups in Sinai are *Ansar Bait al-Maqdis*, *Tawhid al-Jihad*, *Takfir wal-Hijra*, *Soldiers of Egypt*, *Jund al-Islam*, *Mujahideen Shura Council*, and *Wilayat Sinai* some of these groups had affiliated for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in 2014 and after, numbers of these groups were very small, but they quickly increased due to the repression and the political events that followed the 2013 coup.

One of the biggest concerns for Egyptian and regional stability over the past years has been the Sinai Peninsula. As it connects with the most controversial issues in the region, it is the Arab-Israel conflict and the Palestinian issue. Sinai stability directly related to Israeli national security since the 1973 war and before because of the border between the two countries and the international accords between them like the Peace Treaty of 1979. Therefore, after the insurgency in the peninsula, combating terrorism is complicated by limitations that Egypt faces in fully enforcing its rule over the area. The 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty caps the number of soldiers that Egypt can deploy in the Sinai and also the equipment, any changes of these terms are subject to the parties' ability to negotiate about the cooperation between each other and Egyptian deployments as circumstances necessitate.

Terrorist attacks begin in 2004 and 2005 by the terrorist group called *Tawhid Wal Jihad* by bombing the Hilton in Taba and bombing a car in Sharm el-Sheikh and the last bombing in 2006 in a resort in Dahab, resulted in killing hundreds of people. After the 25 January revolution in 2011, chaos spread widely in Sinai and jihadi groups resumed their operations. Several groups merged under one administration and other groups arose, and some of those groups affiliated the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. Those groups re-emerged again in North Sinai, benefiting from the reigning chaos in the wake of the uprising, they started blowing up parts of a major pipeline that carried natural gas through the Sinai to Israel, they repeated these bombings more than dozens of times and it continued over three years and more.

But in 2013 and beyond, Egypt witnessed an increase in terrorism and violent extremism attacks, following the military coup on July 3 and the removal of the elected government, the whole country faced turmoil and insurgency because of repression. Most of the attacks committed in the North of Sinai and other important accidents occurred in the east of the Nile Delta between Cairo and the city of Suez, Ismailia. The majority of the attacks depended on rudimentary tactics in the beginning, like drive-by shootings and crude explosives, but soon it turned to be more lethal and sophisticated tactics and increased in its number, then the attacks included attacking by rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and attacks by suicide vehicular-borne with improvised explosive devices. This year Sinai witnessed many remarkable attacks: In September, the Egyptian Military Intelligence Directorate in Rafah was targeted by suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIEDs) attacks, also, an armored personnel carrier was also targeted at an army checkpoint, killing 9 soldiers. In October, there was a suicide VBIED attack on South Sinai Security Directorate in Al-Tur city and another one at an Al-Arish checkpoint.

Attacks became increasingly deadly and violent in 2014, terrorist groups targeted military and governmental targets. At this period there were two main terrorist groups operating attacks in Egypt, *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis* (ABM) and *Junnad Misr*. on November 3, 2014, the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) group has affiliated to "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) and swore allegiance to ISIL, the ABM became the

most active group in Sinai specifically and all over Egypt. Accordingly, Egypt joined "the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL". Some of the deadly attacks as following: In January, An Egyptian military helicopter was shot down nearby Sheikh Zuweid, by some attackers, the five soldiers onboard killed. In February, a suicide bomber blew himself up with an explosive belt on a tourist bus in Taba in South Sinai, killing the Egyptian bus driver and three South Korean tourists, and several wounded. In July, assailants fired a salvo of rockets at *Eilat* an Israeli city, from inside Egyptian territory, resulted in multiple Israelis wounded. In August, four civilians were kidnapped and beheaded by the attackers of ABM in North Sinai in *Shaykh Zuwayd*, allegedly they confessed to spying for Israel. On October 24, Militants attacked a military checkpoint near Sheikh Zuweid in a two-stage attack, first stage by a suicide VBIED followed by RPGs and fire of small arms, led to killing 30 Egyptian troops and wounded dozens more. The " ABM" claimed its responsibility for those attacks.

The Egyptian Armed Forces had had limited success fighting terrorist groups, but (ISIL)-Sinai Province (ISIL-SP) remained a great threat in Sinai. In July 2015, around 70 individuals from ISIL-SP attacked at the same time, several police and security establishments in the Sheikh Zuweid area in Sinai, killing in total 35 people in different places. Also, in the same month, there was a missile has launched from one of Sinai's shores hitting an Egyptian naval vessel and set it ablaze. ISIL-SP claimed its responsibility for the two attacks. On October 31, 2015, a Russian passenger jet exploded in the air after taking off from Sharm El-Sheikh International Airport over the Sinai Peninsula, all 224 passengers aboard were killed, according to international investigators the explosion was caused by "improvised explosive device" and the ISIL-SP claimed responsibility as a response to the Russian military deployment to Syria, that led the Egyptian armed forces took many actions to counter ISIL-SP persons, but unfortunately, they killed 12 Mexican tourists mistaken instead of terrorists.

As these terrorist attacks continued, some US lawmakers called on the Administration to end its weapons suspension, then on March 31, 2015, the administration announced it will release the aids with significant changes in its aids policy towards Egypt, it would be largely reformulated in the future. Despite efforts by the Egyptian army and the

Egyptian Security Forces terrorist attacks kept going. In the most bloody and deadliest day in a terrorist attack in Sinai, on November 24, 2017, Terrorists attacked the Sinai's civilians in Al-Radwa Mosque in North Sinai on Friday while they were praying, resulted in killing more than 300 people including 27 children and 128 injuries. By detonated explosives around the mosque and then militants directly gun fired at the worshipers. This attack was an example of the Egyptian government's failed efforts in countering the threat of the Islamic State (ISIS) within its borders. Therefore, the instability in Egypt which has created by ISIS threatens the Israeli national security and the US national security interests in the region. In addition, in July, in the village of al-Barth near Rafah in North Sinai, some terrorists blew up a car bomb at a police checkpoint then engaged in heavy shooting resulted in 26 people killed and more than 20 wounded. And in October, some terrorists tried to rob an Egyptian local bank of approximately US \$1 million then opened fir against the security forces in Al-Arish, North Sinai caused killing civilians.

The Egyptian army has carried out several military operations in the Sinai Peninsula to eliminate terrorism and restore its control over the past years. It launched two military operations in mid-2012 and, in mid-2011, known as "Operation Eagle" and "Operation Sinai", Operation Eagle considered the first mass deployment of forces in the Sinai Peninsula since the 1973 War. After the 2013 coup, the Egyptian forced faced unprecedented clashes with militants in Sinai, it is continuing until now, although it is not at the same pace throughout those years. But the permanent security threat in Sinai has become a source of concern for all countries in the region, especially Israel, therefore, the army is holding operations to restore its control over the Sinai Peninsula and secure its borders with Israel. In 2015 Operation Martyr's Right, a major operation conducted by the Egyptian military, this operation was one of the largest and most comprehensive operations aimed at uprooting and killing terrorists, it targeted sites of Arish, Rafah, Sheikh Zuweid, and all towns in the northern areas of the Sinai peninsula. In 2018, the comprehensive operation Sinai launched "Sinai 2018" as a complementary step to eradicate terrorism and terrorist elements. Finally, the State of emergency in North Sinai applied and renewed continuously. In Egypt's war against terrorism in Sinai, it has tried during these operations to defeat ISIS and eliminate it within its

borders, as well as the rest of the terrorist groups located in Sinai. The Egyptian Armed Forces led the military air and ground strikes to kill ISIS members and dismantle their strongholds in the Sinai Peninsula.

4.3 GAZA TUNNELS WITH SINAI

Also, Egypt has also worked to improve border security, especially the demolition of smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. Smuggling tunnels between Gaza and the North Sinai considers as a lifeline for the people of Gaza since 2007, especially since the beginning of the strict Israeli blockade after the Israeli war against Gaza in 2007. The smuggling tunnels have always worked under the Knowledgeable of the Egyptian authorities. There were hundreds of tunnels linking between the Egyptian side in Rafah and the Palestinian side on the Gaza strip, those tunnels are located inside buildings on both sides on the border between the two countries. These tunnels are mainly used to transport goods and the basic needs of Palestinians inside Gaza. But also, they are used to smuggling medium and heavy weapons beside smuggling weapons by the sea in small boats. Accordingly, after the terrorist attacks and security turmoil in Sinai in recent years, the Egyptian armed forces established a buffer zone at the border with Gaza and flooded the tunnels that used for the illegal movement of people and goods with water. The aim of the destruction and dumping strategies was to reduce the capabilities of militants and disrupt their logistics and supplies, killing thousands since 2013 and destroying equipment and some shelters. Another threat of Sinai is the Libyan arsenal that has fall in the militant's hands in the wake of the fall of the Libyan regime, the army weapons depots such as an important weapons source for militants, including ATGMs and MANPADS. It represents a border security concerns because of terrorist groups possess these weapons or smuggle them into Gaza via the borders. Both the Egyptian and Israeli sides expressed their worries about the flow of weapons from Libya after Gaddafi in 2011. Some Israeli officials claimed that the fighters in the Gaza strip had obtained anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles smuggled from Libya through Egypt.

4.4 AMENDMENT IN THE US FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT

It is allowed to use assistance in three areas even with the suspend that issued after the coup. 1) in exemptions of security for many-objective, such as border security, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, and development programs in the Sinai. 2) exemption for sustaining existing contracts at the necessary minimum rate by using prior-year funds and 2014 funds. in order not to harm the US defense contractors because of suspending, if the Secretary didn't make the democracy certifications. 3) exclusions for upgrades, maintenance, and other support of services and equipment that do not require delivery to Egypt.

According to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Law relevant to the Egyptian Situation 7041, That law makes the assistance are available for the government “notwithstanding any provision of law restricting assistance,” subject to certain conditions (Section 7041. P.L. 114-113).

Section. 7041. (For Egypt)

“(1)

(A) None of the funds appropriated under titles III and IV of this Act and in prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be made available for assistance for the central Government of Egypt unless the Secretary of State certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that such government is meeting its obligations under the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty.

(B) Prior to the obligation of funds appropriated by this Act under the heading ‘Foreign Military Financing Program’, the Secretary of State shall certify to the Committees on Appropriations that the Government of Egypt is supporting the transition to civilian government including holding free and fair elections; implementing policies to protect freedom of expression, association, and religion, and due process of law.

(C) The Secretary of State may waive the requirements of paragraphs (A) and (B) if the Secretary determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that to do so is in the national security interest of the United States: Provided, That such determination and report shall include a detailed justification for such waiver.

Previously the FMF assistance to Egypt was controlled by the federal appropriations law, it requires a congressional certification that Egypt meets its obligations under the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty and other conditions regarding the situation in Egypt. But the Secretary of State has a waiver authority that the administration used to keep sending aids to Egypt. Justified as important to the national security interest of the United States. the Obama administration used the national security waiver from 2014 until the end of his presidential period.

In addition to the P.L. 114-113, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, it required that 15% of "FMF" funds would be cut unless the Secretary of State approves to the appropriations committees that Egypt doing an efficient action to improve the human rights conditions and democracy and other requirements. Whereas in the case of using the military aid on armament purposes in border security, counterterrorism, and nonproliferation programs, the 15% condition is not required to be fulfilled, then the Secretary of State can use the waive the requirement of certification of democracy if it is in the favor of the national security of the United States.

4.5 RESTORATION OF MILITARY AID UNDER OBAMA

Egypt held the presidential elections in 2014, the Abdel Fattah Al Sisi won the elections and did a constitutional referendum nevertheless the Obama administration did not release the assistance again. In 2015, after continued terrorist attacks in the Egyptian governorates and affiliation of a lot of militants group in Sinai to ISIS in 2014. the Obama administration announced that it ended its weapons suspension and release all the military assistance again. The administration declared that it would be largely reformulated and stated two big significant changes, first ending the cash flow financing, second, the assistance would be for four categories: counterterrorism, Sinai security, border security, and maritime security. The NSC Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan announced that: Starting in fiscal 2018, the US security assistance to Egypt will go only into four categories, and to maintain the Egyptian arsenal that Egypt already has in its weapons systems. it allowed continuing aids to support counterterrorism and border security efforts, not for prestige items that Egyptian army used to buy like tanks and F-16s. Also, The Obama administration released again the 125 M1A1 Abrams tank

kits,12 Lockheed Martin F-16 aircraft, and 20 Boeing Harpoon missiles. Despite the lack of progress in Egypt, the administration is releasing the weapons anyway, without gaining any political concessions from the Egyptian ruling regime. US considered this as “in the interest of US national security,”.

As a result of the Obama administration reviewing the military assistance to Egypt which ended the cash flow financing this step was like taking away credit cards from Egypt. Egypt will not be eligible for purchases to exceed its budget, which diminishes its ability to make contracts. That taking away of privilege makes the US in the future capable of suspending, limiting aids if it chooses to, it grants the United States exert greater control over the types of weapons Egypt gets. Thus, ending the cash flow was one of the most important reviews conducted by the Obama administration.

4.6 ENDING CASH FLOW FINANCING TO EGYPT

As a result, of Obama reconsidering in the military assistance due to the 2013 coup, the Obama administration decided ending the cash flow financing by 2018. CFF is a financial procedure that enables Egypt to purchase defense materials and services depending on the expected next year's allocations from FMF assistance. The announcement of ending Cash Flow Financing came after a long review of the politics of US foreign assistance toward Egypt, the administration had taken from 2013 till 2015. During this review of military assistance, several voices called for ending authorized CFF to Egypt, with a conviction of Obama administration the need to get rid of this commitment to enable the US to take steps more effective in case of violation of any condition of foreign assistance. Cash flow financing enables Egypt to deal and buy what exceeds the annual amount of appropriation in purchase contracts with US companies and Contractors. That means Egypt is not to obligated to pay the full price of it purchases, also it can enter in future contracts to get weapons. Consequently, if the US cut or reduced the amount of military aid, the US government will not be able to relinquish its responsibility for paying amounts of US contracts or termination fees.

According to Mrs. Wittes from Brookings Institution, Financing the cash flow to Egypt got lost the support of the two parties in Washington, so she expected that it would not

return again, regardless of who will be the ruling party in the White House after the elections in 2017. Besides, what Bernadette Meehan the Spokesperson of "National Security Council" said: at the beginning of the fiscal year 2018, the United States will stop the feature of using Egypt the cash flow finance, that Egypt will not be able to do any weapon deals on credit. The US administrations would have more flexibility to deal with the Egyptian situation in terms of controlling military aid, whether cutting or stopping aid depending on needs and conditions on the ground change, after coordination with Egypt (Wittes, 2016).

There was a consensus of most members in Congress to eliminate CFF by 2018. Providing cash-flow financing for Egypt may have lost support from both parties "Democrats and Republicans" regardless of who is controlling in the White House. In December 2011 the Egyptian police raided US Ngo's offices in Cairo and prosecuted the employees, while the Congress couldn't take any strong action or cut off aid because of US obligations with billions of dollars in Egyptian defense contracts that will extend for years in the future. Second in 2013 after the military coup followed by bloody massacres. The US ending CFF decision will help it to avoid continuously commitment by billions and flexibility to take decisions by the cut or reduce at any time.

It is important to refer to that in recent years 2011-2015 there was no new purchase of major defense equipment according to The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). The DSCA notified Congress of a proposed new single sale to Egypt between 2011 and 2015, on the other hand, FMF had been spent on previous purchases. Because the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) had spent on 2009 -2011 purchases. And the Appropriations Acts (P.L. 113-76 and P.L. 113-235) had limited the use of FMF obligations on current sales after imposing it in the FY2014 and FY2015.

Despite supporting Obama's decision to end the cash-flow financing, there were many voices blamed Obama in case of hurting US Egyptian relations by ending CFF.

4.7 RESTORATION OF MILITARY AID UNDER TRUMP

At the beginning of the year 2018, Washington released \$ 195 million in military aid to Cairo, which had frozen for reasons related to Egyptian North Korean relations, human rights violations, and the law of NGOs in Egypt. Despite the Sisi's government had not met fully of the US conditions but the Egyptian regime allowed a retrial in the 2013 NGO and they get an acquittal in late of 2018 and scaled back its relations with North Korea. Unfortunately, human rights conditions still as past and NGO law hadn't changed. The Trump administration relented and announced it released the suspended assistance and justified the decision in the interest of US national security as usual. With continued political repression, the option to certify will not be available or legal and the FY17 FMF was going to be expired which means if the Secretary did not give the certification or exercise the waiver authority by September 30, 2018, the amount of \$195 million would return to the Treasury. Accordingly, he chose to use the waiver authority but prevented Egypt from withdrawing funding.

Secretary Mike Pompeo choose to release the assistance in July of 2018. According to Pompeo: Pompeo also commended President Al-Sisi, expressing his appreciation for him and his efforts considering that Egypt is an important security partner in eliminating terrorism in the Sinai. Consequently, it reduced the threats that the United States faces in the region (Sharp, J. M., 2018). Also, the funds may use to sustain previous purchases of major US defenses equipment. When the Secretary issued the waiver, he submitted a detailed report detailing the justification for the waiver, also, it included how Egypt failed to protect free speech and didn't investigate violations by the security forces finally Egypt didn't grant access to US monitors into the Sinai Peninsula. Secretary may take the decision of release due to there were the presence of belated sums in arms deals were supplied to the Egyptian army in earlier periods, and Egypt pledged to cut ties with North Korea in addition to the recent American complications in the Middle East and the Gulf region.

In spite of Egyptian government violations, there are congressional support groups for Egypt especially in the House of Representatives. Finally, they reached a compromise between the Senate and the House, where were some wanted to reduce the level of FMF

in Egypt to one billion dollars, while others wanted to keep the full \$1.3 billion free from the conditions of human rights. President Trump requested the Congress appropriate 1.3 billion dollars in military aid to Egypt without restoring the Egyptian military ability to benefit from “Cash Flow Financing (CFF)”. Still viewed to the US military assistance to Egypt as a sign of support for the Egyptian authoritarian regime but the suspension still had a bear message of reprimand and dissatisfaction with the Egyptian government.

4.8 THE BRIGHT STAR EXERCISE

After the improvement of bilateral relations between Egypt and the United States, the United States expressed its willingness to resume the Bright Star exercise, in February 2017 as a sign of good relations. The return of the training came after the visit of General Joseph L. Votel the Commander General the US Central Command to Egypt, this training was restored after Trump assumed the presidency referring to the improvement of relations between the two presidents (Michael, 2017). Operation of Bright Star is a multinational training exercise holds every two years and held by the U S and Egypt, it helps to enhance the interoperability between the US and Egyptian forces and providing opportunities for specialized training for CENTCOM, the US Central Command, in the region of in the Middle East.

The last time the Bright Star exercise was conducted was in October 2009. Due to the Egyptian revolution followed by the political turmoil, it was not held in 2011 because of the revolution and also in 2013 after former President Morsi ousted which resulted in President Obama suspended US participation in 2013. Bright Star was held in September 2017, at Mohamed Naguib Military Base in Egypt. Around 200 US soldiers participated in this exercise with Egyptian forces. They simulating a battel included a US origin prime defense equipment like F16s and M1A1 Egyptian tanks. It was the first time to conduct the Bright Star Exercise since its start in the Mubarak era and the last time in 2009. Re-conducting the Bright Star with the participation of Egypt and the US was a good indication of an attempt to restore the relationship as normal as before.

4.9 AYA HIJAZI'S RELEASE

Aya is an American Egyptian citizen who detained in 2014. After around three years, the Egyptian authorities released her due to President Trump demanding President Sisi to release her. She had been jailed pre-trial nearly three years without a fair trial. President Trump considered it a victory for his administration as she is detained since Obama presidential period while the previous administration had failed to release her even with freezing the military aid in the past. Also, Trump hosted her after she returned to the US in a ceremony.

Accordingly, the United States was unable to pressure Egypt to release Ms. Hijazi by its authority to withhold military assistance, but President Sisi released her in a goodwill gesture to the new President Trump to improve the relations between the two countries again.

5. CONCLUSION

Since last 30 years, it was the first time the United States suspended its military assistance to Egypt twice in two close periods. Both the Obama administration and Trump administration suspended the military aid in a different manner but the outcome was same. The Obama's presidential period was marked by a strained tension in the relationship in general and military relations in particular, while during the Trump administration relationship was more closely with the Egyptian presidency. Both administrations cut the aid for similar reasons which has been going through during the two administration periods with the Egyptian regime continuing on do it.

First reason, for continuous violations of human rights for innocent Egyptian persons from all political spectrum with no fair trials or even good human conditions of detention. Today in Egypt there are around 60,000 political prisoners they are being tried politically in criminal crimes and they did not commit, even a significant number of them are accused of crimes they are supposed to have committed while they were in prison. In addition to it, following enforced disappearance policy for the regime opponents and collective death sentences, and the worst is the extrajudicial killings.

These violations have raised both administrations' concerns about human rights under Sisi's regime. Because the Egyptian security forces human rights abuse, created an appropriate environment for terrorism and attracts more extremists in the long term. The regime created the fertile ground for terrorism and extremists through increasing oppression while the US was fighting against terrorism. Eventually, the United States resumed the aid despite all of these violations. Therefore, it is underlining the message that human rights violations do not matter as much as strategic interests. And starting from the FY2012, Congress amended the FMF appropriations legislation that the US does not send 15% of military aid to Egypt until the Secretary of State ratifies that Egypt takes various steps toward supporting human rights and democracy.

Second reason, cutting aid as a result of the NGO Egyptian law, that problem had started after the 2011 revolution and lasted throughout the Sisi rule. All of the Egyptian successive governments dealt with the NGO case and its local Egyptian partners by massive suspicions. During the Obama administration, President Al-Sisi refused to release one of Egyptian Americans jailed because of its work in NGO, and in the NGO case, he did not issue a decision to ending the investigations and closing that Case. On the contrary, after second suspend Sisi agreed to end the NGO Case during Trump's presidency, they were acquitted and release all of the accused, and Trump welcomed one of those released at the White House. But unfortunately, the dilemma did not end, President Sisi had signed the bill of the new NGO law in 2017 to turn into a binding law with severe restrictions, which angered the administration and Congress because the law contains that condition “all foreign financing for the civil society organizations has to get a previous approval and a tax” that would violate US law. There were different reasons to suspend military assistance during both administrations.

Military Assistance Under Obama Administration

The Foreign Assistance Act mandates that the US cut aids to any country “whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup or decree.” As a consequence of President Morsi ousting and Rabaa massacre and the followed killings, the United States frozen the aid, it remained suspended till the election of President Sisi and the following year until the United States released it eventually. The Obama administration never described what happened in Egypt as a coup to avoid cutting aid entirely, instead, it found the solution of freezing is more suitable for its interests. As for the law, they have enacted later legislations specific to the Egyptian situation only, by that they can continue to provide aid.

Military Assistance Under Trump Administration

The most prominent motivation for this sudden decision for cutting military aid is the relations between Egypt and North Korea. As the Egyptian regime's history of human rights violations under President Sisi is known to all including Trump. But the Trump administration priority in his period is to isolate North Korea economically, militarily

and diplomatically. Which is led to take such a decision against one of its most prominent allies in the region.

In spite of the cordial relations that both Trump and Sisi tried to create it, revelations of Egyptian North Korean relations frustrated the administration and Congress. Egypt worked as a dealership for the North Korean weapons in the region while the US providing it \$1.3 billion in military aid and tried to impose a blockade on North Korea, US found its ally engaged with a closely linked with its enemy. That led the US to take the suspension decision.

During the Obama Administration, the United States suspended assistance and released it again without remarkable changes in the Egyptian situation. But there was an important reconsidering of military assistance policies under the Obama administration which continued also during the Trump administration. First, that reconsidering resulted in ending the Cash Flow Finance for Egypt. By this decision the US controlled the Egyptian purchases with the amount and budget, now Egypt cannot acquisition arming exceeded its annual amount. The CFF makes Egypt for a long time is not obligated to pay the full price of its purchases, and it can enter into futures contracts to get weapons. In these two times of cutting aid, the US administrations were obligated with Egyptian army contracts with American Companies and contractors, which made it difficult for the administration to make decisive decisions. Also, it will help the United States to avoid the ongoing commitment of billions of Egyptian purchases and guarantee its flexibility to take any decisions whether by cutting or reducing. The second decision after reviewing: The United States restricted the upcoming Egyptian purchases in four groups: counterterrorism, Sinai security, border security, and maritime security" and of course sustaining of arming systems already in the Egyptian arsenal.

Both administrations backed down on the suspension decision without remarkable reforms on the Egyptian domestic situation. The Obama and Trump administrations, which are so divergent on the US foreign policy, are sharing an unwillingness to sustain pressure on an increasingly authoritarian Egyptian regime. Even lawmakers in both administrations have including a national security waiver that allows the administration

to waive those congressionally mandated certification requirements under specific conditions, and they used it several times except for 2014. Despite the fact that Sisi's government did not fully meet all the US conditions during the two times suspension, the US released aid again in favor of the US national security.

Resuming aid every time put the US in embarrassment in front of the world and the Egyptians as well. While it calls for democracy and respecting human rights, it releases the aid amid increasing repression and anti-democratic decisions in Egypt. This implies that the United States through its foreign policy overlooked violations of law and human rights, it headlining that values do not matter as much as achieving its interests matter. The US successive administrations would not jeopardize its regional partnerships for democratic values. This is the policy the United States followed before the revolution in 2011, which allowed Mubarak's authoritarian regime to rule for 30 years. Also, suspending aid does not significantly affect domestic decisions of authoritarian regimes, as in the case of Sisi. In the case of Obama's suspended, it returned the aid because of terrorist attacks which the Egyptian regime was a basic reason to fueled by increased oppression, violence, and persecution.

In the case of Trump's suspended, it returned because both Sisi and Trump have common goals to eliminate extremism terrorism. Finally, for the US there is a firm belief of the importance of Egypt for American interests because of its geographic location despite its declining leadership role in the region. Despite the US suspension to pressurize Egypt, the Arab Gulf countries had supported the Sisi's regime, Saudi Arabia pledged to supply Egypt \$5 billion and the UAE \$3 billion. As a result of Gulf support for Egypt, and after continuing tensions in relations with the US, Egypt has diversified its military ties somehow away from the United States, to has closer ties with Russia, China, and European countries such as France and Germany. Egypt was the third-largest arms importer in the world during the years 2014-2018, where France and Russia were the main suppliers to Egypt.

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