The New Eastern Outlook has repeatedly noted that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is probably the fastest to rise among his foreign counterparts in his line of work. This is in line with the general process of a dramatic increase in the country’s role he represents to the world. Together with the US, this makes up the main (internally contradictory) geopolitical duo that largely determines the course of the current stage of the Great Game.

Once again, it should be emphasized that, unlike the United States, China’s economic component of Aggregate National Power is the primary tool for ensuring its relevance. Therefore, the PRC’s external “expansion” is greeted quite favorably by the targets at which it is aimed. The military component is also in a state of rapid progress, but it plays a very supportive role in PRC foreign policy. And as such, apparently, it will remain in it for the foreseeable future.

It is equally important to point out the absence of attempts by Beijing, what they call, to “intrude on the partners’ feeling” in bilateral relations. Which, along with demonstrations of carrier strike groups, is more of a rule in Washington’s foreign policy. And the latter’s complete lack of any indication of the validity of its claims to moral authority confirms the thesis that impudence wins.

Nothing similar accompanies China’s key foreign policy concept of a “Community of One Destiny,” to which all countries of the world, including geopolitical opponents, are invited to participate voluntarily. This concept is embodied in the global Belt and Road Initiative, which often evokes associations with the ancient “Great Silk Road.”

As two thousand years ago, one of the main routes of China’s Belt and Road initiative (BRI) is to pass through the
very troubled region of the Greater Middle East. But without (at least) reducing the level of turbulence in the Big Middle East, the formation and sustainable functioning of the specified route is impossible. This is the reason for Beijing’s increased attention to affairs in this region, which has recently become quite concrete.

The completion in March 2021 of years of Sino-Iranian negotiations on the signing (for 25 years) of the Agreement on Political, Strategic, and Economic Partnership, which was signed on behalf of the PRC by the same Wang Yi, has acquired breakthrough significance.

Then the factors of aggravation of the situation in Afghanistan (as a consequence of Washington’s decision to withdraw the rest of the American military contingent there at an accelerated pace) and more or less regularly occurring conflicts in different areas of the Arab world began to acquire particular relevance. China’s Foreign Minister addressed these problems during his recent two-stage visit to the GME region.

The first (July 12-16) included visits to three Central Asian countries (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), where talks were held with colleagues on all aspects of bilateral relations. But mainly on the situation in Afghanistan, which, with the expansion of the Taliban (banned in Russia) over its territory, is a growing concern for its neighbors.

In addition, in Dushanbe, Wang Yi participated in the regular ministerial meeting of the SCO member states and further in Tashkent in the international conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges, and Opportunities.” The main item on the agenda of both events was the Afghan problem, discussed by the representatives of almost all the countries involved in one way or another.

It is still too early to talk about the results of these activities, taking into account the different interests of the participants, the complex nature of the relationship between them, and the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan itself. Nevertheless, it makes sense to note the main point: The Afghan problem will not be left to chance by “outside interessants.” Thereby, they would have all sorts of unpleasant consequences for themselves, but mainly for Afghanistan.

Tashkent was followed by the second “Arab” phase (July 17-20) of Wang Yi’s tour under discussion, which included visits to Syria, Egypt, and Algeria. In each of these countries, the Chinese guest was also received alongside his office and top leadership colleagues. In addition, Wang Yi met with Ahmed Aboul Geith, Arab League Secretary-General, in El-Alamein, Egypt. Following the talks, a Joint Statement was adopted.

Perhaps the main thing that draws attention in the comments on Wang Yi’s visit to all three of these Arab countries is the clear mutual support expressed by the parties for ways to solve their internal problems. There was not even a hint of moralizing when it came to some “sensitive” aspects of the internal political situation in the countries on whose behalf the negotiators were speaking in Damascus, Cairo, and Algeria.

In particular, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad expressed “unconditional support” for Beijing’s position on the issues related to Taiwan, Xinjiang and Hong Kong, that is, on all three of the now leading causes of the increasingly fierce propaganda attacks that the USA and its closest allies are carrying out against the People’s Republic of China. For his part, Wang Yi voiced China’s opposition toward any attempt to seek regime change in Syria, and welcomed Syria to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Egypt has been a member of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) since January 2016, and the level of cooperation already achieved under this project was praised at Wang Yi’s meeting with President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi. During the conversation, the latter expressed his hope for further expansion of bilateral cooperation within BRI’s framework and pointed to Egypt’s ability to mediate the project to other African continent countries. As in Syria, Wang Yi was assured of Egypt’s steadfast support for the One-China policy and willingness to coordinate actions in the security sector.

Words more or less similar to those uttered in Damascus and Cairo were also spoken at Wang Yi’s meeting with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Here, too, extreme satisfaction was shown with participation in the BRI project and with the nature of relations with the PRC in general. As in the other two capitals, gratitude was expressed for prompt assistance in obtaining the Chinese Covid-19 vaccine (its production began in Egypt).

Two notable features should be marked in the rhetoric of the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s interlocutors from all six (three Central Asian and three Arab) Muslim visiting countries. First, it invariably emphasized the decisive role of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (which is a hundred years old since its foundation) in China’s development and in its emergence as a global power. Second, there was no mention of the so-called “oppression of the Uyghurs,” i.e., the closely religious people living in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the PRC. It should be repeated that
this “problem is now in the focus of attention not at all of the PRC’s Muslim geopolitical opponents. However, it is unlikely that the latter today have anything to do with their own religious and cultural roots.

Generally speaking, the Chinese foreign minister’s recent tour of the Greater Middle East region was further evidence of China’s rapidly growing prestige globally, especially in the third world. Which (mostly) happens without straining muscles and certainly without shooting.

This once again demonstrates the effectiveness of the well-known strategy: “...now you have to be gentler to people, and look at the issues more broadly.”

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