Egypt’s Growing International Renown is Undeniable

Egypt, which has been steadily strengthening its role in the Arab world since the second half of the twentieth century, has uninterruptedly enhanced its authority on the international stage, and is now firmly in a noteworthy position on it.

Recently, very important talks were held in Cairo between Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. One of their topics was the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. President Al-Sisi reaffirmed Cairo’s support for peace within the framework of the “two states for two peoples” solution and relevant international resolutions and stressed the importance of international support for Egypt’s efforts to rebuild the Palestinian territories devastated during the last Israeli war against Gaza, as well as the need to maintain the truce between Israel and Palestine.

According to many analysts, it was Cairo’s efforts that brought the Palestinian dossier to the forefront after a decade in which it had been relegated to the background. And in this, the trilateral summit meeting held in the first week of September in Sharm el-Sheikh between President Al-Sisi, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was very important. The aim was to jointly develop a vision for the resumption of efforts on the Palestinian dossier, negotiating steps to revive the peace process based on a two-state solution. The region, while appreciating Cairo’s efforts to revive the Palestinian dossier, is at the same time aware that while the “deal of the
century” had little chance of breathing new life into a process that stalled 14 years ago, prospects now depend on US and Israeli positions as well as on Egyptian initiatives. Palestinian National Initiative Secretary-General Mustafa Al Barghouti told the Egyptian broadsheet Al-Ahram Weekly, speaking from Ramallah that “a recent flurry of activity, including a meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, could help resolve some issues, such as a ceasefire and improved treatment of Palestinian prisoners.”

In addition to the Palestinian dossier, Egypt has taken many steps to build stability elsewhere in the Middle East, including the third round of meetings and consultations with Qatar aimed at restoring relations. The two sides reached agreements on a multitude of issues, including the signing of several memoranda of understanding to resume cooperation. That said, it should be recalled that Egypt re-established diplomatic, economic and tourism ties with Qatar in January 2021, although Qatar is a sponsor of the Muslim Brotherhood (an organization banned in the Russian Federation), which lost power in Egypt in 2013.

Turkey and Egypt also recently held the second round of political dialogue four months after the first talks. A day earlier, ARE Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said in an interview with Bloomberg that there were important issues between the two countries, and if they were resolved, relations could be restored by the end of the year. Among the demands insisted upon by Egypt, which are also supported by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Libya, as well as the extradition to Cairo of 15 members of the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (aka Muslim Brotherhood, banned in Russia) movement living in Turkey. However, Ankara perceives these demands as difficult to fulfill, contrary to national interests, while noting that “common ground can be found as a result of negotiations.” Cairo, using Ankara’s desire to improve its economy through rapprochement, together with the UAE and Saudi Arabia is trying to persuade the Turkish authorities to change its position regarding the Ikhwan movement, banned in Russia and many Arab countries.

The focus of both rounds of talks with Ankara was of course also on Libya, as Cairo insisted that Ankara stop its military presence in Libya and withdraw its mercenaries before normalizing bilateral relations. Egypt’s position enjoys significant international support, which is consistent with the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya.

Overall, stabilization of the situation in Libya ahead of the country’s parliamentary and presidential elections, scheduled for December 24, has received increased attention from Egypt over the past period. On September 14, President Al-Sisi met with the Speaker of the Libyan House of Representatives, Aguila Saleh, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, to discuss in detail recent political and security developments in Libya. In mid-September, the entire Libyan government visited Cairo for the second round of meetings of the Egyptian-Libyan Joint Higher Committee. During the first meeting in April, several bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed, which included implementing agreements for major infrastructure projects, such as Libya’s third ring road, to be built by a group of Egyptian contractors. At the current meeting, Libyan Economy Minister of State Salama Al-Ghawil stressed that Egypt will make a major contribution to Libya’s reconstruction. Al-Ghawil roughly estimated that Egypt is likely to have a share of $70bn in Libya’s reconstruction program. According to Egyptian sources, Egyptian companies have already started work on some projects after receiving permission from the Egyptian government. They state that Egyptian and Libyan authorities agree that major infrastructure projects should be completed as soon as possible.

In addition to the diligent work on the aforementioned files, Egypt has recently taken active steps towards a comprehensive solution to the Yemeni crisis. Yemeni Defense Minister Mohamed Ali Al-Maqdashi, during his recent meeting with Egyptian President Al-Sisi, praised the cooperation between Egypt and Yemen, especially in the military and security fields. For his part, the Egyptian president noted that the solution to the crisis should lead not only to stability and unity among Yemenis but also to an end to foreign interference in Yemen’s internal affairs, clearly referring to the armed confrontation between the Iranian-backed Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement and the Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia.

Since coming to power, current Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi has placed considerable emphasis on developing relations with Russia. As many Egyptian analysts have noted, el-Sisi considers Putin a key ally and sees the relationship between Moscow and Cairo as highly important to the Arab republic’s foreign policy and Egypt’s development. However, Egypt’s growing relations with Russia have provoked very jealous reactions in the West, which have at times taken the form of a targeted information attack to compromise or derail their further progress. And one of the most recent examples of this is a publication on the website of the Arab Centre in Washington, where “advisers” suggest that Cairo should abandon its independent policy, remaining as it did a few years ago “in the shadow of Washington”. However, Cairo had already travelled the “indicated path” earlier and had therefore decided to pursue an independent policy both in the world and in the region, which was already bearing significant fruit and
increasing its credibility.

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