

Egypt races to reduce impact of \$5 billion Ethiopian dam

Author:

Thu, 2019-03-21 20:50

CAIRO: An international research group has warned of “dire humanitarian consequences” if a controversial Ethiopian project to dam the Nile leads to conflict with Egypt and neighboring Sudan.

The \$5 billion dam is a source of friction between the three countries that could spill over into open hostility, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group said in a report.

Egypt and Sudan fear the dam, now being built near the Sudanese border, could reduce available water to both countries.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, or Al-Nahda dam, has been under construction since 2011 and is due to be completed in 2022. When finished it will be the largest dam in Africa, generating about 6,000 megawatts of electricity for domestic use and export.

Dr. Abbas Al-Sharaki, a water resources expert at the Institute of African Studies at Cairo University, told Arab News that Egypt is likely to face a water crisis in the future because of the dam.

Planned negotiations on the dam between the leaders of Egypt and Ethiopia are unlikely to succeed, he said.

Ethiopia plans to store 74 billion cubic meters of Nile water behind the dam, which would affect the 55.5 billion cubic meters of water that Egypt currently gets from the Nile. Ethiopia’s leaders insist the dam will also benefit all three countries.

Dr. Mahmoud Abu Zeid, the former Egyptian minister of irrigation, said that the impact of the Ethiopian dam on the Egyptian water quota is inevitable, but Egypt is looking to reduce its effects and delay it as long as possible until other resources are raised.

Dr. Hisham Bakhit, professor of water resources at Cairo University, said that Egypt is conducting large-scale research to reduce the impact of the dam.

Egypt has many sustainable solutions to manage the Nile’s water, he said.

The country gets 90 percent of its irrigation and drinking water from the Nile, and has “historical rights” over the river guaranteed under treaties in 1929 and 1959, Bakhit said.

MP Mustafa Al-Jundi said that Egypt has the right to appeal to the African Union, the African Parliament, the UN and international courts in the case of

Ethiopia's intransigence.

Mohamed Abdel-Ati, Egypt's minister of irrigation and water resources, said this week that Cairo does not oppose the development ambitions of any country "as long as they don't harm any shares in water or threaten national security."

The ministry is working to tap all sources of water and implement modern methods in irrigation. Desalination and wastewater treatment plants, and experimental studies into salt water farming are among Egypt's plans to ensure reliable future supplies, he said.

The Al-Nahda dam was 60 percent complete before work stopped in August as a result of a funding crisis. In January, a Chinese company, Voith Hydro Shanghai, signed a deal to build the turbine generators at the dam.



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Nile crisis must be resolved to avoid conflict: Think tankEgypt, Sudan vow to cooperate as Ethiopia builds Nile dam

Pompeo calls Hezbollah risk to Middle East stability

Author:

Thu, 2019-03-21 20:21

JERUSALEM: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described Hezbollah on Wednesday as a risk to Middle East stability and conferred with Israel about the heavily armed, Iranian-backed Lebanese group ahead of a trip to Beirut.

Pompeo, who has been on a regional tour to promote the Trump administration's hard tack against Iran, received a warning from Israel which worries it may again be in the sights of Hezbollah forces winding down their intervention in Syria's war.

Meeting Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem, Pompeo listed Hezbollah, Palestinian Hamas and Yemen's Houthis – all recipients of Iranian support – as “entities that present risks to Middle East stability and to Israel.”

“They are determined to wipe this country off the face of the planet and we have a moral obligation and a political one to prevent that from happening. You should know that the United States is prepared to do that,” Pompeo said in public remarks at the meeting.

For its part, Israel has carried out repeated airstrikes on Hezbollah in Syria, where the Shiite militia – along with Russian air power – helped President Bashar Assad turn the tables against rebels and militants.

In a speech broadcast on the Persian new year on Thursday, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the Islamic Republic had successfully resisted “unprecedented, strong” US sanctions.

Iran has faced economic hardship since US President Donald Trump withdrew last year from the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers and reimposed sanctions.

Pompeo's visit to Jerusalem was widely seen in Israel as a boost for Netanyahu, who enjoys a close relationship with Trump, just three weeks before closely contested Israeli election.

In a further signal of solidarity with Israel, Pompeo was later scheduled, accompanied by Netanyahu, to visit Judaism's Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City.

In May 2017, Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to visit the wall, but did not ask Netanyahu to join him.

Seven months later, Trump broke with decades of U.S. policy and recognised

Jerusalem as Israel's capital, incensing Palestinians who claim the city's eastern sector as the capital of a future state they seek. Last May, Washington moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Pompeo also visited the embassy on Thursday.



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[Sudan summons Egypt ambassador over Red Sea oil and gas exploration blocks](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2019-03-21 16:06

KHARTOUM: Sudan's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday it has summoned Egypt's ambassador to Khartoum, Hossam Issa, over Egypt offering oil and gas exploration blocks "in Red Sea areas subject to Sudanese sovereignty." Undersecretary Badreddin Abdullah expressed Sudan's protest at the offering and called on Egypt "not to proceed in this direction that contradicts the legal status of the Halayeb triangle."

The Halayeb triangle, which is controlled by Egypt, has been claimed by Sudan since the 1950s. However, Cairo says it is Egyptian territory and it has long been a source of contention between the two neighbors.



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Algeria tensions: Governing party chief backs protesters

Author:

Associated Press

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Wed, 2019-03-20 17:46

ALGIERS: The acting head of Algeria's governing party says it is throwing its support behind protests against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Critics viewed the move Wednesday as an effort to save the reputation of the FLN party, or National Liberation Front, amid increasing disillusionment with Algeria's power structure.

FLN interim leader Moab Bouchareb told a meeting of party leaders that the party "supports the popular movement." But he also appeared to support Bouteflika's "roadmap" for political reforms.

Bouchareb himself has been criticized as representing a leadership considered corrupt and out of touch with Algeria's struggling youth. The FLN is Bouteflika's party.

On Wednesday, foreign affairs minister Ramtane Lamamra said the Algerian government is "ready for dialogue" with demonstrators.

"As I see it, the demonstrations have only grown more numerous, and there will be no solution except through dialogue," he said in a press conference in Berlin.

"The Algerian government is ready for dialogue, and beyond that, they are prepared to welcome the representatives of the opposition and civil society in the new government which is currently being formed."

Algerian Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui has been struggling to form a new government as candidates sought to keep their distance from Bouteflika.

Bedoui, who was appointed last week, had promised to create a new cabinet within days to respond to the demands of Algeria's demonstrating youth.

Separately, the Protestant Church of Algeria issued a statement supporting the protests. The Church, whose exact number of members is not precisely known in the largely Muslim country, said it "fully shares the aspirations and legitimate claims of the Algerian people."

Algeria's union for imams and the Islamic High Council, a consultative body, had previously expressed their support for the protests.

Protesters want the ailing Bouteflika to step down after 20 years in power. Bouteflika responded by abandoning plans for a fifth term and promising reforms, but also delayed presidential elections indefinitely.

Demonstrators have demanded the government quit at the technical end of its mandate in April, along with the president who has rarely been seen since a 2013 stroke.



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[Netanyahu and Pompeo vow to counter Iranian aggression](#)

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Wed, 2019-03-20 18:16

JERUSALEM: Top US diplomat Mike Pompeo and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Wednesday to counter Iranian “aggression” as the two met in Jerusalem just weeks ahead of Israel’s elections.

Pompeo was on a regional tour focused largely on Iran, but the meeting and his warm words on Netanyahu’s leadership will likely be seen as support from US President Donald Trump’s administration amid the Israeli premier’s re-election fight.

Netanyahu, facing a stiff challenge from a centrist alliance in April 9 polls whilst under threat of indictment for corruption, will next week visit Washington, where he will meet twice with Trump.

Pompeo's visit offered the right-wing premier an opportunity to burnish his security and diplomatic credentials – both key planks of his re-election campaign.

In comments after Pompeo's arrival, Netanyahu said Trump's pressure on Israel's main enemy Iran was already having an effect, referring to his withdrawal from the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers and Washington's reimposition of sanctions.

"We need to increase it, we need to expand it, and together the United States and Israel are working in close coordination to roll back Iranian aggression in the region and around the world," he said.

Pompeo noted a Middle East conference in Warsaw last month that included Arab nations as well as Israel, saying the discussions involved efforts "to stop Iran's regional rampage" among other issues.

The US secretary of state also spoke of Iranian calls for Israel's destruction.

"With such threats a daily reality of Israeli life, we maintain our unparalleled commitment to Israel's security and firmly support your right to defend yourself," he said.

Netanyahu reiterated his pledge to keep Iran from entrenching itself militarily in neighboring Syria, where the Islamic republic backs President Bashar Assad's regime.

Israel has carried out hundreds of air strikes there against what it says are Iranian and Hezbollah targets.

"There is no limitation to our freedom of action, and we appreciate very much the fact that the United States backs up our actions as we do them," Netanyahu said.

Pompeo's stay in Jerusalem also included a four-way meeting with Netanyahu, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades on Wednesday night.

The discussions were to include plans to build a natural gas pipeline from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe.

Pompeo, who later travels to Lebanon, kicked off his regional tour in Kuwait where he met Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He is pushing for a greater role for the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), a US-sponsored Arab NATO-style bloc aimed at uniting Washington's Arab allies against Tehran.

Pompeo said before his arrival that his trip to Israel had nothing to do with politics, saying the "relationship matters, no matter who the leaders are."

No meetings with Netanyahu's opponents are scheduled, and the secretary of state will not meet with representatives of the Palestinian Authority.

Trump's administration has taken a series of steps that the Palestinian Authority has deemed so hostile that it now refuses any contact with the US administration.

They included cutting most US aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. President Donald Trump's decision in December 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israeli delighted Netanyahu's government.

But it enraged Palestinians, who want to make the eastern, mainly Palestinian part of the city the capital of their future state.

Pompeo's two-day visit to Jerusalem also includes a stop at the new US embassy, which was transferred from Tel Aviv on Trump's orders last year. A shift in semantics and policy has also marked the Trump term. The US has ceased to refer to the Golan Heights as "Israeli-occupied" and instead calls the territory seized from Syria "controlled" by Israel – a change seen by some as a prelude to US recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the strategic plateau.



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