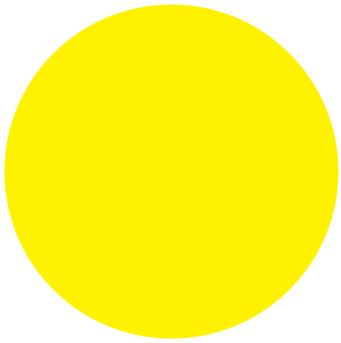


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Masoud Pezeshkian
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Egypt seeks to stay out of conflict, defuse Persian Gulf tensions at their source

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE


Abdolmajid Nabavi

A drone attack on Egypt’s Damietta Port targeted two liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers, setting off a major fire. While no group has claimed responsibility and Cairo has not officially blamed any party, speculation has emerged over a possible Iranian connection, particularly due to the port’s proximity to the Suez Canal — an alternative route for energy exports following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the deterioration of security in the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Iran has firmly denied any involvement, describing the attack as an Israeli plot aimed at undermining peace. Egypt, meanwhile, has adopted a cautious stance, saying it will not

be drawn into the conflict and that any response will depend on the outcome of a thorough investigation. In an interview with Iran Daily, Abdolmajid Nabavi, an expert on Middle Eastern and North African affairs, said Egypt would do everything it could to stay out of the conflict and help resolve the crisis through meaningful negotiations among the parties involved. However, he warned that a further escalation or the direct involvement of the southern Persian Gulf states could prompt Cairo to reconsider its approach. Even so, he stressed that Egypt’s overriding objective is to address the crisis at its source by resolving the conflict in the Persian Gulf.

IRAN DAILY: Given Cairo’s cautious position, how serious do you think is the possibility of Egypt being drawn into a confrontation between Iran and the United States? What factors could push Egypt toward direct involvement?

NABAVI: Like other countries in the

region, Egypt is deeply concerned about the crisis spiraling to a point where it can no longer be managed or contained. Throughout this period, Cairo has sought to act as a mediator, or at the very least as a messenger of peace, bringing the positions of the conflicting parties closer together. The statements and diplomatic engagements of the Egyptian president and foreign minister clearly reflect Cairo’s serious and genuine efforts to contain the crisis and facilitate effective negotiations among the parties involved, particularly Iran and the United States. In this regard, Egypt, much like Turkey and Pakistan, has sought to make full use of its diplomatic capabilities. Nevertheless, other considerations are also at play. While Egypt is concerned about security in the Persian Gulf, it is even more sensitive to the security of the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, as developments there have more immediate and serious implications for its national interests.

Egypt also maintains important strategic agreements and partnerships with Israel, the European Union, the United States, and the southern Persian Gulf states. Naturally, it cannot simply disregard their concerns and sensitivities. Egypt’s response, including its reaction to the attack on the two vessels at Damietta Port, reflects the continuation of its cautious policy of avoiding involvement in the conflict or any escalation. However, if the crisis reaches an uncontrollable stage, or if the southern Persian Gulf states become directly involved in the fighting, it is entirely possible that Egypt’s support for them will become more pronounced and that Cairo will adopt a firmer position on the current crisis. Unofficial reports suggested that during the 40-day war, Egypt demonstrated its support for the southern Persian Gulf states by deploying several aircraft, pilots and air defense assets. A further escalation could lead to a more active Egyptian role, just as similar discussions have emerged re-

garding Pakistan.

Immediately after the incident, Iran described Egypt as a friend and an important partner, while calling the attack on Damietta Port a false flag operation aimed at undermining relations between Tehran and Cairo and expanding the war. Could this approach help prevent misunderstandings between the two countries?

Iran and Egypt have both sought to contain the current crisis and prevent it from becoming a major source of tension in bilateral relations or a catalyst for wider regional escalation. Iran has therefore tried to demonstrate its support for Egypt’s peace-oriented and mediating role. Still, two points should not be overlooked. First, the findings of Egypt’s independent investigation will be important. Second, Israel’s negative role in this context should not be underestimated. Israel continues to seek to further undermine Iran’s relations with other countries in the region.

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