



Last Alliance Standing

Egypt and Saudi Arabia Strengthen Relations Despite Differences

By [Yoel Guzansky](#) and [Ofir Winter](#)

In an era where Arab regimes seem to be in constant battle, Egypt and Saudi Arabia—the cornerstones of a moderate Arab pro-American camp and counterweights to Iran—have not only continued their old alliance but have strengthened it, too. Following a [U.S. retreat from its historically intense role in the Middle East](#), Egypt and Saudi Arabia are now finding themselves, for the first time in years, having to form policies without U.S. input. They must now decide how to face the possible implications of the [Iran nuclear deal](#), the [ongoing crises in Syria](#) and [Yemen](#), and the [growing threat from the self-proclaimed Islamic State \(also known as ISIS\)](#).

Indeed, at the beginning of the year, Cairo and Riyadh announced that they were seeking to establish a joint military force, with Saudi Arabia providing most of the funding and Egypt providing most of the fighters. Then, in August, they signed the “[Cairo Declaration](#),” which encompasses a range of areas of cooperation over common regional challenges. In the last couple of months, the two sides have held a number of high-level talks, including the meetings of their foreign ministers on October 25 in Cairo and the meeting of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Saudi King Salman on November 11 in Riyadh, during which they approved the establishment of a coordination council to implement the “Cairo Declaration.”

However, as much as the regional unrest might motivate Riyadh and Cairo to cooperate, these conflicts have given them reason to fight, first and foremost over how to deal with Syria and Yemen and also on how to handle Islamist political groups in the region, such as the [Muslim Brotherhood](#).

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