



**The New Geostrategic Dilemma of the Modern Middle East - Probable
Contours of the Iran-Israel War: Myth and Reality**

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Abstract

The year 2024 began with a complicated situation in the Middle East. While the situation in Iraq became extremely complicated between the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Their confrontation reached an extreme point and temporarily ended the so-called "truce of prestige" that may not last long.

The downing of the Ukrainian airliner is one of the most tragic events of this confrontation. It is natural that Iran's geostrategic inter-

ests also crossed in Syria, because if the dynastic regime of the Alawite ruler Assad, allied to Iran, falls, it will be accompanied by the activation of Islamic radical groups of Sunni orientation (that is, the "Iraqi" scenario will be played out, which implies the restriction of the rights of the Shiite population). by the USA against Iran, the so-called Promotion of the "anacondi" strategy (the US authorities, especially the previous administration, tried to throw the "loop" of this concept in the direction of the South Caucasus as well). At this stage, the likely prospect of a local war between Israel and Iran becomes even more relevant, because Israel is a strategic partner of the US in the Middle East, and Israel is a never-sleeping enemy for Iran, since the "Cold War" period. This paper will briefly present how the probable scenario of this war could develop.

Keywords: USA; Islamic Republic of Iran; "Anaconda" strategy; Israel; local war.

Introduction

In the Middle East, against the background of the deterioration of the geostrategic situation caused by the attack of "Hamas" on Israel on October 7, 2023, there is a threat of a new interstate military conflict. The Israeli-Iranian geostrategic confrontation and the start of a strategic arms race between these two actors have turned the regional-level military conflict into a global-level military challenge. As a result of Iran's ballistic missile and air strikes in the direction of Israel, which were carried out in October of this year, within the framework of the "Air-Ground" operational-strategic operation, the contours of the regional war were outlined. The military potential of both sides is almost identical, although one actor has an advantage in some military areas, and the other in some other areas. For example, the defense budget of Israel is \$27 billion, and that of the Islamic

Republic of Iran is \$10 billion. Along with this, the number of Iranian armed forces reaches almost 610 thousand military personnel, and the number of "Tsakhali" reaches 170 thousand military personnel.

Method

The mentioned mini-research is based on the policy analysis level method and also the case-study method, and the theoretical basis of the research is the theory of the "securitization" or "Copenhagen" school, the theory of the balance of power, "security dilemma" theory and "nuclear terror" theory.

Result

Recently, the so-called The problem of "Iran nuclear status", which has become a security dilemma for global politics since 1995. Israel's transformation into a "nuclear weapons" status actor could become a similar strategic dilemma. Israel and Iran have already managed, despite great difficulties, to carry out the process of enriching uranium to more than 90% and have actually approached the final stage of making nuclear warheads. In addition, both of these countries have nuclear weapons delivery facilities, all three components of the "nuclear triad" (ballistic missile systems, submarines and strategic bombers - even at the operational-tactical level). In relation to this, it is worth emphasizing the fact when Israel and Iran will develop the final version of the "nuclear triad" and what will be the military-strategic and geostrategic plans for their use. Therefore, such a "strategic race" can lead to the creation of the effect of a serious global technogenic cataclysm, even in the case of the development of a local Israeli-Iranian war scenario. In the modern period, Iran views the events in Gaza to some extent as its strategic advantage, as it allows it to act aggressively and mobilize more forces in the Middle East against Israel⁸⁹.

⁸⁹ Ostovar, A., „Iran, Israel, and War in the Middle East”, WAR ON THE ROCKS, National security. October 17, 2023. P.1. <https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/iran-israel-and-war-in-the-middle-east/>

Discussion

Iran has nuclear facilities in the south and southeast of the country. At this stage, there are a total of 13 objects that have been identified. It is also confirmed that it has 20-25 nuclear warheads and it is not excluded that it may have up to 50. Israel has 80 nuclear warheads and may repeat the India-Pakistan precedent of 1999, when both sides simultaneously detonated nuclear weapons and both became members of the nuclear club. Both sides have all indications of this. Perhaps Israel will repeat the effect of 1978 - it will enter, occupy southern Lebanon, strengthen its positions and create a buffer zone. He did the same in 1978, which was against the combat units of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and this is against "Hezbollah". Perhaps this will be a "surprise". "On the part of Iran, the response may be that its regular armed units attack and occupy the Golan Heights. Second, to send his regular and paramilitary groups to Lebanon, strengthen them and start a ground operation from there. Probably, in such a case, the involvement of "Hussites" is also expected, they have quite strong potential and are a more organized force. Also, they have a fairly high level of armaments and have confirmed that they are capable of serious confrontation even with the great powers of the West. "Hezbollah" has no leadership problem, the group has its own political institutions and its personnel reserve management system. And if Israel cuts off one head, a new head will grow. The situation has gone in such a way that all scenarios should be expected and considered. It seems that Israel is preparing its potential and will not remain in debt to Iran. It seems that he is trying to have more targeted and more accurate strikes in order to take Iran out of the geopolitical game." It seems that Israel is preparing for serious strikes. It is difficult to say how the situation will develop after that. It is interesting what position the Iranian government will take after Israel's actions. It's gone like a game of ping-pong, it's already a bilateral state conflict and we may even see nuclear escalation. Israel's war against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon is another embarrassment for Iran and its new president, raising the pressure

on him to strike back at Israel to defend an important ally. Iran has so far refused to be goaded by Israel into a larger regional war that its supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, clearly does not want, analysts say⁹⁰.

On October 7, 2023, the military intervention against Israel by the jihadist groups " Hamas " and " Islamic Jihad " caused serious geopolitical changes. Not only regionally but globally⁹¹. Against the background of the mentioned geostrategic crisis, the so-called The signing of the " Abrahamist " agreement and the disruption of the high-level political summits in Cairo and Amman, in which the USA and Israel were supposed to participate on the one hand, and the leading countries of the Arab states - Jordan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar - on the other hand, testify to this. Therefore, the background of the situation's complication further increases the impossibility of reaching such an agreement and geopolitical consensus. Taking into account the events that have developed, a special research method can be used - the research method of geopolitical analysis (regional and global level analysis).

Global level geopolitical analysis: *Still, on May 8, 2015, the then US Trump administration, as a result of political lobbying by Israel, decided to issue the so-called From the " Iranian program ". Also, the USA suspended participation in all projects implemented under the auspices of the so-called " Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action " program and thereby completely violated the results achieved by the so-called " Six " (in the 5+1 format: China, USA, Germany, Great Britain, the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran) in 2015. Such a policy of the US Trump administration was continued by his successor, the Joe Biden administration, which made the mentioned process even more difficult. Namely, the current US Biden*

⁹⁰ Haghirian, M., „Walking a Tightrope: How Gulf States are Navigating the Iran-Israel Conflict”, The Henry L. Stimson Center, October 11, 2024. P.1. <https://www.stimson.org/2024/walking-a-tightrope-how-gulf-states-are-navigating-the-iran-israel-conflict/>

⁹¹ Byman, D., Jones, S. G., Palmer, A., „Escalating to War between Israel, Hezbollah, and Iran”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 4, 2024. P.1 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/escalating-war-between-israel-hezbollah-and-iran>

administration introduced it A 180-day sanctions regime also called for new sanctions on countries that continue to cooperate with Iran after the "Iranian program" is suspended. In principle, the US administration has already extended such new sanctions to defense-related enterprises belonging to China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. This decision may further complicate relations with European strategic partners, including Great Britain, because the three European hegemony France, Germany and Great Britain are categorically against the "Iranian program" being stopped and Iran going "free swimming" again⁹². Against the background of the fact that, in accordance with the decision of the Donald Trump administration, the so-called "trade war" between the US and the EU and China over protectionist policies on iron imports. In order to save the American national machinery industry, the said decision will further complicate and strain the relations between these actors and may introduce a great geopolitical dissonance in the so-called unity of the "West" as a single geopolitical center. In short, the situation becomes even more complicated in several directions:

- In the direction of the Middle East, in the direction of Syria and Lebanon, the final result of which could be the end of the US-Turkey strategic alliance;
- In the direction of the Caucasus, according to Georgia.
- in the direction of Eastern Europe, according to Ukraine;
- In the direction of the Persian Gulf and Sub-Africa, the complication of the Yemeni issue and the real scenario of the Iran-Saudi Arabia war;
- ***In the direction of Central Asia, the situation may become even more tense. Especially, after " Hamas " made a call for the second terrorist group "Islamic Caliphate". All this will lead to the***

⁹² Barnes-Dacey, J., Bianco, C., Lovatt, H., „THE GAZA CRISIS: MAPPING THE MIDDLE EAST'S SHIFTING BATTLE LINES“, European Council on Foreign Relations March 2024. <https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-Gaza-crisis-Mapping-the-Middle-East-s-shifting-battle-lines.pdf>

activation of their groups in the near future. It is an interesting fact that the "Islamic Caliphate" does not have a solid base in the Middle East. After the destruction of their main "core", the area of its operations shifted to Central Asia (centered in Afghanistan) and the African continent (centered in Burkina-Faso-Mali). At this stage, about 8-10 thousand terrorists have gathered in the Afghan branch "Khorasan" and they represent a serious force. Therefore, in the near future, the situation may escalate in both regions - the South Caucasus (as well as the so-called "black transit", through which the terrorists of the "Islamic Caliphate" and also the fighters of the so-called "Haqqani" network of the radical wing of the "Taliban" can be shot were in the Gaza Strip and other areas of the Middle East) and Central Asia. As a result of the activation of their branches, we are talking about underground groups (for example, on the examples of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) - the example of the South Caucasus and Central Asia can be assumed to develop.

From these scenario directions, there is a separate topic that will develop autonomously, a direct war between Israel and Iran, which will probably have a local character. Military attacks by the Israeli "Tsakhali" against the pro-Assad military units of Syria, as well as the pro-Iranian units and the units of the Iranian "Islamic Defense Corps" have already become more intense. Air-missile bombardments have also become more intense, and a new combat theater zone has even appeared - the Holan Heights, which has always been the direct cause of the conflict between Syria and Israel. At the same time, the second similar battle theater zone can become Lebanon, where as a result of the parliamentary elections, the pro-Iranian "Hezbollah" strengthened its positions again, and also took the majority of its supporters in the parliament and additionally caused a headache to the Israeli leadership. The leadership of Israel has already officially announced that the country is ready to start a war with Iran. Concrete steps have already been taken for this, in particular, at the beginning of May, the Israeli

Parliament made a decision to grant the country's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who originates from the territory of the former Soviet Union (in particular, Moldova), the right to start a war bypassing the Parliament. This means that Israel is already fully ready for war and the contours of the third Israeli-Iranian war are quite real. Probably, in late June-early July 2025, we will witness the development of this war in three directions. In principle, why is Israel starting a war with Iran? It is interesting to analyze this and why Israel lobbied in the direction of the USA to include the Trump administration in this "geopolitical conflict". There are three specific geostrategic or military-strategic reasons for this:

- 4) Iran, which represents a direct military threat to Israel and a risk to Israel, because the foreign policy and national security strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran explicitly state that one of Iran's goals is to physically destroy Israel as a state through military means. For the first time, since May 14, 1948, in the history of Israel's statehood, Iran approached its "enemy" directly at the state border and created a serious, not only geopolitical, but also macrostrategic springboard in terms of military infrastructure placement on the territory of Syria. Iran has already approached Israel and can literally "reach" the internal territory of Israel operationally and tactically and even intervene directly. At least to make the northern and eastern provinces of Israel in the area of rocket-artillery bombardment. This is already an existential threat to Israel from Iran. Moreover, Iran is not an easy opponent, unlike the Arab coalitions, because the fighting spirit and level of combat training of the Iranian military is much higher and many times higher than theirs. Secondly, during the 2007 military campaign, "Tsakhali" actually lost the war with the pro-Iranian "Hezbollah" for the first time in its history

- 5) The situation in Lebanon is much more dangerous for Israel, which is caused by the victory of "Hezbollah". The direct military connection and coordination between Iran and Hezbollah and their combat operations further increase the options for an already allied attack on Israel. That is, this time the Arab coalition will be replaced by the Iranian or Shiite alliance, which will also be joined by the Palestinian "Hamas" and the military units of the Assad regime, whose number has already reached 80 thousand people;
- 6) At the same time, Iran has a rather serious military ally, the Russian Federation, which is already a serious threat to Israel, because Russia's military-technical support and even the topic of military consulting increases this threat even more. Moreover, against the background that Russia has also created a fairly strong military platform and actually reduced the American military influence from Syria to almost zero.

Regional-level geopolitical analysis: In fact, my prediction, which I made several years ago and which I wrote about in great detail, is coming true. Therefore, I would like to once again remind our readers about the option of the mentioned scenario, which can already be realized in reality. (The said blog was written in 2014 and it seems that this is how things will develop):

Recently, according to the international media, the Israeli government is negotiating with Turkey in order to carry out the bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities from Turkey. Before that, the statement of the Chief of the Israeli General Staff, Benny Gantz, was published: "The Israeli army is ready to carry out an attack on Iran's nuclear system and at the same time start a war in Syria and Lebanon." We are ready at any moment to strike at Iran's nuclear facilities and at the same time attack Syria and Lebanon. I don't think it's going to

happen tomorrow, but we're ready anyway."⁹³ In any case, Israel has already reached a point that forces it to act as it did on June 7, 1981, at the Ozirak nuclear research facility in Iraq. –A surprise air strike by the Air Force, or air "blitzkrieg" This kind of geopolitical dilemma for Israel arose after the situation in neighboring Syria became extremely tense and this country was plunged into the vortex of civil war.

It is natural that Iran's geostrategic interests also intersected in Syria, because if the dynastic regime of the Alawite ruler Assad, allied to Iran, falls, it will be accompanied by the activation of Islamic radical groups of Sunni orientation. (that is, the "Iraqi" scenario will be played out, which means limiting the rights of the Shiite population); by the USA against Iran, the so-called Promotion of the "Anacondi" strategy (the US authorities, especially the previous administration, tried to throw the "loop" of this concept in the direction of the South Caucasus as well); A pro-American government may come to power in Syria, which will automatically lead to the loss of a strategic ally for Iran in the geopolitical struggle with Israel⁹⁴ (the mentioned approach is a fundamental principle of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran); The fall of the Assad regime in Syria will result in the loss of Iran's geopolitical foothold in the entire Middle East region. Especially vital for Tehran is the military-political and financial support for Shiite radical Islamic political movements "Hamas" and "Hezbollah" in Lebanon and the Palestinian autonomous regions (especially in the Gaza Strip), which was carried out through Syria. In short, the military-political turmoil and crisis in Syria created a real threat to the existence of the autocratic-theocratic regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Naturally, this was followed by the taking of specific steps on the part of Iran - the introduction of a limited contingent of the Islamic

⁹³ ჩაჩანიძე, თ., „ახლო აღმოსავლეთი დიდი ომის ზღვარზეა - ირანი ისრაელზე თავდასხმას ამზადებს“, რეზონანსი, 1 აგვისტო, 2024. https://resonancedaily.com/mobile/index.php?id_rub=8&id_art=209830

⁹⁴ Ebrahim, N. „New US backed India-Middle East trade route to challenge China's ambitions“. CNN. 11 September 2023. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/11/middleeast/us-india-gulf-europe-corridor-mime-intl/index.html>

Guard Corps of Iran into Syria, finding military aid for the Shiite population of Syria and providing assistance in the formation of territorial defense units, supplying various types of weapons to the Assad regime, etc. Naturally, the "Iranian" covert expansion in Syria led to the activation of the " Hamas" and " Hezbollah" groups in the territories of Palestine and Lebanon and an increase in the intensity of military rhetoric and activities against Israel. At the same time, Iran began to develop its nuclear project at an accelerated pace (officially Tehran is about 90% closer to the realization of nuclear weapons) and to improve the relevant military technologies, including attack missile systems. According to various opinions and information, Iran will complete the project of creating a new type of ballistic missile and will test it already this summer. This fact poses a real threat to the existence of Israel itself, because Tehran's accelerated development of nuclear weapons and new missile technologies, as well as the unpredictable military-political situation in Syria, further aggravates Israel's geopolitical situation. That is why Israel's military-strategic leadership is in a hurry to attend to such a situation and carry out preventive strikes on Iran's nuclear and military-industrial facilities, where the development of missile technologies is carried out.

The neoconservative Prime Minister Netanyahu's political government supports him in this. At the same time, such an activation of Israel in the development of geostrategy, and the issuance of military-type threats will force the current US administration to return to the militaristic rhetoric that it used in the second half of 2022 against Iran. Of course, against the background of the most difficult geostrategic disorder that can be observed in the Middle East today, Israel is facing the stage of protecting vital national interests and implementing a proper military strategy. For this, the implementation of the preparatory stage is already in effect⁹⁵. It must be said that the

⁹⁵ Hadad, H., „Proxy battles: Iraq, Iran, and the turmoil in the Middle East”, European Council on Foreign Relations, 16 April 2024. P.1. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/proxy-battles-iraq-iran-and-the-turmoil-in-the-middle-east/>

execution of the "Iranian Ozirak" mission by the Israeli Air Force mainly requires crossing the airspace of three countries: Turkey, Syria (partly Iraq) and Saudi Arabia. It seems that the "Tsakhali" armament already includes a certain number of uranium-enriched depth bombs (equipped with BLU-109/B warheads) and an anti-aircraft defense system, while the "echelon" deployment element is brought to full combat readiness. The negotiations started with the Turkish authorities prove this. However, it is doubtful that Turkey will agree to this, especially when Turkey is clearly striving for integration into the Eurasian geopolitical space. This is evidenced by a concrete fact, the incident that happened in Alma-Ata on April 26, 2013 - in particular, Turkey joined the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization" as a "dialogue partner", where Iran already participates in this organization as an observer. So, by joining the organization famous for the leadership of Russia and China, Turkey admitted that its geopolitical future destiny lies in the "East". In addition to this, the realization of Turkey's new initiative, signed in the form of the establishment and development of the "Organization of Turkish States", and the signing of a new geopolitical alliance.

Conclusion

It should be noted here that in the near future, Israel will first of all activate its agency and sabotage-intelligence activities and will carry out specific military-tactical actions in unison with the air "blitzkrieg" in order to destroy Iran's legitimate strategic objects.

Of course, the initiation and development of the mentioned military conflict had its initiators, who are represented by the military-political Middle Eastern alliance signed in 2015, which was created by the so-called in order to destroy the "Islamic Caliphate". And after its destruction, it continued its activities. Its members include the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic (Assad's regime), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, and Hezbollah. Each of them certainly had their own geopolitical and geostrategic interests.

The scenario of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, which is accompanied by the complicated geostrategic background in Yemen and Syria, will develop for another year, and it is not excluded that its area will be further expanded at the expense of Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, which may begin after 6 months. The situation gradually leaves the area of the predictable scenario and the situation becomes even more complicated.

Based on the above, it is interesting to develop several important recommendations, in the case of the development of the possible scenarios that have already been mentioned:

A unified counter-terrorist coordination center should be created at the regional level, which will monitor and coordinate joint activities in this direction. Even with the direct involvement of South Caucasus actors;

- 1) To hold a meeting of the representatives of the special services of the South Caucasus and Central Asian states. Also, consultations should be held regarding the possible complications of the scenario;
- 2) Launching a unified information campaign to better explain the current situation to the public at the regional level.

Such recommendations carry only academic content, and unfortunately cannot affect real geopolitical processes.

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