Iran-Israel Security Competition in West Asia

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Abstract

West Asia as a geopolitical and geostrategic region is of particular importance in the equations of the world system and its developments have attracted the attention of regional powers, including Iran and Israel, and trans-regional powers; Therefore, Israel as a domineering regime and the Islamic Republic of Iran as an independent state is trying to manage the developments in this strategic region by using their hardware and software capacities to their advantage. Iran-Israel relations have had many ups and downs since the establishment of this regime. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, their relations were completely severed and their relationship entered a new round of overt regional and international competition. Using the theory of defensive and offensive realism, this research seeks to answer the main question of the research: What is the security competition between Iran and Israel in West Asia? Therefore, it is hypothesized that Iran competes with a defensive approach and Israel with an offensive approach in the security, political-military, economic and cultural-ideological fields.

Keywords: *Realism; Security Competitions; West Asia; Iran; Israel*

Introduction

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 completely changed this country's foreign policy towards Israel. On the one hand, Iran distanced itself from the Western and Eastern blocs by adopting the policy of "neither East nor West, the Islamic Republic" and on the other hand, it put on the agenda the policy of "supporting the liberation movements and the deprived," thus abandoning the recognition of De facto of Israel and it did not recognize Israel because of its occupation of Palestine and its terrorist activities, which continues to this day. In other words, competition between Iran and Israel since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution has always been an integral part of the foreign policy positions of the two sides. The change in Iran's approach to Israel at the beginning of the Islamic Republic led to a fundamental rethinking of the policies of both actors towards each other, as well as a redefinition of their strategies and tactics in the region and internationally. It can be said that chess strategies and regional and trans-regional coalitions underwent fundamental changes since the victory of the Islamic Revolution and both actors completely changed their role in the field of regional and international

developments (Zarghami Khosravi et al., 2016: 68). In any case, the confrontation between Iran and Israel began at the same time as the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 and the new leaders' serious stance on the occupation of Palestine; but this confrontation was not limited to the two actors. Due to its identity and transnational role in defending the oppressed, Muslims, and liberation movements, Iran has introduced itself as a supporter of Muslims and liberation movements, especially the Palestinian people (Rasouli Saniabadi, 2012: 191). As a result, this ideology has led to a confrontation with Israel. In this regard, the formation of the axis of Islamic resistance, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, was due to the actions of Israel and its allies in the region and the lack of geopolitical balance and power vacuum in the region has also led to the expansion of this alliance. On the other hand, Israel has always tried to maintain the support of extra-regional powers in such confrontations by using the influence of Zionist lobbies in the United States and other countries and by using its economic and military capabilities. In addition, through the signing of treaties, openly and secretly, and sometimes through threats, bribes, and even coercion, it has tried to normalize relations and attract the attention of countries in the region, especially their Muslim neighbors. The continuation of Ben-Gurion's peripheral strategy in a new framework has been one of Israel's plans for this issue (Momeni and Rahimi, 2017, 416). In this regard, to better understand regional rivalries and security, a political, cultural, economic, and geopolitical confrontation between Iran and Israel and the subject of research is drawn in the diagram below these competitions; Also to understand the ups and downs of relations between Iran and Israel at the beginning of this study with a brief explanation of the history of their relations from before the Islamic Revolution and after and then to better understand the concept of competition between the two actors to explain them From the perspective of defensive and offensive realism.
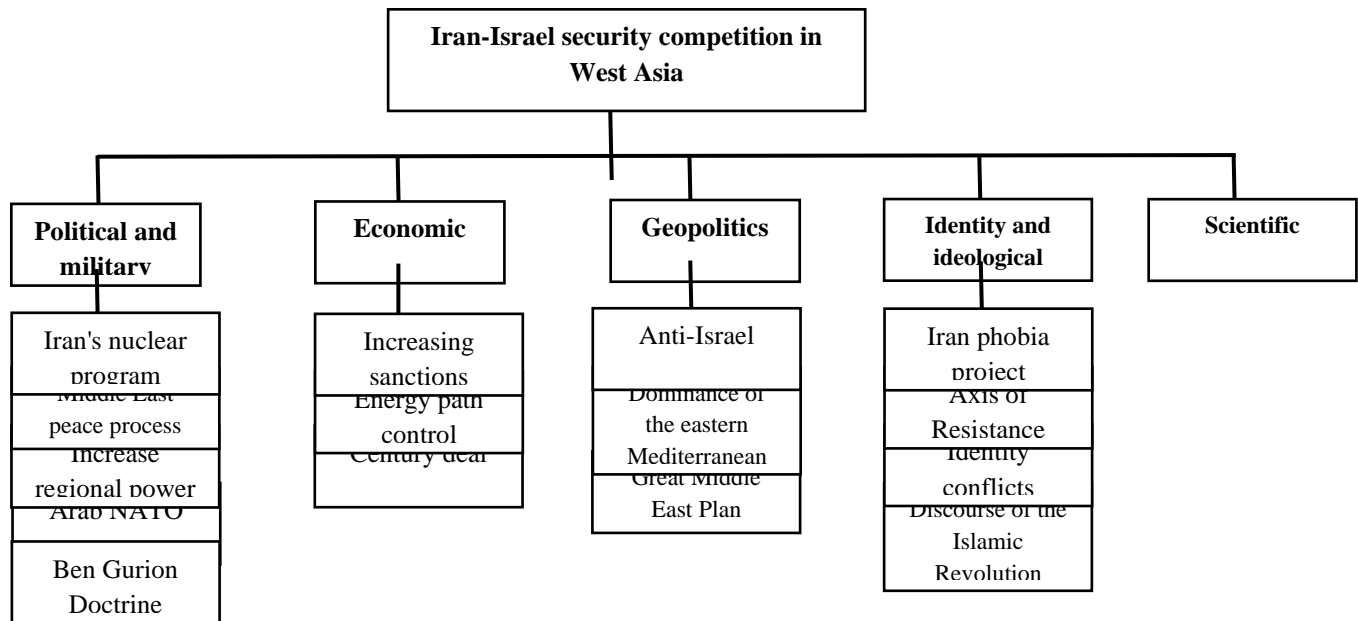

Figure (1): Iran-Israel security competition in West Asia

A history of Iran-Israel Relations before and after the Victory of the Islamic Revolution

Iran-Israel relations have had ups and downs since its establishment, which can be divided into two periods: First, the period of the strategic alliance between Iran and Israel before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and second, the competition and confrontation after the Islamic Revolution, which is still ongoing. Before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, from the founding of Israel in Palestine in 1948, according to Ben-Gurion's peripheral doctrine, sought to establish comprehensive relations and a strategic alliance with Iran. In this regard, at various times, Israel has made every effort to establish good relations with the Shah's regime and as a result, succeeded in establishing strong relations with the Shah

of Iran. These relations which lasted until the fall of the Pahlavi government in 1979, introduced Iran as the first Islamic country to establish diplomatic and economic relations with Israel. It is worth mentioning that during this period, the issue of the migration of Iranian Jews to Palestine and the policy of the Iranian government towards this issue of that land had a high religious sensitivity inside and outside this country (Iran). So that this issue caused reactions from religious groups and communities in Islamic countries as well as clerics and Muslim people of Iran. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, open hostility began between the two sides due to the spirit of freedom of the Iranian revolution and the protection of the lost rights of the Palestinians, which continues to this day. The Islamic Republic of Iran severed its relations with the Israeli regime and declared that this regime is a usurper and illegitimate and should be erased from the pages of the times (Shahbazi, 2014: 93-94). However, before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, with the formation of Israel in 1948, Iran, despite initial opposition and a negative vote to join Israel United Nations, 1950 recognized the regime as "de facto" (Arai, Najafpour, 1392: 122). The recognition of Israel by the Iranian government, in addition to the strong reaction of some members of the National Assembly and the Senate and religious circles at the domestic level, was met with strong reactions from Arab countries. But the victory of the National Movement, created new expectations inside and outside this country to reconsider the issue of recognition of Israel. This responsibility was mostly on Ayatollah Kashani, the religious leader of the movement, who had a long history in the Fight against colonialism and was considered a true supporter of Palestine. State elites at the time reacted positively to public opinion in Iran and the Muslim world, and in 1951 withdrew the recognition of two de facto Israelis and while dissolving the Iranian consulate in Jerusalem, handed over the affairs there to Oman. Although the pursuit of the affairs of occupied Palestine was entrusted to Oman, secret meetings between political, security and economic officials took place between Tehran and Tel Aviv, leading to the reopening of the embassies on both sides. In 1958 (the Iranian embassy in Israel under the auspices of the Swiss embassy) was opened and the Israeli embassy was reopened in Tehran. Thus, the Pahlavi regime not only recognition of Israel, but also improved its relations with the Zionist regime to strategic cooperation. It seems that the reasons for the close relationship between Iran and Israel as two strategic allies in the region were: The withdrawal of the Zionist regime from the political isolation in the region and the alliance of Iran and Israel with the Western bloc (USA), Fear of the influence of communism and the Soviet Union in Iran, Israel was under siege by Arab and non-Arab countries such as Iran and Turkey and Israel's need for Iranian oil as a major source of energy. It is worth noting that Iran-Israel relations before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, despite the insistence of Israeli officials to be recognized as de jure, were never formalized, and in the light of the political and economic crises in the Middle East, remained until the fall of the Pahlavi regime for de facto. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Israelis left Iran forever on a Pan-American airliner, ending thirty years of Iran-Israel relations and inflicting irreparable damage on Israel by losing it strategically[1]. The victory of the Islamic Revolution led to the closure of the Israeli embassy and the establishment of a Palestinian embassy in its place. This was the most important strategic step in supporting the Palestinian cause in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which sowed the seeds of hope in the hearts of deprived nations, as exemplified in Hezbollah's victories over Israel and the Palestinian Intifada. Should be noted that since the beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the fight against Israel has been at the top of the foreign policy agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As mentioned earlier, immediately after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, relations between Iran and Israel were severed and the former embassy of this regime was handed over to the Palestinians. It is obvious that the Islamic Revolution, in which supporting the Muslims of the world was one of its main ideas, will put the issue of Palestine at the forefront of its goals and interests. This means that the foreign policy of the regions of the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979, with a defensive approach to fight against Israel. The opposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Zionist regime was based on the ideological and humanitarian belief that Israel is a usurper regime that has occupied the land of Palestine as an important part of the Islamic land and has displaced the Palestinians. This policy was adopted in the framework of national interests. In other words, the most important factor in the direction

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[1] Refer to: Abtahi, Seyed Mostafa; (2005), Fall, Tehran: Institute of Political Studies and Research, First Edition.

of Iran's defensive foreign policy at this time was not national material interests and international considerations, but also that Iran, according to its religious and humanitarian duty, should support the Palestinian cause and not accept the legitimacy of the Zionist regime, which will be examined in detail below. In this regard, since 1979, a fundamental change has been observed in the relations between Iran and Israel. The factors of convergence gave way to the factors of divergence and made Israel the main enemy of the Islamic Republic and all the Muslims of the world also, the principle of fighting Israel and anti-arrogance became one of the main elements of Iran's foreign policy. The approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Israel is essentially humane, anti-domination and anti-oppression. Accordingly, the principles of the Islamic Revolution are opposed to the terrorist existence of Israel. In this regard, Imam Khomeini considers the plan to form the state of Israel and the recognition of this regime as a catastrophe for the Islamic world and considers opposition to it as a great Islamic duty and forbids (Haram) any political, commercial, and military relations with this regime (Hosseini Moghadam, 2003: 52). Ayatollah Khamenei also said in one of his statements about the Zionist regime: "Islamic Iran has stood by its principled and rightful positions and always emphasizes that Israel must be eliminated." In general, the factors that cause a divergence between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel are: Establishing an axis of resistance and support for anti-Israel movements in West Asia (such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ansarullah, etc.), Emphasis on the illegitimacy of Israel and the liberation of Palestine and Quds, Establishing a strategic alliance with Syria and opposing the Arab-Israeli peace process (which is in Israel's interest) and Strengthen the defense capability of Iran and its nuclear program. Finally, it should be noted that in analyzing the history of Iran-Israel relations, it is important that Iran and Israel have become competitive in the geographical space of West Asia due to their geostrategic, geo-economics, geopolitical and ideological importance. Although Israel is known as a quasi-liberal country among the West (Adami, Tabrizi, 2021: 271), since the establishment and development of power, Israel has competed with Iran in all areas, including security, political, economic, identity, and ideology. On the other hand, given the developments that took place at the regional and international levels, such as the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran-Israel strategic cooperation and alliance quickly turned into a fierce conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Israeli regime.

Defensive and Offensive Realism

The authors of this study try to examine the security competition between Iran and Israel in the region through the theory of "defensive realism" and offensive realism. The theory of aggressive realism states that the goal of governments is to increase their power so that they government finds a hegemonic position in the international system. Aggressive realists, like traditional realists, believe that due to the anarchic nature of the international system, conflict in the international system is inevitable. In other words, in their view, "anarchy" is of considerable importance. This anarchy is generally a Hobbesian situation in which security is scarce and governments try to achieve it by maximizing their relative advantages (Moshirzadeh, 2007: 90). Aggressive realists see the government as rational actors and key agents in the international system whose main goal is to gain the power to achieve security to ensure their survival. In other words, they believe that aggression is inherent in governments. Like structural realists, aggressive realists believe in the systemic pressures of the system on governments that cause governments to behave similarly to different powers and positions in the international arena. That is, the internal differences of countries are insignificant and structural pressures are so strong that it forces them to adopt the same orientation (Ghavam, 2005: 84). In contrast, "defensive realism" sees governments as concerned not with maximizing power but with maintaining their position in the international system; Therefore, achieving security is the highest goal of governments. In other words, the view of defensive realists is also a complete security view, and along with aggressive realism, has led the study of international relations towards securitization. These two approaches sought to answer the security dilemma in an anarchic international system. Unlike aggressive realism, defensive realism assumes that international anarchy is usually benign; that means security is not so rare. As a result, governments realize that they will not act aggressively and will only respond if they feel threatened and this reaction is often threatening

at the level of balancing and deterrence, and only if the security problem becomes more complex will more severe reactions occur. This means that governments expand their influence and increase their power when they feel insecure. Accordingly, the presence of the government outside the national borders takes place only in conditions of perceived insecurity. Thus, in the view of defensive realism, security equals having enough power to create a balance, and as long as there is a balance, there is also security. If a country intends to disrupt security and balance, countries must increase its power and achieve a new balance to gain security (Ghavam, 2005: 86). According to the theories of defensive realism and offensive realism, the explanations given can be said Israel's approach in West Asia and its security competition with Iran is based on aggressive realism. Since its establishment, the regime has not hesitated to take any action to increase its power to stabilize its position and dominance in the region and reduce the power of other countries and its border neighbors. These actions have been taken under the pretext of defending security but in the form of invasion. Other Israeli policies, including nuclear ambiguity and nuclear monopoly, as well as attempts to weaken and isolate competitor powers in the region are considered in the framework of its aggressive and power-seeking approach. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with its defensive policy and effective presence in the region, is trying to maintain its relative security in the region in an insecure political-security environment and to prevent the aggressive dangers of Israel and its allies. On the other hand, Iran's foreign policy behavior in the region is based on cooperation and development of relations with regional governments and not on the weakening and isolation of other countries in the region. Therefore, the behavior of Iran's foreign policy in the region can be evaluated based on the theory of defensive realism, and the behavior of Israeli foreign policy based on aggressive realism.

Iran-Israel Security Competition in West Asia

Iran and the Israeli regime as two competitors in the region seeking to expand their influence in the region. They try to protect their national interests and security by adopting security doctrines against each other and other regional actors. Israel, with US support, has reacted to Iran's actions in the region, and in recent years (2021), Israel by established close relations with the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, they are trying to put Iran in more security straits; in this way, by reducing Iran's power and influence in the region, to achieve its goals. Iran also sought to counter Israeli actions by increasing its military power and indigenous knowledge, economic self-sufficiency at the national level, and strengthening the resistance axis at the regional level to deal with Israel. In this study, while competing between Iran and Israel in the political-military, cultural-ideological, geopolitical, and economic fields, we try to evaluate and analyze these competitions.

1. Political-Military Competition

One of the most important components of the rivalry between Iran and Israel since the establishment of this regime in Palestine has been political and military competition. This confrontation intensified after 2011 with the Islamic Awakening in some West Asian Arab countries, the Syrian-Iraq crisis, the Yemeni war, and finally the discussion of Iran's nuclear program, which has been one of the most important concerns of the Israeli politico-military sphere. On the other hand, the revelation of the Abraham Agreement between the Persian Gulf countries, including Bahrain and the UAE, with Israel, endangers Iran's national security, Therefore, Iran should neutralize these threats by providing military advisory services to the axis of resistance, including Syria, Hezbollah, Iraq, and Ansarullah. In this regard, the nuclear program of Iran and Israel as a deterrent, increasing regional power and influence, and the Middle East peace process, Arab NATO, and the Ben-Gurion Doctrine can be considered important in the field of political-military competition, which is mentioned below.

1.1. Iran's Nuclear Program as a Deterrence

The growing power of Iran in West Asia, especially after the Islamic Awakening, has raised concerns among some regional powers, including Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime. But these regional

concerns about Iran are not limited to competitive strategies. Israel is concerned about the presence of a nuclear force in the region capable of developing and eventually possessing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles that would jeopardize Israel's national security and threaten the Israeli regime. Iran is the only effective force in the region that has shown an ability to develop its nuclear capability depending on national capacity and indigenous technology. Therefore, Israel's security requires preventing Iran from possessing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The Zionist regime is the only holder of nuclear weapons in West Asia. Officials of this regime have been repeatedly asked by various countries in the UN General Assembly to clarify their secret military nuclear program. Israel's nuclear arsenal is one of the most hidden issues in the international community. Since the 1970s, Israel has built an arsenal with the aim of Deterrence and maintaining a balance of power with its neighbors. Aside from the period of the Yom Kippur War (1973), Israel has never seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons. The most likely scenario for Israel to use nuclear weapons could be a response to a foreign nuclear attack. Both countries' efforts for nuclear technology began in the early 1950s, Israel began its nuclear program by building a secret nuclear reactor with the help of France (Cohen, 1998: 54) and Iran began its nuclear program in the 1950s with technical assistance and domestic knowledge. Tel Aviv's concerns have been heightened by Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear technology to curb Israel's military capability. On the one hand, Israel was skeptical of Iran's nuclear program and considered it a serious threat to Israel, and on the other hand, to defend its national security, Iran sought to increase its military capability against any Israeli military or civilian action (Salabili, 2013, 5). In this regard, Iran's support strategy, in addition to supporting non-state actors in West Asia such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the West Bank, was the main focus of Iran's strategy after the Islamic Revolution. As a result, in Israel's view, the most effective approach to preventing Iran from developing its nuclear capabilities is deterrence. At the UN General Assembly in 2016, Benjamin Netanyahu stressed that the biggest threat to Israel is Iran and that Israel will not allow Iran to develop its nuclear capabilities. Assuming that Iran is building intercontinental ballistic missiles that can have nuclear warheads and has missiles that can reach Israel, according to Netanyahu, the possibility of deterrence will still prevail (Maher, 2020: 23). In this regard, it is natural that in such circumstances, the security policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on making innovative efforts to think about maintain the regional balance. This can be considered a reflection of Iran's role-playing and interactive partnership with major powers, regional units, institutions, and security organizations in the process of regional conflicts (Khatami, Anousheh, 1398: 9). In general, the strategies of Iran and Israel in Iran's nuclear conflict can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Iran-Israel strategies in Iran's nuclear conflict

Description	Strategy	actor
This strategy could be a cautious strategy for building mutual trust and working with European countries to limit Israeli and US actions and strategies for reaching future agreements.	1. Adherence to the JCPOA and non-development of the nuclear program (after the period of restrictions)	**Iran**
The strategy includes a formal exit from the JCPOA agreement, limited development of nuclear sites, and an indefinite increase in uranium .enrichment	2. Exit from JCPOA and development of the nuclear program (no restrictions)	
The strategy will include a massive missile and ground attack on Israeli territory and attacks on positions of the United States and its regional allies.	3. Missile attack with allies to Israel (directly or by proxy)	

This strategy includes supporting the escalation of unilateral US sanctions, as well as increasing pressure to mobilize the international community to impose more and more sanctions on Iran.	1. Support for increasing international (and US unilateral) pressure and sanctions against Iran	**Israel**
	2. Limited military attack on Iran's nuclear positions independently	
The massive invasion of Iran is likely to be accompanied by the participation of some Arab countries in the Persian Gulf and the active cooperation of the United States, as well as a comprehensive conflict with Lebanon, Hamas, and Syria. If the countries of the Persian Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE, give their territory to the United States and its allies to attack Iran, this conflict will affect them as well.	3. Comprehensive invasion of Iran with the participation of the United States and some Arab countries in the Persian Gulf	

Source: Anousheh, Khatami (1398)

1.2. The Middle East Peace Process, the Deal of the Century, and the Abraham Agreement

In addition to the plans and proposals for the establishment of a state in Palestine or the strategy of the two states, which mentions the need to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel. These plans consider the solution of establishing two independent states in Palestine as a suitable way to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is worth noting that only some of them have explicitly mentioned the issue of two governments side by side and while emphasizing the need for an independent Palestinian state and the implicit recognition of Israel, they have accepted the issue of two states. Among the projects that have indirectly considered the two-state solution are projects such as the Middle East peace, the deal of the century, and the Abraham Agreement. The Middle East peace plan is an idea that is almost as old as the founding of Israel (73 years). At the same time, with the escalation of tensions between the Arabs and Israel after the 1967 war, the need for a lasting and secure peace was felt more than ever. The rise of the first intifada in the late 1980s showed that resolving the existing problems required more serious will. After the first Gulf War, during which the enmity with Israel deepened, the United States and Israel concluded that the current situation is a good ground for advancing peace. In this regard, the Middle East Peace Conference opened in Madrid on October 30, 1991, and shortly after, direct talks began in Washington. In the meantime, before holding the Middle East peace conference in 1991, the Islamic Republic of Iran held the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada in Tehran in September 1991 with the participation of a large number of resistance characters to openly and practically oppose the Madrid Peace Conference and support the Intifada and the Islamic Resistance against the Israeli occupation. The Tehran Conference, while condemning the holding of the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, emphasized the support of the Intifada and the practical action of the Islamic countries for the liberation of Palestine (Behyar Moghadam, 2007: 130). Iran does not accept peace in which the interests and rights of the Palestinian people are ignored and considers it in line with the survival of Israel. Therefore, both in the Tehran conference and other official and unofficial positions of

the Iranian government, Middle East peace plans lack legitimacy. In addition, after a brief hiatus in the Middle East peace process, following the inauguration of Donald Trump in January 2017, some media sources reported that the new administration was preparing a new peace initiative for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. In the first interview in December 2017, "Jared Kouchner", a senior adviser to Trump and Haim Saban, mentioned some of the main assumptions of this plan. He described this initiative as helping to stabilize the region while helping to weaken Iran's influence (Maleki and Mohammadzadeh Ebrahimi, 2020: 52). Trump's international peace plan is known internationally as the "deal of the century," which includes both economic and political aspects. The economic part of this plan will be examined in detail in the following sections. But the political part of the deal of Century was unveiled in late January 2020 and because it led to the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, it was strongly condemned by some regional powers, including Iran and the Axis of Resistance. Therefore, Ayatollah Khamenei's emphasis on confronting the deal of the century is because it is not only anti-Palestinian, not even an anti-Arab or anti-Islamic conspiracy, but also beyond that, a crime against humanity. An oppressed nation in a land that belongs to all the heavenly religions and the place of resurrection of great prophets such as Prophet Moses (PBUH) and Jesus (PBUH) and many other prophets, want to give it a completely Zionist face and trample on the rights of the other human beings in this land. So it is a human duty for all the free people of the world to stand against this conspiracy[2]. On the other hand, a joint statement by Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States on August 13, 2020, known as the "Abraham Agreement," was aimed at normalizing Arab relations with Israel. Then Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco joined the Ibrahim Agreement and normalized their relations with Israel. The process of normalization of relations between some Arab countries and Israel, because it was an active action by some Arab countries, could lead to the weakening of Iran's position and the axis of resistance, and in a sense, the coalition against them. Therefore, Iran has always reacted to Israel's presence in the region and its efforts to enter into new regional arrangements. In this regard, Iran, to counter the Israeli and American plans for the so-called "Deal of Century" and the normalization of relations with Israel to strengthen the axis of resistance to Middle East peace plans and It has also supported the rights of the Palestinian people and the liberation of Quds since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

1.3. Increase Regional Influence and Power

Iran and Israel seek regional influence and power. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, with the increase of tension against Iran in the region, especially by the Arab countries, and with the intervention of Israel, The Zionist regime sought to gain a sphere of influence in the region. This effort after the Islamic Awakening in 2011, gradually, that Iran becoming a regional power. But Israel, as a longtime competitor of Iran, made great efforts to prevent Iran's widespread influence in the region and to create belts of unity among some governments in the region. For this purpose, it tries to be close to some countries in the region, including the Persian Gulf. On one hand, some regional actors, such as the UAE, were skeptical of regional developments and on the other hand, it cannot trust its neighboring governments and has political differences with Iran, Therefore, has seen Israel as a suitable ally in the competition game in the region. Saudi Arabia, in addition to religious differences and competition over the leadership of the Islamic world with Iran in energy and political competition, is also in tension with Iran on the issue of the crisis in Yemen and Syria. Accordingly, Israel, despite not having an Islamic attitude, has sought to form regional alliances and coalitions against Iran, and also Iran is trying to disrupt this power struggle in favor of Saudi Arabia and Israel by strengthening the axis of resistance and non-governmental (anti-Israel) forces in the region.

1.4. Arab NATO

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[2] See: https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-dialog?id=43208 (2021/01/23)

The grounds for establishing an Arab NATO were first raised after US President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia on May 21, 2017. Trump's first official visit was aimed at strengthening allies and bringing closer the different perspectives of Arab actors in the context of the US Middle East strategy. On this date, about twenty Arab and Islamic countries gathered in Riyadh in the presence of Trump the issue of Iran was one of the main topics of this meeting, and the proposal to form a coalition called "Arab NATO" was also raised for the first time at the meeting, mostly aimed at countering Iran's influence, However, for various reasons, has not gone beyond the initial proposals and some limited measures, such as the Egyptian exercise in mid-2018 and the preliminary meeting of military representatives in early 2019. One of the most important concerns of the Arab actors participating in the Arab NATO alliance, led by Saudi Arabia, is the containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Middle East and Persian Gulf subsystem. Riyadh from the Arab uprisings of 2011 onwards, especially since the coming to power of King Salman and the rise to power of Muhammad bin Salman from 2015 until now, has devoted its main regional strategy to curbing Iran's influence, especially in Syria and Yemen. Inducing a common threat in the name of Iran for Arab actors and linking it to the goals of the Zionist regime in Syria and the issue of the Century Deal, which has also been backed by international-level support from the United States, France, and Britain, has become the main agenda of the Arab NATO and any regional alliance. Highlighting the Iranian threat with other goals of expanding Arab NATO missions is also significant. Iran's support for the Axis of Resistance in the region, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the energy security crisis, and the urgent need for US energy supply are factors that Saudi Arabia, with the support of the Arab actors in the region, the Zionist regime, the United States and some European governments, tries to present them in the media and regional and international meetings (Karami, 2020). But the fact is that the plan to form a joint Arab army, rather than stemming from the Arab world's need to counter foreign threats, stems from Egypt's rivalry with Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia's ambitious plans to cover up its failures in the Region and especially due to the changing environment in the Middle East and the proliferation of Hezbollah models in countries such as Iraq and Yemen that Saudi Arabia and at the same time Israel consider it a threat to their security and regional position[3]. While Israel has no place in the Arab NATO plan, it supports it because, on the one hand, it is anti-Iranian, and Iran is Israel's main enemy and threat, On the other hand, the plan is pursued by the US administration, which always considers the interests of the Israel. There is a direct link between the formation of the Arab NATO and the normalization of Arab relations with Israel. In this regard, also Iran has strengthened the axis of resistance in the region.

1.5. Ben-Gurion Doctrine

Given that Israel was surrounded by Arabs and the Arab countries strongly opposed its formation, thus, the attention of Israeli politicians to establish relations with other regional actors - including non-Arab Muslim countries (Turkey-Iran), Countries with Christian identities (such as Ethiopia and Lebanon), and non-Arab or non-Muslim ethnic minorities (Kurds and Armenians) was attracted. This strategy, known as the peripheral alliance, was first designed by "Reuven Shiloah", the first Mossad chief, and presented to Ben-Gurion. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion the 1950s developed the doctrine of peripheral alliance; the move was based on the hypothesis that Israel should establish close relations with non-Arab countries in the region to protect itself from hostile Arab neighbors. Thus, Ben-Gurion put this doctrine on his agenda to break the siege. He believed that most Arab countries would not have relations with his government, even in the medium term, for a variety of reasons and will use their influence to limit this regime on the world stage. In addition, they will use their facilities and capacities, especially oil, as a weapon against Israel; therefore, in his view, there is no choice but to get out of this impasse by bypassing the Arabs and establishing ties with other non-Arab political units (Shadmani, Yazdani, 1397: 11). With the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the change in Iran-Israel relations and also, the non-acceptance of the existence of Israel by the Islamic Republic and Iran's support for the Palestinian cause and its emphasis on the need to fight Israel as one of the main slogans of the Islamic Republic, despite the

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[3] See: https://bit.ly/3NppDqZ (2022/01.13)

existence of two conflicting views of the Israeli authorities in favor and against the Israeli interaction with Iran, since the beginning of the 1990s and with the beginning of the Middle East peace process, Iran was considered the most important threat to Israel's national security and various strategies were developed to deal with it. Meanwhile, the new peripheral alliance was one of the most important aspects of Israel's foreign policy toward Iran. In fact, from Israel's point of view, given the geopolitical transformation of the region and its role in the post-Cold War period, Peripheral doctrine should be changed based on new regional developments. Accordingly, the Peripheral doctrine was defined based on Israel's enmity with Iran, rather than the Arabs, and Israel's national security strategy and foreign policy shifted from the periphery of Arab states to neighboring Iran.

2. Identity and Ideological Competition

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran caused the emergence of a new idea and power in the region and the world. The change of government in Iran led to fundamental changes in foreign policy priorities; For example, Iran's most important behavior in the international arena is based on anti-arrogance and support for the world's oppressed. This action was accelerated by the announcement of the International Quds Day by Imam Khomeini in defense of the Palestinian people. Naming the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan "Quds Day", trying to convey this message to the Zionists that this country is part of the Islamic world and Holy Quds will be free. Thus, anti-arrogance and the struggle against Israel as the axis of Iran's foreign policy after the Iranian revolution spread throughout the region and the world; today, many political theorists acknowledge that the advent of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the twentieth century has disrupted Status quo in a world that designed by the colonial superpowers of the East and the West. On the other hand, Israel is trying to propagate the concept of Iran's phobia by propagandizing Iran as the symbol of violence and intimidation in the region and the world.

2.1. Iran Phobia Project

"Iranophobia" is used to mean an excessive and irrational fear of Iran to magnify the Iranian threat. Iranophobia first emerged during the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Israel needed an external threat to replace the Arab threat to convince public opinion that peace with the Arabs was possible. The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the opposition to the Camp David peace agreement was a golden opportunity for Israeli leaders to present a threatening image of Iran. In other words, "Iranophobia" is a strategic project based on which Iran is presented as a major threat to the region as well as a threat to world peace and security, and is portrayed as a disturbing variable and a disruptive player in the international system. This approach is followed by the United States of America and International Zionism to marginalize the Islamic Republic of Iran (Abedi, 2020: 1). It can be said that Benjamin Netanyahu was one of the most important people who made the greatest efforts to institutionalize Iranophobia in Israeli policies and change its regional and trans-regional strategies. Netanyahu changed Israel's foreign policy significantly after winning the Israeli general election in 2009; so the efforts of the Israeli government focused on overcoming isolation and friendship with the Arab countries of the region. Especially during his second term as prime minister, in 2013, his motivation for spreading the issue of Iranophobia multiplied and he even encouraged the Israelis to spread Iranophobia (Bergman, 2018). Netanyahu has repeatedly raised the issue of Iranophobia during his appearances in international forums. Israeli and Netanyahu officials are trying to make the situation more dangerous for Iran and to achieve their two important goals, namely, the maximum isolation of Iran and abroad regional alliance with the Arab countries of the region, against Iran. What is called Iranophobia is based on some realities in the region and the inversion of others to increase the cost of regional and trans-regional power and influence of the Islamic Republic in such a way that it becomes impossible to upset any balance of power against Israel (Shariati Nia, 2009).

2.2. Identity Conflicts

Identity components of the Israeli regime have been introduced: racism, hegemony, secularism, Instrumental use of religion, and militarism. On the other hand, the identity components of the Islamic Republic of Iran are based on two foundations: formal (Shiite nationality and republic) and content (Islamic). This identity foundation consists of the components of politicalism, anti-oppression, justice-seeking, universalism, and Unitarianism (Yaseri, 2009). The elites of the Israeli regime try to identify their fragmented society by using identity-building resources, which can be explained in three pillars: "Promised Land", "Unified Historical Identity" and "Jewish Culture". Jewish culture is also divided into two layers, the "teachings of Judaism" and the "symbol" and the symbolic sources of the Zionist regime also include "official Hebrew language", "myths of Zionism", "art", "dress and manner of dress" and "mass ceremonies". Although the leaders of the Zionist regime have made every effort to rely on the mentioned components and resources, to give a unified identity to their society, the prevalence of "secularism and atheism", "multilingualism" and other cases has dealt a severe blow to the regime's identity-building resources (Kamali et al., Bita). Meanwhile, the identity and ideological competition over the superiority of identity-building resources between Iran and Israel has intensified since 1979. The Islamic Republic of Iran, with the slogan of supporting the oppressed and confronting arrogance, which is also mentioned in religious themes and the Qur'an, is trying to confront and reduce the influence of the ideology of Zionism within the region.

2.3. Axis of Resistance

The concept of the "axis of resistance" has been formed in the context of historical events of the past few decades; The Israeli regime's occupier identity and non-adherence to the 1948 borders made the Palestinians, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, always look at Israel with hostility toward. The axis of resistance includes any country, organization, institution, or movement that, following the teachings of religion and in line with the Islamic Revolution of Iran, opposes the aggression and oppression of the domination system and its allies, especially the Zionist regime. The Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, resistance groups in Palestine, Ansarullah in Yemen, and hashd-alshaabi are among the members of the Islamic Resistance Axis in the region[4]. The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its active presence in the Middle East and resistance diplomacy, has organized all its official and unofficial allies such as Syria, Hezbollah, Hashad al-Shaabi, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ansarullah (Yemen), and suchlike for the liberation of Quds and the land of Palestine and in their resistance diplomacy towards Palestinian groups; has avoided divisive religious or racial approaches and has adopted the approach of "unity of strategy, while the multiplicity of methods" (Dehshiri, Hosseini Fahraji, 2020: 39). On the other hand, Israel's foreign policy and security doctrine, influenced by the regime's withdrawal from southern Lebanon due to the increase in the power of Hezbollah and the axis of resistance, took an aggressive approach. Therefore, the securitization of the actors of the axis of resistance and at the top of it Iran was achieved by placing them as the axis of evil and the supporters of terrorism and legitimizing preventive military strikes in Israel's security doctrine. Israel's defeat in the wars between 2006 and 2021 made the foreign and security policy of this regime more aggressive against the increasing power of the axis of resistance and its actors (Zebardast, 2019: 121). Based on this, it can be said that the expansion of the axis of resistance provided many interests and opportunities for the Islamic Republic of Iran among them has been a deepening of the military and strategic geographical area of Iran and the promotion of the balance of internal and external power of this country. The consequences of the actions of Iran and its allies in the

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[4] It is worth noting that al-Qaeda, Takfirist and terrorist groups such as ISIL cannot be included in the axis of Islamic resistance because: Although they are formed with the ideological (deviant) contexts of religion, but the role of the Western intelligence and security services and Zionism in shaping and strengthening them is quite obvious. Their struggle cannot be considered defensive and resistance; they are acting aggressively to achieve their goals of establishing an Islamic state (in the style of ISIL) in the Islamic world. This aggression is basically inside the Islamic world and against the Muslims and not against the hegemonic system, the United States and Israel. Israel openly supported Takfirist terrorists and treated their wounded in Tel Aviv. For them, the issue of Palestine is either not in practice or is not a priority. The axis of Islamic resistance is the main and enemy side of the domination system and Israel; while al-Qaeda and ISIL and other groups like them are the tools of the domination system and serve it and Muslim and even non-Muslim citizens martyr Islamic countries in the worst possible way (Tabnak, Bita).

axis of resistance have not only led to the strengthening of Iran's strategic, political, and defense security; rather, it has further threatened the Zionist regime, which is centered on various dimensions of strategic depth. Because the actions of Iran and the axis of resistance over the past three decades have led to the weakening of the Zionist regime's deterrence and reduction of various dimensions of military security, economic security, and political and social security of this regime (Bagheri et al., 2021: 86). Thus, the victories and successes of the axis of resistance and Iran in the competition of identity and values also show their superiority over Israel.

2.4. The Discourse of the Islamic Revolution of Iran

The Islamic Revolution of Iran is one of the most important events of the twentieth century. Because fundamental changes occurred at the regional and global levels after the Islamic Revolution. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the formation of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution, Its teachings as a determining political force undermined the prevailing political ideologies in the region, such as nationalism and pan-Arabism, and introduced new values based on Islamic teachings into regional relations that were unprecedented before. Martyrdom, anti-arrogance, combat against Zionism, Islamic brotherhood, unity of the Islamic world, anti-oppression, etc. were signs that were formed in the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and manifested themselves among the Islamic nations. The Islamic Awakening and the revival of the Islamic identity of Muslims and their efforts to return to the original Islamic teachings and the establishment of the Islamic political system have been the objective manifestations of this influence. Thus, some Arab countries in the region, which considered the emergence of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution as a danger to themselves, sought to confront the effects of the Islamic Revolution of Iran (Mottaghizadeh, 2011). Accordingly, Israel, as an occupying regime, is killing and displacing Palestinians from their ancestral lands (Israel) and has no legitimacy in the discourse of the Islamic Revolution. Hence, the Islamic Republic does not recognize its existence and is trying to awaken the Muslim nations to be aware of the terrorist nature of the Zionist regime. In this regard, Imam Khomeini states: We have always talked about Israel and its usurper for many years. We have always been to stand by our Palestinian brothers and whenever we gain power, as they defend their rights, we will be with them as brothers will be with them and their comrades-in-arms against Israel (Birki, 2003). On the other hand, Israel, with the support of the hegemonic powers, especially the United States, has always been hostile and opposed to the discourse of the Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Khamenei also noted in this regard:" The goal of the combat for the liberation of Palestine is the liberation of all Palestinian lands -from the river to the sea- and the return of all Palestinians to their homeland". Therefore, the most important elements of the broad discourse of the Islamic Revolution regarding Palestine in the current discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been extended and these elements are significantly integrated and are logically connected by new elements, As a result, have formed a comprehensive discourse entitled "Anti-Zionism" (Mottaghizadeh, 2011). Thus, it is clear that the discourse of anti-Israel and Zionism is one of the identity discourses in the Islamic Republic today. Also can be said in this discourse that such a position has strong and long roots in the discourses before the Islamic Revolution. However, the concept of "anti-Zionism" has reached perfection and comprehensiveness in the current discourse of revolutionary leadership but its intellectual roots are also evident in the pre-revolutionary discourses. It can be argued that the elements of the anti-Zionist discourse have always been reproduced and strengthened within Iranian society for more than half a century. In this context, mere support for the Palestinian people is not enough, and this support will not be achieved without public combat against Israel. Accordingly, the coexistence of the Islamic Republic and the Zionist regime will never be possible in terms of concept and discourse.

3. Economic Competition

In Israel's national security strategy (especially in recent years), economic power is of paramount importance. Israel's growing economic power is being pursued simultaneously to weaken the economies of other countries in the region, especially Iran. Israel's growing economic power is being pursued

simultaneously to weaken the economies of other countries in the region, especially Iran. On the other hand, every government needs strong economic support to increase its power in various fields, especially military and political security. On the other hand, its economic weakness can be a threat to foreign policy goals and the security interests of a government. Therefore, the Israeli regime pursues the growing economic weakness of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a serious policy, which can be discussed from different dimensions. In the following, the most important components of economic competition between Iran and the Zionist regime will be examined.

3.1. The Tactic of Increasing Economic Sanctions

After the founding of Israel in 1948, as a poor land, faced an influx of Jewish population all over the world. On the other hand, with economic development and population growth, Israel's need and dependence on energy, raw material markets, foreign capital, and cheap labor has increased and The economic threat, on the other hand, has affected Israel's security environment has affected the region and the Arab states and has exacerbated the regime's vulnerability to economic security. Regarding the economic problems of Israel, we can mention the economic dependence of this regime on the United States, energy crisis and water scarcity, repeated instability due to ongoing wars and military operations, the transmission of libertarian waves within the borders of occupied Palestine, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque intifada, Israel's failure to move from a security to an economic stage and the increase in military spending due to security threats that have disrupted the economic growth of the Zionist regime (Eyvazi, 2004: 15). Gradually, with the huge investments of traders and statesmen such as Chamberlain, the economic situation of this regime improved, to the extent that many companies and business brands in Israel today have made a profit by investing in stock markets, the film industry, and advanced technology. In contrast, Iran, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the non-recognition of Israel, was opposed by some regional and global powers; for this reason, from the very beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, was sanctioned by these governments in the economic and military fields. This made the field more difficult for Iran after the imposed war, and more difficult for Iran after the introduction of the nuclear program. After the conclusion of JCPOA, by the agreement between Iran and the P5 + 1 on the complete lifting of sanctions against Iran, this issue was dissolved with the withdrawal of the United States from JCPOA In this situation, Iran, by trying to achieve economic self-sufficiency with the slogan of "resistance economy", achieved many achievements in various scientific, political, economic and military fields. Even though Israel, as a regional competitor of Iran, did not give up any action in imposing more and more sanctions against Iran.

3.2. Area Energy Control

Energy supply is so important in today's world that most countries in the world call it their red line in pursuing collective policies. For example, Germany, which is one of the most powerful member states of the European Union, Because of the strong need for energy, violates the EU policy of reducing its dependence on Russian gas and, regardless of the convergence of the European region, mutually, energy diplomacy promotes itself (Niakoei et al., 2011: 199). So it is in a strategic area full of natural energy that the greedy eye of many powers is dazzling. On the other hand, amid regional competition, energy control and energy security are also very important for states claiming power in their region to advance the external goals of governments. In the meantime, Iran, due to its strategic position and access to important oil and gas resources, and its location on energy transmission lines, has gained a special position in the field of energy. But Israel has always been threatened in terms of access to energy resources, especially oil and gas, due to the nature of the occupation, and its anti-Arab and anti-Islamic orientation. The oil governments of the region, even if they secretly befriend and interact with this regime, will not be able to supply Israeli oil and gas for fear of national public opinion and the Arab and Islamic region; because it is not easy to hide it. Therefore, Israel has to import the oil and gas it needs from Russia, Central Asia, the United States, and Latin America. This has forced Israel to look for a new way to supply the energy it needs and to greedily control the region's energy in competition with Iran.

Israel's hopes have been bolstered by the prospect of forming an energy triangle between Israel, Cyprus, and Greece by finding large oil and gas reserves in the special economic zones of the Eastern Mediterranean. Of course, despite the approval of the pipeline construction plan, there will be challenges for it. The high cost of seabed pipeline construction, legal challenges of gas resources with Lebanon and Syria, Israel's conflict with Palestine, Turkey's opposition, instability and security threats, and competition with major gas exporting countries are the most important challenges (Karimipour, 2020). In the context of the competition between Iran and Israel, we can mention the attacks on ships in the Red Sea. Since 2019, Israel has targeted about 12 Iranian tankers carrying oil and weapons to Syria[5]. It must be acknowledged that Israel's operation against Iranian oil tankers, in turn, reflects the strengthening of Iran's regional position in various areas, such as political, military, and economic. It is worth mentioning that one of the most important principles of Iran's regional policy is to strengthen the governments and nations of the region and to create a strong wall against any kind of Israeli aggression, both inside and outside the Palestinian territories. Therefore, Iran's reaction to any action of the Zionist regime against Iran, whether in international waters, coasts, or deep inside Iran, is a response that completely settles Israel's account in the region and leads everyone to believe that there are no more Israelis[6]. This has been clearly stated many times by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3.3. The Economic Aspect of Deal of Century

Arab countries' challenges with Iran over Iran's nuclear issues, Iran's effective role in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine, and Regional rivalries between Iran and Saudi Arabia, with the support of the United States and Israel, have led some Arab countries in the region to normalize the process with Israel. In this regard, the first direct commercial flight from Israel to the UAE took place on August 31, 2020. According to US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel and the UAE are normalizing their diplomatic relations. Accordingly, they exchange embassies and ambassadors and begin their cooperation in a wide range of fields, including tourism, education, health, trade, and energy. It should be noted that the Zionist regime seeks to play a more important role in the energy market and trade (oil and gas), oil policies, regional energy hubs, and large oil investments in the region[7]. On the eve of the "Peace for Welfare" workshop in Doha, the US government unveiled the economic part of the Trump Deal of the Century. Under the plan, $ 50 billion is to be invested over ten years, mainly in the West Bank, and Gaza Strip, and far less in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. In any case, it may seem at first glance that the economic part of the transaction of the century does not matter in itself. What makes this part of the plan meaningful or completely meaningless is the political part of the deal of the century, the time of its disclosure has been postponed until after the Doha workshop (Zeidabadi, 2019). On the other hand, pursuing a compromising approach against the deal of the century, Considering Iran's irreconcilable attitude towards the occupation of the Zionist regime and the emphasis on the issue of Palestine since the Islamic Revolution, has negative consequences for this country. The main proponents of advancing the deal of the century are trying to focus all their attention on undermining Iran's power. But in general, according to Ayatollah Khamenei, an examination of Israel's regional position shows that it is the "will of the nations" that will play a key role in drawing regional equations; Neither the decisions of the White House black rooms nor any other will; Whether the title of those decisions is "peace process" or "deal of the century"[8].Thus, Iran is in the lead in the competition with Israel in this regard.

4. Geopolitical Competitions

The concept of geopolitics has a serious impact on the quality of governments and the power of governments is analyzed by their geopolitical position. Geopolitical competitions are the attempt of two

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[5] See: https://bit.ly/3iF0bje (2022.01.23)
[6] See: http://fna.ir/32tr3 (2022.01.12)
[7] See: https://www.eghtesadnews.com/fa/tiny/news-363668 (2022.01.14)
[8] See: https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=41457 (2022.01.11)

or more groups, nations, and countries to influence or dominate the region or the world or access spatial resources (both material and spiritual). Competition in political geography and geopolitics does not make sense without scale and the philosophy of competition law is domination, superiority, and access to opportunities. In the meantime, practical measures to lead or influence a country, region or the world takes the form of competition. Geopolitical competition, if continued, may lead to geopolitical conflict. This happens when competitor powers try to strengthen their position by degrading or hindering the position of others and promoting and preventing others from achieving their goals. In geopolitical competition, common material and spiritual interests give way to conflicting interests; because peace is obtained from common interests, cooperation, treaty, and geopolitics, but from reciprocal interests, competition, conflict, and war (Autotil et al., 2001). In the meantime, it can be said that one of the components of increasing Iran's national power in the region is the geopolitical position of this country. Iran is the junction of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, and the Arab world. Therefore, Israel is always in conflict with its long-time regional enemy, Iran, to maintain its geopolitical position and sphere of influence.

4.1. Anti-Israelism (and the Great / New Middle East Plan)

The Greater Middle East Plan sought to turn the Arab states of the Middle East, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, the Muslim countries of the Caucasus, and the Israeli regime into an Israel-centric bloc in a free economy. To this end, the Great / New Middle East Plan is based on the fragmentation of major countries in the region or the change of its political regimes. The plan seeks to divide powerful states such as Iran into smaller, more unstable states by using ethnic species, which in turn contribute to the country's vastness and geographical unevenness, on the shores of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf to create. However, in the face of such a plan with the goals planned for the United States and its regime (Israel), the Islamic Republic of Iran has been placed as a major obstacle to achieving this goal. Such a plan is a fulfillment of the Zionists' long-held dream because Iran considers Israel a usurper and illegitimate regime. In other words, when there are no powerful and independent governments in the West Asian region like Iran, Israel can dominate the region and pursue its geopolitical goals in the shadow of American power. Despite all the security, political and economic pressures, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a regional power, is at the peak of its role. Regional power is specific to a country that has the authority and power to influence a region or whose power and interests prevail throughout the region. According to this definition, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a regional power. Friends and foes alike acknowledge this position of the regions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Achieving this power is also a favorable result of Iran's defense and security doctrine, which was able to ensure the security of the Islamic Republic of Iran and, consequently, move towards creating a favorable regional situation. All the efforts of Iran's enemies and international and regional competitions, especially the United States of America and Israel, are to take this position, which is based on this strategic thinking, from the Islamic Republic of Iran[9]. This became especially clear after the assassination of Martyr Qassem Soleimani, which in turn represents the defeat of the United States and Israel in the region and changed the political geography of the Middle East.

4.2. The Dominance of the Eastern Mediterranean

The eastern Mediterranean is the starting point of the axis of resistance. On the one hand, this region is the front of the confrontation between Israel and Iran, so the Eastern Mediterranean is very important for Iran and Israel in terms of geopolitical and geostrategic importance. On the other hand, this region, according to the foreign and regional policy goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Increasing regional influence to establish security rings based on a defense mechanism in the peripheral region is important for Iran. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran by the principles and foundations of the Islamic Revolution and based on the goals of the Islamic Revolution discourse, trying to create spheres of

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[9] See: https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=47280 (2022.01.12)

influence in the Eastern Mediterranean region is one of Iran's regional strategic priorities to achieve this, using the component of resistance against occupation is the most efficient way to dominate. As mentioned, Iran is recognized as a regional power. Therefore, by controlling this region, Iran can lead this territory and be at the center of the Islamic world. On the other hand, Iran's domination of the eastern Mediterranean reduces the influence and aggression of Israel and its supporting forces in the region and does not allow the Zionist regime and the governments that openly and secretly support it in the region to intervene and advance. In addition, Israel wants to dominate the region. The regime intends to subjugate the Eastern Mediterranean in addition to advancing and pursuing political goals for other purposes such as; Mastery of energy resources, trade and investment, cultural relations, and finally, the normalization of relations with all countries in the region will be achieved. In other words, by adopting a policy of strategic depth and strengthening the axis of resistance, Iran has been able to become a powerful geopolitical power in the region and, consequently, in the Eastern Mediterranean.

5. Scientific Competitions

In the last two decades, despite Israel facing a new type of military and security threat called asymmetric or hybrid war, the cycle by which Israel responded to its security threats has not changed. The ruling political establishment in Israel continues to seek security through its military supremacy, political gains, and a balance in the region. Achieving this military superiority has always been pursued through the development of technological capabilities in the field of war. But after the many difficulties that Israel faced in confronting the Palestinian Islamic Resistance and Hezbollah, has tried to rebuild its absolute military superiority by developing new systems of Armor protection, and missile defense and changing its tactics in ground battles (Parto, Abdolhosseinzadeh, 2013: 168). However, Israel did not achieve absolute or even relative superiority during the wars between 2006 and 2021. In this regard, Israel, under the pretext of threatening its security, while expanding its military industry due to easy access to the latest findings and scientific, technological, and military facilities in the world in Europe and the United States has been able to reach a good position in the world (Azghandi, Zakeri, 2010: 107). Considering the scientific growth and development of Iran's nuclear technology and military industries in the region and some sciences (such as nanotechnology, etc.) at the global level, on the one hand, the UAE and the other hand, Israel, to prevent Iran from becoming a scientific hub in the region, sought to develop scientific and technological cooperation. It is also worth mentioning here that the development of Iran's nuclear program has been done for peaceful purposes (medical, scientific, technological) and there is no evidence of the Islamic Republic of Iran's attempt to acquire nuclear weapons and also, the evaluation of the speech actions of high-ranking Iranian officials regarding the illegality (from the point of view of Islam) of nuclear weapons indicates that nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's defense and security doctrine. Although Israel has nuclear weapons, its nuclear program is trusted because of its loyalty to the West. But the Islamic Republic of Iran should be deprived of such technologies due to opposition to the status quo (Koushki, Mirhosseini, 2012: 121-122). In any case, given the recent scientific advances in Iran, to stop Iran's scientific growth, Israeli leaders resorted to assassinating Iranian nuclear scientists such as Massoud Ali Mohammadi, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, Majid Shahriari, and Dariush Rezainejad, and recently (2020), they assassinated Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. This, in turn, demonstrates Iran's superiority in scientific competition with Israel and its allies in the region.

Conclusion

In this article, an attempt has been made to explain the security competition between Iran and Israel by using the concept of security from the perspective of defensive and offensive realism. Iran and Israel have experienced a series of ups and downs in relations based on conflict and cooperation in two different periods. Both have relied on their capabilities to try to defuse their security threats at the regional level; but According to the studies conducted as well as the competitive indicators proposed in the field of competition between Iran and Israel, is understood that given that Israel considers itself alone in the region and does not trust any of its allies in the region, by using its ability and power, including political,

military and economic, as well as by propagating its ideology, it tries to legitimize its aggressive demands in the field of regional competition and seeks to defeat its competitors in West Asia by establishing a hegemony under the shadow of its main ally, the United States; thus, Israel's approach to regional competition is based on aggressive realism. In contrast, Iran, as the only non-Arab country in the Persian Gulf, following the establishment of peace and stability in the region and the repulsion of threats and aggression by its competitors and enemies, has adopted a defensive realism approach to maintaining its national security. In general, it can be said that Israel has been able to enjoy a good position and influence among the Arab countries by using its economic and military leverage in the region; however, in the discussion of cultural competitions, it has not been able to achieve a legitimate and desirable image. On the other hand, Iran has gained potential military and cultural influence in the region by using Islamic concepts with its allies in the axis of resistance. Even pressure from trans-regional powers to leverage economic and military sanctions over the nuclear issue has failed to have a significant impact. In general, it should be acknowledged that given the developments in West Asia, Israel has not been able to achieve significant success during the regional competition between Iran and this regime.

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