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ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ /
POLITICAL SCIENCE

Новые контуры Арабо-Израильского
конфликта (региональный аспект)

Научная статья / Original article

New contours of the Arab-Israeli conflict
(regional aspect)

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Аннотация. Одной из главных детерминант ближневосточной системы международных отношений является арабо-израильский конфликт. Его значение для региона долгое время определялось вовлеченностью в него практически всех региональных и ведущих глобальных акторов. Вместе с тем, за последние два десятилетия арабо-израильский конфликт пережил ремасштабирование и определенную деинтернационализацию. Смещение внешнеполитических приоритетов ряда арабских государств, подписание Соглашений Авраама, нормализация ирано-саудовских отношений, а также глобальный контекст сместили вопрос Палестины из перечня первоочередных проблем Ближнего Востока. В этой связи, очередной виток противостояния Израиля и Палестины несколько выпадает из логики регионального развития и обладает отличительными характеристиками, особенно, с учетом обновленных региональных и глобальных реалий. Исходя из этого, цель настоящей статьи состоит в выявлении особенностей текущей палестино-израильской эскалации его региональной и глобальной проекции.

Ключевые слова: Ближний Восток, региональная безопасность, арабо-израильский конфликт, международные отношения, глобальная безопасность, конфликтный потенциал

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Abstract. One of the main determinants of the Middle Eastern system of international relations is the Arab-Israeli conflict. Its significance for the region has long been determined by the involvement of almost all regional and leading global actors in it. At the same time, over the past two decades, the Arab-Israeli conflict has experienced rescaling and a certain de-internationalization. The shift in foreign policy priorities of a number of Arab states, the signing of the Abraham Accords, the normalization of Iranian-Saudi relations, as well as the global context have shifted the issue of Palestine from the list of priority problems in the Middle East. In this regard, the next round of confrontation between Israel and Palestine somewhat falls out of the logic of regional development and has distinctive characteristics, especially taking into account the updated regional and global realities. Based on this, the purpose of this article is to identify the features of the current Palestinian-Israeli escalation of its regional and global projection.

Keywords: Middle East, regional security, Arab-Israeli conflict, international relations, global security, conflict potential

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Introduction. The last twenty years have significantly modified the views of many politicians and the approaches of international relations scholars to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since the collapse of the colonial system, the Middle East has been clearly associated with the confrontation between Arabs and Israel, which has led to numerous conflicts in the region. The Abraham Accords

(a series of agreements signed in 2020 between Israel and several Arab countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco) marked a new stage in the way regional actors interact with each other. This is primarily due to the fact that they were aimed at normalizing diplomatic, economic and cultural relations between the participating countries, and also created a significant shift in the regional dynamics of international relations, since until 2020, only two Arab states had diplomatic relations with Israel - Jordan and Egypt. This step indicated that the Palestinian problem was becoming less and less decisive in the dialogue between regional actors. In addition to the Abraham Accords, the so-called Beijing Iran-Saudi Relations Agreements were signed in 2023. They included various steps: direct diplomatic negotiations, confidence-building measures, opening embassies, and the initiation of economic cooperation and cultural exchanges. The normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia could have serious consequences for regional stability. This could help mitigate proxy conflicts and reduce tensions in the Middle East, as well as open up new opportunities for cooperation in areas such as trade, energy and security. In this context, the Palestinian issue was also presented as one of the rudimentary factors in the dynamics of the regional system of international relations due to the emerging course to search for strongholds of the Middle Eastern security complex. However, a new wave of Palestinian-Israeli confrontation forces us to rethink regional political development and identify new contours of the Israeli factor in Middle Eastern international relations

Materials and research methods. The problem of the Arab-Israeli conflict has a broad theoretical and methodological basis for research. To achieve the scientific goals set in this article, we used a wide range of sources directly related to theoretical issues of ethno-political conflicts. In particular, the author, when analyzing the situation in the Middle East, used the typology of ethnopolitical conflict [1]. In addition, the theoretical and methodological basis of the work was the analysis of research discourse regarding the historical and military-political aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict [8]. In addition, the modeling method was used as a tool for analysis and forecasting within the framework of the conflict potential of the entire Middle East region [3].

The main part of the study. To fully understand the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it should be noted that it was one of the main determinants of the regional military and political development of the Middle East. In its development, it went through many phases of aggravation, which each time with new force raised the question of the need to achieve a settlement formula acceptable to Palestine and Israel. Ideas of creating two independent states, one common state, and other parameters for achieving an effective model of territorial structure were proposed, but none of them found their practical implementation [10]. Moreover, gradually the Palestinian agenda began to lose its relevance in global international processes, which was reflected in the beginning of the process of normalization of Arab-Israeli relations and attempts to resolve Iranian-Saudi differences.

However, the military-political process in the region again entered a state of heightened turbulence on October 7, 2023, when the Palestinian group Hamas launched an armed attack on Israel. In what became known as Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, it fired several thousand rockets into Israel and carried out attacks in border areas, killing some 1,200 civilians and taking some 240 hostages. In response, Israel launched air strikes against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and on October 28 launched a ground attack in the Gaza Strip to “destroy Hamas' government and military capabilities and bring the hostages home.” [12]

The new round of Palestinian-Israeli confrontation is, among other things, interesting because of its influence on regional political development. In this regard, the reaction of the Middle East countries to the latest escalation is noteworthy. The Hamas attack and Israel's war on the Gaza Strip have put regional governments in a difficult position. On the one hand, the US is pressuring its Arab allies, some of whom have normalized relations with Israel, to condemn Hamas. Only the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain made similar statements. On the other hand, the killing of Palestinian civilians by Israel has angered the Arab public and has also forced Arab governments

to take action in solidarity with the Palestinians [13]. There are already signs that public opinion is pushing Arab leaders to go against US wishes.

It is worth pointing out here that in many ways it is public opinion (the Arab street) that forces many Arab states to take a harsher reaction towards Israel. Mass protests in a number of Arab states in the Middle East have in some cases demonstrated the gap between the leadership of Arab countries and the general public regarding the ongoing processes of normalization of relations with Israel [7]. This is particularly true, for example, in Bahrain and Morocco, where large-scale protests in solidarity with Palestine and against the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip have also called for an end to normalization of relations with the State of Israel. The leaders of Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab countries with the longest diplomatic relations with Israel, are increasingly aware of the difficulties in balancing relations with Tel Aviv (and traditional Western allies) on the one hand, and domestic political relations on the other. In addition, both Cairo and Amman are concerned about the destabilizing effects of the war, especially in terms of the potential influx of new refugees. By taking advantage of popular anti-Israel sentiment in Tunisia and attacking the country's Western partners, the incumbent authorities are seeking to further bolster their popularity and legitimacy. Unlike much of the Arab world, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have so far not been shaken by the anger of their citizens: limited space for dissent and increasingly chilly public attitudes toward Israel in recent years appear to at least explain partly due to the lack of mass rallies in these countries [15].

Returning directly to the regional projection of events in Israel and the Gaza Strip, we note that, for example, the missile and bomb attack on the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital provoked sharp condemnation from all Arab states, including the UAE and Bahrain. At the Cairo Peace Summit on October 21, King Abdullah II of Jordan, whose country signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, gave his most powerful speech condemning Israeli policies.[4] Also during a UN Security Council meeting on October 24 dedicated to discussing the situation in Gaza, the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia - close US allies - strongly condemned Israel and called for an immediate ceasefire. A day later, the UAE, along with China and Russia, vetoed a US resolution that did not call for a cessation of hostilities.

Currently, pro-American Arab governments are resorting to harsh rhetoric to quell public anger. But if Israel continues its deadly attack on Gaza, words will not be enough - they will have to take action by canceling normalization with Israel, which could upset American strategy in the Middle East. In addition, inaction by Arab leaders to protect the Palestinians could lead to a new wave of regional instability. The Arab public is already outraged by failed economic policies, and the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians only further intensifies protest sentiments [16].

Iran also finds itself in a difficult position, although for different reasons. The Iranian leadership supported the right of the Palestinian people to fight for self-determination, while denying their involvement in Hamas attacks [12]. Tehran is acting cautiously, trying not to get drawn into direct confrontation with Israel or its ally the United States. It should be noted that Israel has stated that the purpose of its war with the Gaza Strip is to eliminate the Palestinian resistance group, i.e. regime change in the Gaza Strip [5]. This means Tehran could lose an important ally in the region. Thus, Iran faces a difficult choice: stand by and watch as Israel weakens or destroys Hamas, or actively support Lebanon-based Hezbollah, which is in a position to enter the fight and put pressure on Israel in the north, which could have serious consequences for Iran. his ally. It should also be added that the war in the Gaza Strip could have consequences for Iran-Saudi relations, which have just been restored. Since the Hamas attack on October 7 and the start of the operation in Gaza, the kingdom's authorities have been very cautious about the practical scope of the agreement they concluded with Iran under the patronage of China [2]. We believe that at present it is difficult to implement it in practice, beyond the formal resumption of relations between the two countries. The main purpose of the agreement was to establish a new balance in the region. It also aimed to reduce Iranian support for the Houthis. However, the strengthening of Ansar Allah's activities in the Red Sea, undoubtedly with the support and

assistance of Iran, can only worry Riyadh [14]. The Houthis, with their significant military capabilities, pose a threat not only to shipping in the Red Sea, but also to Saudi oil facilities.

In fact, it is Yemen that is currently exerting real forceful pressure on the world community and official Jerusalem to end the war in the Gaza Strip, threatening shipping in the Red Sea and the security of Israel. Ansar Allah, based on an ideology that encourages resistance to the "forces of arrogance" - America and Israel - has consistently advocated the liberation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and resistance to imperialist forces [11]. The group has always justified its uprising and coup in Yemen as part of a resistance project. Thus, when the aggression in the Gaza Strip began, it was the right moment for them to energize their rebel base, reaffirming their commitment to these ideological goals. Initially, after October 7, Houthi leaders cited the lack of borders with Palestine and Saudi Arabia's refusal to allow the transit of forces or missiles through its territory as limiting its ability to operate. However, their approach changed with the launch of Israel's ground offensive in the Gaza Strip and the commission of numerous massacres of Palestinian civilians. The Houthis, increasingly sophisticated in their military and communications strategy, released footage of the hijacking of a ship by one of their helicopters in the Red Sea, which was widely shared on social media.

Research results and their discussion. So far, the Houthis' actions have primarily served to strengthen their solidarity with the Palestinian cause and the Iran-linked Axis of Resistance, restore their declining popularity, and bolster their reputation among the Yemeni and Arab populations. This move will likely give them regional influence, both within the Axis of Resistance and in the ongoing Yemeni conflict. However, a more significant regionalization of the war could undermine the Houthis' position and the concessions received from Saudi Arabia during peace negotiations, and thus is unlikely to serve Houthi interests. Accordingly, Yemen is well positioned geographically to launch symbolic attacks on Israel without opening a new regional front.

Analyzing the effect of the war in the Gaza Strip from the point of view of global projection, it should be pointed out that the involvement of the United States in another conflict in the Middle East and the weakening of its alliances with Arab states could open up additional ones for Moscow and Beijing. Both countries have benefited from Washington's bloody interventions in the Greater Middle East over the past two decades. The US-led "War on Terror" has damaged US position in the region by promoting positive perceptions of Russia and China among Muslim countries. In addition, unconditional US support for Israel's massacre of Palestinian civilians in Gaza further undermines its position in the Islamic world, allowing Russia and China to strengthen their authority.

Conclusion. Thus, the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 caused a change in dynamics in the Middle East. The extent of this shift will be determined by the US ability and willingness to rein in Israel. Unless it puts pressure on the Israeli government to end the war on Gaza, lift the blockade and begin negotiations with the Palestinians, the entire region could end up at war. There is a real possibility that the conflict will expand to include Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq and spark widespread unrest in the rest of the Arab world. This will not only damage US regional alliances, but will also strengthen Russian and Chinese capabilities in the Middle East.

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