

Iran now faces a Hobson's choice

written by Dr. David Wurmser | 02.08.2024

The impotence of a regime whose sole currency is based on a reign of terror is being exposed.

Iran knows it will lose proxies by the end of the war

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 02.08.2024

The elimination of Haniyeh now puts Iran on the same level as its proxies and dependents. Israel will be freer to confront Tehran's octopus and its other arms and establish a regional anti-Iranian coalition from a position of strength.

The Palestinian State: A Springboard for Iran's Plan to Destroy Israel

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 02.08.2024

Hamas will easily take control of a Palestinian state if it is established, and under Iran's sponsorship will advance towards the shared goal of destroying Israel. Israel must launch an intensive and comprehensive campaign against Iran and Hamas.

Can Israel strike Iran successfully?

written by Elie Klutstein | 02.08.2024

Even if Israel had the heaviest bunker-busting bombs, it would be difficult to deliver them to the target.

The Biden administration wants to avoid any confrontation with Iran

written by Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser | 02.08.2024

Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser: The Biden administration wants to avoid any confrontation with Iran. They are afraid that if they move into confrontation, confrontational Iran may actually move towards having a bomb. But maybe [Iran's leaders] believe that Trump is going to become the next president. They might actually try to break out a bomb now. They have enough material to produce the fissile material that is necessary for three bombs within a month.

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Another Crescent for Iran to Exploit

written by Ronen Levi (Maoz) | 02.08.2024

While the United States and Israel focus on threats from the Iranian-dominated Shia crescent stretching from Lebanon to Yemen, Tehran is quietly laying the groundwork for a second Iranian crescent that will soon pose a grave threat to U.S. interests. In Africa's strategic Sahel region, Iran is taking advantage of Western weakness to deepen its economic and military influence, access critical materials, threaten moderate regimes, and undermine Israeli-Arab normalization.

The U.S., Israel, and their allies must take bold steps to counter this growing threat before it is too late.

The Sahel region has suffered widespread instability since 2020. Mali, Burkina

Faso, Guinea, Niger, Gabon, Chad and Sudan have all seen coups or the rise of military governments, driven by economic difficulties, governmental mismanagement, frustration over continued Islamist terror, and in some cases, growing hostility towards the West. The U.S. has distanced itself from these new governments, creating a void which Iran, Russia and China have been eager to fill.

In Sudan, for example, Iran is seeking to take advantage of the ongoing civil war in order to expand its military presence. Sudan, under the leadership of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, current chair of Sudan's Sovereignty Council, joined the Abraham Accords with Israel in October 2020, in return for U.S. promises of support. However, after al-Burhan dissolved Sudan's governing council in 2021, the U.S. backtracked on its promises and pressured Israel not to upgrade its relations with Khartoum. This lack of Western support contributed to the eruption of the devastating Sudanese civil war in 2023.

Al-Burhan continues to desire to move Sudan closer to the West and has no illusions about the Iranian regime. However, in the absence of Western support, he has been left with little choice but to turn to Tehran for the security assistance and aid necessary to defeat the rebels. Iran was willing to quickly provide Sudan with military support, while asking to establish a naval base on Sudan's Red Sea coast. Such a base, together with those of Iran's Houthi proxy in Yemen, would give Iran far-reaching control over one of the world's most vital waterways. To date, Sudan has resisted the Iranian request, but it is not clear how long Khartoum will be able to withstand Iranian pressure.

Iran is also seeking to expand its influence in Niger, home to 5 percent of the world's uranium output, a vital resource which can serve Iran's illicit nuclear program. There are indications that Iran has already taken steps towards acquiring Nigerian uranium. Similar efforts by Iran to deepen its ties are taking place in Mali, Burkina Faso, and other countries of the Sahel.

In addition, Iran has set its sights on Chad, which reestablished ties with Israel in 2019 but has since become disappointed by the lack of Western assistance, as well as on Mauritania, a vital gateway to Africa for Iran's bitter rival, Morocco.

A crescent of Iranian influence in the Sahel would allow Tehran to destabilize Egypt and threaten Israel and Saudi Arabia in a pincer movement from the north

and south. Just as Iran and its proxies have sown terror and destruction across the Shia crescent stretching through Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, a second Iranian crescent would enable Tehran to further spread instability and violence.

Of course, Iran is not the only threat to Western interests in the Sahel. Russia has been quickly filling voids created by the exit of Western troops, sending former Wagner fighters and other military personnel to assist the new governments. China, too, continues to offer ready economic assistance to the region's leaders, who are desperately seeking solutions to their countries' socioeconomic woes.

The U.S. and its allies now face a choice. They can continue to distance themselves from the governments of the Sahel, while reducing or cutting off economic and military support. The result will be greatly increased Iranian, Russian, and Chinese influence in the region. The ayatollahs in Tehran will expand their efforts to create a new Iranian crescent, which will pose a grave threat to U.S. allies such as Israel, Egypt and Morocco, while giving Iran access to critical resources and undermining the Abraham Accords.

Instead, the U.S. and its allies, including Israel, should find ways to work with the region's governments and deliver on previous commitments, while continuing to urge these countries to improve their records on democracy and human rights. Such a strategic approach would help counter the expansion of Iran's nefarious influence in the Sahel, and prevent disastrous consequences for Africa, the Middle East, and regional peace.

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Israel's strike was the perfect response

written by Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser | 02.08.2024

It sent a message to the regime that we can hit them any time but allowed us to focus on Gaza.

A multi-theater reality has emerged; Israel faces a test

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 02.08.2024

Israel's first objective is to prevent attacks and demolish terrorist networks, of any kind and from any element. Above all else, topping the list of Israel's foreign policy objectives is cementing and strengthening relations with the US.

Iran's attack means Israel has an opening: Derailing its nuclearization

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 02.08.2024

It would be wise to keep Iranian nerves in tense anticipation, allowing the Iranian rial to continue plummeting and enabling internal criticism of the regime to intensify.

Israel needs a high-intensity campaign strategy against Iran

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 02.08.2024

Iran's unprecedented missile and drone attack against Israel last night is the

pinnacle of a decades-long Iranian campaign that has been ongoing since the Islamic regime took power during the 1979 revolution. Over the years, Iran has gradually built a sophisticated proxy system and, with the exception of very few instances, has preferred to fight Israel via its proxies. Hiding behind them is part of Tehran's calculated strategy, which strives to distance Iran from war or any punishment for acts of terror, despite the Islamic Republic's key role in training, funding, directing, and, at times, actively dispatching its proxies.

Now, feeling obligated to restore its eroded deterrence vis-à-vis Israel following the targeted killings attributed to the latter in Damascus in early April, Iran has chosen to take a public stand and attack Israel directly using its advanced drones and missiles. This is not a comprehensive strategic shift on Iran's part. As soon as the strike ended, and before its scope had even been confirmed, Tehran clearly signaled, via its UN embassy, that it wished to end this historical event and return to normal.

Israel cannot go back to October 6. It must not allow Iran to surround it with a tightening ring of fire while making intolerable threats of a potentially nuclear nature.

However, Israel does not operate in a vacuum either and is required to coordinate its actions with the Biden administration, both by virtue of the strategic alliance forged between the two countries and in view of the implications of an Israeli assault against Iran on local US forces and interests. Tehran seems to regard the United States as the weaker player in this arena, and therefore, since the Israel-Hamas War broke out, has instructed its proxies to carry out dozens of attacks against US interests in Iraq and Syria, in an effort to make President Biden pressure Israel to stop the war. The partial US response to the lethal drone strike in early January by Iran's Iraqi proxy, Kataib Hizballah, killing 3 US troops, appears to have only partially and temporarily deterred Tehran. The United States had, once again, chosen to retaliate against the Iraqi proxy, instead of its Iranian master.

Thus, although Quds Force Commander, Ismail Qaani, has reportedly instructed Iraqi Shiite militia groups to desist attacks against US interests, and has probably attempted to convince the Houthis in Yemen to do the same, the Iraqi militias have renewed (albeit not significantly) their assaults against US forces in Syria, while the Houthis continue to attack US sea vessels. Tehran itself, during its

strike against Israel last night, threatened to attack any US forces that would help Israel in its retaliation against Iran. It is therefore clear that Iran views the United States as the weakest link and more easily pressured player.

Israel must formulate a comprehensive strategy for a high-intensity campaign against Iran, that could include peaks during which Iran would attempt to take direct action against Israel. Otherwise, Tehran would probably prefer to go back to operating via its proxies, given that direct Iranian actions against Israel would help form a regional coalition against Tehran, composed primarily of Jordan and Egypt, and supported by the United States, United Kingdom, and France (as seen in action last night). Such a coalition could shift from defensive to offensive mode since Iran is threatening to take action against any country supportive of Israel's defense efforts.

Israel appears to have certain latitude vis-à-vis Iran, despite US pressure. The Biden administration opposes broad conflict that would run the risk of regional war. At the same time, if Israel and the United States choose to restrain their response, Iran would interpret their inaction as permission to attack Israel, the United States' ally, directly, as well as other US partners in the region (to which Iran poses a threat) without paying the price for doing so. Furthermore, war breaking out between Iran and Israel still seems a long way off, allowing Israel to take action against Iran without necessarily leading the region to war. For instance, Israel could utilize the unprecedented Iranian attack to strike Iran kinetically when it is most suitable and convenient, whereas Tehran, which suffers from an acute domestic legitimacy crisis and can still collectively recall the destruction and aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), would think twice before aggravating its conflict with Israel. The cyberattack weapons that Israel has developed over the years could also serve it to repay Iran by damaging its essential infrastructure in an arena where responsibility is not unequivocally assumed by anyone.

Israel's updated security strategy should include various aspects, primary among which are: the desirable *modus operandi* vis-à-vis Iran; increased coordination with the United States on efforts to thwart the drone, missile, and terror infrastructure in Iran and the region; strengthening the IDF's force buildup so that it would tally with the challenge posed by Iran; and closing the various gaps that enable Iran to carry out cyberattacks and influence campaigns in Israel.

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