

## **The Balance of Power In ME**

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April 20, 2007

The United States is facing many problems in the Middle East now among of which the Arab-Israeli conflict and the mounting Iraqi resistance; but the most disturbing and dangerous is the challenge posed against the traditional balance of power in the area. Traditionally, Israel has been militarily unmatched by the Arabs, and the Arabs have been facing an enemy that is well-equipped and superior in fire-power. The Western countries have committed themselves to the military superiority of the Zionist state since its establishment in 1948. France undertook this task at the very beginning, and the US is considered now the prime source of Israeli military might. Although Israel has been making considerable achievements in the realm of military industry, the US still offers very advanced military equipment such as F15's E and F22 warplanes.

Even those countries such as the late Soviet Union who provided some support for the Arabs always made sure that the Arabs don't achieve military superiority, and the balance of power should remain in the interest of Israel. The Soviets thought that the Arabs particularly the Palestinians have rights that should be regained, while the Western countries still think that the Palestinian rights deserve some attention but not at the expense of Israel's security. Although Israel is the outcome of Zionist and Jewish endeavor, this achievement could never been realization without Western adoption of the creation of a Jewish state.

This partially explains why the Western countries have been insistent on the survival of traditional Arab regimes that mostly come from tribal backgrounds, and who have good overt or covert good relations with Israel. these regimes have been very well understanding of Israel's security, and of Western vision of how the Arabs can achieve development in all sectors of life. This explains, to a great extent why the Arabs have been weak, defeated and lagging behind nations although they are wealthy.

Iran which is a Moslem country has decided to go a different path since the toppling of the King in 1979. It realized from the very beginning that only through its own strength its well-being will be insured. It has been working hard toward self-dependence in all fields especially the military. Iran learned a tough lesson in the early 1980's when the Arabs, Israel and the Western countries got together in a war aimed at the new regime of the Mullas (clergy). The regimes suffered a tight military siege, and found itself fighting a war of soldiers facing heavy military western instruments. Iran came to the conclusion that a respectable state should develop its own technology and have its military arsenal to deter enemies.

Israel has its own reasons to consider Iran as a dangerous state that should remain weak. From the very beginning, Iran announced that Israel is an illegitimate state that has usurped a holy Moslem land which is Palestine. The Mullas ordered the closure of the Israeli embassy in Tehran, severed all ties with Israel and handed the embassy building to the Palestinians to have a center of their activities in Iran. Through several official figures, Iran has reiterated that Palestine should be liberated and the Palestinian rights should b redeemed. Besides, since 1979, Iran has been the prime enemy of the US, and has been a major opposing country to the American policies in the area.

Iran decided to become a major player in the Arab-Israeli or Moslem-Israeli conflict though establishing Hizballah party in Lebanon. (Iran is a Shiite country, and Hizballah is

a Shiite organization) Iran has been developing its military machine with top secrecy, and has been supplying Hizballah with the necessary means to fight Israel. Hizballah started its resistance against Israel in Southern Lebanon in 1982, and could drive the Israelis out of the area.

Now, the question is of two facets: one has to do with the Iranian missile industry and the development of nuclear capability, the second has to do with the military capability of Hizballah and Syria. It is becoming evident that Iran has developed missiles that can hit Israel, and possibly, the eastern part of Europe, and can endanger the American marine vessels in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean. Also it is evident that Iran has been making major and significant advancement in nuclear technology.

What lit the red light for Israel and the US was the war in Southern Lebanon in 2006. Considering the Israeli announced objectives, the war was a real astounding defeat for Israel; and a real threatening question for Israel has been looming over the heads: if Israel couldn't be a real challenge to an organization like Hizballah, how the situation would be if Syria and Iran come to the fore?

If Iran makes a breakthrough in nuclear technology and brings Israel's monopoly of nuclear bombs to an end, the ME will witness major changes. The whole peace-process led by the Americans will come to a halt, the Arab regimes will be facing new internal and external challenges, and the American domination over most Arab countries will be ended. Israel itself will be under extreme pressure, and its survival will be threatened, some Arab regimes will fall, and the American interests will become topics of negotiations.

New turns in the Middle East are happening now. If Iran continues its march, the face of the area will be re-shaped. That is why Israel, the US and most Arab regimes are engaged in thorough assessment of what could be done. As Iran insists on recognition of its rights to develop nuclear technology, and as Hizballah is armed to the teeth, the military option from the side of the Americans is strong. But will the US and its allies win the war? Iran isn't scared and continuously warns that any military adventure will be a failure.

The US and its allies will be losers if Iran and Hizballah are left unharmed, but the losses will be extremely painful if a military attack is rebuffed.