

НАПРЯМ 4. СУЧАСНІ ПОЛІТИКО-ЕКОНОМІЧНІ ПРОЦЕСИ НА ТЕРЕНАХ БЛИЗЬКОГО, СЕРЕДНЬОГО ТА ДАЛЕКОГО СХОДУ

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SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE MENA REGION AFTER OCTOBER 7, 2023: THE U.S. RESPONSE

Israel-Hamas war, which began on October 7, 2023, posed a number of new challenges for the USA and led to a significant intensification of American policy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). As a result of the war and the escalation of Israeli-Iranian confrontation, a highly dangerous hotspot of instability emerged in the region, undermining the already fragile balance of power that had formed here after the Arab Spring.

President Biden swiftly responded to the Hamas attack on Israel in his emotional speech on October 10, in which he strongly condemned the actions of the Islamist group and reaffirmed unwavering support for Tel Aviv [4]. During his visit to Israel on October 18, he reiterated the U.S. commitment to ensuring the security of the Jewish state, along with providing the necessary military and financial assistance. At the same time, he emphasized that the ultimate resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on the principle of the two-state solution [3].

Overall, the Biden administration formulated five main objectives in the context of Israel's war in Gaza: to support Israel's self-defense and eliminate the threat posed by Hamas; to ensure the return of hostages; to prevent the crisis from escalating into a full-scale regional war; to protect the civilian population and halt the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza; and to develop a post-war reconstruction plan that would lead to the implementation of the two-state solution and broader efforts toward regional normalization in coordination with regional and international partners [2].

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, CIA Director Bill Burns, and senior Middle East White House official Brett McGurk made multiple trips to the

region and Europe to advance a ceasefire and secure the release of hostages, as well as to engage regional partners in efforts to enhance security coordination. In addition to increased arms transfers and enhanced security and intelligence cooperation with Israel, the United States deployed two aircraft carrier strike groups to the region in the early weeks of the conflict, as a deterrent message to Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and other actors threatening to escalate the war. The United States also remained a key leader in international and regional efforts to increase the flow of humanitarian aid to Palestinians living in Gaza.

In formulating his strategy in response to Israel's military operation in Gaza, Biden faced numerous complex challenges. First, there were clear differences between the positions of the U.S. president and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu regarding the post-war governance of Gaza and the future of the Palestinian state. According to Biden's vision, after the defeat of Hamas, Gaza and the West Bank should be unified under the administration of a reformed Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as a cornerstone of the two-state solution. However, Netanyahu has consistently opposed both the establishment of a Palestinian state and the expansion of PNA's power [5]. Second, due to significant civilian casualties among the Palestinian population, criticism of Israel has increased markedly in Arab and Muslim countries, in Europe, and even within the United States.

A particularly complex challenge has been the need to prevent broader regional escalation and the involvement of other radical groups, primarily Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthis. The Houthis in Yemen attacked international shipping in the Red Sea in response to Israel's military operation against Hamas in Gaza. They also targeted Israeli territory with ballistic missiles and drones. In response, the Biden administration launched «Operation Prosperity Guardian,» a multinational military effort involving over 20 countries aimed at securing the safety of shipping across the Red Sea. In addition to this defensive coalition, the United States, in coordination with other partners, conducted a series of airstrikes against Houthi positions in Yemen [6]. Hezbollah has also opened a war front on Israel's northern border with Lebanon, raising concerns about a broader regional spillover. In response, the Israel Defense Forces have retaliated with airstrikes, as well as tank and artillery fire, targeting Hezbollah positions in Lebanon.

Both the Houthis and Hezbollah are key players in Iran's «axis of resistance.» U.S. policy towards Iran remains one of the weakest links in Washington's broader MENA strategy. Tehran consistently threatens regional stability by advancing its nuclear program, intervening in regional conflicts, supporting terrorism, and carrying out repression against its own people.

On April 13, 2024, Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israeli territory, using more than 300 drones and missiles. Tehran's strike followed an Israeli air raid on April 1, which killed several high-ranking Iranian military officials at the Iranian consulate in Syria. These events marked an unprecedented escalation in the Iran-Israel confrontation. The United States played a key role in repelling Iran's attack on its ally. With assistance from British, French, and Jordanian air forces, the U.S. shot down over 70 air targets using fighter jets and missile defense systems aboard guided-missile destroyers [1]. The Biden administration also vowed to coordinate a global response to Tehran's unprecedented assault. Finally, on May 31, 2024, the Biden administration outlined a plan aimed at linking efforts to resolve the Israel-Hamas war with broader initiatives to foster increased regional integration.

The United States has a short-term goal of containing the escalation, but it seems to lack a coherent strategy for long-term countermeasures against Iran and its numerous proxies. For now, Washington has managed to avoid a wider regional war, but the overall security situation in the MENA continues to deteriorate, as various state and non-state actors persist in posing threats to the U.S. and its partners. America remains the most influential external actor in the Middle East, but it would be a mistake to overestimate its ability to shape the regional agenda.

In a broader context, Russia's war in Ukraine and the war in Gaza have become markers of the transformation of the current international order. Two clearly differentiated camps are emerging: the democratic camp (the U.S., EU countries, and their allies), which advocates for liberal democracy and the rule of law, and the revisionist, or authoritarian camp (Russia, Iran and its proxies, North Korea, and others), which seeks to challenge and revise the existing international norms and rules. The MENA countries, like most of the so-called Global South, act as a third force, showing no desire to align with either group and observing how events unfold. Thus, the key task of the U.S. strategy is to strengthen the unified front of democratic countries in the fight against the axis of revisionist actors.

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ТУРЕЦЬКО-СИРІЙСЬКО-ІРАКСЬКІ ВІДНОСИНИ НАВКОЛО ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ВОДНИХ РЕСУРСІВ ТИГРУ ТА ЄВФРАТУ

Дефіцит прісної води завжди є наріжним каменем соціально-економічного життя в країнах Близького Сходу.