

Defeat's Domino

How did Operation Al-Aqsa Storm foil American initiatives in the region?

Many American experts believe that the Middle East without Iran is not possible; something that American policymakers have been trying to hide in recent years and have failed several times. Crossing the geostrategic and geopolitical issues without Iran will never be feasible. Operation Al-Aqsa Storm has well proven this. At least in the midterm, no one dares to speak about normalization. Therefore, with the return of the Palestinian issue as the most important Middle Eastern issue, the US sees its plans and programs as failures and is now trying to compensate for its setbacks in the region with its actions in occupied Palestine.

Biden's First Visit to Middle East

Joe Biden, the President of the US, in early 2022, at the start of his Middle East journey in Tel Aviv, stated, "You don't have to be Jewish to be a Zionist." Describing this statement as a central theme sets the floating themes of this journey, such as the borderless acceptance of Zionist beliefs and ideas, strengthening the Abraham Accords, continuing the normalization process, emphasizing special ties between Israel and the US, strengthening America's symbolic presence in the Southwestern Asia, and, most importantly, forming strategic coalitions against Iran and hybrid wars in this strategic region.

Important and diverse features indicated that concurrently with Joe Biden's historic trip to Tel Aviv and Riyadh, security engineering in this sensitive and strategic region would undergo significant changes. The positions and actions of regional and transregional governments testified to this important development, showing that significant security transformations were underway in the new Middle East, and a new kind of engineering would be unveiled during Joe Biden's trip to the Middle East. The reality is that a significant part of the objectives of Biden's historic trip, especially to Tel Aviv and Riyadh, had meaningful connections to the ongoing developments in the playing field between the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran from various aspects.

What Biden prioritized during his trip to the strategic Middle East, particularly West Asia, was the adoption of a new security engineering, with the involvement of international friends like NATO and London, as well as regional partners, especially Turkey and Saudi Arabia, in the interest of Israel within the framework of the Abraham Accords and normalization issue. However, what the US and its allies paid attention to

as a central point and a pre-set goal was the deal with Iran on a comprehensive joint action known as the JCPOA, as well as related developments and crises in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

During this trip, Biden aimed to react to the shadow war between Iran and Israel, based on a new software-based approach that prevents it from getting out of control. This is because the lack of control in this space would lead to prolonged political crises in Iraq and Lebanon, intensified conflicts in Syria, a threat to the fragile ceasefire in Yemen, and most importantly, the expansion of China and Russia's hegemony in this crucial region.

The US's focus and attention on the new security engineering is based on a strategy that Biden calls the "Great Middle East Stability Strategy", in which Israel must adhere to the US red lines in the region, one of which is creating restrictions on provocative attacks. With this mechanism, the US will be able to achieve its most important goals for Biden's trip, namely shaping and realizing the strengthening and consolidation of the Abraham Accords and normalization, establishing relative stability in the regional and international energy market dimensions, as well as preserving regional consensus in curbing Iran. Specifically, on this trip, Biden pursued the following plans:

Anti-Iranian Alliances: The Abraham Accords, known as the peace agreement between Israel and the UAE, along with the normalization of ties between Israel and Bahrain and other Arab countries, was signed on September 15, 2020, at the White House. It's the most significant agreement between Israel and Arab nations since the Egypt-Israel (1979) and Jordan-Israel (1994) treaties. The main focus of this agreement is to change the threat landscape and create a common threat in the form of the "Islamic

Republic of Iran." The Abraham Accords are an effort to establish peace between Israel and other Arab nations, based on the Abrahamic religious element. Both Islam and Judaism are considered Abrahamic religions, with Arabs being considered the descendants of Abraham and Israelis as the descendants of Isaac, both tracing their lineage to Abraham.

Formation of the Middle East NATO: The Middle East NATO, with Israel alongside other Arab nations allied with the US, is of significant importance due to its impact on the nature of alliances and coalitions on one side and the Middle East security framework on the other. Israel's establishment in 1948 led to the formation of a security structure in the Middle East with the aim of countering this new phenomenon. The basis of the formation of the security alliance against Israel was nationality or Arabness. This conflict was part of the Arab-non-Arab conflict framework. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the conflict with Israel transcended the national aspect and took on a religious dimension, framing the global Islamic-Jewish conflict. From this perspective, nationality and religion as two fundamental and classical pillars have played a significant role in shaping regional alliances and security initiatives, clarifying security efforts based on these two elements.

However, assessing the threats arising from Iran's policies in the region and depicting Iran's willingness to acquire nuclear weapons and expand its threat range have created the possibility of a new conceptualization of security in the Middle East, turning yesterday's enemies into today's allies against Iran. In this new framework, the foundations of alliances and security initiatives have taken on a fresh and modern shape, departing from the traditional and classical mold.



It appears that the creation of this coalition, also known as the "Middle East NATO," had several objectives:

- An American military-security pact among allies in the Middle East and safeguarding America's regional interests.
- A practical military-security step following the Abraham Accords to unite Arabs and Israel and protect each other's interests in the region.
- Establishing a robust defense against Iran's actions and thwarting Iran's policies in the region, ultimately weakening the country.

Middle East Air Defense Plan (Middle East Air Defense): The integration plan of Israel and Arab countries' air defense systems gained more prominence with Joe Biden's visit to the region. This plan was initially discussed during the meeting of foreign ministers from Israel, the US, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Egypt, known as the "Negev Summit." Later on, it was reported that American military officials and senior military officers from Israel and Arab countries held a meeting to advance this initiative. Benny Gantz, Israel's Defense Minister, announced that this plan had reached the operational phase, and Joe Biden's visit would expedite its implementation. According to this plan, instead of using similar physical facilities, countries coordinate their air defense systems through electronic communications from remote locations. Reuters also noted that this idea is based on Israeli technology. In late June, Democratic and Republican members of the US Senate and House of Representatives proposed integrating the air defense systems of Middle Eastern countries and Israel to counter nuclear, missile, and drone threats from Iran.



US President Joe Biden walks as he departs Joint Base Andrews for a high-stakes visit to Israel, in Maryland, US, October 17, 2023.
● EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS



Scenes of devastation in Gaza
● REUTERS

