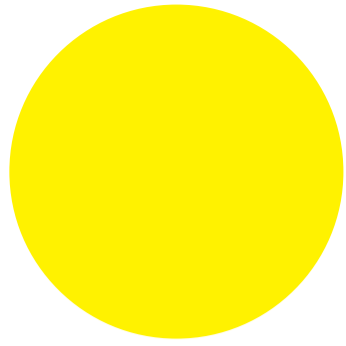


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Iran Daily

Vol. 7711 • Saturday, November 30, 2024 • Azar 10, 1403 • Jumada al-Awwal 28, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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Hayat Tahrir al-Sham; Israel's game in Syria



By Mohammad Bayat
Mideast affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE The sudden eruption of internal tensions in Syria and the advances of anti-Assad groups in Aleppo province, immediately following the cease-fire between the Israeli regime and Lebanon, is highly significant and worth pondering. Since October 7, when Hamas launched its attack on Israel, the West Asia region has been embroiled in intense tensions and conflicts. However, the developments in the region cannot be solely attributed to local and regional factors. Even the Gaza war cannot be reduced to a simple conflict between a military-political organization and Israel. A substantial part of these tensions stems from the conflict of interests among major powers in West Asia, which has reached a boiling point. China, in order to bring its mega-project, the revival of the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative), to fruition, must have a strong and influential presence in West Asia. A crucial part of China's Belt and Road project passes through West Asia. In response, the West, led by the United States, has drawn up alternative plans and designed new corridors to undermine China's initiative. Before October 7, the Western-planned corridors, including the India-Arab-Mediterranean (IAM) corridor; were ready to be implemented. The final link in this corridor was the normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, which has yet to materialize following the October 7 operation. In Western designs for West Asia and in strategic rivalries among great powers, Israel has carved out a privileged and influential role for itself, positioning itself as the region's superior power capable of ensuring its own security and that of the entire region. This, in turn, would safeguard Western and American interests through a demonstration of power. However, the events of October 7 exposed Israel's vulnerability, not by an official state, but by a military organization. Now, concerns are growing that Israel's power and position will be challenged by other powers in the future. In fact, the role that the West had assigned to Israel, and which Israel itself claimed - that of a superior power - is now being contested. Although Israel is seeking to bolster its deterrence capabilities, it aims to reclaim its position as the region's superior power and serve as a representative of Western and American interests in West Asia. **Page 7 >**

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