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1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East states' borders were generally drawn due to the Second World War. It is possible to say that Egypt, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey compete for regional hegemony in the region (Beck, 2020: 85). Although Iran and Israel have no physical borders, they are surrounded by a network of Sunni Arab neighboring countries. This situation provides a different position for both countries in the axis of international relations compared to other countries in the Middle East.

Since Iran is the second Muslim country to recognize Israel after Turkey, relations between the two countries progressed at an acceptable level during the Shah's reign. However, in 1953, a coup against Mohamed Mossadegh was organized by the joint initiative of the USA and England. Israel was described as a collaborator by Iran after the coup. The situation became problematic with the developments in Iran's foreign policy with the Iranian Islamic Revolution led by Khomeini (Maher, 2020); it got worse with Ahmadinejad's anti-Zionist rhetoric (Ehrmann et al., 2013: 219).

While there were tensions in the relations that started well, the pan-Arab nationalism movement, which Egyptian President Nasser led in the 1960s and which found a response in some of the Arab society, became a threat for both countries. Therefore, it was inevitable for them to establish a typical strategic relationship (Maher, 2020).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the wars in Iran's two neighbors, Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), caused the relative weakening of these two countries against Iran. As a result, Israel came to the fore as a new rival for Iran (Beck, 2020: 85). Subsequently, during the Syrian Civil War, Iran positioned Hezbollah forces alongside the Assad regime with both military and economic assistance within its means, Israel became involved in the conflict by organizing many air strikes against Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards over the Golan Heights (Beck, 2020: 86).

Iran Israel Conflict: An Overview of The Situation After the Iran Islamic Revolution from The Framework of Security Theories

İran İsrail Çatışmaları: İran İslam Devrimi Sonrası Duruma Güvenlik Teorileri Çerçevesinden Bir Bakış

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ABSTRACT

The Middle East geography, where the remnants of the 20th-century problems are becoming more and more visible with each passing day, is one of the most critical conflict zones in the world. Although most conflicts in the region stem from border disputes, conflicts can also occur between states that do not have a common border. States such as Israel and Iran, which strive to become a regional hegemonic power, can also have conflicts. Moreover, these conflicts are sometimes implemented directly and sometimes through proxies. In this study, the conflicts between Iran and Israel after the Iranian Islamic Revolution are examined theoretically.

Keywords: Iran, Israel, Conflict, Security Theories

ÖZET

20. yüzyıldan bakiye olarak kalan sorunların her geçen gün etkisini daha çok hissettirdiği Orta Doğu coğrafyası dünyanın önemli çatışma bölgelerinden birisidir. Bölgede yaşanan çatışmaların büyük çoğunluğu sınır anlaşmazlıklarından kaynaklanıyor olsa da İran ve İsrail gibi ortak sınırı olmayan ve bölgesel hegemonik güç olma çabasındaki devletler arasında da çatışmalar yaşanabilmektedir. Bu çatışmalar bazen doğrudan, bazen de vekiller aracılığıyla hayata geçirilmektedir. Bu çalışmada İran ve İsrail devletleri arasında İran İslam Devrimi ardından yaşanan çatışmalara teorik bir çerçeveden bakılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İran, İsrail, Çatışma, Güvenlik Teorileri

The Iran-Israel conflict has generally progressed as a proxy war until recent years. However, lately, the official armies of the countries have started to carry out extensive and minor attacks on each other at various times, especially in Syria. On the other hand, Iran claims that Israel assassinates the Iran Nuclear Program executives.

This study examines the Iran-Israel relations among the countries competing to be hegemon power in the region after the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution within the framework of security theories.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Iran-Israel Conflicts after the Islamic Revolution in Iran

Iran and Israel had positive relations for 30 years after the beginning of their official relations in 1948. However, the Iran Islamic Revolution in 1979 changed that positive climate. The Khomeini revolution aimed to export the Islamic Revolution to regions that it considered non-religious (apostate), preparing the groundwork for a clash of civilizations with the atheistic (infidel) West, which had established hegemony in the Muslim Arab world (especially in the oil-rich Gulf region). In addition, Iran defined the USA (the Great Devil) and Israel (the Little Devil) as the main threats in the region (Shapira and Diker, 2007: 33-34). With the revolution, Iran's sharp and harsh rhetoric against Israel turned into an insufferable disappointment on the Israeli side about Iran's loss (Oruç, 2016).

After the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, the first serious test between the two countries was the Iran-Iraq War. The Saddam regime in power in Iraq was uneasy about the risk of Iran's incitement to the Shiite groups in the country and also claimed rights in the Khuzestan region, which has Iran's rich oil reserves (Çakı, 2018: 13). Iran, where the revolution had just seized power, and the balance of alliances had deteriorated, was exposed to a sudden attack by Iraq under these conditions. The war started in 1980 and lasted eight years. During the Shah's reign, the Iranian army was mainly equipped with weapons of US and Israeli origin, and the supply opportunities for these weapons were cut off after the revolution. Under these conditions, Israel, which sees Iraq as a more significant threat than its former ally Iran and the war as an arms trade opportunity, supplied weapons to Iran, which calls itself the little devil, during this war, and the price for that trade was paid with oil (Oruç, 2016; Green, 2018).

In 1982, Israel occupied Lebanon, and this situation led to the emergence of Hezbollah, one of the important non-Iranian actors in the region. Hezbollah has also encouraged other anti-Israeli structures, as it has failed the Israeli army, which has not lost a war against any regular army since 1948. It is said that 256 Israeli soldiers died, and 840 were injured as a result of the attacks carried out by Hezbollah between 1985 and 2000 (Oruç, 2017). The success of Hezbollah has also been instrumental in increasing the importance Iran attaches to the proxy war.

Diplomatic relations with Israel were terminated in February, following the statement that the regime would support the oppressed all over the world and that the rights of Muslims would be protected after the revolution in Iran, and Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was invited to Iran (Koç, 2020). It can also be said that the Jewish occupation of Jerusalem, which stems from the Palestinian issue in the Iran-Israel conflict, adds a spiritual dimension to the conflict (Sinkaya, 2016: 21). Iran claims it supports the Sunni sect of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Organization in the name of Islam on the axis of this spiritual dimension.

By agreeing with Iran in 1989 in return for 2 million tons of oil (36 million USD), Israel both made a profit of 2 million USD. In addition, it guaranteed the safety of three Israeli citizens captured during the occupation of Lebanon (Oruç, 2016).

Cooperation between Israel and Iran waned in the 1990s, but the two states did not yet see each other as direct rivals. Israel was still preoccupied with the threat posed by Iraq under Saddam Hussein after the First Gulf War. This situation did not prevent Israel from learning about Iran's efforts to develop long-range missiles and being uneasy. However, Iran's various political gestures toward Israel in the relevant period and Israel's ignorance that Iran would have access to the technology to launch a nuclear attack soon prevented the threat from coming to the fore (Kaye et al., 2011: 16).

Iran's simultaneous consideration of both ballistic missile development and Bushehr Nuclear power plant programs in the 1990s was considered a nuclear armament attempt by the USA and Israel. Although Iran states that the issue is based on peaceful grounds, it is not possible to say that other countries accept this discourse (Sinkaya, 2009: 72).

In response to the Oslo Peace Talks held for the first time between Palestine and Israel in 1993, Israel sought a balanced policy with other Arab countries. In this process of seeking balance, with Iraq losing the war, Iran was left as the only state with offensive power that could threaten Israel in the region (Barsi, 2005: 249). Therefore, Israel's risk perception had to shift in this direction.

After the attacks by Al-Qaeda in the USA on September 11, 2001, George W. Bush intervened militarily, first in Afghanistan in 2001 and then in Iraq in 2003. USA mentioned that the operations were based on NATO's Article 5. As a result of these interventions, the Saddam and Taliban regimes were overthrown. After that, an atmosphere of turmoil occurred in these countries. Iran has borders with both countries and has various historical disagreements, and has achieved relative regional superiority due to these developments. Under these circumstances, Iran found the opportunity to expand its sphere of influence on both countries and has gained the ground to use its resources in different areas for the risks concerned about these neighboring countries (Akbarzadeh, 2014; Yıldırım, 2015). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the regime's anti-Zionist approach is at the forefront of these different areas.

In this environment where the risk level of Iraq and Afghanistan has decreased for Iran, Iran's hostility towards Israel increased rapidly after Mahmud Ahmadinejad was elected president of Iran in 2005. Ahmadinejad threatened to wipe Israel off the map and tried to hinder Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts by attacking Palestinian leaders (Kaye et al., 2011: 73).

The Syrian Civil War has created a new field of confrontation between Iran and Israel. Iran announced that all kinds of rebellion against an allied regime are taken as a primary threat by Iran. As a result, Iran was involved in the Syrian Civil War to support the Assad regime (Sinkaya, 2015: 65). Since the summer of 2017, Iran has started to work on transforming Syria into a field of military activity against Israel. That approach has increased Israel's perception of the threat against Iran and has led them to share their concerns with Russia.

Ultimately, as of February 10, 2018, the conflict between the two countries became a de facto reality with the Israeli airstrike against Iranian elements in Syria (Murciano, 2018: 1; BBC, 2018). On March 9, 2022, two soldiers from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, one of whom was in the rank of colonel, were killed in the airstrike carried out by Israel near Damascus (Euronews, 2022). Four days after this event, on March 13, 2022, the US consulate in Erbil was attacked with 12 ballistic missiles by Iran (Deutsche Welle, 2022). Therefore, it is possible to say that the Syrian Civil War turned into a hot conflict between the official law enforcement officers of the two countries.

2.1.2. Iran-Israel Proxy Wars

Today, conflicts between countries do not always take place between regular armies. One of the actors that should be considered in regional politics is non-state or sub-state actors (Sinkaya, 2016: 13). In other words, different non-state actors have become elements that threaten the security of states. That is a fuzzy and strategic approach, also known as hybrid, asymmetric or proxy warfare, and includes many different war methods.

Today, the conflict between the two countries is carried on mainly through proxies. Israel asserts that Iran supports terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas and develops nuclear weapons to attack Israel (Ehrmann et al., 2013). Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's mention that Israel is taking all precautions in this regard shows that concern also turns into action on the Israeli side (Ehrmann et al., 2013). On the other hand, Iran states that Israel supports non-state actors such as the Baluchi rebels, Kurdish separatist PJAK, and Mujahideen People's Organization (Kaye et al., 2011: 61- 62). Ultimately, the ability of well-organized ethnic and religious minorities to become effective political actors under appropriate conditions; it is even possible for them to cross the borders of the country they are in, acquire allies or take action (Sinkaya, 2016: 14). From this point of view, it is seen that proxies play an active role in the nature of the conflicts between the two countries. Both sides try to gain a competitive advantage in the field with the support they provide for their proxies.

2.2. Evaluation of Iran-Israel Conflict in the Framework of Security Theories

According to the primordial approach, the Iran-Israel conflict has its roots in Khomeini's Islamist ideology of the Islamic Republic. That ideology reflects centuries of Shiite anti-Semitism, "*deeply rooted in both religious and historical Shiite Iran*" (Jaspal, 2013: p. 246). However, this inference does not fit with the fact that the Jewish community in Iran is more crowded than in any other Arab country. On the other hand, the instrumentalist approach asserts that the reason for the conflicts in the Middle East is politicians' efforts to justify their foreign policies rather than religious identities (Beck, 2020: 87).

It is a part of realistic security strategies to define the risks in the security strategies of the states, determine the red lines against them, take various precautions, and organize the public opinion within this framework. At this point, Iran bases its definitions on its experiences in the Iran-Iraq War and developing the national arms industry (especially in the field of long-range rockets) in order not to repeat the foreign dependency in terms of military equipment in this war (Konukcu, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that Israeli security policies are designed under the approach of "the state establishes its own security", which is one of the basic elements of the Realist Theory (Acar, 2021). Because according to the Realist Theory, the element that provides the balance between states in international relations is power (Bakan & Şahin, 2018). Just like Iran, Israel considers its historical experience

when defining a security risk. Based on this approach, Israel mentions that it will not allow another Holocaust to happen again, as in the Second World War. The rhetoric of Menachem Begin, one of the former prime ministers of Israel, that "the Jewish people will never allow a second Holocaust" can be considered an initial doctrine for Israel. Israel's attacks on nuclear power plants in Iraq (1981) and Syria (2007) can be accepted as a reaction to neighboring countries trying to gain nuclear power (Valeriia, 2021: 60). On the other hand, Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Khamenei said that Iran's primary mission is to "*exterminate the cancer cell known as Israel*" in a Friday sermon broadcast live in 2000 (Acar, 2021). That speech can justify Israel's concern for a new Holocaust. From this point of view, it is seen that Israel uses hard power with a realistic approach against the efforts to obtain nuclear power in Syria and Iran. Table 1 shows the known and thought actions Israel took in the Middle East against its efforts to acquire nuclear power.

Table 1. Operations carried out and alleged to be carried out by Israel against nuclear programs in the Middle East

Year	Country	Action	Method	Victim	Duty
2007	Iran	Assassination	Poisoning	Ardeşir Hüseyinpur	Nuclear Physicist
2010	Iran	Assassination	Bomb Attack	Mecid Şehriyari	Physics Engineer
2010	Iran	Assassination	Bomb Attack	F. Abbasi Davani	Head of Iran Atom Energy Institution
2011	Iran	Assassination	Armed Assault	D. Rezai Necad	Nuclear Scientist
2012	Iran	Assassination	Armed Assault	M. Ahmedi Ruşen	Nuclear Physicist
2019	Iran	Assassination	Bomb Attack	M.Ali Muhammedi	Nuclear Physicist
2020	Iran	Assassination	Armed Assault	M. Fahrizade Mahabadi	Physicist
Year	Country	Action	Method	Place	Facility
1981	Iraq	Military Operation	Air Strike	Osirak	Nuclear Test Reactor
2007	Syria	Military Operation	Air Strike	El Kibar	Nuclear Reactor

Source: Acar, 2021; Fasting, 2016; Hurriyet, 2012.

As seen from the table, it is understood that Israel has established its security by eliminating the risk before it occurs for nuclear threats (Ben-Meir, 2010). Furthermore, considering the power of nuclear weapons to cause mass deaths and the size of Israel's territory, it can be concluded that Israel also handled the incident from a second genocidal perspective. Finally, it should be noted that Israel did not undertake any acts of the acts given in the table. On the other hand, the Iranian side claimed that these acts were carried out by the CIA and MOSSAD in general (Acar, 2021). Another interesting point about the table is that Iran provided the necessary intelligence for the Israeli attack on the Osirak Nuclear Facility (Oruç, 2016).

According to the Constructivist Theory, states' political approaches are influenced by variables such as their culture, identity, and norms. Since these dynamic variables can differ according to time and situation, trends may change as conditions change (Akbarzadeh, 2014). From this point of view, it can be said that the regime change in Iran caused a differentiation in the relations with Israel and the perception of Iran in Israel and brought the relations to a new level (Oruç, 2017). Despite the regime change and anti-Zionist rhetoric, Iran's supply of weapons through Israel during the war with Iraq in 1980 points to a periodic structuring in international relations due to changing conditions.

Holliday (2020) asserts that Populism creates a political identity, approaches that distinguish or equalize it from other identities (oppressor/oppressed, ostracizing/ostracized, elites/people, etc.) and that this attitude is used in international relations. Based on this approach, despite Israel's accusation of a "rogue state," Iran positions itself as the protector and defender of the oppressed Muslim people. It tries to prove this claim by supporting the people in this situation and their representatives (e.g., Hamas) and positions its actions on this axis in the international community (Holliday, 2020; Akbarzadeh, 2014). Furthermore, by broadcasting in 24 different languages through the Iranian Radio and Television Corporation, Iran responds to the discourses produced against its policies and tries to gather supporters by making its populist propaganda (Konukcu, 2018). On the other hand, according to the Ontological Theory, states build their physical and ideological existence on a narrative by taking into account social dynamics and carrying out their routines in international relations accordingly (Rumelili & Adisönmez, 2020). From this perspective, Iran's attitude towards Israel in the international arena is based on the discourse of being the protector of Muslims. On the other hand, it can be evaluated that Israel determined its routines in the international arena by making self-definitions through the Holocaust narrative with the motto "There will not be another Holocaust."

When the relations between the two countries are examined, it is seen that the situation can be handled within the framework of the Theory of Deterrence. However, one of the crucial issues to be aware of is that this theory emerged during the Second World War and evolved. The theory generally covers several standard applications, including all security strategies such as diplomacy, spying, and war. This approach creates a balance of power while avoiding wars and fighting (Morgan, 2012: 85-86). In other words, it is the threat that one of the parties will

use instruments that will have heavy consequences for the negative behavior of the competitors (Gündoğdu, 2016: 1). From this point of view, Iran's cooperation with various actors to act as a deterrent to Israel and its effort to acquire nuclear weapons can be somewhat meaningful because deterrence requires elements such as rationality and the threat's credibility (Gündoğdu, 2016: 1).

The Securitization Theory outlined in the Copenhagen School can also address the conflict between Israel and Iran. According to this theory, a country; positions any issue as an existential threat or a high-priority risk from the security framework. Therefore, declining it attributes an extraordinary status to the problem by making it a priority (Miş, 2011). Based on that, Israel tries to ensure its presence in the region, and Iran expects to contend with the actions of the USA and Israel. It can be said that both countries are increasingly turning to securitization to become a regional hegemony (Beck, 2016; Lupovici, 2019). On the other hand, Israel sees Iran's nuclear program as an existential threat and tries to at least cause delays in Iran's nuclear program by making sabotage (Kaumert and Wertman, 2020: 100). From this point of view, Iran and Israel present their issues as a matter of existence to form a legitimate basis for their high-cost defense expenditures and foreign policies.

An alliance is an “official or informal arrangement between two or more sovereign states for security cooperation.” States may seek alliances to balance the perceived risks and threats (Kandemir, 2011). For example, Israel established an alliance with the USA in 1948 and kept the alliance with Iran until the Islamic Revolution against the threat of Arab states in the region. On the other hand, Iran's relations with Israel, the USA, and other western states turned positive to negative after the revolution. For this reason, it sought different alliances and established alliances with international security organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Syria.

According to the Regional Security Complex Theory, the security of the states depends on the security of other states in the region. Therefore, common threat perceptions can result in cooperation, polarization, or alliance among these states (Birdişi & Gören, 2018). For example, Israel considered Iraq a more significant threat during the Iran-Iraq War. As a result, it supplied weapons to Iran, despite the lousy course of relations. In this context, Iran and Israel's cooperation as two non-Arab states in the region before the Islamic Revolution can be taken as another alliance example.

According to the Idealism Theory, international conflicts can be prevented by establishing a common superconsciousness among states. For example, the League of Nations (today's United Nations) was established based on a shared understanding of security based on a common response to one member state using force against another state (Iyat, 2020). The idealist approach differs from Realism since it asserts that the continuation of the state depends on the deterrence level gained by international collaborations. However, Iran became a member of the League of Nations in 1945, and Israel joined the organization in 1949. Israel is not a member of any security-related global organization besides Interpol. Although Iran is a member of Interpol, it is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a critical regional actor in the security field. Another significant issue is that neither country is a member of NATO. However, it is understood that Israel has sought a basis for a relationship with NATO in recent years.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Conflicts between countries can be historical, religious, geographical, cultural, ideological, cyclical, etc. The conflict between Iran and Israel also finds its roots in ideological and religious grounds in general. Because historically, there has not been a serious conflict between these two countries, which do not have land borders.

Iran-Israel relations, which had progressed well until the Islamic Revolution, deteriorated as a result of the discourse and actions of the revolution in their ideological positioning. However, the Iraq-Iran War has shown that security concerns and the struggle for existence may require states to set aside their discourses and redefine friend-enemy definitions. In such an environment, Iran did not hesitate to cooperate with Israel to supply weapons to ensure its security.

Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Arab Spring, the Syrian Civil War, and the ongoing Palestinian issue motivate the armament race for both countries to take the military superiority. On the other hand, Iran and Israel seem to develop proxy relations against each other to gain a regional competitive advantage.

When the course of conflicts between the two countries since 1979 is examined, it is understood that the subject can be discussed within the scope of different security theories. The dynamic nature of international relations makes these countries apply different assumptions for diversifying their security designs.

Finally, examining the issue based on international law would be appropriate. It is also a matter of general debate whether the conflicts between Israel and Iran have a basis for self-defense. Article 2/4 of the United Nations

Charter states, "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations" (Aksar, 2012: 32). Since there is no direct attack between those countries, they do not gain a self-defense right based on Article 2/4. On the other hand, Article 51 states, "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security" (Karadağ, 2016: 175). Therefore, not being exposed to an armed attack does not create a right of self-defense in this context, which makes Israel's attacks on scientists and nuclear facilities questionable.

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