



On April 25, the defense ministers and heads of intelligence of Turkey, Russia, Syria, and Iran met in Moscow to “discuss developments in Syria” | Photo: Russian Defense Ministry

The lack of true investment by the United States in its leadership position in the Middle East, whether by disinterest or lack of attention, pragmatic pragmatic Sunni countries closer to Iran

Saudi Arabia reconstitutes its relationship with Iran | Representatives from Russia, Iran, Syria and Turkey met in Moscow to discuss the situation in Syria | Israel keeps preventing Hezbollah from gaining power on the Israeli-Syrian border | Israel deepens diplomatic and economic ties with countries in Asia

Iran

- **The Iranian regime has identified an opportune moment to strengthen its position in the Middle East, to the dismay of Israel.** New developments in the regional playground indicate that **the Iranian regime is becoming more pro-active in its regional foreign policy and is growing bolder and more confident by the lack of adequate Western response or counter initiative.**
- **The “Iranian octopus” is now using a “pincer move” strategy: the “head” reaffirms inter-state ties, while the “tentacles” (Hamas, the Assad regime, Hezbollah) are being re-legitimized by the Arab world.**

March and the first half of April saw a **Chinese-brokered deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia** that facilitated the resumption of full ties between the countries, including flights, visas and embassies; the **summit between Iranian and Saudi foreign ministers in Beijing**; the call between the **Iranian foreign minister and his Jordanian counterpart** in which the parties agreed to act

toward normalization; and the **re-legitimization of Iranian proxies** – Hamas by Saudi Arabia (KSA), and the Assad regime by KSA, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and possibly the Arab League.

These new developments indicate that **Iran is not stopping its claim for regional hegemony, encouraged by the support by China and Russia and by the lack thereof by the United States and the European Union. Iran is using this Western absence as leverage to continue this “show of diplomatic force” in the region. while it continues to enrich and accumulate uranium close to weapons-grade.**

- As part of this trend to change the regional balance of power, Russia is attempting to bring Turkey closer together to Iran and Syria once again. On April 25, the defense ministers and heads of intelligence of Turkey, Russia, Syria, and Iran met in Moscow to “discuss developments in Syria”. It is estimated that the statement concerning the need for a “speedy return of Syrian refugees to their country” is a Turkish condition to withdrawing their troops from Syria as well as opening the strategic M4 highway in order to facilitate Syria’s trade with its neighboring countries, topics that were discussed by the parties as well. The M4 highway, running in parallel to Syria’s northern border with Turkey, was closed after Turkey’s military intervention in northern Syria.
- **During the second half of April, several meetings between Iranian leaders and the**

regime's proxies were noted:

- **Iraq:** Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held two meetings in Baghdad, **both state-level and proxy-level:** one with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, and with PIJ chief Ziad Nahale, who was also invited to Baghdad (April 13);
- **Yemen:** Iranian president Ibrahim Raisi invited over the phone the Iranian proxy and leader of Houthi rebels in Yemen, Mahdi al-Mashat from the "Shi'ite Houthi Supreme Political Council", to an official visit in Iran (April 21);
- **Syria:** Hossein Akbari, the newly-appointed Iranian ambassador to Syria, has presented his credentials to Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Meqdad (April 22);
- **Syria:** A visit by Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash to Damascus, meeting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad April 26);
- **Lebanon:** Iranian Foreign Minister has visited Lebanon, meeting his proxy Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah in his Beirut bunker. He then proceeded to a tour on the Israeli border near Marun a-Ras, southern Lebanon, surrounded by Hezbollah officials, vowing that "All positive developments in the region will lead to the collapse of the Zionist entity... The Zionists only understand power. We support the resistance and the fight against the Zionist enemy." He added, **"our region is entering a new phase of cooperation"** (April 28);
- **Syria, Lebanon and Hamas:** Announcements on Iranian president Ibrahim Raisi's expected trip to Syria and Lebanon, the first visit by an Iranian president to Syria since the outbreak of the Civil War in 2011 (April 29); and the invitation of Hamas leader Ismayil Hanieh to Tehran (April 29).

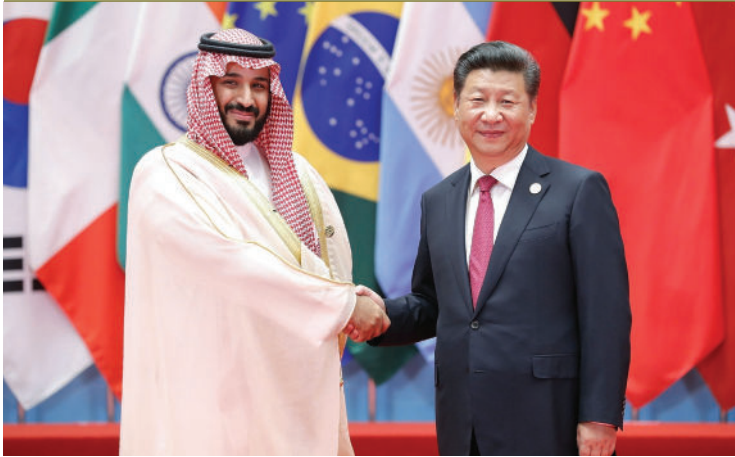
In an official visit to Lebanon, Iranian Foreign Minister met Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah and visited the Lebanon-Israel border, vowing the "collapse of the Zionist entity" and stating the "region is entering a new phase of cooperation" (April 28)



- **Iran is positioning itself as the "regional responsible adult", which sends a clear warning signal to Israel.** In a March press conference, Iranian foreign minister's spokesperson Nasser Kanaani affirmed they are looking for similar détente deals with **Egypt** – **"The region needs the synergy of Tehran and Cairo"** – and with **Bahrain**, KSA's most important Gulf ally. Iran is also expecting "positive results" in Yemen following these developments.
- **Pushed to the corner, pragmatic Sunni countries feel disappointed by the lack of real Western deterrence toward Iran** and its quest for nuclear weapons and fueling of regional and global terrorism. **The Saudis are reading the map:** the West has been caught unprepared by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and despite significant economic support and the provision of military aid to Ukraine, as well as unprecedented economic sanctions targeting Russia, this has not deterred the Kremlin from intensifying its war efforts; the West has failed to deliver a real response to China's lack of cooperation around Covid-19, its moves regarding Taiwan, and its trade practices; and the Assad regime is once again warmly welcomed in Arab capitals after its isolation during the deadly Syrian Civil War, in which it has played a major role in mass civilian casualties. **Given this dynamic between East and West, the Saudis do not see any reason to put their trust on Western support in the coming period.**
- US President Biden had made a clear commitment during the last GCC Summit in Jeddah, July 2022, that **the United States "will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran"**. However, the American refusal to strongly confront Iran on its nuclear activities, combined with the continued negotiations to revive the JCPOA (Nuclear Deal) with Iran at almost any cost, including putting aside key American interests such as limitations on the ballistic missiles program, real inspection mechanism, and regional terrorism and destabilizing activity, have left Arab leaders disappointed. An Israeli senior official said to the press that **"Saudi Arabia turned to other paths given their interpretation of American and Israeli weakness."**
- Such steps might cause the Israeli ambition to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia, as a direct continuation to the Abraham Accords and which could end the Israeli-Arab conflict given KSA's status, to be significantly delayed.
- **The West, chief among it the United States, would be wise to stop this domino effect while possible, and offer pragmatic Sunni countries and Israel real support and guarantees, including leading an Israeli-Sunni-Western coalition against Iran in the spirit of the Abraham Accords.**

Left: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman with Chinese President Xi Jinping

(Credit: Shutterstock.com | Salma Bashir Motiwala); Right: Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, from his official website



Security situation in Israel: several days of tensions amidst a Ramadan that did not lead to wide-scale escalation

- **Ramadan ending, Eid Al-Fitr has passed relatively peacefully** and without any heavy riots or rise of terror attacks, despite the growing tensions and terror activities around Passover in which Palestinian terrorists murdered several Israeli citizens and one Italian tourist; the rise of escalation in Temple Mount and terrorist activity around Judea and Samaria; and a combined rocket barrage targeted Israel from Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza.
- **Israel continues to operate in Syria as part of its continuous effort to prevent Iranian military entrenchment in the country.** As it was reported by Syrian agencies, around 20 shells were fired by the IDF against a Hezbollah post in Al Qunaitra (April 23rd). and later (April 29) an attack that was attributed to Israel was carried out in near Homs. This IDF activity is a continued attempt to prevent the establishment of a strong Hezbollah presence at the Israel-Syrian border like their strong entrenchment along the Israel-Lebanon border.

Israel even dropped leaflets in Al Qunaitra prior to the attacks in order to alert Syrian citizens as well as raise awareness of Hezbollah taking control in the area.

- **A member of the Jordanian parliament** named Imad Al-Adwan and a deputy minister were **caught at the Israeli border while trying to smuggle around 200 rifles and pistols and 100kg of gold, most probably designated for Palestinian militants from Hamas** around Judea and Samaria. The Jordanian politician previously praised Hamas in his social media accounts. It is suspected that this was not his first smuggling operation. The parliament member is being held in Israeli custody and was visited by the Jordanian ambassador to Israel, who reported Adwan was in "good condition". According to reports, there are negotiations around a "deal" between Israel and Jordan on the terms of his release. It is estimated that **hundreds of firearms are smuggled through the Jordanian and Lebanese borders each year.** Israeli police, specifically the Yagal unit partnering with the Border Police and the IDF, is acting to thwart these smuggling activities with overt and covert operations along the border, identifying hundreds of percents' increase annually in smuggling attempts, and catching large deliveries, two such interceptions include, 58 rifles and three M16 guns on the Lebanese border in March 2022, worth around \$1,000,000 \$ USD; and 24 guns on the Jordanian border in April 2022, worth around \$300,000 USD.

At least 200 rifles and 100kg of gold were smuggled by Jordanian parliament member Imad al-Adwan, who was caught by Israeli forces

Credit: Israeli police spokesmanship, Arab media



Israel continues to strengthen its diplomatic and military ties with a historic visit by the exiled Iranian heir to the throne, the opening of an Azeri embassy in Israel and an Israeli embassy in Turkmenistan.

- Reza Pahlavi II, the exiled Crown Prince of Iran visited last week in Israel on Holocaust Memorial Day, participating in the state ceremony and meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. This visit aimed to symbolize the friendship between the Israeli and Iranian peoples, as opposed to the hostility between the governments, and to emphasize the threat posed by the Iranian regime to its people and regional stability.
- Israel has been involved in the international efforts to bring peace to Sudan between the two factions are fighting domestically. Israel's efforts are focused on decreasing the violence and tension and establishing civil government in Sudan.
- After 30 years of partial diplomatic ties which included an Israeli embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, a Shiite republic and a neighboring country to Iran, has opened an embassy and a chamber of

commerce in Israel. The Azeri ambassador has commenced his position in the last month following a visit by Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen to Baku, leading an Israel commercial delegation.

- Israel has opened an embassy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, also a neighboring country to Iran, as part of an official trip by the Israeli Foreign Minister.

Israeli Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen (left) and his Turkmen counterpart Rashid Mardov (right) inaugurated the Israeli embassy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan | April 20 | Photo: Shlomi Amsalem, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government Press Office (GPO)



The Monitor

H2 April 2023 in numbers

ATTACKS:

- **April 21 | Binyamin, near Al Mughayir, around Ramallah** | Shooting and rock throwing attack by a Palestinian mob countering a demonstration by Israelis who protested the recent wave of terror attacks and attempted IED attacks
- **April 23 | Israel-Jordan border** | A member of the Jordanian parliament named Imad Al-Adwan and a deputy minister were caught at the Israeli border while trying to smuggle around 200 rifles and pistols and 100kg of Gold, most probably designated for Palestinian militants around Judea and Samaria
- **April 24, during Yom HaZikaron, the Memorial Day for Fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism| Jerusalem market, ramming attack** | 5 injured by a vehicle which rammed into a civilian crowd near the Mahne Yehuda market by a Palestinian resident of Bet Zafafa, Jerusalem, a 39-year-old named Hatem Najma. The terrorist was neutralized by an armed by-passe

A Palestinian from Al Zafafa, Jerusalem carried out a car ramming attack near the Mahne Yehuda market, Jerusalem on April 24, the national Memorial Day



- **April 25 | Binyamin, on Road 60 around Ofra, Judea and Samaria** | Shooting attack against a group of runners. A 28-year-old Israeli citizen was injured by a Palestinian terrorist firing on the runners around the "Old British Police" junction, still uncaught
- **April 27 | Near Ariel, Judea and Samaria** | Attempted runover attack by a Palestinian terrorist who tried to ram a group of civilians and soldiers, then stepped out of his vehicle carrying

a knife and attempted to stab a police officer. He was neutralized by soldiers who were on site. The terrorist was in the ranks of the Palestinian Authority's National Security Forces, a 39-year-old resident of the Bidya village named Taha Ahmed

- **April 28** | A senior militant of the Lions' Den terror group has turned himself over to the Palestinian Authority, fearing arrest by the IDF

ON THE PALESTINIAN SIDE

- **April 18 | Jenin Refugee Camp** | The IDF has arrested three Palestinian militants in a broad-daylight operation in the camp, the first of its kind since March 7, when the Hamas terrorist Abd Al-Fatah Harusha who murdered the two Israeli brothers Harel and Yagel Yaniv in Hawara was arrested. The three belonged to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terror group and were reportedly **planning an imminent attack**. The raid was carried out by combat soldiers from the Duvdevan unit alongside Paratroopers and Border Police

Military equipment confiscated by IDF forces during a counterterrorism operation in Jenin, April 28

(Credit: IDF spokesperson)



April 28 | Jenin | IDF forces, alongside Shin Bet and Border Police forces, arrested Bassel Hariri, a terrorist who was manufacturing IEDs and carrying out various terrorist activities. Militants fired and threw IEDs on the soldiers, who fired back. A large cache of military equipment was confiscated. One Palestinian suspected of attacking the force was injured by IDF fire

IDF forces arresting wanted terrorists in Jenin, April 18



- **April 28 | Tekoa, near Bethlehem, Judea and Samaria** | One Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire during violent riots against soldiers

SYRIA

- **April 23** | Around 20 shells were fired by the IDF against Hezbollah post

THIS PAST WEEK IN ISRAEL

- **April 21 | Eid al-Fitr**, ending the holy month of Ramadan
- **April 25 | Memorial Day** for the Fallen Soldiers of the Wars of Israel and Victims of Actions of Terrorism | 24,213 fallen soldiers | 4,255 murdered citizens
- **April 26 | Israel's 75th Independence Day**
- **April 25-28 | Ziyarat al-Nabi Shu'ayb**, a Druze holiday

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We are open to provide further research materials and hold in-person briefings on the above analysis and reports, or any other matter related to our activity. Please contact us for more information