# THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAEL–SYRIA RELATIONS

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**Annotation**

This scientific article analyzes the historical stages of the development of relations between Israel and Syria, the factors behind the formation of political and military confrontations between the two states, and their role in the geopolitics of the Middle East. The study examines political processes from 1948 to the present day, ***including the Arab-Israeli wars, the issue 1of the Golan Heights, the influence of*** international powers, and regional security problems. In addition, the current state and future prospects of Israel–Syria relations are assessed from a scientific perspective.

**Keywords:** ***Israel, Syria, Arab–Israeli conflict, Golan Heights, Middle East, geopolitics, security, civil war, diplomacy, international relations.***

**Introduction**

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the Middle East region has become one of the most complex and conflict-prone areas in international politics. Political crises, ethnic and religious confrontations, and geostrategic interests in this region have had a significant impact on the system of international relations. In particular, conflicts between Israel and the Arab states have emerged as one of the main causes of political instability in the region.

Relations between Israel and Syria represent one of the most complicated and long-lasting confrontations in the Middle East. Historical, political, religious, and military factors have played a crucial role in shaping these relations. The confrontation that began with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 intensified over subsequent decades through a series of armed conflicts, diplomatic crises, and geopolitical rivalries.

The Syrian Arab Republic was among the states that refused to recognize Israel for a long period and consistently maintained a firm position on the Palestinian issue. In particular, the occupation of the Golan Heights by Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967 became one of the central sources of conflict between the two states. Due to its strategic and military importance, this territory remains the core issue in Israel–Syria relations.

Even today, relations between Israel and Syria remain highly complicated. The Syrian civil war, Iran's influence in the region, the activities of Hezbollah, and the involvement of international powers have intensified Israel's security policy. Consequently, Israel has regularly carried out airstrikes against certain military targets in Syria.

The main objective of this article is to analyze the historical development of Israel–Syria relations, examine the causes of confrontation between the two states, and scientifically evaluate geopolitical factors at the contemporary stage.

**Main Body**

**The Establishment of the State of Israel and Initial Confrontations**

The establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine in 1948 created a new political reality in the Middle East. Arab states reacted negatively to the creation of Israel, which resulted in the outbreak of the first Arab–Israeli war. Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq participated in military operations against Israel.

Syria was among the most active participants in the war and pursued a policy of supporting Palestinian Arabs. However, by the end of the war, Israel succeeded in expanding its territories. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homeland. This situation contributed to the formation of a hostile political attitude toward Israel among Arab states.

During the period from 1948 to 1967, frequent border clashes occurred between Israel and Syria. In particular, disputes over water resources and undefined borders intensified tensions between the two countries. Syria viewed

Israel's regional policy as expansionist and increased its military preparations accordingly.

The Six-Day War of 1967 and the Issue of the Golan Heights

The Six-Day War of 1967 marked a turning point in Israel–Syria relations.

During the war, Israel conducted military operations against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and quickly achieved military superiority.

As a result of the war, Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The loss of the Golan Heights was a major political and military setback for Syria. This territory was strategically important because it allowed control over southern Syria and the city of Damascus.

The Golan Heights were considered crucial for Israel due to their rich water resources and elevated geographical position. Israel regarded the territory as an essential part of its national security.

The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 242, calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. However, the resolution was not fully implemented, and the issue of the Golan Heights remains unresolved to this day.

**The 1973 War and Diplomatic Processes**

In 1973, Egypt and Syria launched new military operations against Israel. This conflict became known as the Yom Kippur War. During the initial phase of the war, Syria managed to regain parts of the Golan Heights, but Israel later regained military superiority through counterattacks.

Following the war, the United States and the Soviet Union became more actively involved in controlling the regional situation. In 1974, Israel and Syria signed a disengagement agreement. A special United Nations observer mission was deployed in the Golan region.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Israel–Syria relations were largely shaped by the conditions of the Cold War. Syria was one of the Soviet Union's main allies,

while Israel was strongly supported by the United States. This deepened the confrontation between the two states.

In 1981, Israel declared the Golan Heights part of its territory. This decision was not recognized by the international community. The UN Security Council considered Israel's action illegal.

**The Lebanese Conflicts and the Hezbollah Factor**

Beginning in the 1980s, the political situation in Lebanon significantly affected Israel–Syria relations. During the Lebanese civil war, Syria expanded its military and political influence in the country.

In 1982, Israel launched a military operation in Lebanon. The main objective was to eliminate the activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization. At the same time, Israel also sought to limit Syria's influence in Lebanon.

In subsequent years, Hezbollah emerged in Lebanon. The organization received support from Iran and Syria. Hezbollah became one of the most active forces engaged in armed struggle against Israel.

For Israel, the activities of Hezbollah and Iran in Syria represented a serious security threat. Therefore, Israel began conducting regular operations against Iranian military facilities and Hezbollah infrastructure in Syria.

**Peace Negotiations and Their Failure**

During the 1990s, the political situation in the Middle East became relatively more stable. The Madrid Conference and the Oslo process increased hopes for peace in the region. During this period, negotiations between Israel and Syria were also held.

The main issue in these negotiations was the Golan Heights. Syria demanded the full return of the territory, while Israel emphasized security guarantees and water resource issues.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several rounds of negotiations were organized with the mediation of the United States. However, due to mutual distrust and differences in strategic interests, no final agreement was reached.

**The Syrian Civil War and Israeli Policy**

The civil war that began in Syria in 2011 radically changed the political situation in the region. What initially started as anti-government protests later turned into a large-scale armed conflict.

Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States became actively involved in the Syrian conflict. In particular, the military activities of Iran and Hezbollah in Syria created significant security threats for Israel.

Israel pursued a policy aimed at preventing the establishment of Iranian military infrastructure in Syria. For this purpose, the Israeli Air Force carried out strikes against certain military targets in Damascus and other regions.

Israeli officials repeatedly emphasized that both the fragmentation of Syria and the strengthening of Iranian influence would negatively affect regional security. At the same time, Israel also expressed concern that the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's government could strengthen radical groups.

**The Contemporary Stage of Israel–Syria Relations**

Today, there are no official diplomatic relations between Israel and Syria. The issue of the Golan Heights remains unresolved. The recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights by the United States in 2019 was strongly condemned by Syria.

The Syrian government continues to consider the return of the Golan Heights one of the primary objectives of its foreign policy. Israel, in turn, views the territory as a strategically necessary zone for its national security.

In addition, Iran's activities in Syria continue to have a major impact on Israel–Syria relations. Israel continues to launch strikes against certain targets in Syria in order to limit Iran's military presence.

Russia's military involvement in Syria also influences Israeli policy. Israel seeks to maintain balanced relations with Russia in order to coordinate its military operations in Syria.

At the same time, the issue of ensuring long-term peace in the Middle East remains highly relevant for the international community. However, the deep historical contradictions in Israel–Syria relations continue to complicate the prospects for full diplomatic normalization in the near future.

**Conclusion**

Israel–Syria relations remain one of the most complicated and long-lasting political confrontations in the Middle East. Historical, geopolitical, religious, and military factors have played a decisive role in shaping these relations.

The confrontation that began with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 intensified further through the Arab–Israeli wars. In particular, the occupation of the Golan Heights in 1967 became the central disputed issue between the two states.

During the Cold War, Israel and Syria belonged to opposing geopolitical blocs, which further complicated their relations. Conflicts in Lebanon, the activities of Hezbollah, and the Iranian factor also contributed to deepening tensions between Israel and Syria.

After 2011, the Syrian civil war created new security challenges. Iran's military activity in Syria led to regular Israeli military operations. As a result, Israel–Syria relations entered a new geopolitical phase.

Today, diplomatic relations between the two states do not exist, and the issue of the Golan Heights remains unresolved. Therefore, Israel–Syria relations continue to be one of the key factors influencing security and political stability in the Middle East.

In the future, the development of political processes in the region, the effectiveness of international mediation mechanisms, and the balance of power among regional actors will remain the main factors determining the prospects of Israel–Syria relations.

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