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Trump's Middle East policy disappoints Israel

US President Donald Trump's Middle East trip has shifted the new administration's previous focus. The US' success with the richest Arab states and Türkiye is seriously concerning for Israel.



US regional policy traditionally pays special attention to the Middle East. The region hosts the 5th and 6th fleets of the US Navy, a number of US military bases in Türkiye, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, etc. are stationed in the waters of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The Middle East, through which strategically important land and sea trade communications pass (including the Black Sea Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the Suez Canal, the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz), cannot be ignored by the United States. In addition, the rich oil and gas resources of the Arab Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait), as well as Iraq and Syria, are a priority for Washington's energy and trade policy. Finally, Israel, the main regional ally of the United States, is located in this region, whose diaspora in the West (especially in the United States) holds influential positions and often dictates the landscape of finance and global policy to the ruling regime.

Results of Trump's first foreign visits to the Gulf states

It just so happens that the rich tend to gravitate towards the rich. Therefore, it is not surprising that the newly elected US President Donald Trump made his first foreign visit to the Arab Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates).

The restart of the American economy largely depends on global energy prices and the policies of the leading oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf

The four-day visit took place amid a pronounced aggravation of the regional situation related to the unfinished Arab-Israeli war in the Gaza Strip, ongoing tensions in Syria, the escalation of Turkish-Israeli relations and the unresolved Iranian nuclear programme. The Middle East periodically remains a zone of special attention, taking into account the ongoing intra-regional contradictions.

Donald Trump is declaring a new strategy to revive the former financial, economic and geopolitical greatness of the United States, and his policy of raising tariffs has created 'trade wars' (especially with China and EU countries). Accordingly, the restart of the American economy largely depends on global energy prices and the policies of the leading oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf.

Trump's Middle East trip, which began on May 14 with a visit to Riyadh, was marked by the conclusion of multibillion-dollar contracts. In particular, Saudi Arabia has signed a \$600 billion deal with the United States covering of energy, defence and technology. This fast pace was maintained in Qatar, where contracts worth \$1.2 trillion were signed (Doha plans to spend \$250 billion on purchasing US Boeing aircraft). In the UAE, agreements worth a record \$1.4 trillion were signed for a period of 10 years (mainly in the field of artificial intelligence), bringing the total sum of investment to \$3.2 trillion.

No US leader has previously achieved such impressive success during a single foreign tour before. Meanwhile, the US president's talks with the heads of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE were not limited to investments, but also addressed broader political and security issues. Trump discussed the following with Arab partners (including the Syrian transitional leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa) and the Turkish leader in an online format: achieving peace in Gaza, nuclear energy and arms supplies for Riyadh, lifting all US sanctions against Syria, the Iranian nuclear deal, localisation of Kurdish separatism and reduction of Turkish-Israeli contradictions. Digital success indicators can clearly be seen in the field of economics, and positive points are also clearly outlined in the military-political part. The latter raises optimistic hopes for Arabs and Turks, but concerns the Israelis.

Of course, Arab money, oil and gas in exchange for US weapons, technology and political guarantees provide the United States with additional opportunities to strengthen its hegemonic ambitions through influencing the process of determining global energy prices, the main routes of international transit communications (corridors) and setting the regional and global agenda.

Simultaneously with his visits to Arab countries, the US president did not lose sight of the important process of restarting the Russian-Ukrainian negotiations in Türkiye (Istanbul). Accordingly, Washington's successes in Riyadh, Doha and Abu Dhabi in the field of energy are aimed at influencing global oil and gas trade, which may affect the interests of Russia and China. The United States has secured a lucrative deal from Ukraine, a major contract for the extraction and exploitation of natural resources, the implementation of which is impossible during hostilities.

Washington, having supported President Erdoğan's 'mind and strength' in 'capturing Syria', is demonstrating its readiness to return to the military deal for the sale of 40 upgraded F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye and allow the Turks to participate in the fifth-generation F-35 fighter production programme. In addition, President Trump, influenced by Recep Erdoğan, agreed to lift all sanctions against Syria, did not object to the deployment of Turkish military bases on Syrian territory and, apparently, refused to help militant Kurdish groups and support the idea of Rojava's autonomy.

Israel is disappointed by the US president's tour of the Middle East

The changes in Trump's behaviour are a shock to nobody. Nevertheless, having visited the Arab countries, he did not even visit Israel, notes the Guardian.

Thus, Donald Trump is strengthening the key Arab Gulf states and Türkiye, hoping to minimise China's geo-economic and geopolitical presence in the region. At the same time, the US leader, promising to export nuclear energy technologies to Saudi Arabia, is creating tensions in US-Israeli relations. The issue of the Iranian nuclear programme also remains unsolved.

Another stumbling block between Washington and Tel Aviv is President Trump's decision to lift all US sanctions on Syria (in force since 1979), which is currently ruled by the pro-Turkish regime of Ahmed al-Sharaa. The United States approving the establishment of Turkish military bases (as well as air defence systems) in Syria may pose a threat to Israel and its airspace. That is why Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appealed to Donald Trump not to make hasty decisions regarding the lifting of all sanctions against Syria at the behest of Türkiye.

In this regard, former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett sharply criticised the Netanyahu government; in his opinion, the Jewish state is losing influence and security in the Middle East. Bennett criticised US President Trump's Middle East tour, as the situation could evolve into a threat for Israel.

"The Middle East", noted Bennett, "is undergoing tectonic changes before our eyes. Our enemies are getting stronger...Türkiye is getting F-35s, Syria, led by a terrorist, is exempt from sanctions, Saudi Arabia is given the green light for a nuclear programme. Israel is losing a qualitative military advantage that has been maintained for 50 years. But the government is silent".

Thus, Israel is losing its strategic advantage in the light of US regional policy. This will, of course, not only aggravate relations between Tel Aviv and Washington, but will also catalyse a new round of tensions in the Middle East. However, the Israeli authorities did not hide their intentions to resume the offensive on the Gaza Strip after the completion of Trump's visit to the region. On May 17, the IDF launched Operation Gideon's Chariots against Hamas. The media noted that Trump allegedly agreed with the Arabs to relocate more than a million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya.

It cannot be ruled out that the latest resumption of hostilities in Gaza was coordinated with Washington (in any case, Netanyahu's government notified its allies about it). At the same time, US law enforcement agencies have disseminated information that they are investigating a possible threat to kill Donald Trump from former FBI director James Comey, who distributed a '8647' image. In American slang, '86' means 'kill' (or 'eliminate'), and '47' is Trump's ordinal number as the 47th President of the United States.

James Comey not only expressed his dissatisfaction with the contradictory behaviour and policies of Donald Trump, but also possibly warned of the formation of some kind of corporate opinion in the United States, where there is also a very high influence of the Jewish diaspora.

It is still too early to draw conclusions that a historical change 'from Israel in favour of the Arab Middle East' is coming in US Middle East policy after Trump's visit. Here one cannot disagree with the Guardian's opinion:

"Since this is Trump, you cannot be sure that this is not a fleeting whim that will be undone by another equally radical shift in a few weeks or even hours".

Alexandr Svaranc, May 27, 2025

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