

## **The strategic importance of the strait of Tiran in the conflict in South West Asia**

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### **Abstract**

One major geopolitical conflict in South-West Asia, the Strait of Tiran in the Red Sea is located in the North East. Strait of Tiran and Tiran Island and the entrance Snafyr Gulf of Aqaba, northern Red Sea is located. This conflict has been involved in several conflicts at the same time are prolonged. Strait of Tiran strategic position from the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict has played a major role in this regime and operation of the Strait as major geopolitical Arabic countries to put pressure on the Zionist regime the main reason for starting the crisis in decades past. This article aims to explain the strategic importance of the Strait of Tiran in the conflict in South West Asia. The research method was descriptive-analytical study using methods to collect information from library and internet capability. In this thesis, we answer this question we” Strait of Tiran in South West Asia conflict is in what position?” the results of this study show the importance and status of the Strait for the Zionist regime is surrounded by Arabic countries most of the other countries involved in the conflict. Zionist regime, arguing that freedom of navigation in the past, it has wage war in neighboring violated. Defeated in battle and captured the Arabic countries overlooking the Strait Islander peace agreements signed by the Zionist regime and freedom of navigation for the regime brought and it is possible to achieve national objectives. Entrance to the Red Sea, East Africa and increase the penetration of strategic depth, this regime has freed geographical deadlock.

**Keywords:** Strait of Tiran, Geopolitical conflicts, South West Asia.

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### **Introduction**

After the Second World War, United States due to geopolitical position and geostrategic importance of Middle East has changed rules and international and regional power distribution. At this level America, in a new discipline definition, considered Middle East as a part of security zone and its vital interest's provider and because of geostrategic importance of Palestine where is splicer of east and west and connecting link of 3 Asia, Europe and Africa also as a base to control Suez Canal, Indian ocean and Middle east oil wells attract United States' attention. Along with this policy which Israel creates by comprehensive protection of west, this supports are continuing yet to keep region position to their profits (Jafarivoldani, 2012: 154).

South west Asia suffers from many conflicts where more originated from geopolitical problems. From numerous territorial and border disputes among Iran and other southern border of Persian Gulf neighbors to Israeli's numerous disputes (Gods occupying regime) with its neighboring countries are among these disputes. Tiran strait at the entrance to the Aqaba Gulf on north east of the Red Sea has played an important role from the beginning of Arab conflict with this regime due to its strategic location. So that this strait have been the main factor to start in all occurred wars. Map.1 shows Tiran Strait's location in the region.

Map 1: North East of the Red Sea, Aqaba Gulf and Tiran Strait outlines



Although in this situation, this conflict has a dormant state nevertheless it's possible to raise the conflict again due to critical and hurly-burly conditions in Middle East. Emergence of popular revolutions in Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordan and increasing anti-Zionist's emotions in countries are cases which can transform Tiran Strait conflict to a critical situation again. In this research we are going to answer this question that "what is Tiran Strait's position in South west Asia conflict?"

## **2. Methodology**

Spatial domain of research (countries involved in Tiran strait conflict) contains coastal countries of Aqaba Gulf namely Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israeli and Egypt. Subject of this research is Tiran Strait geopolitical analysis in regional and national levels. Time domain of this research starts since the beginning of Tiran Strait conflict and the establishment of Israeli and its achievement to the coast of Aqaba Gulf. This research using a descriptive-analytical method and relying on library and document recourses is following to answer the article's main question.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

**Strait:** in the third convention of seas' rights, national straits have been defined as waterways which have been located between a part of high sea or exclusive economic zone and other part of them; and have been used for international navigation (Pishgahifard, 2005: 30).

**Conflict:** conflict is one of ineludible aspect of human societies which expresses benefits, values and claims which always create with different changes to current situation as a new shape in political relations. Due to its nature, international conflicts can have political or legal nature. Many international conflicts' factor is territorial factor that has been neglected (Mojtahedzade & Rabiee, 2009: 2-3).

**South west Asia:** parts of Caucasus, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and parts of central Asia, Iraq, Turkey and Persian Gulf countries, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and sometimes Egypt use as a part of south west Asia in current literature (salami, 2009: 127).

Geographical values and factors including geographical can be demanded politically and attract actors attention. On the other words, they will get political meaning. Therefore they will get geopolitical nature (Hafeznia, 2011: 156). Geographical location is one of the factors which play an important role in political behavior of governments and formation of their political decisions. Some of these locations have strategic values and

allocate large proportions at that country's political behavior based on national power of their own countries (Hafeznia, 2013:2). These geographical locations can be used as communication center or even military and defense and formed geopolitical crisis and conflicts among countries. Discussed topics in unpleasant and acute conflicts, often rooted in region, ethnicity or religion and are related to neighboring countries (Hosainpoorpoian, 2013: 163).

1- Geopolitical crisis and conflicts mostly have the following properties.

It is crisis, control, intervention and occupation factor and topic of one or more geographical locations including human and natural.

2- Geopolitical crisis have relative stability and continuity and is not easily solved or removed because this crisis is related to geographical locations which is among public and national profits.

3- In geopolitical crisis, intervention pattern forms multilevel. On the other words, different levels of actors involved in crisis. Different levels of actors in geopolitical crisis are:

3-1- pretenders and conflict opponents at national level

3-2- pretenders and conflict opponents at regional level

3-3- pretenders and conflict opponents at global level

3-4- structural level or contrast and interference profits of global and regional organizations (Tosirkani, 2010:3).

Straits are locations where influence both national power and foreign policy among geographical places and locations also they are considered at land and sea's military strategies and as a result geopolitics and geostrategic mach and coincide each other. These locations make it possible for neighboring country to control their traffic and because of that have a strategic value. Strategic straits as geographical factors are effective in global and regional power balance and governments and powers governing the straits use them as instruments in foreign policy. Of course, there is a direct relationship between using strait and the power of its coastal country;

it means that however coastal government of strait is more powerful and stronger; equally it is possible to use strait as an instrument to apply foreign policy in global and regional affairs more (Hafeznia, 1992:3). Napoleon Bonaparte has said about the importance and sensitive role of strategic straits in 1804: "If we were master of world's straits for 6 hours, we would be lord of the world." Also Philip Clomp and Admiral Fisher have named some of straits as "keys of world".

Straits have different roles and values where the most important ones are: economic and communication, military and political role. Economic role of straits is to a extent that has been known as life line of societies; because the main part of global trade are done via seas and straits; and straits act as dividers of global trade (Ibid: 4). Also straits in addition to obtain relationship among seas, they are usually the shortest ways between their two adjacent lands. Most of international straits have political and geopolitical importance more at the age of dipole system. Although this importance is in some of them yet and geopolitical and geostrategic point views id governing them nevertheless important straits have geo-economics role now (Pishgahifard & Khaniha, 2010:153). In fact the increasing importance of maritime trade has cussed more competitions among powers to protect and control strategic straits. Also trades benefit need unobstructed use of waterways and striates and access without being in trouble to the ports of copartners. Direct benefits of economic dominance on striates have especial importance so that if use of them become exclusive and prevents by rivals it will give advantage to the owner country (Pishgahifard, 2009:157). Militarily, straits are important both in navy and army. Sea power needs straits to transfer its power and logistic and superficial fleet and submarine; and as a result should supply their security for itself or can use it as a strategic and wining factor by blocking rim countries' navy exit or prohibiting the entry of foreign invades or interrupting communication between a wide operating unit between two sides of straits. Straits are

important also in army. Blocking relations between two navies, crossing the strait to enter the front beach, mining sea spatially in straits where water depth are low and sea currents aren't powerful make straits important in army(Hafeznia,1992:5). Benefits arising from superior military power and superiority in war show the importance of access to straits during history(Pishgahifard, 2009:157). Political role of straits rise after their communication, economic and geostrategic values. It means although above values which help straits to have high geopolitical importance and influence national power and foreign policy of coastal countries also its usage depends on coastal countries' power. If coastal countries had relative power in global level or at least in regional and continental power, they will benefit from the ability of straits power potential. But if coastal countries didn't have necessary power, it is natural that not only they won't be able to raise the ability of straits power potential but also they have been considered by global powers and will go under domination of one of powers in competition conflicts or they will go to regional and global military and political contracts (Hafeznia, 1992:6).

The importance and usage of strategic straits have been different during history and have changed with technology progress and changing global policy patterns. During the colonial period, important straits were European colonial countries' field. At that time, most of straits were monitoring many business vessels at peace time and caused strengthening military power of their occupants in war time. During cold war, the highest purpose of USA as a sea power was protecting freedom to navigate on the strategic straits for its military ships and preventing that freedom for the former Soviet Union. The period after cold war had changed in political and strategic thoughts. Globalization spatially in economic, nowadays, attracts strategic attentions. Changing military thinking in cold war means "preparing for war because of ensuring peace" to the thought" peace in service of global trade's expansion" is as a guidance to change military reactions to civilian. Nowadays, with

expansion of globalization the function and importance of strategic straits have changed. In fact, increasing importance of maritime trade has caused more competition among powers to control and protect strategic straits (Pishgahifard & Khaniha, 2010:155-156).

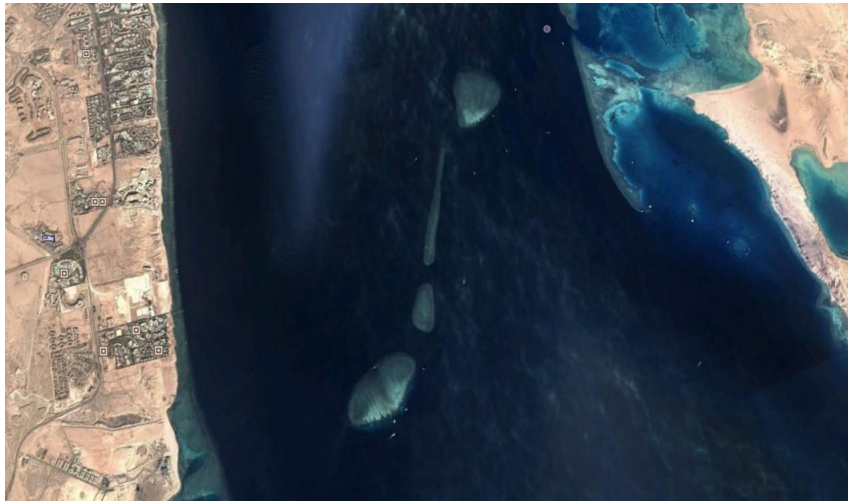
Straits didn't attract attentions until Geneva conference "it means the second convention of sea rights" in 1958. In Geneva conference, straits right system was discussed and a codified text was adjusted and endorsed by participants. According to this text, straits were divided into two categories: first, straits where are in counter of high seas and territorial waters. Second, straits where are in counter of territorial waters of one or more governments.

In the first kind of straits, it was decided that foreign ships are free to navigate and coastal government doesn't have the right or competence to control them. In the second kind, it was decided for foreign ships to have no suspension and harmless crossing right. It means that although ships shouldn't stop and be harmful but also coastal government doesn't have the right to suspend or stop them. As a result, crossing straits where are in territorial water of one or more countries should act without prejudicing. According to the third convention of seas rights, international straits are waterways where are between a part of high sea or exclusive economic zone and other part of high sea or exclusive economic zone; and use as for international navigation. According to the definition that mentioned for international straits transit crossing on these straits includes freedom to navigate and fly on them. Also it's said that crossing should be fast and continuously but government beside the strait doesn't have the right, in no condition, to prevent transit crossing (Pishgahifard, 2005:30). Also we should add that if a strait where joins two parts of high sea or exclusive economic zone used for international navigation; its crossing right system won't be like transit crossing right even if this strait has been completely in government's territorial water or governments of straits in such strait. It seems that shipping right on this strait is a function of harmless crossing



right. However, if a strait feature as a local or regional strait changes to an international strait in future, crossing right system of straits may be a function of transit crossing system (Talaei, 2006:67).

Map 2: Satellite image of the entrance to Tiran strait



Source: satellite image.GeoEye

#### **4. Finding**

##### **4-1- involved countries in conflict in national level**

##### **4-1-1- Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia with 2.149 million square kilometers space at the end of south west Asia is the biggest country in west Asia and second big Arab country (in terms of land area) and is at the confluence of 3 Asia, Africa and Europe continents (Ahadi, 2010:2). This country is limited to Persian Gulf and Oman Sea from east, Indian Ocean and Aden Gulf from south, the Red sea from west and Euphrates valley and Syria and Jordan lands from north (Rezaei, 2005:157). On the other hand, this unity is a result of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of this kingdom country. Saudi Arabia has a deep awareness of their Arab ancestors and is boasting them; and do not doubt about their cultural identity but there is more important unity factor which is

religion (Drysdale, 1990:285).

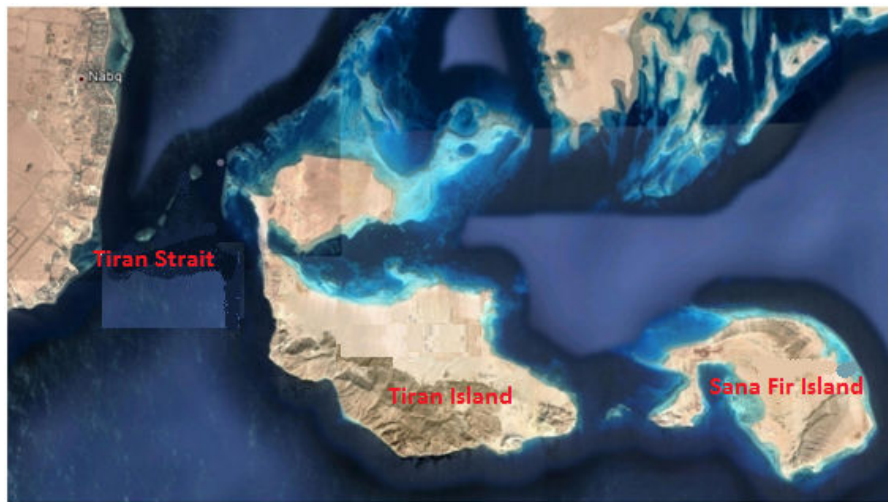
Studying Saudi Arabia's geographical location in terms of access to long and numerous beaches shows position and geopolitical importance of this country in south west Asia. The total length of Saudi Arabia borders is 4431 kilometers that more than a half of them are maritime borders. This country has long maritime borders as long as 650 kilometers in Persian Gulf and is 1860 kilometers in the Red sea (from Aqaba Gulf to Yemen) (Ezati,1999:96). Therefore it's considered that Saudi Arabia doesn't depend on Aqaba Gulf and Tiran strait due to long beaches in Persian Gulf and Black sea. Therefore, it can have a significant portion to control Tiran strait due to have ownership of Sana Fir Island and Tiran at the entrance of this strait. Islands were occupied by Israeli in past years and current control of the United Nations on them have faded Arabia's role in this case. Tiran and Sana Fir islands ownership problem has not been solved yet. These islands were taking charged by Egyptian leader "Jamal Abdo Naser" by "malak Fazil" in war against Israeli in 1949 that Egypt can be more powerful in war against Israeli using these two islands (Drysdale, 1990:188).

For the first time in the war 1956, Sana Fir Island overcame Tiran strait for about 10 months but agreed to retreat in terms of the United Nations troop's deployment. But after Arab's defect in 6 days famous war between Arab and Israeli in 1967, these islands with Sina peninsula, Egypt, up Syrian Golan and west part of Jordan were occupied by Israeli again (Ibid:229). Tiran and Sana Fir islands were occupied by Israeli army until 1979 along with the Camp David peace agreement but since then Israeli has put it formally in the United Nations to prevent every kind of Saudi Arabia public opinion stimulation (<http://kamrankarami.persianblog.ir>).

Saudi Arabia as a big Arab country from the beginning of Israeli and Arab conflict was involved in Palestine dilemma has been endeavoring to have a role in this conflict. Egypt authority on Sana Fir and Tiran islands for its military utilization and pinch Israeli in this way entered Saudi Arabia

from the beginning to the strait of Tiran's conflict. On the other way, proximity and geographical bonding factor with crisis region is one of the effective components in the entrance of Saudi Arabia in geopolitical conflict of Tiran strait. Although there are many territorial and border disputes between Saudi Arabia and its neighboring Arab countries (zeraatpisha, 2005:257) and sometimes becomes media, this country conflicts with Israeli about Sana Fir and Tiran islands has been remaining silent.

Map 3: satellite image of Sana Fir and Tiran islands



source: satellite image.GeoEye

Israeli removed only its military forces from these islands after Camp David peace contract; but it happened when they agreed that Israeli ships cross there with freedom and Tiran strait was known as an international pathway and thus Saudi Arabia lost its governing on this very important pathway (<http://www.taamolnews.ir>). Disconnection between two Egypt and Saudi Arabia countries on land after occupying Eilat port at the north of Aqaba Gulf by Israeli caused to have new ways to expand direct communication between two countries. So recently a massive project to build a communication way between Egypt and Saudi Arabia has been

discussed in media. It's said that one side of the bridge in "raaso sheikh homid" at the north of Saudi Arabia and other side ends at "raaso nasrani" in sharmo sheikh in Egypt. Passage path of this 50 kilometers bridge on Tiran Island renewed this conflict. Medias and Israeli officials reaction to this project shows the importance and sensitivity of this matter. Israeli's media has showed Saudi Arabia's action dangerous in this case and has mentioned reasons to start 1967 war between Israeli and Arab to Saudi Arabia officials. Debka has written about this case that: "war happened in 1967 when Tiran strait was blocked on Israeli ships by Egyptian leader Jamal Abdo Naser (<http://www.parset.com> ). In Israeli officials view point, building this bridge leads to Egypt and Saudi Arabia occupation on Tiran strait and decreases security of that country ships.

#### **4-1-2- Egypt**

Egypt is located at north east of Africa continent between Suez water path and Mediterranean in confluence of 3 Africa, Asia and Europe continents. Egypt has a strategic situation not only due to locating in confluence of 3 continents also due to proximity to the important marine areas where points of international relations are. Geographical location of Egypt is as well that global powers, in past periods, had entered this country to pervade south west Asia (Ezati, 1999:176). Neighboring the Red sea and Mediterranean and having 2896 kilometers maritime borders and controlling Sina desert and the only communicating way between Africa and Eastern hemisphere and also controlling Suez waterway (which with connecting Mediterranean to Red sea has made closer and faster maritime connection between East and West possible) has given a strategic and outstanding maritime location to this country (hoseini, 2002:19). This country with 230 kilometer borders is one of the countries which have the most borders in Aqaba Gulf and dominate it (falahzada, 2005:63).

In addition, Egypt has a considerable extent more than 80 million population and Arab world's leadership (Wimberley, 2010:160). Egypt is

the most important country involved in Israeli and Arab overall conflict and also the conflict on Tiran strait. In foreign policy, Egypt communication with other countries spatially Arab countries has eclipsed by Camp David contract but has the most conflicts with Israeli over Sian desert where was given back to Egypt according to Camp David contract but disagreement has remained on Taba ownership and 15 border points in coastal line of Aqaba Gulf. Egypt in 1949 closed Suez Canal on Israeli ships and this case caused to improve strategic location and importance of Eilat port for Israeli because closing Suez Canal and without this port, this regime's ships had to turn around Africa which was trading with Asian countries. Also in 12 September 1955, Egypt forced all ships to have license before entering Aqaba Gulf. Versus, Israeli announced that its harmless crossing right has been undermined to access high sea.

In 1956, with nationalizing Suez Canal attacked Egypt on efforts of 'Jamal Abdo Naser' Egyptian president and Israeli, France and England (Ovendale, 1997:27). In March 1957 (it means 4 months and a half after Sina attack) this regime retreated to have free traffic in Aqaba Gulf from Sharmo Sheykh by guaranty of Britain, France and America's navy and deployment of the United Nations troops (Smaeil Rabea, 1989:204). Then in 22 May 1967, Abdo Naser, Egyptian president, declared closing Tiran strait on Israeli ships. With this action, Eilat port was surrounded by Egypt. Therefore, to answer these proceedings, Israeli started the war and attacked Syria and Egypt to reach some goals. Also this regime doesn't have difficulty to access Eilat port by mastering Sharmo Sheykh and Tiran strait (Kelly, 2001\_2002: 11). According to Camp David contract, it was agreed to prevent increasing the number of Egyptian forces in Sina desert and international peace keeping force settled in a civilian neutral zone which expanded from Mediterranean to Sharmo Sheykh. Thus free crossing right of Israeli through Suez Canal was approved by Egypt and Tiran strait and Aqaba Gulf was announced as an international waterway where is open on

all nations (Drysdale, 1990:399). According to article 13 of Camp David contract, two sides believe that Tiran strait and Aqaba Gulf is one of international waterways where is open on all ships around the world and also two sides recognize each other's right in shipping and flying on Tiran strait and Aqaba Gulf to achieve their lands (<http://www.rohama.org>). After revolution in Arab countries and Egypt that treat as the leader of Arab world have caused increasing anti-Zionist senses in Arab world, decreasing communication level of Egypt and Israel and increasing political and security tensions in borders can lead to rise new conflict about Tiran strait.

#### **4-1-3- Israel**

Establishment of Israel created a different security zone in this region. This area contains areas where exposure this region's direct danger and countries involved in this conflict will include Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Hamas and Hezbollah non-state actors. Threat problem of this regime is the most important factor in this regime (Ghasemi, 2010: 66).

Israel is limited to Syria from north east, to Bahrol Meyet Lake and Hashemite kingdom of Jordan from east, to Egypt from south and to Mediterranean from west. All this country space is 2033 square kilometers and has 6.43 population (76 percent Jewish, 19.5 percent Arab and 4.3 percent others) (Wimberley, 2010:1038). This country has 420 kilometers length and in average 65 kilometers width (Abdolahi and Zibaei, 2002:17& 61). According to the length full and narrow shape, this regime suffers from strategic depth. To compensate this weakness, domination over vital areas is one of military, economic and political goals that make it possible to be free to act and maneuver to rush adjacent lands and appropriate trade and political communications. This regime at the beginning of establishment has achieved many successes and to obtain these goals has removed many impasses to some extent. So in 1949 march, this regime has occupied Om Al Rashrash in Aqaba Gulf during Aufida attack. This triangle space is more than 150 square kilometers and has 3 regions named Eoje, byrin and Om Al

Rashrash village and in addition strategic and military port "Eilat". Israel achieved very important goals after occupying this sensitive region.

So that occupying this sensitive region caused its physical presence in Aqaba Gulf and the Red Sea. One of very important goals of this regime in this case can point to separating connection ways at east and west of Aqaba Gulf; and in fact block land connecting way from Egypt to Jordan and countries located at the east of Arab world after Om Al Rashrash occupation (Kafash jamshidi, 2000:22). On the other hand, Aqaba Gulf and the Red Sea have spatial positions among Israeli officials.

So that, this regime's access to Mediterranean never has prevented it to try to expand its maritime borders in south. Therefore strategic position of Aqaba Gulf caused Israel to build up Eilat port on this Gulf so it's a reason for its strategic trends. So this regime always has considered strategic importance of the Red Sea both in economic and security dimensions at the beginning of occupied Palestine. In fact, in addition to its trade and economic use has considered this waterway as its defense and also a point to overcome Arab countries' blockade line; because of that always was thinking to use islands and Ethiopia port facilities (before Independence) and new Eritrea so has started strategic relationships with these two countries. Israel has considered achieving Red Sea and mastering its north and south outfall at the beginning of its establishment and has tried continuously (Abaszada, 1997:60). According to this case in 1973 it was announced that this regime's security depends on security and exit gate to be free on Red Sea and will defense this exit gate in any way. So Shalom Rael, former commander of Israel navy, announced that "Red Sea where was weakness of this regime before; can change to initiative scene to be minatory for the front of Egypt and its maritime ways; and if mastering Suez Canal is the only key to benefit Egypt in this waterway but this regime has the second and more important key due to know how change its navy (Abdolahi and Zibaei, 2002:130).

Traditional strategic principle of Israel is based on these factors in the Red Sea:

- 1- Preventing to be surrounded by Arab and surround them if it is possible.
- 2- Granting to be free for shipping on the Red Sea spatially on Bab Al Mendab strait.
- 3- Preventing to master an Arab country on Bab Al Mendab and Tiran strait.
- 4- Creating strategic depth in the Red Sea to make it possible to consider every kind of military activity in Arab countries in the region (jafarivaldani, 1998:3).

Israel could create strategic Eilat port in the Red Sea after occupying Al Rashrash where 40 percent of all its foreign trades are transited from there. Eilat port in terms of strategic position can be an alternative and substitute investment of Suez Canal; and in the war 1973 October, Israel pushed ships traffic very much by it in Suez Canal against Egypt (Ovendale, 1976: 303). Nowadays, this port and other side of its border have an important position as a south gate of Israel. This regime efforts to expand and increase this port capacity by caving a new canal and planning to build railway in other side of its border until 2030 and in 3 steps, is an evident of excellent location and importance of this region. Israel connects south and east coasts of Africa and south and south East Asian countries via this port. This port connected other Israel port named "Ashklon" in Mediterranean east coasts by pipelines and underground ways. That Pahlavi regime also exported a part of its petroleum to Eilat port from Tiran strait which a part of it was used by Israel and remaining part was exported to Eshklon port and other countries around the world by petroleum pipes after 6 days war and Arab defect which caused to block Suez waterway by Egypt and then Israel occupied Tiran strait (Document No. 7, dated May 27 1967-1347/3/6). This problem causes this country's independence of Suez Canal on one hand and increases strategic importance of the port on the other hand; but Tiran strait is the only way to connect this port to the sea where connect Aqaba Gulf to the Red Sea.



"Eshagh Rabin" Israel ambassador in America says that: "this regime is really sensitive that even 3 gunmen can block the strait when there is conflict". Importance of this strait and two mentioned islands is determined more since many experts know blocking this strait on Israel navigation by Egypt one of 1967 war reasons (<http://www.asriran.com>).

Map 4: satellite image of Eilat and Aqaba ports



Source: of satellite image GeoEye

The Red Sea has an important position in thinkers, strategists and Israeli officials thought. So Ben Goryon, first prime minister of this regime and one of founders of Zionist regime said "Israel life and death depends on this sea. Israel has seen itself surrounded by Arab always. Thus its traditional strategy is based on Ben Goryon doctrine in the Red Sea zone. According to this doctrine, Israel should expand its relationship with countries around Arab world. So in this way can provide situation to surround Arab against Israel. Moshe Dayan, former Israel's minister of war and one of Zionist theorist expressed about Eilat and Red Sea importance that: "this line is Israel's exit gate on Asia and Africa" (Anosha,2006:9). Israel always has had

a good relationship with Ethiopia to achieve its goal on the Red Sea and regime's nature, governing it isn't important for it; and always talks about Israel history with Ethiopia and now Tel Avaya, according to future changes in Horn of Africa, tries to have a good relationship with Eritrea and exactly to the Liberation Front of Eritrea's people. What important is for Israel, is its presents on the Red Sea. Governments and countries' changes are not very important to it without considering this case. Because of that, it didn't defend Ethiopia, its historical ally, about Eritrea independence and easily confirmed changing Ethiopian nature to Eritrean on the Red Sea (Abaszada, 1997:9). Military conflicts between Israel and Arab countries in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 and consequently rising critical situation in region approved this point that sea play an important and irreplaceable role in defense and military strategy due to the limits and geographical necessities and locating Israel in a Surrounded region by Arab countries. This regime is one of governments where has an appropriate geopolitical location due to locating beside more than a significant sea. Access to Mediterranean coasts on one hand and Aqaba Gulf and Red Sea on the other hand gives it an expand maneuver power. This appropriate sea location in region where has global importance, gives Israel appropriate opportunities and facilities (Kafashjamshidi, 2000:9&10). Based on this fact that entrance to Aqaba Gulf is possible only via Tiran strait and on the other hand this vulnerable strait had international conflicts in the past rising new conflicts is imaginable in the future.

#### **4-1-4. Jordan**

Jordan with 89206 square kilometers space and 6318 million populations is located in south east. Jordan has 1727 kilometer borders (359 kilometers with Syria in north, 147 kilometers with Iraq in North West, 744 kilometers with Saudi Arabia in west and south and 480 kilometers with Israel in east) with its 4 neighboring countries. The only way this country has to the sea is via Aqaba port in Aqaba Gulf and 25 kilometers water border in this

way (Monaghabati, 1996:1-2). Aqaba is located in west of Aqaba Gulf. Aqaba had border with Saudi Arabia in the past but in 1965, 6000 square kilometers of Jordan internal deserts has given to Saudi Arabia instead of 12 kilometers of coasts near Aqaba Gulf where belongs to Saudi Arabia due to the agreement which was signed by Jordan and Saudi Arabia (National Geographical organization PUBLICATION, 2010:6). Jordan doesn't have direct connection to high seas due to its geographical location on land and its only coastal city (Aqaba port) connects the Red Sea via Aqaba Gulf and Tiran strait; and this strait has geopolitical importance for Jordan. Although this port is important for Jordan but has had a role in transferring military facilities to Iraq in the war against Iran, exporting Iraq petroleum and recently helping tourists against Syria. At the beginning of Iraq war against Iran, Shah Hussein, Jordan king, announced its aids to Saddam Hussein during a 24 hours trip to Iraq. He expressed, in this trip, that: Arab countries are integrated and have a common destiny so they should be integrated in Iraq aid. After this trip, Jordan's Prime minister ordered to mobilize all this country's vehicles to transport food and military and civilian equipments to Iraq.

At the beginning of Iraq war against Iran, in 22 September 1980, insecurity in Arvand River region, Jordan government, gave Aqaba port of this country in the Red Sea to Iraq to transport foreign military aids to Iraq via this port (<http://www.banooyesalem.ir>). Jordan's new approach, when Iraq was occupied by United States, used to transfer logistic facilities and forces traffic against Iraq via Aqaba port (<http://nedains.com>). Jordan has been one of other countries involved in Arab and Israel and specifies with consecutive isolation and separation period from other countries around the world. This country always desired to have relationship with west for its foreign policy and has had less incompatibility with this region and by peace contract that have been signed by Israel, they have solved problems related to Aqaba Gulf to some extent; but the only connection way this country has

to the high seas will block whenever there is conflict (National Geographical Organization Publication, 2010:96). One of this peace contract clauses related to Tiran strait and Aqaba Gulf is as follow:

"It is that in article 3, clause 14, peace contract documents between Israel and Jordan two sides acknowledged that Tiran strait and Aqaba Gulf are international waterways and all nations have been entitled to navigate and fly on them nonstop and without any problem. Two sides will honor shipping and flying right of the other side on Tiran strait and Aqaba Gulf to access other side's land" (Documents peace agreement with Jordan and the Zionist regime, 1384: 196).

##### **5. Analyses and conclusion**

Israel's military conflicts with Arab countries in the past and consequently critical situation shows that seas play important roles in defense and military strategy due to geopolitical impasses and locating this regime in a surrounded region by Arab countries. Israel is one of regimes that because of locating beside of more than a main sea, has an appropriate geopolitical position. Access to Mediterranean on one hand and Aqaba Gulf and the Red Sea on the other hand gives appropriate facilities and opportunities to Israel.

The most important factor of this region for Israel is entering the Red Sea, East Africa and increasing strategic depth. Very important and strategic position of east Africa's countries causes this sea to be more important due to this reason

that some of these countries where have located beside the Red Sea so this sea has strategic position among Arab world and Africa on one hand and Africa and Asia on the other hand is Suez Canal at north and Bab Al Mendab at south of this sea because everyone who dominate Bab Al Mendab or Suez Canal can dominate shipping on this sea. Israel's Eilat port in Aqaba Gulf is a region where an important part of this region's expert and import is based on that. Israel connects east and South Africa's coasts and south and south East Asia countries via this port.

This port connects other Israel's port named "Eshklon" in Mediterranean east coasts via pipeline and pathways. This case has caused this country to be needless of Suez Canal on one hand and increases strategic importance of this port; but it is the only connecting way to Tiran strait where Aqaba Gulf connects Red Sea.

Jordan doesn't have direct connection to high sea due to its geographical position and locating on land and its only coastal city (Aqaba Port) connects the Red Sea via Aqaba Gulf and Tiran strait and has a geopolitical importance for Jordan.

Saudi Arabia doesn't depend on Aqaba Gulf and Tiran strait because of long beaches in Persian Gulf but because of Sana Fir and Tiran islands' ownership at the entrance of this strait has a significant portion in controlling Tiran strait. But now it is controlled by United Nations due to its occupation by Israel in past years and Saudi Arabia isn't important in this case. Egypt is the main side of conflict on Tiran strait. This country has long beaches in Mediterranean and Red sea and doesn't depend on this strait. Egypt main conflict in the region is because of conflicts which this country has with Israel from past years. Because of these conflicts, Egypt always tries to use its geopolitical position such as occupying Suez Canal and Tiran strait and push Israel; verses, Israel reacts and consequently conflicts were intensified. According to Islamic Awakening in Egypt and Egyptian revolution spatially in Sina desert, it is possible to renew this conflict in the region and the role of geopolitical factors such as Tiran strait in future in geopolitical conflicts.

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