

Original Article

# Iran's Proxy Strategy: Militant Networks and Regional Influence in the Middle East

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Received: 04 December 2024

Revised: 05 January 2025

Accepted: 22 January 2025

Published: 19 February 2025

**Abstract** - The paper examines Iran's proxy forces and their role in shaping regional foreign policy and security dynamics in the Middle East. It highlights how Iran has historically leveraged these militias, particularly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, to project power and influence while minimizing direct military involvement. The study identifies key proxy groups, such as Hezbollah, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen, analyzing their operational strategies and implications for regional stability. It argues that these proxy forces serve as crucial instruments for Iran, enabling it to achieve strategic objectives and maintain influence across sectarian and national divides. The research underscores the complexity of Iran's proxy strategy, which blends ideological commitments with pragmatic security concerns. It concludes that these dynamics pose significant challenges for regional security and international policymakers.

**Keywords** - Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Geopolitics, Hamas, Houthi, Hezbollah, Islamic Revolution, IRGC, Proxies.

## 1. Introduction

States throughout the Middle East use asymmetric forces to generate power projection capabilities that enhance their national defence requirements (Akbarzadeh & Gourlay, 2024). Iran's Middle Eastern influence unfolds through consistent changes between strategic elements, including religion and ideology, and the wider political structure of the region. Being at the heart of decisive geopolitical areas makes Iran's actions produce significant global effects that extend throughout the region (Akbarzadeh & Azizi, 2024).

Throughout the Middle East since the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the nation formed an increasing number of allied fighting groups, which Iran's Quds Force trains as part of the IRGC through weapons funding and training to promote Iranian regional objectives. The majority of Iran's allied fighting forces originate from Shiite Muslim states Iraq and Lebanon, but links have developed between groups from Sunni Muslim countries with Palestinian backgrounds and Syria and Yemen. Hezbollah stands as the principal element of a network that operates between the Iranian-led coalition of resistance forces and Lebanese politics (Robinson & Merrow, 2024).

This study aims to examine Iran's proxy forces, focusing on their role in regional foreign policy, effectiveness in achieving strategic objectives, and implications for regional security. Key research objectives include:

- To investigate the Iranian interests in the region.
- To identify the role that proxy forces play in Iran's regional foreign policy.
- To understand the Iranian use of proxies and unconventional warfare.
- To explore the effectiveness of Iran's proxy forces in achieving Tehran's strategic objectives.
- To point out the implications of Iran's proxy strategy for regional security.

This research demonstrates that Iran's proxy forces have become a potent tool for gaining regional influence and power projection, enabling Tehran to rapidly achieve strategic aims while escaping the costs of direct military engagement and international backlash. Through an exploration of the historical evolution of Iran's proxy strategy, the framework and workings of major proxy groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and Kata'ib Hezbollah and an assessment of international responses, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of Iran's multifaceted role in the region.

## 2. Overview of Iran's Revolutionary Ideology and its Impact on Foreign Policy

Most of the Iranian government today and its domestic and foreign policies stem from the Islamic Revolution. It is, therefore, imperative to have a greater grasp of the general revolution theory in order to explain to what extent and why Iran regulates and sanctifies a string of proxy militias across



the Middle East. It is also important to explain major geopolitical trends domestically and internationally.

The ideology emphasizes Islamic governance, Velayat-e faqih, Pan-Islamism, Revolutionary Shiism, Imperialism and the West, Eradication of Zionism and Israel, and Anti-Americanism (Aarabi, 2019).

The following are the core principles of Iranian Revolutionary Ideology:

- Islamic governance: The concept of Islamic governance embraces the view that governance based on Sharia religious law represents the most desired method of governance.
- Velayat-e faqih: The belief system of Velayat-e faqih establishes that a state with clerical guardianship (velayat-e faqih) needs a supreme clerical leader (vali-e faqih) until the Twelfth Shia Imam returns who Shia Muslims think went into occultation in 874.
- Pan-Islamism: A belief in solidarity among all Muslims, the championing of the Ummah (global Muslim community), and the attainment of a widespread Islamic order.
- Revolutionary Shiism: A belief in a political and ideological interpretation of Shiism that is based on resistance, martyrdom, and fighting for justice.
- Imperialism and the West: The belief states that Islam faces an essential clash with Western civilization because the two sides are incompatible, and colonial invaders point to unjust leadership, specifically among western relationships.
- Anti-Americanism: Anti-Americanism defines the United States as the “Great Satan”, which establishes itself as the supreme enemy of Islam and the main force that controls the entire Muslim world.
- Eradication of Zionism and Israel: Across the Islamic world, there is a declared objective to eliminate Zionism since Israel represents a false and oppressively dominating force that occupies Muslim territories to enable US colonial activities (Aarabi, 2019).

### **2.1. Revolutionary Implications: Iran's Foreign Policy**

Having reviewed the key developments in Iran's modern history, it is evident that the revolutionary rhetoric of Iranian elites should not obscure the clear continuities in Iranian foreign policy. Even the break with the West following the revolution can be read as the endpoint of the Shah's estrangement from the United States, which was already well underway. In the Islamic Republic, nationalist and Islamist principles have now been merged within its foreign policy (Hourcade, 2010), which can be encapsulated in a '4x3 formula': four ideology-based foreign policy approaches that combine across three regions (Posch, 2013). These are Iranian

nationalism, traditional Shi'ism, anti-imperialism, and Khomeini's version of political Islam. These ideologies cut across regional concerns in Iran's immediate neighbourhood, the wider Middle East.

In its neighbourhood, Iran vigorously defends its interests (e.g., water security or border disputes). In terms of its foreign policy approach in the Middle East, Iran continues its traditional role, claiming to be the protective power of the Shi'ites. Since the revolution, however, it has expanded its areas of support to include revolutionary groups, both Shi'ite and Sunni. Tehran also formed an 'Axis of Resistance' with Syria against Israel that includes Palestinian Hamas (Posch, 2023).

Iran was one of the first states in the world to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was ratified in 1970. However, the Shah was simultaneously running an ambitious nuclear program, ostensibly for civilian use. After the revolution, this program was suspended as 'the devil's work', and Khomeini issued a legal opinion (fatwa) condemning the use of weapons of mass destruction. The fatwa was endorsed by Khomeini and is often cited as proof of the peaceful intentions of Iran's nuclear program (Chubin, 2006).

### **2.2. The Evolution of Iran's Proxy Strategy**

Almost all Iranian state-sponsored proxy operations appeared after the establishment of Islamic revolutionary Iran in 1979. The Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's previous regime implemented foreign proxy actions very infrequently as part of its foreign policies. Despite ruling the planet's biggest Shi'i Islamic state and having ample resources at his disposal, the Shah governed his support of militant Iraqi Kurds according to non-sectarian principles throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Vatanka, 2018).

The Islamic Republic sought to extend Iranian revolution principles outside national borders soon after it gained control of Iran. Since becoming Iran's first supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had always viewed the revolutionary movement, which gained him power as an international force that sought to spread throughout adjacent Muslim states. The Iranian government formed an Office of Liberation Movements, which later evolved into a special force within the IRGC, known as the IRGC-QF, in accordance with a plan outlined by Pollack (2005).

During the first decade after the Iranian Revolution, leaders established both Hezbollah Al-Hijaz and Badr as important organizations in Saudi Arabia as well as Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain. At the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian security strategy moved towards practical needs beyond revolutionary doctrine and exporting revolutionary ideals (Takeyh, 2009).

In 2019, the proxies operated from fewer than a dozen groups, while at the beginning of their existence, they were limited to just Iraq and Lebanon. The IRGC-QF maintains overall responsibility for proxy support programs through recruitment and material resource delivery to these proxies from the recruitment phase until their deployment as part of operations since the early 1990s (Soufan, 2018).

### **2.3. Key Events that Shaped the Development of Iran's Proxy Forces**

Military strategy in Iran experienced major changes after the Islamic Revolution took place. The components crucial to military defences became lost property to Iran. Before 1979, Iran received fundamental support from the United States, which enabled the Iranian military to establish defence operations and build powerful strengths against several threats. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was succeeded by Islamic Republic leaders who established anti-Americanism as the main basis for both their revolutionary doctrine and the Tehran hostage-taking incident in November 1979. Official leaders within the Islamic Republic identified anti-Americanism as an essential idea that they incorporated into their new ideology; thus, revolutionaries seized US diplomats in Tehran in 1979.

The Iranian military lost its ability to depend on American military training and assistance because of the cây Regulation Act. The Iranian leaders lost their ability to maintain their existing weapons systems when both replacement parts and new weapon acquisitions proved impossible due to diminishing funds and a lack of foreign assistance. US help remained essential to operate certain systems that Iranian forces possessed.

Several weapons system malfunctions emerged within the Iranian armed forces as a result of early Islamic Revolution purges and the implementation of IRGC (Juneau, 2018), along with other internal changes that devalued conventional military power. Events like the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) that shifted Iranian military doctrine, as well as the Gulf War (1990-1991) and Palestinian Intifada (2000), encouraged Iran to develop its proxy military presence.

An increase in Iranian influence, together with IRGC-QF-supported militia growth, emerged because of the 2003 US-Iraq invasion and America's failure to stop Iran from filling the power vacuum, which enabled a Shia-led government to establish control over Baghdad.

When the Arab Spring emerged in 2011, it opened doors for Iranian involvement as insurgencies began in different countries, including Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Iran gained support from Iraq during the 2011 US forces' departure because Baghdad embraced Iranian diplomatic assistance. As a result of the Syrian civil war, which started in 2011, the Assad regime desperately sought assistance. Iran enabled

Syrian military progress through airstrikes conducted by the Russian air force by supporting native militant groups, most notably Lebanese Hezbollah. The capital city, Sana'a, fell under the control of Houthi security forces in Yemen (Jones, 2019).

The Nuclear Deal (JCPOA, 2015) Increased regional influence. Transnational expansion began with increased involvement in Yemen (2015) and strengthened ties with Palestinian political party Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (2014). Moreover, the IRGC-QF and its leader, Qassem Soleimani, seized these opportunities to offer cash, arms, and other aid to allies. The leadership of Qassem Soleimani over the IRGC-QF (1998–2020) was particularly consequential for the proxy strategy (Jones, 2019).

## **3. The Structure of Iran's Proxy Forces**

Iran's proxy forces comprise various organizations with distinct characteristics, objectives, and operational strategies, known as the "Shia Crescent" or "Axis of Resistance" (Ereli, 2024). This section examines key proxy groups.

### **3.1. Iran's Key Proxy Forces**

#### **3.1.1. Hezbollah (Lebanon)**

Under Hassan Nasrallah's leadership, Hezbollah emerged in the early 1980s through 500 Iranian Revolutionary Guard militants to safeguard Shia interests while fighting Israeli and Western influence throughout Lebanon and its neighbouring regions using guerrilla warfare, political influence and regional expansion. Hezbollah dedicated itself to taking forward the Islamist doctrines expressed by Iranian clerics within their religious establishment. The Islamic Republic of Iran supplies \$700 million yearly support as well as military instruction through IRGC-QF (IDF Editorial Team, 2018). During his 1985 address, the IRGC commander stated that Lebanese Muslim Shiites view themselves as descendants of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, promising to replicate the revolutionary model (Brother Mosleh, 1985).

The outbreak of civil war in Lebanon opened doors for Iran to gain a strategic geopolitical advantage through the creation of Hezbollah. From its Lebanese beginnings, the organization expanded, yet Iran saw a strategic opportunity to develop the group as an instrument for foreign policy. Iran invested in funding together with training along with ideological alignment to enhance Hezbollah into a militant force that protected Tehran's regional strategic objectives.

#### **3.1.2. Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) (Iraq)**

Following ISIS threats in 2014, the Shia-dominated Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU), better known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), emerged in existence (EUAA, 2021). The PMF received its official establishment from former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki in June 2014 as he sought to make institutional forces from existing Shia

militias fighting ISIS. Leading Iraqi Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani issued a fatwa through which he told his followers to become capable of fighting against ISIS terrorist groups to join security forces (ISW Press, 2024). This happened after ISIS seized control of Mosul in June 2014.

Then-IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani led the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as they simultaneously assembled Shia militias that answered to his command. (Paraszczuk, 2014). Soleimani's responsive militias contributed both fighters and elements to the PMF, along with personnel who originally followed Sistani but wanted to stay loyal to his directives (Mansour-Renad, 2021).

### 3.1.3. Houthis (Yemen)

The religious and armed Houthis unite behind the Zaidi Shia Muslim community to defend Yemen's Shia Muslim minimal population. The group declares its membership to the resistance bloc that Iran leads. The Partisans of God emerged in the 1990s when its leader was Hussein Al-Houthi and now operates under the name of Ansar Allah. The current leader comes from his family lineage, led by his brother Abdul Malik al-Houthi. During the beginning of the 2000s, the Houthis conducted multiple rebellions against authoritarian president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who ruled Yemen.

The Houthis exercise control over the major city of Sanaa along with the entire northwest area of Yemen extending to its coastline that borders the Red Sea. Both Iran and the Houthi forces have established their alliance to receive direct operational benefits. The Iranian military benefits strategically from this alliance. Iran supports the Houthis because it enables Iran to increase its presence at essential strategic locations around the Gulf of Aden and Bab al Mandeb, as well as the Red Sea. Iran delivers military assistance as well as financial aid with political endorsements through its alliance with the Houthis.

This backing from Iran allows the Houthis to extend their control of Yemen. The Red Sea operations and their support for Palestine demonstrate a transformation point in their organizational development (Ereli, 2024).

"Houthis could not operate at this level without Iranian arms, training, and intelligence," says Dr. *Elisabeth Kendall*, a Middle East specialist at Cambridge University. However, she adds: "It is unclear that Iran has direct command and control over the Houthis." (BBC, 2023).

### 3.2. Command and Control

The role of the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) and Quds Force.

The modern Iranian paramilitary organization was established after the revolution in 1979 for the enforcement of the concept of an Islamic state under Ayatollah Ruhollah

Khomeini on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The Guards had important tasks and missions, not only in eliminating the early opposition to Khomeini's views but also in Iraq's invasion in the summer of 1980. Since then, the Guards have serviced the internal security force as well as the external one (The Iranian Primer, 2019).

As the paramilitary and special operation wing of IRGC, The Quds Force supports the development of allied nonstate organizations across the Middle East. The elite Quds Force took part in founding proxy militias, including Hezbollah, which operates in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini oversees the group, which maintains 125,000 fighters, consisting of army, navy, and air force elements (AJC News, 2024).

Mechanisms of coordination between Iran and its proxies.

Iran maintains separate yet linked connections with its various military groups that expose the regional designs of Tehran. These alliances operate across southern Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen to create political shifts that exhibit Iranian control in proxy conflicts.

Iran grants its proxy militant groups both logistical backing and strategic direction while each organization operates independently according to its individual goals and maintains domestic backing beyond the proxy relationship. Every organization within Iran's Axis of Resistance exists in a distinctive connection with Tehran. The connection between Iran and its proxy forces exists to fight against both the United States' regional dominance and Israeli and American regional diplomatic partners' influence (Harmouch & Jahanbani, 2024).

## 4. Regional Impact of Iran's Proxy Forces

### 4.1. Influence on Iraqi politics and security

All proxies influenced by Iran formed after the 2003 American invasion have become significantly more relevant for modern political patterns (Gaston & Ollivant, 2020). The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) of Iran supported Iraqi armed groups in their expansion of regional proxy networks by backing the Badr Organization together with the Mahdi Army under Moqtada al-Sadr and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq (AAH) or "League of the Righteous" and Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH). The allied organizations executed an active campaign against the American military in Iraq while focusing on both periods as central actors in proxy warfare (Hada, 2024). As part of its political investment, Iran actively worked toward building an extensive network that supported Shi'a political groups and commanders through strategic governmental position placement. The governmental department known as the Ministry of Interior became headed by officials of Badr alongside their political associates. The militia personnel who integrated with Iraqi security forces let their profiles merge with MoI-controlled forces, according to Gaston and Ollivant (2020).

Iraq's strategic position as an economic crossing point for Iran, combined with its diplomatic function as an Iran-Gulf state mediator, together with its national political advancement, have boosted Iraq's position under Sudani and Kadhim (Gaston & Ollivant, 2020).

#### **4.2. Unimpacted Iranian Proxies**

Over the past few years, regional powers have adopted a more prominent stance in their intent to achieve strategic independence. Constant regional enhancement of assertiveness has challenged American global dominance and made it hard for the US to maintain an effective presence in this area (Nagata, 2024).

It has a deficit in how to deal with Iran's proxies short of war. From the Reagan administration to the Biden one, the United States has designated the numerous militia proxies Iran supports across the Middle East. However, no sanctions have ever entirely worked, not even on the Iranian proxy groups who have expanded their footprint in the region both politically and militarily in the past several years. Iran's proxy has also served Iran well because Iran has been able to attack the US indirectly with the added benefits of 'credible denial.' From 1984 until the present day, across six administrations, the United States has used sanctions against Iran's Middle Eastern proxy militant organizations, yet these sanctions have repeatedly failed (Lane, 2023). The Iranian proxy organizations expanded their power base in the Middle East region both politically and militarily throughout recent years. Iran exploits direct proxy involvement to attack the US through means that create doubts about denominating the responsibility. The control Iran maintains over its proxies should be qualified by the fact that their operations prioritize independent decision-making (Moonakal, 2024).

Iran maintains its most powerful strategic position by operating an unbroken strategic ground route stretching from Iran across Iraq into Syria and ending at the tip of Lebanon before reaching the Mediterranean. All US regional partners except Israel lack both the ability and power to overcome Iran individually (Nagata, 2024).

Despite its successful display of air power with strikes, the United States has been unable to limit Iranian proxy operations throughout Iraq and other affected countries. The killing of General Soleimani in 2020 worsened Iraqi-US relations so much that experts predicted Iraq might become a proxy battleground between Iran and the United States (Seloom, 2024). During October 2023, the Iranian-backed militias conducted over 170 assaults against American facilities located in both Syria and Iraq (Barnes-Dacey, 2024).

The United States has yet to solve the fundamental reasons behind the widespread support for nonstate actors, including Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis, Hashd al Shaabi, etc., across the Middle East region (Moonakal, 2024).

#### **4.3. Role in the Syrian Civil War**

Iran's engagement in the Syrian civil war has its origins in the Iran-Iraq War, where a strategic partnership was formed between the two countries. The Arab Spring in 2011 and the subsequent Syrian Civil War ushered in a watershed moment for Iran.

The second stage of Iranian influence in Syria has been through proxies; it has become a powerful foreign influence in the region, supplying Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime with financial, military and economic resources (Mamchii, 2023).

Iran's proxy strategy lets it wield influence while covering its trail in terms of direct military involvement. That includes using groups like Hezbollah to further its goals in Syria (Mamchii, 2023). Iranian-backed Hezbollah has a crucial role to play in helping the Assad regime save the 'Axis of Resistance' against Israel. They have assisted Damascus militarily, technically, and logistically in its fight against a variety of Syrian armed opposition groups and established training camps in the area of Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley, just north of the Syrian border (Bassiri Tabrizi et al., 2016).

Five years into the Syrian war, Iran has cemented a major foothold in the country, one that has become an indisputable element in any post-war landscape to come. Iran heavily finances its proxies in Syria, with Fatemiyoun brigade fighters commanding \$450 to \$700 a month, making the militia the best-paid by Iran. Contrarily, other militias receive \$200–300 each month and for such local militias as Nubl and Zahra Brigades, it provides less than \$100 monthly. These militia salaries are partly paid from the estimated \$7.6 billion (Saban, 2020) budget of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

#### **4.4. Hezbollah's role and its implications for Israeli security**

The creation of Hezbollah took place in 1982 because of two major events, which were the Iranian Revolution of 1979 followed by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (DeVore 2012). The withdrawal decision of Israel to operate inside its buffer zone on the Lebanese border, as well as its complete retreat from Lebanon in 2000, became possible because of Hezbollah's activities. Since its foundation, Hezbollah has maintained a self-identity through opposition against Israel. The fundamental goal of Hezbollah remains to force Israel out of Lebanon. Israel and Hezbollah conducted regular attacks against each other throughout the 1980s and 1990s, even though the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) maintained a presence at the Israel-Lebanon border within the Blue Line region.

An intensive war erupted in 2006 between Hezbollah fighters and Israeli forces, leading to major civilian losses, while Israel grew more worried about Hezbollah's capabilities (BBC, 2024). The 2006 warfare concluded when United

Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701 was established. The period from 2006 until now formed a tense equilibrium (Byman, Jones, & Palmer, 2024).

Hezbollah leaders employed their knowledge of Israeli military strategies through various media outlets, such as interviews and publications, to establish a comprehensive deterrence strategy, as studied by Al-Aloosy (2022). Former Hezbollah secretary-general Nasrallah released “The Speech of Deterrence” (Khitaab al radaa’) through a 2010 published DVD warning the Israeli Defence Forces about retaliation after Israeli aggression.

We will attack Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion International Airport if you strike Beirut’s Rafik Hariri International Airport, and we will demolish Tel Aviv buildings when Israel demolishes Dahyas in Lebanon. The destruction of our utility stations will be met with corresponding attacks against yours. Our response includes matching any operation to plant infrastructure that they begin.

Various developments in the last year modified the operational relationships between Israel, Hezbollah, along with Iran. The terrorist attacks launched by Hamas on October 7, 2023, against Israel escalated Israeli national anxiety levels. The primary task of defending Israel requires a significant reduction of Hezbollah’s military capability alongside programs to prevent future Israeli assaults. Defending minister Yoav Gallant of Israel emphasized the primary goal of Israeli forces, which is to dismantle Hezbollah’s capabilities that developed throughout two decades (Byman, Jones, & Palmer, 2024).

The organization fights frequently with Israeli forces through both sniper gunshots and anti-tank missile operations. The organization has intensified its rocket launchers and anti-aircraft defenses to prevent Israeli air raid attempts and establish ready capabilities during possible future escalations (Mahmoudian, 2024).

Hezbollah has transformed itself into one of the most developed and influential entities in the Middle Eastern area. The organization acquired major political value by establishing itself among the most influential nonstate players. Daniel Byman states that Hezbollah has proven to be the most proficient enemy ever faced by Israel. The success of Hezbollah mainly results from Iranian backing.

## 5. Findings

From this study, it is comprehended that Iran currently has a vast array of proxy militias that operate around the region, including Hezbollah, Lebanon, PMF in Iraq, and Houthis in Yemen, among others. These work independently with separate strategic plans but have enough freedom in their local affairs. They argue that this diversity allows Iran to spread its influence cut across both sectarian and national divides; this

shows that Iran can fashion out its operations by the situation on the ground.

Secondly, the business rationale of Iran as an Islamic Republic with an anti-imperialist and Shiite agenda remains the reason why it supports these proxies today. However, the radicalism of its causes has gradually changed to a more sophisticated set on the improvement of national security and the achievement of regional supremacy. This transition signifies a new trend that is strategic in nature and enthusiast of ideological and pragmatic security discourses.

The implication of these proxy forces on the stability of the respective region is very significant. Their existence escalates the political crisis in the countries of the Middle East, such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, resulting in sectarian strife and straight confrontation with the American troops and regional associate Israel. Moreover, the state proxies use unconstructive and guerrilla warfare that makes Iran attack adversaries while denying state involvement. This strategy has been most evident in the Syrian civil war, wherein Iran has cemented its position by supporting the Assad regime and various militia.

Responses captured by the proxy strategy have not been effective on the international stage. Iran and its allies ignore sanctions and military interventions and continue the missile development and extension of influence in the Middle East. These aspects of the relationship, along with local hostility that responds to and grounds it, pose major difficulties for the policymakers who must develop countermeasures in response.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Iran’s proxy forces are an important tool of its foreign policy, serving as a means of exerting influence and maintaining power throughout the Middle East. The use of these militias assures Iran the flexibility of operating in a complex world without the direct involvement of troops.

However, the function of those proxy groups does not only imply a military aspect; they are a way for Iran to promote its ideological line and respond to national security simultaneously. Analyzing social networks, political grievances, and sectarian movements shows that Iran strategically incorporated these groups into its network to deepen any attempts at regional political rapprochement. The apparent fusion of the ideological imperative to export revolution with the bureaucratic concern with material interests exemplifies this flexibility of Iran’s foreign policy, which has had to change in light of domestic and international constraints.

As such, future work needs to go further into examining how these proxy relationships have dynamic patterns in the future and how they can address new disputes in a different

world environment. Getting a grip on what drives these groups and the contexts into which they are migrating will be of paramount importance in policymaking.

As the situation unfolds, global actors need to increasingly adjust their modalities of operating in proxy conflict dynamics and their implications for regional security. This is also the current understanding of proxy groups and

their capacity to act freely without direct Iranian manipulation. However, achieving a solution to the issues created by Iran's extending influence will only be achieved by first recognizing the different dynamics of proxy relationships as well as the efforts to bring stability to the region as well. Such an integrated approach is the only way to imagine the emergence of a safer and more stable Middle East.

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