



# Iran's Proxy Network: The Role of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis in Shaping Regional Balance of Power

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## Abstract:

Iran's evolving strategy of leveraging proxy groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and the Houthis in Yemen has significantly altered the political and military landscape of the Middle East. The aim of this study is to explore how Iran's proxy network contributes to reshaping the regional balance of power. The key objectives include examining the strategic rationale behind Iran's support for these groups, assessing their role in undermining state sovereignty and promoting asymmetric warfare, and evaluating the broader implications for regional alliances and international norms. Relying on secondary sources such as UN reports, conflict data, and academic analyses, the research investigates developments in conflict zones including Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. The results indicate that while these proxy groups enhance Iran's strategic deterrence against rivals like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, they also contribute to chronic instability, weaken central governments, and complicate diplomatic efforts. The study concludes that Iran's proxy strategy, while tactically effective, poses long-term challenges to regional stability, international law, and the traditional state-centric international order.

**Keywords:** Iran, Proxy Warfare, Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis, Regional Security, Middle East, Asymmetric Conflict, State Sovereignty, International Relations

## I. Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East has long been characterised by a complex interplay of interstate rivalries, sectarian identities, and external interventions. In recent decades, one of the most defining features of this landscape has been the strategic use of proxy actors by regional powers to project influence, deter adversaries, and shape political outcomes beyond their borders. Among the most prominent examples of this phenomenon is Iran's support for non-state armed groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and the

Houthis in Yemen, a triad often described as the cornerstone of Iran's "Axis of Resistance."<sup>1</sup> This proxy network enables Iran to extend its regional reach, counterbalance its adversaries and challenge the prevailing regional order through a model of asymmetric warfare and ideological mobilisation.

Iran's relationships with these groups are rooted in both ideology and strategy. Guided by the principles of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and opposition to Western and Israeli influence, Tehran has provided varying degrees of military, financial, and political support to these groups. Hezbollah has evolved from a resistance movement into a formidable hybrid force with a political and military presence that rivals the Lebanese state. Hamas has developed a pragmatic alliance with Iran based on shared hostility towards Israel and mutual strategic interests. Similarly, the Houthis have become a key lever for Iran in the Arabian Peninsula, following the outbreak of the Yemeni civil war and the Saudi-led intervention in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

This strategic triangulation not only allows Iran to offset its geographic limitations and conventional military constraints but also serves as a means of deterrence and retaliation without direct engagement. The use of proxies provides Iran with plausible deniability, reduces the costs of confrontation, and creates multiple fronts of engagement that stretch the capabilities of its regional rivals. At the same time, these proxy actors have transformed into powerful stakeholders within their respective territories, capable of shaping political outcomes and sustaining long-term military confrontations, sometimes independently of Tehran's directives.

However, this model of indirect engagement has far-reaching consequences for the stability and sovereignty of states in the Middle East. These proxy groups often operate outside or parallel to state institutions, undermining national unity, weakening central governments, and complicating peace processes. Their actions contribute to ongoing regional tensions, trigger cross-border confrontations, and invite external



military interventions, thereby intensifying instability and perpetuating cycles of violence. Moreover, the international community has struggled to develop coherent responses to these hybrid actors, who often blur the lines between militias, political parties, and social movements.

This research article, *'Iran's Proxy Network: The Role of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis*

*in Shaping Regional Balance of Power'*, seeks to critically analyse the role of Iran's proxy network in shaping the regional balance of power. It investigates how Iran's strategic alliances with Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis have influenced military dynamics, political authority, and conflict trajectories in key theaters such as Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, and Yemen. In addition, it explores how this proxy strategy affects regional alliances, challenges the norms of state sovereignty, and complicates the international order in the Middle East. By drawing on case studies, conflict data, and international policy assessments, the study provides a comprehensive examination of how non-state actors, empowered by state sponsorship, are transforming the foundations of modern geopolitics in the region.

## II. Literature Review

The existing scholarship on proxy warfare underscores its utility as a strategic tool for states seeking to exert influence while avoiding direct confrontation. Scholars like Andrew Mumford and Daniel Byman<sup>3</sup> argue that proxies offer sponsors plausible deniability, reduced costs, and expanded reach in asymmetric conflicts. In the context of Iran, researchers such as Ray Takeyh and Trita Parsi highlight how the Islamic Republic has used groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis to project power and challenge the regional order dominated by Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Hezbollah has been extensively analysed as a model proxy, with studies by Norton<sup>4</sup>(2007) and Levitt<sup>5</sup>(2013) emphasising its military sophistication, ideological alignment with Iran, and regional operations. Hamas, despite its Sunni roots, is viewed through the lens of pragmatic cooperation with Iran, particularly in response to Israeli aggression, as explored by Milton-Edwards and Farrell<sup>6</sup> (2010). The Houthi movement, while initially driven by local dynamics, has increasingly been recognised as an Iranian-aligned actor, with scholars like Juneau and Salisbury documenting the group's growing military capabilities and Tehran's support. Despite this rich body of literature, a gap remains in comprehensively analysing how these three groups function collectively within Iran's grand strategy

and their cumulative impact on the regional balance of power, a gap this study seeks to address.

## III. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, case-study-based approach to analyse the role of Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis within Iran's proxy network. Primary sources include government and organisational reports from the United Nations, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)<sup>7</sup>, along with academic literature, policy papers, and news analyses. The study uses a comparative framework to examine each group's military and political activities in key conflict zones, Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, and Syria, drawing on case studies of the 2006 Lebanon War, the ongoing Gaza conflict, the Yemeni Civil War, and the Syrian Civil War. Data from these cases are analysed to assess how Iran's proxy network impacts regional power dynamics, alliances, and international norms.

## Objective

The primary objective of this research is to critically examine how Iran's strategic use of proxy groupsserves its broader geopolitical aims in the Middle East. The study seeks to understand the extent to which these groups operate as extensions of Iranian foreign policy versus independent actors with localized agendas. It also aims to analyze the impact of this proxy network on regional military and political dynamics, particularly in conflict zones such as Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Furthermore, the research investigates how Iran's proxy strategy contributes to deterrence, alliance-building, and asymmetric warfare against regional rivals like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. By doing so, the study aspires to assess the broader implications for regional stability, state sovereignty, and the international security order.

## Importance

Understanding Iran's proxy network is critical to grasping the shifting contours of Middle Eastern geopolitics and global security. These groups are not merely local militant entities but strategic instruments that extend Iran's influence across key regional fault lines. Their involvement in asymmetric warfare, deterrence, and regional alliance-building enables Iran to challenge adversaries such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States without direct confrontation. This network has significantly altered the military and political dynamics in conflict zones like Gaza,



Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, contributing to prolonged instability, undermining state sovereignty, and complicating peace processes. Moreover, Iran's ability to project power through these proxies affects global energy markets, maritime security, and international diplomatic efforts. Therefore, analyzing the structure, strategy, and impact of these groups is essential for policymakers, security analysts, and scholars seeking to understand the broader implications for regional balance, conflict resolution, and international order.

### **Iran's Proxy Strategy and Regional Ambitions**

Iran's foreign policy is fundamentally shaped by its desire to challenge the existing regional order dominated by the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Lacking the conventional military strength to directly confront these powers, Iran has adopted a strategy rooted in asymmetric warfare, centered around empowering non-state actors across the Middle East. By supporting ideologically aligned, anti-Western militant groups such as Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen, Iran effectively extends its strategic depth and fosters instability in regions critical to its adversaries. This proxy network enables Tehran to wage multi-front, low-cost wars without direct military confrontation, thereby altering the balance of power in its favour. Among Iran's proxies, Hezbollah represents the most sophisticated and deeply integrated arm of Iranian foreign policy. Established in the early 1980s with Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) support, Hezbollah has evolved into a powerful political and military force in Lebanon. It possesses an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles, many of which are capable of striking deep into Israeli territory. Iran might have supplied advanced precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and UAVs to Hezbollah, significantly enhancing its deterrence capability against Israel.

Hezbollah remains the most heavily armed non-state actor in the region, with logistical, financial, and doctrinal support from Iran estimated at \$700 million annually.<sup>8</sup> By bolstering Hezbollah, Iran maintains a direct threat to Israel's northern border, forcing Tel Aviv to commit substantial defence resources to its northern front and limiting its strategic freedom in other arenas. Despite sectarian differences, Iran has strategically supported Hamas, a Sunni Islamist movement, due to its shared objective of confronting Israel.<sup>9</sup> Following a brief rupture in ties during the Syrian Civil War, relations were fully restored around 2017. Iran reportedly resumed financial and military aid,

including rocket technology, drone designs, and anti-tank missiles. In 2022, Israeli intelligence assessments suggested Iran's financial support to Hamas exceeded \$100 million per year, alongside technical training provided in Lebanon and Iran.<sup>10</sup> Hamas plays a dual role for Iran: it opens a southern front against Israel and diverts Israeli military focus away from Lebanon and Iran's direct activities in Syria. On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on Israel which some intelligence sources suggest was encouraged or at least greenlit by Iran highlighted Tehran's capacity to trigger escalation in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict at will.<sup>11</sup> This not only undermines Israeli security but also complicates U.S. diplomatic and military efforts in the region.

The Houthi movement, or Ansar Allah, is another critical component of Iran's proxy network, primarily active in Yemen. Though their Zaydi Shia identity is distinct from Iran's Twelver Shiism, Iran has supplied the Houthis with ballistic missile components, UAVs, and military training through the IRGC and Hezbollah operatives. A 2021 report by the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen confirmed that Houthi weapon systems, including "Qasef" drones and "Samad" UAVs, share strong technical similarities with Iranian models.<sup>12</sup> The Houthis enable Iran to exert pressure on Saudi Arabia by launching cross-border missile and drone strikes on key targets such as oil facilities. More recently, their targeting of commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb Strait has disrupted maritime traffic and challenged U.S. naval operations<sup>13</sup>, giving Iran a critical strategic foothold on one of the world's busiest trade routes.

Through these proxies, Iran creates multiple low-intensity conflicts that exhaust its rivals and prevent them from consolidating regional influence. For Israel, the dual threat from Hezbollah and Hamas requires maintaining a constant state of high alert, spending an estimated \$18 billion annually on defence, with a significant portion allocated to missile defence systems like Iron Dome and David's Sling.<sup>14</sup> For Saudi Arabia, the Houthi threat forces it to invest heavily in aerial defence, security operations, and a costly war in Yemen that has drawn international criticism. Moreover, Iran's support for these proxies allows it to circumvent diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions. The existence of battle-hardened allies gives Iran negotiating leverage in regional talks, as seen in UN-mediated Yemen peace talks and post-Gaza war diplomacy. This network also helps Iran create strategic depth, allowing it to retaliate indirectly if



attacked what analysts call the “ring of fire” encircling Israel and U.S. allies.<sup>15</sup>

### **Proxy Groups as Agents of Strategic Disruption**

Iran’s proxy strategy has fundamentally reshaped conflict zones in the Middle East by injecting well-armed, ideologically aligned non-state actors into volatile arenas. Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen have evolved from insurgent groups into powerful political-military actors. These groups not only challenge domestic governments and foreign interventions but also act as force multipliers for Iranian influence. Through them, Tehran has been able to redirect the trajectory of wars, undermine rival coalitions, and alter power calculations in some of the region’s most contested spaces.

Since taking full control of Gaza in 2007, Hamas has transformed the coastal enclave into a central node of anti-Israeli resistance. With Iranian financial and technical support, Hamas has moved from crude homemade rockets to longer-range Qassam, M-75, and Ayyash-250 missiles capable of striking Tel Aviv and beyond. During the May 2021 conflict, over 4,300 rockets were launched at Israel, most from Hamas-controlled areas.<sup>16</sup> Iran’s support has included not only funding but also missile blueprints and UAV guidance technologies smuggled via Sudan and the Sinai. Hamas has also disrupted political progress. Its entrenchment in Gaza has complicated Palestinian unity efforts, weakened the Palestinian Authority, and hardened Israeli security policy. Each armed escalation, including the massive October 7, 2023, attack, reinforces Israel’s siege, while drawing regional attention and rallying Iran-aligned actors.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Gaza under Hamas has become both a battlefield and a symbol of Iran’s ability to keep the Israeli – Palestinian issue inflamed.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah has grown into a “state within a state.” It boasts a military capability surpassing that of the Lebanese Armed Forces and a political wing that dominates parliamentary coalitions. Militarily, Hezbollah is estimated to possess several rockets, including Fateh-110 and Zelzal systems, many of which are now precision-guided, according to Israeli intelligence. This poses a serious threat to Israel’s north and acts as a deterrent to direct attacks on Iran or its Syrian allies. Hezbollah’s role in shaping Lebanese politics is equally profound. Following the 2006 Lebanon War, its image as a resistance force soared, while the central government’s capacity eroded. The 2019–2023 economic crisis further demonstrated Hezbollah’s parallel governance structures,

including fuel imports from Iran and social service networks.<sup>18</sup> Lebanon has become a battleground where Iranian strategic goals are pursued under the guise of national politics. The Syrian Civil War became a decisive theater for Iran and Hezbollah’s interventionism. Hezbollah has supported the Assad regime, alongside Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers and Shia militias from Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran’s goal was to maintain Syria as a transit corridor to Lebanon and the Mediterranean. The result has been a reconfiguration of Syria’s military map, with Iranian-affiliated militias entrenched in border zones, especially in Deir ez-Zor, Albu Kamal, and around T4 airbase. Iran’s investment in Syrian missile production facilities and drone operations further cements its influence. This intervention also altered the broader regional balance. Israel responded with many airstrikes on Iranian and Hezbollah positions in Syria, seeking to enforce red lines.

The Houthis, once a marginal Zaidi Shia rebel group, have emerged as a dominant force in Yemen’s civil war, significantly altering the Gulf’s strategic environment. Since capturing Sanaa, the group has militarised rapidly, aided by Iranian missile and drone technology.<sup>19</sup> Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia including the 2019 Abqaiq-Khuraib oil facility strike, which temporarily cut off 5% of global oil output demonstrate how Iran has enabled the group to pose a serious threat to a regional superpower. Houthi capabilities have expanded to include Quds-series cruise missiles, Samad drones, and ballistic missiles like Borkan-3, all linked to Iranian supply chains. The Houthis have also launched attacks on UAE targets and Red Sea shipping, directly challenging U.S. naval dominance and regional trade routes. In early 2024, multiple commercial ships were hit by Houthi drones, prompting Operation Prosperity Guardian, a U.S.-led naval response. Politically, the Houthis have sidelined the UN-recognised Yemeni government and imposed their own institutions in northern Yemen. Their entrenchment has prolonged the war, complicated peace efforts, and allowed Iran to maintain a proxy presence on the doorstep of Saudi Arabia and near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a global trade chokepoint.

### **Shifting the Balance Without Direct War**

Iran’s relationships with non-state actors such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis form the cornerstone of its regional strategy. These alliances have enabled Tehran to project influence far beyond its borders despite sanctions, military constraints,





and international isolation. In a region dominated by U.S.-backed alliances and conventional powerhouses like Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran uses its proxies to wage asymmetric warfare, build alliances with non-state actors, and create a system of deterrence rooted not in conventional parity but in strategic depth and instability. Asymmetric warfare is at the heart of Iran's strategic calculus. By leveraging armed proxies instead of deploying its regular forces, Iran minimises both economic cost and international backlash. These groups armed with ballistic missiles, drones, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and guerrilla tactics engage in warfare that bypasses traditional battlefields. These capabilities have forced Israel and Saudi Arabia to reallocate vast defence resources, turning their military doctrines increasingly toward missile defence and rapid response.

Iran's proxy network acts as a powerful deterrent mechanism. The "ring of fire" strategy prevents unilateral attacks on Iranian soil by making retaliation costly and unpredictable. Iran's threats via proxies have influenced U.S. troop deployments and regional posture. Iran's relationships with its proxies are not merely transactional; they are rooted in shared ideology and identity. Through the concept of the "Axis of Resistance," Iran promotes a pan-Islamist, anti-Zionist, and anti-American narrative. This identity-based alliance extends beyond formal diplomacy and is reinforced through military training, religious education, and financial support. This network-building fosters regional legitimacy for Iran and undermines rival coalitions like the Abraham Accords<sup>20</sup> bloc or the Saudi-UAE-Israel nexus. It also complicates peace-building efforts, as these groups often operate independently of the formal state apparatus, making negotiations multilayered and unpredictable.

Iran's use of proxies has shifted the regional balance of power without triggering a full-scale conventional war.<sup>21</sup> Its ability to influence events in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Gaza, and Yemen without direct military occupation marks a new form of regional hegemony. While the U.S. and its allies invest in high-end weapons and formal alliances, Iran builds strategic density networks of influence that can activate or deactivate based on Tehran's strategic needs. This form of power is adaptive. When global oil prices fall or sanctions tighten, Iran can increase proxy activity to disrupt adversaries. Conversely, during diplomatic initiatives, Iran can moderate proxy activities to project responsibility. Such flexibility enables Iran to play both saboteur

and stabiliser, giving it strategic leverage unmatched by any other regional actor.

### **The Limits of Iranian Control**

Iran's relationship with its key proxy groups is marked by a complex interplay of centralised strategic influence and decentralised local autonomy. While Tehran provides material support, ideological alignment, and strategic direction, each group maintains distinct national objectives, shaped by local political landscapes, sectarian identities, and tactical priorities. Understanding the tension between coordinated grand strategy and independent agency is essential to evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of Iran's regional ambitions. Iran's overarching regional strategy aims to deter Israel, undermine U.S. hegemony, and counterbalance Saudi Arabia. Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis serve as forward-operating arms of this strategy, extending Iran's reach to the Eastern Mediterranean, the Levant, and the Red Sea. These groups routinely engage in coordinated political rhetoric, celebrate shared victories, and commemorate symbolic events that reinforce ideological cohesion.

These instances indicate that Iran's proxies often function as nodes in a regional security architecture, with shared training, logistical support, and communication pipelines. Despite broad alignment, these groups pursue local political and territorial goals that sometimes diverge from Iranian interests. Their autonomy is rooted in nationalist agendas, domestic constituencies, and operational pragmatism. While Iran's support is crucial for these groups' military capabilities, their political trajectories remain rooted in domestic realities, limiting Tehran's ability to fully centralise command and control. Iran's proxy network operates under a hybrid model of "strategic convergence with operational autonomy". This framework allows Iran to maintain influence while affording its partners the tactical flexibility needed to navigate local landscapes. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force (IRGC-QF) acts as the coordinating nexus, offering resources, training, and intelligence. However, it rarely exercises direct operational command except in exceptional cases like Hezbollah's deployment in Syria or coordinated strikes involving multiple groups.

On October 7, 2023, when Hamas attacked Israel and it was widely speculated to be linked to Iran, U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies found no direct evidence of Tehran ordering the attack.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, Iranian officials publicly praised the assault, and Hezbollah's limited retaliatory shelling



from southern Lebanon suggested a symbolic show of solidarity without escalating to full-scale war. Also, during the 2024 Red Sea crisis, Houthi missile attacks on U.S. and Israeli-linked vessels did not appear to follow a direct Iranian directive but were clearly aligned with Tehran's interest in deterring Western influence in the region.<sup>23</sup> The mix of unity and autonomy within Iran's proxy network complicates efforts by adversaries to formulate coherent counterstrategies. The possible deniability and non-hierarchical coordination allow Iran to shape regional events without assuming full responsibility. At the same time, the independent agendas of these groups introduce strategic unpredictability where actions by one actor can trigger regional escalations regardless of Tehran's immediate intentions.

### **Implications of Iran's Proxy Strategy**

Iran's proxy strategy has become a defining feature of the Middle East's contemporary geopolitical landscape. While such a strategy extends Tehran's influence and bolsters its deterrence capabilities, it also generates profound consequences for regional stability, state sovereignty, and the norms of international order. These implications are not merely tactical but structural, as they challenge the conventional state-centric order and contribute to the persistence of conflict and governance vacuum across key arenas like Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and Yemen. Iran's proxy strategy contributes to regional instability by reinforcing persistent low-intensity conflicts and cross-border militarisation. The existence of well-armed, ideologically driven non-state actors like Hezbollah and the Houthis prolongs conflict cycles, makes ceasefires more fragile, and encourages retaliatory spiral dynamics.

Iran's proxies often operate outside the framework of the state, creating conditions where national governments are undermined or rendered powerless. These groups frequently establish parallel governance structures, collect taxes, provide services, and maintain independent military commands.

- Hezbollah is a "state within a state" in Lebanon, maintaining its own telecommunications network, security apparatus, and social welfare system. Its ability to conduct foreign policy and warfare independently of Beirut as seen in its intervention in Syria undermines Lebanon's sovereignty and international credibility.
- In Yemen, the Houthis have established a de-facto regime in Sanaa, collecting revenue and

enforcing their own legal system. Their influence prevents the internationally recognised government from returning and contributes to Yemen's fragmentation.

- Hamas governs Gaza with minimal input from the Palestinian Authority, and while elections have not been held since 2006, the group enforces security, judiciary, and education systems independently.

These arrangements erode the Westphalian model of state sovereignty, replacing unified political authority with hybrid governance influenced by foreign patrons. This makes peacebuilding, disarmament, and state reconstruction extremely difficult, often leading to international impasses and donor fatigue.

Iran's use of proxies poses a challenge to the existing international legal and normative frameworks, specifically in relation to non-state armed groups, foreign intervention, and collective security. By empowering non-state actors to conduct missile strikes, maritime attacks, and insurgent operations, Iran bypasses formal declarations of war, complicating the international community's ability to respond. In addition, Iran's proxy model represents a new form of power projection, often termed '*gray zone warfare*' activity below the threshold of conventional war that achieves strategic gains without triggering formal retaliation. This form of influence undermines international deterrence frameworks, those established under the UN Charter and NATO deterrence theory, where accountability and reciprocity are premised on state actors.

The presence of Iran-backed militias has catalysed the formation of counter-alliances, reshaping the Middle East's security architecture. The emergence of the Abraham Accords (2020) was, in part, a response to the growing threat of Iranian influence. Moreover, the I2U2<sup>24</sup> group (India, Israel, UAE, USA) and renewed U.S.-Saudi security cooperation aim to contain Iran's regional ambitions. However, this polarisation increases the risk of proxy wars, arms races, and external interventions. It reduces the likelihood of regional forums like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) or Arab League playing constructive roles and has invited great power competition notably through increased Russian and Chinese involvement in regional mediation. Moreover, Iran's proxies have contributed to the diminishing relevance of international arms control treaties, as non-state actors operate beyond their jurisdiction. This includes the spread of unregulated drone warfare, a central tactic of groups like the Houthis and Hezbollah.



#### IV. Results

The analysis of Iran's proxy network reveals that its support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis has substantially altered the regional power dynamics in the Middle East. Hezbollah has evolved into a highly capable military force, enhancing Iran's deterrence against Israel and solidifying its influence in Lebanon and Syria. Hamas, despite sectarian differences, has benefited from Iranian support, allowing it to strengthen its military capabilities in Gaza and maintain a strategic challenge to Israel. The Houthis have transformed the Yemeni Civil War into a regional battleground, significantly impacting Saudi Arabia's security and interests in the Arabian Peninsula. The proxies, while maintaining some autonomy, largely align with Iran's broader strategic goals, allowing Tehran to extend its regional influence without direct military engagement. These groups have contributed to prolonged instability, undermining state sovereignty, and challenging international norms, demonstrating the effectiveness of Iran's proxy strategy in reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.<sup>25</sup>

#### V. Discussion

Iran's strategic use of proxy groups, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, has significantly reshaped the regional balance of power in the Middle East. These groups enable Iran to challenge adversaries like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States through asymmetric warfare, circumventing direct military confrontation while advancing Tehran's geopolitical objectives. Hezbollah has served as a powerful deterrent to Israel, with its military capabilities playing a central role in the Lebanon War and the Syrian Civil War, while also cementing Iran's influence in Lebanon and Syria. Similarly, Iran's alliance with Hamas has strengthened the group's military resistance against Israel, through Iranian arms supplies, despite sectarian differences. In Yemen, Iran's support for the Houthis has provided a direct challenge to Saudi Arabia, with the Houthis using Iranian-provided missile technology to strike key Saudi Arabia infrastructure. These proxy relationships have not only enhanced Iran's regional power projection but have also contributed to prolonged instability and conflict, undermining state sovereignty and regional security. The proxy model has allowed Iran to build influence across the Middle East, often at the expense of the state order, creating new dynamics in both regional politics and international relations.<sup>26</sup>

#### VI. Conclusion

Iran's strategic use of proxy groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis has reshaped the political and military dynamics of the Middle East, enabling Iran to project power and influence while avoiding direct confrontation with its regional and global rivals. Through these proxies, Iran has advanced its strategic objectives, challenging adversaries such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States in key conflict zones. These groups, while operating with varying degrees of independence, largely align with Iran's broader strategic goals, allowing Tehran to extend its regional influence without direct military engagement. These proxies have contributed to prolonged instability, undermining state sovereignty, and challenging international norms, demonstrating the effectiveness of Iran's proxy strategy in reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.<sup>27</sup>

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