



## Impact of Proxy Wars on the Regional Position of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i6.3856>

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### **Abstract**

Proxy wars are one of the most important components of war in the modern age, and what can be seen in the present century is the growing importance of this strategy; because it helps governments achieve their goals by spending less. There are differing views among international observers on the nature and position of this component. Some believe that proxy wars can be a theory or doctrine, while others see it as a politico-military strategy that fits aggressively realistic strategies. This type of conflict has become one of the common strategies in West Asia. Iran is one of the countries that use proxy wars to advance regional goals. Strategic and military support for proxy forces in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen are clear examples of Iran's arms activities in West Asia, which seek to upset the balance of power to the detriment of the United States and the Zionist regime at the regional level. In addition to jeopardizing US interests in the region, it poses a threat to its allies, especially Israel and Saudi Arabia. The present study seeks to answer how proxy wars affect Iran's position in West Asia. The authors seek to investigate the impact of proxy wars on the regional position of the Islamic Republic, assuming that proxy wars lead to the strengthening of deterrent power and increase the regional power of Iran.

**Keywords:** *Proxy Wars; Iran; Regional Position; West Asia; ISIS*

### **Introduction**

West Asia, as one of the strategic areas, due to its geopolitical position, having energy reserves and economic interests, and civilizational and ideological areas, is the intersection of interests and conflicts between global and regional powers and each of the influential actors tries to manage the environment and rules of the game in a way that guarantees their maximum interests in the region. During the last four decades, one of the decisive and important parameters in determining the policies of West Asian countries is the competition between regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia (Alipour, 2019: 144) and The policy of supra-regional powers such as the United States has been. In other words, from the very beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, regional and international competitions have begun to prevent Iran from increasing its influence and power in the region. Accordingly, the issue of "proxy wars" was raised in the international relations literature. A proxy war is the sharing of war expenses to minimize its costs for taxpayers, politicians, and the local army. Proxy war can be considered a participatory war in which a degree of strategic and operational cooperation between regular and irregular forces is seen. In proxy war, the powers involved try to weaken that government or

put pressure on it, instead of going directly to war with each other, with financial, weapons, and propaganda support from other countries or armed groups at war with the opposing government or its allies (Roomi and Kazemi, 2022: 132). Therefore, part of the realities of the new world geopolitical system is regional competitions, proxy wars, and asymmetric conflicts. Under these circumstances, the role of identity actors is manifested in the form of proxy wars, and actors who have the necessary instrumental, military, and strategic capabilities shape competition and conflict in an atmosphere of "Low-intensity war". These are regional powers that play a role in airspace, military bases, and social capabilities based on operational capabilities. What we are witnessing in the 21st century is the transformation of West Asia into a central region in the structure of the international system, which has shifted from a positive to a negative threat-oriented discourse and seeks to monitor the "principle of protection of existence and the primary existence of the national unit" (Mosallanejad, Samadi, 2019: 197, 217). In recent years, especially after the Arab Spring (2011), the most prominent non-governmental actor in West Asia who drastically changed the situation in the region is the terrorist group ISIL. This group was formed and equipped as proxy agents with the support of the United States and its regional allies. What is examined in the present study is the importance and quality of proxy wars in the West Asia region. On the one hand, Iran is backed by governmental and non-governmental forces seeking to achieve common ideological and strategic goals in this region, and on the other hand, rival regional powers include Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel, which, with US support, are countering the expansion of Iranian influence and power in West Asia. A noteworthy point is Iran's managerial ability to control the existing turmoil in the region, what factors have paved the way for Iran's success in this way, and how a large and indirect proxy war can lead this country to a leading position in the region in the fight against governmental and non-governmental actors. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the impact of proxy wars on the regional position of the Islamic Republic of Iran, assuming that proxy wars lead to strengthening deterrence and increasing regional power in Iran.

### **Neo-Realism as a Theoretical Framework**

Structural neo-realists, or structural realists, see what distinguishes nations as the anarchic structure of the international system, which motivates them to gain more power. Because of their sensitivity to the principle of balance of power and the acquisition of power, countries compete fiercely to obtain or at least maintain the status quo. In other words, countries in this anarchic system seek power to ensure their security. Intense interest in gaining power is often expressed in terms of military and economic capabilities. Neo-realists believe that the main concern of any government is security, rather than gaining power. The Neo-realists believe that the main concern of any government is security, rather than gaining power. But only through power can security be achieved, so the military power and superiority of a government over rivals are considered a factor to increase the security factor (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2012: 36-37).

### **Maximizing Power in the Aggressive Realism Approach**

Aggressive realism, which is one of the forms of structural realism, refers to the issue of maximizing power in the anarchic system. Proponents of this approach believe that governments are always striving to maximize their power as the surest means of survival. In an uncertain environment where the real goals of rival governments can never be understood, a country strives to become a hegemonic power and thus dominate rivals (Paffenroth, 2014: 79). The issue that keeps the principle of competition in the international system always in place is the Security Dilemma or distrust of governments to each other. Given the uncertainty about the goals of others that is why they take steps to protect themselves (Burchell et al., 2013: 38). One of the policies that governments use to overcome the security Dilemma is to establish a hegemonic position in the region and work to maintain it.

### **Regional hegemony**

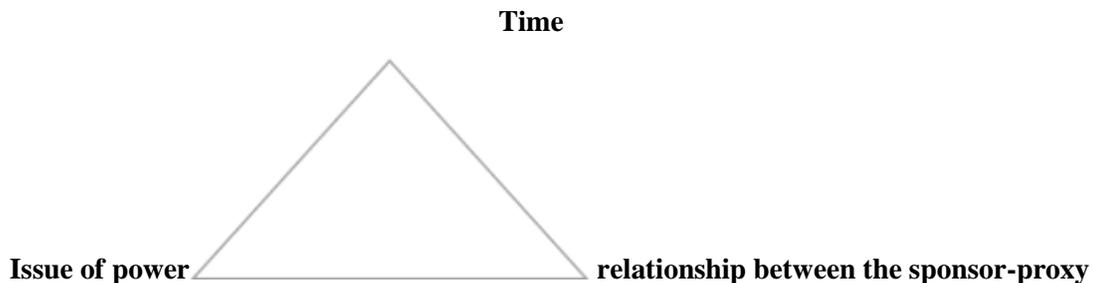
In this view, pro-status governments are rarely found in world politics; Because the international system, given the opportunities that exist to gain power, creates incentives for them that will have the

advantage of calculating profit over the loss. Here the ultimate goal of the state is to achieve a hegemonic position. Hegemony is a situation in which the international system recognizes only one great power. When several great powers are involved in an area, the position of hegemony will not be established. Achieving a state of hegemony for power is not as convincing. That is why it always seeks to prevent the growth of rival powers (Snyder, 2002: 152). Becoming a hegemonic power is the best way to deal with uncertainty about the goals of others and their capabilities now and in the future. The position of hegemony is a major strategic reaction to the lack of confidence in competitors. Mearsheimer rules out the possibility that power can maintain the status quo forever. Therefore, to prevent it from collapsing must prevent other powers from gaining a superior position in the area (Layne, 2002: 129-130).

### Theory of Proxy Wars

Some scholars, such as Amos Fax, believe that proxy wars can be considered as a theory or a doctrine. Whereas the spirit of proxy operations (on the part of the main sponsors) tends to maximize power to increase security and ensure the survival of the actors, this theory is examined under the approach of aggressive realism. The theory of proxy war, which focuses on the highest levels of tactics, operations, and strategy, governs three concepts: Time, the relationship between the sponsor-proxy, and the issue of power. Power is the ability of one actor to persuade another actor to do something. Power cannot exist without the relationship between the actors. However, with the emergence of new actors or the departure of existing actors, relationships change or are no longer interested in the dynamics of existing power. The special feature of this relationship is that after achieving the goal, each partner pursues their interests (Fox, 2019: 14).

**Chart (1): Implications of Proxy War Theory**



### The Concept of Proxy War

The origins of proxy wars go back to the history of Thucydides from the Peloponnesian Wars. A preliminary review of the war studies literature shows that there are profound differences in the definition of proxy and organizational supporters and how governmental and non-governmental actors fit into this strategic paradigm. Andrew Mumford sees proxy war as an indirect interaction in conflict by third parties who want to influence its strategic outcome (Rondeaux & Sterman, 2019: 19; Pfaff, 2017: 310). Seeks to explain how governmental and non-governmental actors can be proxies in a study by Randox and Sterman. Proxy wars are defined as conventional supporters or irregular forces that are outside the organized order of states. Proxy wars are often intense conflicts that occur across borders (Rondeaux & Sterman, 2019: 18). Some scholars see the proxy war strategy as the beginning of preventing a nuclear war. In this way, instead of directly intervening, governments will start selling weapons to their allies (Tomar, 2014: 151). Proxy wars are conceivable in both unilateral and bilateral forms. In the unilateral type, a proxy force directly attacks its supporting rival. But in a bilateral conflict, the proxy forces on both sides attack each other on behalf of their supporters (Allison, 2018: 7). Therefore, in proxy wars, victory is a priority for the participants. With such an interpretation, the number of victories is an important

criterion. In most of the games and competitive situations they face in practice, the key element is the participants' skills and their ability to find the strategy that their opponents are expected to do. The fact is that proxy wars reveal the contradictory nature of retaliatory attacks and the process of creating a symmetrical peace (Konyukhovskiy & Grigoriadis, 2018: 4). What is clear is that proxy wars have little effect on direct wars, while having nuclear weapons increases the chances of proxy. The relationship between the sponsoring or activating government and the proxy force is a special type of formal and informal alliance between small and large that focuses on potential proxy interests. They share a mutual desire to confront the common enemy, even if their ideologies, motives, and concerns are different (Allison, 2018: 3, 4). An important issue that distinguishes proxy war from traditional war ethics is that the beneficiaries of this conflict must manage the moral hazards posed by proxy wars (Pfaff, 2017: 307).

### Proxy Environment

The proxy environment is made up of two or more actors working for a specific purpose. Although the relationship between them is hierarchical. The supporting actor uses the proxy agent as an intermediary to accomplish its goals so that the goals of the supporting government become the proxy agent's goals (Fox, 2019: 3; Fox, 2019: 49). Characteristics that are enumerated for the proxy environment are:

1. All proxy environments are driven by political interests that form the basis of military participation and goals.
2. The proxy environment is based on the relationship between the sponsoring government and the proxy agent, most of which are commercial, for-profit, and time-limited.
3. Proxy relationships are often deceptive, so honest monitoring is needed.
4. Not all political, strategic, and operational decisions are accompanied by significant or obvious changes at the tactical level.
5. Proxy wars are not limited to one type of war but take place anywhere along with a war.
6. This situation in a mental proxy relationship is related to its observers (Fox, 2019: 5).

### The Time

One of the most important issues in a proxy environment is time. Political and social clocks work faster than military clocks. Military commanders are pushing for more time, while communities and political leaders are urging the Army to end military activity as soon as possible. Examples of this can be seen in the recent US political and military debates over Syria, as well as the success of the Shiite nationalist party (Muqtada al-Sadr) as Prime Minister in the 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections, which shows the importance of time in the proxy environment. In this situation, Haidar al-Abadi announced the defeat of ISIS before the elections and prevented the independence of the Kurds and the collapse of the country (Fox, 2019: 54).

### Types of Proxy Wars

**Cyber Proxy Warfare:** Cyber- Competitions have significant potential for a proxy war. Due to the special tendency of most countries to use proxy-cyber weapons, proxy agents can use large-scale cyber warfare against important enemy infrastructure. Testing high-powered cyber weapons may enable programmers to select the best combination of weapons. Therefore, cyber education can be the main source of competitive advantage (Krepinevich, 2012: 44, 80). Today, cyber-empowered proxies use a method very close to a foreign policy tactic called "community-building regulation." This form of governance is widely used by intergovernmental organizations and other actors. When a country voluntarily hires intermediaries for cyber-actions, will involve them in this tactic. In recent years, Iran has been able to compete with powers such as the United States, China, Russia, Britain, and Israel, which are the most important players in cyberspace. Iran has shown a high potential for learning from other capabilities and actions; including learning from the Stuxnet virus (against the Iranian nuclear site) and

learning how to benefit in cyberspace. In addition, it allows cyber tools and weapons to be exploited by allied actors such as Syria, Hezbollah, and the Houthis of Yemen (Archuleta, 2015).

**Nuclear Proxy War:** This type of proxy war seems more difficult than other types because its range of financial and humanitarian losses will be much higher than direct war and like direct wars, there will be no side to victory. One of the factors that make the fight against terrorism and its supporting governments important is the possibility for terrorist forces to gain access to nuclear weapons through supporting governments. Mark Bell, in his study of the importance of nuclear weapons in policy-making, describes how countries use nuclear weapons for political purposes. Nuclear weapons can facilitate a wide range of foreign policy behaviors. Countries use their nuclear weapons to participate in security competitions, political goals, and aspirations that a country considered attractive before it could achieve nuclear capability. He believes that a government can provide weapons and nuclear facilities to its allied proxy forces to strengthen their deterrent power (Bell, 2019: 22).

**Military Proxy War:** Today, most powers use proxy groups and indirect military conflict to achieve their military and paramilitary goals. This type of proxy war is waged to develop influence in a common competition. The warring parties are trying to wage war in geopolitics outside their own country and, according to an unwritten agreement, prevent war and conflict from entering their country. The main goal in this war is the erosion of military, political, economic, social, and ideological power, an example of which can be seen in involving the other side in multi-layered fronts (Ghiasvandi, Torkashvand, 2017: 177-177). In military proxy wars that are waged in hardware, socio-political faults must first be created to form social movements to stir up ethnic, religious, political differences, and ultimately mobilize manpower. The tools used to advance this type of proxy strategy are: mobilizing and training opposition forces, the use of military-missile technologies, and the use of political, military strategies, and warfare techniques in a proxy war.

### **Military Proxy War: Iran's Foreign Policy Strategy in West Asia**

Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and other Gulf states have gradually increased their capacity to implement proxy strategies, Iran in particular, which has dramatically changed the regional military balance by creatively using conventional, irregular, and soft power. In western Afghanistan and South Asia, Iran is confronting the influence of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates through proxy forces, while preventing direct war with them (Rondeaux & Sterman, 2019: 47, 54). Many believe that by expanding its allied forces (known as the Axis of Resistance) in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria, Iran wants to create a confrontational atmosphere in the Arab-Israeli peace agreement, thus focusing on weakening Saudi Arabia (Rahmdel Et al, 2020: 26). In this regard, the factors affecting the strengthening and increase of Iran's proxy power are discussed below.

### **Factors Affecting the Strengthening of Iran's proxy power**

In its national security strategy, Iran has a defense doctrine that is based on certain principles of governance, constitution, fundamental values, and national security. Variety of threats in terms of affecting the environment around Iran, this country requires the use of changing tactics and techniques. The evolution of Iran's military doctrine from defensive deterrence to defensive-offensive deterrence in the land, air, and naval sectors took place simultaneously. In this doctrine, Iran changed from the classic war of the holy defense era to asymmetric war. Regarding the importance of an offensive approach in Iran's defense doctrine, some define Iran's main approach as defensive, but in operational terms, it will act aggressively (Nasiri, 2019). After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, important plans were made to invest in the missile industry to increase defense capabilities. Missile power is at the top of Iran's defense policy, which is based on conventional deterrence. One of the issues that shows the ideological tendency of this country to military independence and self-sufficiency is the deepening of the localization of military products. An action that no medium power in the world has, except for North Korea. Iran's experience in the imposed war with Saddam's regime, US military presence in the region, the importance of deterrence and asymmetric war in Iran's defense doctrine, Equipping regional powers, and ensuring

national security are among the factors that make missile capability important in Iran's defense-security doctrine (Dehghani Firouzabadi, Azizi Basati, 2019: 111,113).

### **The Impact of Islamic Ideology on the Regional Strategy of Iran**

According to the second article of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this system is based on two principles: This system is based on two principles: 1- Belief in God and the assignment of sovereignty and legislation to it, 2- Divine revelation and its fundamental role in the expression of law, which is the basis of Islamic ideological discourse in governing the government. Among the effects that Islamic ideology has on Iran's foreign policy, a very important role in defining the Iranian identity, national interests and goals, and a certain perspective that paints the present and future state of the world. In addition, creates a special value and moral system to judge the policies and actions of this country with others (Khani, Mohammadi Sirat, 2016: 18). This ideology has become the dominant strategy of this system is important and sensitive policies with the priority of the principles of religion. In other words, all decisions in foreign policy will be based on the rules of the Islamic school (Sana'i, Kavianpour, 2012: 205). Iran's fundamental orientation is towards forming a coalition against any hegemony and acceptance of domination. In this regard, it propagates and strives to establish a world Islamic government, supports the liberation movements, invites to the Shiite religion and the subject of Iran being an Umm al-Qara (Davand, Et al, 2019: 91-90).

### **The Axis of Resistance and the Role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

The Islamic and Iranian theory of resistance, which is part of the fruits of the Islamic Revolution, challenges the status quo in the international system, which is based on a relationship of domination. Hence, it provides material and spiritual support to Islamic resistance movements and fights terrorism. Nearly three decades have passed since the history of the confrontation between the two major regional currents in West Asia, on the one hand, the Axis of moderation led by Riyadh and Cairo is supported by Western powers and On the other hand, the axis of resistance led by Tehran, Damascus, Hezbollah, and Ansarullah are present in the face of Western hegemony, which has changed the political rules desired by regional actors. In a cultural-ideological process, Iran uses forces that use ideological concepts to carry out military activities in the field of defense. These examples are manifestations of asymmetric resistance in the face of international threats (Davand, Et al, 2019: 89, 87). According to Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, resistance includes religious, Qur'anic, and Islamic principles. Policy-making in this regard, especially in foreign borders and near Israel, is considered necessary to increase the level of national security in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran, as the only regional power to benefit from the change of former order in West Asia, seeks to deny the reactionary individualism among the Arabs and reduce the influence of the United States and its Western allies in the region by spiritually supporting democracy in the region. This, in turn, reduces the security factor among members of the Axis of Moderation and prevents anti-Western democracies from deviating. The effect that can be seen in the axis of resistance is the transcendence of the security dimension from the national level to the level of the Islamic Ummah. The axis of resistance is Iran's strategic region, which brings stability and security to the region and eliminates security threats. Therefore, what is important here is to change the field of resistance from a theoretical to a pragmatic one. This fact is due to the impact of the Islamic Revolution discourse in practical and theoretical fields on various political, military, security, and economic arena (Ghasemi, 2019: 17, 26, 29). Iran's strategic policy is to create a balance through the mechanisms of resistance, which is a kind of orientation in foreign policy and a model of strategic activities of the Islamic Republic, It necessarily requires Iran to play its political and regional role in a preventive manner (Mosallanejad, Samadi, 2019: 213). The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Quds Force are unique representatives for Iran, which is very useful and practical in West Asia today. The Quds Force is part of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and part of the political and defense structure of Iran and since the IRGC's overseas mission is determined and organized in the Quds Force, this force is the main fulfillment of the part of the Islamic Republic's missions that seeks to raise the level of the "Islamic Ummah" and the "oppressed of the world". Another aspect of the Quds Force is countering the foreign

threats of the Islamic Republic; Of course, this does not mean that this mission is the sole responsibility of this force. (Zare'i, 2014: 6). Thus, the Quds Force is a special force and a sub-branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that is responsible for overseas activities. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, new policies were set for the IRGC, one of which was to create a resistance force and the other to create a force to support Islamic movements around the world. The Quds Force of the IRGC is the guardian power in the region, and unlike some countries and coalitions that seek to create a crisis in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a responsible country for creating security in the region. The Quds Force includes units assigned to other countries and regions, such as Ramadan Corps in Iraq, Eastern Corps in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, Rasoulallah Corps in the Arabian Peninsula, and Ansar Corps in Afghanistan. These forces help Iran deal with security threats and the axis of resistance that extends from the Persian Gulf to the eastern Mediterranean (Jones, 2019). In this regard, the groups and organizations of the Iranian-led Resistance Front in West Asia will be examined.

### **The Resistance Front in West Asia**

**Syria:** Syria is a strategic partner of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the main axis of resistance in the region. Not only is this country the strategic depth of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but also the type of government in this country has a decisive role in the future equations of West Asia and the national interests of the Islamic Republic. Can be said that the most important ally of Iran in West Asia is Syria, and Iran needs the support of the Syrian government to maintain the front line of resistance against Israel and to strengthen and support the resistance movements. Because Iran's political needs in Syria are based on the protection of material and spiritual interests and the importance of its position in the political and security equations of the region. Syria is one of Iran's allies in the region and a link between Iran and its allies (proxy) in Lebanon and Palestine. That is why Tehran's support for this country is due to ideological, geopolitical, and strategic necessities (Mosallanejad, Samadi, 2019: 214). The war in Syria is a sign of Iran's progress and defense capability in managing the axis of resistance. Because it coherently mobilized national and Islamic forces in the region and established popular groups on the resistance front.

**Hezbollah in Lebanon:** On how to play the role of Hezbollah between the two sides of the game, That is, on the one hand, Iran and the axis of resistance, and on the other hand, the Zionist regime and the United States and their regional allies; can be said that Hezbollah is facing the Zionist regime (Israel as a hostile actor) against Iran and due to the special relationship between Iran and Hezbollah, any change in the position of this movement against Israel, while affecting the national security of this regime, affects the national security of Iran (Golshani, Bagheri, 2012: 124-125). As a result, Hezbollah's victories have a particularly significant impact on Iran's deterrent power. During the Syrian civil war, the Israelis realized that Hezbollah had gained a great deal of experience in this battle, although not recognized as an army, but entered into a guerrilla war beyond a political party. In addition, in recent years, Hezbollah has been able to increase its missile capability and apply new tactics to further maneuver the region (Koohkan, 2018: 97).

**Palestinian jihadist groups (Islamic Jihad Movement and Hamas):** The relationship of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the Palestinian Islamic Resistance movements is a structural one and Iran, along with Palestinian jihadist groups led by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, formed the "Axis of Resistance" or "the Resistance Front". The discourse of resistance in the Islamic world and especially in the region of West Asia and North Africa in the field of operations in the form of the axis of resistance, more than ever, manifested and expanded and especially after the Syrian crisis, has become the dominant discourse among the people of the region (Sadat, 2015: 99). On the other hand, with the dramatic victory of Hezbollah, which is one of the key links in the axis of resistance, the defensive capabilities of the Palestinian jihadist groups against the Zionist regime became more objective when they chose the path of military struggle against this regime inspired by Iran and Hezbollah as the only way to liberate Palestine. In other words, these movements have always set the path of resistance and struggle for the liberation of Palestine from the occupation of the Zionist regime (Mahmoudi Raja et al., 2019: 15).

**Hashd-Alshaabi (Iraq):** HAshd-Alshaabi was formed in 2014 in response to Ayatollah Sistani's fatwa aimed at confronting ISIS, which Nouri al-Maliki believes is a model of Iran's Basij structure (Davand et al., 2019: 89). Iraq, due to its long land border with Iran, The most important priority of Iran's security policy is outside the borders. For this reason, the feeling of insecurity on the western borders and the confrontation with the threats posed by the US presence in Iraq have caused Iran to expand its influence in this country in the form of supporting the "Hashd-Alshaabi" group. Hashad-AlShaabi's importance has been due to the two special works of this group for Iran. First, is the deployment of resistance forces in important geographical areas of Iraq, such as Al-Anbar province, which will allow the movement of resistance forces and the sending of weapons aid sent through the Iraq-Syria border crossing in this region. Second, increasing the political influence of resistance groups in the structure of Iraqi political power enhances the deepening of Iran as a leader of an axis of resistance. After the assassination of the martyrs Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, Iran has tried to challenge the United States through resistance groups in Iraq, a clear example of which appeared at the Ain al-Assad base in Iraq (Vazirian et al., 2021: 103-104).

**Ansarullah:** Ansarullah, known as the "Houthis", was politically and militarily organized with the help and support of the Quds Force and Hezbollah from 2011 to 2014 and were able to take over most of the northern regions of Yemen. This group has three strategic advantages for Iran: First, because of the strategic location of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, Ansarullah's domination of the strait as a shipping vessel in the Suez Canal, as well as the port of al-Hudaidah, has strengthened the dominance of Iran's regional allies. The second Ansarullah is the operational arm of Iran's policy of deterrence and balancing against the axis of Saudi Arabia (axis of moderation). Third, Ansarullah has the potential to deepen the discourse of resistance in the peninsula (Vazirian et al., 2021: 106). Moreover, in the "strategic matrix" (the place of origin of the strategy in question) that "Venkatraj" states for the strategic path of the United States, he believes that what paved the way for Iran's victory in the proxy war, political tools are more important in the long-term interest than finding a political partner. Political tools will also enable powerful allies (Venkatraj, 2019: 58).

**Lashkar-e-Fatemiyoun and Lashkar-e-Zainabiyoun:** Fatemiyoun is one of the active Shiite forces that was formed to defend the shrines of Hazrat Zainab (PBUH) and Hazrat Roghayeh (PBUH) against ISIS in Syria. The primary nucleus of this division is the Afghan Mujahideen of the Mohammad (PBUH) Corps and the forces of the Abuzar Brigade, who accompanied the Iranian fighters during the holy defense (Iran and Saddam's War). November 21, 2017, following the success and victory of the Resistance Front against ISIS terrorists, the city of Bokmal was liberated, an important part of this victory was achieved by the fighters of the Fatemiyoun Division (Mashreq News, May 2020). In 2013, a community of Pakistani scholars was held in Tehran, which led to the formation of a primary nucleus consisting of 24 people named Zainabiyoun. The victories of these fighters in Syria led to the deployment of more Pakistani youth to the brigade, which eventually reached the talent of a division due to the increase in the number of volunteers. Lashkar-e Zainabiyoun was actively involved in the liberation operations in Aleppo, Nobul and Al-Zahra, Tadmor, Hama, and the Damascus Reef (Mizan News Agency, May 2020).

## **Conclusion**

The Arab Spring 2011 and its failure by some regional and supra-regional powers paved the way for the emergence of proxy wars as a modern component, also strengthened the axis of resistance against other coalitions and destabilizing countries in West Asia. Proxy wars can take place in three types: cyber, nuclear, and military. The most widely used and least expensive type includes cyber warfare, which often involves macroeconomic damage to the other side. But what has greatly affected West Asia today is the military performance of proxy wars. Due to the competitive battles that have taken place between the two sides of the axis of moderation and resistance, the regional control levers are turning their gaze more towards the resistance front. Therefore, this front will carry out its asymmetric operations in the form of

proxy war to achieve the balance of full power in the region. What can be seen so far is Iran's success in this regional battle, which is advancing its agenda by managing three key factors in the proxy environment (time, the issue of power, and relationship between the sponsor-proxy); first, deals with strategic planning in battle by managing time in the political, social and economic situation of the countries in the region. Second, according to its defense-military doctrine, to maximize power to increase the security factor, it will increase deterrence in terms of strengthening military forces and technology, and third focuses on cohesive communication with proxies. In many cases, the link between the supporting government and the proxy will be fragile, which is why countries like Iran use strong links such as religious and ideological motives to advance this. What is remarkable about the progress and success of Iran's proxy is the speed with which religious ideologies are influenced and operated in comparison with Western values by the other side. In this regard, Iran has placed its functional focus on the indigenous, social, cultural, and religious context. Iran's deterrent power, which subsequently strengthens its superior position in the region, increases through the resistance front and the strategic-defensive performance of the Quds Force, which sets its goal to change the balance of power. Accordingly, proxy wars lead to the strengthening of deterrent power and increase Iran's power in the region.

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