

Iran's Foreign Legion:

The Impact of Shia Militias on U.S. Foreign Policy

Feb 1, 2018

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The leading such group is Lebanese Hezbollah, but Iraq's PMF and Yemen's Houthis also pose serious threats.

The Syrian war has provided Iran with an unmatched opportunity to expand its "foreign legion," a collection of Shia regional proxy militias nurtured since the dawn of the Islamic Republic. The leading such group is undoubtedly Lebanese Hezbollah, which has been central to the Iranian push to bolster the Assad regime. In Iraq, a collection of fighting groups known as the Popular Mobilization Forces counts as many as 120,000 members, of whom some 50,000 operate directly under Iran's elite Qods Force. The Houthis in Yemen and various tribal entities help fill out the picture.

In this Policy Note, derived from a workshop held in June 2017, veteran Lebanese journalist Hanin Ghaddar summarizes the main ideas and arguments discussed and the recommendations that resulted. This Policy Note also contains significant contributions by Michael Eisenstadt, Nicholas Heras, and Michael Knights. ❖

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