The Competition between Middle East Powers: Expeditionary Bases and Non-State Proxies

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In recent years, the competition in the Middle East has waged primarily between the regional powers: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel, as well as, though to a lesser extent, Egypt (as it is preoccupied with its own domestic challenges). The United Arab Emirates, often acting in collaboration with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, is also noteworthy in this context. Most of the rivalries are concentrated in the triangle between Iran (and its non-state Shiite allies as well as the Alawite regime), Turkey (and to a certain extent, Qatar), and "all the other regional powers."

However, the competing regional powers for the most part do not border each other, and the competition between them is often waged indirectly and in territories of third countries. Even in the infrequent instances when the regional powers abut one another, for example Iran and Turkey (and the Gulf's maritime border between Saudi Arabia and Iran), the border region itself is not, at least thus far, the focus of competition, and the competition is concentrated in territories of third countries. Furthermore, even when a regional power intervenes in the territory of an adjacent country, the intervention is not necessarily in the border regions, and is often deep within the bordering country (for example, the Iranian intervention in the Iraqi heartland or the Saudi support to the ethnic minorities deep inside Iran).

As a historic generalization, one can contend that the regional powers built their armed forces in order to protect their borders. However, their need to intervene in third party and sometimes distant theaters and to project

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force on non-bordering regional competitors, which has not been the focus of their traditional force buildup, has increased in recent years. This need has triggered three trends in force buildup: first – acquiring weapon systems that enable long range reach. Examples of this include Egypt's acquisition of Mistral-class amphibious assault ships, Saudi Arabia's acquisition of additional transport helicopters, the Iranian focus on acquiring missiles for ranges of 1,000-2,000 km, and the rise of unlimited range cyber warfare. The second trend is establishing expeditionary military bases and installations in the territories of third countries. The third trend is expanding the use of non-state proxies.

Focusing on the two latter trends, this article maintains that these trends reflect deeper issues – the challenges facing regional powers in acquiring operational access[1] to their areas of interest. This joins their growing need for force projection far from their borders and protection of their interests in the competition for regional influence, inter alia, against the backdrop of the serial collapse of Arab states that has left an extensive power vacuum in many territories.

Expeditionary Bases

Recent years have seen a growth in the phenomenon of Middle East powers establishing expeditionary bases in the Middle East, in North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. This is a new development, as in the past, expeditionary bases were established nearly exclusively by global powers within the context of security alliances or colonial arrangements.

Indeed, the establishment of expeditionary bases in third countries was a typical occurrence during the Cold War, in the context of the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, and when the Cold War ended, the United States enjoyed a clear advantage in this field over every other actor. For the most part, the United States was allowed to establish expeditionary bases in exchange for security guarantees or within the framework of American arms sales. In some cases, this was done as part of the American global nuclear deterrence program. The Americans inherited bases from the British or built them as a way to establish a presence and "show the flag." Today, expeditionary bases constitute a component of the American strategy for combating nuclear weapons proliferation, for combating global terror, for maintaining freedom of navigation, and for ensuring the regular supply of oil.[2]

The Middle East regional powers are establishing new expeditionary bases in two contexts: the first – bases in countries where warfighting occurs, i.e., bases that enable a military force's access to combat zones (for example, some of the Iranian bases in Syria), mainly in failed states that constitute a sort of "playground" for regional and international actors. The second context is bases in the territories of countries where no warfare occurs, but enable access to distant theaters and the ability to project force on other countries (such as the Turkish base in Qatar). The host countries' motivations vary from strategic considerations (as is the case for Qatar) to economic considerations (as is the case with Sudan).

The regional power leading the trend of shifting from fighting "on the borders" to a game being played along the full length and width of the regional arena is Iran. According to various reports in the public media, Iran has a number of bases in Syria (including near Aleppo, at the Damascus international airport, and in the T-4 airbase that was attacked by the Israeli Air Force), and is in the process of establishing a base for its Shiite militias and perhaps later, even a naval base.[3] The more that progress is made in Syria's stabilization process, the more Iran will presumably strive to establish additional bases and repurpose its bases in Syria from mainly supporting its forces participating in the Syrian civil war to projecting regional force, as well as enabling force application in a future war against Israel. Iran has also established weapons factories in Syria and in Lebanon.[4] It appears that Iran is seeking to establish a land corridor that would create a territorial continuum mostly through friendly regions (mainly Shiite or unpopulated regions) from its border to the Syrian Golan Heights border and to the Syrian and Lebanese Mediterranean shores. In addition, Iran previously made use of a seaport in Port Sudan and had a base adjacent to the Assab port in Eritrea (which is now held by the United Arab Emirates), and it is striving to obtain a port in Yemen as well as in Syria.

As for the other regional powers, Saudi Arabia is reportedly establishing a base in Djibouti (a base that formerly hosted United Arab Emirates forces), close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the United Arab Emirates has bases in Somaliland (a port and an airport that are leased for thirty years[5]) and in Assab in Eritrea. These African bases are being used to launch attacks against Yemen. The UAE also has bases in Yemen itself, including on the Yemeni island Perim, and launches air strikes on Libya from bases in Egypt and inside Libya itself, where it reportedly is establishing a new base. These bases are generally limited installations that include runways or docks, a

number of buildings, and logistics equipment (as opposed to, for example, the robust American bases in the Gulf).

Turkey, without coordinating with the governments in Baghdad and in Damascus, has a number of bases in northern Iraq and in northern Syria, inter alia, to enable access to areas of operation against the Kurds. Turkey also has bases in Somalia and in Qatar, with the Qatar base constituting one of the causes for the dispute between Qatar and the Arab Gulf states. In December 2017, it was reported that Turkey had signed an agreement with Sudan, whereby Turkey will be able to maintain a military presence in Sudan and its territorial waters, including a base on the Sudanese Suakin Island. Turkey is also negotiating the establishment of an additional base in Djibouti. The establishment of the Turkish base in Sudan contributed to the political crisis in Sudan's relations with Egypt and Eritrea; consequently, there have been reports that Egypt is deploying forces in Eritrea and that Sudanese forces are deployed opposite them.

Overall, a significant part of the expeditionary bases are located along the seaways of the Gulf and even more so of the Red Sea, and these seaways constitute a significant focus of force buildup for the militaries of the regional powers. More and more military hands are grasping the southern access ways to the Suez Canal, a fact that constitutes a strategic threat to Egypt and to the world economy.

Non-State Proxies

Among non-state actors, some operate under a patron's guidance (i.e., they have no independent political or strategic will of their own); some clients enjoy the support of a patron, while maintaining their own political will; and some collaborate with a patron in the context of ad hoc specific common interests. The patron might use a non-state actor in order to realize particular strategies (such as guerilla warfare or attrition warfare); in order to distance itself from the confrontation (deniability); in order to cut costs and mitigate the risks of the confrontation; in order to keep a rival preoccupied in a secondary theater; or simply due to operational access considerations: to enable effective military access to a theater to which conventional access is challenging.

Iran began using non-state actors primarily due to considerations of cost management, risk mitigation, and deniability. For example, the manner in which Iran applied attrition warfare against the American forces in Iraq until they withdrew was designed to avoid a direct confrontation with the United

States and to provide Iran with deniability. Iran's use of Shiite mercenary militias in Syria, which was accelerated in the context of mitigating heavy losses to the Iranians and limiting direct Iranian involvement in actual combat roles in Syria, served the purpose of reducing the price of fighting for Iran. However, to a great extent, the Iranian non-state proxies also served the purpose of providing it with access to various theaters. Hezbollah has enabled Iran operational access to Israel since the 1980s, and in recent years, the various non-state proxies constitute its main access agents to theaters such as Yemen. And indeed, the Iranian expertise in handling non-state proxies is so extensive that various countries, like Pakistan, are attempting to learn from Iran's experience.[6]

Iran customarily created or adopted non-state actors from Shiite communities residing in the relevant theaters. Iran enhanced Shiite forces already operating in the relevant theaters by supplying them with training, intelligence, weapons, manufacturing means, funds, charity, and religious guidance. Prominent examples are Hezbollah (which besides being the most important military force in Lebanon, is also a religious, social, and political organization); Shiite militias in Iraq, such as el-Badr, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and Kata'ib Hezbollah; and the Houthis in Yemen. However, Iran also engages in strategic or tactical-contextual cooperation with non-Shiite groups, such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and certain Kurdish elements.

The innovation in the web of Iran's non-state proxies is the use of mercenary militias, mainly those recruited in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. These militias were formed in recent years by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and in particular the Quds Force, in order to assist the Assad regime in its war against its rivals; Iranian officers were assigned to them as instructors and commanders.[7] Unlike Iran's traditional non-state proxies that operated in their respective home theaters, these militias are composed of foreigners who are not part of the natural human fabric of the theater where they are deployed. Accordingly, these mercenary militias can be deployed to various theaters as needed. Nevertheless, at least at the present time, these militias are suffering from several weaknesses: first, their low fighting quality, certainly compared to Hezbollah; second, there is a question with regard to the extent of these militias' commitment and loyalty, considering

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that they are mercenaries for all intents and purposes; and third, the fact that they are foreigners, including with respect to their ethnic identity (and, in areas such as the Syrian Golan Heights, with respect to their religious identity as well) suggests they will find it challenging to operate "among the people" if and when they will be called upon to do so.

The Arab Gulf states and Turkey lack the experience that Iran has acquired over the years in handling non-state proxies, and in any case, publicly available information about their use of non-state proxies is modest. It is known that in the past, for example, the Saudis had supported the Afghan mujahidin and later also rebel groups fighting against the Assad regime and its allies in Syria, and that Saudi Arabia might have supported various ethnic groups inside Iran over the years, such as the Azerbaijanis, the Arabs, and the Baloch. Saudi Arabia's money transfers to ultra-radical Salafı organizations in Balochistan have reportedly increased, and a Saudi research institute identifying with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman also called for support of the Baloch and for the "taking of immediate preventive measures" against Iran in this context.[8] Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states have considerable experience operating Western private security companies for domestic purposes – mainly policing, guarding of properties, and intelligence collection. They also operate private security companies and mercenaries, and recruit members of other nationalities for tasks requiring the use of sophisticated weaponry or in order to come into contact with the local population (recalling the case of Bahrain, where foreign forces, including Pakistanis and Jordanians, were tasked with quelling the domestic Shiite uprising in the principality in 2011).

The Challenge of Securing Regional Access

One can argue that the issues of the expeditionary bases and non-state proxies derive from a deeper question, namely, the challenge facing the regional powers as to access to their areas of interest, or in gaining operational access to their peer competitors. One can also argue that the regional powers' militaries were designed and built to protect their borders, sometimes jointly with partners (Turkey with NATO, Saudi Arabia with the United States), and not for operations in distant theaters. However, in recent years, the need to operate in distant theaters has become more acute, mainly due to the collapse of some of the Arab countries and due to attempts by the non-Arab regional powers, Iran and Turkey, to penetrate the Arab sphere.

The game between the regional powers has gradually become the primary game in the Middle East.

Iran operates in or from Shiite regions, but its access to these regions is not necessarily assured. For example, Iran is faced with the challenge of securing access to Yemen, and this impedes its ability to provide significant assistance to the Houthis. This does not mean that Iran is incapable of providing assistance to the Houthis – it certainly does provide such assistance, which apparently increased after Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen. However, the nature of the supply routes and means is not the type that one would expect from a regional power. Iran is basically acquiescing to the maritime blockade imposed on Yemen by Saudi Arabia and its allies (in the sense that the Iranian navy is not trying to lift or even penetrate the blockade), and is making do with dispatching advisers, providing financial assistance, and smuggling war materials using a variety of low signature methods that inter alia limit the flow of the assistance. The smuggling methods are more typical of a limited or subversive player, rather than the conduct of a regional power.

Iran is also contending with the challenge of securing access to Lebanon, which is evident by its struggle with Israel over the supply of advanced weapon systems to Hezbollah. As in the case of the Houthis, this does not mean that Iran is struggling to smuggle weapons or that its operatives cannot find their way to Lebanon, but rather, that the access is not unchallenged and is mainly dependent on the level of aggressiveness of third parties. Israel can hinder (and according to media reports, is hindering) Iran's access to Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia and its allies can and do hinder Iran's access to Yemen. At the time of this writing, Iran's access to Syria still depends to a great extent on Russian cooperation (and also on the extent to which the American administration persists in applying pressure on the Iranian supply routes along the Syrian-Iraqi border, as it did in May 2017). Iran's access to the Yemeni theater likewise depends on Oman's degree of cooperation or willful blindness, since some of the smuggling is routed through Oman's territory.

Indeed, the fact that Iran's access to the heart of Syria is carried out mainly from the air (and subject to the associated constraints, such as dependence on the control of airports and the possibility of airplanes being intercepted), was the source of Iran's motivation to carve out land routes to Syria and Lebanon. There are a number of possible land access routes from Iran, through Iraq and into Syria and then into Lebanon, but

each of them poses some challenge. Finding an access route that passes solely through Shiite regions is a complicated task, and in nearly every alternative route, there are sections that pass through territories of other ethnic groups or at least through unpopulated open desert. Iran's access to areas deep inside Sunni regions of Iraq is also not a given, despite the fact that Iraq is a bordering state.

Iran's operational access to Israel is mostly achieved through its non-state proxies (Hezbollah), though it is in the process of consolidating itself in Syria and filling the void left there by the Islamic State. Iran's direct operational access to Israel from its own territory is limited, and apparently comprises a few hundred missiles and cyber warfare only. Iran's operational access to Saudi Arabia and to the Gulf states is limited; a ground offensive is apparently not a viable option, and therefore the use of non-state proxies – for subversive activities in relevant theaters, such as Bahrain and the eastern district of Saudi Arabia, which is mostly populated by Shiites, and the Houthis in Yemen – appears to be a more practical alternative. Like in the Israeli case, so too in this case, Iran's direct operational access is enabled through high trajectory fire and through cyber warfare, although in the Saudi case, the sea might also constitute a stage for limited direct confrontation.

Indeed, Iran is also contending with the challenge of maritime operational access. Most of its capability in the Gulf's waters is limited to its "nuisance value"; i.e., its ability to disrupt the freedom of navigation of others, but it does not appear that Iran is capable of establishing naval superiority and guaranteeing for itself freedom of navigation, if and when its rivals decide to challenge it. Iran is also striving to achieve a maritime presence in Bab el-Mandeb, in eastern Africa, and in the Red Sea, and its ships have shown their flag in the Mediterranean Sea. Nevertheless, a small number of outdated ships so far from home, and not benefiting from air superiority, constitute a convenient target far more than they pose any serious threat.

Saudi Arabia and its allies in the United Arab Emirates have vital interests throughout the Middle East, from deep inside Iraq, through Syria and Lebanon, to eastern Africa and Libya. Bordering regions are easily accessible, for example, Yemen (without this guaranteeing any decisive military outcome), while the operational access to distant Libya is also relatively convenient (from Egypt, for example). However, it appears that Saudi Arabia and its allies are suffering from a shortage of "hard" means of influence in Syria, in Lebanon, and maybe even in Iraq, and

their main power of influence is "soft" – primarily, financing of sub-state actors – whose effectiveness, at least in these instances, is at best modest. Consequently, the Sunni Arab regional powers did not acquire a sufficiently strong "entry ticket" to the stabilization and shaping of Syria, and their impact to date on the processes in Iraq is also modest. Over the last three years, they even struggled to reach significant achievements in their own backyard – in Yemen.

Although Iraq and Syria constitute Turkey's historic backyard, Turkey is also challenged to gain operational access deep inside both of these countries. Turkish forces operate directly only in regions adjacent to the border, and the non-state proxies are limited to Turkish ethnic populations, mainly south of, but adjacent to, the Turkish-Syrian border. Turkey failed to demonstrate robust operational access deep in Iraq and Syria (Mosul is the exception, and even there, Turkey's involvement was not robust), and failed to gain a sufficient "ticket" to the design of the political futures of Iraq and Syria. In essence, apart from demonstrating partial military "negative" or "preventive" capability with regard to a potential formation of a Kurdish political entity, Turkey has failed to achieve military end states, and as a result, to shape in positive terms the political end state in any of the theaters in which it is currently competing. The Turkish base in Qatar is not an asset that enables the effective operation of Turkish military power in the Gulf, but rather more than anything else serves as an attempt to shore up the rule of the incumbent emir, and by doing so, Turkey contributes to the crisis in Qatar's relations with its neighbors in the Gulf.

The Implications for Israel

Israel's main challenge at this time is Iran: the Iranian nuclear project; Iranian force buildup in proximity to Israel (Iranian forces in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon and in Syria, including the establishment of high quality weapons factories in these theaters); Iranian transfers of weapons through various channels in the Middle East and east Africa; Iranian challenges to Israel's allies; and a potential threat, far from Israeli territory, to gas fields, seaways, and airways. Some of the Iranian challenges to Israel are closer to home, i.e., in Lebanon and in Syria, at ranges in which Israel is accustomed to operate.

The asymmetry in operational access between Israel and Iran is increasing. Iran is developing an extensive and prolonged strike capability against Israel (whose quality is steadily improving) through a non-state proxy

(Hezbollah) and perhaps through expeditionary bases (military presence in Syria that is directed against Israel). On the other hand, Israel is facing operational complexities in order to reach Iran, all the more so when the reference scenario is extensive and prolonged.

The asymmetry in the bi-directional operational access between Iran and Israel forces Israel to contend with both directions: Iranian access to Israel, and Israeli access to Iran. Regarding Iranian access to Israel, insofar as at issue is buildup of statistical firepower to be operated by a non-state proxy, this is tantamount to shutting the stable door after the horses have bolted. But it appears that Iran is striving to enable its non-state proxy some sort of symmetry with Israel in the quality of firepower, a trend that Israel cannot allow. According to various reports, Israel has taken fairly successful action to reduce transfers of high quality weapon to Hezbollah, but the erection of factories for the manufacture of high quality weapons in Lebanon and in Syria heightens this threat once again. It appears, therefore, that Israel must draw the red line[9] at Hezbollah acquiring high impact weapons capabilities, particularly when they are manufactured within the theater (such as precision missiles, long range anti-ship missiles, and weapons of mass destruction), as these capabilities are liable to provide the non-state proxy with a paralyzing strike capability against Israel.

As for the Iranian presence in Syria, it is within a tolerable range, insofar as at issue are foreign militias (who will have difficulties embedding themselves among the people) or light Iranian forces, whose main capabilities are limited to urban combat against insurgents in Syrian cities, and their level of threat to Israel is not high. Even the potential threat of the presence of Shiite militias in southern Syria is lower than the threat of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The Shiite militias constitute a foreign element that will find it difficult to conceal themselves among civilians, and the topography in southern Syria is more favorable for Israel than the topography of southern Lebanon.

Similarly, the establishment of an Iranian military seaport or airport in Syria is not necessarily an intolerable situation for Israel. Israel faces two types of military challenges vis-à-vis Iran and Hezbollah: concealment among civilians (Hezbollah) or geographic access (Iran). Yet in a scenario in which Israel benefits from convenient operational access, then a high signature, relatively isolated Iranian expeditionary outpost suffers from an inherent disadvantage. An Iranian military port in Syria, for example, constitutes a target that will be both overt and convenient for Israel's

operational access. Therefore, a "heavy" Iranian expeditionary base in Syria is liable to pose more of a burden on Iran than on Israel, and Israel might gain leverage over Iran without having to deal with an unanswerable threat. In this instance too, the red line is drawn at high quality weapons: any Iranian deployment of high quality systems on Syrian territory, such as advanced S-300 surface-to-air systems, precision surface-to-surface missiles, or high quality anti-ship missiles, is intolerable for Israel, which must therefore take all measures to prevent the situation.

As for the other side of the asymmetry, Israeli operational access to Iran, Israel always possessed long range operational capabilities and, according to various reports, operated in the past from Tunis to Sudan and up to Iraq. But these operations were limited in their objectives, in their order of battle, in the duration of the operation, and other dimensions. In the current reality, Israel must possess both the capability of conducting extensive military operations against non-bordering Iran, and the capability of conducting certain military operations against Iran and its non-state proxies throughout the Middle East. These two needs require adjustments in Israeli force buildup, from strengthening Israel's ability to achieve air superiority far from home, through strengthening its ability to bring a wide spectrum of support capabilities to distant theaters and maintaining them there continuously (capabilities including intelligence collection, electronic warfare, detection, air control, and refueling) and up to strengthening its low signature and low friction operational capabilities. Such capabilities are operated from Israel itself, but may be operated in coordination with several of Israel's allies.

In the current reality, Israel must possess both the capability of conducting extensive military operations against non-bordering Iran, and the capability of conducting certain military operations against Iran and its non-state proxies throughout the Middle East.

The establishment of major permanent bases in other countries' territory is no trivial matter for Israel. It is simpler to support a specific operation from the territory of a third country (such as support of Operation Entebbe from the territory of Kenya), and Israel might be able to maintain some ongoing low signature activity in the territories of host countries.

In the past, Israel operated proxies (such as the South Lebanon Army) and cooperated with non-state clients (such as the Iraqi Kurds and the Lebanese Christians). But it is doubtful whether the handling of non-state proxies is central to Israel's competitive advantage, and its ability to realize its policies by joining forces

with clients has only been demonstrated in a limited number of cases. However, Israel can support various groups that in any case are already confronting Iran in the various theaters as well as groups operating against the regime inside Iran itself. Israel can also cooperate with various regional players that have better capabilities handling non-state proxies than does Israel itself, such as Saudi Arabia.

The War on Access

Iran is challenged in gaining political access to non-Shiite communities, and suffers from difficulties gaining geographic access to some of the Shiite communities in the Middle East. The Iranian military and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps were not built to deploy "heavy" conventional military forces (army, navy, or air force) in major operations far from home. It might be that these access challenges constitute one of Iran's key weaknesses. Iran's other weaknesses are its aggressive overt courses of action since 2011, which have caused nearly all of the other powers in the Middle East to join forces against it; the scarcity of political state allies; its relative weakness in direct conventional military confrontations; the extent of resources that it can allocate to the various confrontations; and the large minority populations inside its territory.

The Iranian military and the Revolutionary Guards were not built to deploy "heavy" conventional military forces in major operations far from home. Iran's other weaknesses include its aggressive action since 2011, which have caused nearly all of the other powers in the Middle East to join forces against it.

These Iranian weaknesses might enable the creation of a broad regional and international coalition that will launch a campaign against Iranian operational access to theaters of confrontation in the Middle East. The obstacles that may be raised to prevent Iranian access may include, depending upon the context, conventional military efforts, covert efforts, the use of non-state proxies and clients, and international diplomatic efforts. Much of the effort could to be concentrated on disrupting Iran's access to the Sunni region in Iraq, at the Iraqi-Syrian border, Iran's access to the Syrian heartland, Iran's access at the Syrian-Lebanese border, and Iran's maritime access to Yemen and the Red Sea.

From the perspective of undercutting Iran's access capabilities, there is an advantage in stabilizing Syria based on the idea of the divisions between different communities, which will make it difficult for Iran to hold a territorial continuum stretching from Tehran, through

Baghdad and Damascus, and up to Beirut. Regions that will be controlled by non-Alawite Syrian forces, like the Sunnis, the Kurds, or the Druze are likely to cut up Iranian access routes in and via Syrian territories. An arrangement that divides up Syria may also drive a wedge between Russia and Iran, since such a division may be in line with Russian interests (but not in line with Iranian interests) and may reduce Russia's operational dependence on Iran and on its Shiite non-state proxies. Israel's influence on the diplomatic process concerning Syria's future is not dramatic, but the said notion might be presented by Israel, Saudi Arabia, and even Turkey if and when discussions are held between them and Russia and the United States about the future of Syria.

Notes

1 "Operational access" is defined as the ability to project military force into an operational area.
2 Robert Harkavy, "Thinking about Basing," US Naval War College, 2005.
3 Yoel Guzansky, "Iran's Growing Naval Ambitions: Why it Wants Bases in Syria and Yemen," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 2017.
4 Frank Milburn, "Iran´s Land Bridge to the Mediterranean: Possible Routes and Ensuing Challenges and Constraints," *Strategic Assessment* 20, no. 3 (2017): 35-48, see pp. 35-36.
5 Alexander Cornwell, "UAE to Train Somaliland Forces under Military Base Deal: Somaliland President," *Reuters*, March 15, 2018.
6 Ahmad Majidyar, "Pakistan's Army Chief: 'We're Interested in Learning Experience of Basij from Iran,'" Middle East Institute, November 14, 2017.
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8 James Dorsey, "In Shadow Covert Wars, Iran Takes Center Stage," BESA Perspective Papers, November 14, 2017.
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