

Iran's strategy of outsourcing warfare in the Middle East

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For decades, Iran has skillfully employed a network of proxy militant groups across the broader Middle East to project power and advance its interests, while maintaining an impression of plausible deniability on the global stage. At its core lies a “forward defence” strategy: pushing away or pre-empting threats from Iranian soil. Yet while this approach prioritises security, it also carries risks. As conflict in the region has intensified in recent months with the Israel-Gaza war, we ask how much control Iran truly enjoys over these forces. How sustainable is outsourcing warfare via proxies? And what are the risks for Teheran of miscalculation, sparking a wider conflagration?

Ear to Asia host Sami Shah is joined by Prof Shahram Akbarzadeh, Research Professor of Middle East & Central Asian Politics at Deakin University, and author of the 2023 book “Middle East Politics and International Relations: Crisis Zone” from Routledge. And also by international relations expert Dr Andrew Thomas, also from Deakin University. Andrew's new book which relates to our topic is entitled “Iran and the West: A Non-Western Approach to Foreign Policy”, published by Routledge.

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Main image: (L-R) Dr Andrew Thomas and Prof Shahram Akbarzadeh. Listing image: Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Credit: WEF/Flickr.