

**Oasis International School Model United Nations**

**Security Council**

**President:** Mervane Ismail

**Vice-president:** Youssef Zakaria

**Guiding Package**

**Topic 1:** The Question of Iranian Proxy Wars

**11th annual conference OISMUN**

**November 2018**

**Table of content**

1. **Abstract**………………………………………………………………,………………...3
2. **Introduction**……………………………………………………………….…………....4
3. **Keywords definition**…….…………………….………………….……....…………...4
4. **Background information**….………………………………………………….………5
5. **Major parties involved**………………..…………...………………………….………6
6. **UN involvement**……………………………………..………………………………….8
7. **Guiding questions**……………………………………..………………………………9
8. **Possible solutions**..………………………………………..……………………….....9
9. **Useful links**…..……………………………….……………………………………….10
10. **Bibliography.**…………………………..………………………………………………11

**Abstract**

For many years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has participated, and still does, in the conflicts of its neighbors and in the balance of power in the area. Iran supports many proxies, in many countries, such as Hezbollah and the Syrian government under Bashar Al Assad’s jurisdiction. Furthermore, Iran is elevating its proxy wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen against Saudi-Arabia as an attempt to reinforce Iranian President Tehran’s Islamic influence and power in these nations. Meanwhile, there is an ongoing proxy conflict between Israel and Iran since Iran decided to support Hezbollah in the South Lebanon conflict in 1985-2000. The conflict gradually emerged between the two parties in Syria since 2005 ending in direct confrontation between both, after Israel striked Iranian forces in Syria in early 2018. In consequence, an Israeli-Iranian proxy conflict is arising.

As a matter of fact, the danger of Iranian proxy wars is based on their Shia ideology and their desire to acquire regional hegemony in the Middle East. It is mainly because of their extremist belief “Absolute Guardianship of a Jurist” which supports that all religious and political authorities must be in the hands of the Jurisprudent. So, the Islamic Republic of Iran is accused of preparing an expansion in the Middle East.

**Introduction**

Since 1948, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been actively engaged in proxy wars against several parties in the purpose of acquiring regional hegemony mainly in the Middle East. As a Shia power and supporter, Iran aims to assist all Shia parties in the region as to grow a wider sphere of influence in the Middle East.

Nowadays, Iran continues to have an active role in proxy wars as a main belligerent. In fact, Iran is participating in two major ongoing proxy conflicts with Israel and Saudi-Arabia. On one hand, the ongoing conflict between the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1978 is a crucial international threat as it is considered to be the “New Cold War”. With American support for Sunni KSA and its allies and Russian support for Shia Iran and its allies, the proxy conflict intensifies between both parties in the active proxy involvement in regional conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War, the Yemeni Civil War, the Iraqi Civil War, the Bahraini Uprising, the Lebanese Conflict, the Afghan War and the Pakistani sectarian violence. Both parties provide varying types of support to opposing sides in each conflict which accents the rivalry between them politically and militarily.

On the other hand, the conflict between the State of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran gradually escalated after Iranian support of Hezbollah during the South Lebanon conflict (1985-2000) leading to ongoing proxy regional conflict in Lebanon and Syria. The situation deteriorates with increasing Iranian involvement in Syria from 2011 yet the conflict later aggravates with the shift from proxy warfare into direct confrontation in Syria by early 2018. Moreover, proxy conflicts led by Iran are bound to cause aggravated tensions between world parties as well as endanger the lives of millions of civilians in the Middle East. Thus, Iran’s active engagement in proxy wars is crucial and an ongoing threat to international peace and security.

**Definition of key terms[[1]](#footnote-0):**

Proxy war: a war where two powers use third parties as a supplement to, or a substitute for fighting each other directly.

Cold war: state of conflict between nations that does not involve direct military actions. The expression is usually used of the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

Civil war: a war fought by different groups of people living in the same country

Proxy: authority given to a person to act for someone else

Hegemony: (especially of countries) the position of being the strongest and most powerful and therefore able to control others

Sunni: the largest Islamic religious group, which follows the teachings only of Mohammed, not those of any of the religious leaders who came after him

Shia: the second largest religious movement in Islam, based on the belief that Ali, a member of Mohammed's family, and the teachers who came after him were the true religious leaders

**Background information:**

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been largely involved in numerous proxy conflicts mainly between Saudi Arabia and Israel and is subsequently characterised as a poison to the Middle East’s harmony.

 Primarily, one of the major key areas of the Saudi-Iranian proxy conflict is Yemen. The Yemeni Civil War officially commenced on the 22nd of March 2015, is considered a violent playground for regional as well as international powers after the Yemeni population revolted in 2011 which subsequently led to the political transition from Ali Abdullah Saleh to his deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in November 2011. In consequence, the war began between the Hadi Sunni supporters and the Saleh Shia supporters, with each of them claiming to be the reigning government of Yemen. Moreover, the sectarian conflict between both parties has caused the intervention of two major Islamic countries, each claiming to be the leaders of the Muslim world. The Islamic Republic of Iran, a Shia state, is the main supporter of the Houthi rebels[[2]](#footnote-1). Whereas, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a Sunni state, supports the Hadi government leading a coalition of ten countries under the name of Operation Decisive Storm. Hence, the Yemeni civil war is one of the main proxy wars between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East.

Secondly, the Syrian Civil War is an uprising crisis that started in 2011 with the Syrian protesters who called for the President Bashar Al Assad resignation. Most of Assad’s supporters are Shia, however the majority of the population is Sunni, which opposes Assad’s government. Therefore, sectarian tensions escalated between Assad’s government and opposing forces. Moreover, Russia and Iran are supporting the Syrian Shia government; whereas, KSA and Qatar are supporting Sunni Syrian rebels. Furthermore, the tension escalates between Iran and Israel with Israeli support of Syrian rebels and Irani support of Assad. In the early 2018, Israel strikes Iranian forces in Syria, while Iran considers responding to these strikes. In consequence, the Syrian civil war is a proxy war between Iran and Israel, Saudi Arabia.

Thirdly, Lebanon is also an area of proxy conflict not only between KSA and Iran yet also between Iran and Israel. Tensions started to escalate on the 4th of November 2016 when Saudi-supported Lebanese Prime Minister Saad El Hariri decided to resign during a broadcast from Riyadh, KSA. As he stepped down, he criticized Iran and its powerful Lebanese proxy Hezbollah for fomenting violence in the region and meddling in Arab affairs. Some sources state that Hariri’s resignation was Saudi Arabia’s decision and many in Lebanon believe he resigned against his will. These rising tensions create yet another boiling point in the proxy conflict between KSA and Iran. Furthermore, Israel’s collaboration with Arab states declared by Israeli president Netanyahu in September 2017 have led to the commencement of another proxy war between Israel and Iran. In the same month, Israel conducted its largest military exercise in 20 years along the Lebanese border which stimulated conflict with Hezbollah.

Finally, Iraq, which follows a Shia government, was threatened by the rise of the Sunni extremist group, ISIS, who overran the majority of Sunni areas. In response, Iran supported Iraq by providing its Shia militias with weapons to fight ISIS. Furthermore, Iraq is allied with Iran and USA, which is an ally of Saudi Arabia. Both US and Saudi Arabia want to break Iraq and Iran’s ally since US believes Iran is taking advantage of the gains from fighting the ISIS group, to prove and expand its influence. Moreover, KSA is trying to form stronger ties with the Iraqi government, however, Iran has strong political allies in the Iraqi government, which can undermine Saudi-Arabia’s efforts. Hence, the Iraqi war is actually a proxy war between Iran and KSA.

**Major parties involved**

Islamic Republic of Iran: Iran is currently a belligerent in two major proxy conflicts in the Middle East with KSA and Israel in the purpose of acquiring regional hegemony and augmenting the sphere of influence in the region. It mainly supports Shia groups and parties as to spread Shia ideology in the Middle East. Nowadays, Iran has an active role in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Pakistan which all confide to a proxy war between Iran and another regional power.

Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia: Saudi-Arabia, the biggest Sunni supporter, is opposing Iran, a Shia power, in several proxy wars in the Middle East. The conflict between both parties characterises as an ongoing struggle for ideological, political and military influence in the Middle East. The two powers have supported opposing sides with multiple types of assist in nearby conflicts mainly civil wars in Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Moreover, the rivalry extends to other minor disputes in Bahrain, Lebanon and other countries.

State of Israel: Israel and Iran have been in rivalry ever since Iran got declared as an Islamic state. However, the tensions between both parties have intensified and taken the shape of a proxy conflict because of the political struggle of Iranian leadership against Israel and its aim to dissolve the Jewish state. The conflict deteriorates with Iranian assistance of Hezbollah in the South Lebanese conflict and Iranian support of Syrian president Assad. The conflict then gradually emerged from the declared hostility of the post-revolutionary Iran torewards Israel since 1979 into an ongoing proxy conflict between the two parties.

Syrian Arab Republic: Syria is one of the major theaters in the ongoing proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as Iran and Israel throughout its civil war. Syria is an important part of the Iranian sphere of influence and the Syrian government under Assad’s control has been a major ally for decades. However, Syria is now a violent playground for regional and international powers such as Russia backing Iran and US backing KSA and Israel.

Yemen: Yemen is one of the major fronts in the ongoing proxy war between Iran and KSA through its revolution and subsequent civil war. For years, Yemen has been part of the Saudi sphere of influence. However, with the uprising of the Shia rebel group the Houthis backed by Iran, Yemen is now home to an ongoing proxy war between KSA supporting the Yemeni government and Iran.

Iraq: Iraq is one of the major areas of proxy conflict between Iran and KSA. In response to ISIS presence in Iraq, Iran sends Shia militias to fight against Sunni influence. However, fearing Iranian influence in the region, US, a Saudi ally, cooperates with KSA to turn Iraq away from Iran.

Hezbollah: Hezbollah is a Shia Islamist party and militant group based in Lebanon and acts as Iran’s main proxy in Syria and Lebanon.

**UN involvement**

Since the UN is an organization that seeks peace, it participates in the question of Iranian Proxy wars. Between 2016 and 2018, the Security Council released several resolutions discussing the situation concerning Iraq (2421), (2390) (2335), Syria (2336), (2332), (2328), Yemen (2266). The UN started the sanction international regime since the IAEA declared Iran noncompliant with its safeguards obligations in 2005. The UN has participated in imposing sanctions on Iran in 2015, for its nuclear program. Furthermore, an UN report concluded that Iran could not stop the Houthi rebels from using missiles supplies. The Security Council was charged to inspect the supplier of these missiles and experts say it was of Iranian origin. In sum, the UN organization is aiming for a peaceful resolution that satisfies all parties.

**Possible Solutions**

1. Demands to impose economic sanctions such as penalties, reducing exports and cut in certain products exportation on the Islamic Republic of Iran.
2. Requests the creation an Ad-Hoc committee specialized to address the topic of the Iranian threat on the Middle East.

**Guiding questions**

1. Why is Iran considered a threat to the Middle East?
2. To what extent is Saudi-Arabia of help to the Middle East?
3. What are the main reasons for proxy wars in the Middle East?
4. Should proxy wars in the Middle East be considered as a regional or international crisis?
5. How can your country participate in eliminating or decreasing Iranian proxy wars?
6. What is your country’s stance on Iran’s support of proxies in the Middle East? Why?

**Useful links**

* <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/no-end-in-sight-for-saudi-iran-proxy-war>
* <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/iran-saudi-arabia-sectarian-divisions-proxy-wars-chaos/7152358>
* [http://www.thetower.org/article/meet-the-proxies-how-iran-spreads-its-empire-through-terrorist-https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/proxy-power-understanding-irans-use-of-terrorism/militias/](http://www.thetower.org/article/meet-the-proxies-how-iran-spreads-its-empire-through-terrorist-militias/)
* <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-and-iran-four-proxy-conflicts-explained-1512772971>

**Bibliography**

* BLASINA, Niki. *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Four Proxy Conflicts Explained*. [online] (8/12/2017). Available on: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-and-iran-four-proxy-conflicts-explained-1512772971> Consulted on the 18 june 2018.
* Collective. *Meet the Proxies: How Iran Spreads Its Empire through Terrorist Militias*. [online] (March 2015). Available on:<http://www.thetower.org/article/meet-the-proxies-how-iran-spreads-its-empire-through-terrorist-militias/>. Consulted on the 18 june 2018.
* BREMMER, Ian. *The 5 Proxy Battles are making syria’s civil war increasingly complicated.* [online] (16/2/2018). Available on: <http://time.com/5162409/syria-civil-war-proxy-battles/> Consuled on the 19 june 2018.
* LAKE, Eli. *When It Comes to Iran, Threats and Pressure Get Results*. [online] (10/5/2018). Available on:<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-05-10/exiting-iran-nuclear-deal-may-get-results-from-tehran> Consulted on the 19 june 2018.
* Collective. *The role of Iran in the Middle East Proxy Wars*.[online] Available on: <https://www.bic-rhr.com/projects/the-role-of-iran-in-the-middle-east-proxy-wars/> Consulted on the 20 june 2018.
* BAZZI, Mohamed. *No end in sight for Saudi-Iran proxy wars.* [online] (16/11/2017). Available on:<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/no-end-in-sight-for-saudi-iran-proxy-war> Consulted on the 20 june 2018.
* MUNOZ, Carlo. *Iran reaches new stage in proxy wars in Iraq, Syria.* [online] (28/2/2018). Available on:<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/28/iran-reaches-new-stage-proxy-wars-iraq-syria/> Consulted on the 23 june 2018.

1. Cambridge online dictionary, available on: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. The Houthis, known as Ansar Allah, are a political rebel Shia extremist group also reinforced by civilians supporting the Saleh regime opposing forces loyal to the new Hadi government. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)