

Proxy warfare in strategic competition

Type de contenu : Texte

Type de médiation : sans médiation

Type de support : Volume

Titre(s) : Proxy warfare in strategic competition : state motivations and future trends / Stephen Watts, Bryan Frederick, Nathan Chandler,... [et al.]

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Rand corporation

Publication : Santa Monica (Calif.) : RAND Corporation : Arroyo center

Date de copyright : C 2023

Description matérielle : 1 vol. (XVIII-210 p.) : ill., graph., tabl. ; 23 cm

Collection : Research report RR-A307-2

ISBN : 978-1-9774-1053-5

1-977410-53-7

EAN : 9781977410535 br.

Appartient à la collection : Research reports 194X [Santa Monica] Rand Corporation RR-A307-2

Classification décimale Dewey : 355.02

Note(s) : RAND RR-A307-2

"Prepared for the United States Army ; approved for public release; distribution unlimited"
"RAND Arroyo Center"

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Note sur les bibliographies et les index : Bibliogr. p. 185-210. Notes bibliogr.

Note sur le contenu : CHAPTER One: Introduction CHAPTER Two: Overview of the Causes of Proxy Wars CHAPTER Three: Quantitative Assessment of Proxy War Trends and Drivers CHAPTER Four: Russia's Use of Proxy Warfare CHAPTER Five: China's Use of Proxy Warfare CHAPTER Six: Iran's Use of Proxy Warfare CHAPTER Seven: Summary of Findings and Policy Recommendations APPENDIX A: Appendix to the Quantitative Assessment of Proxy War Trends and Drivers

Résumé ou extrait : The authors used both quantitative analysis and case studies of China, Iran, and Russia to examine the causes and likely future trends in proxy wars: civil wars in which at least one local warring party receives material support from an external state. The purpose of the project was to provide insight into the determinants of state support for violent nonstate actors, assess the risks that third-party support poses to U.S. overseas contingency operations, and analyze policy options available to the United States to counter such foreign support. With the renewed focus in many regions on strategic competition, there seems to be a growing risk that states will feel increasingly threatened by their rivals and take greater steps to counteract these threats in the years to come. The case studies highlight how such an environment can often, though not always, lead to an increased interest in supporting proxy warfare. Of even greater concern is the fact that geopolitical drivers of proxy warfare can often be self-reinforcing. The states considered in the case studies were usually able to develop at least a rudimentary capability for proxy warfare very quickly, within a couple of years, often building on the capabilities of prior efforts or regimes. Beyond this baseline capability, however, a relatively lengthy period of learning and growth to better develop proxy warfare capabilities appears to be common.

Sujet - Nom commun : Grandes puissances -- Influence
Moyennes puissances -- Influence
Guerre civile -- Prévision

Forme, genre ou caractéristiques physiques : Études de cas

Adresse électronique et mode d'accès : https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR_A300/RR_A307-2/RAND_RRA307-2.pdf