

Proxy War in Reverse—Client and Proxy States Can Also Try to Use Big Powers to Serve Their Interests

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Theme: [History](#)

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Big powers have often tried to use smaller countries to fight their wars against other countries, particularly against other big powers. The widespread prevalence of such proxy wars is well-recognized. The USA has been involved in several proxy wars. The Ukraine war has been widely discussed as a proxy war of the USA which uses Ukraine to harm Russia as much as possible. Such wars are increasingly preferred by a great power like the USA as any loss of its own soldiers is avoided and so the chances of the public opinion at home turning against the war are significantly reduced.

However a reverse trend has also been noticed and may play a big escalatory role in the near future under certain conditions. In such situations a smaller country or a client country may make efforts to involve a bigger country or even a great power supporting it in a wider war with the aim of serving its own narrow interests.

At times it has been noticed that Ukraine's present regime has tried to take certain provocative measures which are likely to escalate the war in such ways that the higher involvement of the USA or NATO member countries becomes more likely. This can be beneficial for the present regime of Ukraine at a time when it is suffering military reverses. If big powers can be involved in this war as their own war, and not just a proxy war, then things become much bigger and it is possible for the regime to avoid the blame for military reverses. Of course if the war becomes much wider and also more destructive then the actual harm suffered by the people of Ukraine is likely to be higher, but the stigma attached to a military defeat of Ukraine may be avoided by the regime and the support for the regime from the USA and NATO would be higher, thereby strengthening its position and international role.

This can be seen even more clearly in the context of Israel. Even though at one level Israel may be a client state of the USA under its present regime, but still this regime has a high faith in its ability to influence US policy. It feels that by provoking Iran, Hezbollah, etc. in a big way a wider regional war can be started. Such provocative actions on the part of the Netanyahu regime have been seen several times, in their most extreme form in early April and late July this year. The involvement of the USA and close allies in such a wider war can be seen as a way out of several problems faced by the present regime and its leaders who are entangled in a big mess of their own making. Despite all the destruction that a wider war is likely to bring, the regime sees the issue from a very narrow standpoint of finding a way out of the present mess and ending the war on a note of victory and glory as per its own badly distorted vision.

While planning for proxy wars to serve their narrowly conceived agenda, the big powers tend to use their proxies and clients in highly opportunistic ways to serve their self-interests,

one of their frequent aims being to achieve strategic aims including bleeding an adversary without getting involved directly. However the possibility exists that proxies and clients in turn try to be opportunistic and try to get their big power backers involved in the war in a bigger way to serve their own narrow interests. Ukraine and Israel are two recent examples. If things work out their way, the big powers, despite trying to protect themselves, may get involved in very big and destructive wars which they did not plan for while engaging in their smaller mischief.

The lesson emerging from these various possibilities is to stop trying to be too clever and to stop indulging in too many misadventures. In a dangerous world armed with too many destructive weapons and too many dangerous possibilities, all countries and particularly the big powers should at the very least avoid brinkmanship and dragging others into swamps that may ultimately endanger both of them.

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