

**Table 15.2 ► Examples of Iranian Influence in the Middle East**

Country	Examples of Iranian Influence
Afghanistan	<p>In the 1990s, Iran waged a proxy war against the Taliban and other Islamic extremists via financial and material support to the Northern Alliance.<sup>29</sup> In post-Taliban Afghanistan, Iranian influence has at times been more direct; in 2010, President Hamid Karzai admitted that his chief of staff received bags of money from Iran that Karzai later said were ostensibly meant as aid.<sup>30</sup> By 2012, Western media reported that Tehran was undertaking a multifaceted influence operation in Afghanistan that involved “cultivating closer relations with the Taliban, funding politicians and media outlets, and expanding cultural ties with its eastern neighbor.”<sup>31</sup></p>
Iraq	<p>After a long war with Iraq in the 1980s that reverberated throughout the 1990s, Iran’s primary objective today is to use its influence to prevent Iraq from recovering as a military threat. Tehran has used a range of tools to do so, including backing militancy inside Iraq, fostering economic codependence, and integrating eastern Iraq’s energy infrastructure into its own, in addition to “providing campaign financing, media support . . . and paramilitary support to armed groups” that are aligned with Iranian interests.<sup>32</sup></p>
Lebanon	<p>Iran helped to establish Hezbollah in the early 1980s, and has since used the Shia opposition group to exert influence in Lebanon and deter Israel. In more recent years, however, their ties have evolved from that of a proxy relationship to a partnership as Iran and Hezbollah work to deter Israel and the West.<sup>33</sup> Iran has used its Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp to “teach Hezbollah how to organize itself like an army, with special units for intelligence, antitank warfare, explosives, engineering, communications and rocket launching.”<sup>34</sup></p>
Syria	<p>Iran has had a long and close relationship with Syria, which it has used as a pipeline to funnel weapons and other support to Hezbollah and Hamas. In the wake of demonstrations across Syria in 2011 and 2012, Iran allegedly provided Syria with equipment used to “disperse the country’s prodemocracy protests and is helping Syrian security forces block and track Internet and cell phone use among protesters.”<sup>35</sup></p>