

# Hezbollah and Russian intelligence collaboration: a complex nexus

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## Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate relationship between Hezbollah, the Shiite militant organization based in Lebanon, and Russian Intelligence Agencies (RIA). The collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA represents a complex interplay of geopolitical interests, regional dynamics, and strategic objectives. The paper examines the historical context of their relationship, the motivations behind their cooperation, the nature of their interactions, and the implications for regional and global security. Drawing upon a multidisciplinary approach that combines insights from Political Science, International Relations, Intelligence studies, and Middle Eastern studies, provides a comprehensive analysis of this collaboration. It also explores the broader implications for the Middle East, Russia's role in the region, and the challenges it poses to international efforts to counter terrorism and promote stability.

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## 1. Introduction

The collaboration between Hezbollah, the Shiite militant organization based in Lebanon, and RIA has emerged as a complex and intriguing aspect of the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East. Hezbollah, founded in the early 1980s, has evolved into a powerful regional actor with a dual identity as a political party and a militant group. Its historical ties to Iran and Syria have significantly shaped its regional presence and influence [1].

RIA, notably the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), have expanded their activities in the Middle East, positioning Russia as a key player in regional affairs. The collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA reflects a convergence of interests, primarily centered on counterterrorism efforts and regional stability.

This paper seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Hezbollah-Russia collaboration. It explores the historical context of their relationship, the motivations driving their cooperation, the nature of their interactions, and the implications for regional and global security. It also considers the broader implications for the Middle East, Russia's role in the region, and the challenges it poses to international efforts to counter terrorism and promote stability.

## 2. Research method

The present study is a Review article, that serves as an in-depth exploration of the existing body of literature concerning Hezbollah, RIA, and their collaborative interactions. It underscores the paramount importance of

synthesizing a wide spectrum of source materials, encompassing academic studies, government reports, policy documents, and media sources, to facilitate a holistic comprehension of this intricate subject matter. By incorporating academic studies, this review establishes a scholarly foundation for comprehending the historical evolution, ideological underpinnings, and operational intricacies of both Hezbollah and RIA. The inclusion of government reports and policy documents contributes a policy-oriented perspective, offering insights into the strategic implications and security ramifications of their associations, while also illuminating the responses of relevant state actors.

## **2.1 Hezbollah: the Shiite militant organization**

Hezbollah, whose name translates to "Party of God" in Arabic, is a Shiite Islamist organization with its roots firmly embedded in the tumultuous history of Lebanon and the wider Middle East. Its journey from a fledgling revolutionary militant group to a dominant political force within Lebanon is a tale marked by conflict, resilience, adaptation, and complex regional dynamics.

### **2.1.1 Foundations amid civil strife: 1982-1990**

Hezbollah's origins can be traced back to the early 1980s when Lebanon was embroiled in a protracted civil war and under Israeli occupation. This period of intense turmoil provided fertile ground for the emergence of Shiite resistance movements, including Hezbollah. Inspired by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and supported by Iran's revolutionary ideology, the group was founded in the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 [2].

Initially, Hezbollah's primary objective was to resist the Israeli occupation and contribute to the expulsion of foreign forces from Lebanese territory. Drawing from a wellspring of religious fervor, the organization engaged in acts of violence against Israeli military targets, garnering both popular support among Lebanon's Shiite community and condemnation from international actors. The 1983 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut, which resulted in significant casualties, highlighted Hezbollah's militant tactics and its readiness to employ suicide bombings.

### **2.1.2 Transition to political power: 1990s**

The early 1990s marked an important, pivotal period in Hezbollah's evolution as Lebanon attempted to emerge from the ashes of civil conflict. The Taif Agreement of 1989, which ended the civil war, paved the way for political reforms and power-sharing arrangements. Hezbollah, sensing the changing political landscape, embarked on a strategic shift towards becoming a recognized political entity while maintaining its military capabilities [3].

In 1992, Hezbollah participated in Lebanon's parliamentary elections for the first time, securing a notable presence within the Lebanese political system. Simultaneously, it continued its resistance efforts against Israeli forces in South Lebanon, earning admiration as a defender of Lebanese sovereignty, especially among the Shiite population [4].

### **2.1.3 Resistance and regional dimensions: 2000s**

The year 2000 marked a significant victory for Hezbollah when it successfully pressured Israel to withdraw its troops from South Lebanon, claiming it as a victory for the "resistance." This achievement bolstered the group's reputation as a formidable force and established it as a key player in Lebanese politics [2].

Hezbollah's regional influence also expanded during this period, particularly through its alliance with Iran and Syria. Its involvement in regional conflicts, including the support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime in the Syrian Civil War, positioned it as a critical actor in the broader Middle East. Additionally, the group's military capabilities continued to grow, backed by Iranian support and bolstered by its experience in asymmetric warfare [4].

### **2.1.4 2006 War with Israel: consolidation of power**

One of the defining moments in Hezbollah's history occurred in 2006 when a conflict erupted between the group and Israel. Sparked by the abduction of Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah, the war resulted in widespread destruction in Lebanon and significant casualties on both sides. Despite the devastation, Hezbollah claimed a propaganda victory, depicting its resilience and ability to withstand a powerful adversary [2]. This conflict solidified Hezbollah's status as a formidable military force and further entrenched its role in Lebanese politics. Domestically, it capitalized on the war's aftermath, participating in Lebanese governments and parliamentary elections. The group's "two-track" strategy, maintaining its military capabilities while engaging in political processes, proved effective in securing both popular support and political influence [5].

### **2.1.5 2010s and beyond: regional influence and challenges**

In the 2010s, Hezbollah continued to navigate the intricate web of regional politics, particularly in the context of the Syrian Civil War. Its military intervention in Syria in support of the Assad regime exposed it to criticism, both regionally and internationally, while also reinforcing its alliance with Iran [6]. At the same time, Hezbollah's social services and charity networks played a crucial role in providing for Lebanon's Shiite population, contributing to its popularity and influence within its community. However, this dual identity as a militant group and a provider of social services posed complex challenges and dilemmas for the organization.

In recent years, Lebanon has experienced a series of political and economic crises, with widespread protests against political corruption and mismanagement. Hezbollah, as a significant political force in the country, has faced mounting pressure to address these issues and address the demands of the Lebanese people.

### **2.1.6 Hezbollah's ideological foundations**

Hezbollah's ideological foundations are deeply rooted in Twelver Shiite Islam, a branch of Islam that holds the belief in twelve divinely appointed Imams after the Prophet Muhammad [2]. The organization's ideology is characterized by several key principles:

- Wilayat al-Faqih: At the core of Hezbollah's ideology is the concept of "Wilayat al-Faqih," which translates to "Guardianship of the Jurist." This doctrine, propagated by Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, asserts that an Islamic jurist (faqih) holds ultimate authority over the state, acting as the spiritual and political guide. Hezbollah's adherence to this doctrine aligns it closely with Iran's theocratic system.
- Resistance: Central to Hezbollah's ideology is the principle of resistance, both against foreign occupation and perceived oppressors. This principle is rooted in the historical experience of Shiite communities in Lebanon, who faced marginalization and persecution.
- Anti-Israel stance: Hezbollah's staunch anti-Israel stance is a cornerstone of its ideology. It views the Israeli state as an illegitimate occupier of Palestinian and Lebanese lands, and its armed struggle against Israel is justified on religious and nationalistic grounds.
- Social justice: While primarily known for its military activities, Hezbollah also emphasizes social justice and the provision of social services to its constituents, particularly within Lebanon's Shiite community. This combination of military and social roles sets Hezbollah apart as both a militant group and a political party.

### **2.1.7 Hezbollah's strategic objectives**

Hezbollah's objectives have evolved over time, reflecting its dynamic role in Lebanese and regional politics [2]. Its primary objectives can be summarized as follows:

- Resistance against Israel: Hezbollah's foremost objective is the liberation of Lebanese territory, specifically the Shebaa Farms and Kfar Shuba Hills, which it considers occupied by Israel. Its military

wing, the Islamic Resistance, is dedicated to this cause, and it has engaged in multiple conflicts with Israel, including the 2006 war [4].

- Political influence: Hezbollah aims to maintain and expand its political influence within Lebanon. It participates in the Lebanese government and parliament, where it holds significant power and represents the Shiite community.
- Regional engagement: Hezbollah's regional engagement extends to support for allies such as Syria's Assad regime and close cooperation with Iran. Its regional objectives include countering Sunni extremism and enhancing Shiite influence [7].
- Social services: Hezbollah provides an array of social services, including healthcare, education, and financial assistance, primarily to Lebanon's Shiite population. These services contribute to its popularity and maintain a social welfare infrastructure.

### 2.1.8 Hezbollah's organizational structure

Hezbollah's organizational structure is a meticulously designed system that reflects its dual identity as a militant organization and a political party within Lebanon. This intricate structure enables Hezbollah to exert influence across multiple domains, both domestically and regionally. At its helm is the Secretary-General, currently Hassan Nasrallah, who wields significant authority and serves as the organization's primary spokesperson. Beneath this top leadership tier is the Shura Council, a high-level decision-making body responsible for strategic planning and oversight [8].

Hezbollah's Executive Council manages its daily operations and oversees specialized committees, each dedicated to distinct functions such as military operations, political engagement, and social services. The military wing, known as the Islamic Resistance, is central to Hezbollah's identity and serves as its armed force. Highly trained and well-armed, the Islamic Resistance is responsible for conducting cross-border attacks against Israel and safeguarding the organization's military capabilities.

The political wing of Hezbollah operates within Lebanon's formal political institutions, with elected representatives in parliament and cabinet members in the government. This political presence grants Hezbollah significant influence in Lebanese politics, particularly within the Shiite community, and allows it to shape policies and decisions [9]. Hezbollah's social services sector is equally vital; it operates an extensive network of hospitals, schools, and charities that provide essential support to Lebanon's Shiite population. This multifaceted approach, combining military might with social welfare initiatives, enhances Hezbollah's support base and bolsters its legitimacy [10].

Hezbollah also maintains a sophisticated media and propaganda apparatus that disseminates its messages and activities through various channels, including television, radio, and social media. This media wing plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and maintaining cohesion among its supporters. Overall, Hezbollah's organizational structure is characterized by hierarchical leadership, tight internal cohesion, and a well-balanced integration of political, military, and social elements. This dynamic structure enables Hezbollah to exert influence on both domestic and regional fronts, contributing to its enduring prominence in the complex geopolitics of the Middle East. Understanding this intricate organizational design is essential for comprehending the organization's multifaceted role and its impact on Lebanon's political landscape and regional dynamics [11].

## 2.2 Russian Intelligence: A strategic apparatus

### 2.2.1 Overview of Russian intelligence agencies

The Russian Federation boasts a formidable and complex array of intelligence agencies that play pivotal roles in shaping domestic and international affairs. These agencies are renowned for their operational prowess and

the extent of their reach, reflecting Russia's longstanding commitment to intelligence gathering, espionage, and covert operations. While several intelligence agencies operate within Russia, some of the most prominent ones include the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), and the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).

Federal Security Service (FSB): The FSB is Russia's primary domestic intelligence agency, responsible for a wide range of security functions within the country. Its mandate includes counterterrorism, counterintelligence, cyber defense, border security, and monitoring political dissent. The FSB's influence extends to domestic surveillance and intelligence gathering, making it a powerful entity in domestic politics and national security. It is worth noting that the FSB's roots can be traced back to the KGB, the Soviet-era intelligence agency, which was disbanded after the collapse of the Soviet Union [12].

Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU): The GRU is Russia's military intelligence agency and is renowned for its clandestine operations, espionage, and special forces capabilities. Unlike the FSB and the SVR, which focus on domestic and foreign intelligence respectively, the GRU primarily serves the Russian Armed Forces [13]. Its missions encompass gathering military intelligence, conducting covert operations, and supporting Russian military activities worldwide. The GRU has earned notoriety for its alleged involvement in cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and efforts to undermine foreign governments, making it a focal point of international scrutiny [14].

Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR): The SVR is Russia's primary foreign intelligence agency and specializes in collecting intelligence from abroad. Its primary mission is to gather information on foreign governments, organizations, and individuals, as well as to engage in covert operations to further Russian interests internationally. The SVR plays a crucial role in Russia's foreign policy, providing decision-makers with critical intelligence assessments and supporting diplomatic efforts. While its operations are generally more discreet compared to the GRU, the SVR has faced allegations of interference in foreign elections and espionage activities on multiple occasions.

These intelligence agencies are part of a broader Intelligence community in Russia, which also includes specialized agencies such as the Federal Protective Service (FSO) responsible for protecting high-ranking officials, and the Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) involved in combating drug trafficking. Additionally, Russia's Intelligence agencies often work in coordination with each other and have well-established ties to the Kremlin, allowing for effective information-sharing and policy alignment [15].

The RIA community's capabilities and activities have drawn significant international attention and concern, particularly in the context of allegations of election interference, cyberattacks, and espionage operations. Understanding the roles and functions of these intelligence agencies is crucial for comprehending Russia's approach to national security and its broader geopolitical strategies on the global stage.

### **2.2.2 Russian intelligence regional presence, collaborations, and strategy**

RIA, renowned for its clandestine prowess and historical significance, maintains a robust regional presence and engages in strategic collaborations across the globe. These agencies, deploy their expertise to protect Russia's national interests, project power, and influence geopolitical outcomes. Their regional focus extends from neighboring states to far-flung regions, encompassing Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and beyond. Their strategic collaborations are designed to counter adversaries and bolster Moscow's standing in an increasingly complex and competitive world [16].

In the European theater, RIA has a long-standing history of involvement in espionage activities. The SVR, responsible for foreign intelligence, maintains an extensive network of agents and assets across Europe. It closely monitors the activities of NATO, the European Union, and individual member states, seeking to gain insights into their decision-making processes and policy directions. This information is vital for Russia's strategic planning and diplomatic maneuvering. Additionally, the GRU, with its specialization in military

intelligence, has a strong presence in Europe, particularly concerning the Baltic states, Ukraine, and the Balkans. The GRU plays a crucial role in supporting pro-Russian separatist movements and conducting cyber operations, as demonstrated in Ukraine.

Moving eastward, RIA have intensified their efforts in the Middle East and North Africa. This region holds immense significance due to its vast energy reserves and its role as a battleground for regional and global powers. The SVR and the FSB, in coordination with the Russian Ministry of Defense, have established close ties with the Syrian government, providing military support and intelligence assistance to President Bashar al-Assad's regime. This has allowed Russia to maintain a strategic foothold in the Middle East and expand its influence across the region. Furthermore, RIA collaborate with Iran and support proxy groups in Yemen, enhancing their ability to shape events in this volatile region.

In Asia, Russia's intelligence agencies focus on strengthening ties with countries that share its vision of a multipolar world order. The Russian government, led by President Vladimir Putin, seeks to counterbalance Western influence in the region by collaborating with China, India, and Central Asian states. The SVR and the FSB work closely with their counterparts in these countries to exchange intelligence, counter terrorism, and combat cyber threats. This strategic collaboration not only advances Russian interests but also challenges the dominance of Western intelligence agencies in the region.

Beyond regional presence and collaborations, RIA employ a multifaceted strategy that combines traditional espionage, cyber operations, and disinformation campaigns to achieve their objectives. One notable example is Russia's interference in the 2016 United States presidential election, which brought the extent of its capabilities into the global spotlight. The GRU's cyber unit, known as APT28 or Fancy Bear, allegedly hacked the Democratic National Committee's emails, revealing sensitive information that influenced the election narrative. This operation showcased Russia's proficiency in hybrid warfare, blending cyberattacks with information warfare to disrupt and shape political landscapes.

In addition to cyber operations, disinformation campaigns orchestrated by RIA have become a potent tool in influencing public opinion and destabilizing adversaries. The Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Kremlin-linked troll farm, is notorious for its efforts to spread disinformation and sow discord on social media platforms during the 2016 U.S. election and other events worldwide. Such activities not only create confusion but also exploit existing fault lines within target societies, amplifying divisions and weakening the social fabric of rival nations.

Furthermore, RIA employ a tactic known as "active measures" to manipulate foreign governments and organizations covertly. These measures involve the use of espionage, covert influence, and propaganda to advance Russia's interests while obscuring its involvement. For example, the SVR's "illegals" program, exposed in 2010, revealed a network of deep-cover spies living under false identities in the United States and other Western countries. These operatives conducted espionage activities and gathered sensitive information, all while maintaining the facade of ordinary citizens [12].

### **2.3 The historical context of Hezbollah and Russian intelligence collaboration**

The collaboration between Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based Shiite militant group, and RIA is a complex and multifaceted relationship that has evolved over several decades. To understand this collaboration, it is crucial to delve into the historical context that has shaped their interactions.

Hezbollah's origins trace back to the chaotic and turbulent landscape of Lebanon in the 1980s. This period was marked by a protracted civil war, Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, and the presence of various sectarian militias vying for control. In this milieu, Hezbollah emerged as a Shiite resistance movement with strong ideological ties to Iran's theocratic regime. Iran, eager to establish a Shiite bulwark against Israel and promote its revolutionary ideals, became a key patron of Hezbollah, providing it with financial, military, and ideological support [17].

At the same time, the Soviet Union was in the midst of its twilight years, with the Cold War era winding down. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw the emergence of the Russian Federation under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. During this period, RIA, including the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces (GRU), underwent significant transformations. They sought to adapt to a new global order characterized by multipolarity and an evolving security landscape.

The historical context of the collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA begins to take shape in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This period witnessed a series of events that laid the foundation for their interaction. First, Hezbollah consolidated its position in Lebanon, transforming from a guerrilla group into a political and military force with significant influence in Lebanese politics. Second, Russia, under Vladimir Putin's leadership, embarked on a more assertive foreign policy agenda, seeking to regain its status as a major global player. As part of this strategy, Russia aimed to strengthen its presence in the Middle East, a region where it had historical ties dating back to the Soviet era [18].

One critical turning point in the Hezbollah-Russia relationship was Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict, which began in 2015. Hezbollah had long maintained close ties with the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, viewing it as a crucial ally in the region. When Russia intervened militarily to support Assad, it created a common strategic interest between Moscow and Hezbollah: the preservation of the Syrian regime and the containment of Islamist extremist groups, including ISIS. This shared goal became the catalyst for deeper collaboration [19].

RIA, notably the GRU, found themselves working alongside Hezbollah in Syria. While their immediate objectives aligned in Syria, the collaboration also extended to intelligence-sharing and coordination. Hezbollah's expertise in the region, including its knowledge of local actors and terrain, complemented Russia's military operations. RIA benefited from Hezbollah's human intelligence assets and local networks, which provided valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of the Syrian conflict.

Another dimension of their collaboration emerged in the realm of counterterrorism. Both Hezbollah and Russia faced threats from Islamist extremist groups operating in Syria and the broader Middle East. Hezbollah had extensive experience in combating groups like Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. RIA sought to harness this expertise in their efforts to neutralize terrorist threats, both regionally and globally. Their cooperation included sharing information on extremist networks, intelligence analysis, and joint operations [20].

Furthermore, the collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA took on a covert dimension, particularly in the realm of arms transfers and logistics. Reports suggest that Hezbollah may have received weapons and support from Russian sources, facilitated through clandestine channels. While the exact extent and nature of this covert collaboration remain shrouded in secrecy, it underscores the multifaceted nature of their relationship.

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### **3.1. The potential of collaboration in South America**

The potential collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA in South America is a matter of concern and speculation within the international intelligence community. While there is no concrete evidence to suggest a direct and formal alliance between these two entities in the region, it is essential to analyze the factors that could influence such collaboration, as well as the potential implications for South America's security and geopolitical landscape [3].

First and foremost, it is crucial to understand the motives that might drive Hezbollah and RIA to explore cooperation in South America. Hezbollah, known for its global reach and willingness to form alliances with sympathetic actors, has a history of establishing networks beyond the Middle East. South America has a significant Shiite Lebanese diaspora, which offers Hezbollah a potential source of financial support and

recruits. Moreover, the region's porous borders and weak governance structures could provide fertile ground for Hezbollah's fundraising and logistical activities, particularly in the illicit drug trade. Russia, on the other hand, has been seeking to expand its influence in various regions, including South America, as part of its efforts to counterbalance Western dominance. Collaborating with Hezbollah could allow Russia to gain leverage in a region traditionally considered within the sphere of influence of the United States [21].

One area where collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA could manifest is in the realm of cyber warfare. Both entities have demonstrated their capabilities in the cyber domain. Hezbollah, with support from its Iranian sponsors, has engaged in cyber activities, including hacking and disinformation campaigns. RIA, such as the GRU, have been accused of orchestrating cyberattacks in various parts of the world. In South America, these two entities could share expertise and resources, potentially targeting critical infrastructure, government institutions, or financial systems. Such cyber collaboration could have significant destabilizing effects and pose a threat to regional cybersecurity.

Another aspect to consider is the potential convergence of interests in the illicit economy. South America has long been a hub for drug trafficking, with various criminal organizations operating in the region. Hezbollah has been accused of involvement in the drug trade to finance its activities, and Russia has a history of exploiting illicit networks to advance its interests. Collaboration in this arena could involve intelligence sharing, money laundering, or even joint operations to protect drug routes and maximize profits. Such collaboration could undermine the rule of law and fuel criminal enterprises, further destabilizing the region [22].

Additionally, the political landscape in South America presents opportunities for Hezbollah and RIA to collaborate. Some countries in the region have experienced political instability and anti-Western sentiments, creating an environment in which these actors may find common cause. Russia has sought to build alliances with governments that are critical of the United States, and Hezbollah has used political influence to gain support among Shiite communities and sympathetic political factions. The convergence of their interests could lead to cooperation in influencing domestic politics, shaping policy decisions, or even supporting like-minded political movements [17].

### **3.2 The potential of collaboration in Africa**

The potential collaboration between Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militant group, and RIA in Africa is a topic that raises concerns and speculation among experts and policymakers. While there is no concrete evidence to confirm a direct and formal alliance between these two entities on the African continent, it is essential to explore the factors that could influence such collaboration and consider the potential implications for Africa's security, geopolitics, and regional stability [3].

One of the factors that could drive Hezbollah and RIA to explore collaboration in Africa is the region's increasing strategic importance. Africa's vast resources, including minerals, energy reserves, and agricultural lands, have attracted the interest of global powers seeking to secure their access to these valuable assets. Russia, under President Vladimir Putin's leadership, has been eager to expand its influence in Africa as part of its broader strategy to counterbalance Western dominance. Hezbollah, with its global reach and connections, may see opportunities to align with Russian interests on the continent [23].

Additionally, both Hezbollah and RIA have demonstrated their capabilities in the realms of unconventional warfare and asymmetric tactics. Hezbollah, with support from Iran, has honed its skills in guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and proxy conflicts in the Middle East. Russia, through its intelligence agencies like the GRU, has engaged in hybrid warfare tactics, including disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and support for paramilitary groups. These shared expertise areas could provide a basis for collaboration, as both entities seek to leverage their skills in a region characterized by conflicts, instability, and weak governance.



One area where collaboration might manifest is in the field of intelligence sharing and analysis. RIA, with their extensive global reach, could provide Hezbollah with valuable information on African governments, regional dynamics, and emerging security threats. This intelligence could assist Hezbollah in identifying potential partners, allies, or opportunities for expanding its influence on the continent. In return, Hezbollah's networks and expertise could support RIA efforts to gather information, track extremist groups, and protect its interests in Africa [24].

The evolving security landscape in Africa also presents potential opportunities for collaboration. The continent faces a range of security challenges, including terrorism, organized crime, and insurgency movements. Hezbollah has experience in asymmetric warfare and has been accused of providing training and support to various militant groups in the Middle East. RIA, likewise, have engaged in counterterrorism operations and have supported governments in conflict zones. Their collaboration could involve coordinating efforts to combat common threats, such as Islamist extremist groups operating in Africa, thereby enhancing regional security.

Moreover, Africa's political terrain, marked by diverse governments, shifting alliances, and fragile states, offers opportunities for Hezbollah and RIA to exert influence. Both entities have a history of manipulating political processes and supporting like-minded factions. Hezbollah has sought to gain political influence in Lebanon and beyond, while Russia has pursued strategic partnerships with governments that align with its interests. In Africa, their collaboration might involve supporting sympathetic political actors or influencing political outcomes to advance their shared goals.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In conclusion, the examination of the potential collaboration between Hezbollah and RIA reveals a complex and multifaceted nexus that exists within a rapidly changing global landscape. While there is no definitive evidence to confirm a direct and formal alliance between these two entities, various factors suggest that their interests may converge in regions of strategic importance, such as the Middle East, South America, and Africa. Hezbollah's global reach, expertise in asymmetric warfare, and connections to Iran provide it with a unique set of capabilities and interests, while Russia, under President Vladimir Putin's leadership, seeks to expand its influence and counterbalance Western dominance on the international stage.

The potential areas of collaboration span from intelligence-sharing and analysis to cyber warfare, asymmetric tactics, and influence operations. Both entities have demonstrated their capabilities in these domains and may find opportunities to align their interests in regions where conflicts, instability, and weak governance prevail. However, numerous obstacles and risks, including the presence of Western intelligence agencies, local dynamics, and potential backlash, could deter or limit the extent of their collaboration.

The implications of such collaboration, if it were to materialize, would extend beyond the regions of interest to impact global security, stability, and the balance of power. It would raise concerns about the potential exacerbation of conflicts, destabilization of regions, and threats to cybersecurity. As such, international stakeholders, including governments, regional organizations, and intelligence agencies, must remain vigilant and proactive in monitoring, analyzing, and countering any activities that may pose a threat to peace and security.

In an era marked by increasing uncertainty, shifting alliances, and emerging security challenges, understanding and addressing the potential collaboration between non-state actors like Hezbollah and state actors like Russia is essential. This complex nexus underscores the evolving nature of international relations, where traditional and non-traditional actors alike seek to advance their interests in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. It is incumbent upon the global community to adapt and respond effectively to these dynamics, prioritizing diplomacy, conflict prevention, and the protection of international norms and values to maintain global stability and security.

## Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that has no known financial or non-financial competing interests in any material discussed in this paper.

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