

Putin and the Shiite 'Axis of Resistance'

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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The resurgence of the Shiite axis was made possible in part by the absence of a credible U.S. policy in Syria, and it will only be bolstered if Washington embraces Russia and Iran as regional security partners.

In the summer of 2006, the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah went toe to toe with Israel for 34 days. When the smoke cleared, Hezbollah declared "divine victory," and soon after, Middle Eastern capitals were plastered with posters featuring militia leader Hassan Nasrallah alongside his benefactors Syrian President Bashar Assad and Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. This Shiite so-called "Axis of Resistance" achieved widespread regional popularity, including unprecedented support among Sunni Muslims, which lasted until 2011, when Assad, backed by Hezbollah and Iran, began his campaign to eradicate Sunni regime opponents.

In the aftermath of Russia's deployment of an expeditionary force in Syria, a new slew of posters have appeared. The current iteration features images of Nasrallah, Assad, Khamenei, and Russian President Vladimir Putin, with an Arabic caption that roughly translates "Men who bow to no one but God." The poster, reportedly displayed in central Damascus, suggests another emerging regional "Axis of Resistance." Unlike 2006, however, this new axis -- which targets Syrian Sunnis instead of Israel -- is deeply polarizing. Worse, the Obama administration, through acts of omission and commission, risks implicating the U.S. in the new alliance...

[Read the full article on the Hill website. \(http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/defense/256164-putin-and-the-shiite-axis-of-resistance\)](http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/defense/256164-putin-and-the-shiite-axis-of-resistance) ❖

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