

Proposed title: The *Axis of Resistance*’s Joint Operations Room: how Tehran and its allied non-state armed groups collaborate to “unify the fronts”

Author: Philippe BOU NADER, PhD candidate & Paris-based Financial Intelligence and Investigations Consultant

Abstract:

Mid-April 2023, a short propaganda video was published by pro-Iranian news outlets and social media accounts showing a “Joint Operations Room” (JOR) comprised of members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hizballah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and various other Arab (Iraqi and Syrian) and non-Arab (Afghan and Pakistani) armed groups aligned to or supported by Iran.

This followed a long series of televised speeches and interviews made by Hizballah’s General Secretary and IRGC officials in which the *Axis of Resistance*, an extra-legal alliance of state and non-state actors, claimed it was working on “unifying the fronts” against Israeli and American interests in the Middle East. Various local commentators, who are perceived as being close to this *Axis*, further explained that this JOR is a counterweight to Israel’s “Campaign between Wars” strategy.

This paper will first provide a theoretical definition of this “alliance” which sits between the concept of state defence treaties and the concept of non-state agency. It will then illustrate how this JOR is likely involved in coordinating both military and non-military decisions across the *Axis*’ partners, while guaranteeing to each local actor a certain level of domestic autonomy. Immediately below is a tentative paper structure:

The Axis of Resistance

- a. *Its Members*
- b. *Its Tactical and Strategic Goals*

The Joint Operations Room

- a. *Unifying the Military Fronts*
- b. *Unifying the Political Fronts*

Non-Exhaustive List of References

The primary sources for this paper will be comprised of (1) Official statements of various Middle Eastern armed groups, with a focus on Hizballah (Lebanon), Hamas (Gaza), Kataeb Hizballah (Iraq) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (Iraq), and of IRGC-affiliated entities and individuals; (2) Televised speeches of Hezbollah’s General Secretary, Hassan Nasrallah, and various Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups’ officials; (3) Israeli think tanks’ publications and Israeli government and security/defence officials’ announcements; and (4) Middle Eastern press, particularly Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi, Palestinian, and Israeli media outlets.