

# The Tactical Side of Russia's Arms Sales to the Middle East

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**Putin continues to use weapons deals as a tool for gaining political influence and changing power dynamics abroad, courting virtually every government in the region.**

***T***he following is an excerpt from a paper in the Jamestown Foundation's workshop series "Russia in the Middle East." To read the full text, download the PDF or [visit the foundation's website \(https://jamestown.org/press-releases/jamestown-holds-second-russia-middle-east-workshop/\)](https://jamestown.org/press-releases/jamestown-holds-second-russia-middle-east-workshop/).

Russia is one of the world's top arms exporters, second only to the United States. The Middle East and North Africa region has emerged in recent years as Moscow's second most important arms market after Asia. Moscow has made great strides in this region since Vladimir Putin came to power, and especially in recent years, after it embarked on major military reform in 2008. Arms sales matter to the Kremlin because they are a major source of financial gain, but these sales are also a tactical foreign policy instrument for wielding influence. Politically, Russian arms come with few strings attached and thus are a great choice when a country wants to diversify away from the West or at least signal such an intent. Moscow has made inroads with traditional clients such as Iran, Syria and Egypt, but also diversified toward countries closer to the West, such as the Arab Gulf states, Morocco and Turkey...



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