

It's West Versus East in the Battle to Inoculate the Mideast

Tara Kavalier / Feb. 10, 2021

Russian, Chinese vaccines compete with preparations made in the US, UK and Sweden

The next frontier in the East-West rivalry lies in vaccines against the coronavirus, particularly in the Middle East, where Moscow and Beijing are striving to expand their influence since the United States has scaled back its involvement in recent years.

[...]

According to **Galia Lavi**, a research fellow at the Israel-China program at the **Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)** in Tel Aviv, China has sold and donated vaccines to MENA countries. Egypt has launched its vaccine drive using the Sinopharm vaccine, with United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey greenlighting the inoculation for use.

Lavi believes that through the vaccines, Beijing is reaching for its long-term goal of increased influence in the region.

“They want to improve their image that took a hit because of the COVID-19 outbreak and their late response, and strengthen their connections with the countries of this area,” she told The Media Line. “In the future, China hopes those countries will remember who helped them and support China on issues that are important to Beijing.”

Zvi Magen, a senior fellow at **INSS** and a former Israeli ambassador to Moscow, describes Russia's Sputnik V vaccine as one of its “toys for foreign policy,” used to garner favor overseas.

“Whether it's technology, weapons or vaccines, it's the same common denominator of goods Russia can supply,” he told The Media Line. “It's important for their general image and relationship with those other countries.”

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