

American Withdrawal from the Middle East Hands Influence to Moscow

April 21 2023

Among the more disturbing items in the recent leak of classified Pentagon materials is evidence that Egypt was prepared to manufacture rockets and other munitions for Russia. **Yoel Guzansky** and **Arkady Mil-Man** examine this and other revelations about the Kremlin's relations with the Arab world in light of what is already known about the subject. They find that Vladimir Putin has been usurping the traditional U.S. role in the region:

Russia remains an important arms source and between 2018 and 2022 was the third largest arms exporter, after the U.S. and France, to Middle East states (including Iran). [Another] central factor in Russia's importance to the Gulf states is its good relations with the Iranian regime, and Moscow's ability to influence Tehran's decisions. In the eyes of the Gulf states, the U.S. failed to prevent Iran from going nuclear and is insufficiently attentive to their security issues, even as Iran has strengthened militarily and positioned itself at the nuclear threshold. The relationship with Russia is therefore vital to them as leverage over Iran.

Russia and the Gulf states also have a partnership of interests in coordinating oil prices. The Gulf states, which hold some 40 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, have indicated (most recently in their April 2023 decision) that they are committed to understandings with Russia as part of the OPEC+ cartel. The decision by the Gulf states to cut oil production again—in coordination with Russia—has aroused anger in the U.S., both because of its impact on oil markets and because of the indirect assistance it offers the Russian war effort in Ukraine.

U.S. influence in the region has weakened, but not disappeared. Thus, for example, significant U.S. pressure led the UAE to vote in the UN General Assembly against Russia, after it abstained in the first vote in the UN Security Council. Similar heavy pressure also led the UAE to cancel the license it had granted for the operation of a Russian bank on its territory—a step that would have allowed Russia to move money easily in spite of sanctions against it.

However, Israel must continue to observe with some concern the trend of developing relations between Russia (and China) and states in the region.

[Read more at *Institute for National Security Studies*](https://mosaicmagazine.com/picks/politics-current-affairs/2023/04/american-withdrawal-from-the-middle-east-hands-influence-to-moscow/)

<https://mosaicmagazine.com/picks/politics-current-affairs/2023/04/american-withdrawal-from-the-middle-east-hands-influence-to-moscow/>