

FOREIGN AFFAIRS



A Nuclear Nile

The Politics Behind Egypt's Quest For Nuclear Energy

By [Sigurd Neubauer](#) and [Yoel Guzansky](#)

On November 19, less than six months after Iran and the [P5+1 reached a historic nuclear deal](#), [Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi signed two agreements with Russia](#) to finance and build [Egypt's first nuclear power plant](#). Under the agreement, the two countries will build and operate four [1,200-megawatt reactors in the northwestern city of Dabaa](#) along the Mediterranean coast.

The announcement came just days before [Turkish authorities shot down a Russian fighter jet](#) for allegedly violating its airspace. Now, the unfolding [Russian–Turkish crisis](#) could potentially enhance Cairo's standing as it seeks to help shape events by establishing itself as an actor to be reckoned with within the region's ever changing alliances. Already, [Moscow and Riyadh are jockeying for Egypt's support on Syria](#) as they both seek to take advantage of [Sisi's known opposition to political Islam](#) to advance their respective regional agendas. By deepening [anti-terrorism cooperation with Egypt](#), especially in the recent aftermath of the [downing of a Russian passenger plane over Sinai](#), Moscow hopes to strengthen its regional foothold. Saudi Arabia denounced the recent [Russian military intervention in Syria](#), seeing it as an attempt by [Moscow to preserve the Assad regime](#), an ally of Iran, Riyadh's main regional rival.

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