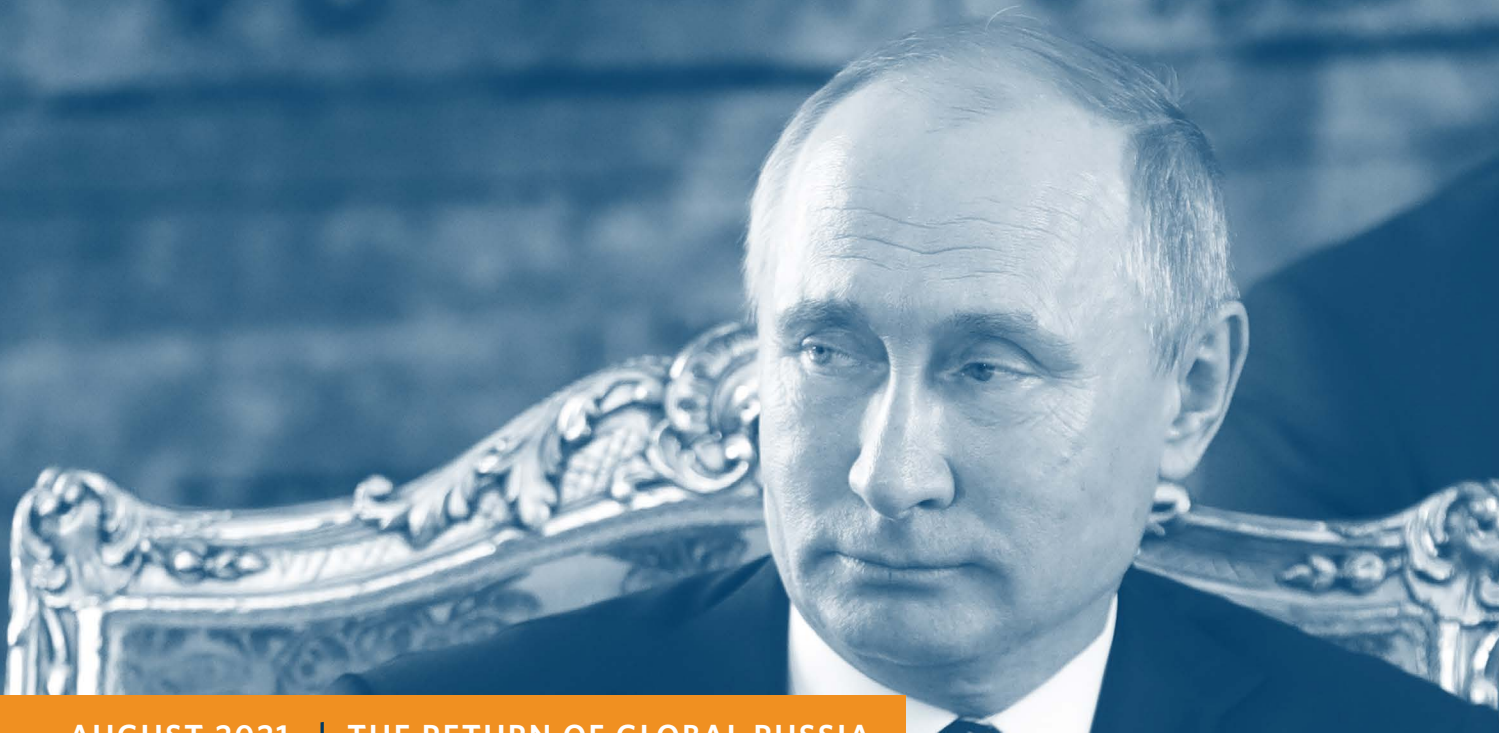




CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE



AUGUST 2021 | THE RETURN OF GLOBAL RUSSIA

Reassessing Russian Capabilities in the Levant and North Africa

Frederic Wehrey and Andrew S. Weiss

Reassessing Russian Capabilities in the Levant and North Africa

Frederic Wehrey and Andrew S. Weiss



This publication was funded by the Russia Strategic Initiative
U.S. European Command, Stuttgart Germany

Opinions, arguments, viewpoints, and conclusions expressed in this work do not represent those of RSI,
U.S. EUCOM, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

© 2021 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All rights reserved.

Carnegie does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented herein are those of the author(s)
and do not necessarily reflect the views of Carnegie, its staff, or its trustees.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission
in writing from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Please direct inquiries to:

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Publications Department
1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
P: + 1 202 483 7600
F: + 1 202 483 1840
CarnegieEndowment.org

This publication can be downloaded at no cost at CarnegieEndowment.org.

Cover Photo: Mikhail Metzel\TASS via Getty Images

CONTENTS

Summary	1
Introduction	3
Syria	4
Israel	6
Lebanon	9
Algeria	10
Libya	12
Egypt	14
Conclusions and Implications	15
About the Authors	17
Acknowledgments	18
About the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	19
About the Russia Strategic Initiative	19
Notes	20

Summary

Russia may be back in the Middle East, but is it a truly strategic player? The picture is decidedly mixed. After abandoning most of its presence in the Levant and North Africa during the late 1980s, the Kremlin has alarmed Western policymakers in recent years by filling power vacuums and exploiting the missteps of the United States and the European states. Moscow panders to the insecurities and ambitions of local regimes, trying to enrich itself along the way. While Russian activism is part of a broader push for great power status, most of its policies are rooted more in opportunism than grand strategy.

Yet Russian influence is formidable in many respects. In war-racked states like Syria and Libya, Moscow has adroitly deployed military forces and engaged with actors that are off-limits to Westerners, thus positioning itself as a significant power broker. In Egypt and Algeria, it has pursued arms deals that are unencumbered by human rights conditions. Russia's economic footprint is expanding in fields ranging from infrastructure to tourism to energy, contributing, in some instances, to the region's cronyism and corruption.

At the same time, a closer look at Russian activism reveals that its ability to shape events in the Middle East is far more modest than is commonly assumed. Russia has neither the tools nor the willingness to tackle the region's deep-seated socioeconomic and governance problems. In Syria, the limits of the Kremlin's military commitment have been exposed amid clashes with other powerful, outside players and a hardening stalemate on the ground. For now, Moscow is simply not in a position to achieve its desired military or political outcomes absent a significant investment of new resources.

Russian economic penetration is driven mainly by short-term objectives and a search for outsized financial rewards that sometimes fail to materialize or to make Moscow an attractive partner. Russian inroads are further limited by regional factors like fractured politics and capricious local actors, who, despite being plied with Russian attention and support, do not behave as docile proxies. In many instances, Middle Eastern rulers exert far more power in shaping the extent of Russian influence than conventional narratives suggest. Successive leaders of Egypt, for instance, have perfected the game of soliciting Russia's attention to gain leverage over other patrons, namely the United States. For their part, Israeli leaders have worked hard to ensure that Russia does not throw major obstacles in the way of Israel's ongoing campaign against Iranian military encroachment in Syria—yet they surely take note when Moscow does the bare minimum in raising concerns about the situation in Gaza. The limits of Russian influence are similarly noticeable in the heartbreaking economic crisis in Lebanon, where Moscow is little more than a bystander.

With these limitations in mind, Washington should avoid viewing the region through a zero-sum, Cold War lens that sees every development as a net gain or loss for Moscow or minimizes the agency of local actors. In the context of multiple policy challenges across the globe and at home, U.S. decisionmakers need to prioritize the areas of Russian influence that necessitate a response. In so doing, they should avoid playing the arms sales game on Moscow's terms or letting themselves be instrumentalized by autocratic Middle Eastern rulers who point to Russian overtures to seek leniency and support from Washington.

U.S. and European policymakers have ample tools at their disposal that can frustrate or slow the more malign forms of Moscow's inroads. Yet the net impact of such pushback on Russian resolve should not be overstated. Instead, Washington should focus its energies on its biggest comparative advantage vis-à-vis Moscow in the region: namely, its abundant sources of influence and leverage in the economic and security spheres, its still-potent soft power, and its leadership of multilateral diplomacy and the rules-based global order.

Introduction

As the sixth anniversary of Moscow's military intervention in Syria approaches in September 2021, Russia's return to the power politics of the Middle East and North Africa is hard to ignore. Moscow routinely plays on openings created by U.S. attempts to pull back from the region and on the mistakes of other players.¹ Throughout the region, the country is once again seen as an important interlocutor, with local actors soliciting Russian involvement and also circumscribing how far it can actually go. Although the Kremlin revels in being at the center of the action, it has not demonstrated that it has the clout, resources, or desire to address the region's deeply entrenched sources of dysfunction and instability.

The highly opportunistic nature of Russian activism in the Middle East and North Africa is hardly a new phenomenon. As preeminent analysts like Arnold Horelick frequently pointed out during the 1960s and 1970s, the Kremlin's mode of operation during the Cold War period was dominated by adapting to or seizing upon the flow of events while trying to manage the behavior of clients that it had less than perfect control over.² The parallels to today's realities are hard to overlook. At the same time, the growing focus in Western policy circles on strategic competition with Russia sometimes overshadows awareness of such patterns of behavior, Moscow's own missteps, and the underlying weaknesses of the Russian policy tool kit.

Of course, Moscow is candid about its inability to address the region's mounting political and socioeconomic problems.³ But real problem solving has never been central to Russia's strategic goals. Instead, Russia's involvement in the Middle East is part of a broader push to be seen as a great power on the global stage.⁴ After abandoning most of the Middle East and North Africa practically overnight during the late 1980s, the Kremlin has tried to restore, largely on the cheap, the trappings it long enjoyed during the tsarist and Soviet periods.⁵ But such lofty ambitions are often subordinated to short-term goals such as discrediting the reputation of the United States, filling power vacuums, pandering to the ambitions and insecurities of regional players, and seizing any commercial opportunities that come its way.

Understanding the historical backdrop to Russia's current involvement in the region remains essential for recognizing longer-term patterns and goals, but that tells only part of the story.⁶ During the post-2015 period, state and substate actors in the Middle East and North Africa have generally been happy to play along with the Kremlin's heavily transactional and symbolic approach, treating it at times as a refreshing alternative to the U.S.-led security order. For Israel and other countries, the benefits of engaging with Moscow generally outweigh the costs of taking a more adversarial approach that would put them smack in the middle of East-West tensions. Israel also has been adept at leveraging or instrumentalizing closer ties with Moscow for its leaders' own purposes. Throughout most of

the region, leaders do not count heavily on Moscow and are not overly disillusioned when it doesn't deliver. And in Syria, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad is all too happy to play Russia off of its other patron, Iran.⁷

These dynamics are especially apparent in North Africa, a region that has witnessed concerted Russian activism on multiple fronts.⁸ Yet these Russian interventions are more the product of opportunism than any calculated grand strategy. And, on balance, they have yielded only mixed results for Russian interests. To be sure, Moscow has intervened militarily in Libya's civil war and pursued major arms deals with Algeria and Egypt. Russian and foreign media outlets have often hinted at Russian designs for military bases in Algeria, Egypt, and Libya, but Moscow's actual footprint comprises a hodgepodge of dealings in the military, infrastructure, energy, agricultural, and tourism sectors. These dealings are meaningful but not necessarily threatening to U.S. interests—nor are they assured stepping-stones for a broad-based and permanent security presence.

Russian inroads are often countered by factors inherent to the region. In North Africa, for example, Moscow's ability to control events is limited by those countries' fractured politics and highly personalized and sometimes unpredictable governance. Local rulers often exploit Russian overtures to secure more favorable attention from their long-standing patrons, the United States and Europe. Perhaps most importantly, Russia must also contend with the increasingly assertive presence of other foreign actors seeking arms sales and energy deals, such as France, Germany, Iran, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, whose interests sometimes overlap or clash with those of Moscow.

Syria

Over the course of more than a decade of civil war, Syria has served as the centerpiece of Russia's claim to regional power status. Starting in 2011, Sino-Russian coordination in the United Nations (UN) Security Council stymied diplomatic efforts led by the United States and the European Union (EU) to put pressure on Assad.⁹ Amid worries about the imminent collapse of the Assad regime in autumn 2015, the Kremlin launched a major military intervention. That effort ultimately broke the back of Syrian opposition forces supported by Washington and regional players. The Kremlin touted its accomplishments in Syria as putting an end to a wave of U.S.-backed regime change during the 2011 Arab uprisings and their aftermath. It also secured long-term naval and air basing arrangements in Syria and used its military intervention as a showcase for Russian hard power capabilities and arms exports.¹⁰

Yet this image of unchecked military success glosses over the fact that the Kremlin accomplished most of its chief war aims by the end of 2017 and that the environment it faces in Syria today is far more challenging. These circumstances cast Russia's strengths and weaknesses in a somewhat different light. While the costs of the war have certainly been modest for Russia in terms of military casualties and the financial burden, the overall return on investment is less than what the Kremlin expected, even accounting for the fact that Russia's goals have continued to change. For now, a negotiated political settlement remains out of reach, as does international recognition of the Assad regime—let alone access to lucrative contracts for reconstruction of the country. Moscow has no pathway for reaching its current desired end-state absent a major infusion of additional military, political, or economic resources.

Even though Russian and Iranian military support was crucial for the Assad regime's reversal of fortune, developments on the ground have often been disappointing, and in some cases even humiliating, for Moscow. Most famously, in February 2018 a battalion-sized group of Russian mercenaries connected to the state-sponsored Wagner Group suffered the loss of more than 200 men during a four-hour battle in which ground-based U.S. air controllers called in devastating air strikes from bombers, fighter-bombers, drones, gunships, and attack helicopters.¹¹ The episode was a brutal reminder to the Kremlin that its 4,000-man Russian contingent is lacking in precision firepower and is thus vulnerable to military pushback from other external powers operating inside Syria.¹²

These military limitations were further exposed during fighting between Turkish and pro-Assad forces in Idlib Governorate in early 2020.¹³ Following the deaths of at least thirty-three Turkish soldiers in airstrikes reportedly by Russian and Assad regime jets, Ankara conducted a counterassault using a mix of armed drones, special forces, and artillery.¹⁴ Much to Moscow's surprise, Turkey destroyed large numbers of pro-Assad forces and Russian-supplied Pantsir and Buk-2 air defenses. Russia's reluctance to retaliate militarily against Turkey or augment its forces in the wake of the fighting in Idlib essentially exposed the upper ceiling of Russia's military commitment in Syria. Ankara later built upon and refined these tactics during its successful military interventions against both Wagner Group mercenaries deployed in Libya from late 2019 to early 2020 and Russia's client Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh later in 2020.

Russia's limited presence in northeast Syria tells a somewhat similar story of how constraints on Russia's military presence failed both to overcome local complexities and to deny freedom of action to rival outside actors. While the hasty withdrawal of U.S. forces in October 2019 handed Moscow

and the Assad regime a propaganda bonanza, the situation has not rebounded to either's clear advantage. On the contrary, Russian forces and the Assad regime have struggled to create a strong beachhead amid a complex situation involving jockeying by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, Turkey's widening control over parts of northern Syria, and the residual U.S. military presence.¹⁵ Russian harassment of U.S. forces in summer 2020 also backfired, triggering a Pentagon decision to send in Bradley fighting vehicles and Sentinel radar as reinforcements and to increase overflights by U.S. fighter jets.¹⁶

Time and again, U.S. policymakers have demonstrated that they can prevent the Kremlin from achieving its core goals with fairly minimal effort.¹⁷ Congressionally mandated Caesar Act sanctions, for example, prevent meaningful EU or Gulf reconstruction aid from flowing in, which puts additional pressure on Syria's devastated economy.¹⁸ Moscow has not offered the Assad regime a financial bailout nor has it been able to convince Gulf Arab states to step up, given their worries about potential U.S. secondary sanctions. Full normalization of relations between Assad and U.S. allies in the Gulf as well as Syria's readmission to the Arab League remain stalled.¹⁹

Perhaps the biggest shortcoming in Moscow's policy is the centrality of an unachievable goal: the reconquest of the rest of Syria by the Assad regime. With a military situation on the ground that has hardened into a fairly durable stalemate, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that the Kremlin or the Assad regime will be able to shift that reality based on their existing capabilities, at least for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, Assad, much to the annoyance of Moscow, continues to use Iran to balance Russia, treating the competition between his two patrons as a boost to his own room for maneuver. Yet for all its frustrations with the status quo in Syria, the Kremlin shows no signs of contemplating a fundamental rethink of its overall strategy.

Israel

Israel is another Middle Eastern state where Russia's increased high-level access to senior decision-makers is frequently portrayed as part and parcel of a growing convergence of interests. However, the reality is more complex, due to Israel's domestic politics, security interests, and the centrality of its long-standing ties with the United States.²⁰

Over the past two decades, Moscow has benefited from friendly ties with successive prime ministers, namely Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert, and Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu, in particular, fostered the impression to domestic and foreign audiences that he was one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest partners and that Russia-Israel relations had taken on strategic importance.²¹ Part of this was a blatantly political ploy. Netanyahu's Likud party has long prized support from the

million-plus Israelis with roots in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. During the summer 2019 election, for example, the Netanyahu campaign blanketed the sides of the Likud party headquarters in downtown Tel Aviv with giant pictures of him shaking hands (separately) with Putin and then U.S. president Donald Trump under a banner reading “In a League of His Own.”²² For his part, Putin used encounters with Netanyahu to send the message that Western attempts to isolate the Russian leader had been unsuccessful.

Netanyahu’s engagement with Moscow also reflected hard-nosed security calculations—specifically, keeping Russia on the sidelines during Israeli military operations in Syria against Iran and its proxies, part of an effort known as the Campaign Between the Wars. These overtures largely succeeded. In a series of conversations that began in September 2015, Netanyahu persuaded Putin that Iran’s military encroachment posed an existential threat, that Israel was determined to roll it back, and that it was not in Moscow’s interest to test Israel’s determination to defend itself.²³ Israeli-Russian military deconfliction arrangements helped ensure that Moscow did not throw meaningful obstacles in the way of Israeli operations.²⁴ The hundreds of precision strikes conducted by Israel since late 2015 testify to the quality of its advanced military and intelligence capabilities and, even more importantly, the priority attached to avoiding any risk to Russian forces on the ground.

Yet in other instances, the convergence of Israeli and Russian interests was stymied by Moscow’s inability—or unwillingness—to shape events in Syria to Israel’s liking, specifically Assad’s failure to give up all of his chemical weapons and the failed attempt to push Iranian forces and Iran-backed militia groups away from sensitive regions along the Syrian-Israeli and Syrian-Jordanian borders. A local cease-fire in Daraa Governorate in southwest Syria—which was announced with flourish at Trump’s first two meetings with Putin in 2017 and collapsed before too long due to a change of heart by Moscow—illustrates this state of affairs.²⁵ Russian military pressure during this timeframe led to the negotiated surrender of rebel groups in the region and the formal restoration of the Assad regime’s control over the borders with Israel and Jordan. However, Moscow proved unable to deliver a deal to keep Iran’s military presence and heavy weapons away from the Syrian-Israeli border, and conveniently tried to shift blame to Washington’s handling of unrelated issues.²⁶



Campaign advertisements on Likud party headquarters in Tel Aviv in July 2019 showing Benjamin Netanyahu shaking hands with Vladimir Putin (right) and Donald Trump (left). Photo by Jack Guez/AFP via Getty Images.

Ever since then, Russia's thin military presence in southern Syria, paired with its limited success in creating semi-autonomous military units consisting of former rebels who have pledged not to challenge the Assad regime and the regime's increased desire to reassert control over Daraa Governorate have created a volatile environment that stirs security worries in Israel and Jordan. The region remains quite vulnerable to penetration by Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah and other actors, underscoring the limits of Moscow's ability to serve as a reliable security partner for Jerusalem on Syria.²⁷ The situation in the region has been destabilized by a siege of a rebel-controlled section of Daraa city by the Assad regime and Iranian-backed units that began in June 2021 and sluggish efforts by Russian military representatives to broker a solution to the crisis.²⁸

Other hallmarks of constructive Russian influence over security issues of key concern to Israel are somewhat hard to come by—let alone any signs Moscow is on a trajectory toward becoming a strategic partner to Israel. For example, during the May 2021 crisis in Gaza, Moscow's role in Israel was confined to that of a bystander. Its public statements were largely recycled from previous conflicts between Israel and Hamas in 2006, 2008, 2012, and 2014.²⁹ Russian consultations with representatives from Hamas and the Palestinian Authority generated little in concrete terms, nor did Palestinians appear to bank on Russian support. For all the suggestions that Russia's intervention in Syria would once again allow it to serve as an important mediator for the region's many conflicts, the Egyptian and U.S. roles in the 2021 crisis in Gaza showed that Russia is simply not in the same league.³⁰

Russian arms sales to Israel's adversaries are another point of divergence. For decades, the Kremlin has faced frequent complaints from Israel—and the United States—about the weapons it sells to Iran and other countries. However, external influence over Moscow's behavior peaked in the mid-1990s when Russia's leaders were at their most vulnerable.³¹ The long delay in the delivery of Russian S-300 air defenses to Iran in 2016 was driven by dramatic ups and downs in Russian-Iranian relations caused by revelations of Tehran's nuclear activities and the protracted negotiation of the Iran nuclear deal.³² More recently, with the expiration of the UN-mandated arms embargo on Tehran in October 2020, there have been reports of Russian-Iranian conversations about purchases of S-400 missiles, Su-30 fighters, Yak-130 trainers, and T-90 battle tanks.³³ Still, the main limiting factor in Moscow's willingness to sell weapons to Iran is not high-level Israeli lobbying, as some members of the Netanyahu team have claimed, but rather Tehran's inability to pay.³⁴

At the same time, Moscow seems to understand how its arms transfers may contribute to risks beyond its control in a volatile region. Following the deaths of fifteen Russian personnel aboard an Il-20 reconnaissance plane in September 2018 in a Syrian friendly fire incident that Russian military leaders blamed on Israel, the Kremlin provided Damascus with its own S-300 missiles.³⁵ (The

Russian contingent in Hmeimim has been protected by an S-400 missile system since the beginning of its intervention.³⁶ Yet the fact that Syria's S-300 system has never been fired against Israeli jets gives rise to suspicions that the Russian military, not Assad's forces, retains firing authority.³⁷ Moscow surely does not want the Syrians to create another dangerous situation that might endanger Russian personnel or provoke an Israeli attack on the S-300. Any successful Israeli attack would surely damage Russia's ability to market the system elsewhere in the world. The same logic applies to the theoretical risks of Russia's transferring an S-400 system to Iran, given the possibility of Israeli preemption.

In the Israeli strategic community, there are few illusions about who the country's true friends are.³⁸ At the same time, any Israeli leader surely would recognize the folly of taking Russia's support for granted or treating its interests cavalierly. Russia's military presence right next door and a wealth of sociocultural, economic, and political connections between the two countries give the Kremlin plenty of potential relevance going forward. At the same time, Moscow is not making the kinds of commitments necessary to become a strategic partner for Israel or putting itself in the middle of sticky situations that might draw attention to the limits of its influence. While it may yet be early days for the coalition government led by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid, there are few echoes of the hype surrounding Israeli-Russian relations that was commonplace during the Netanyahu era. With the contours of the Russia-Israel relationship well-established—and well-understood—on both sides, one suspects that ongoing interactions are likely to unfold on a more matter-of-fact basis.

Lebanon

Russia has maintained a relatively low profile during Lebanon's ongoing economic and political meltdown in sharp contrast to the efforts of countries like France and the United States. The latter have tried, for better or worse, to pressure Lebanon's ruling elite to set aside their internal squabbles and take their governing responsibilities seriously. Russia's main contribution has been to highlight concerns over the impact of the crisis on the Syrian economy, given the intertwined and swift depreciation of the local currency in both states.³⁹ Otherwise, Russian efforts during the protracted government formation process were largely episodic.

Nor has Russia visibly sought to deal with risks to both regional stability and Israel's security stemming from the potential unraveling of key institutions like the Lebanese Armed Forces. It has not sought to constrain Hezbollah or Iran from taking advantage of the protracted crisis.⁴⁰ Some analysts have suggested that Moscow might ultimately be able to help elements of the Syrian government reassert influence over Lebanon's direction at Iran's expense, but concrete evidence of such moves is,

as yet, hard to come by.⁴¹ To the extent Russian officialdom focuses on Lebanon at all, its efforts largely consist of hosting visits by members of different political factions as part of the endless jockeying to form a new government.

Russia's willingness to grapple with Lebanon's crisis in practical terms is diminished by an overriding consideration visible in many of its Middle East interventions: money. The search for economic benefits, rather than altruism, is a key driver behind its approach to Lebanon. Russian efforts in the Lebanese energy sector and on-again, off-again discussions over the past decade about arms sales are far from momentous.⁴² For example, the independent Russian energy producer Novatek is part of a consortium led by the French company TotalEnergies that has been seeking hydrocarbons, so far without success, in an offshore block located in waters claimed by both Lebanon and Israel.⁴³ The Russian state oil company Rosneft controls the operations of an oil refinery in the Lebanese port of Tripoli.⁴⁴ However, any such activities are basically a sideshow, given the scale of Lebanon's crippling energy crisis, which is the product of irresponsible government fuel subsidies and the lucrative cross-border smuggling trade with Syria.

Algeria

Algeria has long been an object of considerable attention by Russia and before that the Soviet Union, which was among the first countries to recognize Algeria's provisional government in 1960 during the war against French colonial rule. Independent Algeria soon became a major purchaser of Soviet weapons. Today, Algeria is the third-largest importer of arms from Moscow and its largest customer on the African continent. Roughly 70 percent of its military hardware originates from Russia.⁴⁵

In 2001, partly in response to Algeria joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Mediterranean Dialogue, Moscow signed a strategic partnership agreement with Algiers.⁴⁶ In 2006, during Putin's first and, so far, only visit to Algiers, Russia forgave \$4.7 billion of Algeria's debt and signed additional bilateral agreements, most notably on arms.⁴⁷ That same year, the two countries' state-owned gas companies, Gazprom and Sonatrach, finalized a memorandum of understanding.⁴⁸ Subsequent years saw additional agreements signed in fields ranging from automobile manufacturing to atomic energy.

For all the hype about these initiatives, the net results for Russian geopolitical interests have been mixed. According to Russian officials and media reports, results from the strategic agreements of the early 2000s were disappointing, often stemming from late arms deliveries.⁴⁹ On other issues, like hydrocarbons, the terms of the signed documents were vague or nonbinding.⁵⁰ Gazprom and Sonatrach may collaborate on certain pipeline and exploration projects, but they have strong incentives to compete—especially on the export of gas to Europe.⁵¹ The volume of Algerian trade with Europe continues to vastly outweigh potential benefits from any cooperation with Moscow.⁵²

More important, perhaps, is Algiers' famously prickly reluctance to align itself with either of the superpowers during the Cold War, even as its military ties with the Soviet Union grew more robust. A similar neutrality is seen today in its refusal to actively intervene in the Middle East's and Africa's major conflicts and rivalries. Russian officials have tried to spin this ambivalent posture as a convergence with Moscow's aims in the region—especially the two states' historic support for status-quo Arab authoritarians, like the late Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and Syria's Assad. But Algiers has also taken actions that have irked Moscow, like the 2019 establishment of an Algeria-Ukraine parliamentary friendship committee.⁵³ Similarly, Russian press outlets have noted Algeria's repeated refusal to grant Moscow permission to build a sought-after naval base at the Algerian port city of Oran.⁵⁴

Internal Algerian dynamics create additional complications and uncertainty for Russia. Entrenched corruption in Algeria reportedly derailed a possible investment in a Lada automobile manufacturing plant.⁵⁵ Algeria's mounting fiscal crisis, related to shrinking exports of gas and oil, has compounded the challenges facing Moscow.⁵⁶ On the political front, the popular 2019 protests that led to the resignation of the aging president Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the possibility of a more liberal, reformist successor are similarly unsettling for Moscow—even though a drastic realignment of Algeria foreign policy is unlikely and military-to-military ties between the two countries remain solid.⁵⁷

Arms contracts remain the anchor of the bilateral relationship. Algeria is reportedly set to receive advanced Sukhoi-34 fighter-bomber aircraft later in 2021 and has reportedly signed a contract to buy the Su-57 multi-role stealth fighter.⁵⁸ Yet even on weapons transfers, Moscow's primacy is not unchallenged: Algeria, as noted in a recent report on the global arms trade, has turned to Germany as an additional supplier of arms.⁵⁹ Ultimately, Moscow has been unable to convert weapons sales to Algiers into a meaningful strategic partnership or a platform for power projection into the Mediterranean or North Africa.

Libya

Neighboring Libya has similarly been a long-standing site of Russian activism and influence, driven both by geopolitics and by economic interests. At the 1945 Potsdam Conference, Joseph Stalin unsuccessfully tried to obtain a UN trusteeship over the former Italian-ruled territory of Tripolitania (western Libya).⁶⁰ In the immediate years following the 1969 Libyan officers' coup, which toppled the pro-American king Idris al-Senussi and installed then captain (and later colonel) Qadhafi as de facto head of state, Libya pursued a nominally nonaligned foreign policy. But by the early and mid-1970s, Qadhafi was importing significant quantities of Soviet weaponry, starting a trend of military cooperation that would later expand to the deployment of thousands of Soviet advisers to Libya.⁶¹ By the mid-2000s, Russia had forgiven Libya's substantial debt in return for deals on energy, weapons, and transportation infrastructure.⁶²

Yet Libya's arms trade with Moscow did not translate into real fraternal relations or transform Libya into a strategic Russian client. Throughout the 1970s, for example, Qadhafi attempted to diversify his sources of arms and increasingly turned to the Soviet Union only after Western governments refused or attached conditions.⁶³ Similarly, the oft-cited example of a Russian naval port in Benghazi was always more aspirational than assured; Qadhafi was cleverly dangling this access as leverage over Russia and the West.⁶⁴ And in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, the common narrative of Russian financial losses resulting from the NATO-led regime change was also somewhat misleading. More often than not, Moscow was talking about potential losses resulting from signed or verbally promised deals.

Since then, Russia's activities in Libya can best be described as opportunistic, flexible, diversified, and scalable. Moscow aims to rekindle and surpass the economic benefits harvested under Qadhafi through the installation of a friendly and preferably authoritarian government. Suggestions that Russia seeks to undermine Europe through release of irregular migrants, especially to Italy and, further afield, Germany, vastly overstate Russia's degree of control on the ground.⁶⁵ That said, Russia has opportunistically sought to thwart European diplomacy in Libya through increasingly aggressive initiatives unencumbered by human rights concerns. For example, Moscow has at various points made overtures to a local militia actor on an illegal hydrocarbon deal, cultivated diverse and often divided currents of Qadhafi loyalists, especially the late dictator's son Saif al-Islam, and backed renegade eastern commander Khalifa Haftar.⁶⁶

Yet the notion of Haftar serving as "Moscow's man in Libya" or a reliable Libyan proxy is overblown.⁶⁷ To be sure, Russian support was critical to the aspiring strongman's rise in eastern Libya from 2014 to the present—though clandestine military support to Haftar from two U.S. allies, France and the United Arab Emirates, was arguably more consequential and destabilizing.⁶⁸ Working

with the UAE and Egypt, Russia sent weapons, spare parts, and medical care to Haftar, as well as technicians, logisticians, advisers, and intelligence personnel.⁶⁹ Moscow also printed dinars for the Haftar-aligned, unrecognized Central Bank in eastern Libya, ensuring this parallel administration's solvency. Russia state media and proxy actors supported Haftar's rise with a fairly sophisticated information campaign.⁷⁰ Most significantly, mercenaries from the state-sponsored Wagner Group bolstered the firepower of Haftar's frontline forces during his assault on Tripoli from late 2019 to mid-2020, improving the precision of his artillery, directing the battlefield maneuvers of his fighters, and degrading morale of the Tripoli forces with fearsomely effective sniping.⁷¹ The net result of this injection of Russian support, which was accompanied by Wagner Group human rights abuses like summary executions and the planting of antipersonnel mines in residential areas, was to put Haftar within reach of toppling the internationally recognized government in Tripoli, the Government of National Accord (GNA).⁷²

Despite all of this, Moscow was both suspicious of Haftar, given his long-standing ties to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and contemptuous of his military competence.⁷³ Russia was a reluctant backer of his April 4, 2019, attack on the capital Tripoli.⁷⁴ And even as it was sending mercenaries to assist his campaign in Tripoli, Moscow kept channels open to his opponent, the GNA—pursuing a gas deal in a GNA-controlled western area, for example—in the hopes of reaching a settlement that would secure its economic interests.⁷⁵

More importantly, Moscow's substantial aid to Haftar did not translate into loyalty or responsiveness from the notoriously headstrong Libyan commander. When the Russian Wagner Group deployment on Haftar's behalf prompted the panicked GNA to turn to Turkish military intervention in the form of drones and Syrian mercenaries, the resulting battlefield stalemate in early 2020 prompted Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to call their own diplomatic summit in Moscow—to which Haftar was invited but ultimately walked out of.⁷⁶ The blatant snub to Putin only accelerated Moscow's distancing from Haftar, shown in its outreach in mid-2020 to his eastern political rival, the House of Representatives chair Aguilah Saleh Issa, and Moscow's decision to halt providing printed dinars to Haftar's beleaguered eastern administration amid a UN- and U.S.-backed effort to unify Libya's financial institutions. Similarly, Russia has been backing a UN-brokered road map for elections scheduled for the end of the year and has been engaging the GNA on possible military support.⁷⁷ In the meantime, the Wagner Group and regular military personnel have expanded their presence in and around air bases and oil facilities in the central and southern regions of Libya.⁷⁸

Taken in sum, these recent shifts indicate that military force and more malign forms of meddling are chips that Russia plays that can be withdrawn, scaled, or complimented by other types of engagement in response to changing local and international contexts. Depending on the outcome of Libya's fraught transition to elections, Russia could easily restart a more bellicose policy of military support

to Haftar or another Libyan spoiler. Looking ahead, external influencers on Russian moves in either direction are the policies of Turkey, which exerts uncontested sway over western Libya through military forces and basing, and, to a lesser extent, those of the UAE, whose long-standing military intervention in Libya provided the opening for Russian support to Haftar in the first place. Ankara and Abu Dhabi have shifted their rivalry in Libya to the diplomatic sphere—for now.⁷⁹

Egypt

Russian ties with Egypt are historically rooted and broad-based, comprising a mix of arms sales, media and propaganda support, logistics and basing arrangements, and infrastructure, energy, and tourism agreements. Moscow's influence in Egypt dates to the aftermath of the 1952 officers' coup and the ascension to power of former president Gamal Abdel Nasser, which established Egypt as a major leader in the nonaligned, nationalist, and anticolonial sphere.⁸⁰ Spurned by the United States over the financing of the construction of the Aswan Dam, Nasser turned to Moscow instead. As part of this deal, the Soviet Union provided both funding for the project and arms, in return for Egyptian cotton and grain. Yet Nasser and successive Egyptian presidents desisted from moving the transactional relationship with Russia to one of enduring fraternalism or a real strategic partnership; instead, they tried to play global powers off against one another. In 1972, for example, then Egyptian president Anwar Sadat ejected Soviet advisers as part of a broader policy of pursuing closer relations with the United States.⁸¹ His successors Hosni Mubarak and Mohamed Morsi were never close to Moscow. And the apparent warmth of relations between Moscow and Cairo during the reign of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi since 2013 belies the Egyptian ruler's view of the United States as his partner of choice. In spite of growing uncertainties about American power in the Middle East, Sisi is still dependent on Washington for security guarantees that he knows Moscow cannot and will not provide.

Today, Egypt is a major customer for Russian arms—Moscow's second largest on the African continent, after Algeria.⁸² Some scholars point to human rights concerns and the conditionality to arms deals that the United States imposed after Sisi's 2013 coup against Morsi, who had been democratically elected, as prompting Cairo's growing predilection for Russian arms.⁸³ In fact, the diversification in weapons purchases began years before, in response to Cairo's perception of a U.S. withdrawal from the Middle East.⁸⁴ From 2009 to 2018, Russian arms comprised roughly 30 percent of Egypt's inventory, with air defenses and aircraft being the core of the transfers.⁸⁵ Most significantly, in early 2021, Egypt received delivery of the first batch of advanced Su-35 aircraft, which it had ordered from Moscow after Washington had refused to sell it F-35 planes—and after Cairo declined other alternatives—and which it was determined to acquire even at the risk of U.S. sanctions.⁸⁶

A Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation agreement that Egypt and Russia had signed in 2018 came into effect in 2021, which delineated military cooperation as well as ties in education, humanitarian assistance, and tourism.⁸⁷ (Flights of Russian tourists to Red Sea resorts—halted after a bomb launched by the self-proclaimed Islamic State downed a Russian passenger jet over the Sinai Peninsula in October 2015—resumed in August 2021, which could help boost Egypt’s post-pandemic economic recovery.⁸⁸) Energy has also been another entry point for Moscow: Russia has offered to lend Cairo \$25 billion to construct a nuclear power plant that it heralds as a “second Aswan Dam,” though the economic rationale for such a massive endeavor is hardly persuasive.⁸⁹

In all of these pursuits, Russia has sought to enlist Egypt as a platform for power projection across the Eastern Mediterranean, including into Libya, the Red Sea, and sub-Saharan Africa. Yet as in the other North African countries, the relationship has been buffeted by tensions, suggesting that the net result for Russian interests has been less favorable than the theatrics imply. Cairo has been irked by the Kremlin’s lack of support for Egypt in its dispute with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, as well as its signing of a military cooperation deal with Addis Ababa.⁹⁰ The Egyptian government occasionally denies Moscow overflight permission and has rebuffed a Russian attempt to sign a long-term air basing agreement—a rejection that possibly resulted from pressure from the U.S. secretary of defense during a 2017 visit to Cairo.⁹¹ On the economic front, much-touted plans for Egypt to join a Russian-led economic union and a free-trade zone remain confined to ongoing talks.⁹² Similarly, the Russian-backed nuclear plant has an ambitious timeline and could collapse under its own economic and technical weight.

Conclusions and Implications

The motives for Russia’s renewed global activism have been well-documented over the course of Carnegie’s ongoing project, the Return of Global Russia.⁹³ The Kremlin’s quest for stature and clout on the world stage is never far removed from its decisionmaking—if anything, these wider ambitions propel its opportunism and attempts to seize upon the self-inflicted mistakes of other powers, especially the United States. At the same time, the Kremlin does not trouble itself with conditionality on its military assistance, respect for human rights, or the protection of delicate regional balances—principles that the U.S. and major European players have long embraced yet not always observed in practice.

Russia’s competitive advantages in the Middle East and North Africa are nontrivial. Its willingness to engage with all parties in the region allows it to maintain ties that are off-limits to U.S. officials, most vividly in Syria where the United States cannot speak directly to most of the key players. Russia’s highly centralized national-level decisionmaking allows it to perform nimbly and adroitly in

fast-moving situations. Free of unwelcome scrutiny by an independent parliament or news media, the Kremlin does not have to worry all that much about the domestic blowback of policy failures or setbacks.

At the same time, the Kremlin has rarely, if ever, committed the capabilities or resources to lead the search for first-order problems in the region. It would rather collect a fee (say, in the form of commercial opportunities) for offering its good offices than provide the actual resources that are necessary to broker political deals and to make them stick. Even in Syria, where Russia is the largest outside actor, there is a clear mismatch between how the Kremlin is viewed by local actors (who sometimes have unrealistic expectations about Russian hard power, influence, and other sources of strength) and what it can actually deliver.

In North Africa, the possibility of Russia acquiring a permanent or contingency military base cannot be ruled out. (The most likely candidates are an air base in Libya or a maritime port in Egypt, Libya, or Algeria.) Such facilities could enhance Russian power projection capability into the Mediterranean and serve as the springboard into the African interior. To be sure, Russia's various contributions to cronyism, corruption, human rights violations, and an already toxic media environment are detrimental to the region's long-term economic and political health.

Yet U.S. and Western policymakers have ample tools at their disposal to deal with some of these challenges. For example, in Libya, shifting developments on the ground and more active multilateral diplomacy like the UN-brokered election road map have removed opportunities that Russia had hoped to exploit. Increased U.S. diplomatic backstopping to European, especially British and German, diplomatic efforts helped limit both European disunity and French unilateralism. Such moves mattered far more than "exposés" like the release of satellite photos from the U.S. Africa Command about the deployment of Russian mercenaries.⁹⁴ Targeted pressure tactics (such as the seizure of Russian-printed banknotes bound for Haftar's eastern administration, stricter multilateral enforcement of oil sales norms and embargos, and the takedown of Russia-backed fake social media accounts) are cost-effective ways to frustrate and stymie Russian meddling, although their net impact on Russian calculations should not be overstated.⁹⁵

But beyond this, the challenge for Western policymakers is to avoid viewing Russian activism in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa through an exclusively zero-sum lens. The region's political disarray, complexities, and especially the agency, obstinacy, and unpredictability of local rulers all present built-in antibodies and buffers to Russian influence—as they do to all external players. Russia has done itself no favors through a series of ham-fisted interactions with the region. Such moves have fostered views among local elites and the broader public that Moscow is an unreliable and problematic partner, especially compared to Europe and the United States. These reputational shortcomings are likely to have a consequential impact on Russia's standing for years to come.

About the Authors

Frederic Wehrey is a senior fellow in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His research deals with armed conflict, security sector governance, and U.S. policy, with a focus on Libya, North Africa, and the Gulf.

Andrew S. Weiss is the James Family Chair and vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment, where he oversees research in Washington and Moscow on Russia and Eurasia.

Acknowledgments

Preparation of this paper benefited immensely from a series of conversations with current and former policymakers, analysts, and experts from the United States, various European countries, and the Middle East. Without their input, advice, and suggestions, the analysis would have been far poorer. Chris Bort, Michele Dunne, Jalel Harchaoui, Andrew Lebovich, Robert Otto, Eugene Rumer, and Paul Stronski provided very helpful comments on an earlier version, which led to significant improvements along the way.

We are deeply grateful for keen research assistance by Grace Kier and Jacqueline Stomski, additional contributions from Aleksandar Vladicic, Ninar Fawal, and Alexa Fults, and editing by Haley Clasen.

Any remaining errors of fact or judgment are solely those of the authors.

About the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is a unique global network of policy research centers in Russia, China, Europe, the Middle East, India, and the United States. Our mission, dating back more than a century, is to advance peace through analysis and development of fresh policy ideas and direct engagement and collaboration with decisionmakers in government, business, and civil society. Working together, our centers bring the inestimable benefit of multiple national viewpoints to bilateral, regional, and global issues.

About the Russia Strategic Initiative

The Russia Strategic Initiative (RSI) is a U.S. Department of Defense organization that works with structures throughout the U.S. Government and with public and private think tanks around the world to develop a common understanding of Russian decision-making and way of war that supports the Coordinating Authority's integration that leads to integrated planning, assessments, and action recommendations.

Notes

- 1 This hedging trend could increase in the wake of the August 2021 U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan and takeover by the Taliban, an event that adds to mounting doubts in the Middle East about the durability of U.S. security guarantees. See Thanassis Cambanis, “The Middle East Is Watching Events in Afghanistan Very Closely,” *World Politics Review*, August 16, 2021, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/29891/for-the-middle-east-afghanistan-is-a-worrying-sign>.
- 2 Arnold L. Horelick, “Soviet Middle East Policy: Origins and Prospects,” RAND Corporation, 1971, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P4579.html>.
- 3 For an overview of these afflictions in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, see Marwan Muasher and Maha Yahya, “The Coming Decade of Arab Decisions,” in *The Day After*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 9, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/09/09/coming-decade-of-arab-decisions-pub-82506>.
- 4 Eugene Rumer, “The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 5, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/05/primakov-not-gerasimov-doctrine-in-action-pub-79254>.
- 5 For Russian policies in North Africa during the 1980s, see I.W. Zartman, “Soviet-Maghribi Relations in the 1980s,” in Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet (eds.), *The Limits of Soviet Power in the Developing World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989).
- 6 Eugene Rumer, “Russia in the Middle East: Jack of All Trades, Master of None,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 31, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/31/russia-in-middle-east-jack-of-all-trades-master-of-none-pub-80233>.
- 7 Aron Lund, “From Cold War to Civil War: 75 Years of Russian-Syrian Relations,” Swedish Institute of International Affairs, May 2019, <https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/ui-publications/2019/ui-paper-no.-7-2019.pdf>.
- 8 Reuters Staff, “Russian Aircraft Active in Libya, AFRICOM Says,” Reuters, June 18, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/russian-aircraft-active-in-libya-afcom-says-idUSKBN23P2RA>.
- 9 Jeffrey Feltman, “China’s Expanding Influence at the United Nations—And How the United States Should React,” Brookings Institution, September 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FP_20200914_china_united_nations_feltman.pdf.
- 10 Dmitry Gorenburg, “Russia’s Naval Strategy in the Mediterranean,” George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, July 2019, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/de/node/11895>; Vladimir Isachenkov, “Russia Deploys Nuclear-Capable Bombers to Syria for Training,” Associated Press, May 25, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-deploys-nuclear-capable-bombers-syria-training-77895043>.
- 11 Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “How a 4-Hour Battle Between Russian Mercenaries and U.S. Commandos Unfolded in Syria,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/world/middleeast/american-commandos-russian-mercenaries-syria.html>; and Lieutenant General Jeffrey Harrigian, “Department Of Defense Press Briefing by Lieutenant General Harrigian via Teleconference From Al Udeid Airbase, Qatar,” U.S. Department of Defense, February 13, 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/1441080/departement-of-defense-press-briefing-by-lieutenant-general-harrigian-via-teleco>. See also Fatima Tlis, “Zakharova Downplays Armed Clash with Americans in Syria, Kremlin-linked Audio Recordings Contradict Her Story,” Polygraph.info, February 16, 2018, <https://www.polygraph.info/a/us-wagner-russia-syria-scores-killed/29044339.html>.

- 12 International Institute for Strategic Studies, “Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia,” *Military Balance* 121, no. 1 (2021): 205.
- 13 Robert E. Hamilton and Anna Mikulska, “Cooperation, Competition, and Compartmentalization: Russian-Turkish Relations and Their Implications for the West,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 8, 2021, <https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/russian-turkish-relations-bssp.pdf>.
- 14 Metin Gurcan, “Deciphering Turkey’s Darkest Night in Syria,” Al-Monitor, February 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/02/turkey-syria-russia-deciphering-attack-on-turkish-troops.html>; and John Parachini and Peter Wilson, “Drone-Era Warfare Shows the Operational Limits of Air Defense Systems,” Real Clear Defense, July 2, 2020, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/07/02/drone-era_warfare_shows_the_operational_limits_of_air_defense_systems_115430.html.
- 15 U.S. Central Commander General Kenneth McKenzie highlighted the deployments during a May 2021 visit to U.S. bases in Syria, saying “[T]his is not the time to mess around with the Americans in the region.” See Luis Martinez, “Repatriating Refugees at Syrian Camp Could Stem ISIS Resurgence: US General,” ABC News, May 22, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/repatriating-refugees-syrian-camp-stem-isis-resurgence-us/story?id=77811334>.
- 16 Richard Sisk, “Bradley Fighting Vehicles Sent to Protect US Troops in Syria,” Military.com, September 18, 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/09/18/bradley-fighting-vehicles-sent-protect-us-troops-syria.html>.
- 17 James F. Jeffrey, “Biden Doesn’t Need a New Middle East Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2021-01-15/biden-doesnt-need-new-middle-east-policy>.
- 18 Charles Lister, “Caesar Bill Could Ratchet Up US Sanctions on the Syrian Regime and Its Allies,” Middle East Institute, December 17, 2019, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/caesar-bill-could-ratchet-us-sanctions-syrian-regime-and-its-allies>.
- 19 Ruth Sherlock, “Arab Nations That Opposed Assad’s Regime Have Begun Rebuilding Ties With Syria,” NPR, July 14, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/23/1009582085/arab-nations-that-opposed-assads-regime-have-begun-rebuilding-ties-with-syria>.
- 20 Scott B. Lasensky and Vera Michlin-Shapir, “Avoiding Zero-Sum: Israel and Russia in an Evolving Middle East,” in *The MENA Region: A Great Power Competition*, ed. Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli (Milan: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2019), 141–157.”
- 21 Mehul Srivastava and Kathrin Hille, “Israel Reaps Rewards of Unlikely Alliance With Vladimir Putin,” *Financial Times*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/ec5e2090-a7bd-11e8-926a-7342fe5e173f>.
- 22 Both Netanyahu and Putin indulged in political gestures. For example, Netanyahu refused to criticize Russian aggression against Ukraine and embraced both the construction of memorials honoring the Soviet victory in World War II and Putin’s self-serving rewriting of history. The Russian military worked with Israeli counterparts on a clandestine effort at a refugee camp outside Damascus to recover the remains of an IDF soldier who had been missing since the 1982 war in Lebanon. The remains were returned on the eve of the April 2019 election. See Ofer Aderet, “Russia’s Putin Dedicates Monument to Victims of Leningrad Siege in Jerusalem,” *Haaretz*, January 23, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-russia-s-putin-dedicates-monument-to-victims-of-leningrad-siege-in-jerusalem-1.8438477>; Ofer Aderet, “Yad Vashem Apologizes for Historical Error at World Holocaust Forum,” *Haaretz*, February 3, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-yad-vashem->

- apologizes-for-historical-error-at-world-holocaust-forum-1.8481112?=&ts=_1580755475048; Lasensky and Michlin-Shapir, “Avoiding Zero-Sum: Israel and Russia in an Evolving Middle East”; and Ksenia Svetlova, “Israel at the Service of Putin, Russian World War II Narrative,” *Al-Monitor*, January 24, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/01/israel-russia-benjamin-netanyahu-vladimir-putin-holocaust.html>.
- 23 Ilan Goldenberg, Nicholas A. Heras, Kaleigh Thomas, and Jennie Matuschak, “Countering Iran in the Gray Zone: What the United States Should Learn from Israel’s Operations in Syria,” Center for a New American Security, April 2020, <http://files.cnas.org.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/CNAS-Report-Gray-Zone-Apr-2020-FinalC-web.pdf>.
- 24 These arrangements were at least an order of magnitude more complicated than comparable U.S.-Russian deconfliction procedures, given that Israeli and Russian units were operating in much closer proximity, the pace of Israeli operations, and the need to protect civilian aviation in the area. The specific time windows for advance notification for strike missions and the level of detail about the location of targets shared by the Israeli Air Force remain shrouded in secrecy. See Andrew S. Weiss and Nicole Ng, “Collision Avoidance: The Lessons of U.S. and Russian Operations in Syria,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 20, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/20/collision-avoidance-lessons-of-u.s.-and-russian-operations-in-syria-pub-78571>; Barbara Opall-Rome, “Israel, Russia Conclude First Round of Deconfliction Talks,” *Defense News*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.defensenews.com/interviews/2015/10/07/israel-russia-conclude-first-round-of-deconfliction-talks>.
- 25 John W. Parker, “Between Russia and Iran: Room to Pursue American Interests in Syria,” Institute for National Strategic Studies, January 2, 2019, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/1723239/between-russia-and-iran-room-to-pursue-american-interests-in-syria>.
- 26 A senior Russian MFA official claimed that the deal fell apart due to U.S. reluctance to issue waivers for Russian oil firms sanctioned over their dealings with the Assad regime. See Nicolas Rouger, “U.S. Oil Sanctions on Russia Tanked Iran Withdrawal From Syria,” *i24 News*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/192841-190109-exclusive-russian-official-says-iran-withdrawal-deal-tanked-by-us-oil-sanctions>.
- 27 Carmit Valensi and Udi Dekel, “The Struggle for Control of Southern Syria: Where Is Israel?” Institute for National Security Studies, December 16, 2020, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/south-syria-threat>.
- 28 Armenak Tokmajyan, “Unfinished Business in Daraa,” *Diwan* (blog), Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, August 25, 2021, <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/85200>; Abdullah Al-Jabassini, “Russia Rethinks the Status Quo in Southern Syria,” Middle East Institute, August 13, 2021, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/russia-rethinks-status-quo-southern-syria>; and Armenak Tokmajyan, “How Southern Syria Has Been Transformed Into a Regional Powder Keg,” Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, July 14, 2020, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/07/14/how-southern-syria-has-been-transformed-into-regional-powder-keg-pub-82202>.
- 29 Russian statements on past crises in Gaza have consistently focused on ceasefires, the protection of civilians, and the importance of the largely dormant UN Middle East Quartet of which Russia is a member. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Stenogramma vystupleniya i otvetov na voprosy rossiyskikh telekanalov Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V.Lavrova po itogam Soveshchaniya poslov i postpredov Rossii za rubezhom i aktual’nym mezhdunarodnym voprosam, Moskva, 28 iyunya 2006 goda” [Transcript of the Speech and Answers to Questions From Russian TV Channels by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov Following the Meeting of Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives Abroad and Topical International Issues, Moscow, June 28, 2006], June 29, 2006, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_

- policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/399106; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Zayavleniye ofitsial’nogo predstavatelya MID Rossii A.A.Nesterenko v svyazi s izrail’skimi aviaudarami po Sektoru Gaza” [Statement by the Spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry A.A. Nesterenko in Connection With the Israeli Air Strikes on the Gaza Strip], Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 17, 2008, https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzCA/content/id/311198; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Kommentariy Departamenta informatsii i pechati MID Rossii v svyazi s rezkim obostreniyem situatsii vokrug Gazy” [Commentary by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry in Connection With the Sharp Exacerbation of the Situation Around Gaza], Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 21, 2014, https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzCA/content/id/677207; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Vystupleniye i otvety na voprosy SMI Ministra inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii S.V.Lavrova v khode sovmestnoy press-konferentsii s Ministrom inostrannykh del Gosudarstva Palestina R.Maliki po itogam peregovorov, Moskva, 5 maya 2021 goda” [Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a Joint News Conference With the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine R. Maliki Following the Talks, Moscow, May 5, 2021], Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 5, 2021, https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzCA/content/id/4720797.
- 30 Dmitry Adamsky, “Putin’s Damascus Steal,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-09-16/putins-damascus-steal>.
- 31 During the administration of former U.S. president Bill Clinton, the government of Russian president Boris Yeltsin secretly agreed to phase out its existing pipeline of conventional arms transfers to Iran. The Kremlin eventually wiggled out of that commitment. See John M. Broder, “Despite a Secret Pact by Gore in ‘95, Russian Arms Sales to Iran Go On,” *New York Times*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/13/world/despite-a-secret-pact-by-gore-in-95-russian-arms-sales-to-iran-go-on.html>.
- 32 John W. Parker, “Understanding Putin Through a Middle Eastern Looking Glass,” *Strategic Perspectives*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, July 2015, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-19.pdf>.
- 33 U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, “Iran: Military Power,” (DIA), 2019, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf.
- 34 To the extent any concessions were made in this area, it was likely in the form of unreciprocated gestures by the Netanyahu government, such as avoiding criticizing Russian actions in Crimea and acceding to Putin’s request not to sell weapons to either Ukraine or Georgia. See Elnar Bainazarov, “My ne znayem, kogda Trump zakhochet obnarodovat’ «Sdelku veka»” [We Don’t Know When Trump Will Want to Go Public. “Deal of the Century”], *Izvestia*, October 29, 2019, <https://iz.ru/937166/elmar-bainazarov/my-ne-znaem-kogda-trump-zakhochet-obnarodovat-sdelku-veka>.
- 35 The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Israeli leaders had abused deconfliction procedures and that Israeli fighter jets had hidden themselves from Syrian ground radars by following in the flight path of the Il-20 as it was on final approach to the Russian air base in Hmeymim. Israeli military representatives denied the Russian accusations. See Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, “The Russian Defence Ministry Held a Special Briefing on Circumstances of the Russian Il-20 Aircraft Crash Near the Syrian Coast,” Russian Ministry of Defence, September 23, 2018, https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12196560@egNews.
- 36 Congressional Research Service, “Iran and Israel: Tension Over Syria,” Congressional Research Service, June 5, 2019, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10858>.

- 37 Yossi Melman, “Why Syria Isn’t Firing Its S-300 Missiles at Israeli Jets,” *Haaretz*, May 15, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/syria/.premium-syria-s-300-missiles-israel-jets-iran-soleimani-hezbollah-1.8841093?lts=1625680798161>.
- 38 Given that parts of the Israeli security establishment have long memories, the darkest chapters of Moscow’s hostility to Israel are not exactly ancient history. The Soviets funded and trained Palestinian terrorist organizations and provided encouragement and material support to Arab governments during their wars with Israel in 1967 and 1972. Israeli and Soviet pilots also engaged in deadly air-to-air combat during the War of Attrition in 1969–1970. See Ronen Bergman, “The KGB’s Middle East Files: Palestinians in the Service of Mother Russia,” *Ynet News*, April 11, 2016, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4874089,00.html>; and Ofer Aderet, “The Secret Israel-Soviet Union War Nobody Knew About,” *Haaretz*, January 20, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-the-secret-israel-soviet-union-war-nobody-knew-about-1.8379133>.
- 39 Mona Alami, “What’s Moscow’s Game Plan for Lebanon?” *Al-Monitor*, April 3, 2021, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/04/whats-moscows-game-plan-lebanon>.
- 40 In December 2020, Russia’s ambassador to Israel Anatoliy Viktorov stirred controversy with provocative comments during a press interview (“The problem in the region is not Iranian activities. . . . Israel is attacking Hezbollah; Hezbollah is not attacking Israel.”). See Lahav Harkov, “Russian Envoy: Israel-Arab Issues—Not Iran—Main Problem in Middle East,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 8, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/russian-envoy-israel-not-iran-is-the-problem-in-the-middle-east-651489>.
- 41 Michael Young, “Can Syria Be the Counterweight to Iran’s Influence Over Lebanon?” *National*, July 21, 2021, https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/2021/07/20/can-syria-be-the-counterweight-to-irans-influence-over-lebanon/?utm_source=ctw&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=buttonlink&mkt_tok=MDk1LVBQVi04MTMAAAF-b1H2_AJe7RMa9qpByQpQQFfAN6hZMIwTa2HrsFmfyusrgDJL5STYQvi5UNP_d2YoTQeb2vAaBT84_yqNA70z_Hg5PrwgAZL_WaoNp4u-c7IekA.
- 42 In 2018 Moscow offered Beirut a \$1 billion line of credit for arms purchases. The proposal, which was poorly suited to the country’s precarious financial situation and actual defense needs, fell apart amid criticism from leading Western donor countries such as the United States and France. See Reuters Staff, “Hariri Office Denies Lebanon Turned Down Russian Aid,” *Reuters*, November 26, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-russia/hariri-office-denies-lebanon-turned-down-russian-aid-idUSKCN1NV1Z9>. See also Anna Borshchevskaya and Hanin Ghaddar, “How to Read Lebanon’s Acceptance of Russian Military Aid,” *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, December 7, 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-read-lebanons-acceptance-russian-military-aid>.
- 43 OGJ editors, “Total Comes Up Dry on Block 4, Offshore Lebanon,” *Oil & Gas Journal*, April 29, 2020, <https://www.ogj.com/exploration-development/article/14174991/total-comes-up-dry-on-block-4-offshore-lebanon>.
- 44 Chloe Cornish and Henry Foy, “Rosneft’s Lebanon Deal Reveals Russia’s Bid for Mideast Influence,” *Financial Times*, February 1, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/1b933960-2561-11e9-b329-c7e6ceb5ffdf>.
- 45 Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova, and Siemon T. Wezeman, “Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*, March 2021, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/fs_2103_at_2020_v2.pdf.
- 46 See Mansouria Mokhefi, “Alger-Moscou: évolution et limites d’une relation privilégiée,” [*Algiers-Moscow: Evolution and Limits of a Privileged Relationship*], *Politique étrangère* no. 3 (2015): 57–70, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2015-3-page-57.htm#>.

- 47 Paul Stronski and Richard Sokolsky, “The Return of Global Russia: An Analytical Framework,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 14, 2017, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/12/14/return-of-global-russia-analytical-framework-pub-75003>.
- 48 Gazprom, “Foreign Projects: Algeria,” Gazprom, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.gazprom.com/projects/algeria>.
- 49 Mark N. Katz, “Russia and Algeria: Partners or Competitors?” *Middle East Policy* 14, issue 4 (Winter 2007), 152–157.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Antoine Galindo, “Algeria’s Gas Industry Under Pressure From Russia and US,” Africa Report, December 2, 2019, <https://www.theafricareport.com/20653/algerias-gas-industry-under-pressure-from-russia-and-us>.
- 52 Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, “Russia in the Mediterranean: Here to Stay,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 27, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/05/27/russia-in-mediterranean-here-to-stay-pub-84605>.
- 53 Algeria Press Service, “Algeria-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group Set Up in Algiers,” Algeria Press Service, February 1, 2019, <https://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/27669-algeria-ukraine-parliamentary-friendship-group-set-up-in-algiers>.
- 54 Avia.Pro, “Algeria Refused to Russia to Create a Military Base on its Territory,” Avia.Pro, December 29, 2020, <https://avia-pro.net/news/alzhir-otkazal-rossii-v-sozdanii-voennoy-bazy-na-svoey-territorii>.
- 55 Al-Quds Al-Arabi, “limadha fashilat sinaeat alsayaarat fi aljazayir?” [Why Did the Auto Industry in Algeria Fail?], *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, February 14, 2021, <https://www.alquds.co.uk/%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D9%81%D8%B4%D9%84%D8%AA-%D8%B5%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1%D8%9F>.
- 56 Verity Ratcliffe, Souhail Karam, and Salma El Wardany, “Algeria’s Oil and Gas Exports Plummet,” Al Jazeera, February 8, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/2/8/algerias-oil-and-gas-exports-plummet>.
- 57 Vasily Kuznetsov, “Moscow Monitors Situation in Algeria as Protests Continue,” Al-Monitor, March 13, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2019/03/russia-algeria-protests.html#ixzz73FO9aoBN>.
- 58 Yuri Ponomarev, “Plany na 2021 g. voyennogo sektora aviapromyshlennosti Rossii” [2021 Plans for the Military Sector of the Aviation Industry in Russia], *Zhukovskiye Vesti*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.zhukvesti.ru/articles/detail/29588>; and “Algeria Buys 14 Stealth Fighters From Russia, Report Says,” *Middle East Monitor*, November 24, 2020, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201124-algeria-buys-14-stealth-fighters-from-russia-report-says>.
- 59 Wezeman, Kuimova, and Wezeman, “Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020.”
- 60 For an exploration of Cold War competition in pre-Qadhafi Libya, see Saul Kelly, *Cold War in the Desert Britain, the United States and the Italian Colonies, 1945-52* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).
- 61 Ronald Bruce St John, “The Soviet Penetration of Libya,” *The World Today*, April 1982, 136.
- 62 France 24, “Russia Cancels Libyan Debt, Eyes Arms Deals,” France 24, April 17, 2008, <https://www.france24.com/en/20080417-russia-cancels-libyan-debt-eyes-arms-deals-tripoli>.
- 63 Ronald Bruce St John, “The Soviet Penetration of Libya,” 134.
- 64 Tom Parfitt, “Gadafy offers Russia a naval base in Libya,” November 1, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/01/libya-russia-gadafy-united-states>.

- 65 For an example of this argument see Sakari Ishetiar, “Echoes of Abstention: Russian Policy in Libya and Implications for Regional Stability,” *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, May 21, 2019, <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/echoes-abstention-russian-policy-libya-and-implications-regional-stability>.
- 66 Andrew Higgins and Declan Walsh, “How Two Russians Got Caught Up in Libya’s War, Now an Action Movie,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/world/middleeast/russia-libya-maksim-Shugalei.html>.
- 67 For an example in the media, see, Samer Al-Atrush, “Western Team Went to Help Moscow’s Man in Libya, UN Finds,” Bloomberg, May 16, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-05-14/western-mercenaries-went-to-libya-to-help-moscow-s-man-un-finds>.
- 68 On French and Emirati roles see, Emadeddin Badi, “Russia Isn’t the Only One Getting Its Hands Dirty in Libya,” *Foreign Policy*, April 21, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/21/libyan-civil-war-france-uae-khalifa-haftar>; and Frederic Wehrey, “‘This War is Out of Our Hands,’” *New America*, September 14, 2020, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/this-war-is-out-of-our-hands>.
- 69 Jalel Harchaoui, “The Pendulum: How Russia Sways Its Way to More Influence in Libya,” *War on the Rocks*, January 7, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/01/the-pendulum-how-russia-sways-its-way-to-more-influence-in-libya>.
- 70 Nathaniel Greenberg, “Russia Opens Digital Interference Front in Libya,” *Middle East Report Online*, October 4, 2019, <https://merip.org/2019/10/russia-opens-digital-interference-front-in-libya>.
- 71 Observations of one of the authors on the Tripoli frontlines and author interviews with GNA fighters and Western diplomats, Tripoli, Libya, November 2019.
- 72 Frederic Wehrey, “With the Help of Russian Fighters, Libya’s Haftar Could Take Tripoli,” *Foreign Policy*, December 5, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/05/libya-khalifa-haftar-take-tripoli-russian-fighters-help>. On the Wagner Group’s human rights abuses, see United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Libya: Violations Related to Mercenary Activities Must Be Investigated—UN experts,” June 17, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25970>; Sam Magdy, “US Africa Command: Russian Mercenaries Planted Land Mines in Libya,” *Associated Press*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/07/15/us-africa-command-russian-mercenaries-planted-land-mines-in-libya>; and Nader Ibrahim and Ilya Barabanov, “The Lost Tablet and the Secret Documents,” *BBC News*, August 11, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/extra/8iaz6xit26/the-lost-tablet-and-the-secret-documents>.
- 73 Marianna Belenkaya, “In Libya’s War, Russia is Directionless—And Falling Behind,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, *Carnegie.ru* (blog), August 31, 2020, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/82608>.
- 74 Harchaoui, “The Pendulum: How Russia Sways Its Way to More Influence in Libya.”
- 75 Reuters, “Libya’s NOC Says Tatneft Resumed Exploring Activities in Libya’s Ghadames Basin,” December 9, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-noc-tatneft/libyas-noc-says-tatneft-resumedexploring-activities-in-libyas-ghadames-basinidUSL8N28J69K>.
- 76 Reuters, “Libya’s Haftar Leaves Moscow Without Signing Ceasefire: TASS,” January 14, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-russia-haftar/libyas-haftar-leaves-moscow-without-signing-ceasefire-tass-idUSKBN1ZD0K0>.
- 77 TASS, “Libyan Parliament Speaker Arrives in Moscow for Talks,” November 24, 2020, <https://tass.com/world/1227557>. The Libyan army chief of staff, Mohamed al-Haddad, visited Moscow in July 2021, but a near-term departure of Wagner Group forces seems unlikely unless the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity were to invite official Russian forces to take their place. See Africa Intelligence, “Chief of Staff Mohamed Al Haddad Heads to Moscow,” *Africa Intelligence*, July 9, 2021, https://www.africaintelligence.com/north-africa_diplomacy/2021/07/09/chief-of-staff-mohamed-al-haddad-heads-to

- moscow,109678800-bre; and Mark N. Katz, “Will Russian Forces Really Leave Libya?” MENASource, July 22, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/will-russian-forces-really-leave-libya>.
- 78 Harchaoui, “The Pendulum: How Russia Sways Its Way to More Influence in Libya.”
- 79 See Ali Kucukgocmen, “Erdogan Says Turkey, UAE Ties Improving After Rare Meeting,” Reuters, August 8, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-holds-rare-meeting-with-senior-uae-official-2021-08-18/>.
- 80 For a view of Soviet-Egyptian relations under Nasser, see Karel Holbik and Edward Drachman, “Egypt as a Recipient of Soviet Aid, 1955–1970,” *Journal of Institutional Theoretical Economics* 127, no. 1 (January 1971): 137–165.
- 81 Edward R. F. Sheehan, “Why Sadat Packed Off the Russians,” *New York Times*, August 6, 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/08/06/archives/why-sadat-packed-off-the-russians-egypt.html>.
- 82 Tatiana Kondratenko, “Russian Arms Exports to Africa: Moscow’s Long-Term Strategy,” *Deutsche Welle*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/russian-arms-exports-to-africa-moscows-long-term-strategy/a-53596471>.
- 83 For example, Gregory Aftandilian, “Closer Egyptian-Russian Relations Causing a Headache in Washington,” Arab Center DC, November 26, 2019, http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/closer-egyptian-russian-relations-causing-a-headache-in-washington/.
- 84 Bradley Bowman, Jared Thompson, and Ryan Brobst, “Egypt’s Transition Away from American Weapons Is a National Security Issue,” *Defense News*, May 25, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2021/05/25/egypts-transition-away-from-american-weapons-is-a-national-security-issue>.
- 85 Kondratenko, “Russian Arms Exports to Africa.”
- 86 Nourddine, “Rusia tuakid bishakl rasmiin aistilam misr limuqatilat alsuwkhui” [Russia Officially Confirms Egypt’s Receipt of Su-35 Fighters], *Defense Arabic*, February 2021, <https://www.defense-arabic.com/2021/02/25/%d8%b1%d9%88%d8%b3%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%aa%d8%a4%d9%83%d8%af-%d8%a8%d8%b4%d9%83%d9%84-%d8%b1%d8%b3%d9%85%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%85%d8%b5%d8%b1-%d9%84%d9%85%d9%82%d8%a7%d8%aa%d9%84>; and David Schenker, “Getting Tough With Egypt Won’t Work,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 25, 2021, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/getting-tough-egypt-wont-work>.
- 87 Egypt Independent, “Strategic Cooperation Agreement Between Egypt and Russia Comes into Force,” Egypt Independent, January 12, 2021, <https://egyptindependent.com/strategic-cooperation-agreement-between-russia-and-egypt-comes-into-force>.
- 88 Sam Magdy, “Russia Resumes Flights to Egyptian Resorts After 6 Years,” Associated Press, August 9, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/lifestyle-africa-business-middle-east-europe-bfda29d669213a6847b23eb6cc164b6d>.
- 89 World Nuclear News, “El Dabaa NPP as Significant as Aswan High Dam, Says Russian Ambassador,” World Nuclear News, March 11, 2021, <https://world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/El-Dabaa-NPP-as-significant-as-Aswan-High-Dam-says>. See also Joanna Pritchett, “Less Than a Full Deck: Russia’s Economic Influence in the Mediterranean,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 21, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/07/21/less-than-full-deck-russia-s-economic-influence-in-mediterranean-pub-84973>.
- 90 Amer Emam, “Egypt Disappointed by Russian Stance on Nile Dam Dispute,” Al-Monitor, July 16, 2021, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/07/egypt-disappointed-russian-stance-nile-dam-dispute#ixzz73LQX3ptN>.

- 91 Menna Zaki, "US Defense Secretary Meets with Egyptian Officials in Cairo," AP News, December 2, 2017, <https://apnews.com/article/c7d1d098c40f408e8d05b4723d89cf3a>.
- 92 Eurasian Economic Commission, "Pyatyj raund peregovorov po soglasheniyu o svobodnoj trgovle mezhdue YEAES i Yegiptom proydet v noyabre etogo goda" [The Fifth Round of Negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement Between the EAEU and Egypt Will Be Held This November], Eurasian Economic Commission, June 24, 2021, https://ecc.eaeunion.org/news/pyatyj-raund-peregovorov-po-soglasheniyu-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-mezhdue-caes-i-egiptom-proydet-v-noyabre-etogo-goda/?sphrase_id=41287.
- 93 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, Paul Stronski, and Andrew S. Weiss, "The Return of Global Russia: A Reassessment of the Kremlin's International Agenda," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/specialprojects/thereturnofglobalrussia>.
- 94 United States Africa Command, "Russia and the Wagner Group Continue to be Involved in Ground, Air Operations in Libya," United States Africa Command, July 24, 2020, <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/33034/russia-and-the-wagner-group-continue-to-be-in>.
- 95 On Malta's September 2019 maritime seizure of Russian-supplied Libyan banknotes bound for Haftar, see Ian Martin, "Seized: Two Containers Full of Cash Bound for Libyan Strongman," *Times of Malta*, November 1, 2019, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/cash-bound-for-libyan-strongman-is-seized.746277>. On the takedown of fake Russian social media accounts related to Libya and other African states, see Luke Harding, "Facebook Removes Africa Accounts Linked to Russian Troll Factory," *Guardian*, October 30, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/oct/30/facebook-removes-africa-accounts-linked-russian-troll-factory-yevgeny-prigozhin>.



1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW | Washington, DC 20036 | P: +1 202 483 7600

[CarnegieEndowment.org](https://www.CarnegieEndowment.org)