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**RUSSIAN ARMS SALES IN THE AGE OF PUTIN:
FOR POLITICS OR PROFIT?**

by

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June 2018

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**RUSSIAN ARMS SALES IN THE AGE OF PUTIN:
FOR POLITICS OR PROFIT?**

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ABSTRACT

International arms sales are a useful tool in executing a country's economic and foreign policy strategy. As such, investigating the drivers behind these exports discloses a state's priorities. Since Vladimir Putin came to power, Russian arms sales have steadily increased in several geographic areas while Russo-American relations have gradually deteriorated. Therefore, as Putin seeks to foster global multi-polarity in order to challenge the American-dominated geopolitical world order, how is Russia conducting international arms sales and for what reasons? This thesis investigates Russian arms sales to China, India, and the Middle East in order to determine Putin's motives behind his export agenda. It focuses on analyzing the potential relationships of two main hypotheses: domestic economic factors and international political factors. This thesis argues that while Russian arms sales generated many domestic economic benefits, especially in the early years of Putin's presidency, international political factors provided the greater impetus behind Russia's export of military hardware. Specifically, Putin used arms sales to secure both influence and leverage with selected partners with the intent of developing a polycentric world, balancing the United States, and improving Russia's reputation as a great power. In conclusion, although Putin has achieved some gains from using arms exports as a foreign policy tool, the long-term benefits of his overall strategy are minimal.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| AAM | air-to-air missile |
| ABM | anti-ballistic missile |
| AD | air defense |
| AEW | airborne early warning |
| AEW&C | airborne early warning and control |
| ASAT | anti-satellite |
| ASW | anti-submarine warfare |
| ATGM | anti-tank guided missile |
| BRICS | Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa |
| BVRAAM | beyond visual range air-to-air missile |
| CAATSA | Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act |
| CAST | Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CST | Collective Security Treaty |
| CSTO | Collective Security Treaty Organization |
| DoS | Department of State |
| EEU | Eurasian Economic Union |
| EU | European Union |
| FDI | foreign direct investment |
| FGFA | fifth-generation fighter aircraft |
| FMS | foreign military sales |
| FOI | Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut |
| FTA | free trade agreement |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| HAL | Hindustan Aeronautics Limited |
| IFV | infantry fighting vehicle |
| IFRI | Institut Français de Relations Internationales |
| IRIGC-MTC | India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation |
| IS | Islamic State |

| | |
|---------|---|
| JCPOA | Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action |
| KMT | Kuomintang |
| LCA | light combat aircraft |
| MANPADS | man-portable air defense systems |
| MBT | main battle tank |
| MENA | Middle East-North Africa |
| MIC | military-industrial complex |
| MRBM | medium-range ballistic missiles |
| MRL | multiple rocket launcher |
| MTA | multi-role transport aircraft |
| MTC | military technical cooperation |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| OBOR | One Belt, One Road |
| PAK-FA | Perspektivny Aviatsionny Kompleks, Frontovoy Aviatsii |
| PONARS | Program on New Approaches to Russian Security |
| SALW | small arms and light weapons |
| SAM | surface-to-air missile |
| SCO | Shanghai Cooperation Organization |
| SIPRI | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute |
| STOBAR | short take-off but arrested recovery |
| TIV | trend-indicator value |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UAV | unmanned aerial vehicle |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSC | United Nation Security Council |
| UNSCR | United Nation Security Council Resolution |
| USCADA | United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| VLS | vertical launch system |
| WMEAT | World Military Expenditure and Arms Transfers |

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PREFACE—UNDER THE ARABIAN SUN

Located southeast of Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the oil rich United Arab Emirates (UAE), is a complex of military installations nestled at the northern corner of the E11 and E22 freeway interchange. One of the bases within this assortment of military schools, training facilities, unit camps, and endless construction sites is the home of 1st Battalion, Khalifa Bin Zayed II Brigade, UAE Presidential Guard.¹ If an observer walks through the entry control point of this camp past the nonchalant Emirati soldier on post, beyond the first street intersection, and makes an immediate left turn, he will find himself looking at the spaces of the Battalion's 1st and 2nd Company. Of particular note, this spectator will gaze upon two companies' worth of pristine, desert-camouflaged, and Russian-built BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles parked under the shade of metal awnings and the flocks of pigeons nesting there to avoid the piercing Arabian sun. Typically, a pair of mechanics will be milling about one or two of these pieces of military hardware as they either tinker with an engine, conduct routine preventative maintenance, or chat idly. However, they will neither be speaking Arabic, nor will they be Emiratis. These individuals will be conversing amongst themselves in Russian, for they are Russians.

B. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Foreign military sales (FMS), known as military technical cooperation (MTC) in Russia, are a useful tool in executing a country's economic and foreign policy strategy.²

¹ This author was a military advisor to 1st Battalion, KBZ II Brigade from July 2013 to July 2014 as a member of Marine Corps Mission—United Arab Emirates (MCTM-UAE). MCTM-UAE is a multi-million dollar foreign military sales case between the United States and the UAE involving a team of more than 40 Marine advisors to the three brigades of the President Guard. Furthermore, it involves six Unit Enhancement Training Exercises (UETs) annually. Four occur at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, California, and two occur at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. In Twentynine Palms, the UAE permanently stores a company of BMP-3s, a platoon of French-built AMX Char LeClerc Main Battle Tanks, and various support and logistics vehicles. It is one of the few, perhaps even the only, permanent storage locations of foreign military equipment in the United States.

² For the entirety of this thesis, this author will use the terms "foreign military sales," "military technical cooperation," "arms exports," "arms sales," and "arms transfers" synonymously.

The Soviet Union engaged in a significant distribution of arms and advisor teams during the Cold War. Conversely, after 1991, the newly formed Russian Federation scrambled to sell arms to prevent the implosion of the state's military-industrial complex. Simultaneously, the Russian government sought to constrain private parties from subverting the state's foreign policy goals during Russia's conversion from a command economy to a free market. However, the relative chaos of the 1990s has evolved into the order and structure of Vladimir Putin's Russia. As the Russian Federation currently seeks to construct a multi-polar order to challenge the American-dominated geopolitical world order, *how is Russia conducting international arms sales and for what reasons?* What are the costs and benefits of its overall arms sales program both economically and politically? Furthermore, what are the ramifications for the United States and the potential policy implications based on Russian actions?

Present research is insufficient to answer the above questions comprehensively. Numerous scholars have researched Soviet and Russian arms transfers during the Cold War era and immediately following the Soviet Union's collapse in the 1990s. A few authors have also investigated this topic during Putin's first two terms as president of the Russian Federation. However, an analytical gap exists in regard to the motivations of more recent Russian arms transfers over the past decade, beyond the work of a handful of academics publishing regionally focused articles in professional journals. This thesis seeks to fill that gap and provide a holistic analysis of the Russian arms trade, its motivations, and its implications in the age of Putin.

C. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

As the optimism of the Obama Administration's forlorn "reset policy" with Russia between 2009–2012 fades away and Russia's foreign policy continues to become more belligerent, irredentist, and anti-Western, the study of Russia's arms sales grows in relevance and applicability for American policy makers. If these qualitative reasons were not sufficient, a growing volume of arms transfers since 2000 presents quantitative justification. As Figure 1 indicates, Global arms transfers have increased steadily over the past 15 years after hitting a 40-year low in 2001. Recent Russia arms sales, displayed in

Figure 2, shows that Russian arms sales have helped drive the global trend. In 2016, Russia supplied 23% of the global arms trade, the second highest amount in the world and nearly four times the amount of the third highest distributor (China, at 6.2%).³

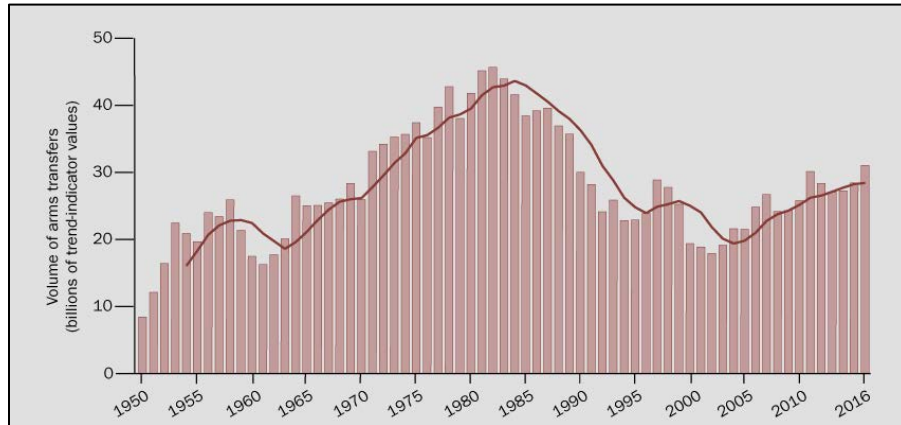


Figure 1. Trend in International Major Weapons Transfers 1950–2016⁴

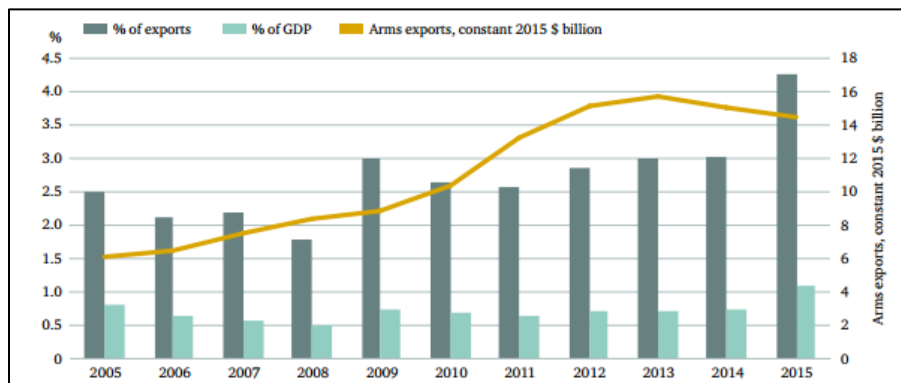


Figure 2. Value of Russian Arms Exports 2005–2015⁵

³ “The Trend of International Transfer of Major Weapons, 1950–2016,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, February 20, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending/international-arms-transfers>.

⁴ “The Trend of International Transfer of Major Weapons, 1950–2016,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*.

⁵ Richard Connolly and Cecilie Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter: The Strategic and Economic Importance of Arms Exports for Russia* (London: Chatham House, 2017), <https://reader.chathamhouse.org/russias-role-arms-exporter-strategic-and-economic-importance-arms-exports-russia#>.

The motivations behind why states engage in arms transactions are nuanced and multifaceted. Investigating the drivers behind these sales provides evidence of the internal and external priorities of states. Therefore, research into Russia's arms sales provides a two-fold benefit. First, it depicts, to varying degrees, certain aspects of Putin's desired *external* end state. Put another way, arms sales can highlight Russia's foreign policy objectives. Second, research into Russian arms sales illustrates *internal* priorities that can influence foreign policy decisions. Insights gleaned from internally focused research supplies evidence to assess the feasibility of Russia's strategic aims and the key actors involved. Additionally, while arms sales are not a metaphorical crystal ball that ascertains or predicts Russian actions and intent, they do provide evidence on which to base arguments regarding both Russian foreign policy and economic goals. Both the identification and analysis of these subjects offer a bevy of policy implications for the United States in order to check, balance, contain, support, or reinforce Russian behavior based on American foreign policy goals. Most notably, analysis of this subject provides potential implications for American policy in the ongoing debate on global conventional arms control.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

When reviewing the literature on Soviet and Russian arms sales, a chronological format provides the most logical and intuitive synopsis. As such, this thesis's literature review will address scholarly analysis of Russian military technical cooperation during the Soviet era, followed by the immediate post-Soviet period during the 1990s, and concluding with the age of Putin beginning at the turn of the century. Additionally, it is also necessary to form a holistic intellectual baseline of academic analysis on arms sales before beginning a specific focus on Russia. Andrew Pierre, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, published his seminal work, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, in 1982. It provided a comprehensive list of the potential reasons of why a state conducts foreign military sales. Specifically, Pierre contended that political, security, and economic factors were all motives behind exporting arms. Overall, Pierre's study provided a solid foundation on which other analysts have built arguments in the subject of arms sales to this day. As such, it demands acknowledgement and perusal in this thesis.

Pierre served as the vanguard for theorists who postulated that foreign policy served as the causal mechanism behind international arms transfers. As he succinctly stated, “arms sales are far more than an economic occurrence, a military relationship, or an arms control challenge—*arms sales are foreign policy writ large*,” and thus they “must be seen, essentially, in *political* terms.”⁶ According to Pierre, arms sales are not without their potential drawbacks as they “are fraught with policy dilemmas” that require various “judgements and trade-offs” in order to weigh and balance “long-term risks” and “shorter-term benefits” that are often contradictory to one another.⁷

In order to determine whether a specific arms deal is “good” or “bad,” Pierre analyzed the benefits and detriments of each transaction through a variety of “rationales” based on the specific motive driving the sale.⁸ Pierre called his first category of rationales “influence and leverage.”⁹ According to Pierre, “leverage over other countries’ sensitive foreign policy decisions” is the most important benefit from engaging in arms sales.¹⁰ In addition to leverage, arms transfers can create influence as they can “be an important symbol of support and friendly relations [and] a demonstration of ideological support or affinity.”¹¹ Furthermore, arms create influence by “[providing] access to political and military elites.”¹² Foreign military sales also provide an opportunity for states to deny these aforementioned benefits to other countries through “preemptive selling.”¹³ Thus, the potential benefits from arms deals can either enhance a state’s influence and leverage over another or prevent an opponent from gaining similar advantages.

While Pierre touted the important of leverage and influence as consequences from international arms sales, he also questioned the longevity of those benefits. Specifically, he

⁶ Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3.

⁷ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 7, 28.

⁸ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 14.

⁹ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 14.

¹⁰ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 15.

¹¹ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 14–15.

¹² Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 15.

¹³ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 15.

stated that “influence and leverage are transitory phenomena: they can be lost even more quickly than they are acquired.”¹⁴ Pierre also “question[ed] the essence of the leverage that arms provide over specific foreign policy decisions.”¹⁵ Sudden regime changes, administrations re-orienting foreign policy directions, and other domestic conditions can all mitigate the potential leverage and influence gained through arms transfers. Even worse, “reverse leverage” can occur whereby the purchasing state gains influence over the distributing state “so far as to make the supplier hostage to the recipient.”¹⁶ Thus, while the policy benefits of gaining influence and leverage through arms transfers are often sizable, the longevity and feasibility of those gains are ultimately suspect and can lead to undesired dependency and curtailed political maneuver space.

Pierre’s second category of foreign military sales benefits is “security and stability.”¹⁷ Specifically, he contended that “supplying arms [can] fulfill the security requirements of allies and friends,” typically with the intent of “creating or maintaining a regional balance of power.”¹⁸ Arms transfers can also assist the distributing state in obtaining either military access—to include airspace, national waters, and facilities—in the purchasing country or even the ability to establish a more permanent military base.¹⁹ Such benefits have the potential to increase strategic options for the defense of a state or its ability to project power elsewhere. Lastly, selling military arms provides an opportunity to test weapons systems in combat “based on the assumption that they are more likely to be tested earlier by the receiver than by the supplier.”²⁰ Therefore, a vendor state receives vital feedback on their new weapons systems prior to having to use them themselves in combat.

While there are certainly potential security and stability benefits to arms sales, there are also drawbacks. According to Pierre, regional power balancing suffers from issues of

¹⁴ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 16.

¹⁵ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 17.

¹⁶ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 17–18.

¹⁷ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 19.

¹⁸ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 19–20.

¹⁹ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 20.

²⁰ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 21.

perception that can undermine an influencing state's original intent.²¹ Specifically, "one nation's perception of balance may be another nation's 'imbalance,'" which can lead to "competitive acquisition" and potentially a full-blown arms race.²² Such actions create what Robert Jervis called a "security dilemma," whereby a state seeking to provide for its own security, such as by purchasing advanced weapons, makes itself less secure since its actions evoke even stronger responses from rival states.²³ Other negative security-related factors include principal-agent problems, whereby buying states ignore potential stipulations of arms deals, such as that the purchased weapons are to be used only for defense, and conduct actions adverse to the vendor state.²⁴ Third-party states might also capture transferred weapons from a purchaser state and either pillage the technology or use it against the selling state or its allies. While Pierre did not state it directly, his comment also implied that not only third-party entities could steal military technology from purchased military hardware, but the purchasing states could reverse engineer the equipment they acquire. Lastly, and although he admitted that this is a rare occurrence, Pierre suggested the selling arms could potentially reduce the readiness and preparedness of the vendor state's military.²⁵ Given the potential negative security effects of arms sales, states must be judicious in conducting them in order to avoid undesired consequences.

Pierre's last category of rationales behind international arms transfers covered the economic benefits from international deals. First, foreign military sales can contribute to a state's balance of payments and serve as "an important earner of foreign exchange."²⁶ Second, they can strengthen a state's military-industrial complex by assisting with the creation of economies of scale in order to reduce the per-unit production costs of military hardware.²⁷ Third, arms exports can underwrite research and development costs of new

²¹ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 5.

²² Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 20.

²³ Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January, 1978): 169, <http://doi.org/10.2307/2009958>.

²⁴ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 22.

²⁵ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 23.

²⁶ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 24.

²⁷ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 24.

military technology, generally a very expensive endeavor. Fourth, international arms transfers can create domestic employment opportunities in a state's defense industry. Therefore, arms sales have benefits that not only affect a state internationally, but also domestically.

While Pierre did not dismiss the economic importance of foreign military sales, he questioned the use of solely economic justifications to support them. He was especially critical of the belief that exports were a necessary component of a state's economy or defense industry:

It may be, however, that the economic importance of arms sales—the explanation most often given for their existence and expansion—is not so great as it is often believed to be. The widespread perception that high levels of arms sales are necessary for the national economies of the principal suppliers is based upon vague, general notions rather than on hard data...economic benefits are less than is generally assumed.²⁸

Therefore, while some economic benefits do exist for arms exports, Pierre declined to label them as the central factor behind arms transfers.

After starting wide in both breadth and scope regarding the subject of international arms sales, Pierre's work focused on numerous case studies of both supplier and recipient countries in which he outlined their motivations for engaging in arms transactions. One of his most detailed studies was the Soviet Union, ironically the second largest arms supplier in the world at the time of his book's publishing, the same ranking that Russia occupies today. Pierre unhesitatingly asserted that political motivations based on Cold War-oriented foreign policy objectives were the primary reason behind the Soviet Union's international arms sales. As Pierre postulated, arms transfers "carefully designed to satisfy specific political and strategic needs [served as] a major tool in the political competition with the West" in the Third World.²⁹ Specifically, the Soviets engaged in transfers to ideological allies, often fighting in national-liberation movements, "to demonstrate Socialist solidarity and foster their affinity with Marxist-Leninist ideology."³⁰ Therefore, in Pierre's analysis,

²⁸ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 25.

²⁹ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 74.

³⁰ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 73.

the “supply of arms has become a key factor—for some, the major instrument—in the intense competition for power and influence” between the Soviet Union and Western powers.³¹ While secondary benefits from arms sales did occur, such as using them to “[pay] for the use of naval bases [and] acquire military bases” or gaining hard currency to purchase needed agriculture imports, the political motivation of obtaining influence was the primary driver behind Soviet arms sales.³²

Other scholars also agreed with Pierre’s assessments of Soviet intentions. Ian B. Anthony, an arms transfer analyst who has worked for the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute for more than two decades, claimed that “arms transfers were an important element of military assistance intended to achieve strategic objectives” in key locations such as the Persian Gulf.³³ Additionally, Herbert Wulf, a German researcher of peace and conflict issues, summarized that Soviet arms transactions had two primary purposes. First, “arms deliveries were seen as a foreign policy instrument in the struggle between two major alliances,” given that “assistance to socialist and non-aligned countries” would bolster international support for the Soviets while decreasing for Western alliances.³⁴ The second objective was that military sales would reinforce an ideological divide in the Third World against the West through “strengthen[ing] anti-colonial and anti-imperialist” movements.³⁵ The desired end state of these objectives was to shepherd the economic and political development of developing countries away from the capitalist model.³⁶ Like Pierre, Wulf discounted any economic motivation supporting arms exports, emphatically stating that “there is no evidence that arms sales brought significant benefits to the Soviet economy as a whole.”³⁷ Instead of creating benefits, Soviet arms exports often

³¹ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 81.

³² Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 76, 78, 79.

³³ Ian Anthony, Introduction to *Russia and the Arms Trade*, edited by Ian Anthony (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2.

³⁴ Herbert Wulf, “The Soviet Union and the Successor Republics: Arms Exports and the Struggle with the Heritage of the Military-Industrial Complex,” in *Arms Industry Limited*, ed. Herbert Wulf (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 121–122.

³⁵ Wulf, “The Soviet Union and the Successor Republics,” 122.

³⁶ Wulf, “The Soviet Union and the Successor Republics,” 124.

³⁷ Wulf, “The Soviet Union and the Successor Republics,” 128.

created problems because “several of the key recipients of Soviet weapons were not in a position to pay for the imported arms.”³⁸ Given the decline of the Soviet economy in the late 1980s, Russia had to drastically reduce its arms transfers. Thus, while economic gains might be merely a correlating factor in engaging in arms trades, a state’s economic decline can be a causal variable in ceasing them if the profit margin is insufficient.

The fall of the Soviet Union created what Russian political science-expert Vladimir Gel’man called “The Roaring 1990s” as the Soviet Union dissolved into 15 independent states and these new countries attempted to rebuild institutions that disappeared with the death of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).³⁹ Due to this enormous geopolitical event, Wulf asserted that military-industrial complex leaders who chose not to convert their factories over to civilian industries would lobby their political allies for increased international sales to keep their factories financially solvent. Thus, unlike the Soviet era when arms sales had political purposes, military exports from the Russian Federation would become haphazard. Wulf also opined pessimistically that using arms exports to keep military industrial facilities operational was not realistic due declining global demand for arms and a rising supply of arms available internationally.⁴⁰

Conducting research throughout the 1990s, multiple scholars concurred with Wulf’s prognosis and asserted that the Russian government would have difficulty controlling its arms exports. One of those academics was Stephen J. Blank, a former university professor and a prolific writer for the United State Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute who currently serves as a Senior Fellow on the American Foreign Policy Council. Blank discovered proof of Wulf’s prediction; one alarming piece of evidence was the story of the Russian Far Eastern Military District where “a corporate unit of the Russian armed forces, *acting on its own, sold a high-level strategic and intelligence asset for almost nothing.*”⁴¹ Blank also noted that Sukhoi, the Russian aerospace giant, sold manufacturing

³⁸ Wulf, “The Soviet Union and the Successor Republics, 128.

³⁹ Vladimir Gel’man, *Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet Regime Changes* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 43.

⁴⁰ Wulf, “The Soviet Union and the Successor Republics, 135–136.

⁴¹ Stephen J. Blank, *Challenging the New World Order: The Arms Transfer Policies of the Russian Republic* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1993), 28.

licenses of the Su-27 fighter to China in July 1996 without government consent or approval in order to obtain funds for research and development of the Su-37.⁴² The Russian government, as Wulf had predicted, had lost full control over its military sales.

In addition to independent facilities executing haphazard sales of military equipment, the Russian government also engaged in strategically incoherent transactions. Blank noted that Moscow engaged in arms sales “not so much for the economic [profits] garnered thereby, but for political reasons.”⁴³ However, Blank also stated that Russia’s reckless quest for arms importers exhibited “a mindless quality” as they sold to “literally anyone” at “fire sale prices” to include “both [Russia’s] geopolitical allies and those allies’ direct security competitors.”⁴⁴ Blank asserted that such actions would not only fuel regional conflicts and instability, but also threaten Russia’s own security.⁴⁵ Thus, while Blank attempted to assert the primacy of political motivations behind arms sales initially, he could not escape the strong influence of economic factors upon Russian foreign military sales during the 1990s.

Writing in 1997, Blank began to officially back pedal on his initial assessment of the primacy of political motivations behind arms sales. He instead acknowledged that “arms sales are critical to Russian defense industr[ies] and planners because [they] cannot survive on the basis of domestic procurement alone.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Blank contended that arms transfers improved the financial efficiency of Russian defense industries by reducing costs through economies of scale thereby increasing overall profits. In terms of other domestic benefits, Blank conceded that arms exports provided funds for both government official and defense industry leaders.⁴⁷ Lastly, Blank reasserted his original point that arms sales provided political benefits such as leverage and influence over arms consumers and

⁴² Stephen J. Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 6.

⁴³ Blank, *Challenging the New World Order*, viii.

⁴⁴ Blank, *Challenging the New World Order*, ix, 70.

⁴⁵ Blank, *Challenging the New World Order*, ix, 27.

⁴⁶ Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China*, 1.

⁴⁷ Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China*, 4.

an opportunity to start “a revival of Russian power, prestige, and a position at a global level.”⁴⁸ He also, at his core, still discounted the potential longevity of economic factors as the principal motivator for Russian arms sales, calling it a “short-term solution.”⁴⁹ So, while Blank understood the gravity of the Russian defense industry’s situation and the impetus behind economic motivations for arms sales, he still believed in the primacy of political factors as the main drivers behind Russian arms transfers.

Other academics writing in the 1990s also summarily dismissed the longevity of the “arms export as a panacea” argument but understood its pull on Russian political elites.⁵⁰ Kevin O’Prey discovered that while there was a shrinking global demand for military arms, the Russian defense industry remained “excessively optimistic of Russia’s export potential.”⁵¹ As such, the Russian government faced pressure to continue military technical cooperation solely for economic reasons. Similarly, native Russian scholars Mikhail Gerasev and Viktor M. Surikov chronicled the economic decline of the Russian military industry complex during the early 1990s and ominously concluded that “the condition of the Russian defense sector is disastrous.”⁵² Logically, they identified multiple economic benefits from arms sales much similar to those that Pierre had identified previously. They also concurred that arms exports could help maintain some but not all of the Russian defense industry. However, Gerasev and Surikov discounted arms exports as being able to resolve both the Russian debt and balance of payment issues, stating directly that “the perception that military-technical cooperation is a cure-all for all economic ills is not only fallacious but also myopic.”⁵³ Thus, O’Prey, Gerasev, and Surikov all acknowledged that while arms sales could assist in maintaining some defense industries,

⁴⁸ Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China*, 5.

⁴⁹ Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China*, 3.

⁵⁰ Kevin P. O’Prey, *A Farewell to Arms? Russian Struggles with Defense Conversion* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1995), 75.

⁵¹ O’Prey, *A Farewell to Arms*, 75.

⁵² Mikhail I. Gerasev, and Viktor M. Surikov, “The Crisis in the Russian Defense Industry: Implications for Arms Exports,” in *Russia in the World Arms Trade*, ed. Andrew J. Pierre and Dmitri V. Trenin (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution Press, 1997), 15.

⁵³ Gerasev, Surikov, “The Crisis in the Russian Defense Industry,” 20.

further curtailment of the overall Russian military-industrial complex was required based on the changing market dynamics of the post-Cold War era.

Other native Russian scholars writing during the 1990s oscillated between the economic and political causal mechanisms fueling Russian arms sales. Sergei Kortunov concurred with other academics by stating that while the Soviet Union's "penchant to supply arms [was] primarily on political and ideological grounds," the dissolution of the Soviet Union "spelled the decline of ideology" and the rise of "market romanticism" and "sell[ing] to anyone who pays."⁵⁴ Kortunov also stressed that Russian policy makers had not struck a balance on "the interrelation between arms export policy and national security policy."⁵⁵ Yevgeni Kozhokin concurred that Russia was "grappling with certain policy extremes, such as a super-ideological foreign policy and opportunistic pragmatism."⁵⁶ Most notably, he asserted that the economic benefits of arms transfers had a greater pull on Russian leaders as defense industry executives attempted "to subject Russian foreign policy to export needs."⁵⁷

In terms of studying other potential causal factors behind Russian arms sales in the 1990s beyond economic and political motives, Anthony also studied possible military benefits from military technical cooperation. However, Anthony asserted that "traditional strategic arguments have lost some of their relevance" specifically related to the need for basing rights "in the support of a global military strategy."⁵⁸ Yet Anthony also opined that some strategic considerations, such as the security and stability of allies, remained salient, especially in the turmoil of the geopolitical turmoil of the post-Cold War world. In terms of economic considerations, Anthony, like Wulf and Blank, rejected the idea that export revenues alone would be able to support the solvency of the Russian military-industrial

⁵⁴ Sergei V. Kortunov, "Arms Export Controls: Competition Among Executive Agencies," in *Russia in the World Arms Trade*, ed. Andrew J. Pierre and Dmitri V. Trenin (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution Press, 1997), 27, 35.

⁵⁵ Kortunov, "Arms Export Controls," 40.

⁵⁶ Yevgeni M. Kozhokin, "Arms Export Controls: What Role for Parliament?" in *Russia in the World Arms Trade*, ed. Andrew J. Pierre and Dmitri V. Trenin (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution Press, 1997), 45.

⁵⁷ Kozhokin, "Arms Export Controls," 45.

⁵⁸ Anthony, Introduction, 2.

complex.⁵⁹ Ultimately, Anthony concluded that the variable with the most causal weight behind Russia's international arms sales remained Russia's desire to obtain influence with and leverage over other states leaders in the execution of Russia's foreign policy.⁶⁰

Cameron Scott Mitchell, an Australian academic whose research focuses on defense related security issues, articulated a different opinion than the majority of other scholars. In his work *Phoenix from the Ashes?*, published in 2009, Mitchell claimed that arms exports have been critical to the resuscitation of the Russian military-industrial complex since the fall of the Soviet Union. As state orders decreased dramatically in the early 1990s, more than 2.5 million of the 6.1 million employees in defense industry left their jobs and military production fell 60% annually from 1992 to 1995.⁶¹ A corresponding "brain drain" occurred as scientists and engineers fled Russia for better economic considerations and employment opportunities.⁶² Mitchell asserted that foreign military sales helped clot the financial and capacity hemorrhaging during the 1990s and allowed "some sort of continuity to be maintained in some part of the defense industry."⁶³ As such, he contended that economic pressures remain relevant as a causal mechanism for Russian arms sales.

Mitchell stated that exports were not only vital to sustaining the Russian military-industrial complex in the 1990s, but also throughout the first decade of the 21st century. Mitchell noted that Vladimir Putin's policies in the early 2000s centralized defense industries under the Kremlin's, and therefore Putin's control.⁶⁴ Putin also conducted an initial restructuring of the Russian military in congruence with the state's consolidated and centralized defense industry in order to improve its overall financial efficiency. Such actions reduced pressure from the government to export arms in order to sustain Russia's

⁵⁹ Anthony, Introduction, 14.

⁶⁰ Anthony, Introduction, 15.

⁶¹ Cameron S. Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes? Russia's Defence Industrial Complex and its Arms Exports* (Canberra, AUS: Australian National University Press, 2009), 31.

⁶² Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 34.

⁶³ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 35.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 37.

military-industrial complex.⁶⁵ Thus, Mitchell inferred, albeit indirectly, that Putin was able to use the arms industry as a tool of foreign policy unencumbered by time-sensitive needs to habitually resuscitate the Russian military-industrial complex later in his second term as Russia's President.

The most recent studies of Russia's arms trade continue to debate potential motivations behind the Kremlin's use of military cooperation. Blank and Edward Levitsky's article "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade in East Asia and the Middle East," published in January 2015, provides one such analysis. While the authors do not discount economic motivations behind arms sales, to include gathering revenue and supporting the defense industry's economies of scale, they contend that "it is erroneous to claim that [economic factors are] the central driver behind Russia's arms trade."⁶⁶ Blank and Levitsky continue their argument in saying that "when Russia sells arms, it is not merely looking for money, but it is looking for influence and 'allies.'"⁶⁷ Beyond this primary preference, the authors list a myriad of secondary benefits of arms sales to include: supporting Russia's self-image as a great power, gaining access to natural resources, reinforcing defense relationships for potential future business and security allies, and obtaining access for foreign bases.⁶⁸ While this list is multifaceted, Blank and Levitsky hold the line established by previous scholars and reaffirm that Russia's desire to obtain influence and leverage over other states serves as the causal mechanism for Russian international arms sales.

Chatham House scholars Richard Connolly and Cecilie Sendstad concur with Blank's and Levitsky's assertion. In their 2016 study, "Russia Role as an Arms Exporter: The Strategic and Economic Importance of Arms Exports for Russia," Connolly and Sendstad analyze Russian arms sales from 2000 to 2016. Using geographic regions as case studies—specifically Asia, Middle East-North Africa (MENA), Latin America, and Sub-

⁶⁵ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 38.

⁶⁶ Stephen J. Blank and Edward Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade in East Asia and the Middle East," *Defence Studies* 15, no. 1 (February 2015): 63.

⁶⁷ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 77.

⁶⁸ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 64.

Saharan Africa—Connolly and Sendstad analyze military exports’ effects on Russia’s overall trade balance and domestic economic health. While their study posits that Russian arms sales are a vital part of sustaining the state’s military-industrial complex and contributing positively to Russia’s overall export of manufactured goods, the authors also suggest that “[Russia’s] performance as an arms exporter might have truly strategic significance...[as] Russian firms [expand] arms exports to countries beyond their traditional client base...with the possibility of weakening ties between those countries and their traditional allies in the West.”⁶⁹

Not all scholars concur with the supposed gravitas of foreign policy motives behind Russian arms trade. Bobo Lo, in his 2014 monograph “Russia’s Eastern Direction—Distinguishing the Real from the Virtual,” submits that Russian desires for arms exports remains the same as it has been since the fall of the Soviet Union. As Lo argues, “Russia sells weapons to whomever it can, whenever it can, and is motivated almost entirely by commercial considerations.”⁷⁰ As such, Russian policy for engaging in export contracts is “à tous azimuts,” a French saying meaning “in all directions.”⁷¹ Such words echo the scholarly analysis of Russian arms sales in the 1990s.

In sum, the conventional wisdom regarding the motives behind Russian arms sales has vacillated over the past 40 years. While most scholars agreed that the Soviet Union transferred arms for political reasons and the newly formed Russian Federation initially scrambled to export weapons solely to fight off the disintegration of the country’s military-industrial complex, recent scholarship, as noted above, remains divided. Currently, the debate behind Russian arms sales has filtered down to two main arguments: economic motives versus political motives. Further research is thus necessary to determine both the soundness of each argument and which one is the more influential of the two.

⁶⁹ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter*, 28.

⁷⁰ Bobo Lo, *Russia’s Eastern Direction—Distinguishing the Real from the Virtual*, Russie.Nei.Reports No. 17, (Paris: IFRI, 2014), <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifrirnr17boboloeasterndirectionjan2014.pdf>, 21.

⁷¹ Lo, *Russia’s Eastern Direction*, 21.

E. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

State leaders set policy agendas and direct actions for specific reasons. The causes in which they engage have desired “effects” that they wish to achieve. As discussed previously in this introduction, there have been a number of potential answers to the question of why Russia conducts international arms sales. This thesis focuses on analyzing the relationships of two main hypotheses: *domestic economic* factors and *international political* factors. The overall goal of this study is to determine which of these factors is the most influential.

In this thesis, domestic economic factors are those that affect the Russian economy in aggregate, specifically how the size and significance of arms exports add or subtract to overall Russian trade and the federal government’s balance of payments. Other sub-factors in this category include effects that arms exports have on the solvency of Russia’s defense industry its and ability to conduct the research and development of future weapon systems. While there is a clear linkage between the economic benefits of arms trades and the stability of the military-industrial complex, the centralization of control over arms exports under the federal government has stripped the ability of Russian defense companies to make unilateral decisions.⁷² Thus, with the independence of the defense industry marginalized, their economic success is more a factor of the Kremlin’s policy than that of the military-industrial complex’s preferences.

International political factors are those that affect Russia’s ability in terms of obtaining influence and leverage to accomplish Putin’s foreign policy objectives. Examples of these goals include increasing anti-Westernism, strategically balancing the United States, strengthening what Chatham House scholar Bobo Lo describes as “polycentrism” and reinforcing the notion of Russia as a global “great power.”⁷³ Putin has subjugated the majority of power brokers that arose after the fall of communism; he did not want to be beholden to king-making oligarchs when he ascended to the presidency, and

⁷² Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 35–39.

⁷³ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 44.

the thought of him not having complete control of policy decisions based on other sources of power internal to Russia seems far-fetched. As such, this thesis assumes that Russian foreign policy decisions are in the hands of one man—Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

F. THESIS STRUCTURE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis uses comparative case studies of three geopolitical regions as its backbone. East Asia, due to its geopolitical significance to the Russian Federation, is the initial region this study analyzes with China serving as the first case study. Russia shares a sizeable border with China, specifically the second longest border between Russia and any other country and the sixth longest border between any two countries in the world.⁷⁴ Besides the tumultuous period during the Sino-Soviet Split of the 1960s, Russia and China have been strategic allies since the Chinese Communist Party's victory over the Nationalist Party in 1949, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union. China's rise as a regional power directly supports Putin's desire for polycentrism, otherwise understood as his belief in the "decline of the West and the rise of the rest."⁷⁵ Given the recent economic sanctions and political hostilities between Russia and the West, China also serves as a natural geopolitical ally and economic outlet for Russian political and monetary capital. Russia also seeks to serve as the "natural balancer between East and West," and therefore arms trade in the region potentially supports that end state through developing influence with Beijing.⁷⁶ Economically, territorial disputes and the growing North Korean threat fuel rising militarism in the region and create a bullish market for arms sales. As such, studying arms sale to China is ripe with opportunity to weigh causal arguments regarding the motives behind Russian arms sales.

South Asia is also an important area in which to test hypotheses behind Russian foreign military sales. In this region, India is Russia's leading partner. Similar to China,

⁷⁴ Kazakhstan shares the longest border with Russia, totaling 6,846 km. That border is the second longest between any two countries. The Russian-Chinese Border is 3,645 km; Oliver Smith, "The World's Longest and Weirdest Borders—and the Quickest Way to Visit Every Country in the EU," *The Telegraph*, April 25, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/lists/the-countries-with-the-most-borders/>.

⁷⁵ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 44.

⁷⁶ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 50.

India has been a long-time ally of both the Soviet Union and Russian Federation and is a part of the BRICS penta-state association (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). More important to the context of this thesis, India has been the biggest importer of Russian arms since the fall of the USSR.⁷⁷ India is also involved in a continual dispute with its neighbor Pakistan over the Kashmir and Jammu region. Such turmoil ensures that India will desire to maintain a capable and technologically advanced military. India's need to balance the growing Chinese influence in the region also requires the deterrence factor of a robust and advanced military. Therefore, it serves as another market open to Russian military sales.

The Middle East provides the third and final case study of this thesis. Politically, the Middle East remains a battleground between countless states for regional influence due to its plentiful energy resources. While small in population size, the sheer magnitude of most Middle Eastern state budgets due to nationalized oil wealth provides an exploitable market. Continual ethnic, religious, and historical strife—most notably between Sunni-majority and Shi'a-majority countries and their various proxies—creates a demand for military equipment and augments the allure of the Middle East's arms import market. This thesis examines Russian arms exports to five specific Middle Eastern countries: Syria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and the UAE. These states are important because they either have been longtime and consistent importers of Russian arms for the past three decades, like Iran and Syria, or that they are either battleground states between American and Russian imports, like Egypt and Iraq, or they are rapidly growing import markets, like the UAE.

For gathering quantitative evidence, this thesis relies on statistical data from three primary sources. The first is the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), an organization that has documented military expenditures and arms sales statistics since 1950.⁷⁸ SIPRI tracks multiple data points to include trends in military expenditures both in local currency and dollars, military expenditure as share of gross domestic product (GDP),

⁷⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 1992–2016," accessed September 4, 2017, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

⁷⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database," accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

military expenditure as share of total government spending, and military expenditure per capita. Using open source data collection, SIPRI tracks the export and import of “major conventional weapons” to include aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), air defense systems, anti-submarine warfare weapons, armored vehicles, artillery, missiles, sensors, satellites, ships, and both gun turrets and engines for all aforementioned pieces of equipment.⁷⁹ Conversely, SIPRI does not document the transfer of “small arms and light weapons (SALW) other than portable guided missiles such as man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and guided anti-tank missiles.”⁸⁰ SIPRI also does not track the sale of “trucks, artillery under 100-mm calibre, ammunition, support equipment and components...repair and support services or technology transfers.”⁸¹

To track the size of arms trades, SIPRI uses a metric named the trend-indicator value (TIV). As SIPRI defines, “the TIV is based on the known unit production costs of a core set of weapons and is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer.”⁸² As such, equipment sold used or refurbished receives a reduction in value. While SIPRI notes that their methodology is not a financial means of tracking arms sales and should not be used for direct comparisons to a state’s defense expenditure or GDP, their statistics have other uses. Specifically, as Connolly and Sendstad describe, “SIPRI allows for comparison(s) of the *material* scale of arms transfers and their composition (i.e., the types of weapons sold).”⁸³ Furthermore, SIPRI data provides reliable information to track the *volume* of the arms trade between importers and exporters.⁸⁴ Based on the capabilities of SIPRI’s data, this thesis uses its statistics to track the military hardware Russia exports and the overall volume of the Russian arms trade chronologically.

⁷⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Sources and Methods,” accessed March 4, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/sources-and-methods>.

⁸⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Sources and Methods.”

⁸¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Sources and Methods.”

⁸² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Sources and Methods.”

⁸³ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter*, 6.

⁸⁴ Kate Blanchfield, Pieter D. Wezeman and Siemon T. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, February 22, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2017/state-major-arms-transfers-8-graphics>.

The U.S. Department of State (DoS) is the second major source of quantitative data. It has tracked international arms transfers and military spending ever since it assimilated the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (USACDA) in 1999.⁸⁵ Previous to its absorption in the Department of State, USACDA had gathered that data every year since 1964.⁸⁶ The DOS consolidates this data in a yearly *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers [Report]* (WMEAT), which it has published from 2012–2017. The DOS also published a *WMEAT 2005*, which provides data for 2000–2005. The only gap that this author has found in DOS data is for 2006.

Unlike SIPRI, the DoS records purely the financial value of arms exports and imports between countries in dollars vice using a metric like the TIV. Furthermore, while SIPRI considers only major end item transfers when documenting arms trade data, the DOS covers “the international transfer (under terms of grant, credit, barter or cash) of military equipment and related services, including weapons of war, parts thereof, ammunition, support equipment, and other commodities designed for military use, as well as related services.”⁸⁷ Based on this wider definition of arms transfers and the use of a financial statistical metric, the DOS provides a slightly different perspective of quantitative analysis than what SIPRI offers. As such, DOS data offer a greater comparative lens to view Russian arms sales.

The Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), a Russian Moscow-based think tank, provides the third source of data for this thesis. It also serves as a balance to the European SIPRI data and American DOS WMEAT statistics. Given that CAST is a Russian organization, it unsurprisingly acquires information from native sources—such as the Russian Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation, the State Duma’s Defense Committee, and Rosoboronexport, from which other organizations

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/wmeat/>.

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers.”

⁸⁷ World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 2017, “Sources, Data and Methods of WMEAT 2017,” accessed March 10, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/wmeat/2017/index.htm>.

might struggle to obtain information.⁸⁸ As such, CAST offers detailed information on Russia's arms trade to include a list of the values from both arms contracts signed and deliveries made each year. Ultimately, CAST provides another source of financial data to compare directly against DOS arms trade statistics and contrast with SIPRI's TIV metrics. Like SIPRI and DOS, CAST also publishes financial information on Russia's Defense Department, specifically its annual budget. Of critical importance, CAST disseminates data regarding Russia's domestic defense procurement program that SIPRI and WMEAT lack.

As Julian Cooper dryly quipped in 2016, "Russia's military economy remains strikingly non-transparent."⁸⁹ As such, it is important to understand that a margin of error is inherent in all these statistical studies. Furthermore, a master repository of all relevant information necessary to conduct a 100% factually accurate analysis does not exist. In order to combat the potential logical errors that arise from the various errors in each source of quantitative information, this thesis examines each organization's information comparatively. Using such a method discloses certain trends regardless of the lack of complete factual certainty. Thus, despite the organic errors that arise from such information sources, a basis for making claims exists.

Numerous newspaper, periodical, and website sources also provides factual quantitative and qualitative data with regard to specific arms transfers between Russia and purchasing states. In terms of Russian sources, the Russian state-controlled multimedia news agency Sputnik, the Western-oriented daily newspaper *Moscow Times*, and the Jamestown Foundation online journal *Eurasian Daily Monitor* all provide insight into Russia economic and military news. A synthesis of multiple published works either in book or journal article form augments the information from these three information sources. These various works, pieces, and periodicals all contribute valuable insights and opinions that serve as qualitative evidence in this manuscript.

⁸⁸ Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, "Useful Figures," accessed March 2, 2018, <http://cast.ru/eng/projects/useful-figures.html>.

⁸⁹ Julian Cooper, *Russia's State Armament Programme to 2020: A Quantitative Assessment of Implementation*, FOI-R--4239--SE, (Stockholm, Sweden: FOI, 2016), <https://www.foi.se/report-search/pdf?fileName=D%3A%5CReportSearch%5CFiles%5Ccbc46df1-667d-4a25-9b75-28ac80863996.pdf>, 12.

G. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis follows a logical order based on its case study-orientated research methodology. With a solid historical and intellectual foundation established via this introductory chapter, the second, third, and fourth chapters include the comparative case study analysis of current Russian military arms sales to various geopolitical regions. Specifically, Chapter II discusses arms sales to China, Chapter III covers transfers to India, and Chapter IV outlines arms exchanges to Middle Eastern countries. The fifth and final chapter of this thesis discusses ramifications of Russian arms sales for the United States. It also presents various policy recommendations in order to counter or support Russian actions based on desired American foreign policy goals. Lastly, this chapter will provide an empirically grounded forecast of whether Putin will actually be able to obtain his desired goals via arms sales in the future.

Ultimately, this thesis concludes that while arms sales provided Russia many domestic economic benefits, especially in the early years of Putin's presidency, international political factors provide a greater impetus behind Russia's export of military hardware. Specifically, Putin used arms sales to secure influence and leverage with selected partners in order to foster the development of a polycentric world, counterbalance the United States' dominance, and improve Russia's reputation as a great power. However, while Putin has a clear end state for his use of arms sales, the overall strategy behind his use of them is flawed. As such, Putin's ability to reap a similar level of benefits as he has had in the past is unlikely.

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II. THE BEAR AND THE DRAGON—RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO CHINA

The People’s Republic of China serves as the first case study of this thesis. In terms of military-technical cooperation, Russia, and the Soviet Union before it, has served as China’s main supplier of arms imports. From the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) victory over the Chinese Nationalists in 1949 until 2017, the combination of Soviet and Russian arms transfers have accounted for 87.2% of Chinese military imports by volume.⁹⁰ More recently, Russia provided 79.2% of Chinese arms imports by volume from 2000 to 2017.⁹¹ While Russia has maintained a prominent place in China’s import market, China has reciprocally served as one of Russia’s biggest customers. From 2000 to 2017, Chinese purchases accounted for 25.5% of total Russian arms exports.⁹² The context behind these statistics merit a detailed review in this chapter.

Overall, there are several reasons behind Russia’s high level of arms exports to China. For Russia, as Sino-Russian expert Bobo Lo argues, China’s rise as a regional power directly supports Putin’s desire for “polycentrism,” otherwise understood as his belief in the “decline of the West and the rise of the rest.”⁹³ Given Beijing’s ongoing economic resurgence and growing regional influence, China serves as a key Russian ally in Asia in Putin’s quest to check the ongoing American hegemonic presence existing in the region since the end of World War II. Putin also desires for Russia to serve as the “natural balancer between East and West” and, therefore, relations with China, cemented via military-technical cooperation, are vital for Russia to assume its self-believed moniker as a “Eurasian” power.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports to China, 1950–2017,” accessed May 23, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

⁹¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports to China, 2000–2017,” accessed May 23, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

⁹² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017,” accessed March 17, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

⁹³ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 44.

⁹⁴ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 50.

For China, Russia represents a reliable source of inexpensive and modern products. Furthermore, following the 1989 Tiananmen Square student protests, a U.S. and European Union (EU) embargo of arms imports to China created a captive market for Russian arms, as Beijing had few other vendors from whom to purchase military hardware.⁹⁵ A summation of regional territorial disputes in the South China Sea, China's ongoing vision of reclaiming Taiwan, and rising Chinese nationalism created a bullish market for Russian arms exports in the 1990s, which has continued into Putin's presidency.⁹⁶ Seeking to modernize its military in order to contend with these external challenges, Beijing sought Russian arms. Thus, just as Russia was a reliable arms vendor, China was a faithful customer.

This chapter first summarizes the history of Soviet and Russia military technical cooperation with China. It then reviews the trends of major arms deals between Moscow and Beijing during Putin's 17 years of de facto rule. This chapter then discusses the benefits that Russia has obtained from exporting arms to China and determines which category of gains Putin has valued the most. It finishes with an analysis of existing and potential obstacles that could negatively affect Sino-Russian arms sales in the future. Ultimately, this chapter concludes that Putin has valued the political benefits of arms sales to China more than their economic gains, despite the financial significance of Beijing's arms purchases in the early 2000s. Despite the benefits that Chinese arms sales have provided Russia, the overall value of these gains has gradually declined due to a variety of factors. Primarily, China's sustained efforts to build a domestic military-industrial complex (MIC) have succeeded, thus lowering Beijing's need to look for international sources of military equipment.⁹⁷ Although at present China's MIC is not fully self-reliant, Beijing's need to import Russian arms has gradually declined as China's domestic military production

⁹⁵ Rajan Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," *Survival* 51, no. 3 (March 2009): 114, <https://doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1080/00396330903011529>.

⁹⁶ Linda Jakobson, Paul Holtom, Dean Knox, and Jingchao Peng, *China's Energy and Security Relations with Russia: Hopes Frustrations, and Uncertainties*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 29, (Solna, Sweden: SIPRI, 2011), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/PP/SIPRI29.pdf>, 16.

⁹⁷ Richard A. Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," *Defence Studies* 17 no. 3 (July 2017): 299, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2017.1347871>.

capabilities have risen.⁹⁸ Thus, Beijing's decreased need for Russian arms has equated to curtailed benefits for Moscow. Yet, despite these factors, Putin still attempts to gain political favor with the Chinese through arms sales, namely through selling newer technologies previously withheld from export to Beijing due to fears of Chinese reverse engineering.⁹⁹ While the Kremlin still worries about Chinese intellectual property theft, Putin deems the risk worth the potential gains. Other obstacles to Sino-Russian relations—Russia's arms sales to several Chinese geopolitical competitors, China's increased presence in Central Asia, and Moscow's rising confrontational attitude towards the United States—also degrade opportunities for increased cooperation between Moscow and Beijing. Thus, in Putin's search for cohorts in his polycentric world, China will remain a partner of convenience rather than a full-fledged ideological ally.

A. A BRIEF HISTORY OF SINO-RUSSIAN MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION

While Sino-Russian relations began centuries ago, modern political interactions began in the 1920s, following the collapse of both the Russian Empire and the Qing Dynasty. Initially, the Soviet Union adopted a hedging strategy between the two parties that arose from China after the end of dynastic rule—the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT).¹⁰⁰ In pursuit of this policy, Moscow gave its Chinese comrades some “spectacularly bad advice” and strongly advocated for the formation of the “First United Front” between the CCP and KMT in the mid-1920s.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately for the CCP, KMT Leader Chiang Kai-shek initiated a purge of the communists in the middle of their unified “Northern Expedition” against Chinese warlords, who still controlled large swathes of the country.¹⁰² As such, the remaining communists fled to northwest China to avoid Chiang's

⁹⁸ Richard Weitz, *China-Russia Security Relations: Strategic Parallelism Without Partnership or Passion?* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 24.

⁹⁹ Stephen J. Blank and Edward Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade in East Asia and the Middle East,” *Defence Studies*, 15, no. 1 (February 2015): 65–67.

¹⁰⁰ Harold M. Tanner, *China: A History, Volume 2* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, Company, 2010), 135–136.

¹⁰¹ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 99.

¹⁰² Tanner, *China: A History*, 153.

annihilation campaigns.¹⁰³ Only Japan's declaration of war in 1937 halted the KMT's communist purge and motivated the formation of the "Second United Front" between both parties.¹⁰⁴ At the conclusion of World War II, Stalin viewed the American-supported KMT as a threat to Soviet interests in Asia and began to provide greater support to the CCP.¹⁰⁵ After the Chinese Communists' victory in 1949, the party remained an ally of the Soviet Union until the Sino-Soviet split began in the late 1950s.¹⁰⁶ Mikhail Gorbachev reinvigorated Sino-Russian relations in the late 1980s and President Boris Yeltsin continued to strengthen Russia's partnership with Beijing in the 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷

Military technical cooperation was an important factor throughout both the Soviet Union's and Russia's relationship with China. Soviet military assistance to China began in the 1920s when the USSR helped found the Whampoa Military Academy, a school that provided training to both KMT and CCP members, including both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong.¹⁰⁸ Soviet support of the CCP—to include training, equipment provision, and attached military advisors—continued throughout the Second World War and Chinese Civil War. Moscow also supported, albeit cheaply in terms of actual aid, China's intervention in the Korean War when Mao decided to repulse the American advance towards the Yalu. However, in the years following Stalin's death, the gradual rift between Mao and Nikita Khrushchev widened. Fearing that a belligerent China could draw him into an unnecessary conflict with United States over Taiwan, Khrushchev terminated assistance to China's nuclear weapons and energy program in 1959.¹⁰⁹ After his relations with Mao worsened even further, Khrushchev recalled all advisors, terminated technical

¹⁰³ Tanner, *China: A History*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ Tanner, *China: A History*, 171.

¹⁰⁵ Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 100.

¹⁰⁶ Bobo Lo, *How the Chinese See Russia*, Russie.Nei.Reports No. 6, (Paris: IFRI, 2010), <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rnr6chinaloengdec2010.pdf>, 10–11.

¹⁰⁷ Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 104–106.

¹⁰⁸ Tanner, *China: A History*, 137.

¹⁰⁹ Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Social in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 343.

assistance, and ended financial credits to China in 1962.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Russian arms transfers to China slowly declined from 1960 to 1968 before ceasing in 1969, due to the outbreak of the hostilities between the two countries along the Ussuri River.¹¹¹

Decades later under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union reinitiated arms sales to China in 1989. Geopolitical events aided the Soviet reunion with Beijing. In June 1989, after the Chinese government cracked down on student protests in Tiananmen Square, both the United States and European Union (EU) embargoed arms exports to China.¹¹² The CCP had few other sources of military hardware besides Moscow.¹¹³ For Russia, renewed sales to China were vital to providing needed monetary influxes for the Russian MIC. As Russian state orders decreased dramatically in the early 1990s immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, more than 2.5 million of the 6.1 million employees in the defense industry left their jobs and military production fell 60% annually from 1992–1995.¹¹⁴ A corresponding exodus of skilled scientists and engineers occurred as this demographic fled Russia for better economic conditions and employment opportunities.¹¹⁵ As William Potter aptly noted in early 1992, “There is no equivalent in Russian for a ‘Going Out of Business Sale,’ but this is what we are now witnessing in the crumbling state sector of the former Soviet Union.”¹¹⁶ The post-Soviet era for the Russian defense industry certainly appeared bleak.

¹¹⁰ Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*, 344.

¹¹¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports to China, 1950–2017,” accessed May 23, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>; Bobo Lo, *A Fine Balance - The Strange Case of Sino-Russian Relations*, Russie.Nei.Reports No. 1, (Paris: IFRI, 2005), https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri_boboloanglais_april_2005.pdf, 3.

¹¹² Hugo Meijer, Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Paul Holtom, and Matthew Uttley, “Arming China: Major Powers’ Arms Transfers to the People’s Republic of China,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1288110>.

¹¹³ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 114.

¹¹⁴ Cameron S. Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes? Russia’s Defence Industrial Complex and its Arms Exports* (Canberra, AUS: Australian National University Press, 2009), 31.

¹¹⁵ Mikhail I. Gerasev and Viktor M. Surikov, “The Crisis in the Russian Defense Industry: Implications for Arms Exports,” in *Russia in the World Arms Trade*, ed. Andrew J. Pierre and Dmitri V. Trenin (Washington, D.C.: Brooking Institution Press, 1997), 15, 34.

¹¹⁶ William C. Potter, “Exports and Experts: Proliferation Risks from the New Commonwealth,” *Arms Control Today* 22, no. 1 (January/February, 1992): 32.

While exports to China were vital to the Yeltsin administration's triage of the Russian MIC, such sales incurred several consequences. For Russia, the Chinese struck hard bargains for arms deals, often providing payment not through hard currency, which Russia desperately needed, but instead with consumer goods, such as canned meat, cigarette lighters, leather jackets, shoes, mango juice, and vodka.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Russia did not sell China its most technologically-advanced platforms, but rather stripped-down export versions of its equipment in order to prevent the creation of a potential security threat on Russia's border.¹¹⁸ Another strategic issue between the two states was the technological pillaging that the Chinese routinely conducted. The majority of Chinese military equipment was not self-developed, but purchased from another state and then reverse engineered.¹¹⁹ Therefore, selling equipment to the Chinese equated to potentially reduced future sales of the same equipment once the Chinese were able to reproduce it themselves.¹²⁰ Given that China was also building a military export industry itself in the 1990s, Russia's sales of newer equipment to China was potentially hazardous to Moscow's own export opportunities.¹²¹ Modernizing China also meant arming a potential geopolitical competitor in Asia.¹²² However, Russia had to address the serious issue of sustaining its crumbling defense industry and related workforce, a dilemma that required an immediate solution. Thus, despite the potential long-term costs, Russian leaders deemed selling arms

¹¹⁷ Pavel Felgenhauer, "An Uneasy Partnership: Sino-Russian Defense Cooperation and Arms Sales," in *Russia in the World Arms Trade*, ed. Andrew J. Pierre and Dmitri V. Trenin (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 96–97; Stephen J. Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 9; Alexander Sergouin and Sergey Subbotin, Sergounin, "In Search of a New Russian Arms Export Policy," *International Spectator* 29, no. 1 (January 1994): 35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729408458039>.

¹¹⁸ Felgenhauer, "An Uneasy Partnership: Sino-Russian Defense Cooperation and Arms Sales," 100.

¹¹⁹ Felgenhauer, "An Uneasy Partnership: Sino-Russian Defense Cooperation and Arms Sales," 87.

¹²⁰ Blank, *The Dynamics of Russian Weapon Sales to China*, 6, 9.

¹²¹ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 65.

¹²² Baidya B. Basu, "Trends in Russian Arms Export." *Strategic Analysis* 23, no. 11 (February 2000): 1919, 1926, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160008455171>.

to China as necessary for the short-term benefits those transactions provided.¹²³ While Russian and China remained strategic partners and enjoyed the mutual benefits of military technical cooperation, both countries had lingering problems in the background of their relationship, which Vladimir Putin inherited when he assumed the presidency of the Russian Federation on December 31, 1999.

B. ARMS SALES TO CHINA DURING THE AGE OF PUTIN: 2000 TO 2017

Russian arms sales to China from 2000 to 2017 had three distinct phases, as Figure 3 depicts. Phase I occurred from 2000 to 2005, a period when Putin was building his “vertical of power” at home while developing his knowledge of international politics and the requirements for leadership at the international level.¹²⁴ Likewise, China was modernizing its military and building up its domestic MIC. Phase II stretched from 2006 to 2011, a time when Putin’s general anti-Western positions grew while China sought to establish itself as an international model for developing countries and increase its image as a global great power.¹²⁵ Phase III occurred from 2011 until 2017, a period when relations between Putin and the West declined, as Xi Jinping centralized power domestically, while also projecting Chinese strength abroad through projects like the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative.¹²⁶ Overall, this next section details the Russia arms sales that occurred during each phase and analyzes both the details and underlying context—to include the various friction points—of major transactions.

¹²³ Richard Connolly and Cecilie Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter: The Strategic and Economic Importance of Arms Exports for Russia*, (London: Chatham House, 2017), <https://reader.chathamhouse.org/russias-role-arms-exporter-strategic-and-economic-importance-arms-exports-russia#>, 14.

¹²⁴ Robert Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone: Russian Foreign Policy under Putin* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2016), 20.

¹²⁵ John Watts, Sofia Ledberg, and Kjell Engelbrekt, “Brothers in Arms, Yet Again? Twenty-first Century Sino-Russian Strategic Collaboration in the Realm of Defence and Security,” *Defence Studies* 16 no. 4 (October 2016): 429, <https://doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1080/14702436.2016.1238747>.

¹²⁶ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, “Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?,” 430.

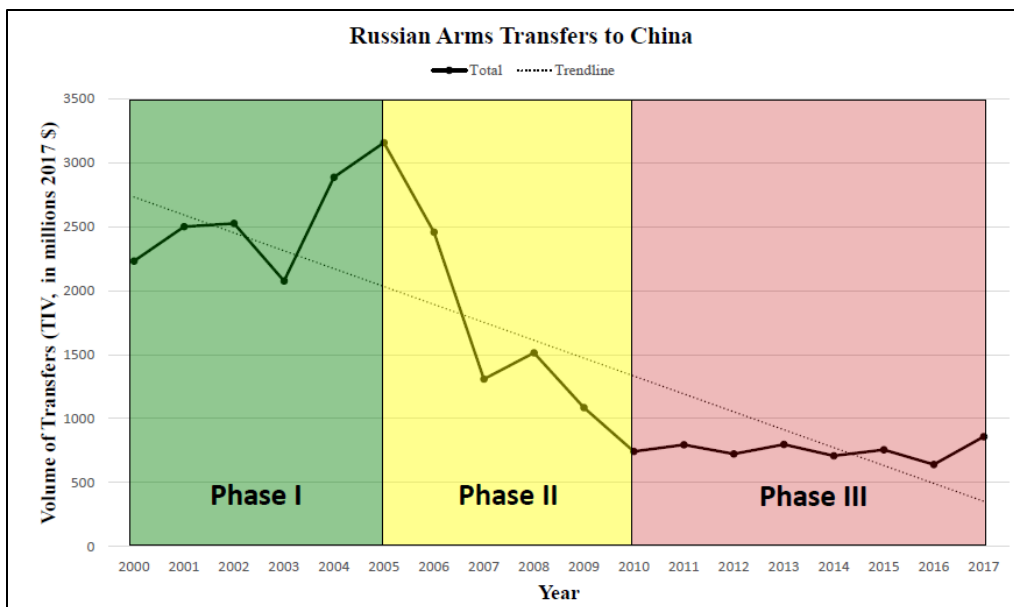


Figure 3. Phases of Russian Arms Sales to China¹²⁷

1. Phase I: 2000–2005

Russian arms transfers to China from 2000 to 2005 were diverse, yet foreshadowed future relational problems between Moscow and Beijing based on China’s growing MIC capability. Aerial platforms constituted the most expensive of China’s purchases, especially fixed-wing aircraft, as China sought to modernize its military and improve its ability to project power in the South China Sea. From 2000 to 2002, China received 28 Su-27UBK Flanker-B fighters, a \$1 billion dollar deal.¹²⁸ Beijing also produced 105 Su-27S Flanker-B, designated the J-11, under license at the Shenyang Aircraft Factory for approximately \$1.75 billion.¹²⁹ Seeking more advanced technology, China purchased a total of 100 newer Su-30MKK fighters for approximately \$5 billion from 2000–2004.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017.”; author’s calculations and graph.

¹²⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017.”

¹²⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017.”

¹³⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017.”

Lastly, China bought one Il-76M transport aircraft for conversion into an airborne early-warning aircraft.¹³¹ China also purchased large numbers of helicopters during this period. From 2001 to 2005, Beijing signed deals to purchase a total of 114 Mi-17 Hip transport helicopters, 54 of which China assembled from kits domestically.¹³² To complete Chinese-produced J-10 Firebird multi-role fighters, Beijing penned deals in 2000 and 2005 to purchase a total of 154 AL-31FN turbofan engines.¹³³ Russia also sold the Chinese 100 Zhuk-8 radar systems in 2001 to assist with Chinese efforts to modernize their older J-8 Finback interceptor aircraft. Lastly, Beijing bought one *Zmei-Seadragon* multipurpose aircraft radar in 2002, which the Chinese intended to use on a balloon to monitor the Taiwan Strait.¹³⁴ In total, these sales demonstrated that while China possessed a decently capable MIC, it was not self-reliant and needed influxes of the most updated technology in order to modernize its military. Additionally, China's inability to manufacture certain aircraft subsystems, namely aircraft engines and radars, further demonstrated that Beijing lacked a fully self-reliant MIC.

China also penned a pair of large deals for naval platforms as Beijing sought to gain military dominance over rivals in the South China Sea. Specifically, Beijing bought eight Project-636E *Kilo*-class diesel attack submarines in 2002 for \$2 billion. The same year, Russian sold China two Project-956EM *Sovremenny*-class destroyers for \$1.5 billion. In addition to these expensive procurements, China also bought a variety of sub-systems for domestically-produced ships. Notably, Beijing procured a total 150 air-search, surface-search, and fire-control radars for Chinese-made *Luyang*-class destroyers, *Luzhou*-class destroyers, *Jiangkai*-class frigates, and the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier that China bought from

¹³¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹³² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹³³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹³⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

Ukraine.¹³⁵ In 2004 and 2005 China also purchased a total of 31 AK-176 76-mm naval guns to outfit their *Jiangkai*-class frigates and *Yuzhao*-class amphibious transport ships.¹³⁶ Lastly, China bought two naval variants of the formidable S-300/SA-10 Grumble air defense system for use on domestically-produced destroyers.¹³⁷ China's purchases of naval platforms, just as those of aircraft, demonstrated that China's domestic MIC was not fully capable of satisfying Beijing's needs for military hardware, and that Russia was more than willing to provide equipment to fill any Chinese capability gaps.

Russia sold fewer ground combat systems to China from 2000 to 2005 than air-based or sea-based platforms. This difference points to the fact that China's MIC was already adept at producing platforms such as main battle tanks (MBTs) and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs).¹³⁸ However, China lacked modern anti-aircraft platforms, while Russia produced some of the best in the world. As such, China sought to procure Russian equipment to satisfy its capability needs. In 2000, China received 20 Tor-M1/SA-15 Gauntlet air defense platforms and bought another four, more advanced S-300PMU/S-20A Gargoyle systems for \$400 million in 2001.¹³⁹ Three years later, China inked a deal to buy eight upgraded S-300PMU-2/SA-20B platforms for \$980 million.¹⁴⁰ These sales indicate the prominent place Russian air defense systems have held in the Chinese import market, despite China's MIC gradually increasing capability.

In addition to the vast amounts of air, naval, and land platforms China procured during this period, Beijing also purchased a sizable amount of munitions for both imported and domestically-produced systems. For fighter aircraft, China bought 750 AA-12 Adder

¹³⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹³⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹³⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹³⁸ Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," 300.

¹³⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁴⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) in 2000 and 200 AS-18MK anti-ship missiles in 2004 for their recently purchased Su-30 combat aircraft.¹⁴¹ To arm their surface ships, Beijing agreed to buy 650 air-to-air missiles of various types and 30 SS-N-22 Moskit anti-ship missiles. For their Kilo-class submarines, China reached several deals in 2002 to buy 150 SS-N-27 Klub cruise missiles and 300 torpedoes.¹⁴² For their SA-20 air defense systems, Beijing bought a total of 447 SA-10 surface-to-air missiles.

The summation of Russian sales to Beijing between 2000 to 2005 demonstrated China's lingering dependence on Russian arms imports. While the Chinese defense industry demonstrated the ability to produce lower-end products through manufacturing such products as the older J-8 Finback, newer J-10 Firebird, and Type 90 MBT, it still required Russia to provide advanced platforms, especially in advanced fighter aircraft, air defense systems, guided missiles, and submarines. Furthermore, China's MIC needed certain subsystems, like radars, and aircraft engines, to complete domestically-produced platforms.¹⁴³ As the *Washington Post* reported, "An engine China made...would routinely conk out after 30 hours whereas the Russian engines would need refurbishing after 400."¹⁴⁴ Moscow gladly fulfilled all of Beijing's needs as it sought to modernize its military.

However, while arms sales spiked during this phase, relations between Moscow and Beijing were not always amiable. In 2004, the Chinese cancelled an agreement they signed in 1996 to produce 200 Su-27 fighters under license with Russian-made subsystems, having only constructed 105 of them.¹⁴⁵ Beijing's announcement that the reason it annulled the deal was that its MIC could now produce each of aircraft's subsystems domestically

¹⁴¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁴² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁴³ Jesse Sloman and Lauren Dickey, "Why China's Air Force Needs Russia's SU-35," *The Diplomat*, June 1, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/why-chinas-air-force-needs-the-su-35/>.

¹⁴⁴ John Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China, Which Looks Overseas for Arms," *Washington Post*, December 25, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/24/AR2010122402788.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, "Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?," 432.

also infuriated Moscow.¹⁴⁶ The summation of these events indicated that, as China's domestic capabilities were growing, Beijing's need to import large quantities of a diverse amount of military hardware was shrinking.

2. Phase II: 2006–2010

While Russian arms sales to China rose in aggregate from 2000 to 2005, they dropped abruptly from 2006 to 2010. The reasons for this decrease were two-fold. First, China's defense industry had become more proficient and able to produce modern, technologically complex weapons systems and military capabilities.¹⁴⁷ One example of China's aggregate technological development was the country's successful anti-satellite test (ASAT) on January 11, 2007.¹⁴⁸ Using a DF-21 ballistic missile traveling at a speed of four miles per second, the Chinese destroyed one of their old weather satellites, unfortunately, creating over 3,000 pieces of dangerous orbital debris.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, they launched a series of eleven *Yaogan* satellites to assist with Chinese missile target tracking.¹⁵⁰ As such, Beijing's palate for arms exports shifted to wanting only the most modern equipment.¹⁵¹ Second, Russia was becoming perturbed with Chinese reverse engineering and decline to sell China its most advanced systems.¹⁵² In 2007, the Russians learned the Beijing had essentially copied the Su-27 when producing its own J-11B fighter that debuted the same year.¹⁵³ The following year the Russians officially declared the J-11B as a copy of their aircraft and threatened legal action against Beijing for intellectual

¹⁴⁶ Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁴⁷ Siemon T. Wezeman, Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, and Ian Anthony, "Impact of Shifts in Arms Trade and Exercises on South Asia and Europe," in *China-Russia Relations and Regional Dynamics: From Pivots to Peripheral Diplomacy*, ed. Lora Saalman (Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2017), 87–90.

¹⁴⁸ James C. Moltz, *Asia's Space Race: National Motivation, Regional Rivalries, and International Risks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 96.

¹⁴⁹ Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁵⁰ Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁵¹ Wezeman, Rajagopalan, and Anthony, "Impact of Shifts in Arms Trade and Exercises on South Asia and Europe," 89–90.

¹⁵² Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 66.

¹⁵³ Jeremy Page, "China Clones, Sells Russian Fighter Jets," *Wall Street Journal*, December 4, 2010, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704679204575646472655698844>.

property theft.¹⁵⁴ Given Russian concerns of continued piracy of their technology, Moscow began bargaining harder during arms trade negotiations.¹⁵⁵ This pair of changes equated to an overall decline in Chinese imports of Russian equipment from 2006 to 2011.

As various friction points arose in Sino-Russian military-technical cooperation, exports of completed aerial platforms experienced a major decline. The aforementioned drama surrounding the cancelled Su-27 contract and accusations of China's intellectual property theft contributed to this drop in aircraft sales. China's domestic defense abilities also had created a reduced demand for Russian aircraft. In addition to the J-11, the Chinese developed the J-10, a fourth-generation-plus fighter comparable to the F-16C.¹⁵⁶ Given these multiple factors, China did not purchase any fighter aircraft from Russia during this period. However, China did express *interest* in buying new platforms. After Moscow resumed contract negotiations with Beijing in 2008 regarding the purchase of aerial platforms, the Chinese requested to buy newer Su-35 Flanker-E aircraft. However, the Russians were now driving harder bargains than before.¹⁵⁷ The Kremlin's requirements for the deal included a sale of at least 48 fighters made in Russia; Moscow declined to offer any licensed production agreements of the Su-35.¹⁵⁸ As Vladimir Portyakov, a Russian diplomat, remarked slyly to the Chinese delegation during negotiations, "We, too, have learned a few things."¹⁵⁹ Faced with these new terms, Beijing declined to purchase any Su-35s.

While Beijing did not buy any new fighters during this phase, it did purchase sizable quantities of aircraft engines. Namely, China reached a deal in 2005 to buy 122 AL-31FN turbofans for Chinese-manufactured J-10 combat aircraft.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, in 2009, Beijing

¹⁵⁴ Meijer, Béraud-Sudreau, Holtom, and Uttley, "Arming China," 24.

¹⁵⁵ Wezeman, Rajagopalan, and Anthony, "Impact of Shifts in Arms Trade and Exercises on South Asia and Europe," 90.

¹⁵⁶ Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," 301.

¹⁵⁷ Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁵⁸ Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁵⁹ Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁶⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

bought 55 D-30 turbofan engines for H-6K Hong bombers made in China.¹⁶¹ Domestic needs drove these sales, as China's MIC continually failed to produce reliable engines. As Wang Tianmin, a Chinese military engine designer, lamented, "Engine systems are the heart disease of our whole military industry."¹⁶² In addition to jet engines, Beijing continued to purchase large amounts of helicopters. In 2006, China signed a deal to buy nine Ka-28PL anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopters and nine Ka-31 airborne early-warning (AEW) helicopters.¹⁶³ Between 2006 and 2009, Beijing reached two agreements to procure a total of 56 Mi-17 Hip transport helicopters. Thus, as Russia raised its requirements for arms contracts and China's MIC grew in capabilities, sales of aerial systems declined.

Russia's sales of naval systems also declined from 2006 to 2010. In fact, China only agreed to two purchases during this period. The first was a 2008 agreement for China to buy 18 Mineral/Band Stand Sea search radars for 18 Chinese-built *Luyang*-class destroyers.¹⁶⁴ The second deal was a sales contract China signed in 2010 to produce 37 AK-176 76-mm naval guns for its domestically-produced *Jiangdao*-class frigates.¹⁶⁵ As with similar declines in imports of the aerial platforms, the continued development of China's defense industry precluded larger orders. Notably, China had successfully developed an advanced destroyer, the *Luyang*-class, equipped with domestically-produced phased-array radars and vertical launch systems (VLS).¹⁶⁶ Beijing has also developed the *Jiangkai*-class frigate—equipped with modern VLS, anti-ship cruise missiles, and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs)—and the *Houbei*-class fast attack craft.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, China

¹⁶¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁶² Pomfret, "Military Strength Eludes China."

¹⁶³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁶⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁶⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁶⁶ Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," 300.

¹⁶⁷ Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," 300.

demonstrated its ability to produce advanced submarines. Having already developed *Shang*-class nuclear attack submarines, Beijing also unveiled a new nuclear ballistic missile submarine model, the *Jin*-class, in 2007.¹⁶⁸

Just like with air and naval platforms, Chinese orders for ground systems also decreased during this period. Russian's only sale of conventional ground systems was a 2006 agreement where Beijing purchased eight S-300PMU-2/SA-20B Gargoyle air defense systems.¹⁶⁹ This purchase also included 750 48N6E2/SA-10E (SAMs).¹⁷⁰ Despite this order netting approximately \$2 billion for Moscow, the overall reduction of Chinese orders for Russian ground platforms reflected an aggregate decrease in Beijing's demand for Russian arms.¹⁷¹ In sum, while Russo-Chinese arms deals abounded in the early 2000s, the period of 2006 to 2010 reflected a period of decline in agreements due to an increase in both Chinese MIC capabilities and Russian bargaining.

3. Phase III: 2011–2017

While Chinese imports of Russian arms declined from 2006 to 2010, from 2011 to 2017 they held a steady, but low, level. Aerial systems were the primary Russian exports to China during this phase. After years of haggling over specifics and varying requirements, Moscow agreed to sell 24 Su-35S Flanker-E fighters to Beijing in 2015 for \$2 billion, making China the first foreign country to receive the aircraft.¹⁷² The deal was ultimately a compromise between the two sides, as China was able to order a smaller quantity than the Russians initially desired to sell, but Moscow also was able to avoid licensing the

¹⁶⁸ Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," 300–301.

¹⁶⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁷⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁷¹ Dmitry Solovyov, "China Buys Air Defense Systems from Russia," Reuters, April 2, 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-china-arms/china-buys-air-defense-systems-from-russia-idUSTRE6310WG20100402>.

¹⁷² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."; Matthew Bodner, "In Arms Trade, China is Taking Advantage of Russia's Desperation," *Moscow Times*, November 1, 2016, <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/in-arms-trade-china-is-taking-advantage-of-russian-desperation-55965>.

production of the aircraft to China.¹⁷³ Separate motivations drove the Russians and the Chinese to this deal. In Moscow, recent Western economic sanctions enacted in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine created a need for both foreign capital and political allies. For the Chinese, the "Achilles heel" of their defense industry—engine production—continued to plague the country's development of modern aircraft.¹⁷⁴ As the Chinese continued to develop their domestically-produced fifth generation fighter, the J-20, they realized that available engines were too underpowered.¹⁷⁵ However, the Su-35S included a newer engine, the AL-41, which Russia had not been willing to sell independently without a large order of aircraft.¹⁷⁶ Since the Chinese bought Su-35s, Russia was thus willing to sell spare engines to China, specifically an order of ten AL-41 turbofans in 2015.¹⁷⁷ As such, China's import provided new engine technologies for the Chinese to study and employ in its domestically-produced fighters.

Beyond the Su-35 deal, China also imported several orders of other aircraft engines, as the Chinese MIC struggled to develop capable domestic equivalents. In 2011, Beijing purchased a total of 273 Al-31 engines for its J-10 and J-15 fighters.¹⁷⁸ The same year, the Chinese also bought 184 D-30 engines for its bomber and transportation fleet.¹⁷⁹ In addition to aircraft engines, China also bought a large amount of helicopters and transport aircraft during this phase. In 2012, Beijing penned an agreement to purchase 52 Mi-17 Hip

¹⁷³ Stephen J. Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries: Facing New Challenges," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, 28, no. 3 (September 2016): 410; Sebastien Roblin, "China Stole This Fighter from Russia—and It's Coming to the South China Sea," *The National Interest*, July 24, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-stole-fighter-russia%E2%80%94its-coming-the-south-china-sea-17087?page=3>.

¹⁷⁴ Feng Cao, "Making Sense of Massive China-Russia Arms Deal," United States Naval Institute News, April 5, 2013, <https://news.usni.org/2013/04/05/making-sense-of-massive-china-russia-arms-deal>.

¹⁷⁵ Sloman and Dickey, "Why China's Air Force Needs Russia's SU-35."

¹⁷⁶ Sloman and Dickey, "Why China's Air Force Needs Russia's SU-35."

¹⁷⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁷⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁷⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

helicopters.¹⁸⁰ Between 2011 and 2015 China also purchased 12 Il-76M transport aircraft.¹⁸¹ As these sales demonstrate, China still depended on Russian sources for aircraft engines and select platforms, but Beijing no longer needed to import sizeable quantities of aerial equipment as it had in the earlier 2000s, due to an increase in domestic MIC capabilities.

As opposed to the numerous exports of aerial equipment and platforms, Russian sales of naval and ground systems to China remained low. In fact, China did not sign a single deal to purchase any Russian ships or naval equipment during this period. While the Chinese and Russians often spoke about a potential purchase of four *Lada*-class diesel submarines during negotiations, no deal emerged.¹⁸² As discussed earlier, China's domestic capabilities to produce advanced ships and submarines had essentially eliminated Beijing's demand for Russian naval systems. Chinese appetite for Russian ground platforms was similarly satiated, but included one craving—advanced air defense platforms. After years of negotiating, China and Russia finalized a \$3 billion deal in 2015 for Beijing to buy six complete S-400/SA-21 Growler systems armed with 9M96 SAMs.¹⁸³ However, unlike earlier Russian sales to China that often involved licensed production agreements and technology transfers, the S-400 purchase included no such options in the contract.¹⁸⁴ Such caveats mirrored those in the Su-35S deal. Thus, while Russia was willing to sell its most advanced air defense system to China, Moscow retained some cards to play in future arms sales.

In sum, Russian arms sales to China, while plentiful during the early 2000s, declined sharply from 2005 to 2010 before bottoming out a relatively stable level from

¹⁸⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁸¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁸² Paul Schwartz, "Russia-China Defense Cooperation: New Developments," Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 9, 2017, <http://www.theasanforum.org/russia-china-defense-cooperation-new-developments/>.

¹⁸³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

¹⁸⁴ Fergus Kelly, "Russia Begins Deliveries of S-400 to China, but isn't Transferring the Technology," The Defense Post, January 18, 2018, <https://thedefensepost.com/2018/01/18/russia-china-s-400-delivery/>.

2010 to 2017. Russia maintained a presence in the Chinese market despite the drop in its overall sales volume due to Moscow's ability to furnish niche technologies and advanced weapons systems.¹⁸⁵ The Chinese MIC's inability to develop capable aircraft engines and Beijing's thirst for modern weapons system like the S-400 created opportunities for Russia to exploit. So, despite Russia's reduction of overall imports to China, Moscow still maintained a foothold in the Chinese arms market.

C. BENEFITS FROM ARMS SALES TO CHINA—THE DRAGON'S HORDE

Russian arms sales to China have yielded several economic and political benefits. In terms of domestic economic gains, Chinese contracts have provided large cash influxes to the Russian defense industry—especially from 2000 to 2005—as Figure 4 displays. These financial benefits were especially important during Putin's first term as president, when the Russian MIC was still rebounding from the economic chaos of the 1990s. As a Jamestown Foundation report stated in 2001, “The survival of many of Russia's hundreds of defense [companies] could depend in large part on their ability to make money abroad.”¹⁸⁶ With China serving as Russia's largest customer during this period—China's \$15.4 billion worth of Russian arms imports accounted for 47.8% of Russian exports by volume from 2000 to 2005—Beijing's procurements were therefore vital to the survival of the Russian MIC.¹⁸⁷ As Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported in 2003 in its yearly review of international arms transfers and arms transfers:

In Russia the dramatic decline in government expenditure on arms procurement and military R&D has been manifested in a number of policy initiatives since 1998, aiming to achieve a core of arms-producing companies with the required R&D manufacturing base. However, progress is slow, hindered primarily by financial shortages. The main efforts of the Russian Government and industry are therefore directed towards arms exports and international armaments collaboration. This, in turn, involves

¹⁸⁵ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 66.

¹⁸⁶ “Russian Arms Sales: The Push is On,” *Monitor* 7 no. 81 (April 26, 2001), <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-arms-sales-the-push-is-on/>.

¹⁸⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017;” “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” *United States Department of State*, accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/wmeat/>.

making the industry more competitive on the international arms market, thus demonstrating the vicious circle of an industry still affected by crisis.¹⁸⁸

Without a domestic source of demand, arms exports essentially funded Russia's arms industry from 2000 to 2005. It was not until the mid-2000s, after global oil prices had risen considerably, that Putin began to increase military procurement and research and development funding, to the extent that the Russian defense industry's dependence on exports to China declined.¹⁸⁹

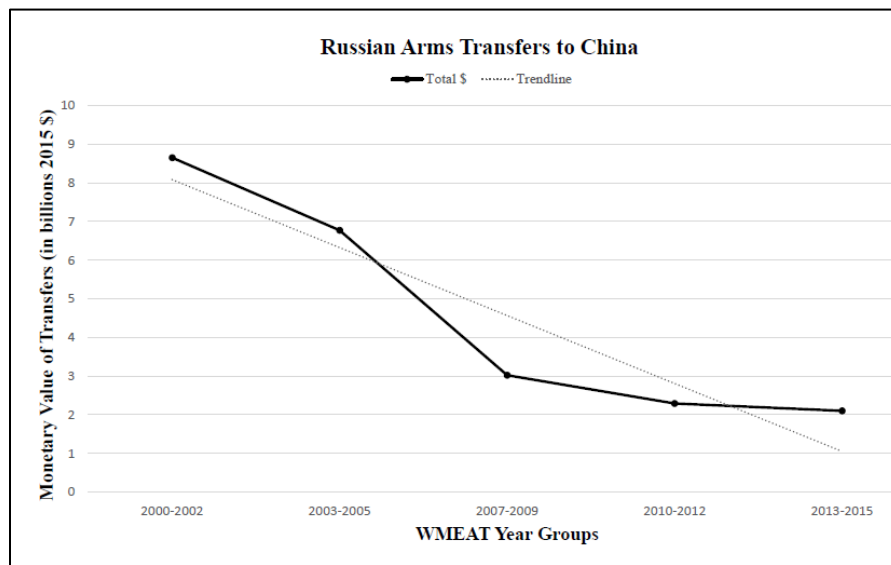


Figure 4. Russian Arms Transfers to China by Monetary Value¹⁹⁰

While not as numerous, later sales to China still provided economic benefits. Specifically, the Su-35 sale ensured an influx of quick cash needed for the MIC enduring the strain of Western sanctions after Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine in 2014.¹⁹¹ Also, as Russia struggled to maintain its aggressive state procurement

¹⁸⁸ Elisabeth Sköns and Hannes Baumann, "Arms Production," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*, ed. Alyson J. K. Bailes (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2003), 402.

¹⁸⁹ Meijer, Béraud-Sudreau, Holtom, and Uttley, "Arming China," 24.

¹⁹⁰ "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," *United States Department of State*; author's calculations and graph.

¹⁹¹ Bodner, "In Arms Trade, China is Taking Advantage of Russia's Desperation."

orders from 2015 onward, the Su-35S deal provided needed work for Russian United Aircraft Corporation.¹⁹² Thus, as Russian analyst Vassily Kashin noted, “The [Su-35] deal has also been an economic success for Russia, in part because of the continued devaluation of the ruble. Since the ruble lost half of its value in late 2014, it has become much more profitable to export weapons, which are manufactured almost exclusively with Russian parts and materials.”¹⁹³ As such, while the total monetary value of Russian arms contracts to China since 2010 has been small, such contracts have still provided domestic economic benefits.

Arms sales to China also had other domestic economic benefits. Beijing’s purchases facilitated Putin’s restructuring of the Russian MIC into a centralized—and subjugated—institution. This process involved the centralization of several smaller companies into larger conglomerates reminiscent of the South Korean *chaebol*, the Japanese *keiretsu*, or even the Soviet MIC.¹⁹⁴ For example, Putin issued Presidential Decree No. 140 in 2006, which consolidated every major aircraft producer in Russia—Ilyushin, Irkut, Mikoyan, Sukhoi, Tupolev, and Yakovlev, all private companies—under one governmentally-controlled authority: United Aircraft Corporation.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Putin created Rosoboroneskспорт, a consolidated Russian arms export control agency, in order to reduce internal friction between domestic export companies.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, as Spanish scholar Antonio Sánchez-Andrés opines, “The policy of weapons exports has thus been used as an economic tool to restructure the defense industry.”¹⁹⁷ Such reorganization streamlined Moscow’s ability to control the defense industry. Thus, Russian arms sales to China had additional positive effects, at least in the Kremlin’s eyes, beyond mere monetary gains.

¹⁹² Vassily Kashin, “Why Is China Buying Russian Fighter Jets?,” Carnegie Moscow Center, February 9, 2016, <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/?fa=62701>.

¹⁹³ Kashin, “Why Is China Buying Russian Fighter Jets?”

¹⁹⁴ Blank, *Rosoboroneskспорт*, 15.

¹⁹⁵ United Aircraft Corporation, “About UAC: History,” accessed September 21, 2017, <http://www.uacrussia.ru/en/corporation/history/>.

¹⁹⁶ Blank, *Rosoboroneskспорт*, 22.

¹⁹⁷ Antonio Sánchez-Andrés, “Arms Exports and Restructuring in the Russian Defense Industry,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 56 no. 5 (July 2004): 703.

While the profits from Chinese imports of Russian equipment declined precipitously since 2005, Moscow’s recent sales of its advanced weapons to China have created opportunities for future sales. Given China’s aggressive behavior in the South China Sea and military modernization efforts, countries in Southeast Asia have sought to upgrade their arsenals to counter the perceived Chinese threat as Figure 5 details. China’s purchase of Su-35s also stimulated other countries to purchase similar equipment. Specifically, Indonesia bought 11 Su-35s in February 2018 for \$1.1 billion.¹⁹⁸ Thus, while the direct profits from Russian exports to China might have decreased from 2000 to 2017, China’s militarization modernization efforts have created other sales opportunities for Moscow.

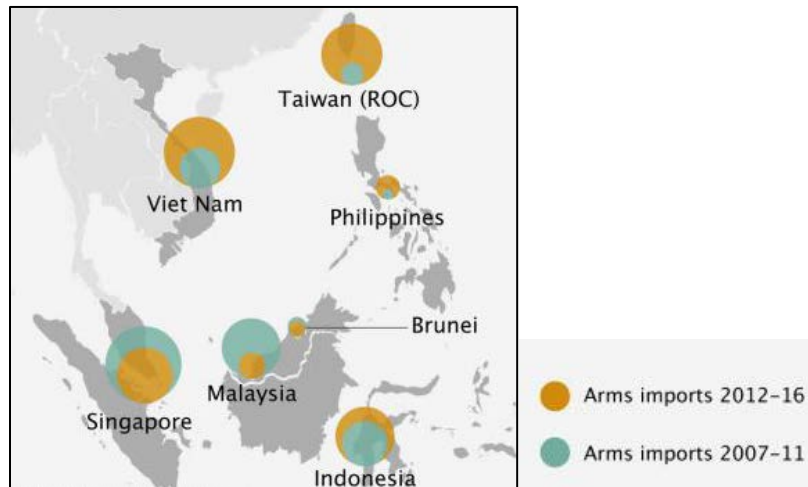


Figure 5. Changes in Arms Imports in South China Sea Countries.¹⁹⁹

In sum, Russian arms sales to China produced several domestic economic benefits. In the early 2000s, Chinese purchases were vital to the solvency of the Russian MIC. Beijing’s procurement of Russian hardware also facilitated Putin’s restructuring of the

¹⁹⁸ Jon Grevatt, “Indonesia Finalises Contract to Procure Su-35 Fighter Aircraft,” *Jane’s 360*, February 15, 2018, <http://www.janes.com/article/77928/indonesia-finalises-contract-to-procure-su-35-fighter-aircraft>;

¹⁹⁹ Kate Blanchfield, Pieter D. Wezeman, and Siemon T. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics,” February 22, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2017/state-major-arms-transfers-8-graphics>.

Russian defense industry during that same period. China's recent purchases of advanced systems following Russia's irredentist actions in Crimea and Ukraine also provided hard currency to Moscow's coffers.²⁰⁰ Lastly, Chinese contracts have stimulated a demand for Russian equipment in Asia. As such, the economic gains from Russian sales to China have been a powerful motivator behind Putin's continued exports to his Asian neighbor.

In addition to boosting domestic economic profits, Russian arms sales to China also created several international political benefits: the support of positive relations between the two countries, shared views on geopolitical events, balancing America's hegemony in Asia, supporting military-to-military cooperation, and decreasing Russia's strategic security threats in the Central Asia. The facilitation of the ongoing strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing served as most important of these benefits.²⁰¹ This amiable relationship, codified in official documents such as the 2001 "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," has been vital for Russia's construction of a multipolar order to challenge American global hegemony and check U.S. influence in Asia.²⁰²

In terms of building a polycentric world, the Russo-Chinese partnership has equated to similar views on various pro-Russian and anti-Western geopolitical issues, including Russian actions in Chechnya, the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion, the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Moscow's support of the Al-Assad regime in Syria, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. In regards to Beijing's support of Russian actions in Chechnya, "China not merely remained silent, it backed the Kremlin" in its actions against Chechen rebels.²⁰³ Despite Moscow's penchant for incurring civilian casualties, committing human rights abuses, and

²⁰⁰ TASS, "China Makes Advance Payment for S-400 Air Defense System Delivery," March 11, 2016, <http://tass.com/defense/861706>.

²⁰¹ Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 113.

²⁰² "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, July 24, 2001, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml.

²⁰³ Bobo Lo, "The Long Sunset of Strategic Partnership: Russia's Evolving China Policy," *International Affairs* 80, no. 2 (March 2004): 296, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2004.00384.x>; Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 109.

creating refugees—all acts that Western powers condemned—Beijing maintained its position on Chechnya in the early 2000s that President Jiang Zemin articulated in 1999: “The Chinese side reaffirms that the Chechen question is purely Russia’s internal affair [and supports the Kremlin’s] actions to strike at terrorist and separatist forces.”²⁰⁴ During this same period, China also joined in Russia’s condemnation of President George W. Bush’s May 2001 announcement of his planned withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.²⁰⁵ The countries issued a joint statement “[stressing] that the ‘ABM Treaty’ is of extreme importance [as] the cornerstone of strategic stability and the foundation for the reduction of offensive strategic weapons [and] should be maintained as it is in its present form.”²⁰⁶ Thus, through positive relations with Beijing, reinforced through arms sales, Russia obtained a valuable partner against the United States and normative Western powers.

In Russia’s ideological crusade against the U.S.-led unipolar world order, Moscow also recruited China to join in the Kremlin’s critiquing of NATO member expansion into the former Soviet space of Eastern Europe and the Baltic states in 2004, in addition to the Balkans in 2009. While Beijing did not formally denounce NATO expansion to the degree of Moscow’s rhetoric, it indirectly attacked the change as an act committed with an outdated “Cold War mentality.”²⁰⁷ Additionally, following 9/11 and the U.S. recruitment of NATO forces to join in military actions against Afghanistan, China also articulated similar views as Russia in opposing NATO’s leasing of bases in Central Asian states—specifically Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan—in support of operations.²⁰⁸ While NATO’s

²⁰⁴ Richard C. Paddock and Anthony Kuhn, “China Backs Russia on Chechen War,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1999, <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/dec/11/news/mn-42811>.

²⁰⁵ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 109.

²⁰⁶ “Joint Statement Signed by the Chinese and Russian Heads of States - 16 July, 2001,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, July 24, 2001, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15772.shtml.

²⁰⁷ Dennis J. Blasko, “China’s Views on NATO Expansion: A Secondary National Interest,” *China Brief* 9, no. 5 (March 4, 2009), <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-views-on-nato-expansion-a-secondary-national-interest/>.

²⁰⁸ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 109.

expansion throughout Europe had little effect on China directly, its indirect critique of the alliance's growth displayed tacit deference to Moscow's stance on the issue.

Sino-Russian criticism of American actions in the Middle East, but support of Russia actions there, serves as another example of the positive relations between Moscow and Beijing. Following the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Foreign Affairs Committee of China's National People's Congress official statement declared that, "The military actions against Iraq by the United States and other countries would cause humanitarian disasters, casualties and the loss of property of the Iraqi people, while endangering peace and stability in the region."²⁰⁹ Such words echoed Putin's statement on the U.S. invasion, namely his assertion that America's invasion "[shook] the foundations of global stability and international law" and lament that "with every hour human casualties and destruction are mounting, peaceful citizens are dying—children, old people, women...American and British soldiers are dying, as are Iraqi servicemen."²¹⁰ This similarity in rhetoric symbolized the affability of Sino-Russian relations. China has also sided with Russia in Moscow's recent forays in Syria. While Western powers have habitually denounced Russian support of Bashar Al-Assad, China has assumed a pro-Russia position. As of March 2017, China and Russia have jointly vetoed six different United Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) regarding actions against the Assad regime.²¹¹ As such, China support of Russian actions in the Middle East and rejection of Western positions showcases the geopolitical like-mindedness of Moscow and Beijing.

China's tacit approval of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 is another symbol of the Sino-Russian partnership. While Moscow's actions were in direct disagreement with China's core foreign policies—specifically its continual support of the principle of non-interference, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Beijing did not condemn

²⁰⁹ "China's Position on the U.S. War in Iraq," Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, March 26, 2003, <http://www.china-un.org/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/regionalhotspots/mideast/y1k/t537117.htm>.

²¹⁰ Jill Dougherty, "Putin Warns on Iraq War," CNN, March 28, 2000, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/03/28/sprj.irq.putin/>.

²¹¹ Stacy R. Closson, "The Russia-China Partnership Remains Strong, Despite America," The Russia File, March 8, 2017, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/the-russia-china-partnership-remains-strong-despite-america>.

Russia's actions in Crimea and has remained quiet on the issue in public forums.²¹² In summarizing Beijing's stance on Ukraine, Reuters newswire service stated that China "respects Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty but that Western powers should take into consideration Russia's legitimate security concerns."²¹³ Such a diplomatic tight-rope walk indicated that while Beijing might have disagreed with the premise of Russia's actions in Ukraine, it would not denounce its partner in public forums. In sum, the Chinese-Russian relationship, a partnership that arms sales support, has contributed to shared positions on foreign policy issues.

Beyond these similar stances of geopolitical issues, Moscow's sale of weapons to China also served as a method to balance American hegemony. Putin's growing anti-Western sentiment requires that he find allies to join him as he seeks to foster "polycentrism" and challenge American unipolarity, as Russia lacks the power to challenge the United States singlehandedly.²¹⁴ China, given its economic power and position in multilateral institutions like the UNSC and BRICS, remains a crucial, if not the most crucial, partner for Moscow. As Bobo Lo contends, "The Kremlin sees China's rise as instrumental in shifting the center of global gravity from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific."²¹⁵ Putin has therefore attempted to maximize the "Russo-Chinese ideological rivalry with the West" in checking "American 'unilateralism' and Western moral interventionism."²¹⁶ China's participation in BRICS-related institutions has been vital to achieving this end.²¹⁷ China's presence in BRICS also "confers success by association," a vital component to Putin's view of Russia as a global great power.²¹⁸ Furthermore, China's

²¹² Shannon Tiezzi, "China Backs Russia on Ukraine," *The Diplomat*, March 4, 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/03/china-backs-russia-on-ukraine/>.

²¹³ "China's Xi Says Willing to Help Resolve Ukraine Crisis," Reuters, January 17, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-china-idUSKBN1520AN>.

²¹⁴ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 44.

²¹⁵ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 46.

²¹⁶ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 382; Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 142.

²¹⁷ Bobo Lo, *The Illusion of Convergence—Russia, China, and the BRICS*, Russie.Nei.Reports No. 92, (Paris: IFRI, 2016), https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri_rnv_92_bobo_lo_brics-eng_march_2016_0.pdf, 8.

²¹⁸ Lo, *The Illusion of Convergence*, 8.

membership in BRICS is an essential component in Putin's fostering of polycentrism. As Lo asserts, "a post-American global order is...a timeless project [for the Kremlin], one to which the BRICS is central."²¹⁹ China's participation in BRICS also counters the Western narrative that Russia is devoid of international partners following its invasion of Ukraine.²²⁰ Beyond participation in multilateral institutions, Putin also values China's ability to counter U.S. power in Asia. Specifically, Russia's provision of advanced ground and ship-based air defense platforms, especially the sale of S-400 systems, has contributed to China's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategy in the South China Sea and isolation of Taiwan.²²¹ In Putin's zero-sum outlook of geopolitics, boosting China's power equates to lessening that of the United States; arms sales contribute directly to that end.

In addition to supporting political symmetry in a quest against the West, the amiable Sino-Russian relationship that arms sales has supported has yielded strategic security benefits for Moscow. Notably, mutual understanding between Russia and China contributed directly to cooperation in the Central Asian states. For Putin, the Central Asian States are a strategically vital region for multiple reasons. Primarily, Putin desires a buffer space between Russia and unstable regions in order "to avoid spillovers of insecurity," such as drug smuggling, illegal immigration, and Islamic terrorists.²²² Thus, as Russia's "soft underbelly," the Central Asian states are a region where Putin requires stability.²²³ Through multilateral organizations, China has been a partner with Russia in keeping the Central Asian states a docile region. Primarily, China and Russia are leading members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an institution they founded in 2001 to counter the "three evils [of] terrorism, separatism, and extremism."²²⁴ Boasting membership of every Central Asia state, minus Turkmenistan, the SCO has been a method for Putin to

²¹⁹ Lo, *The Illusion of Convergence*, 9.

²²⁰ Lo, *The Illusion of Convergence*, 8.

²²¹ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, "Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?," 435–436; Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 411–412.

²²² Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 279–280, 285; Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 115–116.

²²³ Anton Lavrov, "Russia's Geopolitical Fears," *Moscow Defense Brief* 55, no. 5 (October 2016): 3.

²²⁴ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, "Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?," 433.

ensure both the region's stability and Russia's sustained presence there.²²⁵ In Putin's eyes, the SCO also serves as a multilateral organization to counterbalance NATO as it supports his quest for a polycentric world.²²⁶ Also, due to Chinese initial deference to Russia, Chinese maintained a deliberately smaller presence in Central Asia. As Lo explains, during the early years of the SCO's existence, Beijing and Moscow possessed a "tacit understanding over their respective roles in the region" where China took a subordinate place "effectively conceding Russia's leading position."²²⁷ Given the amicable relations between Moscow and Beijing, both countries were able to cooperate effectively in the region.

The Sino-Russia partnership that arms sales have reinforced has also facilitated military cooperation between the two states. From 2003 until March 2017, Russia and China participated in 26 combined training events.²²⁸ Two iterative exercises, Peace Mission and Joint Sea, served as the largest of these cooperative drills. Conducted under the auspices of the SCO as an anti-terrorism exercise, the first Peace Mission occurred in 2005 and included Chinese and Russian forces from all branches of their armed services.²²⁹ While there was no interoperability training during Peace Mission 2005, coordination between Russian and Chinese forces became a greater priority in later Peace Mission exercises that occurred in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2016.²³⁰ Each iteration of the Peace Mission exercise has also improved qualitatively, to include increasing the amount of simultaneous joint operations with ground and air forces in each event.²³¹ Peace

²²⁵ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 286.

²²⁶ Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 116.

²²⁷ Lo, "The Long Sunset of Strategic Partnership," 297.

²²⁸ Ethan Meick, *China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations: Moving Toward a Higher Level of Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017), <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-Russia%20Mil-Mil%20Relations%20Moving%20Toward%20Higher%20Level%20of%20Cooperation.pdf>, 24–27.

²²⁹ Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 116.

²³⁰ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, "Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?," 432; Meick, *China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations*, 10–11.

²³¹ Elina Sinkkonen, *China-Russia Security Cooperation: Geopolitical Signaling with Limits*, FIIA Briefing Paper 231, (Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Institute of International Affairs), https://storage.googleapis.com/upi-live/2018/01/bp231_china-russia.pdf, 7.

Mission exercises have also included multiple senior leader engagements between Russian and Chinese military officials.²³² Ultimately, for Moscow, successful planning and execution of Peace Missions displayed that Russia and China could unite forces against a U.S.-led alliance.²³³

Beyond multilateral exercises, Russia and China also conducted several bilateral training events. Of these, the annual Joint Sea exercise is the most significant. Begun in 2012, the Joint Sea exercise is primarily a naval exercise, but has also included special forces, aircraft, and amphibious troops.²³⁴ The exercise location has rotated between the coasts of both countries, although Joint Sea 2015 took place in the Mediterranean Sea and Joint Sea 2017 occurred in the Baltic Sea.²³⁵ Similar to the Peace Mission training events, Joint Sea exercises have increased in scope with time. Of note, Joint Sea 2016 involved joint amphibious “island-seizing” operations.²³⁶ Overall, the conduct of these exercises served as both a signal to Russia’s potential adversaries that the Russian military has interoperability with the Chinese and that the relationship between Moscow and Beijing is more than merely rhetoric.²³⁷

Arms sales to China have thus netted Russia diverse benefits from 2000 to 2017. Chinese purchases from 2000 to 2005 were essential to the Russian MIC’s solvency and supported Putin’s restructuring efforts. Sales to China also provided Moscow with foreign capital when dealing with economic problems in the face of Western sanctions after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014.²³⁸ In terms of political benefits, Russian arms exports

²³² Jakobson, et al., *China’s Energy and Security Relations with Russia*, 24.

²³³ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, “Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?,” 439.

²³⁴ Hirofumi Kiriya, *Outlook for China-Russia Military Cooperation—Based on an Analysis of China-Russia Joint Exercises*, NIDS Commentary No. 57, (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2017), <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/commentary/pdf/commentary057e.pdf>, 2–3.

²³⁵ Sinkkonen, *China-Russia Security Cooperation*, 7. Of note, two Joint Sea exercises occurred in 2015. Besides the event in the Mediterranean Sea, another Joint Sea exercise took place off the coast of Vladivostok.

²³⁶ Kiriya, *Outlook for China-Russia Military Cooperation*, 3.

²³⁷ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, “Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?,” 433.

²³⁸ Sergey Sukhankin, “Russia Sells S-400 Complexes to China: Smart Move or a Mixed Blessing?,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 24 (February 24, 2017) <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-sells-s-400-complexes-china-smart-move-mixed-blessing/>.

to China have facilitated positive relations between the two countries. Through this partnership, Putin has gained a geopolitical ally against the American-led normative West, ensured that the Central Asian states—a place of potential instability along Russia’s southern border—remained stable and secure, and increased military-to-military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing.

D. ANALYSIS—PROFITABLE BENEFITS OR POLITICAL GAINS IN CHINA?

While domestic economic gains from arms sales to China were significant—and served as the primary motive behind Russian exports to China in the early 2000s—international political benefits have held a greater sway over Putin’s decision to export arms to China in the aggregate. Putin was completely cognizant that domestic economic benefits from Chinese purchases were vitally important in the early 2000s. As SIPRI analysts Elisabeth Sköns and Hannes Baumann reported in 2002, Putin “declared arms exports as the main source of income for the Russian arms industry.”²³⁹ Quantitative research also reinforces Putin’s statement. In a 2017 study, a coterie of European academics— Hugo Meijer, Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Paul Holtom, and Matthew Uttley— charted the arms export dependence of each of the five states in the UNSC based on the monetary value of their exports compared with expenditures on domestic arms procurement.²⁴⁰ For Russia, its export dependence level dropped by 30% every year from 2002 to 2005 before remaining consistently low from 2006 until 2013, the last year of their survey.²⁴¹ Thus, Moscow’s military exports to China were high when the Russian military procurement budget was low. Such a fact lends support to the argument that domestic economic factors mattered the most to Putin during that period. When he needed to obtain financial capital to support his MIC, Putin sought greater exports to China. After he had centralized control over the MIC through various restructuring efforts—and reaped the monetary benefits of profits from nationalized oil companies—his need to export arms to Beijing declined.

²³⁹ Sköns and Baumann, “Arms Production,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*, 400.

²⁴⁰ Meijer, Béraud-Sudreau, Holtom, and Uttley, “Arming China,” 25.

²⁴¹ Meijer, Béraud-Sudreau, Holtom, and Uttley, “Arming China,” 25.

Recent events also seem to imply that economic benefits held the most sway over Putin's decision making, but the evidence is not strong enough to overcome the sustained potency of political motivations. Russia's decision to export its most modern weapons systems to China, the Su-35 and S-400, a recipient that Russia has accused of intellectual property theft and replicating other military platforms, seems illogical. Similar business situations in other contexts usually meet with a termination of the relationship, but Russia has not cut off its military exports to Beijing. Therefore, some motivation remains for Moscow's continued sales to China. Economic gains are one potential impetus behind those exports. After all, as Sergey Sukhankin reported in 2017, "The decision to export this [advanced] weaponry suggests that the Russian Ministry of Defense is having a hard time finding the money to buy them for its own military."²⁴² Such a viewpoint postulates that economic motivations drive these recent sales.

However, while it is true that these recent sales of advanced systems provide needed revenue for the heavily sanctioned Russian MIC, they also provide Putin perceived political influence in Beijing. As American Foreign Policy Council's Russian expert Stephen Blank states, "From Russia's perspective, when it seeks military export contracts, it is not simply searching for a consumer with a need, but it is quite literally inserting weaponry and military technologies into a region to gain or increase its influence there."²⁴³ Putin understands that China holds significant economic leverage over the U.S. and is therefore a vital ally for Russia to use in indirectly influencing America, especially during the time period after his invasion of Ukraine.²⁴⁴ Given this cognizance, China has received preferential status in receiving some of Russia's newest military hardware in an effort to boost Moscow's influence in Beijing. For example, Turkey desired to purchase the S-400 as early as 2009 while deep-pocketed Saudi Arabia expressed interest in purchasing the

²⁴² Sukhankin, "Russia Sells S-400 Complexes to China."

²⁴³ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 406.

²⁴⁴ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 413.

platform in 2010.²⁴⁵ However, the Kremlin completed China's S-400s deal first. If money was the prime motivator for Russian sales, it would have sold to whomever could pay the quickest. Thus, arms sales to China reflect a specific policy agenda aimed at currying favor with Beijing. As Ruslan Pukov, the director of the Russian think tank Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), asserts, "We need China's political support...Obviously, anyone who can commit hundreds of millions of dollar to defense contracts is important, but because of the political dialogue China is doubly important."²⁴⁶ Russia's assumption of various risks and costs due to these recent sales reinforce Pukov's argument. Specifically, Russia's Su-35 and S-400 deals with China reversed the previous trend of only selling its most modern systems to India, a long-time Russian client.²⁴⁷ These sales also gave China, a country that Russia accused of pirating its technology six years prior to the deal, Russia's most modern technology.²⁴⁸ As many Russian defense industry leaders argue, these agreements could lead to Chinese copying and exporting of Russia's most advanced weapons systems, actions that would decrease the Russian MIC's international profits.²⁴⁹

These factors, combined with the large state defense order and overall increase in military spending that Putin began in 2008, indicate that he was not seeking temporary economic gains from these sales, but rather lasting influence with the Chinese.²⁵⁰ Thus, as Stephen Blank and Edward Levitsky note, "While it is true that one of the reasons that Russia exports arms is to maintain the self-sufficiency of its defense industry, it is not the

²⁴⁵ United Press International, "Riyadh Mulls Big Russian Missile Buy," March 22, 2010, https://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2010/03/22/Riyadh-mulls-big-Russian-missile-buy/UPI-93111269283852/; RIA Novosti, "Turkey Hopes to Buy S-400 Air Defense Systems from Russia," April, 27, 2009, <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20090427121328739/>.

²⁴⁶ Bodner, "In Arms Trade, China is Taking Advantage of Russia's Desperation."

²⁴⁷ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 410; Sukhankin, "Russia Sells S-400 Complexes to China."

²⁴⁸ Stephen Blank, *Russian Military Policy in Asia: A Study in Paradox*, FOI Memo 4580, (Stockholm, Sweden: FOI, 2013), <https://www.foi.se/download/18.2bc30cfb157f5e989c3181c/1477482863517/RUFS%20Briefing%20No.%2020%20.pdf>.

²⁴⁹ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 67.

²⁵⁰ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 410.

main reason.”²⁵¹ Given that he needs partners to help balance the U.S.-led order that is currently squeezing him economically, Putin sees strong relations with Beijing, despite the potential economic costs, as very appealing.

E. OBSTACLES TO RUSSIA’S FUTURE SUCCESS IN THE CHINESE ARMS MARKET

From a distance, Putin’s recent large contracts of Russia’s most modern platforms would appear to indicate a positive outlook on future Sino-Russian military-technical cooperation. However, as Sukhankin surmises:

Selling [arms] to China might provide the struggling Russian economy with a much-needed injection of funds and the Kremlin with illusory hopes for political support from Beijing. But the excited rhetoric regarding these arms sales obscures important negative trends that Moscow has been ignoring.²⁵²

Specifically, China’s ongoing development of its MIC, rising Chinese arms exports, Russian arms sales to Beijing’s geopolitical competitors, and underlying Sino-Russian strategic contradictions contribute to the continued reduction of Moscow’s arms sales to Beijing.

Due to the increased capabilities of the Chinese MIC, Beijing no longer entertains Russian offers to import older systems, but instead demands the most modern platforms.²⁵³ While Russia can still count on Beijing’s needs for niche technologies like aircraft engines and advanced air defense platforms, Beijing’s wish list of Russian equipment is rapidly dwindling. As Figure 6 displays, China’s imports of Russian equipment have changed from a wide variety of military equipment to—with the exception of transport helicopters—mostly subsystems needed to outfit domestically-produced equipment. Such changes have also decreased Russia’s share of Chinese imports and, reciprocally, China’s percentage of Russian exports, as Figures 7 and 8 depict. Ultimately, as Matthew Bodner states, “Russia has a very limited catalogue of military hardware that it can sell to Beijing at this

²⁵¹ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 64.

²⁵² Sukhankin, “Russia Sells S-400 Complexes to China.”

²⁵³ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 65.

point...Russia has already sold most everything else.”²⁵⁴ Thus, without continued Russian modernization of its defense industry and development of newer and more technologically advanced weapons systems, Russian arms sales to Beijing will continue to decrease.

| Years | Combat aircraft | Helicopters | Warships | Long-range SAM systems | Aircraft engines |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------|----------|------------------------|------------------|
| 2012-16 | 4 | 62 | | | 424 |
| 2007-11 | 11 | 106 | | 16 | 202 |
| 2002-2006 | 145 | 72 | 8 | 4 | 70 |
| 1997-2001 | 79 | 55 | 4 | | 4 |
| 1992-96 | 45 | 30 | 2 | 4 | |
| 1987-91 | 3 | 24 | | | |

Figure 6. Chinese Arms Imports from Russia by Equipment Type²⁵⁵

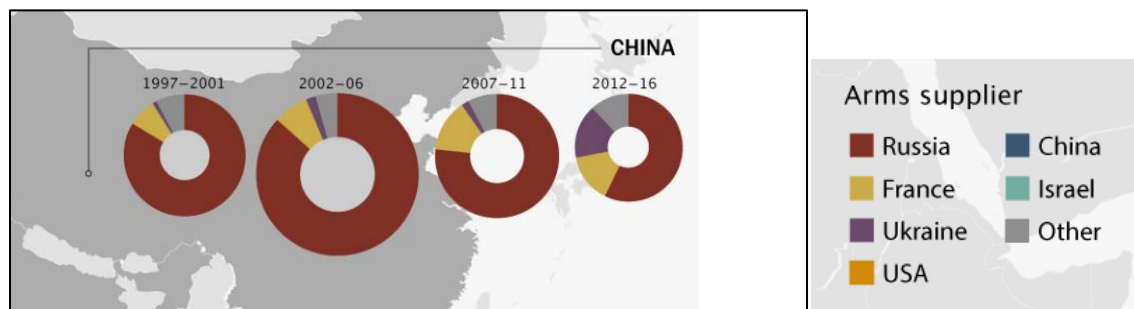


Figure 7. Share of Chinese Arms Import Market by Country²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Bodner, “In Arms Trade, China is Taking Advantage of Russia’s Desperation.”

²⁵⁵ Siemon T. Wezeman, “China, Russia and the Shifting Landscape of Arms Sales,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. July 5, 2017. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2017/china-russia-and-shifting-landscape-arms-sales>.

²⁵⁶ Kate Blanchfield, Pieter D. Wezeman, and Siemon T. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics,” February 22, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2017/state-major-arms-transfers-8-graphics>; If the reader views this chart in black and white, the darker colored piece of the pie chart in all year groups is Russian sales.

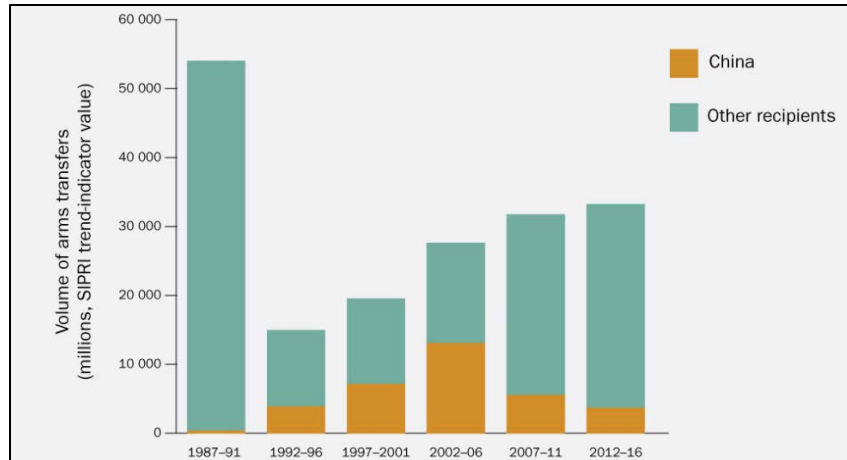


Figure 8. Changes in Volume of Russian Arms Exports to China²⁵⁷

Unsurprisingly, one of China’s objectives in developing its own defense industry has remained reducing its dependence on other states, like Russia.²⁵⁸ With that decrease of dependence on Russian equipment, the potential for Moscow to leverage arms sales for political or economic benefits also declines. Such a future outlook, especially in a period of economic sanctions and continued negative relations with the West, is troubling for Moscow. China’s defense industry has also demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Unlike Russia’s MIC, which requires massive, top-down oversight to ensure its survival, the Chinese MIC has continually dealt with changing circumstances and government requirements with bottom-up solutions.²⁵⁹ Recently, the CCP has created multiple new initiatives to boost innovation and emerging technology development through “marketizing” several defense industries.²⁶⁰ Such flexibility in the Chinese arms industry bodes well for its future success and its greater independence from Russian arms.

²⁵⁷ Wezeman, “China, Russia and the Shifting Landscape of Arms Sales,”

²⁵⁸ “Russia Rethinking Scope of Arms Sales to China?,” *Monitor* 6, no. 52 (March 14, 2000), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-rethinking-scope-of-arms-sales-to-china/>.

²⁵⁹ J.D. Kenneth Boutin, “Arms and Autonomy: The Limits of China’s Defense-Industrial Transformation,” in *The Modern Defense Industry: Political, Economic, and Technological Issues*, ed. Richard A. Bitzinger (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009), 223.

²⁶⁰ Lorand Laskai, “In Drive for Tech Independence, Xi Doubles Down on Civil-Military Fusion,” *China Brief* 18, no. 8 (May 9, 2018), <https://jamestown.org/program/in-drive-for-tech-independence-xi-doubles-down-on-civil-military-fusion/>.

China’s growing share of global arms exports is another troubling factor for future Sino-Russian relations. Through reverse engineering of Russian designs and some indigenous innovation, China has slowly developed its own, mostly, self-sufficient arms industry, which currently underbids Russia in global markets.²⁶¹ Chinese exports were not a problem for Russia in the early 2000s, when Chinese products lacked international recognition. Notably, in 2001, the Stockholm Peace Research Institute reported that “Pakistan consider[ed] Chinese weapons second rate.”²⁶² However, recent changes are more alarming for Moscow. Specifically, China’s exports from 2012 to 2016 jumped 74% from its sales in the 2007 to 2011 time period.²⁶³ As Figure 9 displays, China’s exports from 2013 to 2017 rank it fifth in the world arms market, in such company as the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. Such a swift rise in China’s global market share is disconcerting for Moscow.

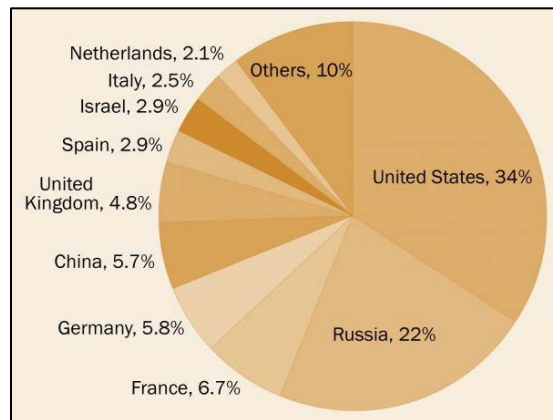


Figure 9. Global Share of Arms Exports by Volume: 2013 to 2017²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 65.

²⁶² Björn Hagelin, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, and Nicholas Chipperfield, “International Arms Transfers,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2002* ed. Adam Daniel Rotfeld (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 382.

²⁶³ Ron Matthews and Xiaojuan Ping, “Why the World Should Fear China’s Military (Exports),” *The National Interest*, September 27, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-the-world-should-fear-chinas-military-exports-22494>.

²⁶⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute “International Arms Transfers,” March 12, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending/international-arms-transfers>.

While some Russian analysts, like Vadim Kozyulin and Vassily Kashin, contend that Russia can avoid potential problems of China reverse engineering of Russian equipment by merely developing newer systems, these scholars forget that Chinese products can compete with Russian equipment on the world market.²⁶⁵ Unless Russia is willing to export its newest equipment in order to provide a better quality product to buyers, Chinese reverse engineered platforms can threaten future Russian sales. Furthermore, Putin's MIC restructuring efforts have stifled innovation through its centralization measures, top-down management, lack of domestic competition, and low investment in research and development.²⁶⁶ Thus, the possibility that China will reverse engineer newer imported hardware and potentially export it remains a potential area of contention between Moscow and Beijing. Additionally, a rising Chinese export presence in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, threatens Russia's ability to expand sales into those markets and reap the economic and political benefits of exporting arms to those regions.²⁶⁷ All these factors create potential problems for Putin to ponder.

Putin also creates friction in his relationship with Beijing through his sales of military equipment to China's regional competitors. Since 2006, Russia has exported several naval platforms to Vietnam, one of China's South China Sea rivals, which contests Chinese claims in the Spratly and Parcel Islands in addition to the Scarborough Shoal.²⁶⁸ Vietnamese orders included six *Gepard-3* frigates, eight Project-10412/*Svetlyak* patrol craft, eight Project-1241/*Tarantul* corvettes, and six upgraded *Kilo*-class diesel submarines.²⁶⁹ Vietnam also purchased 24 Su-30MK Flanker fighter aircraft, two S-300PMU-1/SA-20A surface-air-missile launchers, and two K-300P Bastion-P Coast

²⁶⁵ Bodner, "In Arms Trade, China is Taking Advantage of Russia's Desperation.," Vassily Kashin, "Selling S-400s to China: A New Front in the Cold War?," Carnegie Moscow Center, April 27, 2015, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/59908>.

²⁶⁶ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 421–422.

²⁶⁷ Jakobson, et al., *China's Energy and Security Relations with Russia*, 22.

²⁶⁸ Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, "Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?," 438.

²⁶⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

defense systems.²⁷⁰ Hanoi has also expressed interest in purchasing MiG-35 fighters and S-400 air defense systems.²⁷¹ Given Vietnam's disputes with China over territory in the South China Sea, such past acquisitions and current desires in anti-access and area-denial systems are unsurprising.

India, another Chinese regional competitor as Beijing begins to establish ports along the Indian Ocean as part of the OBOR Initiative, has also received a large amount of Russian arms throughout Putin's tenure. The next chapter of this thesis explains those sales in detail. The key factor needing elucidation in regards to the Indo-Russian partnership is that Russia—generally—exports its most advanced weapon systems to India, while also partnering with New Delhi in co-developing a variety of platforms from fighter aircraft to supersonic cruise missiles.²⁷² While these sales generate various benefits for Russia, they come at a cost of its potential influence with Beijing.²⁷³ The Chinese are not oblivious to Putin's schemes in attempting to balance China through arming its regional rivals.²⁷⁴ Neither are the Vietnamese and Indians clueless towards Moscow's relationship with Beijing. In the end, by arming multiple states in Asia, Putin also annoys those same states by attempting to play the regional balancer. Thus, by continuing to arm China's regional rivals, Putin curtails his ability to influence and expect favors from Beijing.

China's continuous economic growth, military modernization, and overall increase in global power also threaten future Sino-Russian arms sales. Chinese military spending has rapidly outpaced Russia's throughout Putin's tenure, as Figure 10 details. Also, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, China has developed a highly capable MIC that is quickly becoming self-reliant. The confluence of these factors paints China as a potential security threat to Russia. Additionally, under the veneer of affable rhetoric, long-held prejudices

²⁷⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders made for 2000 to 2017."

²⁷¹ Emanuele Scimia, "Russia's Arms Sales Weaken China in the Indo-Pacific Area," *Asia Times*, August 8, 2017, <http://www.atimes.com/russias-arms-sales-weaken-china-indo-pacific-area/>.

²⁷² Watts, Ledberg, and Engelbrekt, "Brothers in Arms, Yet Again?," 437–438.

²⁷³ Blank, *Russian Military Policy in Asia*, 2.

²⁷⁴ Elizabeth Wishnick, *Russia: New Player in the South China Sea?*, Policy Memo 260, (Washington, DC: PONARS Eurasia, 2013), http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Peprm_260_Wishnick_July%202013.pdf, 4, 6.

taint Russia’s view of China. Many Russians, especially those in the Russian Far East, worry about the growing “yellow peril” of increased Chinese immigration and economic involvement in the region.²⁷⁵ Underlying feelings of historical mistrust and prejudice also exist between Russia and China, which complicate relations.²⁷⁶ As Lo posits, a “cultural divide that frequently obscures and undermines commonalities of interest” exists between Moscow and Beijing.²⁷⁷ However, despite these “lingering fears” surrounding China’s rise to great power status, Russia and China maintain positive relations currently.²⁷⁸ The key question is how long Beijing and Moscow can maintain their strategic partnership.

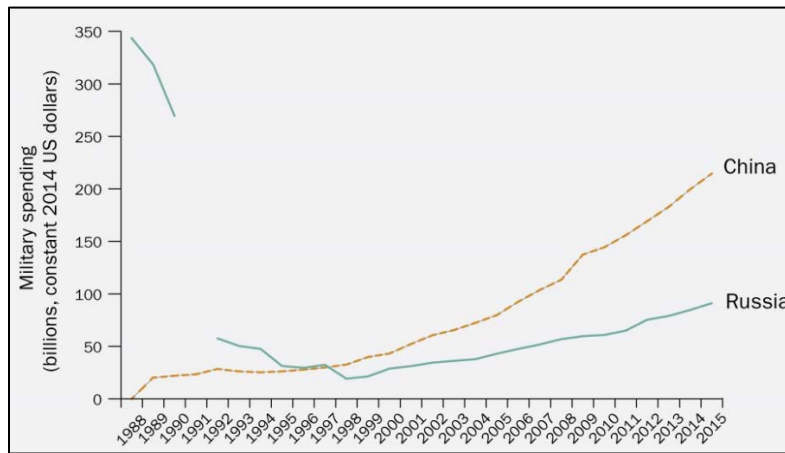


Figure 10. Russian and Chinese Military Spending: 1988 to 2015²⁷⁹

Growing Chinese involvement in the Central Asia states is another obstacle for Putin to negotiate. While Russia remains a major player in the SCO and de facto commands the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with Central Asian members Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, Russia lacks the financial incentives

²⁷⁵ Lo, “The Long Sunset of Strategic Partnership,” 298; Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 121.

²⁷⁶ Kiriyama, *Outlook for China-Russia Military Cooperation*, 7; Meick, *China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations*, 4–5.

²⁷⁷ Lo, “The Long Sunset of Strategic Partnership,” 299.

²⁷⁸ Lavrov, “Russia’s Geopolitical Fears,” 3.

²⁷⁹ Wezeman, “China, Russia and the Shifting Landscape of Arms Sales.”

that China offers.²⁸⁰ As part of Beijing's OBOR Initiative, China is constructing several large infrastructure projects through Central Asia, to include oil and liquid natural gas pipelines that bypass Russia and thus undercut Moscow's ability to attempt similar projects.²⁸¹ Given that a core Russian interest is keeping the Central Asian states economically linked to Russia, not China, Beijing's efforts threaten to curtail Moscow's influence in the region.²⁸² Furthermore, the CSTO is an ineffective institution for anything other than a Russian justification to base troops in former Soviet republics.²⁸³ Utah State Professor Robert Nalbandov succinctly summarizes Russia's overarching intent for the CSTO by stating that, "Russian domination in the CSTO, both in political and military terms, has turned this organization into a foreign policy tool."²⁸⁴ Given that China's geopolitical position appears less instrumental, it is also more attractive to Central Asian states. Thus, China's efforts along Russia's southern border are not unlike NATO expansion on Russia's western flank. While Russia still maintains a foothold in the Central Asian states, China's economic incursions and "chequebook diplomacy" display a strong potential of pulling those states away from Moscow's orbit and towards Beijing.²⁸⁵ As such, just like NATO plucking prior Warsaw Pact members from Russia's grasp, China is surreptitiously stealing Russia's vassal states in Central Asia and further reducing Putin's southern buffer space. Such geopolitical changes directly threaten Sino-Russian relations, unless Putin is willing to defer to China's growing regional presence in Central Asia.

Lastly, the Kremlin's and Beijing's differing strategic outlooks create problems for ongoing Sino-Russian military-technical cooperation. For Russia, it seeks to partner with China through such multilateral organizations as the SCO and BRICS as to counter

²⁸⁰ Arkady Dubnov, "Reflecting on a Quarter Century of Russia's Relations with Central Asia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 19, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/04/19/reflecting-on-quarter-century-of-russia-s-relations-with-central-asia-pub-76117>.

²⁸¹ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 66.

²⁸² Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 287.

²⁸³ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 210–211.

²⁸⁴ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 211.

²⁸⁵ Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russian-Chinese Relations in Eurasia: Harmonization or Subordination?*, FIIA Briefing Paper 238 (Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2018), https://storage.googleapis.com/upi-live/2018/04/bp238_russian-chinese-relations-in-eurasia.pdf, 4.

Western, predominantly U.S.-led institutions, like NATO.²⁸⁶ However, as Lehigh University Professor Rajan Menon observes, “There is no evidence that Russia and China want to transform their strategic partnership into an alliance.”²⁸⁷ Beyond those lingering tensions, Beijing and Moscow lack a unified geopolitical vision. Russian foreign policy analysts Paul Stronski and Nicole Ng summarize this disunity presciently, and their words require reciting in full:

China recognizes that it benefits from the rule-based international order...Unlike Russia, Beijing’s vision of a multipolar world order does not necessarily envision a radical dismantling of the current international system; instead, China seeks to reform the system of global governance to increase its role and influence to match its growing economic power and size...Whereas Russia seeks to exploit divisions and weaken European unity, China still finds a stable European Union, particularly an integrated, single market, to be in its best interest for commercial and economic relations.²⁸⁸

Thus, while Russia predicates its foreign policy on anti-Western multipolarity, China neither plays a similar zero-sum political game nor wants to participate in an anti-Western alliance.²⁸⁹ As Menon notes, “China is under no illusion that [Russia] is a substitute for what China obtains from its multifarious, thick, and far more substantial transactions with the West.”²⁹⁰ Rather, China seeks balanced relations with other countries in an effort to building President Xi Jinping’s desired “community of common destiny.”²⁹¹ Therefore, as Menon quips, “the Kremlin’s touting of the alignment with China is like whistling past a graveyard.”²⁹² While China and Russia presently unite against the current normative U.S.

²⁸⁶ Lo, *The Illusion of Convergence*, 7–9.

²⁸⁷ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 111.

²⁸⁸ Paul Stronski and Nicole Ng, “Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 28, 2018, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/28/cooperation-and-competition-russia-and-china-in-central-asia-russian-far-east-and-arctic-pub-75673>.

²⁸⁹ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 112.

²⁹⁰ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 112.

²⁹¹ Nadège Rolland, “Beijing’s Vision for a Reshaped International Order,” *China Brief* 18, no. 3 (February 26, 2018), <https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-vision-reshaped-international-order/>.

²⁹² Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 111.

hegemonic world order, the difference in their ultimate geopolitical end states create yet another obstacle in Sino-Russian relations.

In sum, a growing list of obstacles—China’s MIC development, rising arms exports, growth as a world power, and differing geopolitical strategy—all negatively affect the potential for future Russian arms sales to China. It is unlikely that any of these hurdles will disappear soon, if at all. Thus, Putin’s ability to use arms sales to China to obtain any gains, economic or political, is lessening while his overall ability to take initiative in the Sino-Russian relationship similarly declines. As Stronski and Ng summarize, “It is China’s decisions, not Russia’s, the will largely set the course for the Sino-Russian relationship, while Russia will remain in position to react.”²⁹³ Therefore, as China continues to increase in overall state capacity, its relationship with Russia become more of a partnership of convenience with China holding the senior position.²⁹⁴

F. CONCLUSION—A POOR PROGNOSIS OF PUTIN’S POLICY

While peaking in 2005, Russian arms sales to China have gradually declined since then. Even recent Chinese purchases of S-400s and Su-35s do not change the trough that Russian exports, by both volume and monetary value, have remained in since 2010. Putin has obtained several benefits from selling military hardware to Beijing. Exports to China in the early 2000s provided necessary capital influxes to the Russian MIC. Recent sales since Russia’s foray into Ukraine in 2014 have yielded similar economic gains. Arms sales also helped solidify a partnership with China that has provided Putin a comrade against U.S. unilateralism, normative Westernism, and existential threats in the Central Asian states.

However, Russia remains strategically trapped. While China no longer needs a significant amount of Russian arms, Russia desperately needs China’s support to obtain Putin’s desired goals.²⁹⁵ Putin’s recent bellicose foreign policy has alienated Russia from other foreign friends and forced it to continue its strategic partnership, which some scholars

²⁹³ Stronski and Ng, “Cooperation and Competition.”

²⁹⁴ Stronski and Ng, “Cooperation and Competition.”

²⁹⁵ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 66.

call a “marriage of convenience,” with China.²⁹⁶ In fact, as Menon describes, “Chinese leaders simply do not see Russia as a rising power: in fact they regard it with a certain amount of condescension.”²⁹⁷ Thus, China is increasingly able to apply reverse leverage and strike favorable trade deals in order to obtain the technology it wants in order to build the military it desires. As Sukhankin posits, “It seems that its economic hardship and international isolation is increasingly inducing Moscow to take ill-calculated steps without giving much consideration of their possible repercussions in a more distant prospective”²⁹⁸ Furthermore, as China continues to gain influence in Asia through its economic growth and military modernization, Russia is gradually becoming “the junior partner” in the relationship.²⁹⁹ Thus, Putin’s partnership with Beijing supports not his increase in influence in Asia, but that of China’s.

In terms of relations with China’s regional competitors, Putin has attempted to enact a “whole of Asia approach” in order to establish Russia as a regional power in the Pacific, balance American presence, and discreetly contain China.³⁰⁰ Arms sales are a key part of Putin’s desire to obtain influence and leverage over Asian states, while also balancing the continually growing geopolitical threat in China. However, Russia’s recent “Sinocentric” policies in the region, namely selling China the most advanced military equipment Moscow has to offer, belie a growing concern of Russian “instrumentalism” among smaller Asian countries.³⁰¹ Given that no state desires to be a pawn in another state’s chess game, Putin’s desire to build Russian influence through arms sales portends only marginally positive results as skepticism over Russia’s true intent rises.

²⁹⁶ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 384.

²⁹⁷ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 112.

²⁹⁸ Sukhankin, “Russia Sells S-400 Complexes to China.”

²⁹⁹ Menon, “The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership,” 112.

³⁰⁰ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 143.

³⁰¹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 136.

III. THE BEAR AND THE BENGAL TIGER—RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO INDIA

Like East Asia, South Asia has a dominant importer of Russian arms: India. As such, this state serves as this thesis's second case study. China and India share many similarities. They are both historically large arms import markets. From 2000 to 2017, India imported 30.4% of total Russian arms exports by volume, the largest amount of any state during the time period.³⁰² Within the same year range, India accounted for 10.3% of *global* arms imports.³⁰³ Similar to China, India had a historic relationship with the Soviet Union. Also like its northern neighbor, India is a part of the BRICS penta-state association along with Brazil, Russia, and South Africa. However, while these two countries share many similarities, they are not completely identical. Unlike China, India's relations with the USSR blossomed in the 1960s and lacked a significant period of geopolitical friction compared to the Sino-Soviet Split. India's late development of a military-industrial complex (MIC), in comparison to China, serves as another point of dissimilarity between the two states. In consequence, India surpassed China in Russian military imports by volume in 2007—a position that it has not relinquished since that year.³⁰⁴

There are several reasons behind India's ravenous import of military hardware. Geopolitically, India remains involved in an ongoing dispute with Pakistan, its western neighbor, over the Kashmir and Jammu region. This ongoing feud has essentially locked both countries into a state of perpetual conflict since their joint independence from the United Kingdom in 1947.³⁰⁵ This dispute has had various spikes in intensity, such as in 1965 and 1971, and escalated severely in 1999 as Indian forces battled Pakistani-sponsored

³⁰² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017."

³⁰³ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia's Role as an Arms Exporter*, 12.

³⁰⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 1992–2016," accessed September 4, 2017, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

³⁰⁵ Björn Hagelin, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, and Nicholas Chipperfield, "International Arms Transfers," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2002*, ed. Adam Daniel Rotfeld (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 380.

Kashmiri rebels in the Kargil region.³⁰⁶ Furthermore, a terrorist attack on the India Parliament in December 2001 almost impelled India and Pakistan into full-scale conventional war as both states massed significant military forces along their border.³⁰⁷ Such continuing tensions ensure that India will seek to maintain a capable and technologically-advanced military.

In addition to military issues with its western neighbor, India's need to balance growing Chinese influence along its periphery requires the maintenance of a credible military deterrent. As Kartik Bommakanti posited in 2017, "The growth of Chinese military power in recent years mandates that the India-Russia military-technical partnership serve as a check against potential Chinese expansionism and hegemony."³⁰⁸ Other historical incidents have also sustained New Delhi's concerns regarding the Chinese. The 1962 Sino-Indian War serves as the most salient of these events. More recently, China has also increasingly reached out to Pakistan—India's rival—in terms of military sales and joint military exercises. Furthermore, Beijing has made the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor a cornerstone in its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative.³⁰⁹ Given that the planned transportation and energy infrastructure development project plows straight through the contested Kashmir region, New Delhi looks upon the growing Sino-Pakistani ties with concern since such an alliance would essentially encircle India.³¹⁰ In light of these persistent threats, New Delhi has sought continually to upgrade its conventional arsenal, and Russia has been happy to supply the merchandise.

Paired with these security concerns, India's desire to assume a greater role in global politics also necessitates that the state import arms. Specifically, India seeks admission as

³⁰⁶ Hagelin et al., "International Arms Transfers, 2002," 380.

³⁰⁷ India Information Line, "Atal Bihari Vajpayee," accessed April 21, 2018, <https://www.indiaonline.com/prime-ministers-of-india/atal-bihari-vajpayee>.

³⁰⁸ Kartik Bommakanti, "India-Russia Military-Technical Cooperation: Beyond commercial relations," June 22, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-russia-military-technical-cooperation-beyond-commercial-relations/>.

³⁰⁹ Sara Perlangeli, "China-Pakistan Relations: A New Chapter?," July 22, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/events/china-pakistan-relations-a-new-chapter/>.

³¹⁰ Alexandra Ma, "Inside 'Belt and Road,' China's Mega-Project that is Linking 70 Countries Across Asia, Europe, and Africa," January 31, 2018, <http://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-belt-and-road-china-infrastructure-project-2018-1>.

a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a role that both Russia and the United States have supported previously.³¹¹ India also believes itself worthy of respect as the world's largest democracy, an often self-awarded badge of honor.³¹² Regardless of its own perception, a state's ability to project power—whether diplomatically, informationally, militarily, or economically—is a requirement for greater influence on the world stage. Military attributes are often the most visible to the international community, and Indian leaders are well aware of this fact. As such, a modern military is important to New Delhi's pride and self-image.

Domestic economic issues also require India to import the majority of its conventional military platforms. Since the early 1990s, India has attempted to build a *self-reliant* MIC capable of a “high share of indigenous development of major weapons and thus low levels of arms imports.”³¹³ Currently, however, India has not come close to obtaining that level of capacity. Modern weapons are highly sophisticated pieces of equipment that require several different technical specialties in fields such as electronics, robotics, machine tools, engineering, and programming in order to design, build, and maintain them. Building those capabilities organically is costly, difficult, and often time consuming.³¹⁴ India has learned these facts the hard way. In New Delhi's quest for self-reliance, it has attempted to produce fighter aircraft and main battle tanks (MBTs) domestically, both with disappointing results. India's MIC took 32 years for its domestic Tejas Light Combat Aircraft program to reach fully missionally capable status. Even worse,

³¹¹ Lionel Martin, “Russia and India: A Strong Partnership or Waning Friendship?,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 129 (November 17, 2004), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-and-india-a-strong-partnership-or-waning-friendship/>; Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Jim Yardley, “Countering China, Obama Backs India for U.N. Council,” *New York Times*, November 8, 2010, <http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/world/asia/09prexy.html>; “Russia Reaffirms ‘Strong Support’ for India's NSG Bid, UNSC Seat,” *Times of India*, June 1, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/russia-reaffirms-strong-support-for-indias-nsg-bid-unscc-seat/articleshow/58949378.cms>.

³¹² Abraham George, “India's Free Press Illusion: India Proudly Proclaims Itself the World's Largest Democracy. But a Lack of Real Press Freedom Will Ultimately Hamper Economic Growth,” *The Diplomat*, October 26, 2010, <https://thediplomat.com/2010/10/indias-free-press-illusion/>.

³¹³ Björn Hagelin, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, and Nicholas Chipperfield, “Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2001*, ed. Adam Daniel Rotfeld (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2001), 340.

³¹⁴ Hagelin et al., “Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2001*, 340–341.

India's development of its Arjun MBT was a 36 year-long debacle, and New Delhi capped orders at a total of 124 because the platform was so technologically out of date when it finally entered service.³¹⁵ Thus, as multiple researchers at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute conclude, "India has so far largely failed to produce advanced indigenously designed weapons and remains dependent on imports."³¹⁶ Consequently, New Delhi has looked to Russia as its primary source of military hardware.

The confluence of these geopolitical factors and economic elements motivates India to import sizable quantities of conventional arms. As Figure 11 displays, India was the largest importer of arms by volume in the world from 2012 to 2016.³¹⁷ Given India's demand for weapons, it serves as another market open to, if not dependent on, Russian military sales. This chapter first reviews the history of Soviet and Russia military technical cooperation with India. It then details the trends and major transactions of arms deals between Moscow and New Delhi during Putin's 17 years of de facto rule. The chapter then discusses the benefits that Russia has reaped from exporting arms to India and determines which of these gains has likely influenced Putin the most. It finishes with an analysis of existing and potential obstacles that could negatively affect Indo-Russian arms sales in the future. Ultimately, this chapter concludes that Putin has valued the political benefits of arms sales to India more than its economic gains. Furthermore, Russia has negotiated several obstacles to remain India's partner of choice throughout Putin's reign. However, while India has remained a loyal Russian customer for decades, the long-term future of Moscow's dominance of India's arms import market may be at risk due to rising competition from other arms vendors, including Israel, European countries, and the United States.

³¹⁵ "After 32 Years, India Finally, Gets LCA Tejas Aircraft," *Economic Times*, January 17, 2015, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/after-32-years-india-finally-gets-lca-tejas-aircraft/articleshow/45921356.cms?imageid=45757544>; "No More Arjuns for Indian Army," *The Times of India*, July 5, 2008. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/No-more-Arjuns-for-Indian-Army/articleshow/3200344.cms?>

³¹⁶ Simeon T. Wezeman, Sam Perlo-Freeman, and Pieter D. Wezeman, "Developments in Arms Transfers, 2014," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2015*, ed. Ian Davis (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 416.

³¹⁷ Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, "The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics."

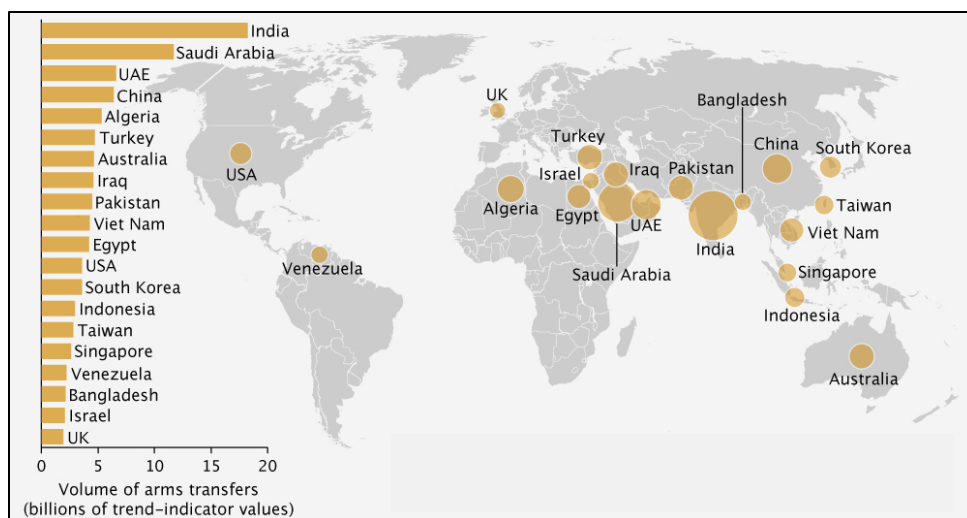


Figure 11. The 20 Largest Arms Importers from 2012 to 2016³¹⁸

A. A BRIEF HISTORY OF RUSSO-INDIAN MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION

After shaking off Britain’s colonial shackles in 1947, India entered the international arena as an independent state. The Soviet Union, quickly observing the intensifying communist-capitalist global rivalry through a zero-sum lens, treated Britain’s loss of its most valuable colony as an overall blow to the West. Furthermore, as Robert Nalbandov observes, “The Soviet Union viewed the process of [India’s separation] within the context of the global ideological battle between capitalism and communism” and assumed that “those who fought against imperial domination...by definition, should [be] pro-Soviet.”³¹⁹ Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s international relations strategy reflected this ideologically-based belief after he assumed absolute leadership of the USSR in 1955. Seeking to shed the hermit-like tendencies of his predecessor—Joseph Stalin—Khrushchev engaged heavily with former Western colonies in the third world in order to court allies to balance American influence.³²⁰ Specifically, Khrushchev developed a burgeoning relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, beginning

³¹⁸ Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics.”

³¹⁹ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 396.

³²⁰ Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*, 341.

with Khrushchev's visit to New Delhi in 1955.³²¹ This Indo-Soviet partnership continued throughout the Cold War despite state leadership changes in both countries. Following Khrushchev's ousting as General Secretary in 1964, Leonid Brezhnev continued affable relations with India. As he stated, "It may be said without fear of exaggeration that the Soviet people and their leaders are friends India can rely upon-friends in good times and in hard times, in clear weather and in bad weather."³²² Brezhnev also backed up his statements with actions. He formalized relations with India with the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1971.³²³ Likewise, Brezhnev's successors of Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and Mikhail Gorbachev all fostered positive relations with New Delhi. While the relationship was not been without its difficulties, such as India's refusal to sign the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or support the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the partnership between Moscow and New Delhi has endured.³²⁴

Arms sales have remained an enduring part of Russo-India relations. From the beginning of their military-technical cooperation partnership in 1961, the Soviet Union provided a total of 71% of India's total arms imports by volume of conventional weapon systems.³²⁵ Soviet sales had many enticing characteristics. Geopolitically, New Delhi's ongoing military-technical cooperation with the USSR ensured India could maintain its territorial sovereignty against arch-rival Pakistan and, for the most part, fend off an increasingly aggressive China.³²⁶ Soviet arms deals also had pragmatic economic features. As one Indian official stated bluntly in the 1980s: "We haven't gone to the Russians as a matter of choice. Their stuff is damn cheap, and the U.S. makes it impossible for us to do otherwise."³²⁷ While Russo-Indian relations faded and arms transfers subsequently

³²¹ Himani Pant, "The Changing Contours of Russia's South Asia Policy," July 27, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/changing-contours-russia-south-asia-policy/>.

³²² Pant, "The Changing Contours of Russia's South Asia Policy."

³²³ Pant, "The Changing Contours of Russia's South Asia Policy."

³²⁴ Pant, "The Changing Contours of Russia's South Asia Policy."

³²⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports to India, 1961-1991," accessed April 20, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

³²⁶ Nandan Unnikrishnan, "The Enduring Relevance of India-Russia Relations," May 25, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-enduring-relevance-of-india-russia-relations/>.

³²⁷ Bommakanti, "India-Russia Military-Technical Cooperation."

declined after the unceremonious collapse of the Soviet Union, in part due to an overall reduction of Indian arms imports, sales rebounded in the late 1990s.³²⁸ Notably, India imported more than 80% of its arms from Russia between 1997 and 2001.³²⁹ Russian deals had many incentives that appealed to New Delhi, beyond Russia's marketing campaigning of advertising "cheap and deadly" weapons.³³⁰ Specifically, Moscow had few qualms in licensing the production of several weapons platforms to India state-owned MIC companies such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Heavy Vehicles Factory.³³¹ Paired with the already low price point of Russian goods, Russian assistance in providing opportunities for the Indian MIC to gain vital production experience was also an enticing feature for New Delhi. So, despite some bumps in the road during the initial years of the post-Soviet period, Indo-Russian military technical cooperation continued through the 1990s.

B. ARMS SALES TO INDIA DURING THE AGE OF PUTIN: 2000 TO 2017

Russian arms sales to India from 2000 to 2017 had three distinct phases as Figure 12 depicts. Phase I occurred from 2000 to 2006, a period when Putin was centralizing his power domestically and learning the intricacies of leadership at the international level. 2007 to 2013 forms Phase II, a time when Putin's general anti-Western positions grew while India witnessed its geopolitical rivals gain strength. Western countries also began courting India during this period. Lastly, Phase III occurred from 2014 until 2017, a period when relations between Putin and the West further deteriorated while Prime Minister Modi simultaneously stoked nationalism in India. Overall, this next section details the Russia

³²⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports to India, 1950–2017," accessed April 20, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

³²⁹ Björn Hagelin, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, and Nicholas Chipperfield, "International Arms Transfers," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2002*, ed. Adam Daniel Rotfeld (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 381.

³³⁰ Tobin Harshaw, "Putin's Arms Bazaar is in a Serious Sales Slump," *Bloomberg*, April 25, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-04-25/putin-s-arms-bazaar-is-in-a-serious-sales-slump>.

³³¹ Federation of American Scientists, "Su-30," accessed April 22, 2018, <https://fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ac/row/su-30.htm>; "India, Russia Sign Agreement on Sukhoi-30MKI Aircraft After-Sales Service," *Sputnik*, March 17, 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/business/201703171051695216-india-russia-su-30mki/>; "Indian Army Receives First T-90 Tanks Made Under Russian License," *RIA-Novosti*, August 24, 2009, <https://sputniknews.com/military/20090824155910756/>.

arms sales that occurred during each phase and analyzes both the details and underlying context of major transactions.



Figure 12. Phases of Russian Arms Sales to India³³²

1. Phase I: 2000–2006

India imports during Phase I were large and diverse. As Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Ilya I. Klebanov’s predicted earlier during a 1999 summit in New Delhi, “Big contracts, joint work, and joint production of arms are waiting for [Russia].”³³³ His words proved prescient. From 2000 to 2006, India purchased a sundry of aerial, land, and naval combat weapons systems, to include munitions and system modifications. Putin’s summit with Prime Minister Vajpayee in October 2000 helped fuel a temporary surge in orders. At that meeting, Putin and Vajpayee signed a “Declaration on Strategic Partnership” and institutionalized their defense relationship through the creation of the India-Russia Inter-

³³² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017.”

³³³ Baidya B. Basu, “Trends in Russian Arms Export,” *Strategic Analysis* 23, no. 11 (February 2000): 1927.

Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC).³³⁴ In terms of land systems procured during this period, India purchased large orders of main battle tanks (MBTs), mobile air defenses, multiple rocket launchers, and infantry fighting vehicles. India inked a deal in 2001 to buy a staggering 310 T-90S MBTs in order to counter the recent Pakistani acquisition of 320 T-80UB MBTs from Ukraine.³³⁵ This deal was particularly lucrative for Russia because India agreed to pay 55% of \$700 million deal in advance. For India, it also received an opportunity to gain experience for its domestic MIC, as Russia sold 186 of the T-90s as kits that India assembled domestically at India's Heavy Vehicles Factory located in Avadi, outside of Chennai.³³⁶ New Delhi agreed to buy 300 more T-90S MBTs in 2006 after struggling to produce its own tanks domestically.³³⁷ India also purchased large amounts of 2S6M Tunguska mobile air defense (AD) systems during this period, 14 in 2001 and another 28 in 2005 for \$400 million.³³⁸ In 2005, the Indians also bought 28 BM-9A52 Smerch self-propelled MRLs.³³⁹ Of note, the initial quantity of the Smerch MRLs order was higher, but Russia's refusal to transfer certain technologies related to the Smerch system curtailed India's order.³⁴⁰ Lastly, India penned a deal in 2006 for 123 BMP-2K infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) for \$90 million.³⁴¹ The diversity of land platforms India procured demonstrated its dependence on Russian arms.

³³⁴ Embassy of India-Moscow. "India-Russia Defence Cooperation," accessed, April 18, 2018, <http://www.indianembassy.ru/index.php/bilateral-relations/india-russia-defence-cooperation>.

³³⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³³⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³³⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³³⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³³⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁴⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁴¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

India also imported several naval platforms during this period. The largest of these transactions was New Delhi's acquisition of the *Admiral Gorshkov*, a decommissioned *Kiev*-class aircraft carrier.³⁴² Technically, the Indians paid nothing for the carrier itself but agreed to reimburse the Russians \$750 million to retrofit this ship and convert it into a short take-off but arrested recovery (STOBAR) carrier.³⁴³ Such a purchase was the largest single platform that India purchased from Russia during the entire 2000–2017 period. India also paid Russia \$650 million to lease one Project-971I/*Akula* class nuclear attack submarine—renamed the INS *Chakra*—for ten years.³⁴⁴ Lastly, India purchased three *Talwar*-class frigates for \$1.5 billion in 2006.³⁴⁵ Notably, India's order of Russian frigates came after its domestic MIC was unable to supply similar platforms.³⁴⁶

In addition to its acquisition of naval and land-based weapons systems, India bought numerous Russian aircraft between 2000–2006. In terms of fighter aircraft, New Delhi penned agreements to purchase a staggering 140 Su-30MKI Flanker-H multirole fighters for approximately \$4 billion, all of which India would assemble domestically at HAL facilities.³⁴⁷ India also bought 16 MiG-29MT Fulcrums in 2005—at least four of which were the carrier-capable MiG-29KUB version—for approximately \$500 million.³⁴⁸ Beyond fighter aircraft, India also procured Russian patrol aircraft, specifically, two used but modernized, IL-38SD May anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft in 2005. India also inked deals to purchase a sizable quantity of Russian helicopters. In 2000, New Delhi

³⁴² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁴³ Pavel Felgnhauer, “The Sinking of the INS *Sindhurakshak* Strains Russo-Indian Military-Technical Cooperation,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 152 (August 15, 2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-sinking-of-the-ins-sindhurakshak-strains-russo-indian-military-technical-cooperation/>.

³⁴⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁴⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁴⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁴⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁴⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

agreed to purchase 40 Mi-17-1V Hip armed transport helicopters for \$170 million and bought another six in 2003.³⁴⁹ Additionally, the Indians acquired five Ka-31 Helix airborne early-warning (AEW) helicopters for \$108 million in 2001.³⁵⁰ Overall, India's continual delays in producing its own aircraft, like the LCA, stimulated India's overseas acquisition of aerial platforms. Russia eagerly fulfilled India's needs by provided a full range of aerial capabilities to New Delhi.

Besides selling the Indians conventional military platforms, Russian also offered New Delhi munitions and equipment upgrades. The Indians agreed to buy 28 SS-N-27 Klub land-attack version missiles at the cost of \$182 million for employment in their modernized Project-877 submarines in 2006. Other munitions orders included Krasnopol-M Guided shells, AT-14 Kornet anti-tank missiles, and a variety of man-portable, surface-to-air, and air-to-air missiles. In terms of modification packages, India purchased 250 V-46 diesel engines for T-72M1 tanks, D-30 engines for IL-78 transport aircraft, and several upgrades to naval weapons such as multiple rocket launchers and naval guns.³⁵¹ In being able to provide these services, the Russians demonstrated not only that could they sell large conventional platforms, but they could also modernize them with new sub-systems. Such an option attracted New Delhi, based on the lower costs associated with modernizing equipment vice buying complete replacements, and enticed Russia with continued share of the Indian arms import market.

In addition to buying arms, India also engaged in several joint ventures with Russia. Specifically, India co-financed the development of a supersonic, multipurpose missile: BrahMos. Named after two rivers—the Brahmaputra in India and the Moskva in Russia—the BrahMos missile program originated during joint discussions in 1998.³⁵² Those

³⁴⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁵⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁵¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁵² Indian-Russian Dense Cooperation Gets a Boost." *Monitor* 8, no. 85 (May 1, 2002). <https://jamestown.org/program/indian-russian-defense-cooperation-gets-a-boost/>.

discussions led to the founding of BrahMos Private Limited, a “tandem” venture with India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation and Russia’s NPO Machinostroyeniya being its lead partners.³⁵³ After what some analysts described as a “rocky start” to the program, greater coordination between the Putin administration and Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes smoothed out such friction and restored the “very firm foundations” of the partnership.³⁵⁴ In addition to BrahMos, India also agreed to jointly fund the development of the Il-214 multi-role transport aircraft (MTA) and assume 50% of both the development costs and overall ownership.³⁵⁵ Given the long time commitment required to produce these platforms, both agreements demonstrated the close and amiable relationship between the Russian and Indian governments.

Despite the volume of arms transfers during this phase, the Russo-Indian relationship was not without friction. When negotiating arms deals in 2000, New Delhi began to haggle over pricing more than it had in previous years, specifically over the purchase of tanks and fighter aircraft. As one Indian military spokesman stated, “We have no problems with the technical aspects of the planes or other military equipment, but our political compulsions to give in to Russia have changed.”³⁵⁶ Furthermore, Russia did itself no favors in trying to moderate India’s sudden shrewdness. Due to internal competition amongst the Russian MIC, export and production companies deliberately attempted to undermine deals that supported their domestic rivals.³⁵⁷ Specifically, Promeksport, a Russian export company that managed the export of T-72 modifications, deliberately leaked confidential documents criticizing T-90 performance data to the Indian media in order to steer New Delhi away from working with Rosvooruzhenie, the export company that managed T-90 sales.³⁵⁸ Also, the Russian General Staff attempted to elicit more Su-

³⁵³ “Indian-Russian Dense Cooperation Gets a Boost.”

³⁵⁴ “Indian-Russian Dense Cooperation Gets a Boost.”

³⁵⁵ Elisabeth Sköns and Hannes Baumann, “Arms Production,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*, ed. Alyson J. K. Bailes (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2003), 401.

³⁵⁶ “India and Russia Haggle over Prices for Tanks, Fighter Jets,” *Monitor* 6 no. 153 (August 7, 2000), <https://jamestown.org/program/india-and-russia-haggle-over-prices-for-tanks-fighter-jets/>.

³⁵⁷ “India and Russia Haggle over Prices for Tanks, Fighter Jets.”

³⁵⁸ “India and Russia Haggle Over Prices for Tanks, Fighter Jets.”

33 Flanker-D sales instead of the MiG-29K Fulcrum which the Indians had initially wanted, in order to assist with Sukhoi's poor financial situation. Such internal friction created leverage that New Delhi believed it could transform into better deals from Russia. Furthermore, President George W. Bush's cancellation of sanctions against India in September 2001 following 9/11 presented New Delhi another potential benefactor.³⁵⁹ Such a change in military equipment sourcing options prompted even greater Indian boldness at the negotiating table.

However, Russia still dominated India's arms import market despite the United States lifting its export ban to India and New Delhi's increased haggling over purchase prices. A confluence of key factors contributed to Russia's sustainment of its Indian market share during this period. Unlike with its other clients, especially China, Russia freely sold India its most advanced technology and agreed to "transfer technology under license production or cooperation programs."³⁶⁰ The United States, however, declined to sell the higher-level American equipment or provide the licensing agreements that the Indians desired, much to New Delhi's chagrin.³⁶¹ Given Pakistan's procurement of multiple advanced weapons platforms—to include medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs), fighter aircraft, and short-range surface-to-surface missiles—India sought equipment to counter Pakistani acquisitions.³⁶² Russia was happy to provide New Delhi the technology it desired through air defense platforms and advanced fighter aircraft. Thus, while India gained greater access to other arms vendors in the early 2000s, Russia still served as India's most reliable source of technologically advanced military equipment. Realizing this fact, the Kremlin called India's bluff regarding their potential flight to other arms vendors. Following America's lifting of the arms embargo on India and New Delhi's squabbling over arms deal prices with Russian vendors, the Kremlin responded by ending the practice

³⁵⁹ Alex Wagner, "Bush Waives Nuclear-Related Sanctions on India, Pakistan," *Arms Control Today*, October 1, 2001, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2001_10/sanctionsoct01.

³⁶⁰ Hagelin et al., "International Arms Transfers," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2002*, 381.

³⁶¹ Björn Hagelin, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, and Nicholas Chipperfield, "International Arms Transfers," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*, ed. Alyson J. K. Bailes (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2003), 459.

³⁶² Hagelin et al., "International Arms Transfers," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2002*, 381.

of offering the Indians “friendship prices” at fixed-exchange rates and eliminating prior barter transactions.³⁶³ Squabbling aside, both Moscow and New Delhi still realized that their relationship was mutually beneficial and Russian exports maintained their sizable share of India’s arms import market.

2. Phase II: 2007–2013

From 2007 to 2013, Russian arms sales to India reached an historic high in terms of volume of equipment transferred. Several factors contributed to India’s larger purchases during this period. First, India still struggled to cultivate the industrial and technological capabilities required for a self-reliant domestic defense industry. India’s ongoing debacle in attempting to manufacture its domestically designed Arjun MBT, an issue that New Delhi’s continual importation of T-90s highlighted, showcased the ongoing issues with India’s MIC.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, India struggled to acquire new technology in an efficient manner. From 2000–2005, India failed to spend more than \$7 billion of budgeted funds for military hardware acquisitions and modernization.³⁶⁵ As *Defense Industry Daily* reported in 2004, India’s parliamentary defense committee determined that it “had ‘miserably failed’ to expedite the procurement process” and promptly “call[ed] on the Ministry of Defense to establish a thorough study to ‘identify the bottlenecks and take remedial measures to streamline the system.’” Second, China made its own developmental progress quite visible. For example, in January 2007, the Chinese successfully completed an anti-satellite (ASAT) missile test by destroying one of their own FY-1C weather satellites with a DF-21 ballistic missile.³⁶⁶ Third, Pakistani military imports had slowly risen in the early 2000s.³⁶⁷ Islamabad had recently signed several sizable deals with China and the United

³⁶³ Hagelin et al., “International Arms Transfers,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2002*, 377–378.

³⁶⁴ “Indian Army Wants to Add another 1,000 T-90S Tanks by 2020,” *Defense Industry Daily*, August 20, 2008, <https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/indian-army-wants-to-add-another-1000-t90s-tanks-by-2020-updated-02697/>.

³⁶⁵ “India’s Defense Market: Obstacles to Modernization,” *Defense Industry Daily*, May 24, 2005, <https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/indias-defense-market-obstacles-to-modernization-0570/>.

³⁶⁶ James C. Moltz, *Asia’s Space Race: National Motivation, Regional Rivalries, and International Risks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 96.

³⁶⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports to Pakistan, 2000–2017,” accessed April 23, 2018, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

States in order to obtain a number of aerial platforms such as the Chinese JF-17 Thunder and American F-16 Falcon fighter aircraft replete with numerous advanced beyond visual range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) missiles and guided bombs.³⁶⁸ The confluence of all these factors greatly motivated India to increase its arms imports.

Russia was more than happy to scratch Indian's itch for more military hardware, especially in terms of aerial systems. In January 2007, Russia and India signed a long-term development deal to co-produce a fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA), the T-50/Su-57, also called the *Perspektivny Aviatsionny Kompleks, Frontovoy Aviatsii* (PAK-FA) or Future Airborne Complex of Frontline Aviation.³⁶⁹ Showing its commitment to the venture, New Delhi paid \$295 million in research and development costs for the PAK-FA's preliminary design.³⁷⁰ Interestingly, New Delhi's official agreement to this arrangement, after years of foot dragging, occurred less than two weeks after the Chinese ASAT test. In addition to joining new joint ventures, India purchased several large orders of combat aircraft. In 2007, India bought another 40 Su30MKI Flanker-H fighters for \$1.5 billion—20 of which India assembled from Russian-delivered kits—and exchanged 18 Su-30K Flanker-C airframes for the newer Flanker-H model. In 2012, India purchased another 42 Su-30MKI Flanker-H fighters, all of which India assembled domestically from Russian kits.³⁷¹ Additionally, New Delhi penned deals with the Russian to rebuild 63 MiG-29SMT/Fulcrum-F aircraft to the MiG-29UPG version for approximately \$900 million.³⁷² To sweeten the deal, Moscow agreed to apply “30% of the contract value into India by setting up MiG consignment depots and service centres, along with simulator centres with

³⁶⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁶⁹ “India, Russia to Make 5th Generation Fighter Jets,” *Times of India*, January 24, 2007, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India-Russia-to-make-5th-generation-fighter-jets/articleshow/1433785.cms?>.

³⁷⁰ Franz-Stefan Gady, “India Should Co-Produce Stealth Fighter with Russia, Defense Ministry Panel Says,” *The Diplomat*, August 8, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/india-should-co-produce-stealth-fighter-with-russia-defense-ministry-panel-says/>.

³⁷¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁷² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

training aids.”³⁷³ Such an arrangement paved the way for more orders in 2010, when New Delhi bought another 29 MiG-29SMT Fulcrum-F fighters—at least four of which were carrier-capable—for approximately \$1.3 billion.³⁷⁴ As with fighter aircraft, Indian helicopter orders were also sizable. In 2008, India penned agreements to acquire 80 Mi-17V-5 Hip armed transport helicopters for \$1.3 billion and bought 68 more in 2013 for \$1.5 billion.³⁷⁵ The Indians also spent \$198 million to purchase another five Ka-31 Helix AEW helicopters that were capable of operating from their recently purchased aircraft carrier.³⁷⁶ Concerned about Chinese and Pakistani threats on the periphery and an overall lack of modernity in its armed forces, India desperately sought to upgrade its aerial inventory, and Russia eagerly offered the equipment to fulfill Indian needs.

India also purchased several large orders of ground systems between 2007 and 2013. In 2007, New Delhi inked a deal to buy 347 T-90S MBTs, 223 of which the Indians would assemble themselves, for \$1.2 billion.³⁷⁷ In 2013, India agreed to purchase another 236 T-90S MBTs for domestic licensed production.³⁷⁸ In addition to large MBT orders, New Delhi also purchased 14 BM-9A52 Smerch MRLs in 2007.³⁷⁹ Furthermore, India agreed to buy 25,000 9M119/AT-11 anti-tank missiles for \$474 million—15,000 of which India would domestically produce—for use in already purchased T-72 and T-90 MBTs.³⁸⁰

³⁷³ Rajat Pandit, “India, Russia Ink MiG-29 Upgrade Deal,” *Times of India*, March 8, 2008, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-Russia-ink-MiG-29-upgradeddeal/articleshow/2846675.cms?referral=PM>.

³⁷⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁷⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁷⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁷⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁷⁸ As of 2017 Moscow and New Delhi had not settled on this deal’s final price; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁷⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

³⁸⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

Russia and India had originally agreed to this deal in 2006, but internal issues with India's MIC had stymied its execution.³⁸¹ A key aspect of this deal, and that of other large transfers during this phase, was New Delhi's demands for greater licensed production rights for their purchased equipment. While the Indians had begun to incorporate licensed production requirements into arms purchases earlier in the 2000s, New Delhi's firmer stance demonstrated they had shifted up a gear. Russia, however, was willing to play ball. Moscow valued its market share and was disinclined to lose it, despite rising Indian stipulations.

Helping Russia maintain its prominence in the Indian arms market was Moscow's continued ability to provide upgrade packages to previously purchased items. While New Delhi did not buy any new ships from Russia during this phase, they did purchase newer naval guns and anti-ship missiles for its already procured equipment. For aerial platforms, the Indians bought 740 AL-31 turbofan engines in 2012, enough to update their entire SU-30MKI inventory while also keeping several engines as spares.³⁸² In terms of other munitions, India purchased 10,000 AT-5 anti-tank missiles for \$225 million, ideal weapons to counter a large-scale conventional force advancing from either Pakistan or China.³⁸³ Through these sales, Russia again strove to display that it could provide the full gamut of equipment India needed to modernize its armed forces in the face of rising peripheral threats and the lack of domestic production capacity.

3. Phase III: 2014–2017

While the period between 2007 and 2013 appeared to be a time of feast for Russian arms exports to India, the next phase of sales from 2014 to 2017 was a time of famine, at least in comparison to previous periods. New Delhi did not agree to any significant arms deals with Moscow in 2014 and 2015. However, given their large orders earlier that decade,

³⁸¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁸² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁸³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

with many of them still outstanding during this period, India's abstinence from new contracts was not too surprising. Other factors also contributed to New Delhi's decline in orders. Following his victory in the 2014 prime minister election, Narendra Modi instituted his "Make in India" initiative in order to foster the development of domestic industry and manufacturing capabilities.³⁸⁴ Modi specifically envisioned the Indian MIC growing in capability. As he said in 2014, "Instead of having to import every little defense hardware, we want India to become an exporter of these equipment [sic] over the next few years."³⁸⁵ Amitabh Kant, the secretary of the newly created Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, echoed Modi by saying, "We want that the global defense companies should come [sic] to India not merely to sell to us but also to manufacture here and export to other countries."³⁸⁶ Such a change in Indian strategy created friction points in arms sales as foreign vendors had to acquiesce to even greater Indian internal production and technological transfer requirements as part of arms deals.

India's improved relationships with the West during this period compounded issues stemming from Modi's "Make in India" initiative. For the United States, India was no longer, as prior Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld once called the country in 2002, a "rogue state" needing a careful observation and purposeful distant relations.³⁸⁷ As such, the United States slowly entered the foray of the Indian arms import market following the Obama administration's "pivot to the Pacific," to the extent that America overtook Russia as the leading exporter of arms to India—in monetary terms—for the combined period of 2012 to 2014.³⁸⁸ However, American primacy in India's market was short-lived.

³⁸⁴ "Make In India—About Us," accessed April 23, 2018, <http://www.makeinindia.com/about>.

³⁸⁵ Rama Lakshmi, "India is the world's largest arms importer. It aims to be a big weapons dealer, too," *Washington Post*, November 16, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/india-is-the-worlds-largest-arms-importer-it-aims-to-be-a-big-weapons-dealer-too/2014/11/15/10839bc9-2627-4a41-a4d6-b376e0f860ea_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.343bc315e55f.

³⁸⁶ Lakshmi, "India is the World's Largest Arms Importer. It Aims to be a Big Weapons Dealer, too."

³⁸⁷ "India, Russia, Sign another Major Defense Deal," *Monitor* 7, no. 34 (February 19, 2001), <https://jamestown.org/program/india-russia-sign-another-major-defense-deal/>.

³⁸⁸ Rajat Pandit, "US Pips Russia as Top Arms Supplier to India," *Times of India*, August 13, 2014, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/US-pips-Russia-as-top-arms-supplier-to-India/articleshow/40142455.cms>; Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia Remains India's Largest Arms Supplier (For Now)," *Economic Times*, March 1, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/russia-remains-indias-largest-arms-supplier-for-now/>.

After a brief hiatus, India returned to signing new arms contracts with Russia in 2016. India's agreement to purchase five S-400 Triumf/SA-21 Growler air defense systems for \$5 billion during an October conference in Goa served as the most important of these purchases.³⁸⁹ Currently, this deal remains a thorn in Indo-Russian relations currently as the two countries have still not finalized several lingering details regarding the purchase. New Delhi continues to haggle Moscow over the purchase price while simultaneously requesting production accommodations based on Modi's "Make in India" initiative.³⁹⁰ Furthermore, American officials have hinted that such a purchase might be subject to the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) and thus elicit economic consequences.³⁹¹ Beyond the S-400 deal, New Delhi also agreed to purchase several other bulk orders of ground systems. In 2016 the Indians penned a \$2 billion arrangement to produce 464 T-90S MBTs under license.³⁹² Also, after a series of prolonged negotiations that began in 2015, New Delhi purchased 149 BMP-2 IFVs for \$141 million in 2017.³⁹³

In terms of aerial platforms, New Delhi and Moscow finalized several helicopter sales. Both parties finally concluded negotiations that they began in 2014 for New Delhi's purchase of 200 Ka-226T Hoodlum light helicopters.³⁹⁴ As with other large orders of Russian equipment, India received the license to produce 140 domestically while importing

³⁸⁹ Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India, Russia Fail to Finalize S-400 Air-Defense Deal," *Defense News*, January 23, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2018/01/23/india-russia-fail-to-finalize-s-400-air-defense-deal/>; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁹⁰ "India, Russia to Expedite Talks on Key Defence Deals," *Economic Times*, April 04, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-to-expedite-talks-on-key-defence-deals/articleshow/63612981.cms>.

³⁹¹ Yashwant Raj, "US Closely Watching India's Plan to Buy S-400 Air Defence System from Russia," *Hindustan Times*, April 1, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/us-closely-watching-india-s-plan-to-buy-s-400-air-defence-system-from-russia/story-j1iiz3hcH9Gzvw1LptLYhI.html>.

³⁹² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁹³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁹⁴ Stephen J. Blank, "Putin's Passage to India: Where Did It Lead?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 223 (December 15, 2014), <https://jamestown.org/program/putins-passage-to-india-where-did-it-lead/>; Shaurya Karanbir Gurung, "India Moves a Step Closer to Procuring 200 Kamov Ka-226T Helicopters from Russia," *Economic Times*, April 11, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-moves-a-step-closer-to-procuring-200-kamov-ka-226t-helicopters-from-russia/articleshow/63718077.cms>.

the other 60 directly from Russia.³⁹⁵ The Indians also agreed to a \$1.1 billion purchase of 48 more Mi-17V-5 Hip transport helicopters and two A-50EhI airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft.³⁹⁶

In addition to ground and air combat platforms, New Delhi agreed to buy four *Talwar*-class frigates, two unfinished vessels from Russia and another two for licensed production in India.³⁹⁷ Of note, the Russian Navy had previously ordered the construction of two of those ships for domestic use, but Ukraine's cancellation of ship engine deliveries following Russia's 2014 invasion and annexation of Crimea prevented their completions.³⁹⁸ India, conversely, had no issue importing Ukrainian ship engines to make these ships fully operationally capable. Lastly, India agreed to sign another lease for one *Akula*-class nuclear attack submarine with the understanding that the Russians would modernize it according to New Delhi's specifications.³⁹⁹ As with the majority of recent arms sales, this deal is still in final negotiations as Moscow and New Delhi work out lingering details.

In total, Russian arms sales to India from 2000 to 2017 represented a continual linkage between both countries. While sales varied from year to year and the Indians' bargaining power generally increased through Putin's 17 years of power, the relationship between Moscow and New Delhi endured. Russia endeavored to seize as much opportunity as it could in order to maintain its overall market share. Additionally, India's inability to develop major conventional platforms helped keep Russian import quantities sizable, and New Delhi depended on outside sources to modernize its aging military. As such, India remained Russia's largest arms import partner in the world during Putin's time in power.

³⁹⁵ Gurung, "India Moves a Step Closer to Procuring 200 Kamov Ka-226T Helicopters from Russia."

³⁹⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁹⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁹⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

³⁹⁹ Ankit Panda, "A Second Russian Nuclear Attack Submarine for India? India May Be Slated to Take Delivery of a Second Russian Nuclear Attack Submarine in the Early 2020s," *The Diplomat*, October 20, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/10/a-second-russian-nuclear-attack-submarine-for-india/>.

C. BENEFITS FROM ARMS SALES TO INDIA—THE BENGAL TIGER’S BOUNTY

Putin’s use of arms sales to India has yielded multiple positive effects for Russia. In terms of domestic economic benefits, India’s purchases have provided needed cash influxes for Russia’s arms industry to ensure its solvency, have provided addition research and development funding, and have compensated for the overall decline of Chinese orders. In terms of cash influxes for the Russian MIC, India has provided the greatest total financial contributions from 2000 to 2017 compared to all other Russian arms importers. According the U.S. Department of State World Military Expenditure and Arms Transfer database, Indian arms purchases grossed \$22.8 billion for the Russian MIC from 2000–2015, \$3.8 billion more than China, Russia’s second largest importer.⁴⁰⁰ In the early 2000s, India’s orders—especially paired with those from China—were vital to financing the Russian MIC as Putin enacted a series of centralization efforts during that period. Given that Russia’s MIC exported two-thirds of its total production quantities in the early 2000s, exports were a significant contribution to the Russian MIC’s revenue.⁴⁰¹ As a Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST) report published in 2005 indicated, the Russian MIC “survive[d] almost exclusively due to exports” during the Putin’s first presidential term.⁴⁰² India’s approximately 17% share of total Russian MIC sales from 2000 to 2004, second only to China, were thus a significant influx of financial sustenance for Russia’s defense industries.⁴⁰³ As such, arms sales to India contributed directly to the Russian MIC’s solvency and overall efficiency through facilitating economies of scale.⁴⁰⁴ Indian orders later in Putin’s second term, during his interregnum period as prime minister from 2008 to 2012, and throughout his third term as president also provided monetary gains for the Russian MIC. As Figure 13 displays, Indian orders have steadily increased over time in

⁴⁰⁰ “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” United States Department of State.

⁴⁰¹ Eugene Kogen, “The Russian Defense Industry 1991–2008: From the Collapse of the Former Soviet Union to the Global Financial Crisis,” in *The Modern Defense Industry: Political, Economic, and Technological Issues*, ed. Richard A. Bitzinger (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009), 198.

⁴⁰² Blank, *Rosoboroneksport*, 31.

⁴⁰³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017.”

⁴⁰⁴ Blank, “Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries,” 406.

aggregately in terms of monetary value. Such a trend provides grounds for optimism in the Russian defense industry.

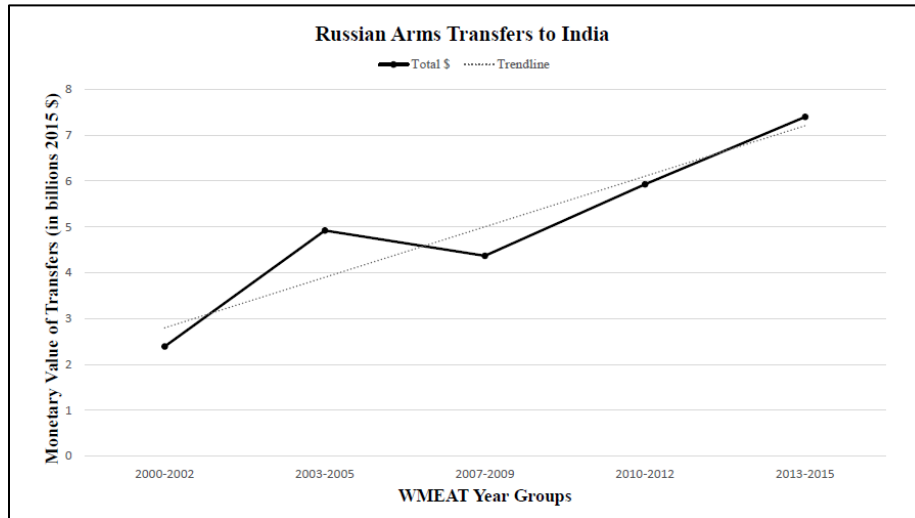


Figure 13. Russian Arms Transfers to India by Monetary Value⁴⁰⁵

In addition to monetary gains to sustain the Russian MIC, arms sales to India created several Indo-Russian joint ventures that stimulated the Russian MIC’s research and development. In the early 2000s, a lack of funding and vision had hindered innovation in the Russian MIC. For example, Sukhoi’s president stated in 2000 that the Russian aerospace company had no plans to design *any* new airframes, focusing instead on producing aircraft that international clients had purchased.⁴⁰⁶ Joint ventures, therefore, provided opportunities for developmental growth in the Russian MIC. As Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov stated in 2004:

We are building up cooperation [with India] in joint scientific and research projects, experimental design and licensed production. We are seriously not just thinking but planning to go into third countries’ markets with a jointly produced product. Clearly one potential area will be Central Asia, where

⁴⁰⁵ “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” United States Department of State; author’s calculations and graph.

⁴⁰⁶ Hagelin et al., “Transfers of major conventional weapons,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2001*, 327.

possible joint ventures could reduce rivalry and provide yet another alternative to expensive contracts with Western defense companies.⁴⁰⁷

As such, various co-development programs with India—to include the BrahMos, MTA, and PAK-FA programs—provided the Russian MIC both extra funding and vision for future projects for exports to other arms markets.

Russian arms sales to India have also negated the potential negative effects of a decline in military exports to China. Since 2007, Indian sales have directed the aggregate trend in Russian exports to the two countries as Chinese orders reached a downward equilibrium in import volume in 2010. As Figures 14 and 15 display, India’s orders compensated for this drop in Chinese orders in terms of volume and monetary value. Given that the combined Chinese and Indian arms purchases equated to 55.9% of Russian military exports by volume from 2000 to 2017, the overall contribution of these two countries’ purchases were very significant to the financial health of the Russian defense industry.⁴⁰⁸



Figure 14. Russian Arms Transfers to Asia by Volume⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Roger McDermott, “Russia and India Explore Cooperation in Central Asia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 141 (December 7, 2004), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-and-india-explore-cooperation-in-central-asia/>.

⁴⁰⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017.”; author’s calculations and graph.

⁴⁰⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports from Russia, 2000–2017.”; author’s calculations and graph.

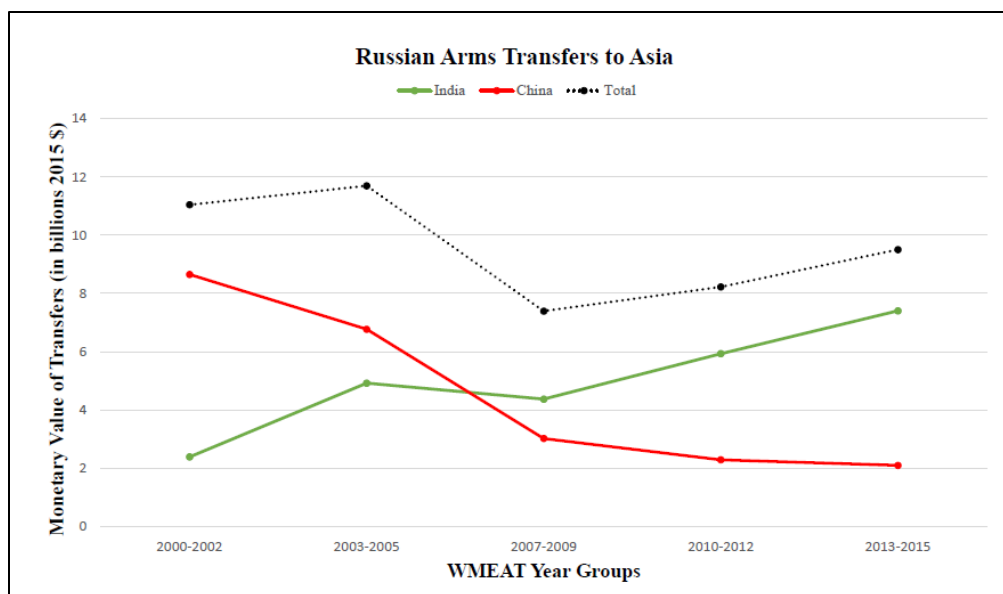


Figure 15. Russian Arms Transfers to Asia by Monetary Value⁴¹⁰

In addition to domestic economic benefits, Russian arms sales to India have provided Putin several international political benefits. Most importantly, the constant stream of military exports into India has assisted in sustaining positive relations between Moscow and New Delhi. Through this ongoing partnership Putin has acquired India's support of Russia's position on multiple geopolitical issues, India's participation in Russian-dominated multilateral institutions, ongoing bilateral military cooperation between the two states, and New Delhi's cooperation on strategic issues. Ultimately, Putin has used this his relations with India as a means to boost his international credibility and contribute to his construction of a polycentric order to challenge American global hegemony.

Putin has wielded his amiable relations with India to reinforce Russia's position on multiple geopolitical issues. He began using this tactic early during his first elected term as the Russian Federation's chief executive, specifically to support his operations against Chechen rebels and disagreements with American unilateralist positions. When visiting Moscow in June 2000, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh voiced support for

⁴¹⁰ "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," United States Department of State; author's calculations and graph.

the Kremlin's ongoing conflict in the Caucasus as merely battling "international terrorism."⁴¹¹ Similarly, New Delhi declined to support any Western economic sanctions of Russia in response to Putin's actions in Chechnya. Such a perspective opposed the prevailing Western view that Russian actions in the Caucasus included indiscriminate tactics that resulted in several human rights abuses and thus warranted censure and an economic reprimand.⁴¹²

In addition to backing Russia's actions in Chechnya, India also supported Putin's anti-unilateralist position regarding the Americans' desire to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. At the same June 2000 summit, Singh concurred with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's argument that an American unilateral abrogation of the ABM Treaty would be both threatening and destabilizing.⁴¹³ With growing American discontent with the treaty, to include then-presidential candidate George W. Bush's assertions that he would withdraw from the treaty if he won the upcoming presidential election, Putin wanted to ensure he had partners on his side to counter the growing neo-conservative camp in the United States.⁴¹⁴ Russia was still able to gain Indian support after newly-elected President Bush's May 1, 2001 speech at National Defense University where he stated his intent to "move beyond the ABM Treaty."⁴¹⁵ The process was not without some diplomatic gymnastics. While the Indian Foreign Ministry initially applauded certain aspects of Bush's proposed policy on May 2, 2001, namely the need for America to consult with allies regarding ballistic missile defense, a quick visit from Ivanov set the Indians straight.⁴¹⁶ On May 3, Ivanov landed in New Delhi, and shortly afterward,

⁴¹¹ "India and Russia Gear Up for October Summit," *Monitor* 6, no. 130 (July 5, 2000), <https://jamestown.org/program/india-and-russia-gear-up-for-october-summit/>.

⁴¹² Nick Childs, "Putin Rebuffs Chechnya Warnings," BBC, December 7, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/554019.stm>; Human Rights Watch, "War Crimes in Chechnya and the Response of the West," February 29, 2000, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2000/02/29/war-crimes-chechnya-and-response-west>.

⁴¹³ "India and Russia Gear Up for October Summit."

⁴¹⁴ "India and Russia Gear Up for October Summit."

⁴¹⁵ The White House, "Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University," May 1, 2001, <https://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>.

⁴¹⁶ "Russia and India Discuss Missile Defense and U.S. Ties," *Monitor* 7, no. 89 (May 8, 2001), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-and-india-discuss-missile-defense-and-u-s-ties/>.

Indian External Affairs and Defence Minister Jaswant Singh stated, “We have always held the view that the ABM of 1972 should not be abrogated unilaterally...even through it is a bilateral treaty.”⁴¹⁷ He also added that the “United States should hold a constructive dialogue with Russia in this regard.”⁴¹⁸ Thus, while India attempted to win some limited favor with the United States, Russia’s leverage ensured New Delhi did not stray too far from the Kremlin’s orbit.

Putin’s use of arms sales also generated political capital that ensured New Delhi matched Russia’s position regarding the international debate on the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Russia habitually attacked the United States for its unilateral actions against Iraq, especially America acting without a UNSC Resolution. Putin noted sharply that America’s invasion “[shook] the foundations of global stability and international law” and lamented that “with every hour human casualties and destruction are mounting, peaceful citizens are dying—children, old people, women...American and British soldiers are dying, as are Iraqi servicemen.”⁴¹⁹ Putin’s proposed solution called for the United States to “immediately end military action and re-start the process of [building a] political solution within the framework of the U.N. Security Council.”⁴²⁰ Desiring leverage over Washington, Putin sought like-minded allies—like India—to bolster his position.

As with the ABM treaty, India’s position vacillated between a pro-Washington and pro-Moscow stance before aligning with the Kremlin’s position on the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. While the Indian Parliament strongly opposed the invasion, passing a resolution that declared the war “unjust and [called] on the United States to withdraw,” India’s executive level leaders were ultimate decision making authorities.⁴²¹ As such, Washington persisted in its recruitment efforts in an effort to bring the Indians

⁴¹⁷ “Russia and India Discuss Missile Defense and U.S. Ties.”

⁴¹⁸ “Russia and India Discuss Missile Defense and U.S. Ties.”

⁴¹⁹ Jill Dougherty, “Putin Warns on Iraq War,” CNN, March 28, 2000, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/03/28/sprj.irq.putin/>.

⁴²⁰ Dougherty, “Putin Warns on Iraq War.”

⁴²¹ John Kifner, “After the War; Other Forces; India Decides Not to Send Troops to Iraq Now,” *New York Times*, July 15, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/15/world/after-the-war-other-forces-india-decides-not-to-send-troops-to-iraq-now.html>.

onboard to the American-led war effort through significant engagement with high-ranking Indian leadership.⁴²² Seeking to curry favor with Washington, especially to mitigate various problems with Pakistan, New Delhi initially pledged to send a division-sized element of 17,000 troops to Iraq for service in the vicinity of Mosul.⁴²³ However, in July 2003, the Indian Cabinet's Committee on Security voted to not send troops, although it asserted that it would reconsider the issue "were there to be an explicit UN mandate."⁴²⁴ Such an opinion matched Russia's position on Iraq that Putin had voiced so adamantly earlier that year. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee echoed a similar perspective during a September 2003 meeting with President Bush in New York, again stating that, "[India] will think about sending troops under an explicit UN mandate" but "so far, there is no such resolution."⁴²⁵ At the same time, Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha articulated the need for a political solution in Iraq vice a troop increase, stating that, "There should be a movement in the direction of return of sovereignty to the Iraqi people and return of governance to them."⁴²⁶ India's stance thus mirrored the official Russian position. Such a decision was difficult for American leadership to swallow, but was not altogether surprising. Moscow's influential pull remained stronger in New Delhi in comparison to Washington. Furthermore, a lack of Indian public support for the war also made a troop deployment unpalatable for New Delhi.

India also declined to join the prevailing Western international position when reacting to Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia. While the United States and its European allies rankled at Russia's actions and denounced the Kremlin's diplomatic recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, New Delhi remained remarkably quiet. In September, Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee continued to assert India's non-aligned stance: "We are watching the development with respect to Georgia and the

⁴²² Kifner, "After the War."

⁴²³ Kifner, "After the War."

⁴²⁴ Kifner, "After the War."

⁴²⁵ P. Mohan Das, "No Indian Troops for Iraq, PM Tells Bush," *India Tribune*, September 25, 2003, <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20030926/world.htm#1>.

⁴²⁶ "India, Russia, China to Adopt Common Approach on Iraq," *India Tribune*, September 25, 2003, <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20030926/world.htm#1>.

other two small countries [South Ossetia and Abkhazia] which have been recognized by Russia...we have not yet taken any final view in respect of these two countries.”⁴²⁷ India’s stance remained unaltered throughout 2008. In a joint Indo-Russian declaration that Prime Minister Singh and President Medvedev both signed in December 2008, the leaders agreed that, “Noting the recent conflict in South Ossetia...India supports the important role of the Russian Federation in promoting peace & cooperation in the Caucasian region.”⁴²⁸ Interestingly, India and Russia conducted negotiations for several large contracts, to include Su-30MKI and T-90S orders in addition to FGFA specifications, immediately following the Russian invasion in August.⁴²⁹

India’s Russo-centric positioning continued during the UN debate over potential military actions in North Africa against Muammar Gaddafi’s regime. During the deliberation, India’s representative “stressed the need for peaceful resolution of the conflict and warned against unintended consequences of armed intervention,” an opinion that generally followed Russia’s position. As a non-permanent member of the UNSC during the vote for UNSCR 1973 that would institute a no-fly zone over Libya, India joined a group of four other countries, including Russia, and abstained.⁴³⁰ After American-led airstrikes began to pound the Gaddafi regime, India again joined Russia in arguing against the continued use of force.⁴³¹ S. M. Krishna, India’s External Affairs Minister, “urged the Western nations...to ceasefire [sic] and called upon the Gaddafi regime and the rebel forces to abjure violence and talk to each other.”⁴³² Through these actions, India again

⁴²⁷ Rajeev Sharma, “How Indian Support for Russia has Evolved from Georgia to Ukraine,” RT, April 28, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/indian-support-russia-crimea-317/>.

⁴²⁸ Sharma, “How Indian Support for Russia has Evolved from Georgia to Ukraine.”

⁴²⁹ Rajat Pandit, “India Raises Delay in Arms Supply with Russia,” *Times of India*, August 21, 2008, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/15645AD955B01FC0?p=AWNB>.

⁴³⁰ United Nations Security Council, “Security Council Approves ‘No-Fly Zone’ over Libya, Authorizing ‘All Necessary Measures’ to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions,” March, 17, 2011, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.

⁴³¹ Bidanda Chengappa, “India’s Realistic Stand on Libya Crisis,” *Hindu Business Line*, March 25, 2011, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/Indias-realistic-stand-on-Libya-crisis/article20113578.ece>.

⁴³² Chengappa, “India’s Realistic Stand on Libya Crisis.”

demonstrated its adherence to the Kremlin's political positions in various geopolitical events.

India also sided with Moscow during Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine in 2014. As Shiv Shankar Menon, India's National Security Advisor, remarked on March 6, 2014: "We would hope that whatever internal issues there are within Ukraine are settled peacefully and that the broader issues of reconciling the various interests involved, and there are after all legitimate Russian and other interests involved, are discussed, negotiated, and that there is a satisfactory resolution to them."⁴³³ The mere utterance of the word "legitimate" hinted at India's deference to Russia in comparison with the Western view that Russia's actions violated Ukrainian sovereignty. As with their pro-Russian stance towards Moscow's activities in Crimea and the Donbass, India did not support U.S.-led economic sanctions on Russia in response for its irredentist actions.⁴³⁴ As an Indian government's official statement read, "India has never supported unilateral sanctions against any country...therefore, we will also not support any unilateral measures by a country."⁴³⁵ India's support went beyond mere words. New Delhi had neither reservations hosting Crimean leader Sergei Aksyonov as a member of Putin's delegation during an official Russian state visit nor hesitations in building business ties with the new governor.⁴³⁶ Such moves clearly displayed the tight relationship between the Kremlin and New Delhi.

India's ongoing partnership with Russia also yielded political benefits for Putin in India's stance on the Syrian Civil War. New Delhi has consistently declined to support any Western intervention in the country. As Salman Khurshid, India's Minister of External Affairs, opined during a UN conference in 2014, "India believes that societies cannot be re-ordered from outside and that people in all countries have the right to choose their own

⁴³³ Sharma, "How Indian Support for Russia has evolved from Georgia to Ukraine."

⁴³⁴ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, 399.

⁴³⁵ "India Not to Support Western Sanctions against Russia," *Indian Express*, March 19, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/india-not-to-support-western-sanctions-against-russia/>.

⁴³⁶ Blank, "Putin's Passage to India: Where Did It Lead?."

destiny and decide their own future.”⁴³⁷ After the United States led another strike against Assad’s forces in April 2018 in response to Syria’s use of chemical weapons, India still declined to condemn the regime. Instead, New Delhi distanced itself from America’s actions and called “for dialogue and negotiations...on the basis of the principles of the UN Charter and in accordance with international law.”⁴³⁸ As one Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesmen stated, “The alleged use of chemical weapons, *if true*, is deplorable. We call for an impartial and objective investigation by the OPCW to establish the facts [emphasis added].”⁴³⁹ India’s stance on Syria aligns with the BRICS party line of non-interference with the actions of a sovereign state. Furthermore, Assad’s Ba’athist regime has supported India with regard to its territorial dispute over Kashmir.⁴⁴⁰ The war-torn country is also Putin’s long-standing Middle Eastern ally, and fostering positive relations between New Delhi and Damascus equates to positive relations between Moscow and New Delhi. Given these factors, and India’s historical political alignment with Russian positions in multiple other geopolitical issues, India’s pro-Russian stance in regard to Syria is unsurprising.

While Putin’s relationship with India—a partnership that arms sales between the two countries reinforced—has contributed to New Delhi siding with Russia on several geopolitical issues, amicable Russo-Indian relations have also supported several Russian-dominated multilateral institutions. Specifically, India is a member of BRICS, one of Putin’s multilateral tools to counter to Western influence.⁴⁴¹ As the largest democracy in the world, India’s membership in BRICS provides a certain legitimacy to the organization,

⁴³⁷ United Nations Office at Geneva, “Statement by H.E. Mr. Salman Khurshid Minister for External Affairs Government of the Republic of India,” January 22, 2014, [https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/8CE868FD4915E995C1257C68004281AC/\\$file/India.pdf](https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/8CE868FD4915E995C1257C68004281AC/$file/India.pdf).

⁴³⁸ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “India Distances itself from Military Strikes in Syria,” *Economic Times*, April 14, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-distances-itself-from-military-strikes-in-syria/articleshow/63763279.cms>.

⁴³⁹ Chaudhury, “India Distances itself from Military Strikes in Syria.”

⁴⁴⁰ Ketan Mehta, “Understanding India’s Response to the Syrian Civil War,” Observer Research Foundation, October 13, 2017, https://www.orfonline.org/research/understanding_india_response_syrian_civil_war/#_edn19.

⁴⁴¹ Lo, *Russian and the New World Disorder*, 78.

especially given the autocratic nature of fellow members China and Russia. Thus, even though India is “[its] least committed member,” India’s very presence in BRICS gives it weight.⁴⁴² Keeping India as a member of the organization, albeit a passive one, is therefore crucial for Putin as he seeks to obtain legitimacy as a global leader and reinforce Russia’s image as a great power through leadership in multilateral institutions.

Russia had also pushed India towards engaging in a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Putin’s attempt to reintegrate former Soviet republics under an EU-like organization that he, naturally, leads. India discussed beginning negotiations for such an FTA as early as 2013, a move that deeply concerned Washington.⁴⁴³ In 2016, both Russia and India began conducting a joint study to determine the feasibility of such an FTA.⁴⁴⁴ As of 2018, discussions between both Moscow and New Delhi continued yet still without a signed deal.⁴⁴⁵ While progress remains slow on this matter, the potential economic linkages of such institutional arrangements would only further pull India and Russia together. Furthermore, India’s membership in the Russian-dominated economic union would further Russia’s reputation and contribute to its image as a great power, especially since India is not a former Soviet republic like all the other EEU members.

Beyond assisting Putin’s efforts in influencing India to assume pro-Russian stances on geopolitical issues and multilateral institutions, Russian arms sales have also helped bolster Indo-Russian military ties. Both states conduct regular joint exercises in each other’s territory, the largest of these being the INDRA joint service exercises.⁴⁴⁶ This

⁴⁴² Lo, *Russian and the New World Disorder*, 155.

⁴⁴³ Stephen J. Blank, “Indo-Russian Summit Highlights Emerging Trends in Asian International Relations,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 199 (November 6, 2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/indo-russian-summit-highlights-emerging-trends-in-asian-international-relations/#.VI8SXHtSKHg>.

⁴⁴⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, “India-Russia Joint Statement during the Visit of President of the Russia to India: Partnership for Global Peace and Stability,” October 15, 2016, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27482/IndiaRussia+Joint+Statement+during+the+Visit+of+President+of+the+Russia+to+India+Partnership+for+Global+Peace+and+Stability>.

⁴⁴⁵ Kirtika Suneja, “India, Eurasian Economic Union to Hold Talks on Trade Pact,” *Economic Times*, January 29, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-eurasian-economic-union-to-hold-talks-on-trade-pact/articleshow/62687655.cms>.

⁴⁴⁶ The Exercise Name “INDRA” is a Merely Portmanteau of “India” and “Russia.”

training event, which has occurred ten times since its first iteration in 2003, has grown steadily in size and complexity over time.⁴⁴⁷ As India's *Economic Times* reported in 2017, "Joint naval exercises were held in Russia's Far-East in 2016 and between the ground forces of the two countries in Rajasthan in 2015."⁴⁴⁸ Most recently, INDRA 2017 included forces from all three major branches of each country's military for the first time in the exercise's existence.⁴⁴⁹ While each year's scenario varies, INDRA typically focuses on building Indian-Russian combined command and control capabilities. As India's Chief of Integrated Defense Staff stated, "The scope of the exercise includes professional interactions, establishment of joint command and control structures between the Indian and Russian forces and elimination of [a] terrorist threat in a multinational environment under [a] UN mandate."⁴⁵⁰ Interestingly, the exercise's scenario hints at the geopolitical priorities of both states, particularly the mutual concerns of terrorism and the imperative of UN sanctioned, and therefore Russian approved, actions.

Putin's strategic gains from arms sales to India constitute the last subset of political payoffs. Through a strong relationship with New Delhi, Putin has successfully kept his southern flank clear of potential geopolitical squabbles with his partner. For example, during a 2004 visit to New Delhi, Putin addressed recent Indian actions in Tajikistan, such as India's proposed construction of a runway at a Tajik military installation outside of Dushanbe.⁴⁵¹ Undoubtedly, Putin disdained New Delhi's incursion into what Chatham

⁴⁴⁷ Indian Navy, "Indo-Russian Bilateral Naval Exercise (INDRA NAVY - 2016)," January 5, 2018, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/indo-russian-bilateral-naval-exercise-indra-navy-2016>.

⁴⁴⁸ Arvind Gupta, "Deeper Defence & Security Cooperation with Russia Enhances India's Strategic Choices," *Economic Times*, December 22, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/deeper-defence-security-cooperation-with-russia-enhances-indias-strategic-choices/articleshow/62200689.cms>.

⁴⁴⁹ "First Indo-Russia Tri-Services Exercise INDRA-2017 Begins," *Economic Times*, October 21, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/first-indo-russia-tri-services-exercise-indra-2017-begins/first-ever-tri-services-joint-exercise/slideshow/61160833.cms>.

⁴⁵⁰ "India, Russia to Take Part in Joint Military Exercise," *Hindustan Times*, October 16, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-russia-to-take-part-in-joint-military-exercise/story-nVdigAsNUPwK7ZOiuhoWIO.html>.

⁴⁵¹ Roger McDermott, "Russia and India Explore Cooperation in Central Asia," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 141 (December 7, 2004), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-and-india-explore-cooperation-in-central-asia/>.

House scholar Bobo Lo calls Russia's "postmodern empire."⁴⁵² As Lo explains, Putin views the former Soviet republics as Russia's "'space' (*prostrantsvo*)," an area that other countries, "especially major powers, cannot treat as part of the world like any other."⁴⁵³ Regardless of the longstanding partnership with India, Putin did not want New Delhi meddling in his perceived sphere of influence. Interestingly, the Russian delegation also discussed over 350 arms sales contracts worth \$3.5 billion at the same summit.⁴⁵⁴ As such, the two delegations were able to agree that rather than compete in Central Asia, the two countries would, "wherever possible, seek cooperative measures instead" for military-technical cooperation with Central Asian states.⁴⁵⁵ Specifically, as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ivanov clarified, "We are seriously not just thinking but planning to go into third countries' markets with a jointly produced product [with India]."⁴⁵⁶ Thus, as Roger McDermott opines, the arrangement "involve[d] a quid pro quo, as Moscow expect[ed] sensitivity to its geopolitical concerns and strategic interests in Central Asia" in return for participation in joint ventures.⁴⁵⁷ As such, Putin wielded arms sales with India to achieve strategic goals.

In sum, while Russian arms sales to India produced economic gains, they also produced political benefits. Putin has used arms sales to build up influence in New Delhi which he has leveraged to obtain political gains, namely in India's continually reinforcement of a variety of Russian position geopolitical issues where Moscow assumed a position contrary to the United States and the West. Putin has also used relations with India to bolster multilateral institutions such as the EEU and BRICS in order to prop up his reputation and cement Russian's status as a great power in the world. Militarily, he has reinforced his relationship with New Delhi though bilateral military exercises. Lastly, Putin has leveraged his partnership with India to ensure that Russia maintains its exclusive

⁴⁵² Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 101.

⁴⁵³ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 102.

⁴⁵⁴ McDermott, "Russia and India Explore Cooperation in Central Asia."

⁴⁵⁵ McDermott, "Russia and India Explore Cooperation in Central Asia."

⁴⁵⁶ McDermott, "Russia and India Explore Cooperation in Central Asia."

⁴⁵⁷ McDermott, "Russia and India Explore Cooperation in Central Asia."

influence in the Central Asian states. The summation of these benefits formed a strong motivation for Putin's continual sale of arms to India.

D. ANALYSIS—PROFITABLE BENEFITS OR POLITICAL GAINS IN INDIA?

Of the multiple benefits that Putin received from selling arms to India, political gains have influenced him the most. As this statement's conditional wording implies, economic factors *did* carry significant weight amongst Putin and his administration. To say that Putin was completely dismissive or unaware of the economic benefits that arms sales provided is factually incorrect. Russian military-technical cooperation with India in the early 2000s was especially vital to sustaining the Russian MIC and providing needed financing and vision for Russia's military research and development efforts. Likewise, a rise in India's arms imports compared with a decline in Russian exports to China prevented an overall decline in orders for the MIC and thus sustained employment rates and economies of scale.⁴⁵⁸

However, despite these domestic economic gains, the international political benefits of arms sales to India have had a greater influence on Putin. While it is true that India provides numerous benefits to Russia's MIC in terms of research and development inputs and funding for joint ventures, the symbiotic relationship in co-developing military equipment indicates the cooperative potential between two countries.⁴⁵⁹ Such a partnership facilitates mutual trust and confidence between the two governments. Through this level of trust, the two countries have a mutual investment that binds them together.⁴⁶⁰ As Putin has sought to gain allies to join his polycentric world order, he has viewed these joint ventures as both a means to garner monetary influxes *and* to build a mutual partnership with New Delhi. Through this relationship, Putin has leveraged military-technical cooperation in order to ensure India fell in line with Russia on certain key issues.

⁴⁵⁸ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 406.

⁴⁵⁹ Pant, "The Changing Contours of Russia's South Asia Policy."

⁴⁶⁰ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 78.

Also, Putin’s increase of sales to India, both in volume and monetary value, came at a time when the Russian state procurement budget began to increase sizably. As American Foreign Policy Council Expert Stephen Blank observed, “It is clear that the [Russian] defense industry [does] not lack for contracts.”⁴⁶¹ If Putin truly needed funds to sustain his MIC, he would not have needed to continually boost sales to India from after 2008 as the evidence in Figure 16 demonstrates. A more convincing argument is Putin’s growing disenfranchisement with the United States during this period, prompted him to support continued, and even increased, sales to India. As Putin further distanced himself away from the West, he needed to invest in strong allies, and India was a natural choice.

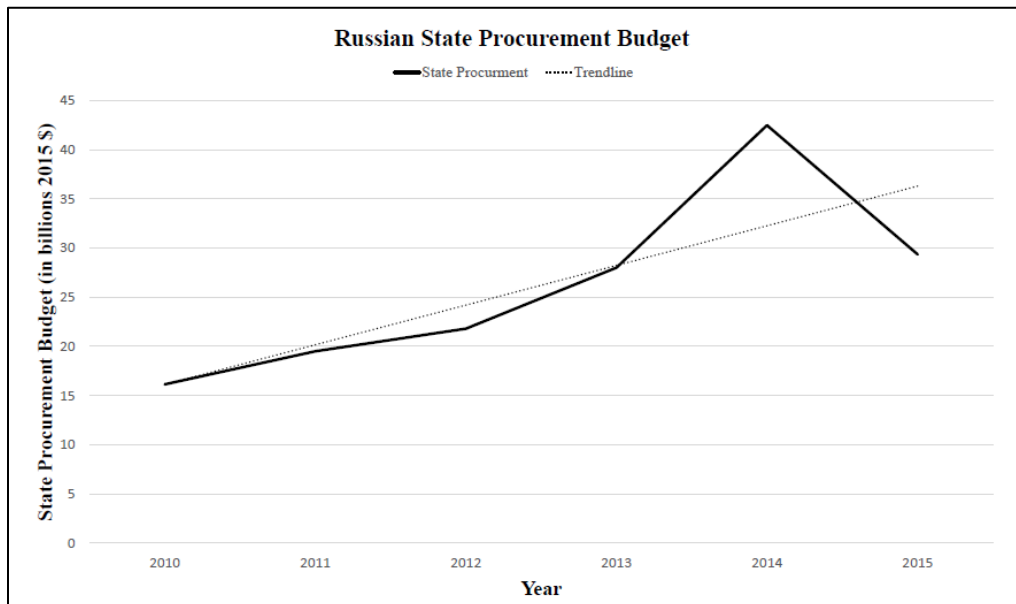


Figure 16. Russian State Procurement Budget—2010 to 2015⁴⁶²

Other factors indicate the primacy of international political factors as the main motive behind Putin’s use of arms exports. Notably, the Kremlin habitually declines to sign

⁴⁶¹ Blank, “Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries,” 405.

⁴⁶² “Useful Figures,” Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies; author’s graph

co-development deals with private Indian MIC companies.⁴⁶³ While Russia has a pragmatic reason for not desiring to deal with these fledgling businesses and the associated friction that coordination with them entails, there is also an underlying political motivation for Russia's actions.⁴⁶⁴ For Putin, a man who has nationalized and subjugated the majority of strategic industries in his own country, such as energy companies and the MIC, his view of private industry is not the same as that of traditional capitalists. While Indian private industries might be unexperienced, there are also in a symbiotic relationship with their state's government like state-owned enterprises. Thus, Putin does not view them as an ideal means of obtaining the leverage and influence he wants with New Delhi. A man with greater vision might see the long-term benefit of partnering with potentially innovative and flexible private businesses vice the bureaucratic behemoths of the public sector like HAL and Heavy Vehicle Factory. However, as Russia's recent choices display, Putin prefers to gain political influence and leverage from his arms deals rather than economic benefits for his MIC.

E. OBSTACLES TO RUSSIA'S FUTURE SUCCESS IN THE INDIAN ARMS MARKET

On the surface, arms sales appear to have benefitted both Russia and India mutually. For Putin, arms transfers helped maintain his influence in the South Asian power that he used to check American hegemony and help construct his desired multi-polar order with fellow BRICS countries. Russia's relations with India also provided a regional power broker in South Asia to balance any potential threats on Russia's southern border, specifically existential Islamic enemies in Central Asia. For India, a country still engaged in industrial modernization, especially of its own defense industry, Russia offered a well-established supply of technologically advanced arms.⁴⁶⁵ However, several problems lie underneath this veneer of past successes. While it is true that India often took Moscow's

⁴⁶³ Ksenia Kondratieva, "As Defence Sector Opens up, Russian Suppliers yet to Find Their Groove," *Business Line*, September 12, 2017, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/as-defence-sector-opens-up-russian-suppliers-yet-to-find-their-groove/article9853508.ece>.

⁴⁶⁴ Kondratieva, "As Defence Sector Opens Up."

⁴⁶⁵ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 79–80.

side on geopolitical issues, India routinely sought to maintain amicable relations with the West, especially the United States. As such, other problems—ongoing technical deficiencies with arms exports, the growth of India’s MIC, a rise in foreign competition, and future strategic dilemmas—are grounds for concern in the Kremlin.

While Russia and India have sustained a long history of military-technical cooperation, Moscow’s habitual failures to meet production deadlines and quality control standards have created friction in its relationship with New Delhi. For land systems, India has had multiple issues with the performance and reliability of their T-90 MBTs and related munitions. When conducting ammunition tests in 2000 with recently purchased T-90s and AT-11 guided missile rounds, two-thirds of the missiles missed due to various guidance errors.⁴⁶⁶ The Indians immediately halted negotiations to buy any more MBTs until Moscow had rectified the mechanical errors and replaced the faulty ordinance.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, when fielding T-90S MBTs, the Indian Army noted several problems with the tank’s performance in hot weather due to radiator problems, and electronic malfunctions.⁴⁶⁸

India has also experienced several issues with maintaining its Russian equipment. As India’s financial newspaper *Economic Times* reported in 2018:

It has been a long-standing grievance of the [Indian] armed forces that supply of critical spares and equipment from Russia takes a long time, affecting maintenance of military systems procured from that country. India has been pressing Russia to adopt a liberal approach in sharing technology for components of major defence platforms as it [is] critical to keep them in operational readiness.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ “Problems in Russian-Indian Arms Dealings?,” *Monitor* 6, no. 50 (March 10, 2000), <https://jamestown.org/program/problems-in-russian-indian-arms-dealings/>.

⁴⁶⁷ “Problems in Russian-Indian Arms Dealings?.”

⁴⁶⁸ “India Knocked out of Tank Contest in Russia after T-90s Develop Snags,” *Hindustan Times*, August 13, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-knocked-out-of-tank-contest-in-russia-after-t-90s-develop-snags/story-TQRNInKysug3ATwr7PK1MM.html>; Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 66.

⁴⁶⁹ “India, Russia to Expedite Talks on Key Defence Deals,” *Economic Times*, April 04, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-to-expedite-talks-on-key-defence-deals/articleshow/63612981.cms>.

However, despite these Indian desires, Russia has declined to transfer the technology that would allow India to produce spare parts for its purchased land equipment. Such delays have resulted in poor military performance. One incident of particular infamy occurred during the tank biathlon event in the Russian-hosted 2017 International Military Games. While competing against tanks from 19 of countries, both of India's Russian-built T-90Ss broke down.⁴⁷⁰

India has also had several maintenance complications with its Su-30MKI Flanker squadrons. As early as 1999, Indian squadrons began experiencing engine problems with multiple Su-30MKI aircraft that resulted in the publication of several reports that "pointed especially to Russian embarrassments" in attempting to "hash out how best to address these problems."⁴⁷¹ Despite having ample time to rectify maintenance problems with Su-30MKI airframes, difficulties continued. In 2017, a retired Indian Air Force air vice-marshal noted that, "The [Su-30MKI] fleet is prohibitively expensive equipment and faces problems due to high, premature failure rate of subsystems like engines, radars, missiles, avionics, etc."⁴⁷² Russia's stance with regard to aircraft maintenance issues mirrors its position on land systems. While Moscow has ensured India's access to maintenance-related items through granting New Delhi the authorization to import spare parts directly from Russian original equipment manufacturers, the Kremlin has not authorized the transfer of technology to allow India the organic capability to reproduce its own spare parts domestically.⁴⁷³ Thus, while overall maintenance responsiveness has increased, India still lacks the ability to self-sustain its Su-30MKI fleet.

In addition to ongoing reliability issues with its land and air platforms, the Indian Armed Forces have experienced several high visibility problems with expensive naval platforms. Notably, Russia's delivery of the aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorshkov* met with repeated delays and cost increases. India initially purchased the carrier in 2004 for \$750

⁴⁷⁰ "India Knocked out of Tank Contest in Russia after T-90s develop snags."

⁴⁷¹ "Problems in Russian-Indian Arms Dealings?,"

⁴⁷² Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India's Sukhoi fleet Faces Problems despite Russian Spare Parts Deal," *Defense News*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2017/03/22/india-s-sukhoi-fleet-faces-problems-despite-russian-spare-parts-deal/>.

⁴⁷³ Raghuvanshi, "India's Sukhoi Fleet Faces Problems despite Russian Spare Parts Deal."

million with all those funds earmarked for upgrading the previously decommissioned vessel. A series of postponements ensued and delayed the ship's projected arrival in India until 2012.⁴⁷⁴ The *Gorshkov* then experienced a catastrophic propulsion failure during sea trials—seven of eight of her boilers shut down—that further delayed its delivery to India by another year.⁴⁷⁵ As such, India did not receive the ship until 2013 after paying a total of \$2.3 billion for its retrofit.⁴⁷⁶ Besides the *Gorshkov* debacle, India experienced problems with imported Russian submarines. In 2013, an internal explosion aboard INS *Sindhurakshak*, a *Kilo*-class submarine, sank the boat in Mumbai harbor, killing 18 Indian sailors.⁴⁷⁷ Notably, this submarine had just returned from a refurbishment and rearmament period in a Russian dry-dock prior to the explosion. While both Moscow and New Delhi blamed on each other for the incident, it was Indian sailors that perished and, therefore, the Kremlin's reputation on the line, not New Delhi's.⁴⁷⁸ Overall, these multiple performance and maintenance problems with Russian imports serve as friction points in Indo-Russian relations.

India's ongoing attempts to create a domestic MIC also foreshadow a future decrease in Russian arms sales to India. New Delhi's first inclinations for self-sufficiency occurred during the 1990s as Russia slowly retreated from its international commitments to deal with internal economic issues. The aforementioned technical issues with Russian arms imports and slow response times in procuring repair parts further motivated New Delhi's attempts at MIC self-sufficiency. Reporting by the Jamestown Foundation in 1997

⁴⁷⁴Arup Roychoudhury, "Russia further Delays Delivery of Aircraft Carrier to India," Reuters, October 10, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-russia-defence/russia-further-delays-delivery-of-aircraft-carrier-to-india-idUSBRE8990GU20121010>.

⁴⁷⁵Jacob W. Kipp, "A Depressing Curtain for Russian Naval Power: Admiral Sergei Gorshkov Fails Her Sea Trials (Part One)," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9, no. 219 (November 30, 2012), <https://jamestown.org/program/a-depressing-curtain-for-russian-naval-power-admiral-sergei-gorshkov-fails-her-sea-trials-part-one/>.

⁴⁷⁶Pavel Felgenhauer, "The Sinking of the INS Sindhurakshak Strains Russo-Indian Military-Technical Cooperation," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 152 (August 15, 2013), 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-sinking-of-the-ins-sindhurakshak-strains-russo-indian-military-technical-cooperation/>.

⁴⁷⁷Felgenhauer, "The Sinking of the INS Sindhurakshak Strains Russo-Indian Military-Technical Cooperation."

⁴⁷⁸Felgenhauer, "The Sinking of the INS Sindhurakshak Strains Russo-Indian Military-Technical Cooperation."

stated that “Indian officials have reportedly indicated their unease over possible delays in Russia’s export of parts for its military hardware [and] suggested that, for this reason, India is pursuing a policy of self-sufficiency in arms production that will be based in part on acquiring licenses to produce Russian weaponry at home.”⁴⁷⁹ India was true to its word. Beginning in the late 1990s, larger Russian sales of aircraft and tanks all included a portion of the transferred equipment marked for domestic assembly under licensed production agreements.

Even though India has endeavored to produce several weapons systems domestically, as noted earlier in this chapter, the Indians have endured several debacles in fielding homegrown defense systems such as the Arjun MBT and Tejas LCA. The Arjun MBT’s production timeline was a particular black eye for New Delhi. By the time the Indian Army fielded the tank, New Delhi was already planning for a replacement.⁴⁸⁰ Despite these various fiascos, New Delhi has remained undeterred in its effort to create a self-reliant MIC, especially given the seemingly habitual problems with several imported Russian systems. Furthermore, Modi’s recent “Make in India” strategy represents the most serious initiative to date in pursuing this strategic objective. Joint ventures, conversely, have yielded some success; the BrahMos project with Russia serves as the best example. In comparison to other projects, the missile’s development has progressed smoothly. India has also recently sourced parts of the missile domestically that Russian companies used to produce, like its tracking system.⁴⁸¹ In March 2018, the Indians successfully launched the supersonic missile from a Su-30MKI fighter with an Indian-made seeker head.⁴⁸² India has also begun to develop an Indian-constructed warhead.⁴⁸³ India’s progress on BrahMos

⁴⁷⁹ “Russia and India Hold Arms, Trade Talks,” *Monitor* 3, no. 239 (December 23, 1997), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-and-india-hold-arms-trade-talks/>.

⁴⁸⁰ Vivek Raghuvanshi, “India’s Tank Plan Clouds Future of Arjun,” *Defense News*, June 27, 2015, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2015/06/27/india-s-tank-plan-clouds-future-of-arjun/>.

⁴⁸¹ N.C. Bipindra, “Russia First Casualty as India Takes Baby Steps on the Road to Self-Reliance,” *Economic Times*, April 14, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-moves-to-reduce-its-reliance-on-russias-defence-imports/articleshow/63757492.cms>.

⁴⁸² “India Successfully Flight Tests Supersonic Cruise Missile BrahMos,” *Economic Times*, March 22, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-successfully-flight-tests-supersonic-cruise-missile-brahmos/articleshow/63411447.cms>.

⁴⁸³ Bipindra, “Russia First Casualty as India Takes Baby Steps on the Road to Self-Reliance.”

development provides a point of positivity for the future of the state's MIC both domestically and collaboratively.

However, despite its tactical successes with joint ventures, India's efforts to construct its MIC through Modi's "Make in India" initiative continues to experience difficulties in achieving strategic goals. Namely, India's lofty objectives impair the state's ability to achieve them swiftly. Ultimately, Modi seeks to replicate China's rapid transformation from the world's largest arms importer in 2006 to the sixth largest arms exporter in 2011.⁴⁸⁴ While China's example is certainly admirable, the ability of India to reproduce similar results remains doubtful. As Arun Prakash—a retired senior Indian naval officer—observed, "Becoming a defense exporter is a noble aspiration but it will take a lot of doing...given the current state of our defense research and industrial base, it is not something that will happen overnight."⁴⁸⁵ Currently, India's efforts have failed to generate sufficient foreign direct investment to assist with growing its MIC, despite loosening several investment restrictions.⁴⁸⁶ Even India's reduced requirements inhibit growth, specifically, New Delhi's desire to maintain significant management control over joint ventures.⁴⁸⁷ Bureaucratic issues compound these issues as New Delhi deals with "a lack of requisite political push and follow-through, bureaucratic bottlenecks and longwinded procedures, commercial and technical squabbles" in its efforts to develop its MIC.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, despite possessing the desire to build a domestic arms industry, New Delhi has still not found the optimal methods to cultivate one currently and thus, for the near future, requires imports to provide the platforms it cannot produce indigenously. While such a fact bodes well for Russian vendors currently, India does not seem inclined to give up its self-reliant

⁴⁸⁴ Rama Lakshmi, "India is the World's Largest Arms Importer. It Aims to be a Big Weapons Dealer, too," *Washington Post*, November 16, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/india-is-the-worlds-largest-arms-importer-it-aims-to-be-a-big-weapons-dealer-too/2014/11/15/10839bc9-2627-4a41-a4d6-b376e0f860ea_story.html?utm_term=.c82b1f214559.

⁴⁸⁵ Lakshmi, "India is the World's Largest Arms Importer."

⁴⁸⁶ Rajat Pandit, "India Flounders in Attracting FDI in Defence Production, Gets Only Rs 1.17 Crore in 4 Years," *Economic Times*, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-flounders-in-attracting-fdi-in-defence-production-gets-only-rs-1-17-crore-in-4-years/articleshow/63215840.cms>.

⁴⁸⁷ Pandit, "India Flounders in Attracting FDI in Defence Production."

⁴⁸⁸ Pandit, "India Flounders in Attracting FDI in Defence Production."

ambitions. As such, the hourglass is flipped for Russia's continued period of large sales to India. The sand is running, only the amount of it remaining is unknown.

While India's domestic production capabilities might take a long time to build platforms that can compete with Russian equipment, external competition immediately threatens Russia's domination of India's arms import market. As Stephen Blank summarizes, "The trend that Russia now faces—of ever greater competition from other producers—will not be reversed...India will continue to diversify its defense imports."⁴⁸⁹ Unlike in China, where Beijing is constructing a highly capable domestic MIC that challenges Russia's market share, Western countries—such as the United States, France, and Israel—are the Russian's main competitors for Indian contracts. Multiple factors paint a pessimistic picture of Russia's ability to maintain its dominant claim of the India arms market. As mentioned previously, India has had a choice between vendors since the cancellation of arms embargos following its 1998 nuclear tests.⁴⁹⁰ Russia's ongoing technical problems with several of its imported platforms—namely MBTs, aircraft, submarines, and the *Admiral Gorshkov*—foment New Delhi's discontent.⁴⁹¹ Russia also lacks a competitive advantage over the more inventive and financially stable Western countries. With Russia's economy declining and innovative capacity waning, Western countries provide India a better source of potential technology transfers and defensive production indigenization, all of which are key factors for India's long-term strategic MIC goals.⁴⁹² Current Western sanctions only further impair Russia's MIC and ability to produce technologically advanced equipment.⁴⁹³ As such, the Indians certain have several motivations to look elsewhere for arms vendors.

⁴⁸⁹ Stephen J. Blank, "Indo-Russian Summit Highlights Emerging Trends in Asian International Relations," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 199 (November 6, 2013). <https://jamestown.org/program/indo-russian-summit-highlights-emerging-trends-in-asian-international-relations/#.VI8SXHtSKHg>.

⁴⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 81.

⁴⁹¹ Stephen J. Blank, "Indo-Russian Summit Highlights Emerging Trends in Asian International Relations," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 199 (November 6, 2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/indo-russian-summit-highlights-emerging-trends-in-asian-international-relations/#.VI8SXHtSKHg>.

⁴⁹² Blank, "Indo-Russian Summit Highlights Emerging Trends in Asian International Relations."

⁴⁹³ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia's Role as an Arms Exporter*, 25.

Geopolitical factors also stimulate India's desire to diversify its arms sales. While Russia's desire for suzerainty might shade its view of India and consider it a de facto tributary state, India does not reciprocate such a perspective. Neither does New Delhi feel that its relationship with Moscow is mutually exclusive. As Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes said in 2002 during a visit by General Michael Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "We are working together [with both], and I don't think there is any conflict of interest between our relations with the United States and our relations with Russia."⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, as Indian worry rises with China's continual economic growth and military expenditure increases, New Delhi will ultimately trust Washington more to balance China, not Russia, who depends on Beijing to join in its crusade against American hegemony. For India, the United States and its various allies certainly appear as more preferred partners.

Several facts serve as ominous warnings for Russia's future dominance of the Indian import market. Recently, several Russian joint ventures with India have met untimely demises. In 2017, after years of delays and continual negotiations, New Delhi pulled out of the MTA/II-214 joint venture.⁴⁹⁵ Additionally, after 11 years of talks, negotiations, and an initial \$295 million dollar initial investment, India officially ended its involvement in the FGFA/PAK-FA program in April 2018.⁴⁹⁶ To make matters worse for the Kremlin, India has also increased the number of arms contracts open to global competition, contests that Russia has lost more than it has won recently. For example, in 2011, the Indian Air Force ran a screener for a new medium fighter-attack platform. Russia's entry, the MiG-35, did not even make it past the first cut while the French Rafale

⁴⁹⁴ "New Challenges to Indian-Russian Defense Ties," *Monitor* 8, no. 59, March 25, 2002, <https://jamestown.org/program/new-challenges-to-indian-russian-defense-ties/>.

⁴⁹⁵ Franz-Stefan Gady, "India-Russia Aircraft Deal Terminated," *The Diplomat*, March 28, 2017 <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/india-russia-aircraft-deal-terminated/>; Simeon T. Wezeman, Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, and Pieter D. Wezeman, "Developments in Arms Transfers, 2013," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2014*, ed. Ian Anthony (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2014), 261.

⁴⁹⁶ Ajai Shukla, "\$8.63-billion Advanced Fighter Aircraft Project with Russia Put on Ice," *Business Standard*, April 20, 2018, http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/8-63-billion-advanced-fighter-aircraft-project-with-russia-put-on-ice-118042000029_1.html.

won.⁴⁹⁷ With discussions concerning the FGFA joint venture with Russia in their final death throes in the spring of 2018, the Indian Air Force moved quickly to seek a replacement. They issued a request for information to multiple potential MIC suitors who were able provide an advanced “medium multi-role combat aircraft” to include technological transfers and domestic production facilitation.⁴⁹⁸ While the process is in its initial stages, the fact that New Delhi did not approach Russia alone to field this request displays the loss of Moscow’s primacy in India’s eyes.

While denying Russia’s aggregate gains in terms of the monetary value and volume of sales to India from 2000 to 2017 is fallacious, Moscow’s percentage of the Indian arms market is shrinking as Figure 17 indicates. Multiple states threaten Russia’s market dominance in India. Of particular note, American arms deals with India are on the rise. While the United States exported practically nothing to India in terms of military equipment from 2005 to 2009, it commanded 12% of the Indian arms market from 2010 to 2014.⁴⁹⁹ The Indians have also begun to replace legacy Russian equipment with American platforms. For example, New Delhi purchased U.S. C-130 Heracles and C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft from 2008 to 2013 to supplant its IL-78 Midas platforms and swapped out its older Tu-142 Bears for P-8A Poseidons beginning in 2009.⁵⁰⁰ India also placed an order for AH-64 Apache Longbow attack helicopters with AGM-114 Hellfire anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) and CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters. The United States possesses many attractive qualities in terms of military-technical cooperation and India’s quest for a self-sufficient MIC. As Stephen Blank notes, “agreements with the U.S. will probably help [India] indigenize defense production to a much greater extent than

⁴⁹⁷ “IAF to Soon Finalise Multi-billion Dollar Aircraft Deal,” *Hindustan Times*, October 8, 2011, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/iaf-to-soon-finalise-multi-billion-dollar-aircraft-deal/story-Qv5QHclOXawfJU7XTTuoO.html>.

⁴⁹⁸ Vivek Raghuvanshi “India’s Air Force just started a \$19.5 billion fighter program — sort of,” *Defense News*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2018/04/09/indias-air-force-just-started-a-195-billion-fighter-program-sort-of/>.

⁴⁹⁹ S. Wezeman, Perlo-Freeman, and P. Wezeman, “Developments in Arms Transfers, 2014,” 416–417.

⁵⁰⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

Russia.”⁵⁰¹ Given both these qualitative and quantitative factors to assist with India’s long-term strategic goals, the United States represents a growing competitor to Russia’s dominance in the Indian arms import market.

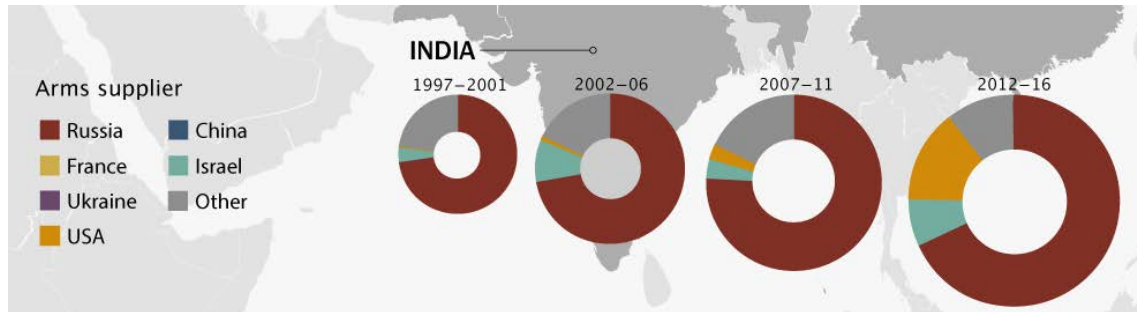


Figure 17. Market Share of Indian Arms Imports—1997 to 2016⁵⁰²

India has expanded purchases from other countries as well. To update its artillery units, India inked a deal to domestically assemble at least 100 South Korean K-9 Thunder self-propelled 155mm howitzers for domestic assembly in 2017 and 145 British BAE M-777 towed 155mm howitzers in 2016.⁵⁰³ Additionally, Israel serves a consistent source of high tech equipment such as UAVs, radars, and guided, munitions for the Indians.⁵⁰⁴ The French also recently infiltrated the India fighter aircraft market with a 2011 agreement to sell 49 Mirage-2000-5 fighters and another deal in 2017 to provide 36 Rafale aircraft.⁵⁰⁵ Furthermore, France sold a license to Indians in 2005 for them to build five *Scorpene* class

⁵⁰¹ Blank, “Indo-Russian Summit Highlights Emerging Trends in Asian International Relations.”

⁵⁰² Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics;” If the reader views this chart in black and white, the darker colored piece of the pie chart in all year groups is Russian sales.

⁵⁰³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”; India will domestically produce 120 of the M-777s. The other howitzers, and all the kits that India will assemble, originate from the United States.

⁵⁰⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

⁵⁰⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.”

submarines domestically at the Mazagon Dock Limited shipbuilding firm.⁵⁰⁶ Of note, France's military imports prior to these deals were mostly diesel engines for naval ships.⁵⁰⁷ Thus, it appears that Russia faces stiff competition in an increasingly crowded Indian arms market.

While it might appear that Russia faces near insurmountable odds in India against foreign competition, deals with Moscow still provide some attractive benefits. Russian arms are often less expensive than those of their Western competitors. Likewise, deals with the Kremlin generally come without the stipulations and lengthy approval-processes that arrangements with countries like the United States entail. As Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force Air Marshal S. B. Deo remarked in 2017, "When it comes to technology transfer, Russia really offers everything they have from the heart without any strings attached."⁵⁰⁸ As such, Russia maintains its competitiveness through its no-stipulations sales mentality in selling conventional weapon systems. Nevertheless, despite Russian arms remaining New Delhi's primary and frugal option, Putin should note that there are few restraints on India from seeking other states with whom to do business.

Strategic dilemmas serve as the last major issue that obfuscates future Russo-Indian relations. While New Delhi often scoffs at American exceptionalism, Indian leaders understand that Russia's desire to expand its own global power carries similar unilateral attitudes.⁵⁰⁹ Ultimately, Putin's goal of having India as an ally in his "putative post-American order" is highly inconsistent with India's goals on maintain relations with both Washington and Moscow.⁵¹⁰ Thus, there could come a point where India finds itself caught in between both countries without having the ability to ride the fence as New Delhi has

⁵⁰⁶ "Scorpene-class Submarine Kalvari, Built in Mazagon Dock, Inducted into Navy," *The Hindu*, December 14, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/narendra-modi-inducts-ins-kalvari-into-indian-navy/article21618713.ece>.

⁵⁰⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

⁵⁰⁸ "Russia Offers Defence Technology to India Without any Strings attached," *Economic Times*, October 23, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russia-offers-defence-technology-to-india-without-any-strings-attached/articleshow/61190714.cms>.

⁵⁰⁹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 154.

⁵¹⁰ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 154.

deftly done before. Russia's chances of being the winner in that binary decision are swiftly decreasing. Putin must continue to demonstrate that he not merely a convenient partner, but an indispensable ally.

However, Putin's inventory of incentives is limited in comparison with other Indian suitors, especially the United States. Lionel Martin penned a foreboding portent regarding Indo-Russian relations in 2004, a statement that requires repeating in full:

Good will, cooperation against terrorism, and arms sales reflect the legacies of the past, but do not necessarily build a basis for a strong relationship in the future, especially as India has increasing opportunities to go elsewhere to get the same benefits, often with higher quality. Indeed, as India's capacities for indigenous production or for attracting other exporters grow, Russia's role as supplier will diminish.⁵¹¹

The problems that Martin identified have not disappeared today. Just as Russia must compete with other vendors in the Indian arms market, so too must it fend off opponents in courting New Delhi.⁵¹² Compared with Russia, America's market, technological development, and global influence are alluring qualities, especially since India's partnership with Russia has yet to yield the economic success New Delhi desires.⁵¹³ Currently Russia has little to offer India besides energy exports, arms and nuclear energy program cooperation.⁵¹⁴ Other aspects of Indo-Russian trade remain minute in comparison with other states. In 2012, there was merely \$11 billion in trade between the two countries.⁵¹⁵ In 2016, 1.2% of India's trade was with Russia, while 1% of Russia's trade was with India.⁵¹⁶ In monetary terms, trade between the two states totaled a mere

⁵¹¹ Lionel Martin, "Russia and India: A Strong Partnership or Waning Friendship?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 129 (November 17, 2004), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-and-india-a-strong-partnership-or-waning-friendship/>.

⁵¹² Blank, "Putin's Passage to India: Where Did It Lead?."

⁵¹³ Blank, "Putin's Passage to India: Where Did It Lead?."

⁵¹⁴ Himani Pant, "India-Russia Economic and Energy Cooperation: The Way Ahead," Observer Research Foundation, June 7, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-russia-economic-and-energy-cooperation-the-way-ahead/>.

⁵¹⁵ Stephen J. Blank, "Indo-Russian Summit Highlights Emerging Trends in Asian International Relations," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 199 (November 6, 2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/indo-russian-summit-highlights-emerging-trends-in-asian-international-relations/#.VI8SXHtSKHg>.

⁵¹⁶ Abhijnan Rej, "The Four Faces of 21st Century Asian Geopolitics," Observer Research Foundation, May 11, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-four-faces-of-21st-century-asian-geopolitics/>.

\$7.38 billion as compared to \$114.8 billion between India and the United States, and \$70.7 billion between India and China.⁵¹⁷ Given this lack of economic connections, Russia lacks some of the pull that other countries possess.

Russia also damages its reputation with India through Moscow's recent cozying up to Pakistan. After a long period of minimal arms transactions between the two countries, Pakistan officially signed a deal in 2015 to purchase four Mi-35M Hind-E combat helicopters. While Moscow attempted to frame the transaction as assistance to Pakistani anti-drug smuggling efforts, New Delhi remained perturbed.⁵¹⁸ As Stephen Blank observes, "A rising India is not amused by the growing appearance of Russo-Pakistani defense deals or by Russia's continuing inability to help facilitate the economic dynamism that Modi wants to impart to India."⁵¹⁹ Russia's ongoing ties to China also created difficulties for Putin to manage. Chinese relations with Pakistan and enduring Sino-Indian strife over the Arunachal Pradesh make cooperation between the Beijing and New Delhi tenuous.⁵²⁰ As such, any indications of Russia enhancing relations with China without reciprocation to New Delhi will only serve to push the Indians away from Moscow and into Washington's orbit.⁵²¹ Bobo Lo phrased it best in stating, "Historical mistrust between Beijing and New Delhi tests Moscow's capacity to pursue a diversified strategy in Asia without prejudice to individual relationships."⁵²² Therefore, as Putin tries to use both China and India as partners in Putin's polycentric order, he must tread carefully lest he alienate one of his key Asian cohorts.⁵²³

⁵¹⁷ Rej, "The four faces of 21st century Asian geopolitics."; Pant, "India-Russia Economic and Energy Cooperation."

⁵¹⁸ Stephen J. Blank, "Arms Sales to Pakistan Kindle Indian Wrath," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 120 (July 2, 2014), <https://jamestown.org/program/arms-sales-to-pakistan-ignite-indian-wrath/>.

⁵¹⁹ Blank, "Putin's Passage to India: Where Did It Lead?."

⁵²⁰ Lo, *Russian and the New World Disorder*, 153–154.

⁵²¹ Unnikrishnan, "The Enduring Relevance of India-Russia Relations."

⁵²² Lo, *Russian and the New World Disorder*, 153.

⁵²³ Thomas W. Zarzecki, "Arming China or arming India: Future Russian Dilemmas," *Comparative Strategy* 18, no. 3 (1999): 272, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495939908403182>.

F. CONCLUSION—A POTENTIALLY POOR PROGNOSIS FOR PUTIN’S POLICY

In sum, India has, and currently remains, a large importer of Russian arms. Putin has garnered both economic and political benefits from his sale of military hardware to New Delhi. Economically, Indian purchases provided vital cash influxes to the Russian MIC during the early 2000s which were vital to sustaining those industries. Politically, arms sales to India has cemented the strategic relationship between Moscow and New Delhi. By fostering such a partnership, Putin has kept India on Russia’s side in multiple geopolitical situations and used India’s participation in Russian-led multilateral institutions to boost Russia’s image as a global power. Russian arms sales have also supported Russo-Indian bilateral military cooperation and New Delhi assuming a pro-Kremlin strategic position in the Central Asian states. Ultimately, Putin values these political benefits more than economic gains. He has used state funding to ensure Russia’s defense industry remains solvent rather than let increased arms sales to India do the economic heavy lifting. In terms of future Indo-Russian relations, however, several ongoing problems will continue to strain their partnership. Russia has successfully negotiated these obstacles so far, but current trends foreshadow a gradually growing rift between Moscow and New Delhi. Such an outlook also alludes to the proposition that Russo-Indian relations are actually based on a construct of convenience rather than ideological like-mindedness. Ultimately, while Russia has remained a long-standing Indian partner for decades, the longevity of the relationship does not guarantee its continued success.

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IV. THE BEAR IN THE DESERT—RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East serves as the third and final case study of this thesis. Unlike Asia, a region that boasts large and historic Russian clients like China and India, the Middle East lacks a sizable importer of Russia conventional military equipment in terms of equipment volume. However, in the study of military transfers, this region has risen in importance due to its recent increased market share of imports in the global arms trade. Of note, Middle Eastern arms imports rose 25% from 2005 to 2009 and by the same factor from 2010 to 2014.⁵²⁴ SIPRI’s most recent analysis in 2017, as Figure 18 portrays, indicates that this rising trend in imports continues currently.

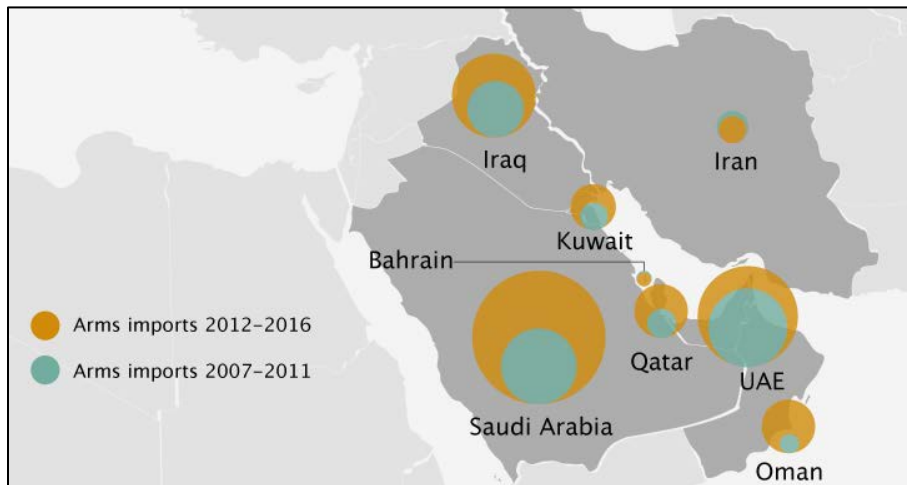


Figure 18. Size of Arabian Gulf Arms Imports—2007 to 2016⁵²⁵

Multiple factors contribute to the ongoing increase of arms imports in the Middle East. Politically, due to its plentiful energy resources, the region remains a battleground among multiple states for regional influence. Economically, most Middle Eastern countries

⁵²⁴ S. Wezeman, Perlo-Freeman, and P. Wezeman, “Developments in Arms Transfers, 2014,” 417.

⁵²⁵ Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics.”

enjoy a healthy budget surplus that nationalized oil companies bankroll.⁵²⁶ Militarily, continual ethnic, religious, and historical strife, most notably between Sunni and Shi'a entities, has motivated several Middle Eastern states to expand and modernize their armed forces. Based on continual regional friction, the Middle East boasts three of the top four arms importing states from 2013 to 2017—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE—as Figure 19 demonstrates.⁵²⁷ The confluence of these multiple factors creates a fertile environment for arms exporters, including Russia.

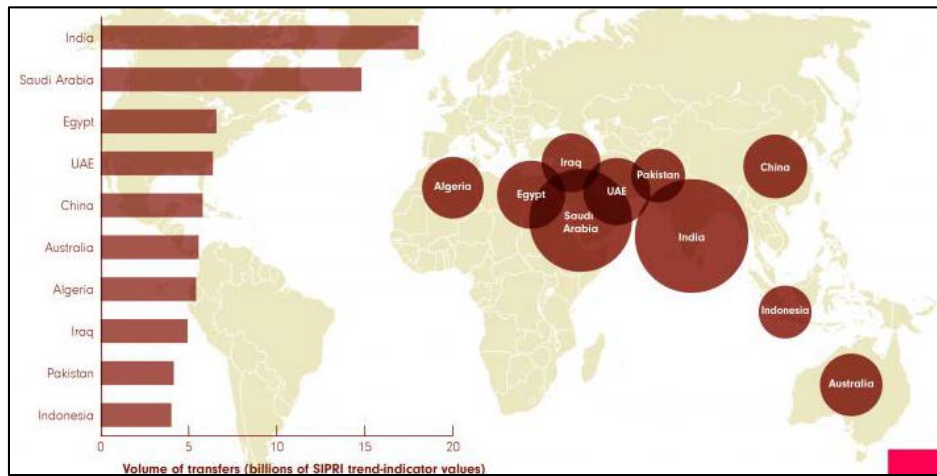


Figure 19. Global Top 10 Arms Importers—2012 to 2016.⁵²⁸

This chapter investigates Russian arms exports to five specific Middle Eastern countries—the UAE, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and Syria—and identifies the various benefits to Russia that arms sales provide. As Figure 20 shows, Russian arms exports comprise a different market share in each of these countries. These states are important because they are emerging and rapidly growing import markets—the UAE—battleground states between American and Russian imports—Egypt and Iraq—or longtime and consistent

⁵²⁶ Mitchell, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, 87.

⁵²⁷ While Saudi Arabia is also a substantial importer of conventional military equipment, SIPRI has not recorded the country importing a single piece of Russian equipment from 2000 to 2017.

⁵²⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “International Arms Transfers,” March 12, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending/international-arms-transfers>.

importers of Russian arms for the past three decades—Iran and Syria. As such, the Middle East is a case study of case studies.



Figure 20. Russia’s Share of Arms Exports to the Middle East, 2000–2016⁵²⁹

Overall, this chapter concludes that while Russia reaps many benefits from exporting arms to the Middle East, Putin predominantly uses arms sales in the region to obtain particular political benefits. Specifically, Putin seeks to gain influence with select states in the region, reassert Russia’s “great power” status, and support anti-Western policies.

A. RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—INFILTRATING A LUCRATIVE MARKET

For the past 20 years, the UAE has been a bull market for arms imports. While the UAE initially engaged in military modernization efforts to deter potential Iranian incursions, it now seeks to improve its power projection capabilities to conduct military operations overseas.⁵³⁰ Since 2010, the UAE has deployed military forces in support of

⁵²⁹ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter*, 17. This chart is in color. If read in grayscale, note that Saudi Arabia, Oman, Lebanon, Israel, Qatar, and Bahrain imported 0% of their arms purchases from Russia.

⁵³⁰ Kenneth Katzman, *The United Arab Emirates (UAE): Issues for U.S. Policy*, CRS Report No. RS21852, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21852.pdf>, 10–12.

multilateral operations in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.⁵³¹ The UAE's desire to continue its military modernization and develop greater power projection capabilities directly increases its need for technologically advanced arms imports. As such, it was the fourth largest arms importer in the world from 2001 to 2017; only India, China, and Saudi Arabia surpassed it.⁵³² Also during that time frame, the UAE imported military hardware from 23 countries, with the United States and France being the country's largest suppliers.⁵³³ Specifically, the United States provided 62.4% of the UAE's arms importers from 2012–2016 while France accounted for 11.8%; Russia's share, however, was a meager 2.7%.⁵³⁴

Even though the United States has long been the UAE's primary arms vendor, Russia has sought access to the UAE's arms import market. In 2000, Russia completed the delivery of 402 BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles.⁵³⁵ That same year, the Russians signed a \$734 million agreement to sell 50 SA-22 Greyhound SAM launcher systems and 1,000 9M311/SA-19 missiles to the UAE.⁵³⁶ As part of the deal, the Emiratis contributed \$100 million to assist Russia's research and development of the SA-22, which was not fully mission-capable at the time of its purchase.⁵³⁷ Sales remained minimal for the next 17 years. Only a purchase of 200 9M111/AT-4 anti-tank missiles in 2007 broke the long

⁵³¹ S. Wezeman, Perlo-Freeman, and P. Wezeman, "Developments in Arms Transfers, 2014," 417; On a personal note, this author advised a UAE Presidential Guard Battalion which deployed in support of operations in each of these countries.

⁵³² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of arms imports to the top 50 largest importers, 2000–2017," accessed March 17, 2018, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/toplist.php>.

⁵³³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports to UAE, 2000–2016," accessed December 12, 2017, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

⁵³⁴ Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, "The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics."

⁵³⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016," accessed November 20, 2017, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

⁵³⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.," "UAE to Receive Latest Russian Air Defense Weapons," *Kommersant*, June 30, 2006, <https://sputniknews.com/analysis/2006063050790408/>.

⁵³⁷ "UAE to Receive Latest Russian Air Defense Weapons," *Kommersant*.

silence in arms deals between the two countries.⁵³⁸ In February 2017, the UAE signed a letter of intent with Russia to purchase an undisclosed number of Su-35 Flanker-E fighters and 9M111/AT-4 anti-tank missiles.⁵³⁹ The total value of this arrangement was \$1.9 billion and included training and logistics support.⁵⁴⁰ This deal followed another tentative agreement between the two countries to “co-develop a new fifth generation fighter beginning in 2018.”⁵⁴¹

Despite these recent agreements, Russian sales do not challenge American dominance in the UAE’s arms market. Neither do these agreements make the UAE a large recipient of Russia’s total military exports. From 2012 to 2016, Russian transfers to the UAE represented only 0.54% of total Russian arms exports.⁵⁴² American sales to the UAE, conversely, were 8.72% of the United States’ total military exports, thereby making the UAE the second largest recipient of American arms during that time period.⁵⁴³ Nevertheless, Russia’s recent efforts in increasing its marketing campaign in the Middle East in order to challenge historic vendors like the United States and France indicate that it is confident that Russian arms can compete in the global arms market. Additionally, the technologically advanced type of equipment that Russia has offered to sell to the Emiratis in recent negotiations indicates that Russia is pushing aggressively to infiltrate the market.

Russian exports to the UAE have yielded several domestic economic benefits. The Emirati’s eagerness to procure the relatively untested, BMP-3 IFV, allowed, as one Russian

⁵³⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017,” accessed March 17, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

⁵³⁹ Andrei Akulov, “Russia’s Arms Sales to Middle East Countries Spike to Record-High Levels,” *Strategic Culture Foundation*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/11/18/russia-arms-sales-middle-east-countries-spike-record-high-levels.html>.

⁵⁴⁰ Anna Borshchevskaya. “The Tactical Side of Russia’ Arms Sales to the Middle East,” *Jamestown Foundation*, December 20, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/tactical-side-russias-arms-sales-middle-east/>.

⁵⁴¹ Dave Majumdar “Russia’s Most Lethal Fighter Jet Ever Is Heading to the Middle East,” *The National Interest*, February 21, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russias-most-lethal-fighter-ever-jet-heading-the-middle-east-19521>.

⁵⁴² Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics.”

⁵⁴³ Blanchfield, P. Wezeman and S. Wezeman, “The State of Major Arms Transfers in 8 Graphics.”

official stated, the Russian MIC to “resolve all the teething problems with the [it].”⁵⁴⁴ The UAE’s sizable state coffers were ideal to defray the research and development costs of new weapons systems. The UAE has already provided this type of support with the development and testing of the SA-22. The Gulf Coast country’s recent agreement to sponsor and co-develop an advanced fighter with the Russians reflects continued Emirati support for Russian research and development projects. The details of this arrangement remain unclear, however, and some experts doubt the UAE’s ability to produce a fifth-generation fighter.⁵⁴⁵ The most likely arrangement is that the UAE underwrites a portion of the costs for Russia’s development of such an aircraft in order to have greater influence on its design specifications. With India out as a co-sponsor of Russia’s last attempt at developing a modern fighter aircraft, the Emiratis’ deep pockets make them an enticing new partner.⁵⁴⁶ Additionally, the UAE could seek an arrangement similar to its SA-22 deal where the Emirates had sole import rights of the platform for a period of time. In a historical context, Russia’s relationship with a financial benefactor, such as China and India, was crucial to defraying costs to the Russian defense industry as it modernized under Putin in the early 2000s. This economic benefit still maintains value for the Russian MIC today, especially as it continues to deal with economic issues stemming from Western sanctions in the aftermath of Putin’s incursion into Ukraine.

In terms of international political benefits, increased arms sales to the UAE provided Russia expanding influence in the Middle East. For example, while the Emirates’ pledge to assist with the development of a fifth generation fighter provided potential Russia economic benefits in underwriting development costs, the UAE’s agreement also reflected its desire to promote its image as a rising regional power in the Middle East. Russia has been more than happy to oblige the UAE’s ambitions. While Russia does not hold the same geopolitical weight as the Soviet Union in terms of global influence, the UAE remains a small country with limited, yet rising, regional influence. Having an ally in Russia provides

⁵⁴⁴ Alexey Losev, “We Will Accept Any Rational and Sound Proposal of the Indian Side Concerning the BMP-2 Modernization,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 51, no. 1 (2016), <http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/1-2016/item4/article2/>.

⁵⁴⁵ Borshchevskaya, “The Tactical Side of Russia’s Arms Sales to the Middle East.”

⁵⁴⁶ Ajai Shukla, “\$8.63-billion Advanced Fighter Aircraft Project with Russia Put on Ice.”

the UAE potential leverage with Iran, its primary external security threat and a recent, albeit tenuous, Russian partner. Given that part of Putin's political end state is international recognition of Russia as a global great power, if he positions himself to serve as the mediator in potential Middle East conflicts, he increases his opportunity to build Russia's international reputation and achieve a critical foreign policy goal. Ultimately, as Russia seeks to gain influence in the Middle East, it needs partners; and the UAE is an ideal candidate.

Lastly, Russia's recent push to expand sales to the UAE creates potential opportunities for Putin to wedge himself between the UAE and the United States. Ongoing military technical cooperation serves as a tool to maintain positive relations between Russia and the Emirates. While it is unlikely that Russia will be able to break the UAE away from the American sphere of influence, Russia's use of arms sales provides a metaphorical beachhead from which Putin can advance his policy objectives in the future. Much like a basketball player attempts to box out a defender to receive a pass or catch a rebound, Putin is positioning himself wisely to exploit potential geopolitical opportunities.

B. RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO EGYPT—EXPLOITING A GAP

In addition to seeking entrance into newer arms markets like the UAE, Russian vendors have recently reengaged with a former arms customer—Egypt. In the 1950s, after Gamal Abdel Nasser's ascension to power, the rise of pan-Arab nationalism, and the Suez Crisis of 1956, Western powers lost significant influence in Egypt. The Soviet Union gladly filled that void and served as Egypt's strategic partner and benefactor until 1973, when President Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser, expelled the Soviet military presence, and reengaged with the West.⁵⁴⁷ Since that time, Egypt has primarily imported American arms.⁵⁴⁸ From 2000 to 2017, purchases of American products accounted for 48.5% of

⁵⁴⁷ David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Snub to U.S., Russia and Egypt Move toward Deal on Air Bases," *New York Times*, November 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/30/world/middleeast/russia-egypt-air-bases.html>.

⁵⁴⁸ Mark Bromley and Pieter D. Wezeman, "Polices on Exports of Arms to States Affected by the Arab Spring," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*, ed. Bates Gill (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 277; Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia's Role as an Arms Exporter*, 18.

Egyptian military imports; Russian transfers accounted for only 18.6%.⁵⁴⁹ However, the regime changes that occurred as part of the Arab Spring have shifted regional geopolitical dynamics. After a military coup deposed the Islamist government under President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, the United States and the European Union banned the sale of offensive military systems to Egypt.⁵⁵⁰

From 2000 to 2009, the Egyptian purchases of Russian equipment were relatively small: eight SA-15/Tor-M1 Gauntlet SAM systems with 200 accompanying 9M338 missiles, one SA-11/Buk-1M Gadfly SAM system with 100 accompanying 9M317 missiles, 600 SA-24 Grinch MANPADS, S-125 upgrades to 20 of its already-purchased SA-3 Goa SAM systems, 24 Mi-17 Hip transport helicopters, and two reconnaissance satellites.⁵⁵¹ Egyptian purchases of Russian arms from 2010 to 2013 were also diminutive and included only an upgrade of a previously purchased SA-11 to the SA-17/Buk-M2 Grizzly model in 2012.⁵⁵²

However, following the institution of limited Western arms embargo of offensive weapons systems on Egypt in 2013, Russian arms sales skyrocketed. In 2014, Egypt bought three S-300VM/SA-23 Gladiator SAM systems in 2014 packaged with 40 9M82M missiles and 150 9M83M missiles.⁵⁵³ The following year, Egypt engaged in an almost \$3 billion deal to purchase 52 Ka-52 combat helicopters complete with a 1,000 AT-9 and a 1,000 AT-16 anti-tank missiles, 50 MiG-29 Fulcrum multipurpose fighters with both 300 AA-11 Archer short range AAMs and 300 AA-12 Adder medium range AAMs, one Project-1241 *Tarantul*-class corvette with ten SS-N-22 Moskit anti-ship missiles, and one 59N6

⁵⁴⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports to Egypt, 2000–2017,” accessed March 17, 2018, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

⁵⁵⁰ S. Wezeman, Perlo-Freeman, and P. Wezeman, “Developments in Arms Transfers, 2014,” 412.

⁵⁵¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁵⁵² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁵⁵³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

Protivnik-GE air search radar.⁵⁵⁴ Egypt also signed a deal with Russia to obtain access to GLONASS, the Russian global satellite positioning system.⁵⁵⁵ The magnitude of these recent sales shows Russia's eagerness to fill any gaps in military procurement needs that may arise in Western-friendly Middle Eastern states.

The growing quantities of Egyptian arms imports from Russian have provided Moscow numerous economic benefits. While sales were slow in the early 2000s, the recent spike of purchases coincided perfectly with the adverse effects of Western sanctions on the Russian MIC. Seeing an opportunity, Russia capitalized on this turbulent period in order to further penetrate the Egyptian arms market, a task which Egypt's recent demand for military hardware simplified. In total, Egyptian arms imports increased by 215% between 2008 to 2012 and 2013 to 2017.⁵⁵⁶ As such, it is another lucrative opportunity for Russian vendors to exploit in the face of declining Western sales. From 2007 to 2010, Egypt purchased \$7.1 billion worth of American arms as opposed to a paltry \$300 million from Russia.⁵⁵⁷ However, from 2011 to 2014, Russian arms sales totaled \$3.6 billion, eclipsing the \$2 billion of contracts from the United States.⁵⁵⁸ Egypt's arms contracts with Russia since 2013 are approximately \$5.5 billion.⁵⁵⁹ While the Russian state armament program budget is still high in relation to Egyptian purchases, the long-term feasibility of maintaining such a level of state orders lies in doubt as the state armament program faces

⁵⁵⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁵⁵⁵ Andrei Akulov, "Russia, Egypt: Agreement to Allow Respective Air Forces to Use Each Other's Airspace and Bases," Strategic Culture Foundation, December 4, 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/12/04/russia-egypt-agreement-allow-respective-air-forces-use-each-others-airspace-bases.html>.

⁵⁵⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Asia and the Middle East Lead Rising Trend in Arms Imports, U.S. Exports Grow Significantly, Says SIPRI," March 12, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/news/press-release/2018/asia-and-middle-east-lead-rising-trend-arms-imports-us-exports-grow-significantly-says-sipri>.

⁵⁵⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Changing Patterns of Arms Imports in the Middle East and North Africa*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017), https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/160205_cordesman_changing_arms_race_MENA.pdf, 13; value is in 2016 USD.

⁵⁵⁸ Cordesman, *The Changing Patterns of Arms Imports in the Middle East and North Africa*, 13; Value is in 2016 USD.

⁵⁵⁹ Borshchevskaya, "The Tactical Side of Russia's Arms Sales to the Middle East."

reductions.⁵⁶⁰ Specifically, low oil prices impair the Kremlin's ability to finance its planned amount of domestic orders.⁵⁶¹ Therefore, Egypt represents a sales opportunity Russia needs to exploit, especially in the face of Western chagrin towards Cairo's more authoritarian polices and potential human rights abuses.

From Russian military-technical cooperation in Egypt, Putin has netted multiple international political benefits. Notably, an increase in Egyptian pro-Russian policies has followed the surge of Russian arms sales. Politically, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi publicly backed Bashar al-Assad's pro-Russian regime in Syria in November 2016.⁵⁶² Militarily, Egypt participated in "Defenders of Freedom," a joint airborne exercise with the Russian military in the Krasnodar region of the Caucasus in September 2017; both countries stated their intention to make the training operation a regularly scheduled event.⁵⁶³ Paired with other joint exercises in June 2015 and October 2016, this increase of bilateral military cooperation symbolized a growing relationship between the two countries.⁵⁶⁴ As Russian International Affairs Council policy expert Yuri Barmin observed, "A security-heavy agenda acts as a glue between Moscow and Cairo, not least due to the military and security background of the political elites of the two countries."⁵⁶⁵ Strategically, Egypt and Russia signed a preliminary agreement on November 28, 2017, to grant Russia access to Egyptian air bases and airspace.⁵⁶⁶ This arrangement would significantly increase Russia's ability to project power in not only the Middle East, but also

⁵⁶⁰ Cooper, *Russia's State Armament Programme to 2020*, 12.

⁵⁶¹ Harshaw, "Putin's Arms Bazaar is in a Serious Sales Slump."

⁵⁶² Oren Kessler, "Egypt Picks Sides in the Syrian War," *Foreign Affairs*, February 12, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2017-02-12/egypt-picks-sides-syrian-war>.

⁵⁶³ Akulov, "Russia, Egypt: Agreement to Allow Respective Air Forces to Use Each Other's Airspace and Bases."

⁵⁶⁴ Borshchevskaya, "The Tactical Side of Russia's Arms Sales to the Middle East."

⁵⁶⁵ Yuri Barmin, "Russia in the Middle East until 2024: From Hard Power to Sustainable Influence," *Jamestown Foundation*, March 8, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-middle-east-2024-hard-power-sustainable-influence/>.

⁵⁶⁶ "Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2644-r of 28.11.2017 'On the Signing of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt on the Procedure for the Use of Airspace and Aerodrome Infrastructure of the Russian Federation and the Arab Republic of Egypt,'" November 30, 2017, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201711300008?index=0>.

in North Africa and the Mediterranean.⁵⁶⁷ The confluence of these factors suggests that Russia's use of arms sales in the wake of the 2013 Western import bans has resulted in significant gains in Russia's influence and leverage in Cairo. As Russian foreign affairs analyst Vladimir Frolov summarizes, "[the] Russians will try to seize every opportunity where the U.S. is seen as an unreliable partner."⁵⁶⁸ Despite this apparent Egyptian sprint towards Moscow, Egypt is not completely in Putin's pocket. America's overall economic capacity and international influence still dwarfs that of Russia and Washington still has many carrots to entice Cairo should the White House choose to use them. Therefore, while Egypt has not completely retreated from the United States' orbit, Putin is striving to increase his own gravitational pull on the country's leadership.

C. RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO IRAQ—FILLING A VOID

For Russia, Iraq represents an open market needing a signature vendor. Prior to Operation DESERT STORM, Iraq was a historic client of the Soviet Union. However, in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 661 in August 1990, which embargoed Iraqi arms imports.⁵⁶⁹ Following the country's return to popular sovereignty in 2004 after a United States-led coalition deposed Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime, the UN lifted the arms embargo.⁵⁷⁰ Consequently, Iraq began importing arms again, primarily from the American government. The United States continued as Iraq's primary arms source as it simultaneously assisted in the country's infrastructure reconstruction and conducted counter-insurgency operations. Following the conclusion of major military operations and the withdrawal of the majority of its combat troops, the United States has similarly decreased its arms sales to Iraq. Given Iraq's recent internal conflict versus Islamic State forces and its lack of a national military-industrial

⁵⁶⁷ Akulov, "Russia, Egypt: Agreement to Allow Respective Air Forces to Use Each Other's Airspace and Bases."

⁵⁶⁸ Matthew Bodner, "Sales Target: Russia Sets Its Sights on the Middle East," *Defense News*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/dubai-air-show/2017/11/09/sales-target-russia-sets-its-sights-on-the-middle-east/>.

⁵⁶⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "UN Arms Embargo on Iraq," accessed December 13, 2017, https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/iraq.

⁵⁷⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "UN Arms Embargo on Iraq."

complex, the country has a pressing need for arms imports, particularly to replace combat losses and captured equipment.

Russia has responded swiftly to Iraq's recent needs. Prior to 2012, Russia sold Iraq only 51 Mi-8MT/Mi-17 Hip transport helicopters.⁵⁷¹ Since then, Iraq has engaged in a major purchase of Russian offensive weapon systems each year until 2017. In 2012, Iraq bought 24 SA-22 Greyhound mobile air defense systems, 500 SA-14 man-portable SAMs, and 19 Mi-28N Havoc combat helicopters.⁵⁷² The next year, Russian sales included 2,000 AT-6 anti-tank missiles, 600 SA-19 SAMs, and 24 Mi-35M Hind attack helicopters.⁵⁷³ Displeased with slow American deliveries to replenish its combat losses and "frustrated with the pace and depth of the U.S.-led military campaign against the militants," Iraq turned to Russia for "emergency supplies of weapons that could be deployed immediately" against Islamic State forces.⁵⁷⁴ Russia swiftly sold Iraq five Su-25 Frogfoot attack aircraft, most likely used, and 10 TOS-1 multiple rocket launchers in 2014; the Iraqi military received both orders within weeks of their purchase.⁵⁷⁵ Iraq also purchased 300 AT-14 *Kornet* Anti-tank missiles and three armed versions of the Mi-17 Hip transport helicopter that year.⁵⁷⁶ Iraq purchased a total of four more Su-25s in 2015 and 2016.⁵⁷⁷ Iraq's purchase of 73 T-90 main battle tanks (MBTs) in 2016 rounded out these other acquisitions.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

⁵⁷² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

⁵⁷³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017.,"; Andrey Frolov, "Russian Arms Trade in 2016," *Moscow Defense Brief* 57, no. 1 (2017), 6.

⁵⁷⁴ Saif Hameed, "Russia Boosts Ties with Iraq in Challenge to U.S. Influence," Reuters, February 11, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-russia/russia-boosts-ties-with-iraq-in-challenge-to-u-s-influence-idUSKCN0VK288>; Pieter D. Wezeman, "Arms Transfers and the Use of Force against the Islamic State," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2015*, ed. Ian Davis (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 52.

⁵⁷⁵ Wezeman, "Arms Transfers and the Use of Force against the Islamic State," 52.

⁵⁷⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

⁵⁷⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁵⁷⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017."

Russian arms exports to Iraq generated sizable sales contracts and economic benefits for the Russian MIC. While the Kremlin only sold \$300 million worth of equipment to Iraq from 2007 to 2010, sales jumped to \$7.9 billion from 2011 to 2014.⁵⁷⁹ Although American arms sales to Iraq also increased during this timeframe, from \$3.9 billion from 2007 to 2010 to \$8.3 billion from 2011 to 2014, respectively, Russia rapidly closed the delta in exports between the two countries.⁵⁸⁰ Another positive aspect for Russian transfers to Iraq is that the petro-state is a seller's market. Given the recent high demand for arms due to an ongoing campaign against Islamic State militants and the corresponding drop in American military aid, Iraq wanted cheap arms quickly. As such, Russia was able to offload mostly older and secondhand equipment to Iraq. Furthermore, while the Iraqi Army received an abundance of Western equipment during its reconstruction in the mid-2000s, it still possesses both significant quantities of Russian armaments and tacit knowledge of how those systems operate.⁵⁸¹ Such factors, paired with Russia's ability to deliver arms quickly, make Russia an ideal vendor from which Iraq can purchase military equipment. Likewise, given the loss of other local customers like the Qaddafi regime in Libya, Iraq represents a new opportunity on which Russia could capitalize.⁵⁸²

Besides serving as a source of monetary gains, Russian arms sales to Iraq had other economic benefits. Notably, Iraqi use of Russian equipment in military operations against the Islamic State (IS) served as a de facto television commercial for Russian arms. Recent reporting in the *Moscow Defense Brief* stated that as of mid-2016, Iraqi combat helicopters had completed more than 140,000 sorties against IS forces, killed more than 11,000 IS fighters, and destroyed more than 1,800 vehicles.⁵⁸³ Even though the Iraqi military uses

⁵⁷⁹ Cordesman, *The Changing Patterns of Arms Imports in the Middle East and North Africa*, 13; Value is in 2016 USD.

⁵⁸⁰ Cordesman, *The Changing Patterns of Arms Imports in the Middle East and North Africa*, 13; Value is in 2016 USD.

⁵⁸¹ David Donald, "Iraq Looks East and West for Attack Helicopters," *Jane's 360*, May 5, 2014, <http://www.janes.com/article/37401/iraq-looks-east-and-west-for-attack-helicopters>.

⁵⁸² Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia's Role as an Arms Exporter*, 18.

⁵⁸³ Andrey Frolov, "Mi Helicopters: Use in Recent Conflicts and Export Potential," *Moscow Defense Brief* 56, no. 6 (2016), 9.

predominantly Western equipment, it is highly likely that Russian-built helicopters did see some action against IS combatants, especially since Iraq had requested emergency arms shipments. Therefore, because of Iraq's conflict with IS forces, Russia gained first-hand knowledge of how its equipment fared in combat situations. More importantly, at least for the Russian's arms industry's short term goals, the reported reliability of Russian aircraft attracted the interest of both existing and new Russia arms importers, including Ghana, Tunisia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.⁵⁸⁴ Such battlefield successes are a welcome sight for the Russian MIC seeking to rectify the international reputation of its equipment. The broadcast of earlier combat failures, like those during the First Chechen War where the images of T-80 hulks burning on the roadside raced across television screens, had created previous adverse effects to the competitiveness of certain weapon systems.⁵⁸⁵

Beyond the reopening of a historic market for Russian arms exports, sales to Iraq have also provided foreign policy-related goals. Regaining access to a previous Soviet-dominated market served as a redemptive victory for the Kremlin, while Russia's ability to provide emergency relief to Iraq has discredited the United States and cultivated influence in a previous Soviet ally. The reputation of Russia as a reliable arms supplier also increased among Iraqi leaders. Previously, Iraqi military leaders believed that the Soviets had sold them inferior equipment during the 1980s which contributed to the Iraqi military's abysmal performance during the 1991 Gulf War and the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.⁵⁸⁶ However, the recent combat performance of Russian equipment has changed the minds of Iraqi leaders and created a potential long-time customer for Russian arms sales. In Putin's zero-sum political perspective, such a Russian gain and de facto American loss are major political victories.

⁵⁸⁴ Frolov, "Mi Helicopters: Use in Recent Conflicts and Export Potential," 10.

⁵⁸⁵ "What Future for Russian Arms Exports?," *Strategic Comments* 3, no. 7 (September 1997): 2.

⁵⁸⁶ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade in East Asia," 71.

D. RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO IRAN—BUILDING A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Over the past few centuries, the Russo-Persian relationship has remained perpetually tenuous. During the 1800s, the Russian Empire seized a sizable amount of the Caucasus from the Persian Empire.⁵⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Soviet Union attempted to annex various portions of Iran following both World War I and World War II, even briefly occupying the northern part of the country during the later conflict until the other Allied powers forced them to withdraw.⁵⁸⁸ After the 1979 Iranian Revolution deposed the Shah and his pro-American government, the Soviet Union was quick to try to replace the United States as Iran's superpower benefactor. However, as James Clay Moltz observes, "the Iranians had other ideas."⁵⁸⁹ Despite the Kremlin's multiple attempts to curry favor with Khomeini, his regime habitually rejected Soviet overtures and instead harshly oppressed the Soviet-favored Iranian Tudeh Communist Party.⁵⁹⁰ Given Tehran's frequent spurning of Soviet propositions, the USSR vacillated between supporting either Iran or Iraq during their 1980–1988 war.⁵⁹¹

Despite this tumultuous history of relations, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation has been Iran's largest supplier of weapons since 1979.⁵⁹² Furthermore, while Russo-Persian relations have had turbulent periods, Putin has succeeded in fostering a positive relationship with the Islamic Republic. His repeal of the 1995 Gore-Chernomyrdin Pact, a Russo-American agreement that limited conventional arms exports to Iran, ameliorated Moscow's diminished reputation with Tehran.⁵⁹³ Russian and Iran also share

⁵⁸⁷ Mahan Abedin, "Tensions in Russia-Iran Ties," *Middle East Monitor*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170403-tensions-in-russia-iran-ties/>.

⁵⁸⁸ James Clay Moltz and David B. Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988," in *Soviet Strategy in the Middle East*, ed. George W. Breslauer (Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 125.

⁵⁸⁹ Moltz and Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War," 125.

⁵⁹⁰ Moltz and Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War," 126, 145.

⁵⁹¹ Moltz and Ross, "The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War," 126–142.

⁵⁹² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports to Iran, 1950–2016," accessed December 14, 2017, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

⁵⁹³ Alla Kassianova, *Russian Weapons Sales to Iran: Why They Are Unlikely to Stop*, PONARS Policy Memo No. 427, (Washington, DC: PONARS Eurasia, 2006), <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/russian-weapons-sales-iran-why-they-are-unlikely-stop>, 2.

several regional interests, such as restraining the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, developing formal laws regarding the Caspian Sea, and improving cooperation in the energy sector.⁵⁹⁴ Such unifying policy goals has paved the way for greater cooperation throughout Putin's 17 years of rule.

In terms of arms transfers, Russian sales to Iran during the first years of the 2000s were varied. From 2001 to 2003, Iran purchased 20 Mi-8MT/Mi-17 Hip armed transport helicopters and six Su-25 Frogfoot attack aircraft with 40 AA-8 short range air-to-air missiles.⁵⁹⁵ Sales in 2005 included two 1L119 Nebo air search radars and 29 TorM-1/SA-15 Gauntlet mobile SAM systems with 750 9M338 missiles in order to defend Iran's nuclear power plants.⁵⁹⁶ While the Kremlin hoped to engage in larger sales to Iran, a 2001 report indicating Russia wanted to sell \$7 billion in arms, no significant transactions occurred.⁵⁹⁷

UN sanctions temporarily stymied Russian arms sales to Iran in March 2007. After Iran failed to disclose significant information regarding its uranium enrichment and ballistic missile programs, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1747 in March 2007, which advised all states to "exercise vigilance and restraint" in exporting conventional arms to the Islamic Republic.⁵⁹⁸ In June 2010, the UN expanded its restrictions to a full embargo of arms shipments to Iran.⁵⁹⁹ However, following Iran's agreement to sign the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 and accept UN inspections of Iran's nuclear program, the UN lifted the blanket arms embargo, choosing instead to approve each arms sale on a case-by-case basis.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁴ Abedin, "Tensions in Russia-Iran Ties."

⁵⁹⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁵⁹⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁵⁹⁷ Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Bear Hugs," *World Press Review*, June 2001.

⁵⁹⁸ "UN Arms Embargo on Iran," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, accessed December 14, 2017, https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/iran.

⁵⁹⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "UN Arms Embargo on Iran."

⁶⁰⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "UN Arms Embargo on Iran."

During the UN arms embargo, Russia also sold Iran two Kasta-2E2 air search radars and two 1L222 Avtobaza-M air search systems.⁶⁰¹ Following Iran's signature of the JCPOA in 2015 and the UN's subsequent reduction of arms import restrictions, Iran was able to purchase four formidable S-300PMU-1/SA-20A Gargoyle SAM systems complete with two 64N6/Big Bird air search radars and 150 48N6 missiles.⁶⁰² The Iranians originally purchased these systems in 2007, but Russia cancelled the first deal after the UN imposed the March 2007 arms embargo.⁶⁰³ However, for Iran, the delay provided an advantage of lateness since they purchased a more advanced version of the SA-20 than the original 2007 deal offered.⁶⁰⁴

While not as frequent as sales to other countries, arms exports to Iran still provided Russia several benefits. Economically, Iran presented a potentially cornered market for Russian arms sales. Since 2000, Russia has provided 59.7% of Iran's arms imports.⁶⁰⁵ Without many international allies, given its less-than-sterling reputation as a sponsor of the terrorist organization Hezbollah and potential nuclear proliferator, Iran has had few other vendors from which to purchase military equipment. China represented a growing competitor for Russia in the Iranian market over the past two decades, but Russia maintained a competitive edge on the technological quality of its merchandise.⁶⁰⁶ China's share of Iranian arms imports since 2000 was only 23.6%, half that of Russia's.⁶⁰⁷ Also, since Iran stares across the Persian Gulf at Saudi Arabia and the UAE—both Sunni-majority states and the third- and fourth-largest arms importers in the world—the modernization of its aging military equipment could become a rising priority.

⁶⁰¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁶⁰² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁶⁰³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016."

⁶⁰⁴ Vasiliy Kashin, "Arms Trade with Iran Following the Nuclear Deal," *Moscow Defense Brief* 48, no. 4 (2015): 10–12.

⁶⁰⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports to Iran, 2000–2017," accessed March 18, 2018, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

⁶⁰⁶ Blank and Levitsky, "Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade," 65–66.

⁶⁰⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "TIV of Arms Exports to Iran, 2000–2017."

While the resumption of arms sales to Iran provided another market for Russian exports and extra revenue for its military-industrial complex, the main benefit they delivered was political. Due to a common anti-Western world view, Iran serves as a partner with Russia against the American-led international order.⁶⁰⁸ The Shi'a Islamic Republic also acts as a regional balance of power against the multitude of pro-American Sunni Gulf Coast countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE.⁶⁰⁹ As Iran's main arms supplier, Russia is able to leverage its sales for influence in Tehran. Thus, Russia maintains the relationship between the two like-minded countries to counterbalance America's regional presence in the Middle East.

Strategically, Iran also offers several benefits to Russia. On a micro scale, the Islamic Republic granted periodic use of Hamadan Airfield to Russian aircraft supporting operations in Syria in August 2016.⁶¹⁰ There was some drama related to Russia's use of the airfield, specifically because Russia leaked photos of Russian aircraft at the airfield while Tehran wanted to keep the arrangement secret.⁶¹¹ Such a brash act resulted in Tehran's expulsion of all Russian aircraft from the base.⁶¹² However, Tehran and Moscow subsequently employed sufficient diplomatic deftness to avoid any long-term rifts in their relationship. As such, Iran signaled in November 2016 that it would allow Russian use of the airfield if required.⁶¹³ As Mehdi Sanaei, Iran's Ambassador to Russia, stated in March 2017 regarding the airfield situation, "Iran-Russia cooperation on actions in the Middle East continues, and we don't have a serious conflict here."⁶¹⁴ On a more macro scale, Iran

⁶⁰⁸ Abedin, "Tensions in Russia-Iran Ties."

⁶⁰⁹ Stephen J. Blank, "The Foundations of Russian Policy in the Middle East," *Jamestown Foundation*, October 5, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/foundations-russian-policy-middle-east/>.

⁶¹⁰ Borshchevskaya, "The Tactical Side of Russia's Arms Sales to the Middle East."

⁶¹¹ Anne Barnard and Andrew E. Kramer, "Iran Revokes Russia's Use of Air Base, Saying Moscow 'Betrayed Trust,'" *New York Times*, August 22, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/23/world/middleeast/iran-russia-syria.html>.

⁶¹² Barnard and Kramer, "Iran Revokes Russia's Use of Air Base, Saying Moscow 'Betrayed Trust.'"

⁶¹³ Allen Cone, "Russia Gets Permission to Use Iran's Hamadan Air Base for Syria Airstrikes," *United Press International*, November 30, 2016, https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/11/30/Russia-gets-permission-to-use-Irans-Hamadan-air-base-for-Syria-airstrikes/8251480520159/.

⁶¹⁴ "Iran, Russia Not Divided Over Use of Hamadan Airbase," *Tehran Times*, March 15, 2017, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/411964/Iran-Russia-not-divided-over-use-of-Hamadan-airbase-envoy>.

is a state with similar geopolitical interests that de facto secures Russia's southern borders from regional discord and Islamic fundamentalism.⁶¹⁵ Therefore, the confluence of both short-term and long-term benefits offers Russia an incentive to continue fostering positive relations between the two countries. Arms sales remains a primary method to maintain that linkage.

E. RUSSIAN ARMS SALES TO SYRIA—SUPPORTING A STRATEGIC ALLY

Syria is a historic Russian partner and has maintained positive relations with the either the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation since 1956.⁶¹⁶ As such, the Russo-Syrian partnership has been the longest continuous Russian alliance in the Middle East, and Putin greatly values his relationship with Syrian President Assad. As Dmitry Gorenburg, a Russian expert for the Center of Naval Analyses, remarks, “Syria is kind of it in the Middle East for Russia.”⁶¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, Russia and the Soviet Union before it have dominated the Syria arms import market since 1955.⁶¹⁸ Syria was also Russia's top arms importer in the region in 2009–2013, eclipsing even Egypt, a much larger country.⁶¹⁹ However, the outbreak of a civil war within Syria as a part of the Arab Spring created problems for Russian arms exporters. After the Assad regime began to attack peaceful anti-government protestors, the European Union (EU) imposed sanctions and an arms embargo on Syria on May 9, 2011.⁶²⁰ On August 24, 2011, the UN Security Council convened and discussed

⁶¹⁵ Kassianova, *Russian Weapons Sales to Iran*, 4.

⁶¹⁶ John Robson, “Syria Hasn’t Changed, but the World has,” *Toronto Sun*, February 10, 2012, <http://torontosun.com/2012/02/10/syria-hasnt-changed-but-the-world-has/wcm/e0a3af3e-1128-4353-a2e0-b5f0ac966781>.

⁶¹⁷ David M. Herszenhorn, “For Syria, Reliant of Russia for Weapons and Food, Old Bonds Run Deep,” *New York Times*, February 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/world/middleeast/for-russia-and-syria-bonds-are-old-and-deep.html>.

⁶¹⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “TIV of Arms Exports to Syria, 1950–2016,” accessed December 13, 2017, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_values.php.

⁶¹⁹ Simeon T. Wezeman, Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, and Pieter D. Wezeman, “Developments in Arms Transfers, 2013,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2014*, ed. Ian Anthony (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2014), 262.

⁶²⁰ Pieter D. Wezeman and Noel Kelly, “Multilateral Arms Embargos,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*, ed. Bates Gill (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 434.

enacting similar restraints on the Assad regime, but Russia blocked all draft proposals.⁶²¹ Furthermore, when four European UN member states recommended a new UNSC resolution to merely threaten sanctions, both China and Russia vetoed it, “stressing the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states.”⁶²² Eventually, Russia yielded to international pressure and halted its arms exports to Syria in 2013.

Russia engaged in several arms deals with the Assad regime before the civil war. From 2002 to 2006, Russia exported 1,500 AT-14 anti-missiles to Syria.⁶²³ Russia also sold 200 SA-18 Grouse MANPADS in 2005.⁶²⁴ In 2006, Russian sales to Syria included 36 SA-22 Greyhound SAM systems with 700 9M311/SA-19 missiles.⁶²⁵ Syria signed several more arms deals in 2007. Specifically, Syria purchased eight Buk-M2/SA-17 Grizzly SAM systems with 160 9M317 missiles; 12 updated S-125 SAM systems; two K-300 Bastion-P coastal defense systems with 72 SS-N-26 anti-ship missiles; and 12 MiG-29M2 Fulcrum-E two-seat fighter aircraft.⁶²⁶ From 2008 to 2010, Syria bought munitions for its recently purchased MiG-29s—50 AA-12 air-air-missiles, 87 AS-17 anti-ship missiles, and 100 KAB-500 guided bombs—in addition to 200 SA-24 portable SAMs.⁶²⁷

Russian arms exports to Syria have yielded Putin the greatest benefits compared to any other country in the Middle East. Economically, Syrian orders from 2007–2013 surpassed \$5.1 billion.⁶²⁸ Also, through both Russia’s use of new military technology while aiding the Assad regime and a robust online marketing campaign of combat footage, “Syria

⁶²¹ P. Wezeman and Kelly, “Multilateral Arms Embargos,” 434.

⁶²² P. Wezeman and Kelly, “Multilateral arms embargos,” 435.

⁶²³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁶²⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁶²⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁶²⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁶²⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2016.”

⁶²⁸ Cordesman, *The Changing Patterns of Arms Imports in the Middle East and North Africa*, 13; Value is in 2016 USD.

[has] become a department store window displaying the latest in Russian weapons systems offered for sale to other countries.”⁶²⁹ As Putin stated, “You can’t miss this opportunity [in Syria] to strengthen our position in the global arms market.”⁶³⁰ Overall, Russia’s demonstrations of its military technology in the Syria civil war have contributed to an increase in global demand for Russian military equipment and increased profits for Russia’s MIC.⁶³¹ Additionally, arms sales to Syria provided Russia leverage to obtain lucrative deals in Syria’s natural resources. For example, in December 2014, Russian energy conglomerate Soyuzneftegas agreed to a \$90 million deal with Syria for oil exploration and production in an 845 square mile area off the Syrian coast.⁶³² Thus, arms sales created economic benefits beyond just profits for the Russian MIC.

In terms of international political benefits, Russian military exports solidified the political ties between Moscow and Damascus. Given that Syria represents Russia’s primary foothold in the Middle East, Putin understood that keeping a pro-Russian regime in power was vital to maintaining a key ally in the region and protecting Russian national interests.⁶³³ Furthermore, by keeping Assad in power, Putin has essentially thumbed his nose at the West. Continually dismayed at American exceptionalism showcased through events like the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Putin’s actions “serve to counter what Moscow perceives as irresponsible U.S. interventionism and the perceived U.S. desire for global domination.”⁶³⁴ In his zero sum view of international relations, Putin’s success in keeping Assad in power is in turn Washington’s failure. Putin also used arms sales to Syria to influence other countries in the region. Of note, he decided to cancel an order of SA-22 SAM systems to

⁶²⁹ Akulov, “Russia’s Arms Sales to Middle East Countries Spike to Record-High Levels.”

⁶³⁰ Harshaw, “Putin’s Arms Bazaar is in a Serious Sales Slump.”

⁶³¹ Mansur Mirovalev, “How Russia’s Military Campaign in Syria is Helping Moscow Market its Weapons,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-russia-weapons-20161118-story.html>.

⁶³² Jonathan Saul, “Russia Steps up Military Lifeline to Syria’s Assad,” Reuters, January 17, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-russia-arms/exclusive-russia-steps-up-military-lifeline-to-syrias-assad-sources-idUSBREA0G0MN20140117>.

⁶³³ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 71.

⁶³⁴ Andres C. Campo, “Politics, Not Profit: Russian Arms Sales to Syria aren’t about the Money,” accessed May 13, 2018, <http://www.andrescalacampo.com/politics-not-profit-russian-arms-sales-to-syria-arent-about-the-money/>.

Syria in 2016 in order to improve his relationship with Israel after the Israelis castigated Russia for earlier arms trades to the Assad regime.⁶³⁵ Therefore, arms sales to Syria provided Russia influence not only with Assad, but also with other states in the region.

The influence that Putin has acquired in the Assad regime has cascaded into multiple other benefits. Strategically, Syria provides a vital warm-weather port for the Russian navy: Tartus, Russia's only military base on foreign soil outside the territory of a former Soviet republic.⁶³⁶ The port can currently host 11 vessels at a time, including nuclear-powered vessels.⁶³⁷ To signify Russia's long-term presence in the region, Putin recently submitted a draft proposal to the Russian Duma to extend Russia's lease on the port until 2092.⁶³⁸ Based on its location and capabilities, Tartus is a strategically important facility for the Russian Navy. Unlike its other warm-water ports, Tartus provides access to the open waters of the Mediterranean Sea, and, due to amiable relations with Egypt, access to the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal. More importantly, a renewed Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean presents extra variables for the United States and NATO to consider.⁶³⁹ Due to this bevy of benefits, arms sales to Syria have had a significantly positive effect on Russia's overall strategic flexibility.

Militarily, Russia used the Syrian civil war as a testing ground for its new equipment. In October 2015, Russia used ships from the Caspian Sea Flotilla to fire 26

⁶³⁵ Nikolay Kozhanov, "Arms Exports Add to Russia's Tools of Influence in Middle East," July 20, 2016, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/arms-exports-add-russia-s-tools-influence-middle-east>; Stephen J. Blank, "Despite Arms Sales Accord with Israel, Russia Sells Anti-Ship Missiles to Syria," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7, no. 194 (October 27, 2010), <https://jamestown.org/program/despite-arms-sales-accord-with-israel-russia-sells-anti-ship-missiles-to-syria/>.

⁶³⁶ Mark Bromley and Pieter D. Wezeman, "Policies on Exports of Arms to States Affected by the Arab Spring," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*, ed. Bates Gill (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 276.

⁶³⁷ Michael Peck, "How Russia Is Turning Syria into a Major Naval Base for Nuclear Warships (and Israel Is Worried)," *The National Interest*, March 18, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/how-russia-turning-syria-major-naval-base-nuclear-warships-19813>.

⁶³⁸ Susan McFarland, "Putin Asks Lawmakers to Keep Russian Navy in Syria until 2092," United Press International, December 13, 2017, https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/12/13/Putin-asks-lawmakers-to-keep-Russia-navy-in-Syria-until-2092/6061513180306/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=4.

⁶³⁹ Keith Johnson, "Putin's Mediterranean Power Play in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, October 2, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/02/putins-mediterranean-power-play-in-syria-navy-tartus-fleet/>; Barmin, "Russia in the Middle East until 2024: From Hard Power to Sustainable Influence."

Kaliber cruise missiles at Syrian targets in order to both evaluate and showcase its technology.⁶⁴⁰ Additionally, Russian airstrikes in Syria provided the Russian Air Force “a trove of data about the upgraded fighter’s reliability and the effectiveness of the MiG-29SMT’s avionics suite” and “combat capabilities.”⁶⁴¹ Furthermore, the Russian military, especially its pilots, gained significant experience while conducting operations against the Islamic State and Syrian rebels.⁶⁴² While similarly armed peer competitors to truly challenge the Russian military in Syria did not exist, the pragmatic value of using Syria as a testing range remained.⁶⁴³

F. ANALYSIS—PROFITABLE BENEFITS OR POLITICAL GAINS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

Arms sales to the Middle East have yielded multiple political, strategic, military, and economic benefits to Russia. In terms of international political benefits, arms sales have allowed Russian to establish or reinforce its regional partnerships, often at the expense of the United States. Given that arms sales “are a means of directly [affecting] another state’s ability to deter and defend itself,” they have provided Russia significant leverage over its customers, especially Iraq and Syria.⁶⁴⁴ Likewise, Russia’s recent sales to Iran signaled Russia’s commitment to Tehran and the preservation of the two countries’ burgeoning partnership. Russian arms sales to the UAE and Egypt displayed Russia’s desire to infiltrate arms markets in search of potential political allies. As such, arms sales have allowed Russia to cement strategic partnerships in order to gain regional influence in the Middle East. Strategically, Russia has secured key basing rights on the Mediterranean coast for its naval and air forces. Militarily, arms sales provided Russia data on the performance of its weapons systems in both Iraq and Syria. Such information is vital to

⁶⁴⁰ Borshchevskaya, “The Tactical Side of Russia’s Arms Sales to the Middle East.”

⁶⁴¹ Dave Majumdar, “Russia’s Mig-29SMT May Soon Be Getting Some New Weapons,” *The National Interest*, December 7, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russias-mig-29smt-may-soon-be-getting-some-new-weapons-23548>.

⁶⁴² Borshchevskaya, “The Tactical Side of Russia’s Arms Sales to the Middle East.”

⁶⁴³ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter*, 18.

⁶⁴⁴ Blank and Levitsky, “Geostrategic Aims of the Russian Arms Trade,” 70.

future technological refinement and modification of Russian military equipment and contributes directly to Russian competitiveness on the global arms market.

In terms of domestic economic benefits, arms exports have provided needed cash influxes into Russia's MIC. While state orders swelled from 2011 to 2014 in response to Russia's lackluster performance during its 2008 invasion of Georgia and Putin's decree to modernize the Russian military, recent Western economic sanctions for Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine have truncated government orders.⁶⁴⁵ Falling oil prices have compounded Russian state budget problems.⁶⁴⁶ Also, sanctions have had a negative effective on the Russian MIC. Specifically, several Western countries have terminated exports of dual-use electronics and machine tools to Russia, what Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin called "the two Achilles Heels" of the Russian defense industry.⁶⁴⁷ In order to combat sanctions-related problems, the Kremlin has instituted a domestic industry substitution plan, but this course of action requires increased funding.⁶⁴⁸ As this argument concludes logically, in order for the Russian MIC to keep production costs down through economies of scale, they need a new source of orders. As Figures 21 and 22 show, Russia's recent increased sales to Middle Eastern countries have helped fill the financial gap that a reduced Russia military budget created.

⁶⁴⁵ Sam Perlo-Freeman, Catalina Perdomo, Elisabeth Sköns, and Petter Stålenheim, "Military Expenditure," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2009*, ed. Bates Gill (Oxford U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2009), 194–195; Sam Perlo-Freeman and Simeon T. Wezeman, "Military Spending in Europe in the Wake of the Ukraine Crisis," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2015*, ed. Ian Davis (Oxford U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 88.

⁶⁴⁶ Perlo-Freeman and Wezeman, "Military Spending in Europe," 88.

⁶⁴⁷ Cooper, *Russia's State Armament Programme to 2020*, 37–38.

⁶⁴⁸ Borshchevskaya, "The Tactical Side of Russia's Arms Sales to the Middle East."

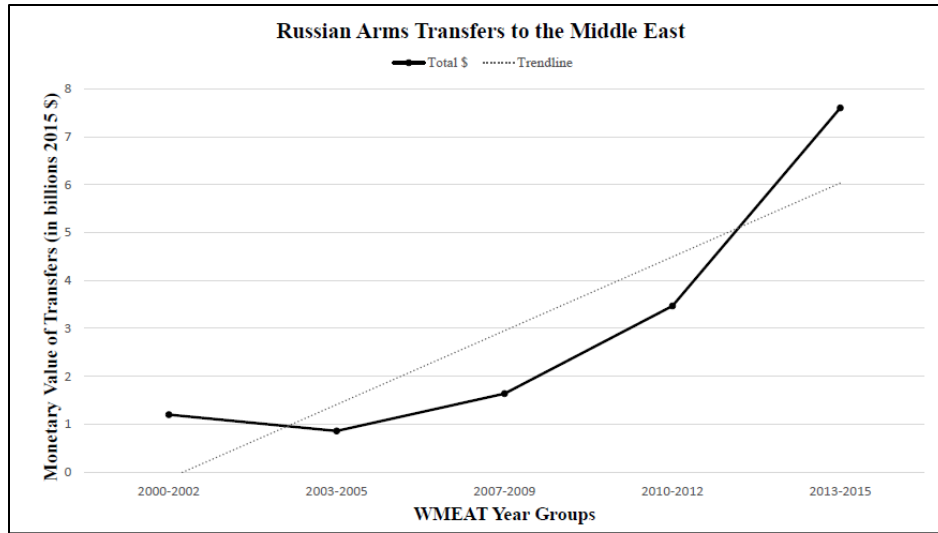


Figure 21. Russian Arms Transfers to the Middle East by Monetary Value⁶⁴⁹

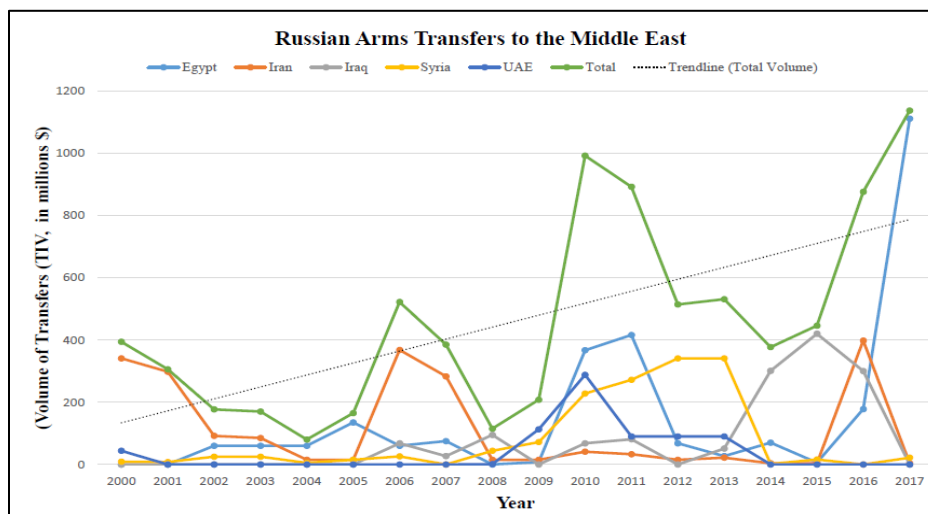


Figure 22. Russian Arms Transfers to the Middle East by Volume⁶⁵⁰

As sanctions hit the Russian economy hard after Putin’s decision to annex Crimea and invade Ukraine in 2014, exports to Middle Eastern countries have displayed a noticeable increase. This evidence might lend credence to the proposed primacy of

⁶⁴⁹ “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” United States Department of State; author’s calculations and graph.

⁶⁵⁰ “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; author’s calculations and graph.

economic motives behind arms sales to the region. However, when compared to the Russian procurement budget, as Figure 23 depicts, arms exports display a similar rise vice the inverse correlation that would indicate a potential motivation behind sales.

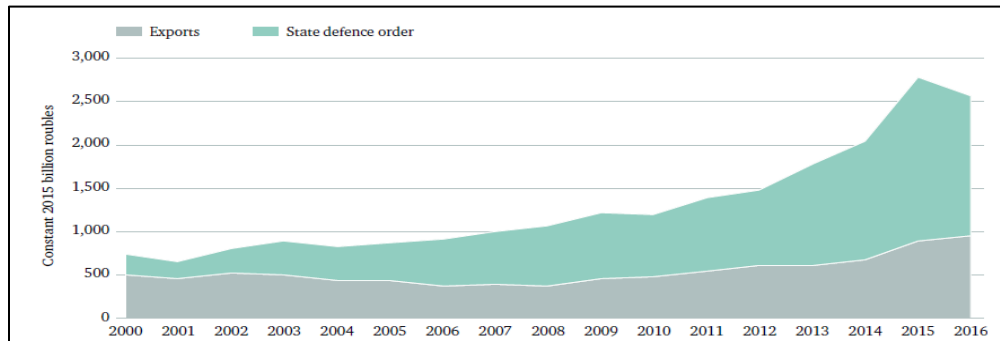


Figure 23. Value of Russia’s Arms Exports and State Defense Order⁶⁵¹

Thus, when comparing the magnitude of the two sets of benefits, the international political gains of arms sales to Middle Eastern countries are the most important to Putin vis-à-vis the domestic economic benefits. Putin has used the Middle East as a battleground for influence, with military-technical cooperation as one of his primary instruments. Since rising to power in 2000, he has defended his strategic partner in the region—Syria—reengaged with old allies—Egypt and Iraq—maintained a previous tenuous relationship with a potential geopolitical partner—Iran—and elevated relations with a rising regional power—the UAE. In Putin’s zero-sum outlook of international relations, Russia’s rising influence comes at the expense of historical Western power brokers, specifically the United States. Russian arms sales to the Middle East have directly supported achieving each of these objectives and they have cemented ties with both long-standing regimes in the UAE, Syria, and Iran and recently elected regimes in Egypt and Iraq. As such, Putin’s efforts have provided him new partners and increased regional influence.

Furthermore, the leverage in the Middle East that arms sales provides Putin has the potential for him to become a regional power broker. Given that Russian sells arms not

⁶⁵¹ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia’s Role as an Arms Exporter*, 24.

only to Sunni-majority countries like Syria, Egypt, and the UAE, but also Shi'a majority countries like Iran and Iraq, Putin is positioning himself assume hegemony in Middle Eastern affairs, a task that once belonged to the United States. However, the long-term prognosis for this outcome remains unclear. The Soviet Union tried several times to straddle the fence in various conflicts in the Middle East with poor results. While the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s was one such example of the Soviets attempting play both sides in a conflict, the Kremlin's actions in the 1977–1978 Ogaden War serves as a another reference. Seeking to capitalize on a socialist revolution in Ethiopia in order to give the United States—Ethiopia's previous benefactor—a political black eye, the Russians began providing military assistance to Addis Ababa in the mid-1970s.⁶⁵² However, such behavior infuriated USSR's ally Somalia, a long-time Ethiopian enemy. The Soviets, thinking that they could control the two regional rivals, told the Ethiopians that they could leave their eastern border loosely defended; but the Soviets miscalculated.⁶⁵³ The Somalis swiftly secured American assistance, eliminating their need for Soviet aid, and then invaded the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia in July 1977.⁶⁵⁴ While the combination of Soviet military equipment, advisors, and a large ground force of Cubans assisted the Ethiopians in repulsing the Somali advance by 1978, the Soviets overestimation of their ability to manage the situation discredited themselves.⁶⁵⁵ Thus, for Putin, while his current spate of political “opportunism” appears to foreshadow success, Russia actually assuming a hegemonic status will require greater diplomatic nuance.⁶⁵⁶ Without it, Russia will merely rotate between allies without obtaining far-reaching and long-lasting regional influence.

⁶⁵² Don Oberdorfer, “The Superpowers and the Ogaden War,” *Washington Post*, March 5, 1978, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/03/05/the-superpowers-and-the-ogaden-war/00f60ef2-01b4-4cd3-8c5f-e545df388def/?utm_term=.f77a43670c88.

⁶⁵³ Oberdorfer, “The Superpowers and the Ogaden War.”

⁶⁵⁴ Oberdorfer, “The Superpowers and the Ogaden War.”

⁶⁵⁵ Oberdorfer, “The Superpowers and the Ogaden War.”

⁶⁵⁶ Moltz and Ross, “The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988,” 145.

G. CONCLUSION—A POSITIVE PROGNOSIS FOR PUTIN’S POLICY

Overall, Putin’s current policy in the Middle East is succeeding. While some scholars brand him a mere tactician and not a strategist, he is actually both.⁶⁵⁷ Not only has he seized initiative in the Middle East, but he also has a clear end state in mind—a polycentric world where Russia has renewed geopolitical strength to balance the United States. Furthermore, many of Russia’s tactical victories in improving relations with Middle Eastern countries have come at the expense of Western influence, specifically America’s. While some of these victories, like the Western embargo of Egypt, were not part of a master plan on Putin’s part, his actions display a deft “opportunistic” touch.⁶⁵⁸ It was Putin who flew into Syria in December 2017, declaring “Mission Accomplished” in regard to the war versus the Islamic State.⁶⁵⁹ As Matthew Spence, the former Deputy Secretary of Defense for Middle Eastern Policy remarked, “power abhors a vacuum.”⁶⁶⁰ Putin fully understands the logic behind Spence’s statement. He observed the Obama Administration beating a slow retreat from playing the region’s “policeman.”⁶⁶¹ He then saw the Trump Administration’s recent rash of incoherent policy, such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, effectively destroying America’s ability to mediate Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.⁶⁶² As such, he has been able to exploit the void of American leadership and insert Russia back into a position of influence in order to, as Vladimir Frolov states, “cut the [the United States] down to size.”⁶⁶³ Putin will continue to capitalize on Western weaknesses during his ongoing campaign to foster a polycentric world and restore Russia’s reputation to that of a great power. Given the local demand that exists in the region, arms sales will remain one of Putin’s key tools to sustain and increase Russian influence in the

⁶⁵⁷ Blank, “The Foundations of Russian Policy in the Middle East.”

⁶⁵⁸ Bodner, “Sales Target: Russia Sets Its Sights on the Middle East.”

⁶⁵⁹ Andrew Osborn, “Putin, in Syria, Says Mission Accomplished, Orders Partial Russian Pull-Out,” Reuters, December 11, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-putin/putin-in-syria-says-mission-accomplished-orders-partial-russian-pull-out-idUSKBN1E50X1>.

⁶⁶⁰ Kirkpatrick, “In Snub to U.S., Russia and Egypt Move toward Deal on Air Bases.”

⁶⁶¹ Barmin, “Russia in the Middle East until 2024: From Hard Power to Sustainable Influence.”

⁶⁶² Barmin, “Russia in the Middle East until 2024: From Hard Power to Sustainable Influence.”

⁶⁶³ Bodner, “Sales Target: Russia Sets Its Sights on the Middle East.”

Middle East. As mentioned earlier, the long-term success of Putin's plan will require additional diplomatic maneuvering, but his current efforts are laying the foundation for positive future outcomes.

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V. CONCLUSION

Throughout the previous three regional case studies, this thesis has investigated the two-fold question of how and why President Putin has conducted arms sales to selected countries throughout his 17 years of de facto rule. The purpose of this final chapter is to summarize the comparative findings, briefly analyze them holistically, offer a prognosis for Putin's overall arms sales strategy, and make recommendations for U.S. policy makers.

When analyzing arms sales to China, the evidence shows that while Putin initially sought profits from his arms deals to Beijing, political benefits were the primary motivations behind these continued sales. China's large import market provided vital revenue to the Russian MIC in the early 2000s, when domestic military spending was low. However, China's improvements to its own defense industry decreased Beijing's demand for arms imports. Additionally, China's chronic reverse engineering of Russian platforms perturbed Moscow. Despite these problems, Russia has recently engaged in sales of its most advanced platforms to China. Due to his continued isolation from the West following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Putin required geopolitical partners for his efforts at balancing, and China's rising economic and military strength made Beijing an attractive choice. While Russia's recent, and lucrative, sales to China might appear to foreshadow a rebirth of Sino-Russian military technical cooperation, multiple problems are likely to stymie sales of similar magnitude in the future. China possesses the greater leverage in the relationship as its economy grows while Russia's stagnates.

Russian arms sales to India have gradually increased in the aggregate during Putin's 17 years of rule. Unlike China, India has been unable to improve its MIC at a rapid rate and thus its demand for foreign arms has remained high. India's purchases of Russian military hardware have provided several economic benefits to Russia's MIC, but Putin has valued political benefits from sales to India more than New Delhi's money. Arms sales to India increased nearly simultaneously with Russia's state military procurement budget. In terms of political benefits, Russian arms exports to India have solidified the strategic partnership between Moscow and New Delhi. By fostering such a relationship, Putin has created another valuable non-Western partner to provide him with political support on

geopolitical issues and a democratic state—the largest in the world—to participate in Russian-led geopolitical institutions, thus giving them greater legitimacy. India’s membership in those organizations, in the eyes of Moscow, have increased Russia’s global influence and image as a great power. Despite ongoing sales to New Delhi, recent changes in Indian policy, like Modi’s “Make in India” initiative point to a likely future reduction in importing Russian arms. Furthermore, competition from other arms Western vendors—like France and the United States—threaten Russian dominance of the Indian market. Therefore, while Russian arms exports to India might maintain their current level, Moscow’s long-term ability to sustain such sales is questionable.

In the Middle East, Putin has sought to increase his influence at expense of the United States. Moscow has correctly identified that multiple geopolitical tensions and conflicts in the region have created a fertile arms import market, one which Russia can exploit. While there have been some lucrative sales to Middle Eastern countries, especially after 2009, Putin has valued the political benefits of these deals more than the monetary gains they have provided. Putin has deftly maneuvered in the region to rebuild Russian influence in countries like Egypt and Iraq while also fostering relations with the United Arab Emirates. In addition, he has sought to reengage with Iran and protect his partner Syria in a continued quest to construct a polycentric world order. Although sales to the Middle East have not yielded the same quantity of sales as to other Russian clients, recent sales portend an overall increase of exports to this region.

Taken as individual cases, Russian aggregate arms sales to the China, India, and the Middle East all demonstrate the potency of political benefits over economic gains in motivating Putin’s export strategy; but, what does a holistic analysis display? The evidence in Figures 24 and 25 both corroborate previous claims. Russian arms sales spiked after 2009, just as Putin was increasing the state military procurement budget as Figure 26 reiterates. Thus, both in individual cases studies and in aggregate, quantitative evidence supports the qualitative argument that Putin valued political gains more that monetary benefits for the Russian MIC in his pursuit of new arms sales contracts.

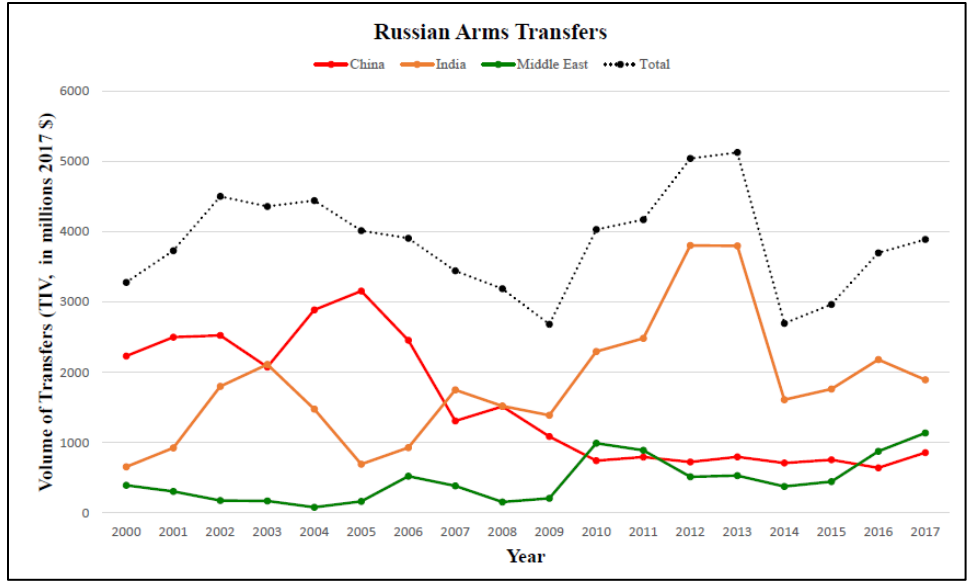


Figure 24. Russian Arms Transfers to China, India, and the Middle East by Volume⁶⁶⁴

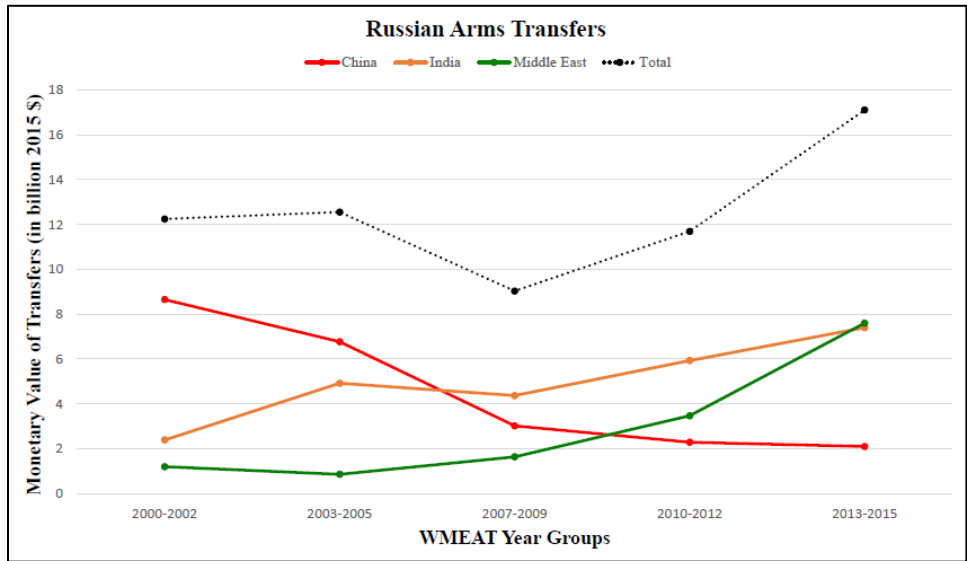


Figure 25. Russian Arms Transfers to China, India, and the Middle East by Monetary Value⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁴ “Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2000 to 2017,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; author’s calculations and graph.

⁶⁶⁵ “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” United States Department of State; author’s calculations and graph.

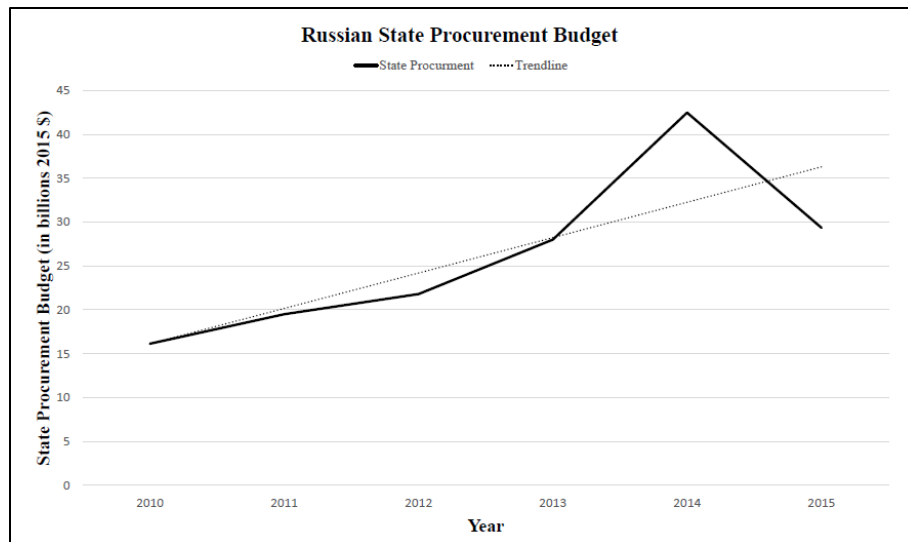


Figure 26. Russian State Procurement Budget—2010 to 2015⁶⁶⁶

In addition to discussing the motivations behind arms sales, the thesis has also sought to ascertain whether Putin’s arms export strategy will continue to work. For China, Russia’s ability to exert leverage over Beijing through arms sales has dramatically decreased throughout Putin’s reign. As mentioned earlier, Russia is simply running out of equipment that is attractive to China.⁶⁶⁷ India’s MIC development is following China’s example, albeit not at the same speed. But New Delhi has set its course, and the clock is ticking on Russia’s continued ability to sell the Indians large quantities of military hardware. For China and India, Putin will need to use different methods in order to retain the influence in and leverage over those countries. If Moscow’s historic clients continue to reduce their demand for Russian arms, Putin will need to shift to other markets to ply his wares to new potential buyers in order to attract possible geopolitical partners. The Middle East is one example. It is there that Putin has the most potential to reap future political benefits through arms sales as regional powers modernize their militaries due to rising national security concerns. This thesis did not investigate Russian arms sales to Africa, Central America, or South America. The study of Russian sales to those regions warrants future research.

⁶⁶⁶ “Useful Figures,” Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies; author’s graph.

⁶⁶⁷ Harshaw, “Putin’s Arms Bazaar is in a Serious Sales Slump.”

Beyond these shifting market factors, other, more systemic problems allude to negative outcomes for Russia's arms export strategy. While Russia's current military technology is of high quality, the defense industry's ability to improve is lacking. Over the past decade, Russian has actually had to import multiple dual-use technologies, such as advanced electronics, in building its most modern systems.⁶⁶⁸ While Putin has increased research and development funding recently, the Russian defense industry's innovative capacity still pales in comparison to other vendor states.⁶⁶⁹ Demographic issues also contribute to the Russian MIC's difficulty in increasing domestic innovation. As Richard Connolly and Cecilie Sendstad wrote in a 2016 Chatham House report, "ageing [sic] physical capital, an ageing [sic] workforce, and inadequate linkages between higher education and defense-industrial firms [all] suppress modernization."⁶⁷⁰ With a mostly Soviet-trained labor force and ineffective recruiting measures to attract younger talent, the Russian MIC appears ill-suited to modernize into an innovative institution.

Structural factors contribute significantly to the Russian defense industry's lack of an innovative capability necessary to its future competitiveness and success. As this thesis has previously mentioned, Putin has centralized the Russia MIC into large conglomerates in order to improve his control over them, while reducing inefficient squabbling between different defense industries. Putin's hyper-centralization of the MIC has not only provided him greater control of its activities, but also a method to reward loyal subordinates and maintain the strength of his administration. Russian scholar Anna Ledeneva defines this practice as a *sistema*, in which the "role and importance of personal contacts [that] is linked to Putin's control, or micromanagement, but also to the grip of patrimonial rule and traditional forms of governance."⁶⁷¹ Ultimately, the variety of reforms Putin has executed has not only increased his power over the formal institutions of power, but also allowed

⁶⁶⁸ Stephanie G. Neuman, "Power, Influence, and Hierarchy: Defense Industries in a Unipolar World," in *The Modern Defense Industry: Political, Economic, and Technological Issues*, ed. Richard A. Bitzinger (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009), 75.

⁶⁶⁹ Useful Figures," Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies.

⁶⁷⁰ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia's Role as an Arms Exporter*, 25.

⁶⁷¹ Alena V. Ledeneva, "Russia's Practical Norms and Informal Governance: The Origins of Endemic Corruption," *Social Research* 80, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 1136.

him to create an informal network of an “inner circle,” “useful friends,” “core contacts,” and “mediated contacts.”⁶⁷² The preponderance of these individuals are from the *siloviki*, the name for the network of former security service officers from the KGB or FSB that form Putin’s coterie; others are Putin’s associates from his St. Petersburg days.⁶⁷³ For example, as *Los Angeles Times* reporter Mansur Mirovalev notes, “The Russian military-industrial complex is centered on Rostec, a mammoth state conglomerate that includes dozens of subsidiaries and is headed by Sergei Chemezov, a former engineer who worked in East Germany in the 1980s and befriended Putin, a KGB officer at the time.”⁶⁷⁴ In Putin’s neo-patrimonial system, each of these officials collects a form of “rent,” whether it be monetary or influence-based. The Russian MIC is no exception to this practice of “feeding.”⁶⁷⁵ As Stephen Blank estimated in 2016, 20% to 40% of the defense budget disappeared due to corrupt practices.⁶⁷⁶ Therefore, structural issues with Russia’s defense industry curtail its ability to develop a robust innovative capability, even with recent research and development budget increases and jointly funded projects.

Russia’s overall economic situation could also interfere with Putin’s ability to wield arms sales as a foreign policy tool. On the surface, Russia’s economy appears to have such a foundation in its export surplus, substantial gold and foreign currency reserves, and a budding trade relationship—especially in energy products—with China.⁶⁷⁷ However, due to the poor investment climate that Putin’s nationalization of industry, authoritarian regime, and current EU and United States economic sanctions have created, foreign money is not flowing into the country; instead, it is flowing out.⁶⁷⁸ Since 2014, Russia has lost more than

⁶⁷² Ledeneva, “Russia’s Practical Norms and Informal Governance,” 1145.

⁶⁷³ Andrew E. Kramer and David M. Herszenhorn, “Midas Touch in St. Petersburg: Friends of Putin Glow Brightly,” *The New York Times*, March 1, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/02/world/europe/ties-to-vladimir-putin-generate-fabulous-wealth-for-a-select-few-in-russia.html>.

⁶⁷⁴ Mirovalev, “How Russia’s Military Campaign in Syria is Helping Moscow Market its Weapons.”

⁶⁷⁵ Ledeneva, “Russia’s Practical Norms and Informal Governance,” 1140–1141.

⁶⁷⁶ Blank, “Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries,” 408.

⁶⁷⁷ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 224.

⁶⁷⁸ Sergei M. Guriev, “Political Origins and Implications of the Economic Crisis,” in *Putin’s Russia: How it Rose, How it is Maintained, and How it Might End*, ed. Leon Aron (Washington, D.C., American Enterprise Institute, 2015), 18.

\$200 billion in capital flight.⁶⁷⁹ The recent decline of the ruble has also caused Russia to start expending its cash reserves to prevent a monetary crisis similar to the catastrophe that occurred in 1998.⁶⁸⁰ Based on Russia's dependence on energy exports, one prolonged oil price depression could sink the entire economy, if the investment climate remains stagnant.⁶⁸¹ Without significant reforms, Putin will fail to maintain the economic foundation needed to pursue his foreign policy agenda. Should these economic trends continue, it is possible that Putin will need to shift his arms export strategy to obtaining profits rather than political gains.

In addition to developmental problems within the Russian defense industry, Putin's over-ambitious search for geopolitical partners has created ongoing problems in his pursuit of a multipolar world. As the evidence in this thesis has displayed, Putin has habitually tried to insert himself into the role of geopolitical balancer in multiple regions. In Asia, Putin supports China and Pakistan, but also India and Vietnam. In the Middle East, he is also developing partnerships with Iraq and the UAE in addition to their regional rival, Iran. As mentioned in this thesis's introduction, Bobo Lo once called Putin's arms export strategy "à tous azimuts," a French saying meaning "in all directions," in his search for profits.⁶⁸² Lo is partly right. Putin *is* searching in all directions for arms contracts; but, his strategy is multi-vectored because he is searching for geopolitical *partners* everywhere, not profits. However, such an instrumentalist policy will prevent Putin from developing anything except partnerships of convenience.

In terms of policy recommendations, the United States should seek to sustain, and, if necessary, strengthen sanctions against Russia in order to prevent further irredentist actions and Putin's continued meddling in such events like U.S. and other NATO-member elections. Given that arms sales remain one of Putin's key foreign policy tools—in addition to energy exports, nuclear power assistance, and space program cooperation—seeking to reduce the effectiveness of the Russian defense industry will impair Putin's ability to obtain

⁶⁷⁹ Guriev, "Political Origins and Implications of the Economic Crisis," 18.

⁶⁸⁰ Guriev, "Political Origins and Implications of the Economic Crisis," 18.

⁶⁸¹ Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, 86–87.

⁶⁸² Lo, *Russia's Eastern Direction*, 21.

his desired policy objectives.⁶⁸³ Sanctions have already had negative effects on Russia's MIC. The embargo of exporting various dual-use technologies and sub-systems have caused Putin to scramble into setting up an import-substitution strategy to compensate for lost foreign products.⁶⁸⁴ However, the long-term efficacy of such a plan remains questionable.⁶⁸⁵ As Richard Bitzinger, an expert analyst in military-industrial complexes, observes, "most domestic defence arms programmes have simply become 'self-licking ice cream cones,' project demanding ongoing government support simply to keep arms-producers in business...autarky has become a high price to pay for, well, further autarky."⁶⁸⁶ The United States should, therefore, seek out more countries to join in the Western coalition sanctioning Russia, in order to increase pressure on Moscow to change its meddlesome behavior. This economic squeeze is a long-game play, though, and will require substantial resolve. As such, U.S. policy makers must understand the need for patience and deft diplomacy with allies to maintain sanctions on Russia.

It is unlikely that Russian arms sales will disappear in the near future, but their strategic pull is weakening. Influence and leverage, as arms export analyst Andrew Pierre notes, are indeed transitory phenomena.⁶⁸⁷ While Putin has successfully integrated arms sales into his strategy of fostering polycentrism, challenging American hegemony, and re-establishing Russia's presence globally, his strategic end state of returning Russia to its former world power status lacks international attractiveness. Furthermore, his focus on short-term political gains in lieu of a more farsighted plan to achieve his strategic end state has handicapped his use of arms exports.⁶⁸⁸ In fact, arms sales have merely supported multiple pragmatic relationships, not an anti-Western coalition, as states seek to maximize their benefits at the expense of Russia. As Lo observes, Putin's policy "is frequently held hostage to short-term political and economic expediency...and the over-personalization of

⁶⁸³ Menon, "The Limits of Chinese-Russian Partnership," 123.

⁶⁸⁴ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 405.

⁶⁸⁵ Connolly and Sendstad, *Russia's Role as an Arms Exporter*, 25.

⁶⁸⁶ Bitzinger, "Asian Arms Industries and Impact on Military Capabilities," 308–309.

⁶⁸⁷ Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, 16.

⁶⁸⁸ Blank, "Russian Arms Sales and Defense Industries," 408.

decision-making.”⁶⁸⁹ Thus, while Russia’s recent dispersal of arms might strengthen the ability of other states to either reduce the power of the West or promote regional balancing, it does not mean that Russia’s overall strength and influence rise reciprocally. For as long as Putin’s strategy remains myopic as he seeks partners in a quixotic quest to renew Russia’s grandeur and global influence, states will continue to gain reverse leverage on Russia. Recently imprisoned anti-Putin activist Aleksey Navalny phrased it best in his ominous foreshowing of Putin’s future:

This regime is doomed, I’ve said it and I will repeat it, but of course, I will not mention specific dates: in the eleventh year I said that they had a year and a half left, and I will not say anything more. Doom is obvious, because [Putin’s regime] is [a] feudal power, in the post-industrial world unthinkable [sic]; because it prevents us from developing, inventing, building, growing, teaching and healing.⁶⁹⁰

While Navalny’s words might err on the dramatic, there is truth within them. Although Putin might still view arms sales as an important item inside his political toolbox, military exports are quickly becoming a dull and impractical instrument unable to yield the outcomes that Putin desires regardless of the previous benefits they once provided.

⁶⁸⁹ Lo, *A Fine Balance*, 9.

⁶⁹⁰ Dmitry Bykov, “Aleksey Navalny: The Power Will Yield as Much as We Require,” *Sobesednik*, December 5, 2014, <https://sobesednik.ru/politika/20141203-aleksey-navalnyy-sudbu-strany-vsegda-reshaet-odin-procent>.

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