



The Russian Resurgence: Strategic Objectives and Political Maneuvering in the Middle East

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Abstract

Middle East is a conflict hub where major powers institutionalized its role and strategies. Russian engagement in the Middle East projects its interests in the region vis a vis other major power. The study concludes that while reestablishing itself Russia has being face challenges both at domestic and international level. From the historical perspective hard power is not an option instead; Kremlin is focusing on furthering its power and position through hard and soft power projection in the Middle East. This is based on qualitative methodology for which data from multiple sources is vigorously analyzed. This study has taken its theoretical insight from Offensive Realism with The purpose of this study is to examine the complex nature of Moscow's foreign policy through the lens of Realist theory in order to understand the origins of Russia's resurgence. It explores the revival of Russian foreign policy following the Cold War and highlights the growing relevance of Offensive Realism and its core principles as analytical tools in this context.

Keywords

Russian Resurgence, Strategies Objectives, Policies, Middle East, Major Powers, Realism.

Introduction

World politics is in transition, and history witnessed the rise and fall of great powers. As the power is dynamic and fluid, and in retrospect it observed that the power capability of great power determined the rise and then decline. Throughout history, Russia has remained a major power in world politics. The Russians had expanded the geographical frontiers of its empire, by extending its influence to China, Afghanistan and further up to the pacific Coast (Kennedy, 1995).

The objective of this paper is to understand the reemergence of Russia and its greater role and strategies in the Middle East. It explains the Russian Re-emergence and its policy implication on Middle East and the Challenges Russia faces in the process.

The study is based on qualitative method. The study employs an extensive review of both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data have been collected from academic journals, research papers, books, newspapers, and through systematic content analysis. Primary data is gathered through open ended interviews with experts, journalists, academicians and diplomats/officials.

Theoretical framework

This study draws its theoretical insights from theory of "Offensive s Realism" to understand the nature of the Moscow's foreign policy and the theoretical underpinnings of the Russian resurgence.

The anarchic nature of international politics compels states to maximize its national power. States pursue different strategies and sometime adopt aggressive policies. (Kenneth Waltz, 1979) Russia is aiming to regain its status as a great power in Middle East. Russia like other rising global

powers has adopted offensive approach in her foreign policy in different parts of the world especially in the Middle East ((Pietrzak, 2024).

Offensive realists contend that a state attains greater security and power when it maintains a military advantage over other states. There is no or very less status quo in the International politics. The international order operates on the basis of competitive gains, compelling states to seek relative power vis-à-vis others. Power thus becomes the central pillar upon which states rely for ensuring their security. In this pursuit, the ultimate aspiration of every state is to attain regional or global hegemony and to outmaneuver competing powers (Dominic. P. Johnson, 2016).

In the aftermath of the Cold War, Russia has consistently pursued a strategy centered on restoring its geopolitical stature. The dissolution of the Soviet Union revealed the extent to which Moscow had overextended its political and economic capacities. Recognizing these limitations, Russia temporarily adopted a posture of strategic restraint, aiming to rebuild its capabilities and reestablish itself as a formidable actor within the international system. This gradual process gained momentum following the 9/11 attacks, the onset of the global war on terror and the ascension of Vladimir Putin to power (Bharti & Aryal, 2024). These developments collectively created a geopolitical opening for Russia to reassert its hegemonic ambitions and counterbalance U.S. global influence. With the West deeply engaged in protracted counterterrorism operations, Russia exploited this period to consolidate its power and expand its international reach. Informed by its Cold War experiences, Moscow emphasized alliance-building on regional and global scales and pursued alliances in Middle East, East Asia and South Asia (Baldoni, 2023). This policy served as a strategic declaration of Russia's enduring military capability and its continued relevance in global power politics (Leyla & Latypova, 2022).

The coming of Putin to Russian presidency radically changed the Kremlin thought. He played a vital role to ensure Russian security and stability. Vladimir Putin has characterized the collapse of the Soviet Union as the most significant geopolitical tragedy of the twenty-first century, a perception that underpins his determination to restore and sustain Russia's global influence. Upon assuming power, Putin advanced a comprehensive strategic framework oriented around the imperatives of state security and national survival, marking a departure from the ideologically motivated policies of the former Soviet regime. Different economic policies were adopted by Putin that helped Russia to get back on track grow economically (Nikolay, 2022).

Russia has reasserted itself on the global stage through extensive political, diplomatic, and military engagement. Kremlin has revitalized its military apparatus, economic stabilization and modernization measures. It has broadened its political outreach within its regional sphere and beyond, with particular emphasis on the Middle East. Moscow's participation in multiple multilateral frameworks in the region has elicited concern from the United States. Within this context, Russia's interventions in the Syrian and Libyan conflicts, the annexation of Crimea, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and its expanding influence in Africa and South America exemplify the principles of Offensive Realism, underscoring its strategic endeavor to consolidate power and enhance its geopolitical standing (Jeffrey, 2023). In an effort to transform the Soviet Union's domestic and foreign policy orientation, Mikhail Gorbachev, the then President of Russia from 1985 to 1991 introduced the reform initiatives of *Glasnost* (openness) and *Perestroika* (restructuring). These policies, while intended to revitalize the Soviet system, culminated in the official dissolution of the Union on 25 December 1991. In the present geopolitical context, the evolving security architecture and shifting international order have driven Russia to transcend its conventional security framework, protect its political and economic interests, and assert a more proactive role in global politics (Ijaz, 2016).

Vladimir Putin once remarked that "those who do not regret the passing of the Soviet Union have no heart; but those who want to bring it back have no brains". (Steele, 2022) The Russian president is the only factor in resurgence of Russia domestically, nationally, and internationally. This paper is about the Role and strategies of Russia in the Middle East. Russia involvement in the Middle East proposes the external dynamics of Russian foreign policy. The role of Russian Military advancement and the export of weapons and technology to the Middle Eastern states boost the Russian Resurgence. Russia have objective to be achieved around the world in general and particularly in the Middle East (Peter, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

The resurgence of Russian has changed the strategic calculation in the Middle East. Kremlin has reasserted itself through a number of initiatives which includes Strategic alliances, vigorous diplomacy and active military interventions. Mostly the different academic work focuses only on single aspects of the Russian strategic involvement in the Middle East. There is lack of an integrated approach which explains the military, political and economic attempts of the Russian federation to secure its interests in the Middle East. This paper attempts to provide a holistic approach to understand the Russian political and strategic gestures in the Middle East.

The Military Resurgence of Russia

The possession of a formidable military apparatus remains an essential attribute of great powers in the international system. The centrality of military strength as a decisive element in global politics continues to endure. In this context, Russia's armed forces have experienced a profound transformation, reconstituting into a leaner, more mobile, and technologically adept force proficient in the full spectrum of modern warfare. This restructured military establishment is capable of projecting power both within Russia's immediate periphery and across more distant theaters, including the Middle East. The revitalized Russian military thus functions as a key instrument for advancing Moscow's strategic objectives and reinforcing its status as a principal actor within a multipolar world order. Coupled with its sophisticated defense capabilities, advantageous Eurasian geography, pragmatic leadership, conservative nationalist orientation, and the revival of Cold War-era strategic dynamics, Russia has firmly reasserted itself as a consequential player in global politics (Adelman. J, 2014).

In the weeks following his ascension to the presidency, Vladimir Putin articulated a bold vision for Russia's strategic modernization in a speech delivered at the Central Manezh Exhibition Hall. He proclaimed the advent of novel weapon systems capable of redefining the global strategic equilibrium, famously asserting, "*No one has listened to us. So, listen to us now*" (Sabra Ayres, 2018). Putin unveiled a suite of advanced strategic weapons intended to signal Russia's technological resurgence and deterrent credibility. These included the *Burevestnik*, a nuclear-powered cruise missile; the *RS-28 Sarmat* intercontinental ballistic missile; *Avangard*, a hypersonic boost-glide vehicle with nuclear capability; *Poseidon*, an autonomous undersea nuclear drone; *Kinzhal*, a dual-use hypersonic air-launched cruise missile; and *Peresvet*, a directed-energy weapon system. Collectively, these systems embodied Russia's aspiration to expand its offensive capabilities, recalibrate strategic parity with the West, and reaffirm its status as a principal military power in the emerging multipolar order (Kirby, 2022).

The escalation in Russia's defense spending is primarily attributed to Moscow's comprehensive and assertive rearmament agenda, embodied in the State Armament Program (SAP) for 2011–2020. Implemented annually through the State Defense Order (SDO), the SAP encompasses large-scale procurement of weaponry, investment in advanced military technologies, and the systematic modernization of existing defense systems. Structurally, the program was designed with a pronounced back-loading of expenditures, wherein approximately 31% of total funds were disbursed during the initial phase (2011–2015), with the remainder earmarked for the subsequent five years. This fiscal strategy underscores Moscow's long-term commitment to restoring and sustaining its strategic and technological parity with major global powers (Gorenburg, 2010).

Moscow is actively developing long-range, precision-guided conventional systems while persistently modernizing its extensive weapons complex. Concurrently, it seeks to shape the global information domain and project force extraterritorially via expeditionary deployments and instruments of indirect coercion aimed at neighboring states. Central to Russia's deterrence strategy is a potent nuclear triad able to deliver swift strategic strikes against distant targets; in the years ahead, this nuclear capacity will likely underpin a more confident Russian reemergence on the global stage (Aljazeera, 2023).

Russia is estimated to field approximately 1,700 nuclear warheads and close to 500 ICBMs, a stark diminution from the Soviet Union's peak Cold War arsenal of roughly 45,000 warheads (Weiler, 2023). Notwithstanding such reductions and attendant vulnerabilities, Moscow has prioritized showcasing and fielding novel hypersonic systems notably boost-glide delivery vehicles, hypersonic cruise missiles, and nuclear-powered, programmatically guided cruise missiles. These platforms are

explicitly designed to erode missile-defense effectiveness by adopting highly maneuverable, programmable flight profiles and speeds that challenge current intercept technologies (Weiler, 2023).

The 2014 Russian Military Doctrine underscores a pronounced focus on the synergistic employment of military and non-military means to achieve strategic objectives. It advocates the integrated application of armed force with political, economic, and informational measures, complemented by the exploitation of societal unrest and the use of special operations forces as instruments of influence (Embassy of the Russian Federation, 2014). Russia's conduct in Ukraine and other theaters substantiates the practical implementation of these principles, reflecting Moscow's evolution toward a unified New Generation Warfare (NGW) doctrine designed primarily for operations within the post-Soviet sphere and, to a lesser extent, against NATO member states (Ashby, 2023).

Russia's strategic objectives across the globe

Russia's contemporary strategic orientation is rooted in a persistent sense of geopolitical vulnerability and an enduring aspiration to reconstitute an exclusive sphere of influence within the post-Soviet landscape (Arquilla, 2019). Within the intellectual tradition of Russian strategic thought, deterrence and the projection of coercive power are understood as mutually reinforcing mechanisms of statecraft. Moscow continues to conceptualize the global system through a neoclassical balance-of-power prism, where great powers are presumed to exercise distinct, uncontested influence over regional domains. This worldview animates Russia's strategic behavior, from its intervention in Syria—designed to reclaim a historical foothold in the Mediterranean (Anna, 2022) to its calibrated engagement with Venezuela's socialist government, aimed at generating strategic friction for Washington within its hemispheric sphere (Samuel, Treyger, & Geist, 2019).

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has sought to restore the geopolitical stature and prestige forfeited in 1991. The dissolution of the USSR produced a profound psychological rupture within Russian leadership circles, fostering an enduring drive to resurrect what is perceived as Russia's "natural" great-power status (Mearsheimer, 2014). NATO's incremental eastward expansion has been interpreted in Moscow as both an existential security threat and a deliberate attempt to erode its traditional influence zones (Lavrov, 2005). This encroachment has consolidated Russia's strategic conviction that resistance to Western encirclement is not merely defensive but essential to national survival.

To mitigate Western penetration into its near abroad, Russia has institutionalized a spectrum of hybrid instruments—ranging from political manipulation and economic coercion to disinformation and covert subversion—short of overt warfare (Masters, 2022). Central to this policy is the reintegration of Russian-speaking populations dispersed across the former Soviet republics. The 2014 annexation of Crimea epitomizes this ethno-political strategy. President Putin argued that millions of ethnic Russians became involuntary minorities after 1991, thereby justifying Moscow's role as their protector. He emphasized that the stakes transcend Crimea or Donbas, extending to Russian communities in Central Asia and the Baltic region (Kavalski, 2014).

Russia's broader strategic calculus also seeks to consolidate a Eurasian geopolitical architecture under its preeminence. While not envisioning full political unification, Moscow aspires to cultivate a "Eurasian community" where post-Soviet states align economically, militarily, and ideologically under Russian leadership. This aspiration has materialized to varying degrees, except in the Baltic States and Ukraine, which have gravitated toward Western institutions. China, however, poses an emergent counterweight in Central Asia. Concurrently, Moscow endeavors to diminish the structural cohesion of Western power centers such as NATO, the EU, and the United States, while reactivating dormant partnerships with Cold War-era allies like Syria and Cuba, and forging new strategic alignments with revisionist powers such as Iran (Gurfinkiel, 2018).

Nowhere has Russia's resurgence been more evident than in the Middle East. Through calibrated diplomacy and military assertiveness, it has reestablished a durable presence in Syria, Libya, and Egypt, while simultaneously cultivating pragmatic ties with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, and the Gulf monarchies. Between 2005 and 2007, Putin's state visits to key regional capitals—combined with Russia's successful attainment of observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation—underscored its determination to be recognized as a central actor in regional security architecture (OIC, 2024).

The Syrian intervention of 2015 marked a watershed in Moscow's reemergence as a consequential global actor. It reasserted Russia's operational reach into the Mediterranean and the Middle East after decades of strategic dormancy (Vladislav, 2016). Moreover, the campaign functioned as both a demonstration of modernized military capability and a powerful marketing instrument for Russia's defense industry, revitalizing its global arms export market (Mona, 2021).

Russia's Strategic Assertion in the Middle East

Occupying the intersection of Africa and Western Asia, the Middle East constitutes the world's most geostrategic ally consequential region (Avdaliani, 2023). Its complex geopolitical matrix renders it a perennial epicenter of global instability, where localized upheavals often produce transnational repercussions. For over a century, it has served as an arena for great-power contestation. The region's twenty-two states have endured recurring crises, from the protracted Israeli–Palestinian conflict to the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) and successive U.S.-led interventions in Iraq (1991, 2003). Yet, beyond these landmark conflicts, the Middle East remains marred by sectarian fragmentation, proxy wars, and external interference (Malley, 2019). Within this context, Russia has reemerged as a pivotal extra-regional actor, leveraging its military, diplomatic, and energy instruments to reclaim influence once lost after the Soviet collapse (Louis & Anna, 2023).

The Syrian Crucible

The Syrian conflict, ignited in 2011 by the Arab Spring revolts, epitomizes the intersection of domestic authoritarianism and global geopolitical rivalry. Long-standing repression under Bashar al-Assad's regime provoked mass uprisings that, inspired by revolutions in North Africa, rapidly escalated into a brutal civil war (Laub, 2023). As state authority eroded, the conflict metamorphosed into a multilayered proxy war. Iran, Hezbollah, and other Shia militias rallied behind Damascus, while Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia financed various opposition factions (Hokayem, 2011). Meanwhile, transnational jihadist organizations, including ISIL, exploited the chaos to pursue their caliphate ambitions (Stephens, 2019).

Moscow's 2015 intervention marked a decisive strategic inflection. Through sustained airpower deployment and diplomatic maneuvering, Russia not only preserved the Assad regime but also reasserted itself as a global power broker (Matloob, 2024). This intervention was guided by a realist calculus: to constrain U.S. influence, safeguard Russian assets, and demonstrate advanced military capability (Kozhanov, 2018). Beyond tactical success, the campaign symbolized Russia's ambition to shape postwar political settlements and restore its prestige as an indispensable actor in Middle Eastern security architecture (Yacoubian, 2018).

Moscow's involvement also advanced its broader agenda of balancing against U.S. unipolarity. By leveraging crises such as Syria, Russia sought to project the vision of a multipolar world order in which Western hegemony is curtailed and regional agency reasserted (Kudors, 2014; Nye, 2006). The "Foreign Policy Concept" of 2000 explicitly rejected the unipolar paradigm, affirming Russia's aspiration to restore equilibrium among great powers (Ashby, 2023). Subsequent iterations under Medvedev and Putin integrated this worldview into operational doctrine, rendering interventions like Syria's both strategic and symbolic of Russia's return to global centrality (Katz, 2013).

Yemen a Subtle Balancing Act

The Yemeni civil war, emerging from the aftermath of the Arab Spring, represents another theater for Moscow's nuanced engagement. Following President Saleh's declining rule, domestic unrest devolved into a multipolar conflict involving Iranian-backed Houthis and a Saudi-led coalition (Nagi, 2023). While Western powers struggled to mediate, Russia positioned itself as a pragmatic intermediary, engaging all factions while safeguarding its maritime and geopolitical interests (Mansharof, 2013).

Through diplomatic overtures like the 2018 Moscow consultations, Russia projected itself as a neutral actor capable of dialogue with both Houthis and Gulf-backed authorities (Katz, 2017). Simultaneously, it expanded its strategic footprint near the Gulf of Aden, securing potential naval access routes crucial to its global logistics network (Ramani, 2013). The deployment of Russian private military companies further deepened its presence, advancing national interests without overt state involvement (Robinson, 2023). By framing its actions within international legal norms, Russia cultivated the image of a responsible power counterbalancing Western interventionism (Ramani, 2018).

The Russians Iranian Nuclear Nexus

Russia's cooperation with Iran in nuclear development constitutes a cornerstone of its Middle Eastern strategy. Moscow has long defended its assistance as compliant with IAEA safeguards, rejecting Western allegations of nuclear weaponization (USIP, 2023). After the Soviet dissolution, bilateral relations deepened, extending to scientific collaboration through institutions like the Persepolis Research Center (Tabarani, 2008).

The completion of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant symbolized this partnership. Despite Western opposition, Russia finalized the project in 2010, supplying nuclear fuel and managing spent materials under IAEA supervision (Singh, 2023; Katz, 2010). Although Western sanctions sought to curtail cooperation, Moscow persisted, viewing Iran both as a regional partner and as a counterbalance to U.S. dominance (Katz, 2010).

Russia played a constructive role in shaping the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), advocating for diplomatic engagement and transparency (Sabrina, 2023). The U.S. withdrawal from the deal under the Trump administration and the reinstatement of sanctions were condemned by both Moscow and Tehran as violations of international consensus (Smith, 2019).

Ultimately, the enduring Russian–Iranian partnership reflects a convergence of strategic necessity and mutual defiance of Western coercion. Both states publicly characterize their relationship as one founded on reliability, shared interests, and principled opposition to hegemonic order (Hutcheson, 2022).

Russian Role and Strategies in the Middle East

Russia has demonstrated a clear resurgence in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, Libya, and Egypt, actively engaging with key regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, the Gulf monarchies, and Kurdish groups (Zvyagelskaya, 2017). From 2005 to 2018, Russia significantly increased its diplomatic presence, with President Vladimir Putin visiting Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and successfully attaining observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Arab News, 2011). This extensive diplomatic engagement reflects Moscow's long-term strategy to restore its influence in the Arab world and reassert its credibility as a reliable power broker (Garfinkel, 2018).

Russia's military intervention in Syria marked its first major post-Soviet combat deployment beyond its borders, aimed at bolstering the Assad government and maintaining regional stability favorable to Moscow (Ilnick, 2015). Russia has provided extensive financial, military, and diplomatic support to Assad, establishing large combat and intelligence facilities in Syria, which would have been at risk had the regime collapsed (Lazareva, 2014). These strategic bases also serve as forward platforms for projecting Russian military influence across the eastern Mediterranean (Katz, 2017).

The Syrian intervention has proven vital for Russia, allowing it to demonstrate advanced military capabilities, reaffirm its role as a major regional power, and reintroduce its weapons market in the Middle East (Shokri, 2019). Additionally, the Kremlin sent a broader geopolitical message: Russia is a consistent and dependable ally, in contrast to the perceived unreliability of U.S. support in the region (Radin & Reach, 2014). Preserving Assad's regime also symbolized Russia's objection to U.S.-led interventions under the guise of promoting democracy, reflecting Moscow's enduring skepticism toward Western influence in Eurasian and Middle Eastern peripheries (Radin & Reach, 2014).

In Libya, Russia capitalized on the post-NATO intervention vacuum to project itself as a decisive actor and avoid the mistakes made by Western powers (Derassad, 2023). Moscow has participated in the reconstruction of Libya's infrastructure, security forces, and energy facilities, presenting itself as a trustworthy partner for long-term engagement (Reuters, 2017). Russia's partnership with Khalifa Haftar, established when Western powers struggled to identify reliable local allies, illustrates Moscow's strategic acumen in filling power vacuums and consolidating influence (Al Jazeera, 2023). This engagement also ensures Russia a strategic foothold in North Africa and the Mediterranean (Ramani, 2016).

Moscow has extended its relationship with Egypt under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, exploiting the United States' temporary disengagement due to human rights concerns during the Obama administration (Al-Anani, 2021). Military cooperation between Russia and Egypt included joint exercises and an arms agreement signed in 2017, permitting Russian combat aircraft to operate from Egyptian bases which further demonstrates Russia's growing regional influence (Fisk, 2015).

Sunni Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, have increasingly regarded Russia as a strategic partner. President Putin received a state-level welcome from the Saudi monarch during his visit to Riyadh, symbolizing strengthened bilateral ties (Al Arabiya News, 2023). As retired Saudi Major General Anwar Eshki observed, “Saudi Arabia needs Russia in the Middle East, not to weaken countries but to be a friend” (International Economic Forum, 2019). This recognition underscores Moscow’s ability to cultivate trust-based partnerships beyond sectarian or ideological lines (Garfinkel, 2018).

Across the broader region, Russia has pursued a comprehensive strategy combining high-level diplomacy, energy cooperation, defense sales, and economic engagement. Through official visits, major investment initiatives, and offers of civilian nuclear technology, Moscow has steadily expanded its strategic footprint in the Middle East (Ramani, 2016). This sustained presence reflects Russia’s long-term objective of institutionalizing its status as a great power capable of balancing U.S. influence and shaping regional security outcomes (Katz, 2017).

Findings & Conclusion

Russia has been reemerging on the global stage with increasing vigor, particularly in the Middle East, reflecting a strategic effort to reclaim and expand its international influence (Zvyagelskaya, 2017). Moscow has implemented a series of interrelated strategies designed to project power and counterbalance the U.S.-led liberal world order in regions traditionally under Western influence (Radin & Reach, 2014). The country’s resurgence is characterized by a well-resourced, coordinated approach, combining military modernization, diplomatic engagement, economic investments, and energy cooperation to reinforce its role as a global power (Ramani, 2016).

The Middle Eastern chapter of Russian foreign policy highlights direct military interventions, most notably in Syria, where Russia conducted its first post-Soviet combat deployment to support the Assad government (Lazareva, 2014). Moscow’s engagement in Syria includes sustained military, intelligence, and logistical support, enabling the regime to withstand opposition forces while deterring U.S. influence in the region (Shokri, 2019). The intervention also provided an opportunity for Russia to display advanced military capabilities, reinforcing its status as a reliable ally and a formidable power in regional conflicts (Popescu & Secieru, 2018).

Beyond Syria, Russia has pursued strategic influence in Libya, exploiting the power vacuum created by NATO’s intervention and Western mismanagement. Moscow has engaged in reconstruction initiatives, security partnerships, and military positioning, including the deployment of its sole aircraft carrier to the Libyan coast, signaling its return as a critical player in North African geopolitics (Al Jazeera, 2023). Simultaneously, Russia strengthened ties with Egypt under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, facilitating military cooperation and securing basing rights for Russian combat aircraft, demonstrating a gradual but deliberate expansion of regional influence amid declining U.S. involvement (Al-Anani, 2021).

In Yemen, Russia capitalized on the civil war to assert its influence diplomatically and strategically. By engaging multiple factions and offering mediation efforts, Moscow secured access to critical ports such as Aden and safeguarded its strategic interests in the Gulf while maintaining the appearance of legal and principled international engagement (Robinson, 2023). Russia has also employed private military contractors to advance its objectives while avoiding direct violation of international law, thereby enhancing its image as a responsible actor in conflict resolution (Batati, 2012).

Russia’s collaboration with Iran in the nuclear sector represents another dimension of its Middle Eastern strategy. Following historical partnerships and mutual geopolitical interests, Russia completed the Bushehr nuclear power plant and provided ongoing technological support for Iran’s civilian nuclear program under IAEA safeguards, countering Western attempts to restrict Tehran’s nuclear capabilities (Hutcheson, 2022). This cooperation underscores Russia’s broader aim to assert strategic leverage in a multipolar global system while fostering reliable partnerships in regions traditionally dominated by the West (Sabrina, 2023).

On a global level, Russia’s resurgence is underpinned by a comprehensive military modernization program and strategic investments in nuclear capabilities. Moscow maintains a modernized, mobile, and versatile military force capable of power projection far beyond its borders, enabling the country to pursue its strategic objectives in Eurasia, the Middle East, Africa, and beyond (Matloob, 2024; Shokri, 2019). The integration of conventional forces with nuclear deterrence,

advanced missile systems, and technological innovation positions Russia to challenge the unipolar dominance of the United States while promoting a multipolar world order that recognizes Russia as a great power (Radin & Ashby, 2023).

Russia's strategic interventions are also informed by its historical and geopolitical perceptions, particularly its sense of vulnerability following the collapse of the Soviet Union and NATO's eastward expansion. Moscow has consistently pursued policies aimed at consolidating its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space while countering Western encroachment, seeking to restore regional primacy and protect Russian-speaking populations in neighboring countries (Mearsheimer, 2014). This approach aligns with Russia's broader objective of reasserting global power status, ensuring both regional stability under its influence and the expansion of strategic partnerships worldwide (Gurfinkiel & Anna, 2022).

Conclusion

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Russia's resurgence is methodical, multidimensional, and strategically coherent. Its interventions in Syria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Iran, combined with global military modernization and nuclear deterrence, reflect a calculated effort to safeguard national interests and assert great power status. The evidence indicates that Russia is not merely reactive but proactive, employing diplomacy, military power, economic investment, and strategic alliances to influence regional and global power dynamics.

Furthermore, Russia's actions underscore its commitment to a multipolar international order, challenging unipolar dominance and asserting a vision of power-sharing consistent with its historical and geopolitical perspectives. The combined findings and analysis suggest that Russia's foreign policy is anchored in long-term strategic objectives, balancing deterrence with power projection, fostering regional influence, and maintaining credibility as a global actor. This integrated approach provides insights into the mechanisms through which Russia seeks to institutionalize its role as a major world power, ensuring its presence and influence across multiple regions over the long term.

Recommendations

In order to achieve its strategic and political objectives, the following recommendations are recommended in the light of the possible realist policy options.

Russian should employ an all-inclusive, whole-of-government approach to the Middle Eastern region to reap the dividends of the investments Kremlin is doing there. It should be executed in a tailored fashion.

Russia should involve the local people and not only the political elites. This can be a possible political and diplomatic leverage for Russia in case the government of the respective country falls as we saw recently in Syria.

Russia needs to improve its ability of sustained operational advantage in the region. Kremlin should manage and alleviate the risk of direct conflict with United States and its regional allies. Mutual accommodation on more important issues in the Middle East can improve U.S.-Russia relationship

A more institutionalized and state led approach is needed to achieve its strategic efficiently in the Middle East. The different Russian stakeholders and proxies lobbying for pursuing their own agendas can be detrimental for the Kremlin. Though it can be sources of deniability in certain cases, it can lead to clash of interests some time. Differences among different Russian actors can create legitimacy problems for the Russians and is more inefficient and personalized.

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