



Middle East arms sales, such as the massive \$67 billion military package for Saudi Arabia, are keeping the U.S. defense industry in business. These days, with the Arab world in turmoil, two presidents booted out and a third fighting for survival of his authoritarian regime, that strategy is being questioned.

The wave of unrest in the region has given new weight to concerns that the vast arsenals of weapons the United States has sold to Arab states over the years could fall into the hands of anti-American forces.

That's what happened in 1979 when Iran's Islamic revolution ousted Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Americans' key ally in the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

The mullahs inherited a U.S.-made armory, including 77 Grumman F-14 Tomcat fighters and 190 McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantoms, then top-of-the-line combat jets. The current political turmoil engulfing the Middle East caught everyone by surprise -- the Americans, the Israelis, the regimes themselves -- underlining the dangers that critics have been warning about for so many years.

So far, no extremist Arab regime has emerged although the way things are going that could happen.

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