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# Is Russia profiting from its investment in the Middle Eastern conflict?



The Kremlin views the war in Israel and the horrifying atrocities carried out by Hamas as a chance for Putin to reclaim his position as a principal player in the world as a mediator and influencer.

The Kremlin has been attempting to maximise the benefits from the crisis brought on by the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against Israel. At this point, those benefits are twofold.

First, this enables the Kremlin to avert attention from the war the Kremlin has been waging in Ukraine. It also allows the Kremlin to spin various disinformation on the alleged usage of weapons supplied by the West to Ukraine by Hamas terrorists.

Moscow and Hamas have a well-established and open alliance. Even though Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation in the West, its leadership maintains regular contact with Moscow and has high-level meetings at least twice a year.

A senior Hamas delegation visited Moscow last March and met with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The state news agency TASS disclosed a statement from Hamas last Saturday expressing gratitude for Russia's position on the crisis in Israel and praised "the tireless efforts of Russia, aimed at ending the systematic and barbaric Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip".

## Putin's influence on Israel

However, while the ties between Russia and Hamas logically precede Moscow's expectations to profit from the conflict in the Middle East, we should not forget that Russia also has a profit return from a long-term investment elsewhere - in Israel.

The Kremlin has steadily increased its influence in Israel while remaining unnoticed and neglected by Western organisations and agencies for years.

About one million Russian-speaking people live in Israel and are loyal to the Kremlin. Russian-speaking oligarchs who repatriated to Israel, those similar to Viatcheslav Kantor or Lev Leviev, have enabled the Kremlin literally to bend Israel's domestic and foreign political agenda in Russia's favour.

The media loyal to the Kremlin present in Israel shapes the worldview of Russian-speaking Israeli voters. At the same time, oligarchs with connections to the Kremlin who reside in Israel did an outstanding job of infiltrating and penetrating the upper echelons of Israel's leadership.

Leviev and Kantor are under scrutiny from the UK and EU authorities, similar to many other Russian-speaking oligarchs living in Israel, most of whom are full-time Kremlin emissaries.

## Israel has no part of the coalition helping Ukraine

The state of Israel ended up being similar to many former USSR countries that have been perpetually under Russia's influence and subversion following the Kremlin's malignant and covert activities.

Since the war in Ukraine started and US sanctions began to crush the Russian economy and the lifestyles of the Russian upper and political class, a joke started to circulate among Russian opposition: the Kremlin needs to raze Iran to the ground in order to gain the support of the US Republican Party, and as a result of that support, get rid of sanctions despite the war the Kremlin has been waging in Ukraine.

Given that Israel is significant to the West and particularly to America, it was just a matter of time before Moscow decided to use Israel for its own purposes regarding Ukraine.

Benjamin Netanyahu had many clumsy excuses not to join the coalition of over 50 democratic countries which support Ukraine.

However, his good relationship with Putin did not help him to prevent the horrific attack on Israel by Hamas, the Kremlin's friends and allies.

## Putin has profited from terrorism before

Putin loves being important. His connections to Hamas and PM Netanyahu provide solid ground for him to attempt to get back to the world's main stage.

Putin's Russia learned long ago how to use Israel for its own purposes. Years back, Moscow used Putin's good relations with Netanyahu to penetrate and cultivate American conservatives and evangelicals.

This time, Moscow has been using a catastrophe which has recently happened in Israel to advance its interests - those related to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Putin has profited from terrorism in the past. His political career took off in 1999 after a string of suspicious incidents of domestic terrorism.

At the time, Russian apartment buildings were demolished. This enabled Putin to become the undisputed leader of all Russian people. The terrorist strikes in Russia in 1999 continue to be a source of much controversy.

Russia is no stranger to profiteering from the pain and suffering of other countries. For example, Russia annexed Chinese Manchuria while China had been bleeding from the consequences of the war against Japan.

## Freezing the conflict - Russia's interest

This time, Putin's Russia has profited from Hamas's attack on Israel.

Putin will use his leverage on Hamas and

Russia's overall influence on Benjamin Netanyahu to advance his interests regarding Ukraine.

The Russian leader sees Israel as a perfect bargaining chip he could use to get what he wants in Ukraine, providing that Moscow has established a significant influence in Israel.

After the terrorist attacks of Hamas and the decisive response of Israel, it would suit Russia's interests best to freeze the war, just as it is now trying to freeze the war in Ukraine.

That is why Moscow will appear as a factor that convinces both sides in the Middle East conflict to freeze confrontations and enter into negotiations, following the same model it wants in Ukraine.