

Russo-Israeli Crossroads: What's Next?

No great power enjoys Moscow's Mideast networks. But will the Jerusalem axis endure?

By Zvi Magen & Sarah Fainberg / March 3, 2017

Russia's surprise entry into Syria in September 2015 – in the fifth year of the Syrian conflict – created an unpredictable security situation for Israel right at its borders. Now, after a year and a half of largely successful military coordination and 'deconfliction' between Moscow and Jerusalem, Russo-Israeli relations stand at a crossroads.

Of course, for all the media excitement, Russia's insertion into the Syrian battlefield was not entirely new. Moscow is a veteran actor in the Middle East in general, and in Syria in particular. Some 15 years ago, Russia's 'grand return' to the region was initiated by President Putin, who capitalized on Moscow's vast diplomatic and military presence in Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Libya – not to mention its historical ties with the Palestinian national movement from the Cold War period – as a means of challenging the 'unipolar order' imposed by the US after the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as regaining regional power status and promoting Russia's booming energy and military-industrial sectors.

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