

Jerusalem maintains delicate balancing act over Russia-Ukraine tensions

Zvi Magen, a former Israeli ambassador to both Ukraine and Russia, and currently a senior research fellow at the **Institute for National Security Studies**, said the Russian president's main ambition is "to make Russia a global superpower." That has implications for Israel.

By Israel Kasnett

(February 10, 2022 / JNS) The perceived Western European notion that a major war cannot again occur on the continent is quickly dissipating as Russia continues to threaten war with Ukraine. Even with the flurry of diplomatic activity on the part of the United States and Europe to reduce tensions, the threat is not going away and could materialize at any time.

[...]

Zvi Magen, a former Israeli ambassador to both Ukraine and Russia, and currently a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), told JNS that Putin's main ambition is "to make Russia a global superpower." Following that goal, Putin would like to keep ex-Soviet territories under Russian control. At a minimum, Putin wants to postpone Ukraine joining NATO for as long as possible and to end sanctions against Russia.

Addressing an INSS conference, Magen acknowledged that "no one knows where Putin is headed or how far he intends to go, including those in his immediate surroundings. The probability is low that Putin will go for an all-out war. Apparently, that's also the assumption in the West. The question is what Putin will do instead."

Magen said he thinks Russia is trying to prove it is a global power, in part by operating in Syria. And while Moscow has flexed its muscles on the Syria-Israel border recently, "there is no attempt to threaten Israel," he stressed.

He emphasized that Putin would like to see a change in the world order, believing that there's been enough of a unipolar world with one, single leading superpower.

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