

Two Russia experts fear Putin played Bennett by inviting him to Moscow

Analysts say Russian leader may have used Israeli PM to buy time for regrouping, and to win legitimacy from world leaders

By Carrie Keller-Lynn / March 8, 2022

Israel, a regional power but hardly a global one, is very unlikely to be the negotiating force that derails Russian President Vladimir Putin's decades-long lust for Ukraine's land, two Russia experts told The Times of Israel. Rather, they believe Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's Shabbat shuttle to Moscow is more likely to have served Putin's goals than Israel's.

[...]

Zvi Magen, a former Israeli ambassador to Russia and senior research fellow at the **Institute for National Security Studies**, had a more optimistic view about Putin's intentions but agreed that Bennett, the diplomat, will not be the deciding factor.



Zvi Magen, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (Chen Galili/Institute for National Security Studies)

"I would reduce my expectations, it's not an issue of Bennett's personal skills. Putin chose Israel because Israel most suits him at the moment. Israel is the only Western democratic state that doesn't belong to any one side on the issue," Magen said.

Noting Russian military setbacks, economic hardship, and internal dissent regarding the invasion, Magen added that, "Putin doesn't have time for a long involvement here."

"The one who has to be serious [about negotiating] is not Bennett, or whoever else in that position, but Putin. Putin is advancing this, so apparently he wants to negotiate."

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