

The Kremlin's "Balancing Act": Russia's Ties with both Israel and Iran

Top Russian Foreign Policy Planner

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The Senior Advisor of the Foreign Policy Planning Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation denied that there ever was a so-called "Russia-Shia axis" like Alt-Media claimed for years and reminded the prestigious audience at Russia's top think tank that her country militarily cooperates with both the Syrian armed opposition and even the Islamic Republic's hated foes in "Israel" as part of its regional "balancing" act.

One of the most enduring narratives pushed forth by the [Alt-Media Community](#) is that Russia is "allied" with Iran in spite of all the evidence suggesting that it's actually much more closely aligned with "Israel" in an intimate strategic partnership that can best be described as "[Putinyahu's Rusrael](#)". Up until this point, there was no direct contradiction of Alt-Media's flawed interpretation of events from any Russian official, but that just changed after Maria Khodynskaya-Golenischeva's latest article for her country's top think tank, the Valdai Club. She's not just one of the countless commentators sounding off about this issue, but is an actual diplomat who works as the Senior Advisor of the Foreign Policy Planning Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Speaking from a position of undisputed authority, she clarified the following about her country's ties with "Israel" and Iran in her article titled "[How Bloc-Free Mentality Helps Russia Be a Welcome Foreign Actor in the Middle East](#)":

"Incidentally, the emphasis of some colleagues (primarily from the West) on some "other side of the medal" as regards the Russia-Iran cooperation on Syria (in the bilateral format and the Astana venue) makes no sense. They are trying to present this cooperation as some Russia-Shia axis that is alienating the Arab world from Moscow, primarily the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the Sunni opposition in Syria.

However, this view is contrary to hard facts. Russia has become the only country involved in the Syrian file to preserve contacts with all players in Syria without exception: the Syrian Government, political and armed opposition's organizations (except those classified as terrorist) and the states involved in the Syrian settlement. There are examples of joint action by Russia and the armed Sunni opposition "on the ground", for instance, the participation of the Shabab Al Sunnah in the operation to free the valley of the Yarmouk River from ISIS, in which the Russian Aerospace Forces were involved.

The same is true of Russia-Israel interaction, which has not been marred by Moscow-Tehran cooperation. In the framework of Syrian settlement, Russia and Israel not only discussed "deconflicting" initiatives but also cooperated "on the

ground”. Importantly, it was Russia that ensured the withdrawal of the pro-Iran forces from the Golan Heights and the Russian military police ensures security in this area, thereby creating the conditions for the mission of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).”

In a nutshell, she vehemently denied that there was ever any intention for Moscow to construct a so-called “Russia-Shia axis” and reminded her prestigious audience that her country militarily cooperates with both the Syrian armed opposition and even the Islamic Republic’s hated foes in “Israel” as part of its [regional “balancing” act](#). Importantly, she confidently asserted that the aforementioned narrative that she just debunked comes “primarily from the West”, which is true since many in the Alt-Media Community are “[Non-Russian Pro-Russians](#)” (NRPR) who mostly reside in that part of the world. Nevertheless, her comment strongly implies that this interpretation of events is therefore disreputable and might have the ulterior motive of discrediting Russia’s “balancing” act with all the other Mideast players at odds with the Islamic Republic, even though that likely wasn’t the intention of the Alt-Media outlets that propagated it in the first place. In any case, her words are the most authoritative confirmation yet that Russia is not, nor ever was or will be, in an “alliance” with Iran.

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