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- ASIAN GEOPOLITICS
- RUSSIAN INVASION
- UKRAINIAN FACTOR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

POSITIONS OF THE STATES OF THE MIDDLE EAST REGARDING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR	3
<i>Mykola Zamikula</i>	
ISRAEL AND THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE	18
<i>Yurii Latysh</i>	
HOW DOES THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR CHANGE ASIAN GEOPOLITICS?	27
<i>Alina Hrytsenko</i>	
ASIAN NEUTRALISM, SECURITY, AND THE UKRAINIAN FACTOR	37
<i>Ihor Lossovskyi</i>	
THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR AS A TURNING POINT FOR UKRAINE'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA	46
<i>Yurii Poita</i>	
WILL CHINA TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR	52
<i>Vladyslav Faraponov</i>	
IN PURSUIT OF INTEREST: INDIA AND RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE	60
<i>Olha Vorozhbyt</i>	
FROM DOWN UNDER: WHY IS AUSTRALIA SO INVOLVED IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE?	69
<i>Izabela Pereira Watts</i>	

ISRAEL AND THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

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The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to the consolidation of the Western world, which has imposed heavy sanctions against the aggressor and is supplying weapons to Ukraine. But in other regions of the world, support for Ukraine is not unequivocal. Often, aid for Ukraine comes down to declarations and humanitarian assistance. Israel is an ally of the US and the Western world, but its interests are centred in the Middle East, and determined by the protracted conflict with the Arab states and Iran. In Ukraine, the Israeli model seems attractive, but the pragmatic position of Israel during the Russian-Ukrainian war, based solely on national interests, disappoints the Ukrainian side.

Introduction

Israel occupies a key place in Ukraine's political discourse. The Ukrainian elite has great sympathy for Israeli politics, particularly in the field of security. Therefore, Israel's attitude to Russia's aggression against Ukraine is very important for Kyiv, which considers Israel's security policy to be a benchmark.

To the question of how he sees the future of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy answered: "I think all our people will be our great army... we will definitely become a "big Israel" with its own face. We will not be surprised that we will have representatives of the Armed Forces or the National Guard in all institutions, supermarkets, cinemas,

there will be people with weapons"¹. Often the idea "Ukraine is the second Israel" is seen as a means of mobilising a type of economy, encouraging militarisation, and at the same time as a preservation of democracy, pluralism of opinions, overcoming of right and left radicalism². But today, it is most often with an expression of disappointment that Ukraine views the position of Israel.

Foreign Policy on a Powder Keg

In terms of foreign policy, Israel is, on the one hand, an ally of the US and part of the Western bloc, but on the other hand, this country positions itself as a regional power. According to Ambassador to Israel in Ukraine Michael Brodsky, Israel is a small, regional state, "therefore, our interests are

- 1 *For the Ukrainian state, the issue of security should be in the first place for the next ten years – the President*, "President of Ukraine. Official website", 05 April 2022 [https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/dlya-ukrayinskoyi-derzhavi-pitannya-bezpeki-maye-buti-na-per-74113]
- 2 *Алексей Арестович и посол Израиля в Украине Михаэль Бродский: Как Украине построить Израиль Восточной Европы (Oleksiy Arestovych and Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine Michael Brodsky: How Ukraine can build the Israel of Eastern Europe)*, "Khvyliya", 24 July 2022 [https://hvyliya.net/interview/256368-aleksey-arestovych-i-posol-izrailya-v-ukraine-mihael-brodskiy-kak-ukraine-postroit-izrail-vostochnoy-evropy]

primarily in the Middle East... Israel is not a European country and not a superpower. Israel is a country with its own problems in the Middle East, which is sitting on a powder keg"³. The key issue for Israel is Iran's nuclear programme. The United States is building an anti-Iran coalition in the Middle East, which includes the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf, Egypt and Israel.

The trauma of the Holocaust plays a big role in Israeli politics. Historian Yuval Noah Harari, who is ashamed of his country's policies during the Russian-Ukrainian war, believes that the lesson of the Holocaust in Israel is that during the tragedy no one came to the aid of the Jews, so in today's world, it is necessary to take care only of ourselves. First of all, in any situation, Israel must be guided only by its own interests and not have any obligations to anyone in the world⁴. The historian's opinion is confirmed by the words of ex-Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. "The suffering of the citizens of Ukraine is terrible. That is why we are working to help. But at the same time, I clearly understand that no one will fight for us. Not with Iran, not with Syria, not with Gaza. No one will intercede for Jews in trouble. Nowhere, anywhere in the world. We've already been through this. And learned that lesson"⁵.

In relations with Ukraine and Russia, Bennett aimed at maintaining friendly relations with both Kyiv and Moscow. The mosaic coalition,

which included the right-wing political parties, liberal-centrists, the left, the party oriented towards those who came from the former USSR Yisrael Beiteinu ("Israel Our Home"), and the United Arab List, had 61 seats against the opposition's 59. It is often difficult for the government to come to an agreement on many issues.



At the same time, Israel did not agree to supply weapons to Ukraine, and did not join the countries with sanctions against Russia. Israel does not have a law on sanctions and does not apply sanctions in its political actions

After the Russian aggression on February 24, Israel's official position was announced by Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, who called the Russian invasion "an attack that undermines the foundations of the world order"⁶. "Israel has been and will be on the right side of history. Those are our values. Our main ally was and will be the USA"⁷. Lapid also called helping the people of Ukraine a moral obligation, and promised to send emergency humanitarian aid. A field hospital was deployed in the Lviv region, and dozens of Israeli doctors went to Ukraine.

- 3 *Алексей Арестович и посол Израиля в Украине Михаэль Бродский: Как Украине построить Израиль Восточной Европы (Oleksiy Arestovych and Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine Michael Brodsky: How Ukraine can build the Israel of Eastern Europe)*, "Khvyliya", 24 July 2022 [<https://hvyliya.net/interview/256368-aleksey-arestovich-i-posol-izrailiya-v-ukraine-mihael-brodskiy-kak-ukraine-postroit-izrail-vostochnoy-evropy>]
- 4 *Юваль Ной Харари про те, як війна в Україні змінить світ (Yuval Noah Harari on how the war in Ukraine will change the world)*, "Forbes Ukraine", 26 May 2022 [<https://forbes.ua/inside/putin-khotiv-zrobiti-rosiyu-velikoyu-a-zrobit-provintsieyu-kitayskoi-imperii-yuval-noy-kharari-pro-te-yak-viyna-v-ukraini-zminit-svit-26052022-6239>]
- 5 *Беннет: «Было проще всего завернуться во флаг Украины, но я выбрал другое» (Bennett: Wrapping up in the flag of Ukraine was easiest, but I chose something else)*, "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 29 July 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/opinions/article/ry11efvb69>]
- 6 *Израиль осудил российское вторжение в Украину (Israel condemns Russian invasion of Ukraine)*, "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 24 February 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/h1ptjane5>]
- 7 *Министр иностранных дел Израиля пообещал Украине поддержку в ООН (Israeli Foreign Minister promised Ukraine UN support)*, "Detali", 28 February 2022 [<https://detaly.co.il/ministr-inostrannyh-del-izrailiya-pobeshhal-ukraine-podderzhu-v-oon/>]

At the same time, Israel did not agree to supply weapons to Ukraine, and did not join the countries with sanctions against Russia. Israel does not have a law on sanctions and does not apply sanctions in its political actions. But also, as Michael Brodsky noted “Other than the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Uman, Israel has no strategic interests in Ukraine”⁸.



Taking a relatively neutral position, in March 2022, Israel attempted to mediate between Ukraine and Russia

Traditionally, Israelis are primarily interested in domestic policy and security issues. However, the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war roused considerable interest in Israel. According to the survey prepared by the Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute in March 2022, more than 70% of Israelis followed the events of the war. 66.7% of respondents believed that Russia, led by Putin, was mainly responsible for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Among Jews, this opinion was shared by 75.8%, among immigrants from the CIS – 69.3%, among Arabs – 26.6%. But only 22% agreed that “Israel should supply Ukraine with weapons and military equipment, not just humanitarian aid”⁹.

In March and June, the Russian-language website NEWSru.co.il conducted a survey among its readers about their attitude to the Russian-Ukrainian war. A total of 75% of respondents in June expressed their support for Ukraine (74% in March). In the same survey, 46% believed that Israel does not help Ukraine enough, and 39% that Israel should help Ukraine with weapons. Meanwhile, 47% of Israelis said that Israel should join in imposing sanctions against Russia (in March, 42% thought so), and 61% of respondents believed that Israel should accept refugees from Ukraine (four months ago, 57% thought so)¹⁰.

Bennett’s Peacekeeping Mission

Taking a relatively neutral position, in March 2022, Israel attempted to mediate between Ukraine and Russia. Ynet columnist Itamar Eichner reported that Prime Minister Bennett tried to mediate in response to an appeal by the leaders of Germany, France, and Ukraine¹¹. According to US Ambassador Tom Nides, the Biden administration is in “hourly contact” with the Israelis over Russia’s war against Ukraine. “The Prime Minister has not made a move without talking to the White House”¹².

On 3 March, Bennett said that the situation in Ukraine is rapidly deteriorating and called on world leaders to bring the warring parties back to the negotiating table. Referring to his own experience of participating in hostilities, the Israeli prime minister said

8 G. F. Cashman, *Ukraine Russia war likely to get worse before it gets better – Israeli diplomat*, “Jerusalem Post”, 07 July 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/international/article-711406]

9 *Survey on the Conflict Between Russia and Ukraine*, The Israel Democracy Institute, March 2022 [https://en.idi.org.il/media/17649/final-survey-on-the-conflict-between-russia-and-ukraine-march-2022-data.pdf]

10 *Итоги опроса NEWSru.co.il о войне в Украине: разочарование санкциями Запада, всё больше израильтяне считают режим Путина угрозой (Results of the NEWSru.co.il poll on the war in Ukraine: disappointment with the sanctions of the West, more and more Israelis consider the Putin regime a threat)*, “NEWSru.co.il”, 21 June 2022 [https://www.newsru.co.il/israel/21jul2022/ukr_war_opros_itogi.html]

11 *Посредник Беннет. За кулисами тайного визита в Москву (Mediator Bennett. Behind the scenes of a secret visit to Moscow)*, “Vesti. Israel in Russian”, 6 March 2022 [https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/T24XL9BFY]

12 T. Lazaroff, *US in ‘hourly contact’ with Israelis on Russia-Ukraine war, envoy says*, “Jerusalem Post”, 16 March 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/international/article-701406]

that it is very easy to start a war, but very difficult to end it. However, in this speech, he never mentioned Russia¹³.

On 5 March, Naftali Bennett made an emergency visit to Moscow during Shabbat (he observes religious orders and does not move on Saturdays), about which only three ministers in the Israeli government were informed. After that, he visited Berlin and held telephone talks with the presidents of France and Ukraine. However, the prime minister's mission was not successful. The president of Ukraine disappointedly said that he expected more from Israel. He said that he had seen footage of Jews standing near the Western Wall wrapped in Ukrainian flags, but he did not feel that the leadership of Israel was wrapped in Ukraine's flag¹⁴.

On 12 March 2022, a report carried by Israel's Walla news, the Jerusalem Post and the US news site Axios suggested, citing an unidentified Ukrainian official, that Bennett was pressuring the Ukrainian president to accept the Russian president's demands to end the war, and that Kyiv was upset with Israel's stance¹⁵. Both sides denied this information¹⁶. At the same time, there were reports of a diplomatic protest by Israel in response to criticism from the Ukrainian authorities, which also did not receive official

confirmation. "The Israeli reprimand of the Ukrainians, if it did occur, is outrageous: a nation is fighting for its life, and we are commenting on its manners,"¹⁷ Israeli journalist Amit Segal wrote on Twitter.

From the beginning, Bennett's mission had little chance of success. Russia emphasised that it did not need mediation and planned to impose a ceasefire on Ukraine on its own terms. Ukraine refused to sign such a capitulation. Replying to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the former Israeli prime minister wrote: "I have often been reproached for not declaring an unequivocal position while wrapping myself in the Ukrainian flag. Yes, it is. I didn't say it. I am demonstrating an unequivocal position by wrapping myself in another flag – the Israeli flag"¹⁸.

Israel's Policy Towards Ukrainian Refugees and Returnees from Ukraine

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel announced an operation to save Ukrainian Jews, "Arvut Israel". According to Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked (Yamina), about 100,000 Jews "from Ukraine and CIS countries" can move to Israel and obtain citizenship under the Law of Return¹⁹. Regarding citizens of Ukraine who do not

13 Беннет призвал мировых лидеров вернуть Украину и Россию за стол переговоров (*Bennett urged world leaders to bring Ukraine and Russia back to the negotiating table*), "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 03 March 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/bjnitbrxc>]

14 Зеленський не відчуває, що керівництво Ізраїлю "загорнуло в український прапор" (*Zelenskyy does not feel that Israel's leadership is "wrapped in the Ukrainian flag"*), "Ukrinform", 03 March 2022 [<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3419291-zelenskij-ne-vidcuvae-so-kerivnictvo-izrailu-zagornute-v-ukrainskij-prapor.html>]

15 L. Harkov, *Ukrainian defense official: We appreciate Bennett's mediation*, "Jerusalem Post", 12 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-701093>]

16 *Israel, Ukraine deny report Bennett recommended yielding to Russian demands*, "Jerusalem Post", 12 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-701064>]

17 E. Kener, *Амит Сегаль: выговоры Израиля Украине – рекорд наглости (Amit Segal: Israel's reprimand of Ukraine is outrageous)*, "7kanal", 08 March 2022 [<https://www.7kanal.co.il/News/News.aspx/237140>]

18 Беннет: «Было проще всего завернуться во флаг Украины, но я выбрал другое» (*Bennett: Wrapping up in the flag of Ukraine was easiest, but I chose something else*), "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 29 July 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/opinions/article/ry11efvb69>]

19 Z. Klein, *Interior Minister Shaked announces new plan for Ukrainian refugees*, "Jerusalem Post", 14 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-700687>]

have the right to repatriation, Israel had to create a policy, as it has no refugee law. On 1 March 2022, Israel allowed entry to Ukrainian tourists with first-degree relatives. For the rest, the host had to pay a deposit of 10,000 shekels and sign an undertaking that their guests would leave the country at the end of their residence permit. However, in a week, a new entry procedure was announced that de facto abolished the visa-free regime for tourist trips. Since then, Ukrainians have had to receive an invitation from an Israeli citizen and apply on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, to get permission to board a plane to Israel, but the 10,000-shekel deposit has been waived. Ayelet Shaked said that the Israeli government will allow Ukrainians with a relative in Israel into the country, and they will be able to stay “for a month or two to rest” and will have to sign a statement that they do not intend to remain. A separate quota will be established for Ukrainian refugees who do not have a relative in Israel²⁰.



After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel announced an operation to save Ukrainian Jews, "Arvut Israel".

The Interior Minister announced that Israel is ready to temporarily accept 25,000 Ukrainians, and this quota includes 20,000 Ukrainian citizens who are already illegally

in Israel²¹. In addition, Israel decided not to expel Ukrainian illegals until the end of the war, and to extend the visas of Ukrainians who entered before February 24. According to the Ukrainian ambassador, as of June, 38,500 Ukrainians have entered Israel, of which about 13,000 have received Israeli passports. More than 14,000 Ukrainians have already left Israel²². Many Ukrainian citizens who have entered Israel as tourists, actually are refugees. The Interior Ministry extends their visas every month. Refugee “tourists” do not have official work permits. But the authorities have announced that they will not punish employers who hire Ukrainians who are in Israel for more than 90 days.

Not everyone in the Israeli government shared Shaked's position. The leftist parties Avodah and Meretz stood up for protection without limits of quotas, religion, or nationality. Diaspora Minister Nachman Shai (Avodah) said that the Jewish people should extend a helping hand to refugees and called the policy of the Interior Ministry shameful²³. The position of the Interior Ministry was criticised by the deputy from the United Arab List, Walid Taha. However, the Yamina coalition held its position, arguing that Israel is, first of all, a Jewish state, therefore, first of all, it should provide asylum to those who have the right to repatriation.

On 3 July 2022, the High Court of Justice (Bagatz) cancelled the decision of Ayelet Shaked to deprive Ukrainian citizens of the right to visa-free entry to Israel. The interior

20 Z. Klein, *Interior Minister Shaked announces new plan for Ukrainian refugees*, “Jerusalem Post”, 14 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-700687>]

21 E. Kener, *Шакед: Израиль готов принять 25 тысяч украинцев (Shaked: Israel ready to accept 25,000 Ukrainians)*, “7kanal”, 08 March 2022 [<https://www.7kanal.co.il/News/News.aspx/237133>]

22 E. Shlyumovich, *Посол Украины: “Моя работа – рассказать, как много Израиль делает хорошего” (Ambassador of Ukraine: “My job is to tell how much good Israel does”)*, “Detali”, 16 June 2022 [<https://detaly.co.il/posol-ukrainy-moya-rabota-rasskazat-kak-mnogo-izrail-delaet-horoshego/>]

23 *Глава МВД Шакед против министра диаспоры Шая: «Он оклеветал государство Израиль» (Interior Minister Shaked vs. Diaspora Minister Shai: «He brings out the slander of the State of Israel»)*, “NEWSru.co.il”, 09 March 2022 [https://www.newsru.co.il/israel/09mar2022/shaked_705.html]

minister published a reaction to the Bagatz decision, saying that “one cannot accept the unlimited entry of foreign citizens into the country when it is not clear whether they intend to leave and, if so, when.” The Israel Minister of Tourism Yoel Razvozov (Yesh Atid), and Chairman of the Knesset Financial Commission Alex Kushnir (Yisrael Beiteinu) said they would not allow the abolition of the visa-free regime with Ukraine²⁴.

Ukraine’s Attempts to Change the Policy of Jerusalem

On 20 March 2022, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, spoke online before members of the Knesset.²⁵ His speech was broadcast by the leading Israeli TV channels, and on a large screen he could be watched by the participants of the rally in support of Ukraine on the square in front of the Habima Theater in Tel Aviv, where thousands of Israelis and citizens of Ukraine were present. This address was preceded by a series of successful speeches before foreign parliaments, in which Volodymyr Zelenskyy skilfully used emotions and historical analogies. He often appealed to the citizens of one or another country to put pressure on their government to provide aid to Ukraine. Part of his speech consisted of accusations and reproaches against Israel, which did not introduce sanctions against Russia, does not supply weapons to Ukraine, and has created problems for Ukrainians entering the country. The president of Ukraine recalled the close historical ties between the Ukrainian and Jewish peoples, and also compared the Russian invasion

of Ukraine to the Holocaust, because both events threatened the total extermination of peoples.

However, the reaction of the Israeli society turned out not to be as expected in Kyiv. In Israel, the Holocaust is understood as an unprecedented event in human history. Comparing any other events to the Holocaust is considered a trivialisation or even a denial of the Shoah. Commentators saw in the words of the president of Ukraine about sanctions against Russia and the supply of weapons an accusation of indifference towards Israel. And in response, they put forward a considerable list of claims against Ukraine, including voting in the UN “against the interests of Israel”, a failure to recognise Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organisations, no willingness to move the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and maintaining a consulate in Ramallah²⁶. Some of the commentators even recalled a survey conducted at the end of 2021 in Ukraine by the Israeli embassy, when almost 54% replied that they do not support “either side” in the diplomatic conflict between Israel and Iran²⁷.

Criticism of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s speech came from both government representatives and the opposition. Communications Minister Yoaz Handel and Religious Zionist Party leader Bezalel Smotrich, expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people, said that comparisons of modern events with the Holocaust were outrageous. Likud deputy Yuval Steinitz went even further, recalling that many Ukrainians during

24 Развозов и Кушнир выступили против Шкаед, они требуют не отменять безвизовый режим с Украиной (*Razvozov and Kushnir opposed Shaked, they demand not to cancel the visa-free regime with Ukraine*), “NEWSru.co.il”, 04 July 2022 [https://www.newsru.co.il/israel/4jul2022/ua_il_110.html]

25 *Speech of President Zelenskyy for Knesset*, 30 March 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSYMqkv5olM]

26 L. Harkov, *Zelensky strikes the wrong note to bring Knesset to his side – analysis*, “Jerusalem Post”, 20 March 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-701850]; *Ukraine repeatedly votes against Israel in U.N. but is making demands*, “J-Wire”, 20 June 2022 [https://www.jwire.com.au/ukraine-repeatedly-votes-against-israel-in-u-n-but-is-making-demands/].

27 *Украинцы признались, что они думают об Израиле (Ukrainians admitted what they think about Israel)*, “Vesti. Israel in Russian”, 23 December 2021 [https://www.vesti.co.il/main/article/s1375vzsy]

World War II “enthusiastically helped the Nazis exterminate Jews by appropriating their property”²⁸. Representatives of the left and liberal parties refrained from criticizing the speech of the president of Ukraine. On 27 April, in a speech on the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Prime Minister Bennett said that “as the years go by, there is more and more discourse in the world that compares other difficult events to the Holocaust. But no. Even the most difficult wars today are not the Holocaust and are not comparable to the Holocaust.”²⁹. Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian president is among the intended targets of these words.

The Arab community in Israel reacted even more sharply to Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s speech. Arab commentators noted the pro-Israeli bias of the president of Ukraine. Palestinian member of the Knesset Ahmad Al-Tibi said in a tweet that “Zelenskyy’s speech was a Zionist one by excellence, hitting its bottom when he gave Israel the historical status of victim by quoting Golda Meir.”³⁰ Haifa University political science professor Asad Ghanem, expressed outrage at Russia’s desire to occupy Ukraine and assured that most Palestinians want Ukraine to win. But in his opinion, Zelenskyy, in his speech, reversed the roles of the occupier and the occupied – Israel and Palestine³¹.

The attempt to sway public opinion in Israel to the Ukrainian side, using the personal charisma of the president of Ukraine, a Jew by origin, and through historical

analogies, was not successful. Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to sharply criticise the Israeli government. “Unfortunately, I have nothing to say about most of the items of the necessary assistance from Israel to Ukraine,”³² he told Hebrew University students in June. Ukraine’s ambassador to Israel Yevhen Korniychuk, tries to put pressure on the Israeli government to obtain a supply of weapons, to impose sanctions against Russia, and to cancel restrictions on entry to Israel for Ukrainians. However, such tactics in Israel were not successful.



The attempt to sway public opinion in Israel to the Ukrainian side, using the personal charisma of the president of Ukraine, a Jew by origin, and through historical analogies, was not successful. Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to sharply criticise the Israeli government

Another topic is Russia’s attempts to monopolise the narrative of victory in World War II, which Ukraine has tried to prevent. Ambassador Yevhen Korniychuk appealed to the Israeli government with a request to change the date of the Victory Day over Nazism, which has been a public holiday in Israel since 2017, from May 9 to May 8. After consultations with Israeli veteran

28 *Министры о речи Зеленского: он – неблагодарный, сравнение с Холокостом возмутительно* (Ministers about Zelenskyy’s speech: he is ungrateful, comparison with the Holocaust is outrageous), “Vesti. Israel in Russian”, 20 March 2022 [https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/h1gav1sf5]

29 *PM Bennett’s Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day Speech at Yad Vashem*, Prime Minister’s Office, 27 April 2022 [https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/event_yadvashem270422]

30 Q. Muaddi, Palestinian factions and MKs slam Zelenskyy’s speech before the Israeli Knesset, “New Arab”, 22 March 2022 [https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/palestinians-slam-zelenskys-speech-knesset]

31 A. Ghanem, *Dear President Zelensky, your support for Israel is a disgrace*, “Middle East Eye”, 22 March 2022 [https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/russia-ukraine-war-israel-palestine-zelensky-support-disgrace]

32 *Address by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the community of major educational institutions of Israel*, “President of Ukraine. Official website”, 23 June 2022 [https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vistup-prezidenta-volodimira-zelenskogo-pered-spilnotoyu-pro-76009]

organisations, instead of the traditional procession, a ceremony was held at the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem, near the monument to the fallen Jewish soldiers who fought in the USSR army. The head of the Union of Veterans of World War II, 96-year-old Abraham Greenside, decided not to invite representatives of diplomatic missions³³.

Israel Before Snap Election: Discussions About Ukraine and Russia

In summer, the foreign policy line of Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz began to take shape in the government coalition, a line which began to prevail over Naftali Bennett's attempts to maintain an equidistant policy, which historian Yehuda Bauer compared to fence-sitting – both uncomfortable and causing moral damage³⁴. The representative of Israel took part in the international conference on the supply of weapons to Ukraine at the Ramstein base in April 2022. The minister of defence decided to provide Kyiv with protective gear for its rescue and emergency organisations³⁵.

Due to the prime minister Bennett's resignation in late June, Israel is holding a snap election on 1 November 2022. Up until the elections, the government is headed by Yair Lapid, who is considered one of the biggest sympathisers of Ukraine among Israeli politicians, and became an object of criticism from Russia. The growing influence of left-liberals may strengthen Israel's pro-Ukrainian position. Before US President Joe Biden's visit to Israel in July 2022, Benny Gantz announced that Israel's additional

aid to Ukraine includes 1,500 helmets, 1,500 protective vests, hundreds of mine protection suits, 1,000 gas masks and dozens of hazmat filtration systems for Ukraine's emergency services³⁶. However, it is not worth counting on Israel to start supplying weapons to Ukraine.



There are more and more problems in Russian-Israeli relations, fuelled by such cases as a scandal concerning the anti-Semitic words of Russian minister Sergey Lavrov, or Russia's claims to the Alexander Compound in Jerusalem, and Russia's attempts to close the Jewish Agency

There are more and more problems in Russian-Israeli relations, fuelled by such cases as a scandal concerning the anti-Semitic words of Russian minister Sergey Lavrov, or Russia's claims to the Alexander Compound in Jerusalem, and Russia's attempts to close the Jewish Agency. On 26 July, Netanyahu accused the prime minister and defence minister, his political rivals, of mismanaging Israel's relationship with Russia, amid growing tensions over Moscow's attempt to force the Jewish Agency from its borders. At a press conference, he said that for years "we have led a measured, balanced and responsible relationship" with Russia, but that there was currently "a dangerous crisis" and Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Defence

33 E. Mar'yash, *Праздник раздора: как в Израиле отметят День Победы (Feast of Discord: how Israel celebrates Victory Day)*, "Detali", 29 April 2022 [<https://detaly.co.il/prazdnik-razdora-v-izraile-vse-taki-otmetyat-9-maya/>]

34 Y. Bauer, *The Russo-Ukrainian War Through a Historian's Eyes*, "Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs", 2022, p. 4 [<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/23739770.2022.2056376?needAccess=true> access: 28 July 2022]

35 E. Fabian, *In policy shift, Israel to send flak jackets and helmets to Ukraine*, "Times of Israel", 20 April 2022 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-policy-shift-israel-to-send-flak-jackets-and-helmets-to-ukraine/>]

36 *Gantz approves shipment of Israeli protective gear aid to Ukrainian civilians*, "Jerusalem Post", 12 July 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/international/article-711875>]

Minister Benny Gantz were “babbling” and “endangering our national security”³⁷. However, issues of relations with Ukraine and Russia are unlikely to affect the election results.



Ukraine has not yet managed to change the position of Israel, which is highly immune to international pressure. Disregarding who becomes the prime minister of Israel in November, one should hardly expect changes in policy apropos the Russian-Ukrainian war

The results of the snap election are still difficult to predict. Likud will obviously take first place, and Yesh Atid – the second. Third place will go to a coalition led by Benny Gantz. Benjamin Netanyahu wants to create a coalition of right-wing parties based on Likud, with the participation of the political parties of Orthodox Jews and religious Zionists. Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the opposition leader has not taken a public position for a long time. If he wins, Israel will take a position of neutrality in the Russian-Ukrainian war. A victory for Lapid and Gantz leaves little chance for Israel to take a pro-Ukrainian position.

Conclusion

Israel considers itself a regional power whose interests are in the Middle East, where the situation is currently tense. Israelis mostly support their government’s policy regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war – condemning aggression, providing humanitarian aid, but not weapons, with the exception of the actual cancellation of the visa-free regime for Ukrainians.

Ukraine has not yet managed to change the position of Israel, which is highly immune to international pressure. Disregarding who becomes the prime minister of Israel in November, one should hardly expect changes in policy apropos the Russian-Ukrainian war. Israel will be guided not by values, but by its own interests, and building an anti-Iran coalition will be at the centre of its policy.

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37 Keller-Lynn C. *Netanyahu blames PM for Russia ‘crisis’; Lapid: You haven’t bothered to get updates*, “Times of Israel”, 26 July 2022 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-blames-pm-for-russia-crisis-lapid-you-havent-bothered-to-get-updates/>]

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