

Report

# Russian Disinformation in Israel

Kraków 2024

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## About the project



Instytut Badań  
nad Turcją



Disinformation  
in MENAT



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# Introduction

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Israel is a unique political partner for the Russian Federation due to the significant presence of the Russian-speaking diaspora, who migrated from the territories of the former Soviet Union after 1991. Their descendants remain an important part of the Israeli population to this day. Additionally, the close ties between Russian oligarchs from Vladimir Putin's inner circle and Israel (many of whom hold Israeli citizenship) are of considerable relevance to this relationship. Both nations share overlapping interests in the Middle East and the West, which, in certain aspects, position Israel and Russia as allies. Partnership with the Kremlin has been crucial for the Israeli military in recent decades, particularly in operations aimed at limiting Iranian influence in Syria and targeting weapon shipments to Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, Russia also supports Israel's key regional rivals, adding complexity to bilateral relations. Therefore, Moscow conducts disinformation and propaganda campaigns, disseminates false information, and seeks to leverage the Russian-speaking diaspora in Israel to strengthen its position. It exploits existing resentments, prejudices, and beliefs present in Israeli society and among the Israeli political class, particularly distrust of multilateral political relations and international institutions representing the liberal international order, as well as the widespread perception of anti-Semitism in Western societies.

This report aims to identify the techniques and narratives used by Russia in Israel, discuss its strategy, and demonstrate how these techniques and narratives align with the current situation in Israel. The report analyzes the impact of Russian activities on the social sphere, public opinion, and the political class in Israel. It highlights how Russian actions may affect Polish-Israeli relations and Poland's image, concluding with findings and recommendations to mitigate the damage caused by Russian disinformation.

This report has been prepared based on an independent analysis of social media, the media landscape, and the political situation in Israel. The analysis is further supplemented by a review of current literature, including articles published by Israeli think tanks, which have also identified Russian disinformation activities in the country. However, this report aims to propose solutions tailored to Polish audiences, improving Poland's position and enhancing its security in relations with Israel.

The report's final pages present a summary of the main conclusions drawn from the analysis, as well as recommendations for the future. These recommendations pertain to measures that could be implemented in Poland, necessary actions to be taken in Israel, and potential developments in bilateral relations with Israel and Palestine.



# Chapter 1.

## Russian Information Strategy in Israel

The Russian information strategy in Israel focuses on influencing public opinion to **undermine trust in the West—particularly the United States, the European Union, and international institutions such as NATO and Ukraine**. This strategy finds fertile ground, as it aligns, at least partially, with the perceptions of Western institutions held by Israeli society. In a 2021 Statista survey, only 22% of Israeli Jews viewed the European Union as friendly toward Israel (Statista, 2024). Similarly, a 2023 Pew Research Center report revealed that 76% of surveyed Israelis held a negative view of the United Nations, rising to 82% among the Jewish population (PEW, 2023).

The premises of Russia's information strategy in Israel, consistent with its doctrines of information and hybrid warfare, allow for maximizing influence over Israel's domestic and foreign policy without significant deployment of military or diplomatic resources. Russia employs information warfare techniques to manipulate messaging and control the flow of information reaching the public. The goal is to intensify anti-Western sentiment and delegitimize international institutions and the concept of international law. The strategic objectives of Russian information warfare in this context largely align with the perspective of Israeli society regarding the functioning of the international community.

Notably, in the messages directed at the Israeli public, Russia is not typically portrayed as an alternative leader. Instead, its information strategy tends to have a negative focus. This means that Russian propaganda is not primarily aimed at directly improving Russia's image but rather at depicting its rivals in an unfavourable light.

An essential component of Russia's information strategy is the influence of Russian oligarchs and Israeli citizens. Notable figures include Vyacheslav Moshe Kantor, Roman Abramovich, Mikhail Fridman, Viktor Vekselberg, and Boris Mints. These individuals often operate within Israeli and Russian business and political circles, frequently serving on boards or in the leadership of globally influential institutions.

## Chapter 2.

# Tools and Techniques of Disinformation Used by Russia

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Russia's strategy for influencing Israeli society and policy relies on several key techniques:

### **Manipulated information and graphics, impersonation of established media outlets**

A common technique in Russia's disinformation strategy targeting Israel involves using materials designed to resemble those of reputable mainstream media outlets, such as the Walla news portal. This approach is part of Russia's broader Doppelganger disinformation campaign in various countries, not limited to Israel (Czerny et al., 2024).

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### **The use of Russian-language information channels such as Russia Today (RT) and Arabic-language channels such as RT Arabic**

These channels are accessed by the Russian-speaking segment of Israeli society, as well as by Palestinian residents in the territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and by Arab citizens of Israel.

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### **The dissemination of false information or satire distorting reality**

Content is published on social media platforms aiming to influence attitudes toward, for example, Ukraine or the European Union, exploiting social conflicts existing in Israel. Satirical content may, among other things, suggest that Ukraine is supplying Hamas with rocket weaponry used during the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 7 October 2023.

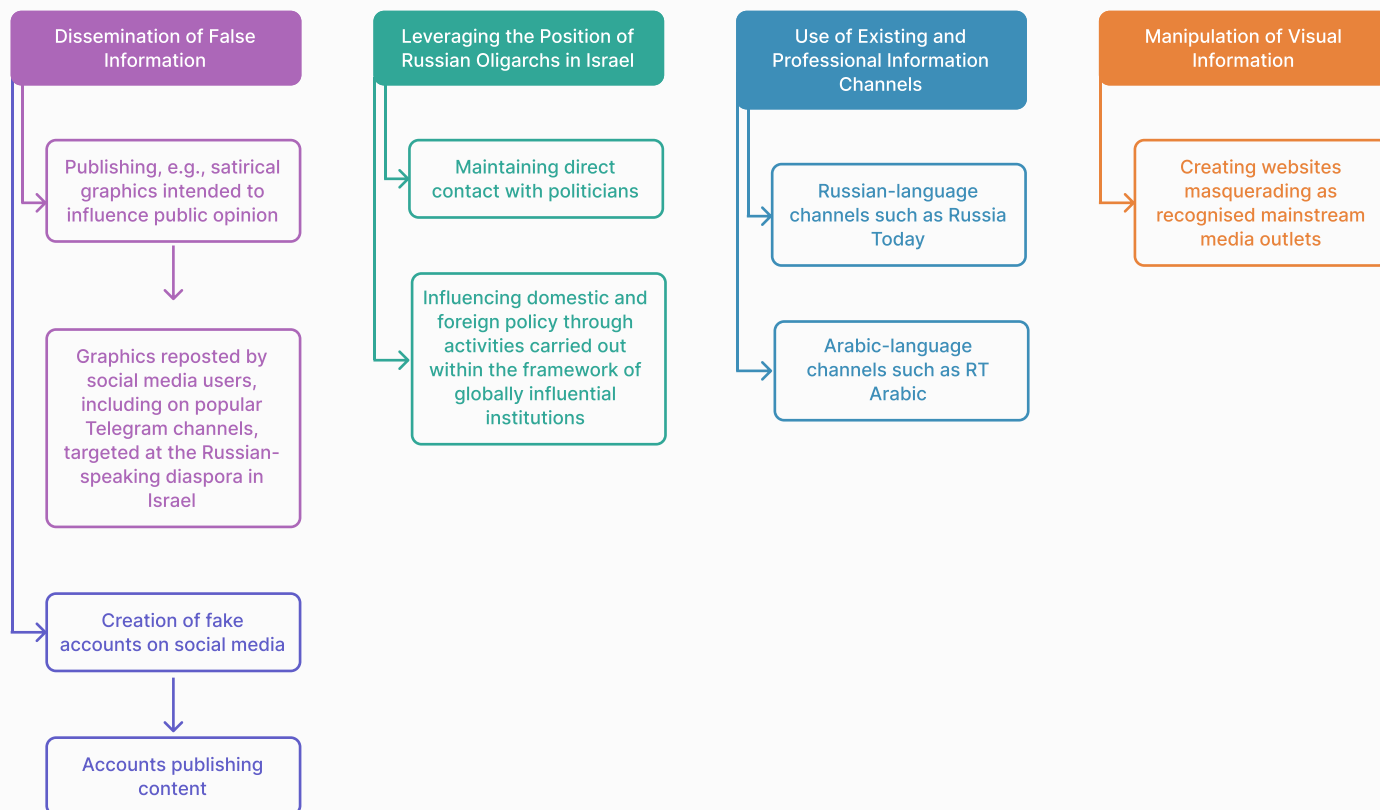
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### **The use of Russian oligarchs with Israeli citizenship to influence public opinion**

Russian oligarchs holding strategically significant positions in public trust institutions such as the Yad Vashem Institute may influence image strategies to strengthen existing divisions between Israel and the West.

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## RUSSIAN INFORMATION STRATEGY IN ISRAEL



**Graphics 1:** Russian Information Strategy in Israel.  
**Source:** Own study.

# Chapter 3.

## The Political and Media Landscape in Israel

### 3.1. Political Background in Israel

Israeli politics are shaped by **social diversity and the associated multiparty system**, which results in significant divisions. The main political actors are Zionist parties, although there are also parties representing Arab minorities. Since 2018, Israel has faced a **political crisis** caused by the instability of successive governments. Between 2019 and 2022, five parliamentary elections were held. After the 2019 elections, no party achieved a governing majority, leading to elections in 2020. The 35th government of Israel, formed after those elections, was dissolved in 2021. The subsequent government also lasted less than a year. This situation changed only after the most recent elections in 2022, which resulted in the formation of the 37th government of Israel, a coalition comprising the following parties: Likud, Shas, United Torah Judaism, Religious Zionism, New Hope, Otzma Yehudit, and Noam.

A central figure in Israeli politics is Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Zionist, national-conservative Likud party. He served as Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999, from 2009 to 2021, and then again from 2022 to the present, effectively holding power almost continuously since 2009 (with a brief one-year hiatus during which Naftali Bennett replaced him). Netanyahu is considered a controversial figure, and his actions polarise Israeli society. He has faced accusations of corruption, criticism for collaborating with far-right nationalist and religious parties, and allegations of authoritarian tendencies, with some viewing him as a threat to democracy in the country.

**Corruption allegations** against Netanyahu surfaced during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which began in 2019. The pandemic also **exacerbated economic and political issues**. During this time, the Prime Minister declared a state of emergency. Initially, Netanyahu's actions led to peak support for Likud, but by July and August 2020, protests emerged against his handling of health policies. Restrictions in Israel were lifted in 2021, while entry restrictions for non-citizens were not fully lifted until 2022.

One of the controversial moves of Netanyahu's government was **the attempt to introduce a judicial reform in 2023**. This reform aimed to reduce the power of the Supreme Court by limiting its judicial review authority and transferring control over judicial appointments to the government. As a result, ministers would effectively appoint and dismiss judges, while the Supreme Court would no longer be able to rule on the unconstitutionality of laws

proposed in the Knesset. These proposals received mixed reactions both in Israel and internationally. While some groups, such as right-wing politicians and religious Zionist rabbis, supported the reform, public opinion surveys indicated that the majority of Israeli society was opposed to it. Critics, including opposition members and activists, argued that the changes would threaten the independence of the judiciary. Public outrage over the government's legislative efforts led to **mass protests lasting from January to October 2023**, effectively delaying the reform's implementation. Despite unfavourable public opinion, a law passed in July 2023 revoked the Supreme Court's ability to oversee government actions. However, the Supreme Court overturned this law on 1 January 2024. The protests diminished in intensity after **the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023**, followed by the formation of a wartime cabinet on 12 October 2023.

The events of 7 October 2023 and their aftermath have become another pressing issue causing unrest among Israeli citizens. After the Hamas attack, Israel launched a military operation in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The attack on 7 October was widely regarded as an intelligence failure. A significant topic in public debate has been the rescue of hostages abducted by Palestinian militants. Netanyahu has been accused of not doing enough to secure the hostages' release. War-related tensions triggered protests aimed at pressuring the Prime Minister to agree to a ceasefire and secure the hostages' freedom. During these demonstrations, the issue of judicial reform also resurfaced.

The tense situation in the country following 7 October 2023 has led to a rise in **anti-Arab sentiments** in Israel. Public attitudes towards military actions have further deepened societal divisions, particularly between Jewish and Arab citizens. Internationally, the conflict has been widely discussed, with accusations against Israel of committing war crimes and genocide. Additionally, significant questions have arisen concerning the future of the Gaza Strip and the recognition of the State of Palestine.

## 3.2. Media Context

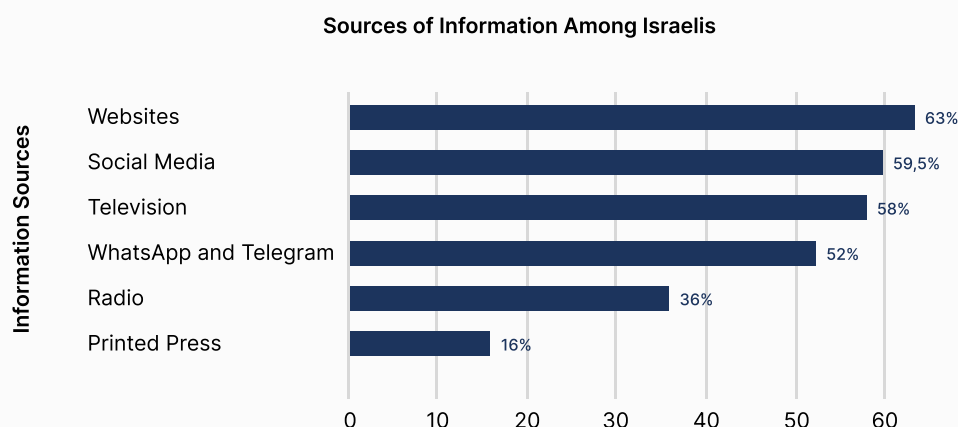
Israeli media are diverse. The public has access to television stations, radio channels, printed magazines, online platforms available in multiple languages, and social media. Hebrew is the most widely used language, followed by others such as Arabic, English, French, and Russian. Most media outlets are privately owned enterprises, making it difficult to determine whose influence they may be under, as noted by a Reporters Without Borders (RSF) report (2024). For the same reason, these media outlets often depend on their owners' commercial interests (Freedom House, 2023).

**Censorship exists** in Israel and can be applied when there is a risk that a published article may threaten national security. The Israeli Military Censor, headed by the Chief Censor, is appointed by the Minister of Defence but operates independently of the ministry. Although decisions made by the censor can be appealed, it should be noted that any potentially controversial articles related to national security must be approved before publication. Failure to comply can result in journalists losing their right to practice their profession and facing legal consequences. Additionally, as of 2024, under the so-called "Al Jazeera Law" (which passed its first reading in April 2024 with a vote of 71 to 10), it is possible to ban foreign entities from broadcasting if they are deemed a threat to national security. This law was applied to Qatar-based Al Jazeera, which broadcasts reports from the Gaza Strip.

Nevertheless, media outlets in Israel retain considerable freedom to criticise government policies. According to the 2023 report by Freedom House, Israel scored 3 out of 4 points for media freedom and independence. However, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) highlights the repression faced by journalists, particularly Arab journalists, and police brutality during anti-government protests. RSF also notes that many Palestinian journalists are held in Israeli detention.

According to surveys conducted in December 2023, 30% of Jews and 36% of Arabs expressed trust in the media (Israel Democracy Institute, 2024). Other IDI studies suggest that, on average, 46% of Israelis trust the media (Shwartz-Altshuler & Sapozhnikova, 2024).

Websites and social media are Israelis' primary sources of information, followed by television in third place. These are followed by messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram, then radio, and finally, printed press (Shwartz-Altshuler & Sapozhnikova, 2024).



**Graphics 2:** Sources of Information Among Israelis.

**Source:** Graphic generated using AI based on data from the IDI report.

## Television

The main languages used in Israeli television are Hebrew and English. The level of trust varies depending on the television station. For selected channels, the trust levels are as follows:

Channel	Ownership Type	Owner	Political Affiliations	Trust Level	Broadcast Languages
<b>Kan 11</b>	Public	Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation	Neutral; aims to present information objectively	60%	Mainly Hebrew; programs in Arabic and English, subtitles in Arabic/Russian
<b>Kanal 12</b>	Private	Keshet Media Group	Considered centrist; avoids clear political affiliations	54%	Hebrew; some programs with subtitles in Arabic/Russian
<b>Kanal 13</b>	Private	Reshet Media	Viewed as centrist; no clear political affiliations	46%	Hebrew; some programs with subtitles in Arabic/Russian
<b>Kanal 14</b>	Private	Jewish Israeli Channel Ltd.	Right-wing affiliations; supportive of Benjamin Netanyahu	35%	Hebrew; some programs with subtitles in Arabic/Russian

**Table 1:** Television in Israel.  
**Source:** Own study.

## Public Broadcasters

The national public broadcaster in Israel is the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation (IPBC), formerly known as the Israeli Broadcasting Authority. It is known in Hebrew as Kan (meaning 'here') and in Arabic as Makan (meaning 'place'). The IPBC is part of the European Broadcasting Union.

Channels owned by IPBC include:

- Kan 11
- Madat 33 – a channel broadcasting in Hebrew
- Kan Educational – aimed at children

Another public channel is the Knesset Channel, owned by the Second News Company, which serves as a parliamentary channel.

## Private Broadcasters

The majority of television channels in Israel are private broadcasters. Data on selected private Israeli channels are as follows:

Channel	Language	Owner	Political Affiliations
Keszet 12	Hebrew	Keshet Media Group	No clear political affiliation
Reszet 13	Hebrew	Reshet Media Group	No clear political affiliation
Kanał 14	Hebrew	Jewish Israeli Channel Ltd.	Right-wing, supportive of Benjamin Netanyahu
i24NEWS	English, French, Arabic, Hebrew	Patrick Drahi	Right-wing
Kanał 9 (Israel Plus)	Russian, Hebrew	Alexander Levin	No clear political affiliation
Hala TV	Arabic	Panorama Group	Targeted at the Arab community in Israel



ILTV	English	Simon Falic & David Herzog	No clear political affiliation; aimed at a global audience
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**Table 2:** Private Broadcasters in Israel.**Source:** Own study.

## Radio

Like television, radio stations in Israel are divided into public and private. The Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation (IPBC) owns eight radio stations, including:

- Kan Bet – focuses primarily on news.
- Makan – an Arabic-language station.
- Kan REKA – a Russian-language station.

A noteworthy station is Galei Cahal (Galac), which is state-funded and owned by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). It broadcasts on frequencies accessible in bomb shelters.

Other radio stations in Israel include: Radio Tel Aviv 102FM, Kol Chai – targeted at religious Jewish communities, similar to Kol BaRama, Ashams – an Arabic-language station.

## Printed Press

Popular magazines and newspapers in Israel include: Israel Hayom, Yedioth Ahronoth, Haaretz, Maariv, Globes, B'Sheva. Arabic-language publications include: Kul al-Arab, al-Ittihad.

## Internet

A variety of news portals and online publications are available, such as:

- Ynet (<https://www.ynet.co.il>).
- Walla! News (<https://www.walla.co.il>).
- Haarec (<https://www.haaretz.com/>) – a liberal publication.
- The Jerusalem Post (<https://www.jpost.com/>), primarily available in English.
- Israel Hayom (<https://www.israelhayom.co.il/>) – a conservative portal.
- Times of Israel (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/>) – available in several languages, including English.

- Aruc Szewa (<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/>) – a right-wing, religious Zionist portal available in Hebrew, English, and Russian.
- Panet (<https://panet.com/>) an Arabic-language portal featuring reports from Palestin.
- Arab48 (<https://www.arab48.com/>) – an Arabic-language portal.

The IPBC also offers its online platform: <https://www.kan.org.il/>

## Social Media

The most popular social media platforms in Israel are WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) (Wiener, Stegman, 2024). The popularity of these platforms and the time spent using them vary across different age groups. Social media is used for official accounts of government institutions, the IDF, politicians, and public figures associated with the government.

## Arabic Media

Approximately 20% of Israel's population are Arabs, leading to the presence of Arabic-language media in the country. However, these media face challenges such as political pressure, lack of funding, and censorship, particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Repressive measures also target Arabic media broadcasting from outside Israel. An example of the difficulties faced by Arabic media in Israel includes the raid on the editorial office and closure of the Israeli branch of the Qatari broadcaster Al Jazeera, deemed a threat to state security due to its published content.

## Russian-Language Media

Due to a large group of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Russian-language media can also be found in Israel. These outlets primarily target older audiences, as younger generations are more likely to use English or Hebrew. Another challenge for Russian-language media is competition from globally accessible Russian media. An example of such a global medium is RTVI. Russian-language media in Israel often have a right-wing orientation.

# Chapter 4.

## Analysis of the Effects of Disinformation

### 4.1. Political Effects of Disinformation

Russian disinformation in Israel finds fertile ground. To a large extent, its strategic objectives align with those of the ruling camp in Israel over the past decade and a half. However, this does not mean that the objectives overlap entirely. Israel's international policy strategy is based on maintaining bilateral relations and strategic partnerships, particularly with the United States.

The camp of Benjamin Netanyahu, along with a significant portion of Israel's political class and society, expresses limited trust in multilateral relations, the liberal international order, and international institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, the International Criminal Court, and others. In this regard, the strategies of Israel and Russia are similar, as both seek to undermine the legitimacy of these institutions to advance their political interests, which are consistent with the widespread beliefs of their respective societies.

Due to its desire to maintain amicable relations with Russia, Israel refrained from openly supporting Ukraine in 2022 and 2023 following Russia's full-scale invasion, despite calls from Kyiv and the West. This cautious approach created an opportunity to introduce anonymous satire aimed at further deepening the rift between Israel and the Ukraine-supporting West. On social media, accounts set up as part of the Doppelganger campaign posted satirical graphics suggesting that arming Ukraine is equivalent to arming Hamas. While this alone has likely not influenced Israel's cautious support for Ukraine, such actions reinforce existing negative stereotypes in Israel about Western international institutions, portraying them as genuine political threats.



In the illustration, a person dressed in Ukrainian colours and national symbols waves to a figure with the NATO logo on their sleeve, heading toward Gaza. The person is carrying a missile labelled "Made in the USA." On the right side of the illustration, a hand with a Palestinian national flag on the sleeve extends a dollar bill toward them. This anonymous satirical illustration has been circulated in Israel and Western countries.



In the illustration, a missile made in the United States, marked with a heart in Ukrainian national colours, strikes a target marked with the Israeli national flag. This anonymous satirical illustration has been circulated in Israel and Western countries.

However, the direct impact of Russian actions on politics becomes much more evident when examining Russian oligarchs with Israeli citizenship. One notable example is Vyacheslav Moshe Kantor, a close associate of Vladimir Putin, who has held significant roles in the European Jewish Congress (serving as its president until 2022) and in advisory bodies of the Yad Vashem Institute. In 2023, Poland decided to freeze Kantor's 19.82% stake in the Grupa Azoty chemical company, and the European Union imposed sanctions on him. In his public activities, Kantor utilised Russia's state position, portraying Russia as a model country in combating anti-Semitism (Bryc, 2020). Around the same time, the European Jewish Congress, under Kantor's leadership, criticised Poland for an alleged increase in cases of anti-Semitism. Such actions undermined Poland's international standing and complicated bilateral Polish-Israeli relations, especially during the diplomatic crisis following the amendment of Poland's Administrative Procedure Code in 2021.

In the political context, Russian disinformation, which leverages existing societal prejudices, also contributes to strengthening the position of politicians who base their messaging on the fears of Israeli society related to security concerns, particularly

regarding the activities of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, as well as Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

## 4.2. Social and International Effects of Disinformation

The Russian propaganda campaign *Doppelganger* also contributes to the spread of disinformation within Israeli society. Similar campaigns targeting other countries involve disseminating false information through websites designed to resemble popular platforms. On social media, posts are created to provoke specific controversies. While these posts often fail to generate significant engagement, some gain traction and reach more popular channels (Czerny, Michlin-Shapir, Siman-Tov, 2024; Siman-Tov, Michlin-Shapir, 2024).

This threat is particularly evident on social media platforms. One example of such activity is the dissemination of information on popular Telegram channels, such as *Sdartoli*<sup>1</sup> or *Carmel News*<sup>2</sup>, claiming that the 2024 Paris Olympics could be as dangerous for Israelis as the 1972 Munich Olympics, where an attack targeted Israeli athletes. It also happens that such falsely disseminated information reaches traditional media. This occurred with the *Kan 11* channel, which repeated the claim that Hamas had acquired Ukrainian weapons (Czerny, Michlin-Shapir, Siman-Tov, 2024). It is worth noting that Telegram, a platform popular among Israelis (e.g., the group *Ukronazim*<sup>3</sup>, whose name equates Ukrainians with Nazis), is widely used to spread Russian disinformation and anti-Ukrainian propaganda in Hebrew. However, other social media platforms, such as X or Facebook, are employed for these purposes (Barel, Michlin-Shapir, Czerny, 2024). Due to Facebook's stricter rules introduced in 2024, platforms such as Instagram, Reddit, and Pinterest are becoming increasingly popular for such activities (Rakov, 2024).

Another rumour spread as part of the *Doppelganger* campaign claimed that American Democrats were organising left-wing protests against judicial reform (in 2022) because Joe Biden allegedly wanted to overthrow Netanyahu's government. The tense social situation surrounding the reform was exploited to deepen political and social divisions, including those between secular and religious individuals. Suggestions were made that the United States intended to corrupt Israel, alienate Jews from Judaism, and train Palestinian Hamas fighters to fight against Israelis. Notably, the *Doppelganger* campaign also disseminated content in Hebrew that aligned with the narratives of opponents of judicial reform and critics of the American administration (Rakov, 2024).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://web.telegram.org/k/#@sdarotali>, [access: 26.12.2024].

<sup>2</sup> <https://t.me/alexme hacarmel>, [access: 26.12.2024].

<sup>3</sup> <https://t.me/ukroterror2/11339>, [access: 26.12.2024].



Russia extensively exploits the war in the Gaza Strip to influence public opinion, promoting narratives favourable to President Vladimir Putin and justifying Russia's aggression against Ukraine. By using imagery from Gaza, it seeks to normalise the ongoing conflict and desensitise the public. Furthermore, it argues that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the result of the U.S.'s inept policies in the Middle East. The war is portrayed as a direct conflict with the United States, claiming that the U.S. uses Israel as a proxy and that the Gaza conflict is, in essence, a proxy war (Shamrai, 2023). Additionally, the narratives suggest that U.S. relations harm Israel's security and that the U.S. has abandoned a weakened Israel.

There is also widespread promotion of the fear that Israel and Ukraine are competing for Western support. The suggestion is that aid to Ukraine might be halted because of Israel, and Israel should forego assistance to Ukraine due to its own financial needs (Barel, Michlin-Shapir, Czerny, 2024; Rakov, 2024). Concerning Ukraine, accusations of anti-Semitism and Nazism are made, even directed at Volodymyr Zelensky. On the one hand, Russia accuses Ukraine of anti-Semitic behaviour, while on the other, it adopts such attitudes towards Ukrainian leaders. Russian media have also spread claims that Hamas allegedly purchased Ukrainian weapons, which were then used to kill civilians.

Russia seeks to portray itself as a state condemning anti-Semitism, as demonstrated by its handling of the incident in Makhachkala in October 2023. During this event, riots broke out in which individuals stormed a plane arriving from Tel Aviv, searching for "refugees from Israel" while chanting slogans calling for the killing of Jews. This situation was criticised by the Russian authorities, who blamed Ukraine for organising the unrest (Shamrai, 2023). By doing so, the Russian government attempted to present itself as friendly toward Jews, even though the Doppelganger campaign contributed to the spread of anti-Semitic content in Western countries (Barel, Michlin-Shapir, Czerny, 2024).

Russian disinformation likely existed in Israeli media even before October 7, 2023. In addition to fuelling tensions over judicial reform, in previous years, Russian disinformation influenced the dissemination of false information and anti-vaccine sentiments during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bulshtein, 2024). Alongside Jewish audiences, particularly those with right-wing views, the Arab community in Israel also provides fertile ground for Russian activities and becomes a target of disinformation attacks (Siman-Tov, Michlin-Shapir, 2024).

## 4.3. International Consequences of Russian Disinformation

Russia's activities in the region are not the primary cause of tensions between Israel and its partners in the region or the West. However, as noted earlier, they exploit existing resentments and stereotypes prevalent in Israeli society, skillfully integrating into Russian messaging the widespread belief that international institutions are biased against the Jewish State and Israelis.

Israeli politicians have also successfully blocked support for Ukraine, despite efforts by Ukrainian officials to secure missile defence systems, including the popular Iron Dome system. Israeli politicians, however, avoid antagonising Ukraine, focusing their arguments on Israel's security concerns and the fear of unintentionally strengthening regional rivals. On 29 June 2023, Benjamin Netanyahu stated that his government ruled out providing Ukraine with missile defence systems out of concern that they could fall into Iranian hands if captured by Russia.

According to documents from the Social Design Agency, a Moscow-based firm linked to the Kremlin and (at least partially) responsible for conducting the Doppelganger campaign, one of the strategic goals of activities in Israel was to ensure that Israeli political parties would not support the delivery of weapons to Ukraine (Blau, Czerny, 2024). However, it should not be claimed that the lack of support for Ukraine from Israeli political parties is solely the result of Russian disinformation efforts. Instead, Russian disinformation builds on existing resentments and genuine fears among Israeli policymakers and public opinion about strengthening Iran, viewed as Israel's most significant regional rival.

## Chapter 5.

# Conclusions

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Russian disinformation in Israel exploits widespread prejudices in Israeli society, including those related to the perception of international institutions as systemically anti-Semitic.

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Russian disinformation in Israel influences society by leveraging social media platforms, especially Telegram, as well as some Russian-language media accessible in Israel. Since many media channels are privately owned, they may be susceptible to Russian influence, potentially disseminating Russian propaganda among their audiences.

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Russia exploits controversial events in Israeli society, such as the 2023 judicial reform or the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, to incite social unrest and propagate its disinformation. It capitalises on pre-existing issues to construct narratives aligned with Russian propaganda.

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Russian efforts aim to foster hostility toward Ukraine, justify the Russian invasion, and present Russia as a state friendly to Jews. In this context, the conflict with Palestine and the war in the Gaza Strip are mainly utilized to reinforce these narratives.

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Russian propaganda is intended to deepen divisions within Israeli society, whether along ethnic, political, or religious lines. Particularly vulnerable groups include right-leaning Jews and Arabs, who are also targets of disinformation campaigns.

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Fears regarding the West are also stoked, partly through the Doppelganger campaign. The goal is to foster hostility toward the United States and the European Union in Israeli society. Anti-American propaganda aims to instill a sense of abandonment by the United States.

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Israel holds strategic significance in the Middle East, influencing the policies of other regional and global actors. As such, it is a crucial potential target for Russian disinformation efforts aimed at weakening its ties with the West.

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In recent years, the interest in relations involving Israel, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, Syria, and Lebanon among the Polish public demonstrates a need to strengthen the role of foreign correspondents.

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Russia's disinformation activities are part of a long-term political strategy aimed at weakening the West's ties with international partners, including actors in the Middle East. The erosion of the perception of liberal democratic institutions, international organisations, European states, and the United States could, in the long term, lead to further diplomatic crises and the delegitimisation of liberal democracy in Israel and among the public in other Middle Eastern countries.

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## Chapter 6.

### Recommendations for the Future

Introduce and strengthen education among Polish citizens to raise awareness of Russia's disinformation strategies, using examples collected in Poland, Europe, and other regions, including Israel.

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Monitor Israeli state and non-state institutions with national and global reach to develop recommendations for the Polish government and non-governmental institutions. This would enable them to verify the presence of potential Russian influence more effectively, even within renowned institutions (e.g., Yad Vashem Institute).

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Strengthen the position of Polish public and private media and strive to extend their reach to Israeli public opinion. This could include the development of English, Hebrew, or Arabic editions to convey Poland's perspective on domestic and foreign policy and explain Poland's positions on various international issues.

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Expand the network of Polish foreign correspondents to report on events in Israel and Palestine for Polish media, both public and private, thereby strengthening the role of the Polish Press Agency.

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