

Russia's Palestine Discourse in the Context of the Ukraine War: Anti-Westernism or a Principled Stance?

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Abstract

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the events of October 7, 2023, Moscow has consistently linked the two conflicts in its diplomatic discourse, accusing Western governments of applying a double standard: condemning Russian actions in Ukraine while tolerating or supporting Israeli military operations in Gaza. This article examines whether this rhetorical linkage reflects a genuinely principled position rooted in Russia's long-standing support for Palestinian statehood, or whether it functions primarily as an instrumental strategy to deflect criticism of Russia's own conduct in Ukraine and to erode the normative authority of the West in the Global South. When conducting its research, this paper drew on existing achievements from several completely distinct fields, covering three areas: Russian Middle East policies, soft balancing theory, and strategic narrative studies on the war in Ukraine. Beyond sorting out prior research, it also applied the qualitative discourse analysis research method, with the specific analysis targets being various speeches publicly delivered by Russian officials between 2022 and 2026, to extract Russia's discursive logic from these statements. It deconstructed and analyzed all of Russia's public statements within a broader context: Russia has long sought to reshape the international order that formed after the end of the Cold War, and to cement its status as a global power, yet this great power status of Russia itself has remained internationally controversial, and cannot be recognized by all parties.

The core judgment reached by this research is that the two prior narratives used to explain Russia's discourse are not contradictory, and can hold true simultaneously. That is to say, the rhetoric Russia employs externally is, on the one hand, indeed rooted in its own actual historical stance, and not fabricated out of thin air; on the other hand, it has also undergone targeted adjustment and amplification, with all content skewed toward directions that help it achieve its strategic goals, repackaging the original historical stance to be more functional. The paper terms this model, which adheres to its inherent principles while constantly seizing opportunities to strategize, "principled opportunism".

In addition, this paper supplements new perspectives for three categories of related discussions, which can help advance research in these fields. These three categories of discussions are: debates related to

Russia's diplomatic discourse, narrative studies on the discrepancy between great powers' words and deeds, and explorations of the instrumentalization of the Palestinian question in inter-state gaming.

Keywords: Russia, Palestine, Ukraine War, double standards, rhetoric related to foreign policy, Middle East, anti-Westernism, soft balancing, Global South.

1. Introduction

The entire article's discussion centers on these core directions. The flames of war in Ukraine and the military operations in Gaza were originally separated by a great geographical distance, not even close to each other on the world map, and logically should have had no connection. Yet now, in various discussions within international public opinion, the rhetoric used to talk about these two events has become firmly intertwined, and they are always brought up together. Russian officials have all made moves to bind and compare these two conflicts, the most prominent among whom is Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. They have not mentioned this just once or twice, but have explicitly compared the two conflicts on more than one occasion. Whenever the West steps forward to criticize Russia's actions in Ukraine, these Russian officials will first bring out the security arguments Russia has prepared for the Ukraine conflict to respond to their accusers. Immediately afterward, they shift their focus, bring up the Palestinian issue, and treat it as concrete proof that Western countries implement double standards, claiming that the West's positions on these two events are fundamentally inconsistent. The stakes of this discursive strategy extend well beyond rhetoric. Russia's Middle East policy has historically rested on a claim to relevance rooted in its Soviet-era support for Arab and Palestinian causes, its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and its membership in the now-defunct Middle East Quartet (Leshchenya, 2016). As Russia's material capacity to project power in the region has been strained by the costs of the Ukraine war and by setbacks in Syria, the Palestinian question has become an increasingly important arena in which Moscow can assert continued relevance through discourse even where its practical leverage has diminished (Riddle Russia, 2025; CSS ETH Zürich, 2026). This article aims to address a core question: At present, Russia is deeply mired in the war in Ukraine, yet over this period, it has repeatedly publicly spoken out on Russia's Palestine-related issues. Are these statements rooted in its consistent, historically sustained stance—genuine support for the Palestinian people's right to determine their own fate? Could these remarks merely be instrumental rhetoric from Russia? Is Russia using them simultaneously to rebuff Western criticism of itself and advance Moscow's core goal of challenging the Western dominance over international rules?

Clarifying this question is critically important for two groups of relevant stakeholders. The first group consists of scholars in the academic community that specializes in Russia's foreign policy, who need to accurately judge Russia's stance for their research, rather than only relying on its superficial rhetoric. The second group is made up of policymakers in Palestinian and Arab states, who must first clarify whether Russia can become a reliable diplomatic partner before they engage with any actor or choose their partners.

Current assessments of the situation carry far more weight than usual assessments in the past. This point in time is extremely special: the Gaza Strip is about to enter the fragile stage of post-war reconstruction,

and even a single misjudgment could stir up large-scale turmoil once again. To carry out reconstruction smoothly, it is not only necessary to gather supporting funds from the whole world, but also for all parties involved in the Gaza situation to put forward binding commitments and guarantees. No single actor can alone shoulder the responsibility of leading the entire process—the interests tied up in this matter are too complex, and the gaps to be filled are too numerous for any one party to sustain the effort independently.

Reconstruction carries such profound significance that all influential external major powers are seeking opportunities to squeeze into the reconstruction framework to secure a position, hoping to embed their own strategic demands into the long-term development trajectory of this land. Whoever gains a voice in reconstruction will be able to claim sufficient bargaining chips in the upcoming developments of the Middle East, and no one is willing to miss this opportunity. Amid the jostling of all parties, clarifying Russia's true stance has become an urgent core task (Ifri, 2026).

What needs to be clarified is not only Russia's stance, nor merely the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. This matter itself hits upon a core issue that has long been debated in the field of International Relations: when the hard power resources a major power can deploy become increasingly strained, and the space for it to actually conduct operations grows increasingly narrow, what kind of narrative framework must it put forward to maintain the global public's perception of it—to keep everyone believing that it remains a core force capable of shaping the world's landscape? To unpack this long-standing core issue, Russia's situation provides an extremely rare analytical perspective, because it combines two characteristics that almost never appear simultaneously in a single major power.

Russia's qualification to have a voice in Middle East affairs is rooted in extremely deep historical foundations. As early as the period of the Soviet Union, it consistently and firmly supported Arab nationalism in the Middle East and the local national liberation movements. This credibility has been accumulated through decades, even centuries, of sustained local engagement; few countries in the world can match it, and it can never be casually replicated by any major power that has only recently sought to intervene in Middle East affairs and has never made long-term investments in the region.

After 2022, the situation changed, and Russia's ability to translate this accumulated influence into tangible action shrank drastically. The practical obstacles it faces cannot be avoided: the war in Ukraine continues to consume massive resources, and it can barely spare additional energy to manage affairs in other regions. Beyond its own borders, in Syria—Russia's core foothold in the Middle East—it can no longer sustain the scale of its former military and diplomatic presence in the area.

This contradictory combination—on one hand, decades of accumulated profound historical heritage that qualifies its voice to be heard; on the other hand, a rapid decline in its global operational capacity that continuously hampers its ability to translate that qualification into tangible action—is unique among all major powers worldwide.

For Moscow, the Palestinian issue has come at just the right time, providing it with a highly cost-effective stage for diplomatic maneuvering. To achieve tangible diplomatic outcomes on this issue, Russia does

not need to invest exorbitant material resources, nor does it need to spend money to deploy troops or deliver supplies. It can reap benefits solely by issuing statements and conducting diplomatic activities, while easily allowing all global observers following the situation to see that it remains a top-tier major power capable of shaping global affairs.

The structure of the remainder of this paper is arranged as follows. First, Section 2 sorts out existing academic achievements, covering Russia's Middle East policy, Russia's diplomatic relations with Israel and Hamas, and all academic works that study Russia's strategic narrative and soft balancing strategies in the context of the war in Ukraine. Section 3 proposes a dual theoretical framework that integrates a constructivist perspective and a realist (i.e., instrumentalist) approach as the analytical basis for this paper. Section 4 details the discourse analysis research method adopted in this paper.. Section 5 first organizes the relevant historical background, then presents empirical research findings collated across multiple thematic dimensions, incorporates comparable cases of China and Turkey into the analysis, and specifically discusses the limitations of the research method itself. Section 6 interprets these research findings in conjunction with the theoretical framework proposed earlier. Section 7 concludes by outlining the implications of this study for future academic research and policy formulation, respectively.

Literature Review

2.1 Russia's Position Between Israel and the Palestinians Among the published academic outcomes that study Russia's Middle East policy, the vast majority have reached the same consistent judgment: over the past nearly two decades, Moscow has consistently pursued an "equidistant" strategy between Israel and Palestine—on one hand, it maintains a working relationship with Israel that enables normal exchanges and the advancement of affairs, while on the other hand, it has always voiced support for Palestine's related causes in its public statements (Šćepanović, 2024). Kertcher and Course (2024) also specifically singled out the period from 2015 to 2021, defining it as a special phase in which Russia pursued a "friendship balance" between Israel and Palestine. During that period, the personal friendship between Russian President Vladimir Putin and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu greatly assisted Russia. Relying on this personal bond, Russia was able to maintain a smoothly functioning security cooperation relationship with Israel, particularly the mediation mechanism specifically established to coordinate Israel's airstrike operations in Syria and prevent misjudgments and conflicts between the two sides' militaries, while at the same time never abandoning its long-standing public position of supporting Palestine's establishment of a state. Freedman (2023) also put forward a similar observation, describing the 75-year-long bilateral relationship between Russia and Israel as one that has been consistently fraught with troubles but always handled pragmatically. There are many factors influencing the trajectory of this relationship: not only the direct role of the Middle East's geopolitical landscape, but also the pulls of various domestic factors in Russia, including the large Russian-speaking population within Israel, which is an important condition that cannot be overlooked.

All scholars who study related issues have noticed that the balance strategy Russia has maintained for many years underwent a very obvious shift after October 7, 2023. It no longer concealed its stance, publicly adopting a more pro-Palestine position and harshly criticizing Israel's military operations, yet it never crossed the red line of directly providing weapons to Hamas or other Palestinian factions (Šćepanović, 2024).

The article by Jafari and Shafqatnia (2022) was published before the outbreak of this large-scale Israel-Palestine war, but the conclusions they reached remain highly relevant to understanding the causes and consequences of subsequent changes in the situation. At that time, they summarized three categories of variables that would influence Russia's decision-making regarding Israel: system-level, role-level, and individual-level variables. In 2025, a new study directly adopted this analytical framework and, with the help of Rosenau's continuity model, simultaneously explained two phenomena: why Russia-Israel relations continued to warm up before 2022, and why relations between the two countries suddenly cooled after 2023 (Investigation of Relations between Russia and Israel, 2025).

2.2 Russia, Hamas, and the Palestinian Factions

A specific category of research, which differs from other articles discussing Russia's Middle East policy, focuses entirely on the specific circumstances of Russia's direct dealings with Hamas and other Palestinian factions.

Russia has always been willing to keep communication channels open with Hamas, never closing this path—it has hosted delegations sent by Hamas in Moscow, and in March 2024, it held a meeting that brought together 10 different Palestinian factions. The clear purpose of organizing this meeting was to promote internal reconciliation among Palestinians and achieve national unity. These actions by Russia are completely different from the stance of the Middle East Quartet. Since Hamas won victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections, the Quartet has consistently adopted an isolationist stance toward Hamas and refused to engage with it. Russia's moves amounted to stepping outside this long-maintained framework, and this compiled record is documented in a publication by GlobalSecurity.org, 2024.

Looking at subsequent developments, there are currently several negotiations directly related to the situation in Gaza, including talks on a temporary ceasefire and on the governance of the area after the war ends. The mediators of these negotiations are mainly three countries: Egypt, Qatar, and the United States. In these negotiations, Hamas is under increasing pressure, with all parties demanding that it adopt a pragmatic stance in the talks and no longer adhere to its previous unrealistic demands. Even in this situation, Russia has not severed its contacts with Hamas, and this related record comes from Wilson Center, 2025; Washington Institute, 2025. This precisely shows that the communication channel between Russia and Hamas has never been a core channel for Hamas to conduct external diplomacy, but only a supplement to its many diplomatic channels.

2.3 The Quartet and Russia's Institutional Claim to Relevance

Russia is a member of the Middle East Quartet, and the other three members are the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations. For a long time, this Quartet membership has been Russia's core institutional support for claiming that it has the right to participate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations; relying on this identity, it could rightfully join the relevant international agenda (Leshchenya, 2016; Brookings, 2016).

Some studies have specifically sorted out the actual outcomes of this Quartet over the years. In its early years, it did produce core implementable plans: first, it introduced the 2003 Road Map for Israeli-Palestinian peace, and then it promoted the United Nations Security Council to pass Resolution 1515, which formally established this core framework for peace talks and received official recognition from the international community. However, not long after, the mechanism's ability to play a practical role weakened increasingly, entering a steady decline. In the end, the United States and the European Union simply halted all its activities, yet never formally announced the dissolution of the mechanism, leaving it in a state of existence in name only (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

The Quartet mechanism for the Middle East issue has completely ceased all official operations. Russia is unwilling to lose its qualification to participate in Middle East affairs, so it has begun to seek a new approach—a multilateral cooperation framework that can bring multiple countries together to discuss issues, with a nature similar to the original Quartet mechanism, so that it can remain in the circle of participants in Middle East affairs. It also proposed a specific plan to bring in the Arab League to co-organize consultation meetings, hoping to maintain its official seat at the Middle East diplomatic negotiation table through this newly established multilateral framework. Now, the situation has changed again. All diplomatic negotiations that can effectively promote progress in the situation in the Gaza Strip have shifted to a track led by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar. Russia is completely unable to squeeze into these negotiations that can truly influence the situation, nor can it participate to play a role. Even in such a situation, it is still doing everything possible to retain its right to speak in various institutional affairs in the Middle East, and refuses to give up the position that allows it to intervene in international affairs as a participant (Lowy Institute, 2026)

2.4 Soft Balancing and the Instrumentalization of Normative Discourse There is no shortage of theoretical research on Soft Balancing, and this concept can help us unpack a core question: how can a country with limited hard power, such as Russia, challenge the dominant position of the world's leading power without resorting to means other than values and discourse tools, and without directly clashing with that leading power. Ferguson (2012) was the first to specifically apply this analytical framework to study the strategies of China and Russia toward the United States, proposing that the two countries could put forward values different from those of the West, gaining diplomatic advantages while avoiding costly military competition. Papageorgiou, Eslami, and Duarte (2023) extended the scope of application of this analysis, applying it to the cooperative relationship between China, Iran, and Russia, emphasizing that binding the diplomatic relations of all parties within the rule framework of international organizations—that is, integrating diplomatic actions into the rules of international multilateral mechanisms—is the core operation mode of soft balancing. Larionova (2020) specifically conducted a systematic review of all research literature related to soft balancing, and found that the scenario of China and Russia jointly balancing the United States has always been the most discussed practical research case in this field. The latest update to related research came in 2025, when International Affairs launched a special issue that revisited the phenomenon of soft balancing in various regions, once again emphasizing that this analytical framework remains valid to this day, and can still be used to explain how countries with limited hard power respond to the world's leading power (He & co-authors, 2025).

2.5 Strategic Narratives and the Global South in the Ukraine War

After the outbreak of the Ukraine War in 2022, the number of related studies has surged. All these studies circle around two core directions: first, how Russia explains its military operations in Ukraine to countries outside the West, and constructs a set of credible justifications for its actions; second, how those developing countries classified as the "Global South" view these statements from Russia and what responses they have given.

Mamedov (2025) specifically sorted out the evolution of Russia's official narrative surrounding this war, noting that for Russia to keep its external explanations internally consistent and credible to other countries, it can only adjust the content of its narrative from time to time, filling gaps or adapting to new circumstances.

In 2026, there was also a report specifically analyzing Russia's official propaganda targeting Latin America and Africa, titled Selling Russia to the Global South(s), 2026. This report found that Russia adapts its "anti-imperialist" rhetoric to align with the local perceptions of audiences in different regions. It repeatedly references the Soviet Union's historical leadership in opposing colonialism, using this history to lend credibility to its own statements, while at the same time never mentioning Russia's own historical imperial expansion.

Kurnyshova (2024), meanwhile, shifted her focus to Ukraine, studying Ukraine's responses to Russia's actions. She found that the Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv also tried to adopt the framework of post-colonial narratives, seeking to gain support from Global South countries through this logic of opposing colonial oppression, but the final results were mixed, and not all attempts achieved the desired effects. Many broader studies have turned their attention to the actions of Global South countries themselves, specifically analyzing these countries' voting records at the UN General Assembly. The report titled Understanding the Global South's Vote at the UN, 2025 points out that one factor is far more accurate than "whether a country is part of the Global South" for predicting a country's stance on the Russia-Ukraine war: that is, the country's type of political system—whether it is a liberal democracy or an illiberal democracy. In the same period, another study published in International Affairs, titled Global South and Western Divergence, 2025, also noted that the different reactions of the West and the Global South to this war are rooted in the inherent differences in their historical experiences and the values they identify with, rather than all Global South countries forming a unified anti-Western camp.

Finally, the journal Chinese Journal of International Politics once hosted a dedicated forum with the title Forum: The Russia-Ukraine War and Reactions from the Global South, 2024. This forum discussed Russia's diplomatic efforts to court the Global South alongside China's simultaneously pursued yet distinct stance on this war, sorting out the similarities and differences between the two countries' approaches.

2.6 The “Double Standards” Frame

On the double standards narrative specifically, commentary from policy institutes frames Russian discourse as part of a broader pattern in which Moscow highlights Western inconsistency in its treatment of occupation and territorial annexation in Ukraine versus Gaza and the West Bank, with some Russian commentators going so far as to characterize Russia's own conduct in Ukraine as comparatively moderate (Atlantic Council, 2025). This framing has also attracted attention outside Russian discourse itself: independent commentators have separately argued that Western governments apply materially different standards of occupation, self-defense, and civilian protection to Ukraine and to Gaza, a critique that — whatever its own merits — supplies Russian officials with ready-made rhetorical material that did not originate with Moscow (Alternatives Humanitaires, 2025; Middle East Monitor, 2024).

2.7 Historical Foundations: The Soviet Legacy

Finally, understanding the contemporary discourse requires engaging with the historical record of Soviet-Palestinian relations. Golan's foundational study (1980; reprinted 2019) characterizes the Soviet-PLO relationship as a tactical rather than ideological alliance, shaped primarily by the broader Soviet-Arab and Soviet-American relationships rather than by doctrinal commitment to the Palestinian cause as such. The relationship between the Soviet Union's and Palestinian nationalism was not unchanging; a clear evolutionary trajectory can be traced in historical records. Examined within its specific temporal context, in the 1960s, the Soviet Union first directly rejected a request for support submitted by the PLO, judging at the time that the organization's uncompromising "rejectionist" stance of refusing peace talks was entirely unrealistic and unsustainable. More than a decade passed before the Soviet Union officially

recognized the PLO's legal status in 1974; relevant records are available in Institute for Palestine Studies, n.d.

This long-past historical event remains relevant today—it serves as key evidence to refute claims made by current Russian officials. Current Russian official figures repeatedly assert that their country's stance on related issues has never shifted from the past to the present, and that it has always adhered to the same set of principles. However, the narrative that Russia's diplomacy has repeatedly emphasized in recent years, which claims "the country's position has remained unchanged since 1988", is completely inconsistent with authentic historical archives. The archives clearly document that the lineage of stances from the Soviet Union to Russia's has never been fixed; it has always been adjusted according to the actual situation and aligned with its own interests, which is entirely contrary to the current claim of "consistency". Relevant records are available in President of Russia, n.d.

Currently, there are numerous relevant academic studies. Together, these studies have provided sufficiently solid empirical materials and theoretical support for the discourse analysis conducted in this paper. Yet, these prior studies have overlooked one key point: no one has ever systematically verified the essential nature of Russia's recent rhetoric that ties the situation in Ukraine to the situation in Gaza. Is it a passive defensive response forced upon it when backed into a corner? Or is it a continuation of ideological commitments passed down from the Soviet era? This paper aims to fill this unaddressed research gap.

Theoretical Framework

This paper conducts a specific analysis using two complementary theoretical perspectives.

The first perspective is foreign policy discourse analysis rooted in constructivist thought. This analytical logic does not treat a country's diplomatic rhetoric as a straightforward declaration of hard power and tangible interests. It rejects the idea that the statements a country puts forward in diplomatic settings merely serve as a direct announcement of its own military and economic strength, as well as the concrete benefits it can secure. On the contrary, these diplomatic statements are strategic tools that are actively deployed. Through such rhetoric, a country can establish its footing, obtain the status of a legitimate participant on the international political stage—securing recognition from other countries that it is entitled to participate in various international affairs—and construct the public image it desires. Applying this framework to Russia's relevant statements reveals that Russia's consistent and repeated emphasis on the rights of the Palestinian people is by no means a casual, temporary signal, but rather a core component of its carefully crafted self-presentation strategy: Russia seeks to shape itself as a guardian of the Global South, willing to confront Western hegemony and expose the hypocrisy of Western powers' inconsistent words and deeds. This framework is not a generic empty template cobbled together on the market that can be applied to any scenario; it is one that Russia has genuinely devoted substantial effort to specifically building. To align with this identity, Russia adjusts its strategic narratives in its external communications across different regions of the world. This practice is explicitly documented in the 2026 publication *Selling Russia to the Global South(s)*.

There is a second analytical perspective that integrates the realist analytical framework with research on soft balancing, serving as a pragmatically oriented analytical tool. From this perspective, every statement Russia makes in diplomatic settings is a carefully calculated instrument. Through this set of narratives,

Russia can constrain the actions of the dominant Western powers in the international arena, erode those countries' international standing, and completely avoid direct head-on confrontation with the West. Relevant analytical support can be found in (Ferguson, 2012; Papageorgiou et al., 2023). When this perspective is used to examine the various demands related to Palestine, those demands become an especially handy lever in Russia's hands, ready for use at any time. On one hand, these demands can sustain a broad-ranging, far-reaching anti-Western narrative; on the other hand, they can help Russia justify and prop up its own operations in Ukraine. This entire dynamic fully conforms to the logic of "tethered diplomacy" that exists within international institutions such as the UN Security Council.

This paper does not treat the two aforementioned analytical frameworks as opposing hypotheses that must be ranked, judged right or wrong. Instead, it frames them as two coexisting layers of explanatory logic: the historically rooted, ideologically grounded stances Russia has inherited from the past and sincerely upholds do not prevent it from simultaneously utilizing those stances as tools to advance its strategic goals. A country can wholeheartedly hold these historically embedded, ideologically tied stances while also deploying them to push forward its strategic objectives, and there is no inherent contradiction between these two endeavors. The core analytical goal of this paper is to clarify which elements of all of Russia's diplomatic statements are primarily shaped by the first layer of logic, and which are driven by the second. This analytical approach that integrates the two layers of logic is fully consistent with the findings of recent academic research on Russia's strategic narratives. Those studies all find that across all of Russia's external narratives, upholding consistent stances and flexibly adjusting its rhetoric to meet strategic needs often coexist, and are never mutually exclusive options that require a choice between one or the other. Relevant supporting citations can be found in (Mamedov, 2025).

4. Methodology

This study adopts the method of qualitative discourse analysis. Its specific task is to dismantle the narrative logic that strings together the content in the officially published statements of Russia, as well as every word choice employed in those statements. All texts included in the analysis are official public statements formally released by Russian officials, with a time span stretching from February 2022 to mid-2026. The original research text also specifically notes that the starting point of the time frame covered by this study, which is February 2022, is exactly the time point when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Up to now, this study remains in the draft stage. The research team has only just set up a preliminary material repository, which contains a total of only 15 core official statements, and all the analysis content written in the draft is constructed on the basis of these 15 materials. None of the materials stored in the repository were collected casually; all were accumulated one by one by the researchers through public online searches. There are three fixed, reliable sources for collecting these materials, which are the Kremlin's official website Kremlin.ru, the official website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and reports released by various news agencies that are relevant to the research content. All the collected materials have release dates that fully conform to the pre-defined coverage interval of the study. None of the materials were published earlier than the start date of February 2022, nor later than the end date of mid-2026. The complete information of each material is recorded exactly as it is in Table 1 of the original text.

Among these 15 materials, only one material dated (January 22, 2026) was directly extracted from the official original text archive on Kremlin.ru. To ensure the accuracy of the content, the research team also cross-checked the original published content on the official website word by word, and finally confirmed that this material is completely consistent with the authoritative content officially released, with no discrepancies whatsoever. All other remaining materials in the material repository were not obtained from first-hand official original records; all of them are official statement content cited from news agencies and other media reports.

This preliminary material repository, which currently contains only 15 materials, serves a single purpose: only to demonstrate the type of materials that will be used in the final version of this study. Its status is merely that of a demonstration sample, and it has not included all eligible relevant materials that fall within the study's time frame and screening criteria. When the complete version of the research is to be submitted for final review, this small initial material repository will be expanded into a complete dataset with a clear collection scope. The original text also cites a specific expansion direction as an example: for instance, collect all of Lavrov's speeches at the UN from February 2022 to the date the research is submitted, as well as all public Kremlin transcripts of meetings between Putin and Abbas that mention Palestine. All these expanded new materials must be downloaded directly from kremlin.ru and mid.ru, and the download date of each material must be recorded. The raw materials for this complete dataset shall include:

Table 1. Preliminary primary-source corpus (n = 15, February 2022–June 2026) compiled via public web search of Kremlin.ru, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and wire-service reporting. One entry (Jan. 22, 2026) is verified against the official Kremlin.ru transcript; the remainder rely on secondary wire-service quotation of primary statements. Illustrative, not exhaustive.

Date	Speaker	Context	Content Summary	Source
Feb 22, 2022	Lavrov	Remarks reported by Interfax, days before the invasion	Questioned whether Ukraine's government represented the country's "constituent parts" and thus whether it could claim full sovereignty and territorial integrity.	Euronews/Reuters

May 11, 2022	Lavrov	Video shared by the Russian Mission in Geneva	Told those “hysterical” over the war to “imagine Ukraine is Palestine” and “imagine Russia is the United States” — the most explicit direct analogy identified in this corpus.	Newsweek; The New Arab
Sep 24, 2023	Lavrov	UNGA press conference	Compared the Golan Heights and Ukraine's Donbas, arguing the US disregards legal sovereignty selectively.	Jerusalem Post
Sep 26, 2023	Lavrov	UNGA sidelines press conference	Asked about “territorial integrity” re: Ukraine, redirected to Russia's Donbas security narrative rather than addressing the comparison directly.	Palestine Chronicle
Dec 28, 2023	Lavrov	Russia-24 TV interview	Drew an explicit parallel between Israel's Gaza campaign and Russia's Ukraine invasion; noted approvingly that Netanyahu avoided criticizing Russia.	Times of Israel
Sep 16, 2024	Lavrov	Joint press conference with Egyptian FM Abdelatty, Moscow	Reaffirmed the UN two-state formula for Israel/Palestine while separately invoking Libya's “sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity” — the same	Russian MFA (mid.ru)

			vocabulary applied to Ukraine.	
Dec 30, 2024	Lavrov	TASS interview	Reiterated that Russia would not negotiate on Ukraine unless Kyiv renounced its claim to 1991 borders, calling that claim an "ultimatum."	ISW / Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs
May 2025	Putin & Abbas	Kremlin meeting, 80th WWII Victory Day	Abbas thanked Russia for its "consistent stance and principled support" for the Palestinian cause; Lavrov present.	Kremlin.ru
May 10, 2025	Abbas to Putin	Kremlin meeting	Abbas urged an immediate Gaza ceasefire and humanitarian access, describing a total blockade in place since March 2.	WAFA
Aug 20, 2025	Lavrov	Joint press conference with Jordanian FM Safadi, Moscow	Called Palestinian statehood essential to regional stability in the same press conference where he addressed a possible Russia-Ukraine-US trilateral meeting — both files raised back-to-back before the same press corps.	Russian MFA (mid.ru)
Sep 25, 2025	Lavrov	Meeting with UN Secretary-General Guterres	Discussed UN80 reform, stressing that change must preserve institutional foundations and remain under member-state oversight.	Russian MFA (mid.ru)

Sep 27, 2025	Lavrov	80th UNGA address	In one address: warned NATO against "aggression," called Israel's Gaza conduct "collective punishment" with "no justification," and criticized Western states' delayed Palestine recognition and "double standards" on the UN Charter.	AP/ABC News, AA, Fox News, UN News
Jan 22, 2026	Putin & Abbas	Official Kremlin transcript of Russian-Palestinian talks	Verbatim: "Back in 1988, the Soviet Union recognised the Palestinian state, and we maintain the same position today"; pledged \$1 billion to the "Board of Peace" sourced from Russian funds "frozen in the United States"; cited 800 tonnes of aid via 32 missions and 150 Palestinian students hosted in Russia.	Kremlin.ru (official transcript, en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/79026)
Feb 17, 2026	Lavrov	Remarks ahead of US talks	Ruled out territorial concessions to Ukraine, framing 1920s–30s Soviet-era border adjustments as the only relevant historical precedent.	Yahoo/Kyiv Independent wire report
Jun 4, 2026	Putin	Russian Energy Week forum	Reaffirmed support for an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and urged minimizing civilian casualties.	WAFA

- Statements and press conferences by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, including his remarks at UN General Assembly sessions (Anadolu Agency, 2025; Palestine Chronicle, 2023).
- Kremlin transcripts of presidential statements and meetings, including President Putin's meetings with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (President of Russia, n.d.; WAFA, 2026).
- Russian Foreign Ministry statements on Gaza and on the Middle East peace process (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).
- UN Security Council voting records and meeting transcripts on Gaza-related resolutions (UN Meetings Coverage, 2023; Al Jazeera, 2024).
- Secondary analytical sources (academic articles, think-tank memos) used to contextualize and triangulate the primary material.

All collected statements can be categorized and annotated one by one according to the core theme focused on by each piece of content, with a total of five categories:

The first category includes content that explicitly compares the situation in Ukraine with the situation in Gaza/Palestine;

The second category includes content that accuses Western countries of adopting "double standards";

The third category includes content that mentions international law and relevant UN resolutions;

The fourth category includes content that mentions Russia's current position continues the Soviet-era position of supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state;

The fifth category includes practical action initiatives proposed by Russia—these are not empty verbal statements, and specifically include commitments to provide funding, the proposal of diplomatic plans, the implementation of security cooperation related to Syria, and other measures.

The collection currently in hand is only an initially assembled set of materials. The research draft we currently hold—if we plan to submit a complete formal report later—must first have its existing scattered content organized and expanded into a well-defined, compliant standardized dataset; it cannot remain in a casually assembled state.

As for how exactly to expand it and what direction to add content in, we must collect two categories of materials in their entirety, with no omissions. The first category is all of Lavrov's speeches at the UN from February 2022 up to the day you submit that complete report; not a single one can be missed. The second category is all publicly accessible Kremlin documents that mention Palestine and record content related to meetings between Putin and Abbas; these must also be collected in full.

For the large volume of materials just mentioned that need to be collected, they cannot be downloaded randomly from other websites. They may only be downloaded from two designated official websites, which are kremlin.ru and mid.ru. Furthermore, for every material downloaded, its exact download date and the corresponding source webpage link must be recorded and stored one by one; the information for every single material cannot be left unrecorded.

In addition to the requirements for collecting materials, there are two other core requirements that must be implemented to avoid subsequent issues with incorrect content:

If more than one person participates in the annotation and classification of these materials, before starting the work, a formal unified process must first be established. Following this process is the only way to ensure that the annotation results produced by all personnel are completely consistent, and that there will be no conflicting, mismatched situations where everyone annotates according to their own standards.

The other requirement is that every item listed in Table 1 of this draft cannot be directly used in any subsequent research. Each item must first be cross-checked against its corresponding original primary source material, and may only be used further once its correctness is confirmed.

Why is this cross-checking absolutely necessary? The reason is clear: all materials in the current draft were collected scatteredly through ordinary web searches, and have not been systematically organized through a formal, structured archival retrieval process. Therefore, the accuracy of this content must still be verified; it cannot be used directly.

Historical Background and Findings

5.1 From Soviet Ambivalence to Post-Soviet Equidistance

When the Soviet Union first made contact with the Palestine Liberation Movement, its stance was completely different from the "consistently unwavering" stance that is retroactively claimed in current Russian official propaganda. Back then, the Soviet Union was far from certain, and its internal affairs were rife with contradictions. It was nothing like the image that current Russians boast of, which claims it took a firm stance from an early stage. In the current official Russian narrative, the Soviet Union is always portrayed as a staunch supporter of this movement from start to finish, but this narrative was packaged later and does not reflect the historical facts. From the day of the first formal exchanges between the two sides, the Soviet government at that time never established a fixed position. In the first few years of contact, its attitude kept shifting, and it had nothing to do with the "reliable ally" image shaped in those revised narratives. It was by no means the kind of supporter that current Russian propaganda claims it was, one that took a firm stance from the very beginning and invested all mobilizable resources into the liberation movement.

By the mid-1960s, shortly after the first leadership team of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had just established its own working group, it formally submitted a request for military and political support to the Soviet government, hoping to obtain tangible aid from Moscow. The act of

seeking help from Moscow mentioned here does not refer to physically traveling to the city of Moscow to submit an application; it refers to contacting the highest level of the Soviet government. What the PLO wanted was not superficial lip-service support, but resources that could directly advance its organizational work. Military support was intended to sustain the continuous implementation of all operations of the Palestine Liberation Movement, so that its activities would not fail due to a lack of weapons or personnel. Political support, meanwhile, was meant to help the movement gain a foothold on the international diplomatic stage, avoid being sidelined in international venues, and secure its right to speak. But Moscow directly rejected this request. At that time, the Soviet government believed that the PLO's position of completely refusing to recognize Israel was completely unfeasible and unrealistic in the contemporary environment, and even derided the organization's core concepts as being dragged down by "naive left-wing ideological trends"—deeming its approach to action too immature (Institute for Palestine Studies, n.d.).

This cold attitude of the Soviet Union toward the PLO persisted for nearly a decade. During that period, it never relented to provide support, nor did it recognize the PLO's status. It was not until 1974 that the Soviet Union formally recognized the PLO's legitimate status. Scholar Golan (1980) pointed out that the alliance formed between the two sides afterward was, in essence, merely a makeshift arrangement, serving throughout the whole course the Soviet Union's overall strategic layout of its relations with Arab states, as well as the Soviet Union's global hegemonic rivalry with the United States. It was never the result of the Soviet Union sincerely upholding the principle of Palestinian national self-determination; the Soviet Union never placed Palestinian demands within its own sequence of core interests.

During the same period, the Soviet Union's diplomatic relations with Israel also underwent tremendous turmoil. The two countries severed all diplomatic ties completely after the 1967 war, cutting off all official exchanges. This frozen state of relations remained in place until it was formally restored in 1991. It was also in 1991 that a wave of Jewish immigration emerged within the Soviet Union, with a large number of Soviet Jews packing their belongings to immigrate to Israel. The impact of this large-scale immigration persisted after the Soviet Union's collapse, becoming an unavoidable key factor shaping post-Soviet Russian-Israeli relations (Ifri, 2026).

After the Soviet Union dissolved, Russia inherited most of the Soviet Union's diplomatic legacy in the Middle East and began to readjust its stance on the Palestinian-Israeli issue. In 2002, Russia formally joined the Middle East Quartet, an international mechanism established specifically to mediate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which provided Russia with a platform to re-engage with core Middle East affairs. Seizing this opportunity, Russia positioned itself as a neutral mediator capable of engaging with both sides of the conflict: on one hand, it maintained decades-long historical ties with the Arab world left over from the Soviet era, allowing it to communicate effectively with Arab states; on the other hand, Israel is home to a large population of Russian-speaking immigrants from former Soviet territories, who share natural emotional bonds with Russia. These two identities enabled Russia to communicate effectively with both Palestinians and Israelis, without being excluded by either side (Carnegie Endowment, 2026; ISPI, n.d.). The most accurate

description of Russia during this period is that it maintained equidistance between the two sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, never completely alienating either, nor fully aligning with either: it publicly supported the two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state at international forums, participated in all diplomatic activities of the Middle East Quartet, and repeatedly criticized Israel's policy of building settlements in Palestinian territories on the international stage—for example, in 2016, when the UN Security Council put forward Resolution 2334, which demanded Israel cease building settlements, Russia voted in favor of the resolution, using its actual vote to express opposition to Israel's settlement policy (as in its support for UN Security Council Resolution 2334 in 2016). At the same time, however, Russia quietly deepened economic, security, and personal leadership-level exchanges with Israel's leadership. Especially during the period when Russian President Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu held office simultaneously, such private interactions were particularly frequent, and cooperation between the two sides was in no way undermined by Russia's public criticisms on the international stage (Kertcher & Course, 2024).

5.2 The “Double Standards” Frame as the Dominant Discursive Device Since 2022

Since 2022, the most consistently used framing in all of Russia's public foreign policy statements has been to explicitly juxtapose two sets of events: the West's perception of Russia's actions in Ukraine, and its perception of Israel's actions in Gaza, laying bare the disparity between the two sides' attitudes directly on the table. This practice is not used on an occasional basis; it has been a consistent core public opinion tool from 2022 to the present.

Even when confronted with challenges invoking the principle of "territorial integrity," which claim that Russia's actions in Ukraine violate this international norm, Lavrov never follows up on the comparison of the West's differing stances toward Russia and Israel, nor does he acknowledge the validity of the challenge. He never draws any comparisons between the situation in Ukraine and the situation in Gaza; instead, he completely shifts the topic to Russia's own stated claims related to security in the Donbas region, avoiding any discussion of the two conflicts in the same breath throughout (Palestine Chronicle, 2023). Even at formal multilateral settings where countries from across the world gather, such as the UN General Assembly, he clings rigidly to this same narrative. He publicly denounces actions he labels as “undermining the two-state solution” — a consensus long widely recognized by the international community, centered on establishing independent sovereign states for Israel and Palestine respectively. He not only criticized such actions, but also publicly targeted the timing chosen by Western countries—why did they not recognize Palestine's statehood earlier or later, only to come out and do so now? He stated bluntly that this set of statements from Western governments was completely devoid of any sincerity. These countries deliberately delayed taking a position, waiting until all practical foundations that could support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state had completely collapsed before putting on a pretense of supporting Palestinian statehood; all these remarks were nothing more than performative posturing for show (Anadolu Agency, 2025).

Furthermore, Western analysts have confirmed that this unified narrative runs through all of Russia's publicly released foreign information, with a consistent stance that has never changed from start to finish. Whether it is official comments formally issued by the Russian government, or semi-official analyses that are tied to and fully aligned with the official position, they all repeatedly parrot the same claim: Russia's actions in Ukraine are "far more restrained" than Israel's military operations in Gaza. This claim is not a temporary talking point that was brought up once and then discarded; it has become a fixed, repeatedly emphasized core element in all of Russia's relevant statements, and is continuously brought up and reaffirmed through various official and semi-official channels (Atlantic Council, 2025).

The most critical reason this narrative has spread so widely among audiences across the globe and gained such broad acceptance is that the criticism of Western "Double Standards" was never first raised by Russia. Long before Russia picked up this logic to make its case, media editorials within Western countries themselves, as well as various independent analytical pieces released by the Western and Global South countries, had already put forward this same observation, sparking widespread global attention. These early materials pointed out that the Western stance on the developments in Ukraine—including their reactions to territorial incursions, land annexations, and civilian casualties—was completely inconsistent with their stance on identical events unfolding in Gaza, and this contradictory double standard was laid bare for all to see (Alternatives Humanitaires, 2025; Middle East Monitor, 2024).

For Russian officials, there was no need to fabricate this narrative from scratch; they only needed to amplify this already widely accepted, inherently independently credible criticism through Russia's own official communication channels, to bring it to a larger audience. The strategic benefit of this approach is clear: many audiences already default to viewing all statements from the Kremlin as serving Russia's own interests, which must be approached with skepticism. But because this criticism of Western double standards was not an original Russian creation, these otherwise cautious audiences were far more likely to set aside their guard and accept the narrative promoted by the Russian government as a logical conclusion.

5.3 Continuity with a Longer-Standing Position

Whenever issuing statements related to foreign policy, Russian officials consistently tie their current stance on the Israel and Palestine issue to a long-standing historical narrative. They repeatedly claim that as far back as the Soviet Union's era, Russia had always maintained a principled stance in support of Palestinian statehood, and trace the origin of this commitment explicitly to the Soviet Union's official recognition of Palestine in 1988. Yet as section 5.1 of this article previously noted, this account deliberately obscures the reality of the situation before 1988 — at that time, the relationship between the Soviet Union and Palestine was never a consistently principled, stable bond. Instead, it was marked by extreme volatility, with every adjustment to the relationship crafted solely to meet the Soviet Union's own tactical needs at the time.

Russia's President Putin has also repeatedly invoked this unified line in multiple meetings with Palestine's President Abbas, stating that Russia's approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict has never changed since the Soviet era (President of Russia, n.d.). In June 2026, Putin delivered a public speech, reiterating once again that to completely and permanently resolve the issues between Israel and Palestine, two conditions must be met: first, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital; second, the adoption of all feasible measures to reduce casualties among civilians affected by this conflict. This content is sourced from (WAFA, 2026).

Russian officials have stated publicly that the country's position on the Israel-Palestine issue "has never changed since the Soviet era." This claim aligns exactly with the constructivist interpretation in academic circles—scholars of the constructivist school argue that the successive public statements Russia has issued regarding the Israel-Palestine issue are not merely hastily fabricated excuses to cope with the ongoing war in Ukraine. However, when examined rigorously, even if this statement from Russia is compared one by one with all verifiable historical records, Russia's so-called "consistent, principled support for Palestine" completely collapses under careful scrutiny and cannot withstand any detailed examination.

5.4 Practical Constraints and the Limits of “Principle”

Russia's increasingly hardline rhetorical stance on the Gaza issue, paired with its steadily declining capacity to implement tangible actions, is not a random development; it is fully synchronized with the gradual decline of its overall influence in the Middle East. Even though it still holds a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and is a long-standing member of the Middle East Quartet, which once participated in mediating the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the core states currently leading all practical work on brokering a ceasefire in Gaza and post-conflict reconstruction are only the United States, Egypt, and Qatar. Moscow has barely participated in any specific operational-level work from start to finish (Lowy Institute, 2026).

First-hand on-site records directly confirm this increasingly prominent trend: on January 22, 2026, Putin met with Palestinian leader Abbas at the Kremlin, and on the spot pledged to contribute \$1 billion to the "Board of Peace" for Gaza's reconstruction, which had been proposed by the United States. Immediately after making this statement, he added a clear clarification—that this funding would come from Russian state assets frozen by Western institutions, assets that were frozen as a result of a series of sanctions imposed by the West in response to Russia's actions on the Ukraine issue (JNS, 2026; EIR News, 2026). This statement ties the Palestinian issue to the years-long wrangling between Russia and Western countries over Ukraine sanctions, fully aligning with the inferences previously drawn by independent analysts, source cited: (Ifri, 2026). The US\$1 billion Russia has pledged to allocate is the single largest sum it has Investment to address the crisis in the Gaza Strip to date. Even this tangible support, in line with the logic Putin has publicly stated, was never provided to assist Gaza. It has only one true purpose: to help Russia secure a more advantageous position in its dispute over Western sanctions, and it is in no way a purely well-intentioned act of charity. As soon as this move was made, the utilitarian nature of Russia's

involvement in Palestine and Israel-related affairs was laid completely bare for everyone to see, and it could no longer be hidden.

Russia's consistent style of conduct has never changed, and it always follows the same pattern: it shouts harsh rhetoric and adopts an extremely tough stance, but when it comes to following through on its words and taking concrete action, it is completely unable to produce the corresponding capacity to act. This approach of merely spouting empty rhetoric and failing to deliver on its words is fully consistent with Russia's overall development trajectory across the entire Middle East region after the collapse of the Syrian Assad government in December 2024. One scholar described the fall of that Syrian regime as a "triple blow" to Russia's influence in the Middle East — the event simultaneously undermined Russia's pre-planned strategic layout in the region, Russia's international reputation and credibility, and Russia's own domestic situation, source cited: (Abbasov, 2025). In June 2025, conflict broke out between Iran and Israel. Shortly before this conflict erupted, Russia had just signed a strategic partnership treaty with Iran. Logically, as a signatory ally, Russia was obligated to provide support to Iran. Yet from the first day of the conflict to its conclusion, Russia failed at no point to deliver any substantial assistance that could have genuinely helped Iran. Russia's inability to provide practical support during the conflict between Iran and Israel adds another conclusive piece of evidence: this is not only the case in its handling of the single issue of Palestine; across all affairs in the Middle East region, Russia has increasingly replaced tangible, resource-backed investments with verbal statements of solidarity and sympathy, source cited: (Abbasov, 2025; Riddle Russia, 2025).

5.5 Russia-Israel Security Coordination as a Counterweight to Rhetorical Escalation

The war of words between countries over the Gaza issue is growing increasingly fierce, yet when Russia and Israel engage with one another, there has always been a complex set of unstated calculations hidden beneath the surface. No matter how harsh Russia's public statements may be, the cooperation channels that both sides must preserve have never been loosened in the slightest, and have remained fully functional.

In 2015, Russia formally intervened in the situation in Syria. Just a few months after this event, Russia and Israel established a specialized coordination mechanism within Syrian territory to avoid conflicts. The rules of this mechanism are by no means complicated: if Israel intends to strike Iran-linked targets inside Syria, it must notify the Russian military in advance, and clearly communicate with the Russian side the specific time and precise location of the operation, so that the forces of the two countries do not encounter each other on the battlefield and trigger unnecessary conflicts. From the day this mechanism was established, it has never ceased operation, and has run smoothly up to the present. Even when Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, an event that sent the political relations between Russia and Israel over the Ukraine issue plunging to a freezing point, that coordination channel tied to both sides' core security interests was unexpectedly able to continue operating as normal, entirely unaffected by the chill in political circles. Russian officials even came forward to publicly state that this channel would be retained as a

permanent part of bilateral relations, and would never be disrupted by other political disagreements; the sources cited for this relevant content are the 2022 reports from the Times of Israel and the Jerusalem Post (Times of Israel, 2022; Jerusalem Post, 2022).

Today, with the collapse of Syria's Assad government and Israel's direct deployment of troops to carry out cross-border strikes inside Syrian territory, the nearly decade-long model maintained between Russia and Israel—"harsh words in public, while practical cooperation continues"—has begun to encounter problems. On one hand, Russia's criticism of Israel over the Gaza issue has grown increasingly harsh, and the intensity of its public stance has also grown stronger, with no intention of concealing its position whatsoever. On the other hand, Russia and Israel jointly established a security cooperation framework back in 2015, and this framework has yet to slow down at all in its operation up to the present; there is no sign of any real plan to scale down the scale of cooperation or reduce the scope of cooperative content.

Putting these two matters together, they seem somewhat contradictory at first glance—while one side lashes out fiercely at the other, cooperation between the two continues to proceed smoothly. The two countries have completely separated the priorities they each focus on, creating this seemingly illogical situation. And this situation aligns perfectly with a long-held assessment of Russia's approach to conducting affairs: "principled opportunism". Put simply, Russia never ties the practical cooperation it carries out with Israel to its public statements supporting Palestine; instead, it treats these two matters as two nearly non-interfering parallel lines that each advance on their own, with progress in one matter never dragging down the development of the other.

As for how the priority of each matter is ranked, which issue is handled first and which is put on the back burner, it is entirely determined by Russia's current strategic needs. Russia will never be trapped by a set of unchangeable fixed principles that leave no room for maneuver and adjustment.

5.6 Voting Patterns at the UN Security Council

The UN Security Council is the core body within the UN responsible for maintaining international peace and security. In every official resolution document related to the situation in the Gaza Strip that is put forward under this framework, every vote cast by Russia is completely clear, and it has fully laid out its stance on the global multilateral cooperation stage. Its stance is not black-and-white; it does not make decisions solely based on abstract norms, nor does it fixate only on what benefits it can obtain. Instead, it integrates both the considerations of principle and its own interests into every statement and action it takes. As early as October 2023, Russia submitted a self-drafted resolution draft, which explicitly called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Only after the ceasefire is implemented can humanitarian aid intended to rescue the local population be smoothly delivered to those in need. Russia voted in favor of this self-submitted resolution, yet the resolution ultimately failed to pass at the Security Council, UN Meetings Coverage, 2023. A review of Russia's past voting patterns reveals that its stance has remained consistent: whenever a resolution calls for an immediate ceasefire and supports the establishment of a Palestinian state, Russia will come forward to cast a supporting vote. However, when it comes to voting on resolutions led by Western

countries, the situation changes—if Russia believes the text is insufficiently balanced and cannot fairly address the demands of both parties to the conflict, it will publicly criticize the draft, Anadolu Agency/AA, 2023. Yet it would be wrong to assume that only Russia finds fault with others' proposals; resolutions drafted by Russia itself also frequently draw external criticism. Those who criticize Russia point out that during the resolution drafting phase, Russia often fails to conduct full consultations with other countries, and never seriously follows through on the step of soliciting opinions from all relevant parties, leaving many countries with no opportunity to voice their views. This practice will directly reduce the probability of the passage of a Security Council resolution. Let me first make clear the hard requirements for the entry into force of a United Nations Security Council resolution—for a resolution to officially enter into force, two conditions must be met simultaneously. First, it must secure enough affirmative votes; second, it must gather a coalition of supporting countries with a sufficiently broad scope. If it fails to meet either, it cannot satisfy the necessary conditions for entry into force, let alone be passed. A 2023 report from the Anadolu Agency noted that if a draft resolution has not undergone complete consultation and communication with all relevant parties before being submitted, it will simply not be able to gather that level of support mentioned earlier, and will naturally fail to pass in the end. A series of Russia's actions fully aligns with the judgment of a mainstream analysis: when Russia submitted these draft resolutions, it not only sincerely wanted to promote the implementation of these resolutions, but more crucially, it used this move to send a clear signal—on the one hand, it wanted to show the whole world its stance of standing with the Palestinian people; on the other hand, it wanted to draw a clear line between its own practices and the repeated vetoes cast by the United States on resolutions related to Gaza, explicitly laying out the vast difference between the two countries' attitudes toward handling this crisis. Anadolu Agency, 2023.

5.7 Domestic Framing

When handling all Gaza-related affairs within its own borders, the Russian government has always maintained a cautious stance. Even ordinary citizens are prohibited from organizing any activities related to the conflict, whether public rallies and demonstrations, or solidarity events that speak out in support of either side of the conflict—all such activities are banned. The core concern of the government is that if it allows public sentiment related to the issue to develop unchecked, it could escalate over time, eventually leading to unrest that would completely disrupt Russia's originally stable and peaceful social order.

On the other hand, it has not squandered the opportunity presented by this crisis. Instead, it has repeatedly used the events unfolding in Gaza as evidence to back its long-held international narrative of "Western hypocrisy," directly treating the Gaza conflict as practical material to support its public messaging around the war in Ukraine (Ifri, 2026).

Opinion poll data can clarify the true views of ordinary Russian people on this conflict: the vast majority cannot put forward a coherent and clear stance on the Gaza conflict. In other words, most people cannot articulate a fixed and clear view of this dispute far away in the Middle East; they will

not publicly take sides with any party to the conflict, nor will they continuously follow news updates to keep track of the latest developments of the incident. Even among the small number of respondents who can express a clear inclination, most side with Palestine, and almost no one stated their support for Israel.

This public opinion trend among the people is completely consistent with the official position of the Russian government. It should be noted that this consistency is not forced—it is not that large-scale domestic protests forced officials to adjust policies to meet public demands. On the contrary, the positions originally held by officials happened to align with this vague but widespread civilian tendency. This conclusion comes from (Chicago Council on Global Affairs & Levada Center, 2024).

Putting these facts together, a clear logic emerges: every statement and every public position released by the Russian government on the Gaza issue has been planned and promoted from start to finish by the Russian elite. These statements were never intended for the domestic public from the very beginning; their core audience has never been the people within Russia, but relevant overseas groups in Western countries, Arab countries, and the Global South. This set of carefully crafted external publicity content is not a position adjusted by the government to respond to unmet demands of the Russian people, nor is it a stance revised under the pressure of spontaneous grassroots domestic movements in Russia.

5.8 A Comparative Note: China and Turkey as Alternative External Patrons

To sort out all of Russia's statements on the Palestinian issue, one cannot fixate solely on Moscow's official narrative. After all, the Middle East has never been a region where only one or two external countries intervene. To fully grasp Russia's stance, one must lay out the positions of all other major external powers that are also involved in Middle Eastern affairs, compare them side by side, and avoid analyzing Russia's position in isolation.

Local Palestinian and Arab residents have long compared the actions of all these major powers one by one. After all, every move of these major powers tangibly impacts their daily lives, and they quietly weigh each country's approach in their minds. In particular, they form their own judgment of how much substantial content backs up Russia's verbal support for Palestine. That is why Russia cannot earn sincere acceptance from all parties concerned about this issue merely by stating that it "supports Palestine".

Since October 2023, all of China's official statements have closely aligned with the demands of Palestine, and every public remark China has made matches the requests put forward by the Palestinian side. China has publicly criticized Israel's operations in Gaza, repeatedly called for the implementation of the two-state solution — which would enable Israel and Palestine to establish their own independent states respectively — and has repeatedly seized opportunities to mediate, helping relevant parties sit down for talks. For example, in 2024, China hosted reconciliation talks between different Palestinian factions in Beijing, bringing all internal Palestinian forces together to discuss how to resolve disputes and reach internal reconciliation. This move, from multiple

perspectives, both overlapped with Russia's earlier practice of hosting talks between Palestinian factions in Moscow and created direct competition with Russia (GlobalSecurity.org, 2024).

Previous academic research on Global South countries' reactions to the war in Ukraine has noted that China's stance in the Ukraine conflict has long been described by scholars as a form of "balancing act": it verbally expresses sympathy for Russia, but in tangible areas such as the economy and military, its stance leans toward pragmatic interest-based exchanges, with all decisions centered first on its own core interests (Forum: The Russia-Ukraine War and Reactions from the Global South, 2024). This description of China's stance on Ukraine, with minor adjustments to details, can be directly applied to the Chinese government's actions on the Gaza issue.

Turkey's situation differs from both China and Russia. Its public criticisms of Israel use far sharper language than what Russia typically employs, it has actively reduced economic exchanges with Israel and cut off some cooperation channels; more critically, it has participated in subsequent coordination of affairs as a guarantor of post-ceasefire postwar arrangements in Gaza, a role that Russia has not been able to fulfill to this day.

A horizontal comparison of these countries' situations reveals that Russia's strategy of using rhetorical posturing to build influence is not unique; it is a small part of a broader current trend—many non-Western major powers use the Palestinian issue to accumulate public opinion prestige, or so-called "normative capital," among Global South countries, but the level of tangible resources and energy each country is willing to invest varies widely.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Russia among these countries is that it has a deeper historical legacy of engagement with Palestine, dating back to 1974/1988, but when compared to China's economic strength and Turkey's geopolitical and logistical advantages, Russia's current ability to practically engage in Palestinian-Israeli affairs is far more limited, and cannot match the other two countries.

5.9 Limitations of the Discourse-Analytic Approach

If this analytical framework is to be fully implemented in practice, several unavoidable inherent limitations must first be acknowledged, and even if this line of research is to be expanded in the future, these issues must be brought to the table upfront.

The first limitation is that the discourse analysis method this framework adopts to analyze official public statements can only capture the signals that high-ranking elites intend to convey to the outside world, and it is completely unable to directly measure the true intentions behind these individuals' decision-making. The label "principled opportunism" we attach to the observed behaviors is merely used to describe the pattern we have verified with solid evidence—that the slogans they publicly shout happen to align with the practical interests they seek to pursue. First of all, it must be stated that we will never assert that Russian officials privately actually identify with the statements they have released to the public.

This analysis also has a second core limitation: the collection of publicly retrievable official statements is extremely unevenly distributed. The vast majority of the content is concentrated in high-profile, high-attention major occasions such as UN meetings and presidential press conferences, while the daily diplomatic communications that few people track are almost never included. All publicly available statements that can be searched are basically clustered in these high-exposure events that attract extensive media and archiving resources; the unnoticed daily exchanges simply do not have such complete archived records. Yet it is precisely these unexamined ordinary interactions that maintain a consistently professional tone throughout, and focus solely on the terms of specific transactions. The absence of this content has directly reduced the comprehensiveness of this analysis.

The third key limitation stems from content deviations caused by translation and paraphrasing, which have injected an incalculable amount of distortion into the final dataset. The Original Russian-language statements, the English-language Kremlin's official English translations, and the summaries compiled by third-party media outlets including Anadolu Agency, WAFA, and Palestine Chronicle, all inadvertently fine-tune the focus of the original content. These changes are minor, but their cumulative impact cannot be underestimated. A methodologically rigorous study should prioritize the direct use of original speech drafts in the source language, and never rely on secondary materials that others have organized or translated. However, constrained by current conditions, this analysis can only temporarily carry out its work using these readily available secondary materials for the time being.

6. Discussion

The data collated in this paper shows that the series of statements Russia has released on the Palestinian question amid the Ukraine war cannot be simply classified into either of two categories: it is neither a genuine expression "rooted entirely in principle," nor is it wholly a political facade exploited as a tool. Russia has consistently stated externally that its stance on Palestine has remained unchanged for decades, and this claim is broadly tenable: the Soviet Union, the predecessor of Russia, officially recognized Palestine's statehood as early as 1988; and over the past thirty years, Russia itself has repeatedly made public statements in support of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, that is, the resolution that allows Israel and Palestine to coexist as separate independent states.

However, the historical context sorted out in section 5.1 of this paper also uncovers another detail: the interactions between the Soviet Union and Palestine before 1988 were shaped step by step mainly by the evolving situation at the time, diplomatic strategies, and the Soviet Union's own interests. This does not match the state of "a consistent stance spanning decades" described by current Russian officials, showing a clear discrepancy with Russia's current official claims, with relevant citations as (Golan, 1980; Institute for Palestine Studies, n.d.). This historical detail will not completely overturn the credibility of Russia's statements propped up by those past experiences;

Russia can still use this history to endorse its current positions, but it will impose certain limits on that credibility, which can no longer be as flawless as Russian official propaganda claims.

Beyond that, the timing of Russia's recent involvement in Israeli-Palestinian-related affairs, the rhetoric it has employed, and the conditions for its implementable practical actions all point to the same outcome: the Palestinian question has become deeply intertwined with the strategic conflict between Russia and the West. There are two specific pieces of corroborating evidence: first, Russia has explicitly linked the matter of funding the reconstruction of Gaza to its own overseas assets that have been frozen by Western countries; second, viewed as an overall trend, while Russia's verbal stance on the Israeli-Palestinian issue has grown increasingly firm, its practical actions implemented in the Middle East region have decreased.

This situation fully aligns with the core arguments of academic works researching "soft balancing," with relevant citations as (Ferguson, 2012; Papageorgiou et al., 2023). The core logic of this theory holds that a country whose hard power is constrained can use concepts rooted in international consensus, prevailing norms, and various international mechanisms to counter a power that holds an overwhelming advantage in strength. Furthermore, adopting this approach does not mean that all the ideas and propositions put forward by that country are falsehoods or facades; its propositions can also be ones it genuinely endorses. As long as it adjusts the way it deploys these propositions in a manner that helps it secure strategic advantages, it fits the description of this theory's logic. This paper specifically defines Russia's above behavioral logic as "principled opportunism." It is labeled "principled" because Russia does maintain a set of long-adhered-to formal positions; it is deemed to carry opportunistic attributes because this set of positions is never deployed casually—it is only brought forward, refined, packaged, and amplified for dissemination when it can help Moscow's fend off Western criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine and advance Russia's core immediate goals. As for the practical obligations that the stated slogans superficially demand to be fulfilled, Russia has always reserved room to maneuver, allowing itself to back out at any time, and has never truly bound the requirements in those slogans to its own actual actions. This disconnect between rhetorical stances and practical actions can be easily illustrated with a single example. No matter how fiercely the Kremlin denounces the situation in Gaza, or how high it ratchets up its anti-Western rhetoric, its security cooperation with Israel and Russia in Syria has never been interrupted; meanwhile, Russia has never truly participated in key negotiations directly related to Gaza, including ceasefire implementation and post-war reconstruction, and has not even made any substantial appearance in those processes. This pattern of operation fully aligns with the conclusions of existing academic research on strategic narratives. Previous studies have all noted that Russia always flexibly adjusts its anti-imperialist, anti-Western rhetoric to cater to local public opinion in different regions, yet never actually implements the practical actions those slogans demand (Selling Russia to the Global South(s), 2026). If we compare this set of Russia's practices with the similar foreign policy statements of China and Turkey (Section 5.8), we will find that Russia is not a unique, self-serving exception. Instead, it is a concrete manifestation of a prevalent model in contemporary great power competition. This model is, to put it simply, quite straightforward: whenever invoking the long-

proclaimed narrative of "solidarity" can help a country gain a more advantageous position in its standoff with the West, countries will bring out this narrative at an opportune moment. However, there is one unique specificity in Russia's case that merits close attention from Palestinian and Arab observers: Moscow's rhetorical stances have grown increasingly firm, and its confidence in this stance draws partially from its past accumulated experience in participating in the Middle East Quartet, and partially from its identity as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. By all accounts, it is speaking from a position of substantial leverage. Yet the reality is that since Russia's influence in Syria waned, its capacity to take practical action in the Middle East has continued to shrink. It is simply unable to translate its verbal commitments into tangible diplomatic moves or financial support, and the gap between the vision it proclaims and what it can actually deliver is widening.

A country's proclaimed justice slogans exceeding its ability to deliver on them does not necessarily mean it is deliberately lying. But if a country seeks to secure tangible support, rather than merely verbal statements of solidarity, Russia is by no means a reliable partner.

One more point must be clarified: the evidence from all existing analyses cannot substantiate a circulating conjecture that all of Russia's statements in support of Palestine are entirely fabricated falsehoods invented after 2022.

None of the currently compiled records can present conclusive evidence to validate this conjecture. The continuity of Russia's stance toward Palestine outlined in Section 5.3 of this paper is already sufficiently clear. Even though the historical period before 1988 was more complex and volatile, this years-long continuity of stance thoroughly separates Russia's position from those of opportunistic countries that made sudden U-turns—such as certain Gulf states that abruptly reversed their policies toward Palestine after 2023, which are pure cases of ad-hoc opportunism.

The core judgment this paper ultimately puts forward is a more rigorous and restrained one: Russia merely amplifies and disseminates the parts of its pre-existing, genuine long-held positions that serve its interests in the Ukraine conflict, rather than fabricating an entire pro-Palestine stance specifically for the sake of that conflict.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, in its public foreign statements, Russia always ties the situations in Ukraine and Gaza together. Whether in speeches delivered at international conferences or official statements released to the public, as long as it mentions the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, it will inevitably bring up the combat situation in Gaza at the same time, and frame the two issues on the same platform. This is not an offhand, impulsive remark; behind this practice lie two distinct and completely independent motives.

On one hand, for decades Russia has stated its support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, but this support has never been an unchanging commitment. Over the years, it has been repeatedly

adjusted in line with Russia's constantly shifting geopolitical circumstances, and the focus of its stance can be altered at any time based on Russia's current core interests and the closeness of its relations with other countries. It is by no means the "consistently upheld, unshakable principle-based stance" that Russian officials repeatedly claim.

On the other hand, this is a tactically calculated choice by Russia. Framing the two crises as linked issues is intended to weaken the West's grasp of global international rules, and break the West's monopoly on the moral interpretation of its own position, at a time when the conflict in Ukraine remains ongoing. Put simply, it leverages the public attention surrounding the Gaza issue to disrupt the West's moral discursive power on the Ukraine issue, divert part of global public attention away from the battlefield in Ukraine, and at the same time prevent the Western-led international order from centering solely on the conflict in Ukraine.

For policymakers in Palestinian and Arab countries, Russia's dual-track stance—partially rooted in its long-standing public position, and partially a pragmatic weighing of pros and cons—will generate tangible, implementable impacts. These core decision-makers, who formulate their own countries' policies toward the Israel-Palestine issue and toward Russia, will truly feel the specific changes brought about by Russia's contradictory stance, rather than facing empty, theoretical impacts that only exist on paper.

First, Russia will not stop its verbal support for Palestinian statehood. It will continue to formally support the Palestinian people's right to self-determination in multilateral settings such as the UN, as well as in bilateral high-level talks, and the frequency and strength of such statements will remain unchanged. Whether in its voting position at the UN General Assembly, or in public remarks during one-on-one meetings with leaders of Arab countries, it will not omit any of the required supportive rhetoric, and the firmness of its stance will be identical to previous levels.

However, the actual aid it is willing to provide, and the diplomatic resources it is willing to invest for these causes, are extremely limited. Unless it can tie relevant funding to its own disputes with the West, Russia will never allocate any direct funds for the post-war reconstruction of Gaza. Even if Gaza requires substantial funds to rebuild infrastructure and restore people's livelihoods after the war, Russia will not spend a single cent unconditionally. It will only consider releasing funds if they can be used to gain an upper hand in its strategic game with the West. After losing its core foothold in Syria, Russia's ability to project influence across the entire Middle East has shrunk significantly. Previously, relying on its military outpost in Syria, Russia was still able to build connections and mobilize resources in the core region of the Middle East. After losing that foothold, the resources it can leverage and the countries it can influence in the Middle East have been greatly reduced. Even if the aid packages it announces appear to be unconditional support, every allocation will be tied to its own great power rivalry disputes, with additional clauses that have nothing to do with the needs of the Palestinian people it claims to aid. Even if it does release a sum of funds labeled as aid for Palestine, the use of that money will be saddled with a host of conditions completely unrelated to

the Palestinians' livelihoods and statehood needs. In essence, it still serves Russia's game with the West, rather than being a sincere effort to help Palestine solve practical problems.

This means that Russia's actual ability to influence the trajectory of Palestine-related developments, and its willingness to set aside its disputes with the West and invest real resources solely to support Palestinian demands, were limited from the start. Regional leaders must not hold overly high expectations for the practical support Russia can provide. No matter how polished Russia's verbal support may sound, it lacks both the capacity to allocate substantial resources to advance Palestinian interests, and the willingness to set aside its rivalry with the West to support Palestinian demands purely for their own sake. The actual role Russia can play should never have been overstated from the outset. Moving forward, if researchers continue to study this topic, they can advance their work in three clear directions. First, collect a large volume of relevant materials with accurate time stamps, use a unified coding analysis framework to systematically compare all of Russia's diplomatic statements on Palestine before and after February 2022, and sort out the specific changes that have occurred in the frequency, wording, and positions of these statements. Second, observe whether Russia also uses similar "double standard" rhetoric to accuse the West when discussing other regional hotspots such as the conflict in Sudan and the dispute in Western Sahara, to examine whether this set of rhetoric is a universal attack logic Russia employs in all international conflicts. Third, directly survey ordinary Arab and Palestinian people and local policymakers, ask them how they evaluate the credibility of Russia's statement of "supporting Palestine", and further compare Russia's statements with the actions of other external countries—for example, China and Turkey, both of which have launched their own independent strategies to engage with the Palestinian issue starting in 2023, which are completely different from Russia's approach, allowing their distinctions to be drawn through side-by-side comparison.

This analysis also puts forward three core policy recommendations for Palestinian and Arab leaders. First, policymakers in these regions must completely separate the values of two matters and not conflate them: one is the diplomatic value of Russia's verbal support—this support is indeed useful in multilateral settings, as Russia holds veto power on the UN Security Council and its votes in the General Assembly also carry weight, and it can effectively block the adoption of proposals that Palestine deems harmful to its interests; the other is the value of the funds and practical actions Russia can provide, all of which have been tied to Russia's geostrategic goals in its game with the West from the start, and it will never make purely selfless contributions to Palestine's demands. Second, clear records show that Russia has long maintained two parallel, non-interfering policy lines: on one hand, it maintains in-depth security cooperation with Israel, and on the other, it maintains political solidarity with various Palestinian political factions; the two lines are extremely loosely tied, and Russia will never sacrifice one for the sake of the other. Therefore, Palestine must never expect Russia to pressure Israel using its close ties with Israel for Palestine's sake; at most, Russia will only offer a few perfunctory statements of support and will not take real action—if it were to offend Israel for Palestine's sake, it would destroy the Russia-Israel security communication channel that Russia has spent great efforts to build and maintain since 2015, and Russia will never take that risk.

Third, after losing its foothold in Syria, Russia's influence across the entire Middle East continues to decline. Even if, to cover up the embarrassment of its waning influence, it makes more perfunctory statements supporting Palestine, trying to mask its declining strength by increasing the volume of its rhetoric, its meager diplomatic value on the Palestinian issue will only become smaller and smaller, with the gap widening, when compared with that of Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, and the United States. This trend is fully consistent with the judgment on Russia's position in the Middle East after 2024 in existing research—which defines Russia's regional posture as "holding a weak hand", and that research is sourced from (CSS ETH Zürich, 2026).

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