

Moscow's Silence In Relation to the Israel-Palestine War: Russia Is Reorienting Towards the Arabs

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[Dances with Bears](#)

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Until now Russia has never been so silent in the middle of a Middle Eastern war.

Russian opinion pollsters are reluctant to reveal how far the country's public opinion is moving away from Israel towards the Palestinians and the anti-American Arab and Iranian side.

The silence from the Kremlin reveals how thoroughly the Israelis have burned their bridges to President Vladimir Putin, and how far, if silently, the Russian President has moved to the side of the General Staff in their assessment of Israel as hostile – on the enemy front with the Ukraine, the US and NATO. Putin's pro-semitism, on display in his relationship with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for [several years](#), is now impossible in public and also in private.

The Russian money which has moved easily between Moscow and Tel Aviv and exercised its influence on Putin's dealings with the Israelis, is now fleeing back to Moscow with the oligarch, [Mikhail Fridman](#). About Fridman's flight to safe haven in Russia, the Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, has [said](#):

"Fridman is a citizen of the Russian Federation. He can come back, live here, leave here, just like any other citizen of the Russian Federation. There is nothing unusual."

About that, the Speaker of the Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, said something more [unusual](#).

"Anyone who left the country and engaged in reprehensible acts, celebrating gunfire on Russian territory and wishing victory to the Nazi Kiev regime, should realize they are

not only unwelcome here, but if they do return, Magadan [the gulag] is waiting for them.”

From a [policy](#) of equivalence and equivocation between Israel and the Arabs, Russia has reached the policy of engagement on the Arab side. The driver has been the US war to defeat and destroy Russia through the Ukraine. The longer the new Palestinian war lasts, the more clearly Russian military and political strategy in the Middle East will pursue a new anti-American line.

The consequences are as great as the defeat of the US and NATO which Russia is now inflicting in Europe, and of the western sanctions war in the global commodity markets and the trading lanes at [sea](#).

“We are witnessing a sharp deterioration of the situation in the Middle East,” Putin [said](#) in his public welcome for Iraq’s prime minister, Muhammed Shia al-Sudani, at the Kremlin on Tuesday morning. “I think that many will agree with me that this is a clear example of the United States’ failed policy in the Middle East, which tried to monopolise the settlement process, but, unfortunately, was not concerned with finding compromises acceptable to both sides, but, on the contrary, put forward its own ideas about how this should be done and put pressure on both sides, truly both — first on one, then on the other.

“But each time without considering the fundamental interests of the Palestinian people, bearing in mind, first of all, the need to implement the decision of the UN Security Council on the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state.”

The Foreign Ministry followed Putin later in the afternoon, when the regular weekly briefing by Maria Zakharova was advanced several days early in order to report there have been direct negotiations with the leaders of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the Arab League, Iran, and Turkey – not with Israel.”[1]

“The US bet on the ‘freezing’ of the status quo and the promotion of ‘economic peace’, as well as the use of collective formats tailored for crisis response, has not justified itself,” Zakharova said. “Everyone sees the result...The statements of American politicians and public figures calling for ethnic cleansing in the region look monstrous.

“They openly call for one group of people [to be] near-doomed to complete destruction. Once again, aggression, violation of the rule of law, and the caveman’s hatred have emerged on the surface of the American declarations of good looks and human rights dogmas.”

In the first direct Russian [warning](#) to the US Navy force in the Eastern Mediterranean, Zakharova added:

“So far we see that the situation is developing along the path of escalation. There is a great risk of involving third forces in this conflict. And this is fraught with long-term consequences for the region and for the world.”

Putin followed in the evening on the telephone with the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

“The need for an immediate ceasefire by both sides and the resumption of the

negotiation process was emphasised,” according to the Kremlin’s [communiqué](#). “Mutual readiness to actively contribute to this was expressed...Separate issues of Russian-Turkish cooperation in various fields were also touched upon.”

Erdogan’s [press release](#) was more revealing. He and Putin had “touched upon what initiatives can be taken to meet humanitarian needs in the region, as the Turkish president told Putin that targeting civilian settlements is worrying and Türkiye does not welcome such moves.” Erdogan’s twitter [announcement](#) adds: “President Erdoğan and President Putin of Russia also exchanged views on potential initiatives to meet humanitarian needs in the region.”

President [@RTErdogan](#) spoke by phone with President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

The two leaders discussed the alarming course of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the measures to prevent the escalation of the tension.

President Erdoğan and President Putin of Russia also exchanged...

— Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye (@trpresidency) [October 10, 2023](#)

This is a hint that Erdogan and Putin are contemplating a Turkish ship convoy of aid to Gaza, protected from Israeli attack by the Russian Navy from its Tartous base on the Syrian coast, and by the Russian Air Force from Hmeimim. This humanitarian operation by sea would aim at breaking the blockade of the coast by the Israelis, and running the gauntlet of the *USS Gerald Ford* and its squadron further offshore.

If this operation, a reminder of the [Gaza Flotilla of 2010](#), is in planning now – the open signals are warning Washington and the US Navy to expect it – then the confrontation, and the risk to the US and Israel, of strategic defeat at sea, are unprecedented.

The planning of Russian military protection of seaborne humanitarian aid convoys to the Gaza also extends to Egypt.

This was touched on in the [conversation](#) which Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry had with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. That was followed by Egyptian press [disclosure](#) of Israeli warnings, following by bombings, to stop Egyptian trucks delivering aid into Gaza across the Rafah land bridge at the southern end of Gaza.



An alternative Egyptian option is a naval convoy. If this will be coordinated through the Kremlin and the Russian Defense Ministry with an Erdogan-Putin plan of a Turkish convoy sailing from the north, the escalation to regional and superpower level will have materialised before the Israeli invasion of Gaza can preempt it.

The Russian Defense Ministry has not been silent towards Israel in the past. Since the ambush by the Israel Air Force of the Russian Il-20 surveillance aircraft, and the killing of its 15-man crew in September 2018, the General Staff has [said](#) it has been reserving its moves against the Israelis while identifying them as the enemy.

Vzglyad, the Moscow platform for Russian military and security thinking, editorialised on [April 17, 2023](#), that in siding with the Ukraine during the Special Military Operation, the Israeli government had become Russia's adversary:

"The time has come to take a new position on the Palestinian issue. To take the celebration of Al-Quds Day to a new level, as well as to take a more pro-Palestinian position in the Middle East conflict. To stand on the side of those who help Russia within the framework of their own interests (Iran, Saudi Arabia) against those who help our enemies. And thereby to send a very clear signal to the world – a signal that Russia will

treat its partners exactly as they treat it. To help supporters – and not to act in the interests of opponents.”

The creation of a humanitarian corridor was explicitly mentioned in the Foreign Ministry briefing on [Tuesday](#).

“Tensions are rising in the West Bank of the Jordan River. There are high risks of the conflict spreading to the area of the Lebanese-Israeli border and drawing new parties into it. A large-scale humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes. The main thing now is to cease fire and stop the bloodshed.

“We support the efforts of interested parties aimed at solving this priority task. This would make it possible to avoid new victims, end the suffering of the civilian population, ensure its evacuation through humanitarian corridors and prevent the situation from sliding into a region-wide humanitarian catastrophe. This is not just a crisis or an emergency. We are talking about the fate of millions of people.”

Spokeswoman Zakharova also struck at the CIA and the Pentagon for their surprise defeat by Hamas.

“How did it happen that in a year; that’s how much time the operation was being prepared for, then carried out now in a few days, the United States as Israel’s closest ally did not warn about this? They have satellites everywhere, appropriate tracking devices, military bases, including in the region.

“There are all the possibilities to carry out, not just monitoring, but surveillance — the facts speak for themselves — of all information circulating on American-made equipment (hardware and software). For the whole year of preparing such a large-scale operation, the United States with all the power of its special services did not transmit anything to Israel as intelligence...How did it happen that during the whole year of preparation of the corresponding operation in the Middle East, the United States did not transmit any information to its partners in Israel?”

By contrast, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said,

“for two months at the end of 2021 and two months at the beginning of 2022, the United States at all levels told how Russia would ‘attack’ Ukraine. This was done specifically to create an information backdrop in order to divert the eyes of the whole world from how, for all these years, the United States and their NATO colleagues (primarily the United Kingdom) have been pumping Ukraine with weapons and creating the anti-Russia project, an anti-Russian springboard...

“After the corresponding instruction from Washington, a multiple increase in the shelling of Donbass by the regime of V.A. Zelensky followed. Then, in late 2021-early 2022, the US ‘knew everything’ and told everyone. But in the area of their direct responsibility — the Middle East has always been one of them — in relation to the closest ally over which the American protectorate is carried out, the US special services, the State Department and the White House did not transmit any information necessary for self-defence.”

The first public indication of how Russian military intelligence and the General Staff assessed what had happened surfaced in [Vzglyad](#) on Sunday.

“Those who were previously perceived as peasants in woven slippers, capable at best of blowing up a bus stop, destroyed one of the myths about the state of Israel in a few hours,” Yevgeny Krutikov [concluded](#) after itemizing the weaknesses of Israel’s defence lines, over-confidence in its technology, and under-estimation of Arab capabilities.

“The IDF [Israel Defence Forces] was in a coma...Thus, Israel has suffered losses more important than just tragic losses in manpower and equipment. The Palestinian attack has destroyed the idea of how the Israeli security forces are organised and how capable they are.

“It has turned out that the Israeli security forces rest on the laurels of the victories of past generations. Intelligence and counterintelligence are ineffective, and the Israeli military has been asleep through the changes in combat tactics taking place during the contemporary conflicts right now.”

In a personal Telegram post, Krutikov spelled out the consensus of Russian military staff thinking at present:

“1. The IDF and the Mossad were completely unprepared. There is no primary protection system and the garrisons of the border posts were fast asleep on Saturday on the [Simchat Torah religious] holiday. The Arabs on foot, slowly, reached the unguarded positions of the Jews. The very idea of these posts was nonsense.

2. They don’t know what drones, air defence systems and all of this are at all. The Iron Dome is a fiction. They’ve been living in some kind of fantasy world for the last few years.

3. Everything about Israel is a myth. There is no such defence system, there is no such intelligence. Their PR is solid.

4. Either the Arabs were trained in a special way, or they somehow unexpectedly evolved into a new form of life. The operation was planned for at least a year, taking into account all the new trends...

5. A huge amount of weapons from the Arabs could not fall from the sky. How did it get there? Again, we convey our warmest greetings to the Israeli mother of intelligence.

6. Tactical training is completely absent as well as the vaunted patriotism.

7. Exceptional cruelty is a sign not only of this region. God is dead, including the Jewish God.

8. Where else will catch fire?”

In a last line intended to be an ironic echo of the Orthodox Jewish belief in the apocalypse, Krutikov [wrote](#):

“Truly, the last days are coming.”

The reporter, who has served in the field as a GRU officer, [reported](#) in *Vzglyad* on Sunday:

“It is clear that Israel is technologically stronger. If it follows that, sooner or later, such a

degree of destruction of Gaza will be achieved, that Tel Aviv will be able to call a victory, nevertheless the Arabs have already achieved the main thing: they have destroyed the myths around Israel's defence systems, and this moral victory is much more important than the purely military counterattack that the Jewish state is now organizing against them.

"Furthermore, the events of these days may reshape the entire military-political structure of the Middle East, and lead to the emergence of new alliances and new front lines. Against the background of all other world events, this is almost the most terrible thing that could happen."

Late on Tuesday, US time, a NATO veteran of the Afghan war cast doubt on what the Israeli offensive will be able to achieve in Gaza.

"The Israelis don't have the staying power to dig through, let alone occupy, Fort Gaza. Now, thanks to the bombing, they've turned it into a giant improved defence complex. It's sure to be laced with tunnels and other underground workings well-stocked with food, water, medical supplies, weapons, ammunition, etc. We can bet those workings crisscross the border with Egypt. We can also bet that, no matter how nervous General Sisi [President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, *right*] is, there is certainly Egyptian support where it counts now."

"The Israelis are said to be mobilising 300,000 reservists. How long can such a mobilisation last before it tells on the country's economy? The US, after nearly exhausting its arms stocks, and a great deal of treasure, on the war against Russia via the Ukraine, has little to show for it. How will 'giving Israel all it needs' to slog through the ruins of the Gazan death trap work out any better?"

"All of this goes without counting what the Russians, Turks, Iranians, Lebanese in the form of Hezbollah, and others, may do. If the Russians launch a blockade-busting run with the Turks, will the Americans and Israelis risk a nuclear exchange trying to stop them?"

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Note

[1] Late on Tuesday evening in Moscow, the Israeli ambassador to Russia, Alexander Ben Zvi, was admitted on his request to an interview with Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov at the latter's reception room at the ministry. The Russian [communiqué](#) indicates the Israeli official was warned the proposed IDF plan to destroy Gaza, occupy the territory, and cleanse it of "[human animals](#)" — was "fraught...with the most devastating consequences for the humanitarian situation in the [region](#)." The Israeli press has not reported Bogdanov's warning to Ben Zvi; the Israeli had been telling Tass hours earlier: "when we declared a state of war with Hamas, we meant that the state of war implies everything, including a ground operation," Ben Zvi [said](#). "When will it begin? Right now certain work is being done so as not to make any hasty steps. It is necessary, of course, to analyze things thoroughly. What is needed? How should it be done? I cannot rule out that it will not happen, either. It is possible

that it will happen. I don't know, it is to be decided at the army level." He then [told](#) a meeting with Moscow Jews that Israel is not targeting all the Palestinians of Gaza: "this war will continue as long as Hamas exists as a terrorist organization, and we will have to pay with more and more casualties. In order to prevent this, we need to destroy all these terrorist cells of Hamas."

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