

# ‘Satanism in All Its Glory’: Russian Reactions to the US- Israeli Attack on Iran

Martin Kragh

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## Executive Summary

- Official Russian reaction to the US-Israeli attack on Iran has involved condemnation, claims of increased nuclear threat and accusations of western duplicity. Russia’s reaction to the war in the Middle East must be seen in the wider context of Russian–US relations, Russia’s war aims in Ukraine and its overarching aim to reshape the global and European security architecture.
- Russian officials frame Russia as a guarantor of international law and stability that is ready to engage in diplomacy for a peaceful solution to the war.
- The Kremlin frames western diplomacy as cover for military preparations. Western governments should expect diplomatic engagement with Russia-aligned parties to be publicly framed in this way.
- Western governments should treat Russian mediation offers as primarily performative, designed to influence the UN discourse and key audiences, rather than as operational diplomacy. Engaging with such offers risks legitimising the framing without gaining from the outcome.

## Background

The [United States and Israel launched coordinated military strikes against Iran](#) on 28 February 2026. These strikes killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and numerous senior military and security officials. Russia responded with strong rhetorical condemnation but provided [no material military support](#). The Kremlin [convened an emergency session of the UN Security Council on 28 February](#). It is also alleged to have provided Iran with intelligence support.

## Condemnation without action

The near-unanimous rhetorical stance – from Russian President Vladimir Putin to foreign ministry (MFA) spokesperson Maria Zakharova – has been strong condemnation of the strikes as illegal aggression. However, Russia has provided no material military support to Iran. Russian officials have confirmed that BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation frameworks contain no mutual-defence obligations. Moscow's response is, in essence, one of verbal solidarity and strategic passivity.

“In our country”, according to Putin, [“Ayatollah Khamenei will be remembered as an outstanding statesman](#) who made a huge personal contribution to the development of friendly Russian-Iranian relations”. He also called the killing of Khamenei “a [cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law](#)” and an “assassination”.

The Kremlin convened an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on 28 February but did not publish any record of its proceedings. [Putin also held phone calls with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE](#) in the days following the attack.

## Increased nuclear threat and instability

A recurring narrative has been that of increased nuclear threat and instability in the Middle East. According to Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, there was no evidence that Iran was developing nuclear weapons, but the likelihood of a nuclear Iran had now increased: “The logical consequence of the US and Israel's actions could be that [forces will emerge in Iran](#)... in favour of doing exactly what the Americans want to avoid – acquiring a nuclear bomb”. The US does not attack those who have nuclear weapons. Therefore, [“Arab countries could now join the race to acquire nuclear weapons](#), given the experience of recent days – and the nuclear proliferation problem will begin to spiral out of control”.

A [statement by the Russian foreign ministry on 28 February warned of destabilisation](#). The statement accused the US of seeking to “dismantle the constitutional order” of Iran and remove its leadership, “because it has refused to yield to the dictates of force and hegemonic pressure”. The statement warned of an “unpredictable chain reaction” and a “spiral of escalating violence”.

## Charges of duplicity

A second narrative has been that of western duplicity. Lavrov argued that Moscow had been misled, citing Israeli [“assurances conveyed to Russia indicating that Israel had no interest in entering into military confrontation](#) with Iran”. He proposed a moratorium on attacks on civilian populations in the Middle East and stated that Russia was ready to work with partners on a draft UN Security Council resolution on ending hostilities.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova was more blunt: “The [United States and Israel have attacked Iran under a fabricated pretext](#)”...“[The West's tactics on Iran mirror its behaviour under the Minsk agreements](#)”, where negotiations were used as cover for a military strike.

In a message aimed primarily at domestic and Global South audiences, framing the conflict in civilisational terms, Zakharova saw hidden forces of evil at work: “Here it is, [Satanism in all its glory](#)...Cursed be both those who performed this ritual sacrifice [a reference to the bombing of [a school in Minab](#)], to the forces of evil and those who saw ‘new hope’ in it”.

The US-Israeli plan for Iran, Zakharova argued, was to implement “a [long-cherished plan to violently overthrow the constitutional order in Iran](#)” and plunge the Middle East “ever deeper into an abyss of chaos”. In the same context, she repeated an unsupported claim made by Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, the SVR, that France and the UK were [planning to transfer nuclear weapons to Ukraine](#).

In addition, former President Dmitry Medvedev claimed that [multiple countries were now ready to arm Iran with nuclear warheads](#) – a type of fear mongering that prompted Trump to mock him directly by name on Truth Social.

## Diplomatic signalling

A third narrative has involved a more measured approach, focused on diplomatic signalling and careful to preserve Russia’s relationship with the US amid ongoing negotiations on Ukraine. Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov remarked that: “The [Russian Federation expresses deep disappointment](#) that amid information about progress in negotiations between the United States and Iran, the situation has deteriorated to the point of direct aggression”. He added, however, that “It’s in our interests to continue the Ukraine negotiations, and we will certainly remain open to them”.

## Conclusions

Official Russian reaction to the US-Israeli attack on Iran has varied, from condemnation to claims of increased nuclear threat and instability and accusations of western duplicity. Russia’s reaction to the war in the Middle East must be seen in the wider context of Russian–US relations, Russia’s war aims in Ukraine and its overarching aim to reshape the global and European security architecture.

Russian officials frame Russia as a guarantor of international law and stability, ready to engage in diplomacy for a peaceful solution to the war. During the crisis, the Russian foreign ministry has condemned the strikes, called for a ceasefire, proposed a resolution in the UN Security Council and framed the entire diplomatic track as western deception. These are structurally incompatible postures: a credible mediator cannot also be a party that is publicly narrating the other side’s bad faith.

Western governments should treat Russian mediation offers as primarily performative, designed to influence the UN discourse and key audiences, rather than as operational diplomacy. Engaging with them as the latter risks legitimising the framing without gaining from the outcome.

The Kremlin describes western diplomacy as cover for military preparations. Western governments should therefore expect diplomatic engagement with Russia-aligned parties to be publicly framed in this way and factor this into the design of verification mechanisms.



**Martin Kragh**

Deputy director, Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies

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