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Major Powers and the Gaza Crisis: Responses to the Post-2023 Israel-Palestine Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The post-2023 escalation in the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly in Gaza, has reignited worldwide tensions and produced varied responses from major world powers. This study critically examines the political, diplomatic, and strategic reactions of key global actors including the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union. By analyzing official statements, policy shifts, aid assurances, and geopolitical alignments, the paper highlights the divergence in international approaches and the broader implications for global order, international law, and regional stability. The research highlights how deep-rooted interests, alliance, and normative frameworks shape the international community's stance on the conflict. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the internationalization of the Gaza crisis and its potential to reshape the balance of power and diplomatic discourse in the Middle East.

KEY WORDS: *Israel-Palestine, Conflict, Gaza War, United States, Russia, China*

INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of intense hostilities in Gaza following October 2023 marked one of the most severe escalations in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Triggered by a series of violent confrontations and political provocations, the crisis not only caused immense humanitarian suffering but also boomed far beyond the borders of the region. As images of destruction, mass displacement, and civilian casualties circulated worldwide, the responses from major world powers became a defining aspect of the clarifying geopolitical narrative. This study explores how global powers specifically the United States, China, Russia, and European Union, have reacted to the conflict. Each of these actors brings a unique set of interests, alliances, and strategic calculations. Some have repeated traditional alliances, while others have seized the moment to challenge Western-

dominated narratives or reposition themselves diplomatically in the Middle East. The post-2023 Gaza crisis presents a critical case for understanding the intersection of humanitarian concerns, international law, and geopolitical rivalry. In an increasingly multipolar world, how major powers respond to regional conflicts not only affects local dynamics but also reflects broader shifts in global order. This paper aims to analyze these responses through the lenses of foreign policy, international diplomacy, and strategic interest, shedding light on the complex and often contradictory roles that powerful states play in shaping the course and resolution of protracted conflicts like that in Gaza. The following research questions will be addressed in this research study.

Research Questions

1. How have the foreign policy responses of major powers (United States, China, Russia, and the European Union) evolved in response to the post-2023 Gaza conflict.
2. What role have major powers played in either supporting or obstructing ceasefire negotiations, humanitarian aid efforts, and reconstruction in Gaza since the escalation of conflict in 2023?
3. How have geopolitical rivalries among major powers influenced their responses to the Gaza crisis, particularly in multilateral institutions like the United Nations?

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research to examine and interpret the responses of selected states to the Israel–Palestine conflict following the 2023 Gaza War. Qualitative research is suitable for exploring complex political behaviors, narratives, and state motivations, especially when the goal is to understand the underlying meaning, context, and dynamics behind foreign policy decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research is guided by Realism, which requires close attention to both systemic-level structures and domestic-level factors, best captured through interpretive and contextual methods. This study relies entirely on secondary data sources, which provide comprehensive access to existing knowledge, historical context, and evolving political positions. The secondary data include official government statements, press releases, and foreign ministry publications. It also includes the reports of the international organization and reports of reputable news outlets (BBC, Al Jazeera, CNN, Reuters, The Guardian, The New York Post and Washington Post). Academic journals and policy papers on international relations and Middle East politics have also been consulted.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Realism, of international relations, provides the most suitable framework for examining how major powers have responded to the post-2023 escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Realism views the international system as anarchic, where states act in pursuit of their national interest, with power and security as their primary concerns. In this context, the Gaza crisis is not merely a humanitarian issue but a geopolitical event that shapes and is shaped by the strategic calculations of global powers. Countries usually make decisions based on what assists them the most. Their main goals are to stay safe, gain power, and have more control in their region. They do not always focus on what is morally right or wrong. Instead, their actions

are guided by what helps protect and promote their own interests. From a realist perspective, the United States' continued support for Israel reflects its long-standing strategic alliance and its aim to preserve regional dominance and deter hostile actors such as Iran. Similarly, Russia and China have responded to the crisis in a way that challenges U.S. hegemony and seeks to enhance their own global influence. Russia presents itself as a balance to Western ideas, trying to gain support from Arab countries and the Global South. At the same time, China focuses on not interfering in other countries' affairs and following international rules. These responses are not rooted in ideological alignment with either party, but rather in a broader strategy to maximize relative power and influence global governance structures. Ultimately, Realism allows us to understand the diverse reactions of major powers as calculated moves within a competitive international order. Humanitarian concerns, international norms, and peace efforts are often secondary to the search of national interest, especially in conflict zones like Gaza, which hold both symbolic and strategic significance. By focusing on power dynamics, military alliances, and geopolitical calculations, Realism provides a clear and pragmatic explanation for why states respond the way they do to the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly in the volatile aftermath of the 2023 escalation.

Literature Review

There is sufficient literature available on Israel–Palestine conflict following the 2023 Gaza War. The scholar selected some relevant literature to understand the dynamics behind major powers foreign policy decisions, political behaviors, and state motivations, on Israel–Palestine conflict. Khalid and Mat (2024) explain how different Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries reacted to the Israel–Palestine conflict after October 7, 2023. Saudi Arabia paused its talks to normalize relations with Israel. Qatar focused on helping with peace talks and humanitarian aid, the UAE and Bahrain were careful in their responses, Oman stayed neutral, and Kuwait strongly supported Palestine. This shows that even though the GCC is a united group, their responses to the war were quite different. Falki and Asrar (2024) looked at how major global powers like the United States, China, and Russia responded after the war in Gaza. They found that each country took a different approach: China tried to offer new diplomatic solutions, Russia increased its military and political involvement, and the U.S. continued to support a two-state solution. Konya et al. (2025) showed how artificial intelligence (AI) helped bring together Israeli and Palestinian peace builders to talk and agree on ideas. Over 84% of the participants agreed on joint policy statements, suggesting that technology could help reduce conflict and support grassroots peace efforts. Kaur and Arora (2025) found that media in both the West and the Middle East tend to focus more on war than peace. Their study also showed how news stories vary in who they portray as victims or aggressors, which affects how people around the world view the conflict. The book *Gaza: A War of Frenzied Revenge* (2024), published by the Institute for Palestine Studies, brings together many articles and policy papers that explain how different countries and groups responded to the war legally, politically, and in humanitarian terms. It's a valuable source for understanding the broader impact of the conflict. Raja Shehadeh's book *What Does Israel Fear from Palestine?* (2025) reflects on lost chances for peace since the end of the Cold War. He

argues that there is still hope for peaceful existence, but it will need strong international support. In the light of theoretical framework the research questions are explained below.

A: Foreign Policies of Major Powers in Response to the 2023 Gaza War

The 2023 Gaza War marked a key moment in the Israel-Palestine conflict, drawing strong attention from countries around the world. Major Powers like the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union had to rethink their foreign policies in response to the conflict. While many of their positions were based on long-standing alliances, their reactions showed some important changes in how they handled diplomacy, worked with other countries, and showed support or criticism. These changes were influenced by a mix of factors, including national interests, the opinions of their citizens, and shifting political situations in the region. Domestic pressures and public opinions played a large role in shaping their responses, showing that global issues like this war are never just about international politics, but also how leaders respond to their own people and changing world events. Responses of the major powers are discussed below.

1: The U.S. Response to the Post-2023 Gaza War

The United States has been strong supporter of Israel throughout the ongoing conflict. After the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, President Joe Biden emphasized that Israel had the right to defend itself. To support this, he sent U.S. naval forces to the region to deter Iran and its allies from getting involved (House of Commons Library, 2024). As the fighting continued, the U.S. blocked several United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions that called for a ceasefire. The U.S. said that such actions would limit Israel's ability to defeat Hamas (Le Monde, 2024). However, as civilian deaths in Gaza rose and global criticism increased, the U.S. began to change its approach to some extent. By 2024 and 2025, the Biden administration announced conditions on U.S. aid to Israel. This included temporarily pausing some weapons deliveries (Washington Post, 2025). This shift was influenced by growing criticism from American civil society and progressive lawmakers (House of Commons Library, 2024). From a strategic insight, U.S. policy was still focused on maintaining influence in the Middle East, supporting a key ally and leading peace efforts. At the same time, the U.S. struggled with reputational damage, as many believed it was partly responsible for the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Gaza (AP News, 2023). After the 2023 Gaza War, the U.S. continued to strongly support Israel while also trying to address humanitarian issues. This double standard approach showed how U.S. policy was trying to balance military support with growing criticism from both inside and outside the country. For example, in mid-2025, the U.S. approved a \$510 million arms deal with Israel, mostly made up of precision-guided bombs such as JDAM kits. This decision was made despite protests from human rights groups and some international partners (Defense Forces, 2025; Anadolu Agency, 2025). Many Americans and lawmakers began to question the scale of support for Israel (Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 2024). Under former President Donald Trump, the U.S. put forward a 60-day ceasefire proposal. This plan required Israel to allow humanitarian pauses, exchange hostages and prisoners, and expand humanitarian access to Gaza. Israel carefully supported the proposal, but Hamas had not formally responded. This diplomatic move was

aimed at preventing the conflict from spreading further in the region (Reuters, 2025; The Australian, 2025). During President Biden's administration it focused more on long-term recovery and governance in Gaza. It worked with regional partners and the Palestinian Authority to create plans for rebuilding, improving security, and pushing for political reforms (CNN, 2023; Voice of America, 2023). A key part of this strategy was to restore the Palestinian Authority's role in Gaza, which the U.S. saw as essential for lasting peace. Despite these efforts, many still criticized the U.S. for continuing to send weapons to Israel. Human rights groups and members of Congress argued that this made the humanitarian crisis worse and hurt America's moral image internationally. This reaction led to internal dissent, including resignations from officials in the State Department and public criticism from former diplomats (Al Jazeera, 2024; New York Post, 2025). A major shift came in 2025 when Donald Trump returned to office. He quickly canceled National Security Memorandum 20, which Biden had introduced to tie U.S. arms sales to compliance with international humanitarian law. With that rollback, arms shipments to Israel resumed without conditions, signaling a return to full and unconditional support (New York Post, 2025; Washington Post, 2025).

U.S. foreign policy after the 2023 Gaza War has been shaped by a mix of strong support for Israel, strategic goals, and growing public and political debate. Historically, the U.S. has always backed Israel diplomatically and militarily, often blocking UN resolutions that criticize Israeli actions (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). Although President Biden defended Israel's right to self-defense after the Hamas attacks, he also faced growing pressure from progressive groups and civil society to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and rethink military aid (Barnes & Wong, 2023). Human rights organizations and members of Congress criticized the administration for not calling for a ceasefire and for continuing to send weapons during the violence. The U.S. diplomatic statements frame the conflict as part of the global fight against terrorism, mitigating military actions in Gaza as lawful under Article 51 of the UN Charter. However, critics argue that this focus sometimes sidelines Palestinian claims to self-determination, as the U.S. rarely frames Hamas or Palestinians' resistance in those terms (Euronews, 2024). From a realist perspective, the U.S. response to the post-2023 Gaza War can be seen as a continuation of its strategic interests in the Middle East, particularly its long-standing alliance with Israel. Realism focuses on the quest of power and security, and the U.S. has consistently prioritized maintaining a strong relationship with Israel as part of its broader goal to ensure stability and counterbalance regional threats, such as Iran. In the aftermath of the Gaza War, the U.S. response supporting Israel diplomatically, providing military aid, and shielding it from international blame aligns with the realist view that states act in their own self-interest to maximize security. This approach also reflects the U.S.'s broader strategic interest in preventing any shifts in regional power dynamics that could weaken its influence in the Middle East. However, realism also recognizes that states must steer changing power structures and shifting alliances. In this context, the U.S. had to carefully balance its support for Israel with the growing global pressure to address humanitarian concerns and the increasing influence of other powers, such as China and Russia, who have taken a more critical stance toward Israeli actions.

2 : China Response to the Post-2023 Gaza War

China has taken a very different approach to the Israel–Palestine conflict compared to the United States. It has presented itself as a neutral power that supports peace and diplomacy. Though Beijing condemned violence on both sides, it focused most of its criticism on Israel’s military actions in Gaza (Atlantic Council, 2024). China supported calls for a ceasefire at the United Nations Security Council and also worked with Arab countries to suggest alternative peace plans (Atlantic Council, 2024). To strengthen its image as a neutral mediator, China hosted meetings with both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas (The Guardian, 2024). This active role is part of China’s greater strategy to increase its influence in the Middle East, improve its standing in the Global South, and promote a non-Western way of solving international conflicts (Helmy, 2024). A more peaceful and stable Middle East is also important for China's economic goals, especially for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which relies on energy security and safe trade routes through the region (International Institute for Iranian Studies, 2023). China’s efforts have also supported its claim to be a responsible world power that believes in multipolarity that is, a world where power is shared among many countries rather than dominated by a few. After the 2023 Gaza War, China became more active in trying to help solve the conflict. It positioned itself as a peaceful mediator and a counterbalance to Western powers like the U.S. In June 2023, President Xi Jinping introduced a three-point peace plan. This plan supported a two-state solution, called for a return to the 1967 borders, and suggested that East Jerusalem should be the capital of a future Palestinian state. It also proposed holding an international peace conference led by multiple countries not just the U.S. (Wikipedia, 2023a). This showed China’s ambition to play a leading role in peace efforts traditionally dominated by the West. At the UN, China took a stronger position by supporting ceasefire resolutions. Unlike many Western countries, Chinese officials avoided calling Hamas a terrorist group, which reflected a more sympathetic view toward the Palestinian cause (The Washington Post, 2023). This approach improved China’s reputation among Arab and Muslim-majority countries. China also expanded its role by hosting reconciliation talks between Palestinian factions. In July 2024, these talks led to the “Beijing Declaration,” a political agreement between Fatah and Hamas. The agreement focused on working together, holding elections, and creating shared leadership, marking a major diplomatic win for China in a region that is often divided (CNN, 2024; Wikipedia, 2023b). Israeli leaders were unhappy with China’s weak response to the October 7 attacks and especially critical of China’s statement that Israeli military actions had “gone beyond self-defense” (Le Monde, 2024; Voice of America News, 2024). As a result, China reduced certain exports and maritime cooperation with Israel, showing that ties between the two countries were weakening (Wikipedia, 2024). Overall, China’s response to the 2023 Gaza War showed its desire to be seen as a neutral but helpful player in Middle East diplomacy. China called for an immediate ceasefire, condemned violence against civilians, and stood by its support for a two-state solution (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2023). In global forums like the UN Security Council, Chinese officials also criticized what they saw as U.S. double standards especially on issues like human rights and sovereignty. This helped China promote its image as a supporter of fairness

and the interests of the Global South (Sun, 2023). China's diplomatic approach to the Gaza conflict emphasizes core international principles such as sovereignty, human rights, and the right to self-determination. Beijing has consistently called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, urging the international community to prioritize the protection of Palestinian civilians and address pressing humanitarian needs (UN News, 2024). This stance highlights China's image as a global advocate for the rights of oppressed peoples of Palestine. As China believed in diplomatic principle of non-intervention and its preference for peaceful, negotiated solutions in accordance with international law (Atlantic Council, 2024). Such an approach allows China to maintain constructive relations with various actors in the Middle East. From a realist stance, China's response to the post-2023 Gaza War can be understood as an effort to strengthen its influence in the Middle East and challenge U.S. dominance in the region. Realism emphasizes the pursuit of national power and security, and for China, maintaining a neutral but assertive stance allows it to position itself as a key global player. By criticizing Israel's actions and calling for a stronger international response, China presented itself as a champion of global justice and increases its stature as a counterbalance to the West. China's growing ties with Middle Eastern countries make it vital for Beijing to balance these regional dynamics carefully to further its strategic interests. Moreover, China's approach to the Gaza War was a direct challenge to the U.S.'s influence, especially in light of Washington's unwavering support for Israel.

3: Russia Response to the Post-2023 Gaza War

After the 2023 Gaza conflict, Russia responded by blaming the United States, claiming that the war was a result of failed American policies in the Middle East. Russian officials strongly criticized Israel's military operations, even comparing the siege of Gaza to the Nazi blockade of Leningrad during World War II a powerful and emotional symbol in Russian history (Arab Center DC, 2023). At the same time, Russia welcomed delegations from Hamas and refused to label the group as a terrorist organization. This move reflected Russia's larger goal of challenging Western narratives and building influence in the Global South, especially among countries that distrust the U.S. and its allies (International Institute for Iranian Studies, 2023). By involving itself in the Gaza conflict, Russia aimed to divert attention from its own war in Ukraine and show that it can still play a major role in global affairs. The conflict also gave Russia a chance to strengthen its partnerships with Iran and Syria, two of its key allies in the Middle East. These alliances give Russia more power in regional diplomacy and energy politics (Helmy, 2024). Overall, Russia's response to the Gaza War fits into its broader foreign policy, to present itself as a global power that opposes U.S. dominance and supports a multipolar world where influence is shared among many countries. In 2023, Russia hosted a Hamas delegation in Moscow. Although Israel strongly criticized this visit, it highlighted Russia's long-standing ties with Hamas's political leadership (Wikipedia, 2024a). During the conflict, President Vladimir Putin took a "dual-criticism" approach: he condemned the October 7 attacks by Hamas but also criticized Israel's heavy-handed military response, calling it extreme (Wikipedia, 2024b). By using this balanced language, Russia tried to maintain good relations with Arab countries while still keeping communication open with Israel. Russia also offered to mediate peace talks between Israel and Hamas, although these efforts did

not result in actual negotiations. Russia increased its criticism of the West, especially the U.S. Russian officials, state-run media, and diplomats accused the U.S. of having double standards and acting hypocritically in international affairs (Arab Center Washington DC, 2024; Foundation for Defense of Democracies FDD, 2023). In contrast, Russia portrayed itself as a defender of Palestinian rights and a supporter of the Global South. Russian leaders condemned Israel's actions as too aggressive and criticized it (TASS, 2023). Russia also reaffirmed its support for Palestinian statehood and called for new peace talks through multilateral efforts. Its ability to keep ties with both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority helped present Russia as a more balanced actor in the conflict. This approach not only helped it in Middle East politics but also supported its bigger goal challenging Western power globally and promoting a new international order (Trenin, 2023). Russia's response to the 2023 Gaza War combined strategic opportunism and diplomatic calculation. By aligning with the Palestinian cause, criticizing the U.S. and Israel, and working with its regional allies, Russia tried to rebuild its global image and offer an alternative vision to Western-led governance. By maintaining open channels with both Israel and Palestinian factions, Russia aims to position itself as a pragmatic and influential mediator in the region. In addition to its stance on political engagement, Russia often invokes humanitarian norms and critiques what it views as Western double standards, particularly concerning civilian casualties in Gaza. Moscow's narrative frames Western actions as selective and unreliable, contrasting them with Russia's call for balanced, multilateral responses to international crises (UN News, 2024). From a realist viewpoint, Russia's response to the post-2023 Gaza War can be seen as part of its broader strategy to challenge Western influence and reassert itself as a dominant global power. Realism posits that states act primarily in their own self-interest to maximize power and security, and for Russia, this means using the Gaza conflict as an opportunity to further its influence in the Middle East, particularly among Arab states and against U.S. leadership. By criticizing Israel's actions and advocating for a stronger international stance, Russia sought to position itself as a voice for peace and a counterbalance to the U.S. As the West continues to support Israel, Russia has worked to strengthen its relationships with regional powers, such as Iran and Syria, positioning itself as a major player in regional engagements.

4 :. European Union Response to the Post-2023 Gaza War

The European Union's response to the 2023 Gaza War was divided and unpredictable. As the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen initially voiced strong support for Israel's right to self-defense after the October 7 Hamas attacks, this position quickly faced criticism from other EU leaders and institutions (Wikipedia, 2025). After the Hamas attacks, von der Leyen's quick support for Israel was seen by many as reflecting the EU's traditional alliance with Israel, especially among member states like Austria and Hungary that tend to support Israeli policies (Al Jazeera, 2024). Leaders from countries like Ireland, Spain, and Belgium, along with EU foreign policy Chief Josep Borrell, called for an immediate ceasefire and condemned Israel's attacks on civilians (AP News, 2023). He criticized Israel's blockade of Gaza, called for the protection of civilians, and urged all parties to follow international humanitarian law (Wikipedia, 2024). Borrell's comments were strongly supported by countries such as Ireland, Spain, Belgium,

Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Denmark. This lack of unity exposed deep divisions within the EU. On one side, some countries focused on security and alignment with the U.S., while others stressed the EU's commitment to human rights and international law (GIGA, 2024). Even though the European Union provided large amounts of humanitarian aid to Gaza, it struggled to present a single, strong voice in international discussions. These nations condemned forced displacement and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza, which they believed violated international legal standards. This split within the EU reflected a broader tension between Western European countries, which focus more on human rights, and Central and Eastern European countries like Hungary and Austria, which have a closer strategic alignment with Israel. Even Germany, while traditionally supportive of Israel due to historical reasons, avoided criticizing Israel directly but still emphasized the need to protect civilians in Gaza (Reuters, 2023). At the same time, public opinion in Europe began to shift. As the conflict increased, protests broke out across major European Union (EU) cities, with people demanding an end to the violence and urging the European Union (EU) to take a more balanced or pro-Palestinian position. Civil society groups and some Members of the European Parliament began to question the EU-Israel Association Agreement, a key deal that shapes EU-Israel relations. Many critics said that Israel's actions in Gaza violated the human rights clauses in the agreement and pushed for its suspension (FDD, 2024; The Australian, 2024; The Washington Post, 2024). Although the agreement was not suspended, these debates brought more attention to the EU's inconsistencies in foreign policy and whether it truly upholds its stated values. Despite all the political disagreements, the EU continued to provide significant humanitarian support. It increased funding to UN agencies operating in Gaza and publicly repeated its commitment to a two-state solution. However, the EU's efforts were weakened by its internal structure. The European Union is more divided in its approach, also acted through a realist lens by balancing its own security and political interests in the region. Realist theory suggests that the EU, as a collective actor, strives to protect its economic ties and security, and its response to the Gaza War reflected these concerns. While many European nations maintained strong support for Israel's right to defend itself, there was also significant pressure from European publics to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The EU's response, therefore, reflected a delicate balance between supporting Israeli security and maintaining its strategic partnerships with Arab states and the wider international community.

B. ROLE OF MAJOR POWERS IN CEASEFIRE, HUMANITARIAN AID, AND RECONSTRUCTION IN GAZA POST-2023

The escalation of the Gaza conflict in October 2023 has drawn intense international attention, with major powers namely the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union (EU) playing crucial and often conflicting roles in ceasefire efforts, humanitarian aid provision, and the prospects for reconstruction. These powers have leveraged the crisis to assert their geopolitical interests, shape regional narratives, and respond to domestic and international pressures.

1. United States

The United States has played a complex and evolving role in the Gaza conflict, initially prioritizing Israel's right to self-defence while resisting international calls for a ceasefire. In late 2023, the U.S. vetoed multiple United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions demanding an immediate halt to hostilities, arguing that such measures could undermine Israel's efforts to dismantle Hamas (AP News, 2023). However, growing international pressure and the deepening humanitarian crisis prompted a shift in Washington's approach. By March 2024, the U.S. began advocating for a sustained ceasefire linked to hostage exchanges and regional security guarantees, although this proposal met resistance from Russia and China (Euronews, 2024). Alongside its diplomatic efforts, the United States gradually moved to address the humanitarian fallout of the conflict. In December 2023, it sponsored UNSC Resolution 2720, which aimed to facilitate aid delivery to Gaza and called for the appointment of a humanitarian coordinator. The resolution passed after the U.S. chose to abstain rather than veto it, signalling a shift toward greater engagement with humanitarian concerns (UN, 2023). By mid-2025, the U.S. took a more active role in negotiating ceasefire arrangements that included early-stage plans for Gaza's reconstruction and governance reforms, reflecting a broader strategy to stabilize the region while preserving its strategic alliance with Israel (The Washington Post, 2025).

2. China

China has positioned itself as a strong advocate for peace in the Gaza conflict, presenting an alternative to the U.S.-led approach and reinforcing its image as a global mediator. Throughout the crisis, China consistently called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, voting in favor of several UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions that the United States initially opposed. Beijing openly criticized Israel's military actions and reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution as the foundation for long-term peace (UN News, 2024). Notably, China backed UNSC Resolutions 2712 and 2720, which called for uninterrupted humanitarian access to Gaza and greater protection for civilians caught in the conflict (Wikipedia, 2024). Beyond diplomacy, China also promoted a political and development-oriented response to the crisis, emphasizing the need for reconstruction and long-term stability in the region. It linked its humanitarian and reconstruction efforts to broader economic cooperation goals, including initiatives under the Belt and Road framework. This approach reflects China's preference for addressing conflict through infrastructure investment, multilateral dialogue, and alignment with Global South perspectives, positioning itself as both a peace advocate and a counterweight to Western influence in Middle East affairs (Atlantic Council, 2024).

3. Russia

Russia has used the Gaza conflict as a platform to advance its anti-Western foreign policy narrative and strengthen its influence in the Middle East. In March 2024, Russia opposed U.S.-drafted UN Security Council resolutions, arguing that they lacked strong, enforceable demands for a full and immediate ceasefire. Moscow accused the United States of enabling Israeli aggression and called for an unconditional end to hostilities, presenting itself as a defender of international law and civilian protection (Euronews, 2024). While Russia supported earlier

humanitarian ceasefire resolutions, it criticized U.S.-backed proposals that, in its view, failed to impose clear obligations on Israel to halt military operations (UN, 2023). Positioning itself as an alternative mediator to the West, Russia has maintained direct engagement with Hamas and stressed the importance of including all Palestinian factions in post-conflict political processes. Russian officials emphasized that any reconstruction plan for Gaza must be tied to inclusive governance and national unity, rather than being limited to technical or economic assistance. This approach reflects Moscow's broader strategy of expanding diplomatic ties across the region and portraying itself as a neutral power that challenges Western dominance in global crisis management (Arab Center DC, 2023).

4. European Union

The European Union has played an active role in humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza conflict, though its political stance has been marked by internal divisions. While countries such as Ireland and Spain pushed for an immediate ceasefire and stronger criticism of Israeli actions, others aligned more closely with the U.S. position, emphasizing Israel's right to self-defense. Despite these disagreements, the EU collectively supported UN Security Council Resolution 2728, which called for a ceasefire during Ramadan, reflecting at least some shared concern for civilian protection and de-escalation (Wikipedia, 2024). In humanitarian terms, the EU has been one of the largest donors to Gaza, providing substantial funding for UN agencies and NGOs delivering aid on the ground. It also played a key role in coordinating international assistance, helping to facilitate access and resources amid ongoing hostilities (BBC News, 2023). Looking ahead, EU leaders have proposed reconstruction plans for Gaza that are tied to institutional reforms within the Palestinian Authority and a renewed commitment to a peace process, highlighting the EU's long-term interest in linking humanitarian aid with political stability and governance improvements (GIGA, 2024).

C. GEOPOLITICAL RIVALRY AND THE UN: MAJOR POWERS IN THE GAZA CRISIS

1. United States vs. China and Russia: Veto Politics and Strategic Messaging

Cold War style tensions have re-emerged at the UN Security Council, where the U.S., China, and Russia frequently clash over ceasefire resolutions. In October 2023, the U.S. vetoed a Brazil-led resolution calling for humanitarian pauses, citing Israel's right to self-defense. Around the same time, Russia proposed an amended resolution demanding a full ceasefire, which also failed due to insufficient support (UN News, 2023; DeYoung, 2023). On February 20, 2024, the U.S. again exercised its veto this time against an Algerian resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire despite backing from China, Russia, and several other members who argued it could put at risk sensitive hostage negotiations (UN News Center, 2024). In March 2024, the U.S. introduced its own resolution urging an "immediate and sustained" ceasefire tied to the release of hostages. However, Russia and China vetoed it, accusing the U.S. of leveraging humanitarian concerns for domestic political purposes (Euronews, 2024; Politico, 2024). These episodes highlight that the U.S. aims to defend its ally and preserve diplomatic leverage, while China and

Russia present themselves as moral counterweights, simultaneously seeking to erode U.S. influence on the global stage (UN News, 2024; Politico, 2024).

2. China's Strategic Positioning

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council seeking to expand its global influence, China has increasingly leveraged its veto power and diplomatic rhetoric to challenge both U.S. and Israeli positions. On March 22, 2024, Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun voted against a U.S.-backed draft resolution, criticizing its vague ceasefire provisions and aligning with broader demands from the Global South (UN News, 2024). This move underscores Beijing's consistent emphasis on sovereignty, non-intervention, and multilateralism principles it has echoed in other international conflicts, including those in Libya and Sudan (China & UN Wikipedia, 2025). China's engagement in Gaza ceasefire diplomacy, particularly through the Cairo negotiations, further supports its soft-power ambitions. By positioning itself as a principled actor advocating for humanitarian concerns and a just peace, Beijing seeks to distinguish its global image from that of Washington. These efforts not only reinforce its narrative of moral leadership but also serve to strengthen its ties with non-Western nations disillusioned with U.S.-led diplomacy (UN News, 2024).

3. Russia's Counter-Western Narrative

Russia is using the war in Gaza to criticize the United States and its role in international diplomacy. When the United States blocked a United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire, Russia accused it of enabling further violence by effectively giving Israel a free hand in its military actions (UN News, 2024). Russia claims that the U.S. is being hypocritical and acting out of political interest rather than promoting peace. At the same time, Russia presents its own actions at the UN as more focused on protecting civilians and supporting humanitarian efforts. It uses its veto power to push for temporary pauses in fighting and to highlight the suffering of Palestinian people. Unlike the U.S., Russia does not call Hamas a terrorist group in its official statements, which helps it appear more neutral in diplomatic discussions (Arab Center DC, 2023). By taking this approach, Russia is trying to position itself as a fairer and more balanced voice in the Middle East. It supports some Palestinian groups and aims to build stronger ties in the region by offering an alternative to U.S. leadership. Through this strategy, Russia hopes to increase its influence and challenge Western dominance in global politics (Arab Center DC, 2023).

4. European Union and Western Divisions

European Union (EU) members often find themselves caught between supporting the United States and listening to the growing voices of the Global South. When UN Security Council Resolution 2728 passed in March 2024 with the U.S. abstaining and China and Russia voting in favour it highlighted Europe's increasing willingness to take independent positions on Middle East issues (UN Wikipedia, 2025). This marked a shift away from always siding with Washington. This split within the Western bloc shows the EU's struggle to balance its traditional ties with the U.S. and its own values-based foreign policy. European countries are also feeling public pressure to support more humanitarian approaches, especially in conflicts like Gaza. As a result, the EU is

trying to maintain unity with its allies while also promoting diplomacy and human rights on the global stage.

CONCLUSION

The Gaza crisis following October 2023 has once again exposed deep divisions among major powers. The United States has prioritized its strategic alliance with Israel, often using its veto power at the UN to block ceasefire resolutions while attempting to shape negotiations around hostage releases and humanitarian aid. This approach has drawn criticism for being selective in its application of international norms, leading to accusations of politicizing humanitarian concerns. Meanwhile, China and Russia have seized the moment to position themselves as champions of international justice and humanitarian diplomacy, and presenting themselves as counterweights to U.S. influence. Their support for immediate ceasefires and criticism of Western double standards reflects broader geopolitical ambitions particularly in the Middle East where both powers aim to expand their diplomatic and strategic presence. In contrast, the European Union faces a complex balancing act. Caught between Atlantic loyalty and increasing internal and public pressure for a more humanitarian-focused foreign policy, the EU has shown signs of diverging from Washington's line. The passage of UNSC Resolution 2728, supported by EU members reflects Europe's growing desire to assert an independent voice in global diplomacy.

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