VOL.07
ISSUE.68

CENJOWS
WEB ARTICLE

RUSSIAN EURASIANISM AND INDIA'S MULTIPOLAR VISION: CONVERGENCE, CONTRADICTIONS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

MS SUJATA CHAUHAN



www.cenjows.in

CENJOWS WEB ARTICLE

Volume 07 Issue 68 NOV 2026

CENJOWS
(Established: 2007)
Room No 301, B-2 Wing, 3rd Floor
Pt Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan,
CGO Complex, Lodhi Road
New Delhi –110003 (INDIA)
Telephone Nos: 011-24364881, 24366485
Fax: 011-24366484
Website: www.cenjows.in
E-mail: cenjows@cenjows.in

ABOUT US

CENJOWS was raised in 2007 as an independent think tank, registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. This aims to promote Jointness as a synergistic enabler for the growth of Comprehensive National Power and provide alternatives in all dimensions of its applications through focused research and debate.

Starting Year : 2020

Year of Publication : 2026

Frequency : Weekly

Language : English

Publisher : Maj Gen (Dr) Ashok Kumar, VSM (Retd) Director General, CENJOWS

301, B-2 Wing, 3rd Floor
Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan CGO Complex, Lodhi Road
New Delhi-110003

Editor : Maj Gen (Dr) Ashok Kumar, VSM (Retd) (dg@cenjows.in)

Deputy Editor : Dr Ulupi Borah, Distinguished Fellow
(distinguishedfellow1@cenjows.in)

Editorial Board :

Brig K Ranjeev Singh, VSM (ddg@cenjows.in)

Col Ajay Kumar Rajak, SM
(secy@cenjows.in)

Gp Capt Ashish Kumar Gupta (Retd)
(seniorfellow2@cenjows.in)

Dr Ulupi Borah, Distinguished Fellow
(distinguishedfellow1@cenjows.in)

301, B-2 Wing, 3rd Floor
Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan
CGO Complex, Lodhi Road
New Delhi-110003

Dr Monojit Das, Senior Fellow, PRO (monojit.das@cenjows.in)

Publication Head : Ms Vaibhavi Katal

All correspondence may be addressed to:

Editor

Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS) 301, B-2 Wing, 3rd Floor

Pt Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan CGO Complex, Lodhi Road
New Delhi-110003
Telephone: (91-11) 24366485/Telefax: (91-11) 24366484 e-mails: cenjows@cenjows.in / cenjows@yahoo.com Website: http://cenjows.in

© Centre for Joint Warfare Studies

Price: Rs 150/- INR

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission from the DG, CENJOWS, New Delhi.

RUSSIAN EURASIANISM AND INDIA'S MULTIPOLAR VISION: CONVERGENCE, CONTRADICTIONS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

CONTENTS

Title	Page No
Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Russian Eurasianism and Multipolarity	7
'Putin's Brain': The Worldview of Aleksandr Dugin	8
Indian Notions of Multipolarity	8
Convergences and Divergences in Approaches to Multipolarity	9
Strategic Implications for India	10
Policy Recommendations and Conclusion	12

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES

CENJOWS

RUSSIAN EURASIANISM AND INDIA'S MULTIPOLAR VISION: CONVERGENCE, CONTRADICTIONS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA



Author: Sujata Chauhan, Research Intern, CENJOWS

Abstract

The discourse surrounding the emergence of a multipolar world is at the forefront of global policy debates. In this context, different states have formulated distinct conceptions of what a multipolar order should look like and what it means for their strategic interests. Russia and India both speak of multipolarity, but they do not mean the same thing. In Russia, the idea grew out of Eurasianist thinking, most visibly in Aleksandr Dugin's work. In India, it has primarily served as a practical tool for keeping options open, as seen in its continued purchase of Russian oil after 2022 while still maintaining ties with the Quad partners. This paper compares the two conceptions: where they overlap, where they split, and what that means for India's strategic autonomy. The split matters especially now. Russia is leaning heavily on China, while India is working with several major powers at once. If Russia becomes the junior partner in Eurasia, the room India has to manoeuvre changes. This paper therefore traces how changes in Eurasian power dynamics may affect India's strategic space.

Keywords: multipolarity, Eurasianism, strategic autonomy, India-Russia relations, Indian foreign policy

Introduction

The emergence of a multipolar world order has become an important debate in contemporary international relations. 'Multipolarity' is used both descriptively to denote shifts in the distribution of power and normatively as an aspiration for a more equitable international order, yet, its meaning remains contested even among states advocating it.[1] The pursuit of a multipolar order has frequently been coupled with an assertion of the plurality and autonomy of distinct civilisational states. Both India and Russia call for a multipolar world and object to Western dominance, but they mean different things by it. For Russian hardliners like Aleksandr Dugin, multipolarity is civilisational, i.e. separate "great spaces" organised around distinct civilisations, with Russia leading a Eurasian bloc.[2] For India, while rooted in its self-identification as a distinct civilization-state, multipolarity is more often than not a way to widen its choices and avoid dependence on any single power. The gap between these views is becoming more important. Russia is growing closer to China, while India is managing ties with Russia, the United States and others at the same time. What Moscow means by multipolarity, and how far Beijing goes to support it, now bears directly on the room India has to manoeuvre.

The literature has mostly treated these as separate subjects. Work on Russian Eurasianism, such as that of Michael Millerman,[3] focuses on the ideas themselves. Work on India's strategic autonomy and multi-alignment, focuses on policy. Mollestam and Saini offer the closest comparison, setting Indian and Russian approaches to multipolarity within the wider India-Russia relationship. Their report, however, treats Russian multipolarity as mainly a state policy and does not trace its Eurasianist roots. Furthermore, their report does discuss the China factor, but mainly as part of the bilateral relationship; strategic autonomy is not its central analytical question.[4] This paper takes that comparison further in two ways. It treats Russian Eurasianism as an intellectual framework, drawing on Dugin's work, and compares it with India's conception of multipolarity. It then asks what their overlap and divergence mean for India's strategic autonomy.

Russian Eurasianism and Multipolarity

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine and justified its actions primarily in terms of a “Special Military Operation” aimed at the de-Nazification of Ukraine and the protection of the rights and aspirations of Russian separatists in the Donbas. Russia has also, time and again, expressed its strong opposition to NATO’s eastward expansion, which it has criticised as being contrary to the assurances given by NATO in 1990 that it would not expand eastward beyond German territory. Russia and the United States of America (USA) may not be engaged in an ideological conflict of the kind witnessed during the Cold War today, but tensions and strategic conflict between them continue. One such area of conflict revolves around the Kremlin’s critique of Western hegemony and “universalism” in the realm of values and moral principles, with the United States often portrayed as the principal proponent of this Western order. The idea is that if the West has stood for ideas of democracy, human rights and economic reforms, the ‘Eurasian’ landmass must also stand for and strongly assert its own interests and ideals.[5] It has been in light of this that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s vision of ‘Eurasia’, a geopolitical space that spans Russian influence over both Europe and Asia has resurfaced as another possible explanation to account for the invasion of Ukraine.

Although Putin acknowledged the mistakes of the Soviet past in his 2015 UN address,[6] he had earlier described the collapse of the Soviet Union as the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe” of the twentieth century.[7] While neither Russia nor any of the other former Soviet republics want to resurrect the Soviet Union, there is a consensus among some of these states that in today’s multipolar world, sovereign nations should be free to form independent associations.[8] This idea found expression, for example, in 1991, when the Commonwealth of Independent States was established and then in 2000 when the Eurasian Economic Community (replaced by the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015) came into being. To enhance the cooperation among some of the former Soviet republics, leaders have expressed their interest in the creation of a Eurasian Political Union. However, as Lukin argues, strengthening post-Soviet integration to such a level raises questions about the underlying motives and philosophies.[9] This is where understanding the views of Aleksandr Dugin becomes important.

‘Putin’s Brain’: The Worldview of Aleksandr Dugin

Aleksandr Dugin, theorist of civilizational multipolarity and founder of the International Eurasian Movement gained widespread attention, especially in the West, post an article in 2014 called “Putin’s Brain: Alexander Dugin and the Philosophy Behind Putin’s Invasion of Crimea”.[10] His Neo-Eurasianist philosophy and the “fourth political theory” are an extension of Eurasianism, which promotes the existence of different civilizations and a dualistic understanding of geopolitics described as “Thalassocracy vs. Tellurocracy” or in the contemporary world, “Atlanticism vs. Eurasianism”.[11] Eurasianists like Dugin understand Russia to be neither completely European, nor wholly Asian, but an amalgamation of both, thereby having an “original identity.”[12] This idea finds expression in Russian foreign ministry’s affirmation of a special identity for Russia as a “unique country-civilization and a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power”.[13] Moreover, according to Dugin, Russia’s role in the world extends to being a “vanguard” for other civilizations to safeguard their freedom.[14]

Dugin is against the ideas of “economics as destiny”, globalisation, postmodernity, end of history, “post-liberalism as a universal practice” and “the inertia of the processes of civilisation” and he attempts to revive traditional values (religion, hierarchy, and family).[15] This view is reflected in key Russian strategic documents. The 2021 National Security Strategy emphasized the importance of defending “traditional Russian values”.[16] Later, the 2023 Foreign Policy Concept affirmed Russia’s unique role in uniting the peoples who shared the cultural and civilizational values of the “Russian world”.[17]

Indian Notions of Multipolarity

India’s worldview and its aspirations for a multipolar world order seem to be rooted in its self-identification as a “civilisational state”[18] as much as in any strategic imperative. In the words of External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, India’s identity as “Bharat”, a “civilizational state” rather than only a national polity, “implies not only rebalancing in politics and economics, but in the cultural domain as well.”[19] He suggests that India’s distinct civilizational outlook and approach to world affairs can contribute to a more stable international order and help shape the emergence of multipolarity.[20] The conception of India as a civilizational state that is most

closely associated with the present government is rooted in the “Hindutva” perspective which views India primarily as a Hindu civilizational state. From this perspective, India encompasses the principal sacred geography of Hinduism and constitutes the homeland of the majority of Hindus.[21] The aspiration for India not merely to rise as a global power but also to provide global leadership rooted in its cultural and spiritual heritage is reflected in the idea of India as a “Vishwaguru,” or “world teacher,” which has gained prominence in contemporary Indian political discourse.[2223]

From an Indian perspective, multipolarity can be understood as a natural feature of the international order. It denotes a global system in which multiple civilisational states coexist as distinct and foundational centres of power. Such an order recognises the coexistence of diverse values, civilisational traditions, cultural norms, belief systems, and religious practices.[24]
India views multipolarisation as an inevitable process to be shaped in its own interests.[25] Scholars have claimed that for India, multipolarity is less a means of resistance than a framework for securing recognition, preserving strategic autonomy, and promoting reform of international institutions.[26] India’s embrace of a multipolar world order complements its strategy of multi-alignment, which seeks to deepen partnerships with multiple powerful states to strengthen its own regional role.[27]

Convergences and Divergences in Approaches to Multipolarity

We see how India and Russia both aspire to a multipolar world order in which they are uniquely positioned as major civilisational powers and assume distinctive roles as vanguards of stability and pluralism, drawing upon their respective cultural heritage and spiritual traditions. However, an important difference is clearly visible in their approaches to multipolarisation. Russia has adopted an increasingly confrontational approach, viewing the emergence of a multipolar world order as closely intertwined with the decline, and potentially even fragmentation[28], of the West. It is strongly opposed to Western liberal hegemony, as reflected in the implicit Dugin-Kremlin nexus, and its discourse on multipolarity is therefore frequently articulated through a critique of the West, particularly the United States, and its perceived efforts to preserve a unipolar, Western-led global order. India, too, aspires to shift the balance towards a plurality of civilisational centres of power, as evident in its ambition to pursue greater rebalancing not only

in the political and economic spheres but also in the cultural domain. However, its democratic identity and commitment to liberal values, alongside the strategic imperative of strengthening and deepening cooperation with the United States to balance Chinese ambitions in the Indo-Pacific, render its approach to multipolarity less a project of revolutionary transformation of the existing international system and more an effort to enhance strategic autonomy through gradual reform and greater recognition of multiple major powers.

Russia views the transition to multipolarity as a potentially disruptive and crisis-ridden transformation that requires actively weakening Western institutions and structures. From this perspective, the decline of institutions associated with US-led unipolarity – most notably NATO – is viewed as a necessary component of the shift towards a multipolar international order. From this flows the understanding of war as "creative destruction".[29]

India, on the other hand, perceives the transition to a multipolar order as a gradual and evolutionary process.[30] The way multipolarity unfolds matters for India. If the transition is gradual, India can keep adding partners and adjust as power shifts. If it is turbulent, it will come under pressure to pick a side. Russia pushes for a confrontational change, which is why the difference between the two conceptions affects India's room to act.

The following section looks mainly at the Russia-China strategic nexus, which most directly affects that room. It then draws on India's growing relations with the United States, the war in Ukraine, and India's role in Eurasian platforms like BRICS and the SCO as shorter illustrations of how Russia's confrontational approach to multipolarity can widen or narrow India's strategic space.

Strategic Implications for India

"Friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no "forbidden" areas of cooperation" – Joint Statement by Russia and China during President Putin's visit to Beijing in February, 2022[31] is an important marker of the growing proximity between the two countries. Today, the "no-limits" partnership has enabled China to make inroads into the Arctic, the Russian Far East and Central Asia.[32] At the same time, Russia's renewed willingness to

resume arms exports to China suggests that its earlier concerns over Chinese reverse engineering of Russian defence technology have diminished.[33] Built on mutual support and an alignment of core interests, relations between Moscow and Beijing appear increasingly coordinated in their efforts to reshape the global order; their emphasis on multilateralism and multipolarity seeks to reduce the dominance of the United States and bringing the Global South into closer alignment with their vision of a more representative international order appears to be an important part of their broader approach to reconfiguring global governance.[34]

However, Rajorshi Roy cautions against treating Russia and China as natural allies. Their ties are uneven, and Moscow is uneasy about it. It is also wary of China's growing presence in regions it has long seen as its own. There is a security worry too: if tensions on the border ever escalated, China could come out on top, especially now that Russia has been weakened by the war in Ukraine. Russian arms sales to India are, as Roy notes, a source of friction, and Moscow's outreach to North Korea could complicate matters for Beijing: a more assertive Pyongyang may push Japan and South Korea toward the US, which would expand its presence on the peninsula at China's expense. A formal alliance would tie both countries' hands, so Roy thinks it unlikely. A tougher US stance, though, could push them closer.[35]

For India, the picture is mixed. Because the Russia-China partnership is limited, it keeps some room to manoeuvre. But a deeper alignment could tilt the Eurasian balance toward Beijing, which is why India's ties with the United States and others matter.

However, the expanding partnership with the West has generated its own points of friction, as India's balancing act, anchored in strategic neutrality, has led it to refrain from condemning Russia at the UN, maintain diplomatic engagement with Moscow, and continue purchasing Russian oil despite US pressure, thereby challenging Western efforts to isolate Russia.[36]

India's approach to Ukraine reflects its effort to preserve strategic autonomy, extending to multiple platforms such as BRICS, RIC and the SCO, where it engages competing powers while pursuing independent interests. A study on India's multi-alignment management across these three Eurasian platforms showed how multiple alignments help sustain dialogue even amidst heightened tensions by creating spaces for cooperation in specific areas of shared

security interests, while India's preference for building and operating through informal intergovernmental organisations (IIGOs) allows it to preserve foreign-policy flexibility; however, its ability to advance policy agendas across these overlapping alignments depends on the acquiescence of its partners, and growing perceptions in China and Russia that an increasingly pro-US India undermines their interests could lead them to more actively obstruct Indian initiatives across these institutional groupings.[37]

Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The differences identified in this article, in how hard each country pushes against Western dominance and in how each imagines the move to a multipolar order, narrow India's room for manoeuvre. Four responses follow from the analysis.

India has reason to keep Russia close. As Russia depends more on China, a strong India-Russia relationship helps keep Eurasia from tilting towards a single centre. The cost is friction with Western partners over diplomatic engagement, oil purchases, and sanctions, which India will have to manage. It should also hold to its position of neutrality in the conflicts now dividing the major powers. Its ties with both sides give it standing to offer dialogue, though its influence as a mediator has so far been limited.

Multi-alignment should continue, including in groupings whose aims differ, such as the Quad and RIC. Being in both lets India reap benefits, e.g., access to technology and security cooperation on one side, a channel to Moscow and Beijing on the other, without committing to either bloc's agenda.

Finally, India should keep pressing for reform of the UN Security Council. Permanent membership would give it a formal voice on sanctions and use-of-force decisions, but this is a long-term aim and not a near-term strategy.

Declaration

I declare that this manuscript is being submitted exclusively to CENJOWS for publication consideration, is original, and has not been published or submitted elsewhere. I further certify that it contains no classified, restricted, or sensitive information and is based entirely on open-source material suitable for publication in the public domain.

ENDNOTES

[1] Felix Heiduk et al., 'Multipolarities - the World-Order Visions of Others', in *SWP Research Paper 8/2026*, version 1 (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2026), https://doi.org/10.18449/2026RP08.

[2] Alexander Dugin, *Eurasian Mission – An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism* (Arktos, 2014).

[3] Michael Millerman, 'Alexander Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism and the Eurasian Union Project:', The Fourth Political Theory, 12 January 2021, //www.4pt.su/en/content/alexander-dugins-neo-eurasianism-and-eurasian-union-project.

[4] Erik Mollestam and Simmi Saini, *India's Partnership with Russia: An Overview* (2025), https://www.ui.se/butiken/uis-publikationer/ui-report/2025/indias-partnership-with-russia-an-overview/.

[5] Alexander Lukin, 'What the Kremlin Is Thinking: Putin's Vision for Eurasia', *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2014): 91, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24483561.

[6] *General Assembly official records, 70th session: 13th plenary meeting, Monday, 28 September 2015, New York* (New York: UN, 2015), 24, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/811223.

[7] AP, 'Putin: If He Could, He'd Try to Prevent 1991 USSR Collapse', World, *The Hindu*, 3 March 2018, https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/putin-if-he-could-hed-try-to-prevent-1991-ussr-collapse/article22916749.ece.

[8] Lukin, 'What the Kremlin Is Thinking', 89.

[9] Ibid., 91.

[10] A. Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, 'Putin's Brain', *Foreign Affairs*, 31 March 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-31/putins-brain.

[11] Dugin, *Eurasian Mission – An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism*.

[12] Ibid.

[13] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation', 31 March 2023, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/.

[14] Dugin, *Eurasian Mission – An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism*.

[15] Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, ed. John B. Morgan IV (Arktos Media Ltd, 2012).

[16] Michel Duclos, 'Russia's National Security Strategy 2021: The Era of "Information Confrontation"', Institut Montaigne, accessed 26 September 2026, https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/russias-national-security-strategy-2021-era-information-confrontation.

[17] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation'.

[18] 'Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru Memorial Lecture 2024 Delivered by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi', accessed 27 September 2026, https://www.mea.gov.in/speeches-statements?dtl/37662/Pandit_Hriday_Nath_Kunzru_Memorial_Lecture_2024_delivered_by_EAM_Dr_S_Jaishankar_at_the_Jawaharlal_Nehru_University_New_Delhi.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Kanti Bajpai, 'DISSONANT EU-INDIA WORLDVIEWS: Is Cooperation Possible?', in *EU-India Relations - Gaining Strategic Traction?*, ed. Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo (European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2024), 8, https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/chaillot-papers/eu-india-relations-gaining-strategic-traction.

[22] 'India as "Vishwa Guru": As G20 Summit Ends, PM Modi's Vision of India's Place in the World in Sharper Focus', *The Indian Express*, 10 September 2023, https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/india-vishwa-guru-g20-summit-pm-modi-vision-world-8933278/.

[23] 'Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Beginning of His 20th Year as a Public Representative', accessed 27 September 2026, https://www.pib.gov.in/www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1662375.

[24] Abhinav Pandya, 'Why India Accepts Multipolar World with Dignity', Usanas Foundation, 11 June 2024, http://usanasfoundation.com/why-india-accepts-multipolar-world-with-dignity.

[25] Heiduk et al., 'Multipolarities - the World-Order Visions of Others', 23.

[26] Mollestam and Saini, *India's Partnership with Russia*, 5.

[27] Heiduk et al., 'Multipolarities - the World-Order Visions of Others', 30.

[28] Ibid., 13.

[29] Ibid., 19.

[30] Ibid., 20.

[31] 'Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development', President of Russia, 4 February 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770.

[32] Rajorshi Roy, 'RUSSIA'S PIVOT TO THE EAST', *Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, July 2026, 22.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 22–23.

[35] Ibid., 41–46.

[36] Nishant Rajeev, 'Understanding India's Evolving Policy of Strategic Autonomy', S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 21 February 2025, https://rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip25015-understanding-indias-evolving-policy-of-strategic-autonomy/.

[37] Frank O'Donnell and Mihaela Papa, 'India's Multi-Alignment Management and the Russia–India–China (RIC) Triangle', *International Affairs* 97, no. 3 (May 2021): 822, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab036.