



India and Russia in International Organizations: Motives, Strategies, and Outcomes

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Abstract: India and Russia share a vision of a multipolar world, which is reflected in their cooperation within international organizations and fora such as the United Nations, Russia-India-China (RIC), BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). India has shown greater enthusiasm towards RIC and BRICS than SCO due to its non-founder status and concerns over the group's creation to further China's regional agenda. The expansion of BRICS and a potential free trade agreement pose challenges to India-Russia relations and require more bilateral engagement. Russia should realistically assess the benefits of endorsing China's Belt and Road Initiative while also considering the potential of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to access West Asian and South Asian markets and mitigate the impact of Western sanctions on the Russian economy. India and Russia must collaborate to build regional consensus on the INSTC through RIC, BRICS, and SCO platforms. Despite Russia's growing proximity to China, Moscow has not compromised its support for New Delhi on issues such as Kashmir, terrorism, membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and the United Nations Security Council. In contrast, China continues to question and oppose India on these matters. Similarly, India has maintained friendly ties with Russia and has not succumbed to Western pressure. Cooperation between India and Russia in international organizations has further strengthened their bilateral ties, and they must continue to work together to maintain a multipolar Eurasia, as neither can achieve this goal alone.

Keywords: Russia, India, BRICS, RIC, SCO, INSTC, multipolarity, international organizations, Russia-India relations

Russia is the only permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with which India shares a sense of nostalgia, owing to the mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries since India's independence in 1947. In the 1950s, geopolitical factors played a crucial role in bringing the Soviet Union closer to India. As a prominent leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), India

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was essential for the Soviet Union in countering US-led efforts to contain Moscow. Unlike other great powers, the Soviet Union was associated with progressive ideas such as decolonization, self-determination, anti-racism, mutual respect, and equality, which resonated with newly independent countries like India. India, in turn, made the Soviet Union acceptable to the Third World by refraining from publicly criticizing Moscow on significant world issues such as Soviet actions in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) (Pant 2013).

Apart from the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations, there were few major international organizations where India and the Soviet Union could interact and engage. After the end of the Cold War in 1991, new international organizations and dialogue platforms such as Russia-India-China (RIC), BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) emerged, where India and Russia continue to engage and find ways to manage their relations amidst the evolving flux in international politics. These mechanisms also involve China, apart from India and Russia, indicating their essentially "Eurasian" and "non-West" nature. While Beijing and Moscow have resolved their border disputes, India and China have yet to do so. Given the current stalemate in India-China relations and the improvement in Russia-China ties, the effectiveness of RIC, BRICS, and SCO for India is in question. While there has been a detailed analysis of India's membership and potential challenges in these Eurasian structures, there is a lack of academic analysis examining India and Russia's engagement in these groupings. This article discusses India-Russia relations in international organizations such as the UN, RIC, SCO, and BRICS concerning their motives, strategies, and outcomes.

The article seeks to answer several research questions about India-Russia engagement in international organizations. First, it investigates the underlying principles that guide this cooperation. Second, it assesses the effectiveness of India-Russia collaboration in various multilateral forums, including the United Nations, RIC, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Third, it identifies the emerging challenges that could affect this partnership. Finally, it analyzes the impact of India-Russia engagement in international organizations on their bilateral relations. By addressing these questions, the article contributes to the academic discourse on the role of multilateralism in promoting Eurasian cooperation and managing geopolitical flux.

The article employs qualitative research methods, specifically focusing on discourse analysis, to examine India-Russia engagement in various international organizations. The analysis involves a comparison of the statements and actions of both governments with the arguments presented by experts, including former ambassadors, academics, journalists, and policymakers. The aim is to understand India-Russia engagement at the multilateral level comprehensively. To achieve this, relevant references to essential statements made by government representatives, government documents, and joint statements will be cited to provide an objective and well-rounded perspective on India-Russia relations in international organizations.

India-Russia engagement in international organisations

1. **The United Nations:** the joint statements of both countries reveal a remarkable similarity in their worldview. The Saint Petersburg Declaration (2017) emphasizes the establishment of multipolarity in international affairs as an inevitable and natural process in the evolution of interstate relations. India's Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar (2020), characterizes the contemporary state of international politics as "greater multipolarity with weaker multilateralism," stating that creating a stable order in Asia is a priority for India. Jaishankar argues that a multipolar Asia would lead to a multipolar world, and to ensure this, India needs to engage America, manage China, and reassure Russia. In his speech in Moscow in 2021, Jaishankar also highlighted that one of the crucial reasons why India and Russia accept multipolarity is their strong sense of independence.¹ Joshi (2007) explains that a multipolar world is just, democratic, and fair, where all nations are considered equal and enjoy equal security. There is no place for hegemony or unipolarity in this world, and the UN would have a central position in global politics. Chenoy (2010) supports this view, emphasizing that multipolarity in global affairs acknowledges one superpower (the US) in the global system, but other political and economic power centers act as independent actors. She further argues that a multipolar world is more inclusive and gives more importance to non-military solutions to international problems, keeping military blocs and alliances aside. Unnikrishnan believes that the desire for a multipolar world is a shared concern of India and Russia. Russia is an essential partner for India in Eurasia, and it would not be possible for India to prevent the rise of a hegemon in Eurasia without engaging Russia.²

It is important to note that although India and Russia share the desire for a multipolar world, their motivations for it differ based on their respective threat perceptions. India aims to prevent China from becoming the dominant power in the international system, while Russia aims to prevent the US from maintaining global hegemony. This has led to some differences between the two countries, as Russia has started to view South Asia through its strategic rivalry with the US. As a result, Russia has changed its policies towards the Taliban and Pakistan, which has put India at a disadvantage³.

In light of the recent Russia-Ukraine crisis, the relationship between Russia and the US has become openly hostile, leading to increased anti-West sentiment in Russia. On the other hand, Western countries like the US and France have become key strate-

¹ Jaishankar S. 2021. *India-Russia ties in a changing world*. Available at: <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33991> (accessed 03.04.2023).

² Unnikrishnan N. 2021. Bridge the geopolitical distance with Russia. *Hindustan Times*. Available at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/bridge-the-geopolitical-distance-with-russia-101613393990382.html> (accessed 03.04.2023).

³ Unnikrishnan N. 2017. The Enduring Relevance of India-Russia Relations. ORF Issue Brief. Available at: https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ORF_IssueBrief_179_India-Russia_Nandan_FinalForUpload.pdf (accessed 03.04.2023).

gic partners for India, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. As a result, India is cautious about being perceived as an anti-Western nation and aims to maintain a balance between its non-Western and anti-Western posture.

While India's beliefs and practices on issues like democracy, human rights, global governance, and sovereignty differ from those of the West due to its postcolonial history, India is not aggressively challenging these ideas with an anti-Western stance. Instead, India emphasizes a country's territorial integrity and sovereignty in the classical Westphalian sense. Furthermore, India's reluctance to support regime change from the outside also reflects its commitment to these principles.⁴

India and Russia's engagement in RIC, SCO, and BRICS reflect their shared concern over China's rising power and its potential challenges to their respective primacy in their neighborhoods. India and Russia support the idea of multipolarity at the global level, which also allows for regional areas of primacy. Moscow is wary of a bipolar world, as it believes that being a relevant actor in the international system requires it to be a power necessary for solving critical global issues such as terrorism, Afghanistan, and Syria.

India and Russia believe in democratizing international relations, with the United Nations playing a central role in global governance. This approach helps prevent the UN from becoming irrelevant due to great power rivalry. Russia typically prefers international organizations that do not impinge on the sovereignty of member states and where decisions are made through consensus.⁵ In his speech at the Valdai Discussion Club in October 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected Western hegemony and called for a dialogue with the West based on equal terms. He emphasized that in a multipolar world, all countries have the right to choose their path of socio-political development. This suggests that Russia remains committed to its stance on multipolarity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Putin's call for dialogue with the West on equal terms may indicate a willingness to engage with Western countries more cooperatively rather than in open hostility. It remains to be seen how this will play out in the context of the ongoing tensions between Russia and the West.⁶ It is important to note that the idea of multipolarity allows Russia to reject the universality of human rights and liberal democratic principles. The West has continuously criticized Russia's human rights record and the status of its democracy. As a postcolonial state, India can relate to Russia's perspective, as it has been sensitive to the issue of the sovereign equality of all states in the international system while being cautious on issues related to democracy and human rights promotion.

⁴ Raghavan P.S. 2020. RIC, a triangle that is still important. *The Hindu*. 28 Jul. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/ric-a-triangle-that-is-still-important/article32215791.ece?homepage=true> (accessed 03.04.2023).

⁵ Stronski P., Sokolsky R. 2020. Multipolarity in Practice: Understanding Russia's Engagement with Regional Institutions. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/01/08/multipolarity-in-practice-understanding-russia-s-engagement-with-regional-institutions-pub-80717> (accessed 03.04.2023).

⁶ Putin's Valdai Discussion Club Speech. 2022. *Russia Briefing News*. Available at: <https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/putin-s-valdai-discussion-club-speech.html/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

Both India and Russia are unlikely to support concepts such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention, as such ideas could be seen as interfering in the internal affairs of a country and violating its sovereignty. While the BRICS nations support R2P, they are against military action to protect human rights, as it could give agency to the West in such matters (Nuruzzaman 2022). An analysis of India's voting behavior in the UN General Assembly reveals that India's stance on various issues has been closer to the Russian position than that of the West.⁷

The congruence of India's and Russia's worldviews has led to Russia's support for India's global aspirations, particularly in backing India's bid for permanent membership in the UN Security Council. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union exercised its veto power in the UNSC four times to protect India's territorial sovereignty. Additionally, the Soviet Union vetoed six UNSC resolutions on issues such as the liberation of Goa from Portugal, the Kashmir dispute, and the India-Pakistan war in 1971, which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh.⁸ The veto power exercised by the Soviet Union in support of India's territorial sovereignty and status quo in Kashmir prevented UN intervention and internationalization of the Kashmir issue. Russia was the first permanent member of the UN Security Council to back India when it revoked Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, describing it as an internal matter.⁹ This support was crucial as China brought up the issue at the UNSC, aiding Pakistan's efforts to internationalize it.

During his visit to Australia in October 2022, Indian foreign minister Jaishankar underlined these points, stating that the long-standing relationship with Russia had benefitted India. He further argued that the West favored Pakistan over India during the Cold War.¹⁰ India and the Soviet Union/Russia had developed an understanding over the years that they would not interfere with each other's core national interests at the UN platform. The West pressured India to condemn the Soviet Union's actions in Afghanistan, but India refrained from doing so due to the Soviet Union's veto power used in support of India during the India-Pakistan war in 1971. Soviet support came at a time when most nations opposed India's actions in East Pakistan.¹¹ India's "soft" stance on the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan later invited criticism from

⁷ Das A. 2017. *A fine balance: India's voting record at the UNGA*. ORF. Available at: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/fine-balance-india-voting-record-unga/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

⁸ Nair S., Sharma R. 2022. Six times Soviet Union used the veto to rescue India at the UN. India. *Times of India*. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/six-times-when-the-soviet-veto-came-to-indias-rescue/article-show/89941338.cms> (accessed 03.04.2023).

⁹ Chaudhury D.R. 2019. Russia 1st P-5 nation to formally state Article 370 India's internal matter. *The Economic Times*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/russia-1st-p-5-nation-to-formally-state-article-370-indias-internal-matter/articleshow/70614723.cms> (accessed 03.04.2023).

¹⁰ In Australia, Jaishankar is asked about ties with Russia. His blunt response. 2022. *Hindustan Times*. Available at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/in-australia-jaishankar-is-asked-about-ties-with-russia-his-blunt-response-101665390673201.html> (accessed 03.04.2023).

¹¹ India wooed by US and Russia for the support over Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. 1980. *India Today*. Available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19800215-india-wooed-by-us-and-russia-for-support-over-soviet-intervention-in-afghanistan-806449-2014-02-10> (accessed 03.04.2023).

other NAM members and Muslim countries (Ghosh & Panda 1983). Currently, India has abstained from Western-sponsored resolutions against Russia in the UNSC despite being a non-permanent member and facing Western pressure. President Putin praised India's independent foreign policy in this regard in his speech at the Valdai Club in October 2022. As India assumes the presidency of G20 for 2023, it would continue to resist Western pressure to isolate Russia on global platforms and seek Russia's active participation in addressing global issues.

Cooperation between India and Russia on the issue of terrorism has become an important area of their partnership at the United Nations. This cooperation is evident in two ways. Firstly, Russia has supported India whenever the issue of terrorism has arisen as a bilateral problem between India and Pakistan at the UN. Specifically, Russia has backed India's efforts to designate Pakistan-based anti-India elements such as Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar as global terrorists in the UN Security Council (UNSC). In contrast, China has delayed India's efforts in this regard, and Russia has been unable to influence Beijing's decisions, given China's strong security links with Pakistan. After the Pulwama terror attack, Russia supported the UNSC statement that named the terrorist organization "Jaish-e-Mohammed" while China attempted to dilute the statement to make it less critical of Pakistan¹². Secondly, Russia has conveyed its differences to India whenever terrorism is not a direct bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, such as India's concerns over the Taliban. Russia, along with China, abstained from voting on the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2593 on Afghanistan in August 2021 when India was the UNSC president. This abstention results from Russia's tactical approach to some issues, where its rivalry with the US defines its actions.

Russian support for India is also evident in other global forums, such as multi-lateral export control regimes. Russia has been continuously supporting India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), where China has been a significant obstacle. Moscow also welcomed India's entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Wassenaar Arrangement (WA). India's membership in these export control regimes will enhance its military capabilities at a time when it faces the threat of a two-front war with Pakistan and China.

2. RIC, BRICS and SCO: Analyzing the RIC mechanism is crucial as it serves as the basis for other groupings involving India and Russia, such as BRICS and SCO. The trilateral relationship between India, Russia, and China has been shaped by their relations with the United States and their military and economic capabilities. During the Cold War, China emerged as an independent Communist country and formed a close alliance with the Soviet Union, both of which stood united in their fight against the

¹² Chaudhury D.R. 2019. Pulwama terror attack: China tried to water down UNSC's statement on Pulwama terror attack. *The Economic Times*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/china-tried-to-water-down-unscs-statement-on-pulwama-terror-attack/articleshow/68121663.cms?from=mdr> (accessed 03.04.2023).

capitalist bloc led by the United States. However, ideological differences between Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Chairman Mao eventually led to the Sino-Soviet split, and China ultimately allied with the US against the Soviet Union in 1971. The Soviet Union was thus forced to fight two Cold Wars simultaneously - one with the US and the other with China¹³. India's relationship with both China and the US was not trustworthy, prompting Moscow and New Delhi to cultivate a close and strategic partnership during the Cold War. India and the Soviet Union both had border disputes with China, and their cooperation posed a two-front dilemma to China. The Soviet Union initiated détente with China by easing military tensions, which also influenced India to improve its relations with China. In 1988, then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing, and it was during this time that the idea of a strategic triangle between India, Russia, and China began to gain popularity (Radchenko 2014). Although this concept is generally attributed to former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Mikhail Gorbachev was attracted to the idea of a USSR-India-China triangle after he assumed office in 1985. Gorbachev discussed this idea with leaders of India and China, and even informed Rajiv Gandhi in November 1988 that Brazil was interested in joining this potential triangle, which can be seen as a precursor to the idea of BRICS. However, the border dispute with China dampened India's interest in this idea, and China did not show much interest either. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India, and Russia attempted to cultivate a closer relationship with the US for economic reasons. However, these efforts were stymied by America's strategic tensions with both India and Russia. India faced disapproval from the US regarding Kashmir and its nuclear program, while Russia was concerned about US efforts to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the former Soviet Republics, culminating in NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 without United Nations Security Council approval. Like Russia, India also experienced the extreme effects of a unipolar world order when the US imposed sanctions on it after New Delhi conducted nuclear tests in May 1998.

Under the circumstances described above, Primakov proposed the idea of a RIC strategic triangle during his visit to India in December 1998, in which India, Russia, and China could push back against American hegemony and strive for a multipolar world. In a joint statement, India and Russia agreed to work together to ensure a multipolar world based on the sovereign equality of states, justice, democratization of decision-making, and a strengthened role for the UN. Meanwhile, Russia was also engaged in border negotiations with China under the Shanghai Five arrangement, which began in 1996 and included Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Russia signed strategic partnerships with India in 2000 and with China in 2001, indicating its efforts to act as a link between the two countries. However, the idea of a strategic triangle did not receive an immediate enthusiastic response from India and China, as their mutual

¹³ Menon R., Rumer E. 2022. Russia and India: A New Chapter. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/09/20/russia-and-india-new-chapter-pub-87958> (accessed 03.04.2023).

relations had already soured after India's nuclear tests in 1998. The presence of US-NATO troops in Afghanistan after the 11 Sept., 2001 terrorist attacks and the future of Afghanistan may have been one of the reasons why RIC foreign ministers informally came together for lunch at the UN General Assembly Session in New York in 2002. While India may have supported America's War on Terror, the unilateral thrust in its foreign policy under George Bush was evident when he stated, "in the fight against terrorism, you are either with us or against us" (Nadkarni 2020).

The year 2005 marked a crucial period for India's foreign policy, as its multi-alignment approach was in full display in its relations with the United States, China, and the RIC triangle. In April 2005, India and China established a "Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity." The first RIC Foreign Minister's meeting was held in June 2005 in Vladivostok, Russia, just a month before India and the US announced their nuclear deal in July 2005. During the same month, India became an observer at the SCO at the Astana Summit. The first meeting of RIC leaders occurred in July 2006 on the sidelines of the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg. In September of the same year, the BRIC Foreign Ministers met on President Putin's proposal, launching a process that ultimately resulted in the formation of BRICS in 2010 when South Africa joined the group of emerging economies. It could be argued that India's rapprochement with the US was accompanied by its engagement with its Eurasian partnerships with Russia and China. The second RIC summit did not take place until 2018, although the Foreign Ministers continued to meet and discuss areas of mutual cooperation.

India has exercised caution in its engagement with the RIC mechanism over the past 12 years, given the inherent structural issues that exist within the framework. While India maintains strong ties with Russia, it does not have a robust bilateral relationship with China. Moscow, similarly, is wary of overdependence on Beijing, as it aims to retain its status as a great power within a multipolar world order. In December 2018, the RIC mechanism was revived on the proposal of President Putin, coinciding with a period of uncertainty in the global system due to Donald Trump's unilateral approach, which had undermined multilateralism. India has sought to hedge against uncertainties in its relations with the US through its engagement with RIC, particularly in light of Trump's prioritization of Pakistan and negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan, which undercut India's security concerns. With the US withdrawing from Afghanistan, Russia and China are likely to play a more prominent role in the region, and India cannot afford to ignore them on issues such as counterterrorism¹⁴. It seems that India's renewed interest in RIC was partly due to its border standoff with China at Doklam in 2017, which highlighted the need for India to hedge against uncertainties in its relations with China and the US. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also initiated informal summits with China and Russia in 2018, and at the Sochi informal summit,

¹⁴ Jaison C. 2020. The RIC Triangle and India's Multialignment Strategy. *South Asian Voices*. Available at: <https://southasian-voices.org/the-ric-triangle-and-indias-multialignment-strategy/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

both countries committed to cooperating to create a multipolar world order and intensify mutual consultations on various issues, including the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁵ In June 2020, Russia organized a virtual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the RIC nations shortly after the violent clash between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan valley of Ladakh. In September of the same year, Russia again organized a meeting of RIC Foreign Ministers in Moscow, during which India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, even as tensions between India and China persisted at their border. Russia had also proposed a RIC Defense Ministers meeting in 2020, but this idea may not have found support in New Delhi and Beijing. It is worth noting that a similar Russian proposal had been rejected by China in 2017, while India had been willing to participate in such a meeting at that time.¹⁶ It is worth noting that the meeting between India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in September 2020 took place shortly after a meeting between the Indian and Chinese Defence Ministers in Moscow. Unnikrishnan and Purushothaman have previously pointed out the role of Russia in acting as a bridge between India and China within the RIC mechanism, given its strong relations with both countries.¹⁷ Raghavan has also argued that the RIC mechanism provides India with an opportunity to influence the Russia-China dynamic in Eurasia.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that Russia would be reluctant to see a military conflict break out between India and China. This is because both countries have maintained strong economic ties with Russia and have not supported the Western sanctions. A war between India and China would compel Russia to pick sides between its strategic partners, a situation that Moscow would prefer to avoid. Russia does not have any full-fledged allies and relies on support from its Asian partners, namely India and China, in its efforts to counter Western influences.¹⁹ The defence industry in Russia has been a strong proponent of the RIC mechanism. Since the turn of the millennium, India and China have been significant purchasers of Russian military equipment (Gvosdev & Marsh, 2014). Reports in Indian media have pointed out that Russia has ignored China's objections to arms sales to India. During his visit to Moscow in June 2020, India's Defence Min-

¹⁵ Mukerji A. 2020. New Directions for the India-Russia Strategic Partnership. *Indian Council of World Affairs*. Available at: https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=5300&lid=3737 (accessed 03.04.2023).

¹⁶ Korablinov A. 2017. China snubs Russian request for RIC Defence Ministers meeting. *Russia Beyond*. Available at: https://www.rbth.com/politics/2017/04/12/china-snubs-russian-request-for-ric-defence-ministers-meeting_740562 (accessed 03.04.2023).

¹⁷ Unnikrishnan N., Purushothaman U. 2019. Indian Approaches to Multilateral Cooperation and Institutions in Eurasia. *Russia in Global Affairs*. Available at: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/indian-approaches-to-multilateral-cooperation-and-institutions-in-eurasia/#:~:text=India> (accessed 03.04.2023).

¹⁸ Raghavan P. S. 2020. RIC, a triangle that is still important. *The Hindu*. 28 Jul. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/ric-a-triangle-that-is-still-important/article32215791.ece?homepage=true> (accessed 03.04.2023).

¹⁹ Zakharov A. 2019. Friends in Need: Whither the Russia-India Strategic Partnership? *Notes de l'Ifri. Russie.Nei.Visions* 116. Available at: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rnv_116_zakharov_russia_india_2019.pdf (accessed 03.04.2023).

ister Rajnath Singh urged Russia to accelerate the delivery of critical defence platforms to India²⁰. Russia's efforts to foster communication and understanding between India and China within the RIC mechanism demonstrate its commitment to promoting regional security in Eurasia and cooperation in international forums such as the UN, BRICS, and SCO. India, too, has sought support through the RIC platform to address issues such as cross-border terrorism and has tried to evolve a regional strategy against it with the cooperation of Russia and China. However, China's close relationship with Pakistan has hindered its cooperation on this issue, with Beijing taking a tactical approach and shielding Pakistan on cross-border terrorism against India, regardless of the platform.

There have been two areas of concern between India and Russia within the RIC framework. First, Russia had expressed in 2017 that India could benefit from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), while Russia and China had announced in 2015 that they would align activities of their respective initiatives, the Eurasian Economic Union and BRI. Second, Russia has been speaking out against the Indo-Pacific construct, an area where India has developed a close strategic partnership with the US, Japan, and Australia. Russia has failed to understand that India's concept of the Indo-Pacific is different from that of the US, while India has invited Moscow to be part of its version as India seeks a multipolar Indo-Pacific. India treats Russia as an Indo-Pacific power, which is also evident from the Act Far East policy launched by India in 2019.

India has been raising these concerns with Russia at the bilateral level. As a continental power, India can serve as a bridge between emerging alignments in the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia, in line with its policy of multi-alignment, where New Delhi cooperates with relevant countries on issues of mutual concern to maximize its foreign and security policy outcomes.²¹

The SCO has been perceived as a China-centric organization due to its name, which could explain India's lack of enthusiasm for it. India became an observer in 2005 and a member in 2017.²² The SCO has also been viewed as a way for China always to connect India with Pakistan, as India was only allowed to join when Pakistan became a member simultaneously. In contrast, the BRICS offers India opportunities to contribute to global governance and separate itself from Pakistan. While theoretically, the SCO has the potential to address regional issues like terrorism and the situation in Afghanistan, it has not achieved anything substantial due to the divergent bilateral approaches of member states on these issues. India has concerns about sharing infor-

²⁰ Chaudhury D.R. 2020. Russia offers to organise RIC defence ministers' meet. *The Economic Times*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russia-offers-to-organise-ric-def-ministers-meet/articleshow/76900346.cms> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²¹ Jaison C. 2020. The RIC Triangle and India's Multialignment Strategy. *South Asian Voices*. Available at: <https://southasian-voices.org/the-ric-triangle-and-indias-multialignment-strategy/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²² Sharma B., Sharma R. 2016. India's SCO Membership -Challenges and Opportunities. *USI Occasional Paper*. №5. Available at: <https://usiofindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/India%E2%80%99s-SCO-Membership-%E2%80%93-Challenges-and-Opportunities.pdf> (accessed 03.04.2023).

mation under the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) mechanism due to the presence of Pakistan and China in the group. Instead, India is more involved with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to deal with cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. Nonetheless, the SCO serves as a dialogue platform through which these differences could be minimized. It has become a medium through which Beijing seeks regional support for its initiatives like the BRI, which India has not endorsed. However, other members, including Russia, have done so through the SCO platform. As the SCO President for 2023, India is expected to shape the SCO's agenda on terrorism and seek support for its counter-terrorism initiatives. As the SCO plans to prepare a common list of terrorist, separatist, and extremist organizations, India would need support from Russia and the Central Asian Republics to pressure Pakistan to list anti-India terrorist outfits that operate from its territory. For Russia, the SCO is an institution to manage China's presence in its neighborhood. Russia has agreed to coordinate its own initiative, Eurasian Economic Union, with China's BRI through the SCO mechanism. Russia has demonstrated its commitment to the SCO by organizing joint BRICS-SCO summits in 2009 and 2015, aimed at conveying to the West that their efforts to isolate Russia would not succeed.²³ With respect to India-Russia collaboration within the SCO, Moscow had initially proposed and supported India's membership to limit China's growing influence in the organization, as it was apprehensive of China's plans for the SCO bank and free trade agreement.²⁴ According to some Russian experts, Moscow is content with the expansion of the SCO, and it has made the organization irrelevant by continuously striving to enlarge it since 2011. Merely having more members does not guarantee greater influence for an organization.²⁵ Given that the SCO is China's initiative, Beijing places significant importance on it. Amidst the ongoing border conflict with India, there was some concern that Prime Minister Modi might not attend the Samarkand SCO summit in September 2022. However, just days before the summit, China and India reached an agreement to disengage their border troops from one of the friction points in Ladakh.²⁶

Finally, it should be noted that India and Russia share many commonalities within BRICS. The RIC and BRICS are not perceived as being Chinese Trojan Horses, as suggested by Chaulia (2021). India has been working to establish a more democratic world based on equality through its participation in BRICS. For example, India proposed the

²³ Stronski P., Sokolsky R. 2020. Multipolarity in Practice: Understanding Russia's Engagement with Regional Institutions. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/01/08/multipolarity-in-practice-understanding-russia-s-engagement-with-regional-institutions-pub-80717> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²⁴ Grossman D. 2017. China Will Regret India's Entry into the SCO. *The RAND Blog*. Available at: <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/07/china-will-regret-indias-entry-into-the-shanghai-cooperation.html> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²⁵ Gabuev A. 2017. Bigger, Not Better: Russia Makes the SCO a Useless Club. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Available at: <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/71350> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²⁶ Snehes A. Ph. 2022. Ahead of SCO meet, Indian & Chinese troops begin disengagement in Ladakh's Hot Springs. *The Print*. Available at: <https://theprint.in/defence/ahead-of-sco-meet-indian-chinese-troops-begin-disengagement-in-ladakhs-hot-springs/1121041/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

establishment of the New Development Bank, which offers economic alternatives to countries in the Global South, without any conditions attached, unlike the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. India's involvement in BRICS also strengthens its strategic autonomy.²⁷

Western sanctions on Russia may lead to its isolation from the West in the future, and Russia may have to rely on countries in the Global South, many of which have not supported these sanctions.²⁸ India's role in this regard is expected to be crucial for Russia. Furthermore, with the US-China relations deteriorating in recent years, it may be beneficial for Russia and China to expand the BRICS grouping to counter Western pressure. This may result in BRICS becoming more China-centric, with Pakistan also seeking to join the group under China's influence.²⁹ An Indian expert has argued that Russia and China's desire to expand BRICS to challenge the G-7 nations by including members from the G-20 could dilute the grouping's democratic principles. The IBSA trilateral (India, Brazil, and South Africa) of democracies within BRICS will need to be more assertive to prevent this from happening and ensure that the expansion of BRICS is not solely on China's terms.³⁰

India's cooperation with Russia in the BRICS grouping faces challenges, as China's growing power and dominance within the group have disturbed the equilibrium of India-Russia relations. India's participation in BRICS is driven by its desire to create a more democratic world based on equality and to enhance its strategic autonomy³¹. The rise of China and its greater power compared to India has upset the balance in their relationship. The current Chinese government aims to shape the global economic and political order to serve its own interests and does not view India as a supportive partner in this endeavor (Saran 2017). As a result, there is concern that China may use institutions such as BRICS to advance its anti-Western agenda, causing discomfort for India. While India does not oppose the expansion of BRICS, as it could provide relief to Global South economies affected by Western sanctions on Russia, such expansion must occur through proper consultations and consensus rather than being driven by the geopolitical interests of individual states.³² China has proposed a free trade agreement between the BRICS countries, but India and Russia are cau-

²⁷ Kugelman M. 2022. India Plays BRICS to Its Interests. *Foreign Policy*. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/23/brics-summit-india-russia-china-quad/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²⁸ Chenoy A. 2022. Russia-India Relations in a Transformative World Order. *Valdai Club*. Available at: <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-india-relations-in-a-transformative-world/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

²⁹ Tharoor S. 2022. Are the BRICS Breaking Up? *Project Syndicate*. Available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/brics-strategic-direction-enlargement-indian-unease-by-shashi-tharoor-2022-07> (accessed 03.04.2023).

³⁰ Singh G. 2022. China wants a larger BRICS to challenge the existing international order. *The Indian Express*. Available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/brics-summit-expansion-china-russia-g20-international-order-7969914/> (accessed 03.04.2023).

³¹ India, Russia share a vision of how the world should develop: Ambassador Alipov. 2022. *The Hindu*. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-russia-share-a-vision-of-how-the-world-should-develop-ambassador-alipov/article65602404.ece> (accessed 03.04.2023).

³² Bhaumik A. 2022. India to tread cautiously on BRICS expansion. *Deccan Herald*. Available at: <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/india-to-tread-cautiously-on-brics-expansion-1122884.html> (accessed 03.04.2023).

tious about the proposal. India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) due to concerns over its trade deficit with China, while Moscow did not support Beijing's proposal for a free trade agreement within the SCO. India sees BRICS as a mechanism to balance China's aggressive behavior and bring it into compliance with rules. Russia plays an important role in India's approach to balancing China through the BRICS mechanism by acting as a behind-the-scenes intermediary to manage India-China tensions during border disputes (Chaulia 2021). According to a Western perspective, Russia's increasing closeness to China may cause India to worry that Moscow no longer supports India's interests. Without Russia's assistance, India may be unable to effectively moderate China's conduct through multilateral channels such as BRICS. The expert further contends that Russia and India would benefit more from cooperating with their respective adversaries (the US and China), which presents a fundamental paradox in their relationship.³³ Regarding the border issue, it is notable that China had reached an agreement to resolve the Doklam standoff with India before the 2017 BRICS summit in China, and similarly, Beijing agreed to disengage from one of the friction points in Ladakh before the 2022 SCO annual summit.

Conclusion

India and Russia share a similar worldview that supports a multipolar or polycentric world order, which forms the basis of their cooperation in various international organizations. Compared to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, India has been more enthusiastic about the idea of the RIC trilateral grouping and BRICS, both of which originated in Russia. India was not a founding member of the SCO and viewed the organization as a creation of China to advance its interests in the region. While it may not be a general pattern, there are two instances where India has benefited from its engagement with China in these groupings. In 2017, China agreed to end the Doklam standoff with India before the BRICS summit, and in 2022, China agreed to disengage from one of the friction points in Ladakh before the SCO annual summit.

The RIC platform serves as a means for Russia to maintain a balance of power in Eurasia by reducing tensions between India and China. Revived in December 2018 at the behest of President Putin, the platform is a response to the India-China tensions over Doklam. India has supported Russia's efforts and has engaged in dialogue with China, even during border standoffs. India also supports Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership initiative, which aims to prevent the emergence of a hegemon in Eurasia.

³³ Salzman R.S. 2017. Russian and Indian Approaches to BRICS and Global Governance. *Wilson Center*. Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/russian-and-indian-approaches-to-brics-and-global-governance> (accessed 03.04.2023).

Although the alignment of projects under the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road Initiative does not have a direct impact on India, it could be seen as Russia's support for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through the so-called "Pakistan Occupied Kashmir", an area that India considers to be under illegal occupation by Pakistan. In order to maintain a favorable balance of power in Eurasia, India, and Russia must work together, as neither can do so alone. Despite the common perception that Russia's close ties with China would have a negative impact on India, Moscow has continued to support India on issues such as its membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the designation of Pakistan-based individuals as UN-designated terrorists, the abrogation of Article 370, and India's candidature for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. China, on the other hand, has opposed India on these issues.

The potential expansion of BRICS and the prospect of a free trade agreement within this grouping present challenging issues for India-Russia relations, which require increased bilateral engagement. While Russia has endorsed the BRI, it needs to assess the benefits of such an endorsement realistically. In contrast, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) has the potential to provide Russia with access to West Asian and South Asian markets. Therefore, India and Russia should aim to build regional consensus on the INSTC through platforms such as RIC, BRICS, and SCO.

Moreover, the G20 is expected to become another area of significance for India-Russia cooperation, as New Delhi has assumed the presidency of this grouping for 2023. The cooperation between India and Russia in international organizations has further strengthened bilateral ties. However, emerging areas of concern need to be discussed at the bilateral level to maintain regional convergence.

These outcomes hold significance in the current global order, especially in light of the relationship between India and China. Despite tensions between the West and Russia, China, India, and Russia continue supporting each other. However, it is important to note that Russia's response to China's rise will differ from that of the Soviet Union. As two great powers, India and Russia aim to integrate China into multilateral forums to encourage moderation in its behavior, thereby maintaining a multipolar Eurasia. India has invited Russia to join its Indo-Pacific vision, mainly for this reason. It is important to emphasize that Quad is not a military alliance and should not be compared to an Asian NATO. India's reluctance to turn Quad into a military alliance may have prompted the US to create a parallel structure such as AUKUS to balance China militarily.

India's approach to the RIC grouping is primarily driven by its geographical location and history of friendly relations with Russia. As China's influence grows and the balance of power shifts in its favor in Eurasia, India may seek to develop closer ties with the United States in the maritime domain. However, this does not imply that India will abandon its relationship with Russia in favor of the West. This is evident from India's stance on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis, which demonstrates that New Delhi is unwilling to sacrifice its relationship with Russia for the sake of the West.

Unlike the Western perspective, India hopes that Russia will remain neutral in the event of an India-China conflict, just as India has remained neutral in the Ukraine crisis between the West and Russia. India aims to maintain its friendly ties with Russia while also attempting to balance China in forums such as BRICS and SCO, without raising concerns in the West.

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Индия и Россия в международных организациях

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Индия и Россия разделяют концепцию многополярного мира, что находит отражение в их сотрудничестве в рамках международных организаций, таких как Организация Объединённых Наций (ООН), формат Россия – Индия – Китай (РИК), БРИКС, Шанхайская организация сотрудничества (ШОС). Индия проявила большую заинтересованность в форматах РИК и БРИКС, чем в ШОС, не будучи государством-учредителем последней организации и в связи с опасениями относительно возможного использования данной группы для продвижения региональной повестки Китая. Расширение БРИКС и потенциальное создание зоны свободной торговли в соответствующих рамках являются вызовами для отношений Индии и России и требуют более активного двустороннего взаимодействия. России следует реалистично оценить выгоды поддержки китайской инициативы «Один пояс, один путь», а также рассмотреть потенциал Международного транспортного коридора «Север-Юг» для доступа к рынкам Западной и Южной Азии и смягчения воздействия западных санкций на российскую экономику. Индия и Россия должны сотрудничать для достижения регионального консенсуса по МТК «Север-Юг» через форматы РИК, БРИКС и ШОС. Несмотря на продолжающееся сближение России и Китая,

Москва не отказывается от своей поддержки Нью-Дели по таким вопросам, как Кашмир, терроризм, членство в Группе ядерных поставщиков (ГЯП) и Совете Безопасности ООН. Напротив, Китай продолжает ставить под сомнение позицию Индии по этим вопросам и выступает против неё. Аналогичным образом Индия поддерживает дружественные отношения с Россией, несмотря на давление Запада. Сотрудничество Индии и России в международных организациях дополнительно укрепило их двусторонние связи, и обе страны должны продолжать совместную работу для сохранения многополярности в Евразии, поскольку ни одна из них не может достичь этой цели в одиночку.

Ключевые слова: Россия, Индия, БРИКС, РИК, ШОС, МТК «Север-Юг», многополярность, международные организации, российско-индийские отношения

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