

The Indo-Pacific through a Eurasian Lens: Implications of the Russia–Ukraine War for India’s Indo-Pacific Strategy

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Abstract

India's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" is currently being affected significantly by the geo-political dynamics of the global community as a result of the ongoing conflict in Eurasia (Russia- Ukraine), as well as how that conflict relates to those geo-politically dynamic of the Indo-Pacific. This research examines how the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict will affect the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" of India. At present, this strategy involves promoting a free, open, and inclusive region at a time when China's foreign policy is becoming increasingly assertive. The effects of the conflict on India's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" will be assessed in relation to India's longstanding relationship with Russia; in addition to how India can continue to develop its relations with Western allies, while also continuing to confront cooperation between Russia and China. It was determined that the conflict has accelerated India's pursuit of a multi-alignment approach, enhanced India's strategic autonomy; however, the conflict has also revealed weaknesses in India's dependence upon foreign defense suppliers and its regional security. Through developing alternative economic relationships, as well as participating in multilateral organizations, India can mitigate spillover from the conflict in Eurasia into the conflict in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, India can support a multipolar international system. However, there remain additional challenges such as potential sanctions against Russia, as well as ongoing tensions between India and China along their borders which may require India to develop flexible responses. This research illustrates the interconnectedness of the Eurasian and Indo-Pacific theater systems and provides insights into how decision-makers can create a stable foreign policy in a world where fragmentation continues to occur.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific Strategy, Russia-Ukraine War, Eurasian Geopolitics, Strategic Autonomy, Indo-Russian Relations, Sino-Russian Alignment, Western Engagements, Multipolar Order

Introduction

Competition globally is intensifying rapidly in the Indo-Pacific region – which includes the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean — with India's approach important to maintaining equilibrium in opposition to Chinese expansion (Kara, 2025). India’s Indo-Pacific vision — as articulated via the Quad (India, U.S., Japan, and Australia), for example — seeks to promote rule-based order; to develop economic connectivity among the nations in the region; and to

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establish cooperative security arrangements among nations in the region (Akhtar, 2020). However, the Russo-Ukraine conflict has introduced new complexities to existing frameworks of analysis as the geo-economic and geo-political implications of the conflict are felt in Europe as well as within Europe (Sloss & Dickinson, 2022). Russia's isolation from the West and Russia's growing alignment with Asia have added layers of complexity to India's Multi-Alignment Strategy — which has included cultivating and maintaining beneficial relationships with multiple global powers while simultaneously ensuring India's continued ability to function strategically independently (Verma, 2023).

This paper seeks to analyze India's strategy regarding the conflict in Ukraine using a Eurasian lens — and to argue that the conflict has strengthened India's commitment to maintaining its strategic independence while causing significant changes to India's alliances and economic approaches. Historically, India's foreign policy has maintained a delicate balance between non-alignment and pragmatic engagement with other countries, guided by doctrine from the Cold War era to inform decision-making in response to the multifaceted multipolar nature of international relations. The conflict in Ukraine has intensified these endeavors — as the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West present both opportunity and risk for India in advancing its presence in the Indo-Pacific. This study will examine the evolving nature of India-Russia relations and the extent to which India and Western countries are collaborating. Furthermore, this study will analyze the impact of China on India's position in the Indo-Pacific. This study will utilize a wide array of forms of literature — including policy analyses, trade data, and geopolitical assessments from numerous sources — to present a comprehensive and inclusive examination of the subject matter. Conclusions drawn from this study will be valuable to further understanding hybrid threats in connected geographic regions — and the implications for global stability.

Background: India's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Eurasian Interconnections

India's strategy of countering China's Belt and Road Initiative and assuring maritime security at strategic chokepoints such as the Malacca Strait, is based on the Indo-Pacific Strategy of India (IPOI). The IPOI framework focuses on sustainable development, disaster resilience and blue economy cooperation (Binh et al., 2022) and is built on the principles of interconnectedness through Eurasia. This connectedness exists due to historical partnership between Russia and India where historically Russia has been the primary defense equipment supplier to India with over 60% of all defense equipment supplied to India coming from Russia, along with being the largest supplier of energy resources to India. Historically prior to the Ukraine conflict India viewed Russia as a counterbalance to China and utilized this relationship to negotiate strategic partnerships with other member countries of BRICS and SCO (Kapoor, 2023).

Due to Russia's "pivot" to the East, resulting from the Ukraine conflict and resultant economic sanctions imposed by Western countries, there has been a significant increase in Russia's economic dependence on China, creating a shift in the balance of power in Asia (Lukin, 2020). This shift in the balance of power in Asia will indirectly influence the security environment of the Indo-Pacific region as military exercises conducted in the region between China/Russia have demonstrated a growing level of coordination in their ability to challenge regional security

(Verma, 2023). In terms of geopolitics, the conflict has significantly impacted India's energy costs and created vulnerability in supply chains; therefore, India has been compelled to pursue diversification strategies that maintain India's autonomy of decision making (Drieniková et al., 2022). Thusly, the context set forth above provides a backdrop to assess the impact of Eurasia on the Indo-Pacific Region and enables the use of Eurasia- based perspectives to analyze the realignments of Indo-Pacific Strategies.

The Russia-Ukraine War: Eurasian Shifts and Global Repercussions

Russian participation in this conflict has resulted in a rise in Eurasia's multipolar structure due to western-imposed sanctions against Russia and because those sanctions are resulting in Russia being directed away from Europe and towards Asia. Indian president Vladimir Putin's geopolitical strategies to promote national sovereignty and to oppose the west are echoed throughout the Global South, notably in India who has chosen to abstain from voting on United Nation resolutions condemning Russia to maintain good relations with Moscow (Fomin & Kryuchkova, 2025). In essence, India sees this conflict as a regional Eurasian conflict, with spillovers into the Indo-Pacific region, specifically the loss of Black Sea grain shipments that are causing food insecurity across the region. Also, the war has contributed to the exacerbation of global energy shortages and disruptions to global supply chains; both have had negative impacts on developing nations' economies and have caused inflation to rise worldwide, which has furthered the need to assess the long-term feasibility of international economic systems. In addition to the conflict promoting a rethinking of the viability of international economic systems, the conflict has also "weaponized" economics, creating new parallel trade networks and reduced reliance on traditional international trade routes. For example, India purchased large quantities of discounted Russian crude oil exports in 2022, which accounted for a large proportion of the growth in India-Russia trade in 2022 and also enabled Russia to avoid many of the sanctions that were levied against it by western countries (Liu & Su, 2024). Although these developments originated in Eurasia, they will ultimately be felt throughout the Indo-Pacific region, as India's enhanced energy security provides greater opportunity to implement its maritime strategy to challenge China's dominance of sea lines. The war has also illustrated vulnerabilities in the international web of supply chains and is promoting India to enhance its own supply chain resiliency through a number of Eurasian connectivity projects, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which connects India to Russia via Iran and provides an alternative route for India to obtain Russian products and services, without having to rely on Chinese sea lines. INSTC illustrates how the conflict in Eurasia is enabling strategic diversification (Zakharov, 2023). Nevertheless, if Russia becomes significantly weaker after the war, then Russia could lose much of its capacity to function as a counter-weight to China, which would create complications for India's delicate balancing act between maintaining good relations with both Russia and China.

Implications for India's Relations with Russia in the Indo-Pacific

Following WWII, the Russian-Indian relationship increases significantly. For instance, Russia is now beginning to look at India as one of the primary partners for Russia's Eurasian pivot. Defense cooperation between Russia and India, including joint ventures, will continue to be critical for India's capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China's expanding naval

presence. Sanctions due to the war have caused delays in delivery; therefore, India is responding by establishing a domestic production base to produce these weapons, and this aligns well with India's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative (Kashin, 2023). From an Eurasian standpoint, new opportunities emerge: With growing necessity for Russia to pursue non-western markets, there are more energy corridors being built from Russia to India at lower costs than previously experienced, and these energy corridors may enable India to enhance its economic development in the Indo-Pacific region (Mukhia & Zou, 2022). These enhanced relations illustrate India's potential to act as a bridge between nations in a multipolar world as India counters western efforts to isolate Russia. Furthermore, the enhanced engagement with Russia provides India a mechanism for maintaining neutrality in the Indo-Pacific region while avoiding membership in U.S.-led coalitions and obtaining support from Russia in the United Nations on issues, such as Kashmir (Sharma & Atri, 2023). However, reliance on Russia could result in secondary sanctions, which could affect India's ability to engage in the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue). Overall, the war has resulted in Russia seeking to create a balance in its relationships with both China and India, and this creates an opportunity for India to become a significant player in Eurasian geopolitics that supports India's interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Impact on India's Western Engagements and Indo-Pacific Alliances

The post-war rise of Indo-Russia relations shows that Russia now sees India as one of the key partners in its "Eurasian Turn". Defense cooperation (including co-operations through joint ventures) will remain a significant aspect for India's military capabilities within the Indo-Pacific, given that Chinese naval presence is expanding. Deliveries have been slowed by the sanctions resulting from the conflict; nevertheless, India is establishing an indigenous capacity to manufacture these weapons, as part of the country's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative (Kashin, 2023). From an Eurasian perspective, we see potential for India to act as a bridge in a multipolar world in which Western powers are attempting to isolate Russia. The additional trade agreements, including those related to energy corridors from Russia to India at discounted prices, allow for additional avenues for India's economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region (Mukhia & Zou, 2022), and help India to maintain its neutral position in the Indo-Pacific region by avoiding membership in U.S.-led coalitions while receiving Russian support at the UN on matters like Kashmir (Sharma & Atri, 2023). However, India may also face secondary sanctions if it continues to rely on Russia, potentially hindering its ability to participate in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Ultimately, the ongoing conflict prompts Russia to find a balance between its relationships with China and India, which will give India greater leverage over Eurasian politics, and thus will continue to strengthen India's position in the Indo-Pacific.

The China Factor: Eurasian Alliances and Indo-Pacific Tensions

India's "Indo-Pacific" strategy is impacted greatly by the Sino-Russia "no limits" relationship formed during the war. This new Eurasia-based relationship has allowed China to act more aggressively in the South China Sea and along India's Line of Actual Control (LAC), in the form of joint military exercises; this demonstrates that Russia and China are now working together to coordinate their military actions against India. This Eurasia relationship creates an Indian concern about being surrounded; therefore, India is increasing its border fortifications

and reducing its economic ties with China (Freitas, 2024). India is using the Eurasia lens to expand its counter-measures to the effects of the war in the Indo-Pacific region, using AUKUS and naval patrol operations. Also, as a result of Russia's pivot towards India to balance the growing power of China, India may be able to capitalize on the divisions among allies (Verma, 2023). However, the ongoing LAC tensions resulting from the war require an increased need for dialogue to reduce tensions at the LAC. Overall, India will need to evolve its strategy of combining deterrence with diplomacy to protect India's interests in the Indo-Pacific as a result of the Sino-Russian relationship in Eurasia.

Strategic Adjustments, Challenges, and Future Trajectories

To counteract the economic/financial/geopolitical risks that arise from the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia, India uses multilateralism and develops alliances with countries to protect itself. This also means that India will face challenges related to potential disruptions to supply lines as a result of sanctions placed on Russia, as well as an increased likelihood of conflict spreading to other areas. So, India may build connectivity in Eurasia at the same time that it builds its defense capabilities in the Indo-Pacific and creates a global multipolar environment. Therefore, Indian policymakers must develop strategies and provide support to help India become more resilient, while at the same time allowing India to operate effectively in the two interrelated environments of Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific. For instance, India will have to continue to find the correct balance between its long-standing and traditional partners and its new and emerging allies as Russia's capacity to play a role globally diminishes and India becomes increasingly involved with western-aligned nations (Kapoor, 2023; Leandro & Oberoi, 2023). If Russia continues to lose its capacity to act, then this will further complicate India's geopolitical positioning and reduce the number of options available to India in terms of balancing out the different regional players within Eurasia. Furthermore, as India and Russia have become more disparate in their views concerning China, the "lines of conflict and commonality" between India and Russia are changing and are becoming increasingly divergent (Kapoor, 2023), which may affect the degree to which India and Russia can strategically align with one another in the future. Due to the continuing conflict between India and Pakistan, India has been required to reevaluate its multi-alignment strategy, and due to the unequal multipolarity of the current global order, India has had to adapt (Kapoor, 2023). While there are many challenges facing India, India is presently working towards its vision for the Indo-Pacific as a result of the continually evolving nature of its multi-alignment strategy, as a result of events in the Galwan Valley and the ongoing border dispute between India and China (Verma, 2023). Due to the increasingly complex geopolitical environment, India requires a sophisticated foreign policy to allow India to pursue simultaneous relations with its traditional ally Russia and to enhance its relations with western powers and regional allies to counterbalance the rapidly growing influence of China in both Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific (Kapoor, 2023; Raghav, 2024). No matter the complexities of this environment, India will require to carry out the necessary strategic maneuvering in order to defend its national security interests and preserve its geopolitical sovereignty in the face of the evolving global environment.

Conclusion

The war between Russia and Ukraine, when looked at from the Eurasian perspective, is a

development which is causing the same effects on India's Indo-Pacific policy, and therefore contributing to India's policy of autonomy within a changing multipolar world. In navigating its relationships with Russia, China, and the West, India will face significant challenges; however, India will continue to develop its presence in this complex environment. The relationship of the regions (and their states) in terms of the international system, and therefore, the need for coordinating/ integrating foreign and defense policy in order to achieve regional stability in today's increasingly unstable world, will also contribute to the need for coordinated/ integrated foreign and defense policy in terms of the international system. Diversification and dialogue are the best strategies moving forward, in order to secure India's central position.

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