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INDIA AS A KEY COMPONENT OF THE GLOBAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

ABSTRACT: Polarisation is intensifying within the global security architecture of the modern world. On the one hand, this phenomenon stems from the decline of the unipolar system that emerged after the Cold War, in which the United States functioned as the sole superpower and the dominant actor in international relations. At present, the emergence of new poles – global powers – is increasingly evident. On the other hand, there is a growing prevalence of political, economic, ideological, and cultural confrontations, which at times escalate into armed conflict. A prominent example of this is the neo-imperial and aggressive policies pursued by the Russian Federation. In this context, it is pertinent to examine the role that India, as a world power experiencing the growth of its political, economic, and military influence, plays in shaping the global security architecture. What are India's potential contributions and limitations in this regard? This article examines India as a power increasingly regarded in International Security Studies as a critical element not only in regional security, but also in the broader global security system. Many observers argue that the evolving US-China rivalry in Asia will be instrumental in determining the regional and global balance of power, ultimately shaping the future global security order. This analysis adopts a specific research perspective by investigating India's role as a key component of the global security system from the perspectives of the European Union and the Russian Federation. This analysis is confined to two perspectives: first, the role assigned to India within the strategic documents of the European Union; and second, the position of India as outlined in the strategic documents of the Russian Federation. By examining these perspectives, it becomes possible to identify the untapped potential for India to emerge as a pivotal element of the global security system.

KEYWORDS: international security, multipolarity, India, European Union, Russian Federation

INDIE JAKO KLUCZOWY ELEMENT GLOBALNEJ ARCHITEKTURY BEZPIECZEŃSTWA: POTENCJAŁ I OGRANICZENIA W ŚWIETLE DOKUMENTÓW STRATEGICZNYCH UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ I FEDERACJI ROSYJSKIEJ

ABSTRAKT: W globalnej architekturze bezpieczeństwa współczesnego świata nasila się polaryzacja. Z jednej strony zjawisko to wynika z upadku systemu jednobiegunowego, który powstał po zimnej wojnie, w którym Stany Zjednoczone pełniły rolę jedyne supermocarstwa i dominującego podmiotu w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Obecnie coraz bardziej widoczne jest pojawienie się nowych biegunów – światowych mocarstw. Z drugiej strony coraz częściej dochodzi do konfrontacji politycznych, gospodarczych, ideologicznych i kulturowych, które przeradzają się w konflikty zbrojne. Wyraźnym tego przykładem jest neoimperialna i agresywna polityka prowadzona przez Federację Rosyjską. W tym kontekście warto przywrócić rolę, jaką Indie, jako światowa potęga doświadczająca wzrostu swoich wpływów politycznych, gospodarczych i militarnych, odgrywają w kształtowaniu globalnej architektury bezpieczeństwa. Jakie są potencjalne możliwości i ograniczenia Indii w tym zakresie?

Artykuł analizuje Indie jako mocarstwo, które w badaniach nad bezpieczeństwem międzynarodowym jest coraz częściej postrzegane jako kluczowy element nie tylko bezpieczeństwa regionalnego, ale także szerszego globalnego systemu bezpieczeństwa. Wielu obserwatorów argumentuje, że rozwijająca się rywalizacja między USA a Chinami w Azji będzie miała kluczowe znaczenie dla regionalnego i globalnego układu sił, ostatecznie kształtując przyszły globalny porządek bezpieczeństwa. Niniejsza analiza przyjmuje specyficzną perspektywę badawczą, badając rolę Indii jako kluczowego elementu globalnego systemu bezpieczeństwa z perspektywy Unii Europejskiej i Federacji Rosyjskiej. Niniejsza analiza ogranicza się do dwóch perspektyw: po pierwsze, roli przypisanej Indiom w dokumentach strategicznych Unii Europejskiej; po drugie, pozycji Indii przedstawionej w dokumentach strategicznych Federacji Rosyjskiej. Analiza tych perspektyw pozwala zidentyfikować niewykorzystany potencjał Indii, aby stały się one kluczowym elementem globalnego systemu bezpieczeństwa.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe, wielobiegunowość, Indie, Unia Europejska, Federacja Rosyjska

INTRODUCTION

Following the watershed moment of the end of the Cold War, which also marked the conclusion of the bipolar rivalry and initiated a period of unchallenged Western dominance, the contemporary global order is undergoing another significant transformation. Francis Fukuyama's assertion of the 'end of history', once posited from a Western perspective, has not materialized. Moreover, it has become increasingly apparent that the Western model of social and political organization, often simplistically equated with liberal democracy, is neither universally accepted nor embraced, even within Western societies themselves.

Several key trends are shaping this transformation: (1) the diminishing global dominance of the West, understood as the United States and its allies; (2) the emergence of a new bipolar rivalry, this time between the United States and China; (3) the declining political significance, and perhaps the gradual erosion, of Europe's global influence (here understood as the European Union) and that of Russia; (4) the deepening internal divisions within the West, manifest in the increasing divergence between the United States and its NATO allies; and (5) the potential for the rise of alternative centers of political influence, such as India, which may weaken the emerging US-China bipolar system. These factors impact not only international politics, but also global economic development and cultural dynamics.

A crucial aspect of this transformation is the evolution of the global security system. It can no longer be based on the unchallenged military supremacy of the United States, which, despite being the only genuine superpower capable of achieving its political objectives through military interventions worldwide, is increasingly constrained by the aforementioned shifts. These changes have profound implications for emerging security challenges. Russia's decline – exacerbated by a catastrophic demographic situation, a corrupt and outdated economy reliant solely on the extraction of natural resources, and an ineffective military – has driven its leadership towards aggressive policies, culminating in the war against Ukraine and the perpetration of war crimes. Concurrently, the European Union's internal challenges – economic, political, and social – are rendering Europe, including its former colonial powers, increasingly marginal on the global

stage. Moreover, the potential distancing of the Donald Trump administration from Europe could further weaken its global role. At the same time, the intensifying US-China rivalry is shifting the focus of *International Security Studies* towards Asian states, whose security policies may ultimately determine the outcome of this rivalry and shape the emerging global security architecture.

This article examines India as a power increasingly regarded in *International Security Studies* as a critical element not only in regional security, but also in the broader global security system. Many observers argue that the evolving US-China rivalry in Asia will be instrumental in determining the regional and global balance of power, ultimately shaping the future global security order. This analysis adopts a specific research perspective by investigating India's role as a key component of the global security system from the perspectives of the European Union and the Russian Federation. This inquiry is particularly relevant given the fundamental divergence between European and Russian perspectives: their identification of threats and challenges to regional and global security, their preferred methods of ensuring security, and their interpretations of fundamental values and principles governing inter-state relations, all of which shape their security policy objectives. The question of India's role as a key component of the global security system from these two perspectives also underscores the strategic choices India faces in realising its potential as a global power.

The analysis presented here is grounded in the realist approach to *International Relations* and *International Security Studies*. The international political system, and by extension the global security system, is fundamentally anarchic. The primary actors in these systems are states, although supra-state organisations, which have assumed some foreign and security policy competences traditionally reserved for states, are increasingly influential. One such organization is the European Union, which continues to expand its competences in these domains. States act according to their perceived national interests, as interpreted by ruling elites, which do not necessarily reflect the views of the broader population, even in democratic systems. These interests, articulated in public discourse and official policy documents, are not immutable, meaning that state actions in the security sphere are subject to change.

In addition to this realist perspective, which remains dominant in *International Relations* and *International Security Studies*, this article incorporates a more recent analytical approach – ontological security. This perspective posits that states' security-related actions, including their perception of threats and challenges, their securitization of specific spheres of human activity, and their catalog of acceptable and unacceptable security measures, are heavily influenced by their self-ascribed status. This status encompasses how states define their distinctiveness from others, their cultural particularities, their principles of social organization, and their recognized values. For some states, this extends to how they perceive their historical mission. Ontological security, therefore, involves striving to act in accordance with this self-defined status and regarding as threats all internal and external phenomena that contradict it. This status is reflected in public debates and legal instruments, particularly constitutions and strategic foreign and security policy documents. When analyzing European Union and Russian Federation approaches

to global and regional security, the concept of ontological security proves invaluable, as it highlights the fundamental differences – cultural, ideological, and socio-political – that distinguish European nations from Russia. These differences influence how Europe and Russia define threats and challenges to security and the measures they deem permissible for defence.

This article is structured into four sections. The first section explores contemporary debates within International Security Studies regarding India's role in constructing the global security architecture, assessing its prospects and limitations. The second section examines India's place within European and Russian strategic foreign and security policy documents through a content analysis. The third section discusses the findings and assesses the prospects for India's evolving role in the global security system within the context of European and Russian perspectives. Finally, the fourth section presents key conclusions regarding India's future role in global security.

FACTORS INFLUENCING INDIA'S ROLE IN CREATING A GLOBAL SECURITY SYSTEM

The trajectory of India's security policy – whether it engages in cooperative formats such as the 'Russia-India-China' group or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) – will be crucial in determining security in the Asia-Pacific region¹ and, given the growing political and economic importance of the region, global security. In this context, it is worth noting the fundamental differences in European and Russian perspectives on the global security system and how these differences affect the role that the European Union and Russia envisage for India in the future global security architecture.

THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

The literature on *International Security Studies*, particularly research and analysis conducted from realist perspectives, is predominantly shaped by Western thought, which originated during the Cold War period, when *Security Studies* emerged as a distinct discipline. This literature primarily represents a Western viewpoint, assessing global and regional security issues in accordance with the security policy interests of Western nations—chiefly the United States and, to a lesser extent, Europe. The Western perspective on global security analysis retains traces of its Cold War origins, focusing on the rivalry between the West (primarily the United States) and its adversaries. Today, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and amid the waning global influence of Russia, China has emerged as the principal competitor. In Europe, US-India relations are expected to strengthen under a Trump presidency, given that India is perceived as a potential counterweight to China in both regional and global contexts². Consequently, interpretations of India's security policy are contingent on whether it is viewed as pursuing Western

¹ Z.A. Ferenczy, *Locating India and Taiwan in the EU's Geostrategic Adjustment*, "ORF Issue Brief" 650, p. 5, <https://www.orfonline.org/public/uploads/posts/pdf/20240610225630.pdf> (31.08.2025).

² P. Kugiel, *U.S.-India Partnership Likely to Strengthen Further under Trump's Second Presidency*, <https://www.pism.pl/publications/us-india-partnership-likely-to-strengthen-further-under-trumps-second-presidency> (31.08.2025).

security objectives or as aligning itself with the West's adversaries. Whereas, during the Cold War, India was regarded in the West as an ally of the Soviet Union despite its declared policy of non-alignment, in the post-Cold War era, it has emerged as a rising power³.

Western scholarship generally recognizes India as a regional power⁴. Buzan and Wæver observe that the West has not historically accorded India the same attention as China, nor has it considered India a global power⁵. Classified as a regional power for an extended period, India was not initially given a prominent place in Western security policy. However, with the decline of Western global dominance, this situation is evolving. India's independent foreign policy is becoming more evident, while simultaneously making it a more attractive partner in the context of intensifying US-China rivalry. This shift has led to increasing questions regarding India's potential to attain great power status⁶. While Buzan and Wæver identify China and Japan as the two great powers in Asia, they acknowledge that India is a 'leading aspirant to elevation from regional to great power standing'⁷. The European Union's reassessment of India's strategic role has also been influenced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which China has tacitly supported. The deepening of Sino-Russian relations and Russia's confrontational policies – including military aggression and, as recent years have demonstrated, acts of sabotage and subversion in Europe – represent the most serious security threats to the European Union⁸.

From the perspective of ontological security, Western conceptualizations of global and regional security threats are closely tied to the axiological dimension: threats are typically identified where values deemed fundamental in the West – such as the rule of law, freedom of expression, and property rights – are not universally upheld. In assessing India's role in shaping the global security system, it is therefore imperative to examine the axiological foundations of Indian state policy, both domestically and in international relations.

From a European perspective, three principal developments underscore India's increasing international significance.

First, the primary driver of India's growing role in the global security system is the intensifying rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China. This competition is arguably the most consequential political process, with long-term implications for the global balance of power, akin to the shifts following the Second World War – when a bipolar international order emerged – and the Cold War's conclusion, which ushered in a unipolar world dominated by the West. While some observers highlight Russia's challenge to the Western liberal

³ S. Ganguly, *Indian Security Policy*, in: Routledge Handbook of Security Studies. Second Edition. London 2017, p. 239.

⁴ B. Buzan and O. Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge 2003, p. 55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶ W.R. Thompson, *India and its great power aspirations*, in: The Routledge Handbook of Asian Security Studies, Second Edition, London 2018.

⁷ B. Buzan and O. Wæver, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁸ E. Macron, *Address to the French people by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic*. <https://uk.ambafrance.org/President-announces-major-decisions-to-counter-Russian-threat> (31.08.2025).

order, as evidenced by its military aggression⁹, this assessment may overstate Russia's strategic prospects. The United States has sought to cultivate closer ties with India in order to counter-balance China and weaken India's longstanding political ties with Russia. This rationale has underpinned efforts to enhance security and military cooperation between India and the West¹⁰. China's assertive policies in the South China Sea, its challenges to US interests and its support for Russia have led the United States and the European Union to adopt a more sceptical stance towards Beijing¹¹ and to prioritize partnerships with other regional actors, particularly India. Given the Trump administration's anticipated hardline approach towards China, India's role as a security partner is likely to expand further. This trend extends to the European Union, where concerns regarding economic and political engagement with China – ranging from intellectual property theft to broader ethical and political considerations – are growing. Consequently, India is increasingly viewed as a viable alternative to China as the European Union's primary partner in the Asia-Pacific region¹². The Indo-Chinese rivalry also plays a critical role in this dynamic, as China represents India's greatest national security challenge, whereas India does not pose a comparable threat to China¹³. China's strategic maneuvers in the Indian Ocean have been interpreted as attempts to encircle India¹⁴.

Secondly, India presents itself as a promising economic partner for the European Union, particularly given China's economic policies and their adverse impact on European economies¹⁵. Projections of India's economic growth further reinforce its rising status in international politics¹⁶. While China faces an increasingly pronounced economic downturn, India is anticipated to experience sustained growth, driven by large-scale infrastructure investments and increased Western foreign direct investment, which had previously been concentrated in China¹⁷. India's economic trajectory is complemented by its military modernization and the potential reduction of its defence dependency on Russia through enhanced cooperation with Western countries¹⁸.

Thirdly, the European Union positions itself as a community of values, and its constitutional and strategic documents emphasize democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law. From the perspective of ontological security, partnerships with states that share similar

⁹ R.K. Sharma, G. Atri, *India and Russia in International Organizations: Motives, Strategies, and Outcomes*, "MGIMO Review of International Relations", 2023 16(2), p. 44.

¹⁰ M.S. Pardesi, *China and India: The evolution of a compound rivalry*, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Asian Security Studies*, Second Edition, London 2018, p. 172.

¹¹ E.C. Economy, *The World According to China*, Cambridge 2023, pp. 209-210.

¹² P. Khanna, *The Future Is Asian: Global Order in the Twenty-First Century*, London 2019, pp. 250-251.

¹³ D. Brewster, *An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?*, "Security Challenges", 2010, 6(3), pp. 1-20: 6; B. Buzan, *People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Colchester 2016, p. 163; A. Tarapore, *Zone balancing: India and the Quad's new strategic logic*, "International Affairs" 99(1), pp. 239-257.

¹⁴ L. Cordner, *Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean*, "Naval War College Review", 2011, 64(4), p. 75.

¹⁵ F. Grare, M. Reuter, *The Battle for the Indian Ocean: How the EU and India Can Strengthen Maritime Security*, ECFR Policy Brief, p. 4, <https://doi.org/resrep52705> (31.08.2025).

¹⁶ W.R. Thompson, op. cit., p. 210.

¹⁷ P. Khanna, op. cit., pp. 185-186.

¹⁸ S. Ganguly, op. cit., p. 255.

foundational values are preferable. India's democratic governance and its civilian-led, non-militaristic state structure are significant advantages from a European standpoint¹⁹. Consequently, strengthening ties with India aligns with the European Union's objective of counteracting the emergence of a new bipolar US-China rivalry.

Nevertheless, one cannot overlook those elements of India's international situation and foreign policy that, from a European perspective, pose challenges and may limit the scope of European-Indian cooperation, as well as affect perceptions of India's position in the global security system.

The first negative factor is that India's security policy is shaped by its complex relations with Pakistan and China, which contain latent sources of conflict²⁰. The challenge is that this strong regional focus of India's security policy makes it difficult to ascribe to India a role beyond that of a regional power. From the perspective of India's place in Western security thinking, it is therefore crucial to shift the focus away from viewing India's security policy primarily through the lens of its conflicts with Pakistan and China. Given India's strategic potential, this shift is not only desirable but also realistic²¹.

The second factor that particularly negatively affects contemporary perceptions of India's role as a potential key element of the global security system is its ties with Russia and its neutrality towards the war that Russia is waging against Ukraine, along with the war crimes it is committing—crimes against civilians, prisoners of war, and the destruction of Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. In international organizations such as the United Nations, India has adopted an ambiguous stance on these issues from a European perspective. On the one hand, it advocates respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states²², in contrast to Russia, which, through its unilaterally declared annexations of Ukrainian territories, is violating the post-Second World War international order. Although India has not formally supported Russia in its aggressive war, its neutrality is often perceived in Europe as disappointing²³. This, in turn, may negatively impact the perception of India's potential to assume a global power role, which is crucial to the creation of global and regional security, within the European Union.

¹⁹ K. Booth, N.J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*, London 2008, p. 133; A. Shah, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia*, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Asian Security Studies*, Second Edition, London 2018, p. 187.

²⁰ S. Ganguly, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

²¹ J. Baylis, J.J. Wirtz, C.S. Gray, *Strategy in the Contemporary World*. Sixth edition. Oxford 2019, p. 247.

²² *Permanent Mission of India to the UN, UNSC Adoption of Resolution on the situation in Ukraine. Statement by Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti*, <https://pminewyork.gov.in/statementsearch?id=eyJpdjI6IjRyT01pd3pyVHBQal-hXNW5WVEY3aHc9PSIsInZhbHVlIjojSzdnafWvS3M4bFpBXC9aSW93SXQrVGFRT0iLCJtYWMi-OiIyNTRiOTFjNTY5YmFjZmNhMzZiNWZkMzZk0M2FhYmU1ZDQ5YWQ1ZmY5NDk5ZjM1OD-kxNWRiZTU2NTNiOTk3MmEwIn0=> (31.08.2025); R.K. Sharma and G. Atri, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²³ A.J. Tellis, "What Is In Our Interest": *India and the Ukraine War*, p. 1, https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/202204-Tellis_The_Ukraine_War_and_India1.pdf (31.08.2025).

THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE

Russian literature on international security frequently references the Cold War confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Western states are perceived as the primary threat to Russia, including an existential threat, as some Russian scholars interpret Western policies as aiming at Russia's destruction or disintegration. From this perspective, a potential ally of Russia is any state that pursues anti-Western policies, even if it does not share Russia's security policy objectives in other respects. However, the ontological security perspective is also evident in Russian analyses of international security.

Russia defines itself as a world power with a claim to an exclusive sphere of influence, encompassing the states that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the exception of the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. President Putin has adopted rhetoric previously confined to the Russian far right until the late 2010s, defining Russia as a unique state constituting a distinct civilization. As Glazev and Arkhipova assert, 'Russia is a special state whose position and internal essence can be referred to as a "country civilization."' Together with India and China, it constitutes an original socio-cultural and historical zone. Despite the external influence of liberalization and globalization on its traditional values, its national and state identity will endure over time'²⁴. This discourse has also been integrated into Russian strategic documents, with Russia's self-definition as a distinct civilization with a special historical mission explicitly referenced in the *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2023*²⁵, adopted after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Such ideological framing positions Russia as the leader of global opposition to Western hegemony, with influential thinkers such as Aleksandr Dugin advocating for other states – including China and India—to align themselves under Russian leadership²⁶. This ideological assumption, a key element of Russia's understanding of ontological security, contrasts with Russia's increasing vulnerability and growing dependence on China. Consequently, in Russian considerations of global and regional security, it is not only the anti-Western stance of potential partners that matters but also whether cooperation with them can mitigate Russia's deepening dependence on China. In this context, India, given its strained relations with China, which it perceives as a primary national security threat, could be a promising partner for Russia if it chooses to pursue an anti-Western policy.

From the Russian perspective, what factors are likely to influence the perception of India as a prospective partner and a key element in the emerging global international order?

Paradoxically, as in the European perspective, India's complex relationship with China is regarded as an asset from the Russian viewpoint. Particularly amid the conflict with the West

²⁴ S.Y. Glazev, V.V. Arkhipova, *Russia, India, and China: Cooperation and New Role in the Development of International Relations*, "Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies", 2022, 14(3), p. 313.

²⁵ *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* (2023), 4, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49090> (31.08.2025).

²⁶ A. Dugin, *Novaya formula Putina: Osnovy eticheskoy politiki*, Moskva 2014, p. 76; *Idem, Voyna kontinentov: Sovremennyy mir v geopoliticheskoy sisteme koordinat*, Moskva 2015, p. 204.

and the extensive sanctions imposed on Russia following its aggression against Ukraine, the Russian authorities have been compelled to strengthen cooperation with China. However, this has progressively transformed Russian-Chinese relations into a less balanced partnership, with the advantage increasingly shifting in China's favor. Russians are acutely aware of the risks associated with becoming dependent on China due to the significant disparity in economic potential²⁷. In an attempt to diversify its foreign policy and counteract this imbalance, Russia has sought to strengthen relations with other Asian states, particularly India²⁸. However, this policy has not succeeded in mitigating China's dominance or reducing Russia's dependence on political and economic cooperation with China. This does not mean, however, that Russian policymakers consider such an outcome unattainable. Russian declarations emphasizing the need to deepen cooperation between Russia, China, and India²⁹ should be understood in this context.

Russia and India participate in numerous international cooperation frameworks that also include China, such as the 'Russia-India-China' (RIC) format, the BRICS group, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)³⁰. However, these platforms primarily serve China's political and economic interests, and it remains difficult to identify any tangible benefits—particularly in terms of security—for the other participating states. From Russia's perspective, therefore, strengthening India politically, economically, and militarily would be advantageous, as it could help to counterbalance Chinese dominance within all international cooperation frameworks in which both Russia and China are engaged³¹.

India's second major asset as a participant in the global security system, from a Russian perspective, is its continued military-technical dependence on Russia³², despite India's efforts to diversify its arms procurement. Russia regards India as a crucial market for arms³³. The Russian-Ukrainian war has demonstrated the poor quality of Russian weaponry, with Russian arms production largely reliant on the modernization of Soviet-era armaments. As a result, the technological gap between Russia and the West continues to widen. Nevertheless, India maintains its dependence on Russia in this domain³⁴. India's choice of Russia as a major arms supplier, therefore, appears to be driven more by political considerations than by purely military or technical factors.

From the perspective of Russian security interests—both regionally in Asia and globally—India's policies also present certain challenges. The first is a paradoxical one: what is

²⁷ P. Khanna, op. cit., p. 86.

²⁸ B.G. Carlson, *Russia and the China-India Rivalry*, Russian Analytical Digest, 265, pp. 8-9, <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000476768> (31.08.2025).

²⁹ *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* (4 February 2022), <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770> (31.08.2025).

³⁰ A.D. Muraviev, D. Ahlawat, L. Hughes, *India's security dilemma: engaging big powers while retaining strategic autonomy*, "International Politics", 2021, 59(6), p. 1123.

³¹ Ø. Tunsjø, China and the United States in a New Bipolar System, in *US-China Foreign Relations: Power Transition and Its Implications for Europe and Asia*, London 2021, p. 44.

³² A.D. Muraviev, D. Ahlawat, L. Hughes, op. cit., pp. 1126-1128.

³³ P. Khanna, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

³⁴ A.J. Tellis, op. cit., p. 3.

perceived as an asset can simultaneously be a limitation. While Russia and India, at least in their official rhetoric, share a vision of a multipolar world, and while they promote this vision through organizations such as BRICS, the SCO, and the RIC format³⁵, the actual mechanisms through which these organizations are expected to achieve this objective remain unclear. The RIC format, for instance, is problematic: its purpose and objectives are not well defined, and its constituent states—Russia, India, and China—have substantial divergences in their political interests³⁶. At present, it is difficult to identify any shared security policy interests uniting these three states. On the contrary, considerable differences exist between them regarding regional security policies. The Russian Federation's de facto inability to assert a leadership role in Asia, combined with the absence of a coherent security policy that unites Russia and India, may render the policy frameworks in which they formally cooperate largely ineffective in advancing Russia's vision of regional and global security. Moreover, India's ongoing efforts to reduce its dependence on Russia as a primary arms supplier are met with concern in Moscow³⁷. Such developments weaken one of Russia's most significant instruments of influence over India and erode what is perceived as their only common security interest.

PROVISIONS IN STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND THEIR RELEVANCE

It is essential to examine whether the factors influencing India's rise as a significant element of the global security system are also reflected in European and Russian strategic documents. However, it is noteworthy that Russian strategic documents are far more numerous than their European counterparts. This discrepancy arises primarily from the fact that European Union member states continue to pursue their own foreign policies, each based on its own international relations and security strategies. In contrast, strategic planning in Russia is heavily influenced by immediate political objectives, meaning that changes in Russia's international situation are rapidly reflected in new or updated strategic documents. Consequently, in Russia, security and foreign policy strategic documents do not necessarily serve as frameworks for future planning but rather as justifications for the actions already undertaken by the Russian authorities.

INDIA IN THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

European security strategy documents reveal an evolution in the EU's approach to Asia, although it is evident that, until recently, the region was not a priority for EU foreign and security policy. The 2003 *European Security Strategy* made only vague references to the region.

³⁵ S.Y. Glazev, V.V. Arkhipova, op. cit.; R.K. Sharma, G. Atri, op. cit.

³⁶ F. O'Donnell, M. Papa, *India's multi-alignment management and the Russia–India–China (RIC) triangle*, "International Affairs", 2021, 97(3), pp. 801-802.

³⁷ *Russia Struggles to Keep India Dependent on Its Arms Supplies*, The Moscow Times, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/02/11/russia-struggles-to-keep-india-dependent-on-its-arms-supplies-a87940> (31.08.2025).

Drawing on historical experience, the document highlighted the need to develop strategic partnerships, identifying Japan, China, and India as potential partners³⁸.

The importance of cooperation with Asian countries on security issues was further elaborated in the subsequent version of the *European Security Strategy* in 2009. While largely reiterating the core content of the 2003 strategy, this document provided a more detailed discussion of key international and regional security issues. It identified China, India, Japan, and the United States as essential partners in promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and 'transparent and well-regulated global markets'³⁹. When addressing global security threats posed by Iran's policies, the document underscored the necessity of dialogue and political pressure on the Iranian authorities, listing the United States, China, and Russia as key partners but notably omitting India. In contrast, cooperation with India – along with Pakistan – was highlighted as crucial to stabilizing Afghanistan. The strategy acknowledged that the potential for EU-India cooperation in addressing regional security challenges was facilitated by improving relations between India and Pakistan⁴⁰. Notably, the EU had already begun to recognize the negative consequences of the imbalance in EU-China and EU-India relations. The 2009 strategy acknowledged that while the EU had significantly strengthened its relations with China, there remained substantial scope to deepen engagement with India⁴¹. However, these declarations remained largely general and lacked concrete policy measures.

A significant shift in the European approach to security cooperation can be observed in *A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* of 2016. This document explicitly recognized that regional security, peace, and stability in Asia were essential for European prosperity. While emphasizing the importance of cooperation with China, it also introduced certain conditions based on the values that the EU considers fundamental, values that constitute a core aspect of its ontological security. The EU expressed a willingness to deepen relations with China but conditioned this on 'respect for the rule of law, both domestically and internationally,' compliance with intellectual property rights, and engagement in human rights dialogue. Simultaneously, the EU signalled its intention to strengthen economic ties with other strategic partners, including India. Interestingly, while Japan and India were identified as strategic economic partners, security cooperation was explicitly mentioned only in relation to Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia, with India conspicuously absent. Furthermore, while the EU defined itself as 'a global maritime security provider' and committed to enhancing security in

³⁸ *European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World* (2003), p. 16, https://eclan.eu/files/attachments/.1615/doc_10184_290_en.pdf (31.08.2025); *vide European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World* (2009), p. 42, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30823/qc7809568enc.pdf> (31.08.2025).

³⁹ *European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World* (2009), p. 14, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30823/qc7809568enc.pdf> (31.08.2025).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Straits of Malacca, it did not explicitly reference cooperation with India in this context⁴².

The limited references to the Asia-Pacific region in recent European strategic documents – along with the complete absence of India (and China) in the 2020 EU Security Strategy – indicate that European foreign and security policy has, until recently, been primarily focused elsewhere, specifically on the Euro-Atlantic region and the Middle East and North Africa region. These two regions have traditionally been identified as the primary arenas where the EU's core security interests, as well as its main challenges and threats, are concentrated.

In the *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, published in 2022, India is identified as one of the European Union's partners in the field of security, including close military cooperation⁴³. However, this is not accompanied by any clearly defined objectives or commitments. The situation remains largely unchanged in the latest *White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030*, published by the European Commission on 19 March 2025. The document mentions China's activities in the East China Sea and South China Sea and the growing military pressure in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean, which destabilizes the security situation in the region⁴⁴. The document states that the European Union's cooperation with India has developed in recent years, particularly through regular Security and Defence Consultations⁴⁵. Nevertheless, the White Paper does not contain any specific commitments towards India, nor does it specify the objectives of the European Union's security policy in the Indo-Pacific region beyond a general statement on the need to ensure security, including freedom of navigation⁴⁶.

An analysis of the evolution of EU security strategy documents suggests that European interest in Asia, including the partnership with India, has increased relatively recently. The primary drivers of this shift are the rise of China's global influence, the potential for a US-China conflict, and the destabilizing and aggressive policies of the Russian Federation, which has sought support from both China and India. This growing attention may indicate that the EU recognizes its marginalization in security discussions concerning the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, in the context of policies pursued by the United States and Russia, the EU may be acknowledging the limitations of its political engagement with Asian states, including India.

Given the ongoing transformations in the global security system – such as the weakening of US-European relations and Russia's increasingly aggressive foreign policy – it is likely that India will become a far more attractive partner for the EU in efforts to build regional security and contribute to a new, stable global security architecture.

⁴² *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, pp. 37, 40-41, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf (31.08.2025).

⁴³ European Council, *The Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, p. 57, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf (31.08.2025).

⁴⁴ European Commission, *The White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030*, p. 5, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019_en (31.08.2025).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

INDIA IN THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Interest in India has only relatively recently begun to appear in Russian strategic documents. The same applies to China and other Asian states. Earlier documents, particularly those from the early 2000s, referred only in general terms to the Asia-Pacific region, in which Russia sought to maintain its political influence. This can be attributed to Russia's earlier policy of seeking closer political relations with the West, primarily engaging with Western European states and the United States.

The *National Security Concept* of 2000, a document updated at the beginning of Vladimir Putin's tenure, does not mention any Asian states as being of particular interest to Russia. Instead, it refers to Russia's unique position as a Eurasian state⁴⁷ and vaguely alludes to unnamed states seeking to counteract the consolidation of Russia's influence in a multipolar world and to weaken its position in Europe, the Middle East, Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region (NSC 2000, sec. III). Notably, the Asia-Pacific region is listed last among Russia's declared spheres of political influence.

A shift in Russia's foreign and security policy towards confrontation with the West became evident in 2007 when Putin delivered a speech at the Munich Security Conference, which many in the West perceived as signalling a new Cold War. In this speech, Putin openly declared Russia's opposition to the United States and its allies on a global scale. This policy shift was soon followed by the 2008 Russian-Georgian War. From this point onward, a noticeable reorientation towards Asia can be observed in successive Russian strategic documents. While China increasingly took precedence as a political and security partner⁴⁸, India, along with other formats of international cooperation involving both Russia and China, also began to attract Russian interest. The *National Security Strategy* of 2009 declared Russia's intention to enhance cooperation within these frameworks⁴⁹. However, Western-led organizations such as the G8, which included Russia until its exclusion in 2014 following its first aggression against Ukraine, and the broader G20 were still given higher priority. The RIC (Russia-India-China) format and BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) were mentioned only later, reflecting the fact that, prior to the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict in 2014, Asia was not a principal focus of Russian foreign and security policy.

A major shift in Russia's approach to Asia can be seen in the *Foreign Policy Concept* of 2013. This document explicitly stated that the West's influence in global politics and the economy was declining, with power and development shifting towards the East, primarily the Asia-

⁴⁷ *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation*, 10.01.2000, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/14927> (31.08.2025).

⁴⁸ M. Składanowski, C. Smuniewski, P. Kopiec, B. Bado, *The People's Republic of China in the Security Policy of the Russian Federation: The Evolution of Russian Strategic Documents in 2000–2023*, "Athenaeum. Polish Political Science Studies" 2024, 83(3), pp. 115-134.

⁴⁹ *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, 13.03.2009, <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/424> (31.08.2025).

Pacific region⁵⁰. Russia reiterated the priority of cooperation within international organizations to address global challenges, listing the G20, BRICS, G8, SCO and the RIC format as key platforms⁵¹. The document also underscored Russia's ambition to position itself as a key transit state, securing trade and economic links between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region⁵². It further asserted that Russia was strengthening its position in the Asia-Pacific region, claiming that Russia belonged 'to the same dynamically developing geopolitical space to which the center of gravity of the global economy and politics is consistently shifting'⁵³. Additionally, Russia declared its intention to establish a 'transparent and equal security and cooperation architecture' in the Asia-Pacific region⁵⁴. For the first time, the document explicitly identified China and India as Russia's main partners in the region⁵⁵. However, it only contained a general declaration of Russia's intent to deepen its 'privileged strategic partnership' with India in all areas and to collaborate in addressing global challenges⁵⁶.

Similar declarations regarding the Asia-Pacific region's priority status in Russian security policy appeared in the *National Security Strategy* of 2015, published after the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The document argued that in many regions, including the Asia-Pacific, the principles of equal and indivisible security were not being upheld and that militarization and an arms race were underway⁵⁷. NATO was identified as a particular threat to international security⁵⁸. In this context, previous commitments to partnerships within BRICS, RIC, SCO, and the G20 were reaffirmed⁵⁹. Russia declared its intention to establish sustainable security mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific region⁶⁰. It also formally recognized India's status as a 'privileged strategic partner'⁶¹, although China was given even greater emphasis, with Russian-Chinese relations described as an 'all-encompassing partnership and strategic interaction'⁶².

The subsequent *Foreign Policy Concept* of 2016 reiterated the high importance of international cooperation within the G20, BRICS, SCO, and RIC frameworks⁶³. Regarding India, the document repeated previous declarations about the necessity of deepening the privileged strategic partnership, which was purportedly based on a convergence of Indian and Russian foreign policy priorities⁶⁴. However, beyond such vague formulations, the document did not

⁵⁰ *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 12.02.2013, <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70218094/> (31.08.2025).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 34, 44.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 79, 82.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁷ *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, 31.12.2015, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391> (31.08.2025).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶³ *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 31.11.2016, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451> (31.08.2025).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

specify the nature of this convergence, outline concrete forms of cooperation, or define expected outcomes.

Russia's declarations of cooperation with India were again reiterated in the *National Security Strategy* of 2021, a document that can be seen as part of Russia's preparations for war against Ukraine and broader conflict with the West. The strategy accused the United States of pursuing policies that threatened global security in both Europe and the Asia-Pacific region⁶⁵. In response, Russia committed to strengthening partnerships in the region, primarily with China and India. However, once again, China was given precedence, with the Sino-Russian relationship described as an 'all-encompassing partnership and strategic cooperation,' while the Indo-Russian relationship was referred to as a 'privileged strategic partnership'⁶⁶.

Declarations of a shift towards Asia and the importance of Asian states in Russian policy were reiterated in subsequent documents published after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. These documents, aimed at fostering an anti-Western coalition among Global South states, also highlighted non-military cooperation. For instance, the *Humanitarian Policy Concept* of 2022⁶⁷ emphasized countering the Western influence in various spheres of international politics and security. The most recent *Foreign Policy Concept* of 2023 reaffirmed Russia's commitment to regional integration and security in the Asia-Pacific region, supporting international organizations such as BRICS, SCO, and RIC to advance Russian policy objectives both regionally and globally⁶⁸. India was specifically mentioned in this context, with Russia declaring its intention to strengthen strategic partnerships, particularly in trade, investment, and technological cooperation, while jointly opposing what it described as the 'destructive actions' of other states and organisations⁶⁹. This suggests that Russia perceives India as a potential ally in its confrontation with the United States and NATO.

An analysis of the evolving role of the Asia-Pacific region—and India in particular—in Russian strategic documents reveals that this shift is not the product of a consistently implemented foreign and security policy but rather a reaction to Russia's escalating conflict with the West. As Russia has become increasingly politically and economically isolated from Western states and institutions, it has been forced to pivot towards Asia. However, Russian strategic documents do not outline any substantive common foreign and security policy interests with India. The only explicitly stated commonality is a shared opposition to Western policies – an ideological rather than a strategic alignment. Given this, it cannot be ruled out that, just as the pivot to Asia was a reaction to Western isolation, future geopolitical developments – such as

⁶⁵ *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, 02.07.2021, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/47046> (31.08.2025).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.7.

⁶⁷ *Humanitarian Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 05.09.2022, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48280> (31.08.2025).

⁶⁸ *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 31.03.2023, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49090> (31.08.2025).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

a potential shift in US-China relations under a new administration—may again prompt Russia to refocus on its core security interests in the Euro-Atlantic region.

PERSPECTIVES

India, as envisioned by its authorities, perceives itself as ‘the new provider of security in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond’⁷⁰. However, as Hall rightly observes, ‘To be a “net security provider,” a “field” in a new multipolar world, or a “leading power” requires resources and a robust strategy about how to use them and how to acquire more of what one needs’⁷¹. Thus, for India’s global role to expand in accordance with both its governmental expectations and its inherent potential, it must first focus on the development of security studies as an academic discipline within India itself, alongside the promotion of Indian security policy abroad⁷². Identifying the objectives of its security policy and the means to achieve them is imperative. Broad, slogan-like formulations – such as advocating for a ‘multipolar world’ – are insufficient, as they fail to specify actionable security policy objectives, delineate threats and challenges, or define the range of tools India deems permissible in implementing its security policy.

Both European and Russian perspectives on global and regional (Asia-Pacific) security issues indicate that international relations will increasingly be shaped by escalating confrontations, primarily between the United States and China. A major risk in this scenario is the potential marginalization of other international actors, including the European Union and the Russian Federation. As both the EU and Russia view themselves as significant actors in global politics and seek to maintain their influence, India—currently regarded as a regional power with the potential to become a global power—becomes an increasingly attractive and promising partner from both perspectives. However, a security partnership with the European Union or Russia also carries inherent risks for India, which must be carefully considered. In an environment of intensifying global rivalry, such a partnership could result in India becoming entangled in external geopolitical struggles, leading not to development and international empowerment, but rather to marginalization and instrumentalization. This is, in many ways, what Russia is experiencing today, having become heavily dependent on China as a consequence of its conflict with the West⁷³. Indeed, some analysts suggest that only a renewed anti-China policy under a potential Donald Trump administration could restore Russia’s status as a significant actor in international politics. India thus faces the challenge of defining its security policy objectives in a way that strengthens its position as a power with ambitions of active participation in global politics. This challenge is compounded by the difficulty in predicting the outcomes of key political processes, including the impact of China’s economic crisis on its security policy, the

⁷⁰ I. Hall, *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy*, Bristol 2019, p. 131.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁷² I.B. Neumann, O.J. Sending, *Expertise and Practice: The Evolving Relationship between the Study and Practice of Security*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of International Security*, Oxford 2008, pp. 33, 38n3.

⁷³ A.J. Tellis, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

persistence and consequences of Russia's dependence on China, and the growing uncertainty surrounding US policy in the Asia-Pacific region⁷⁴.

Integration initiatives involving India, such as the RIC, BRICS, and SCO frameworks, have thus far failed to establish a new and equitable international security regime. Moreover, it remains unclear how these frameworks align with India's security policy objectives. Therefore, India is at a strategic crossroads, both in the context of the security challenge posed by China's policies in the Asia-Pacific region and in terms of shaping its role as a global power. One viable strategic pathway for India's security policy is to strengthen ties with other Southeast Asian states that, like Vietnam, have security interests that conflict with China's⁷⁵. Economic security cooperation is also of considerable importance in this regard; China's economic policies could serve as a catalyst for increased infrastructure investment in other countries in the region⁷⁶.

Another potential strategy, which is not mutually exclusive with the first, is for India to engage in new international cooperation frameworks that explicitly consider India's interests as a key member. In this context, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) presents a promising avenue for international security cooperation. However, India has demonstrated inconsistency in its commitment to this initiative⁷⁷. Notably, India has resisted efforts to transform the Quad into a more formalized collective security organization, possibly due to concerns about over-reliance on the United States and the potential subordination of its security interests to US strategic objectives in the region⁷⁸. Nonetheless, from the perspective of India's broader role in international relations, participation in the Quad remains advantageous, as India's presence is critical to the initiative's success, ensuring that its security interests cannot be overlooked⁷⁹.

Thus, it can be hypothesized that India's prospects for increasing its international relevance will be fundamentally determined by articulating a clearly defined security policy. This policy must include well-identified objectives, challenges, and threats, as well as effective strategies for implementation in collaboration with other international partners.

CONCLUSIONS

India is arguably at the beginning of its journey towards establishing itself as a key actor within the global security system. This trajectory is influenced by the significant weakening of the global roles of traditionally dominant actors in international politics. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and its ongoing conflict with the West have exposed fundamental weaknesses in its political and economic structure. Meanwhile, ideological disputes, the post-Brexit weakening of its influence, and serious social challenges related to immigration and

⁷⁴ A.D. Muraviev, D. Ahlawat, L. Hughes, op. cit.

⁷⁵ M.S. Pardesi, op. cit., p. 172.

⁷⁶ P. Khanna, op. cit., p. 20.

⁷⁷ A. Tarapore, op. cit., pp. 249-250.

⁷⁸ K. Sullivan de Estrada, *India and order transition in the Indo-Pacific: resisting the Quad as a 'security community'*, "The Pacific Review" 2023, 36(2), p. 38.

⁷⁹ A. Tarapore, op. cit., 2023, p. 250.

internal divisions are contributing to the declining political role of the European Union. Additionally, uncertainty remains regarding the future direction of United States foreign and security policy—whether it will prioritise strengthening or weakening NATO, focus on confronting China, or seek to construct a new global security framework in cooperation with Russia.

In this context, India’s potential and its attractiveness as a strategic partner for the increasingly fragile European Union and Russia are evident. Infrastructure investment, sustained economic growth, the modernisation of its armed forces with an emphasis on technological independence from Russia, and the preservation of its democratic political model can further reinforce this potential. A long-term objective of Indian foreign policy should include the reform of the United Nations, particularly its Security Council, whose current structure remains a vestige of the post-Second World War global order. However, in the shorter term, the pursuit of other strategic objectives will be crucial in advancing India’s global role. Regardless of how these objectives are formulated by Indian policymakers, a fundamental necessity is the clear articulation of a security policy that extends beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Such a policy must define India’s vision for the evolving global security architecture and outline the means at its disposal to realise this vision effectively.

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