

CHANGING RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

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Abstract¹

The structure of international relations has been continuously changing since recent past with the evolution of southern world countries like China, India, Brazil and many other countries in world affairs. Whereas, the global north's influence in world affairs going down rapidly. It is in this context, Russia has its strategic chance to revive its global power ambition and become one of the power centre in world affairs once again. Russia needs to go along with southern world region more emphatically unlike earlier period of time. In this instance, the article explores what are the possible options for Russian foreign policy in this changing global politics scenario. And the article explains how Russia should approach with certain strategic regions.

Introduction

It's been twenty five years on since the dissolution of the USSR and Russian Federation was the main successor state. In these Twenty three years of itinerary Russia's political system and foreign policy has undergone drastic changes, it was restructured, renovated, while its foreign and domestic policies have experienced significant changes (Kanet 2010: 204). It was the only federation which stood firmly against the US during the second half of the twentieth century with super power status during the Cold War period. In the beginning of the new Russian Federation days, it sought to imitate itself with the Western countries, and was in deep trouble because of with domestic and external reasons. The foreign policy primarily was pro Western, ignored many

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other regions of the Globe, including the important former Soviet Union Republics, so called the “Near Abroad”, that were geographically linked with Russia for centuries, and had have immense importance. Southern world was a lesser priority. In this article I will deal on the emerging new trends in International politics, their role in changing world politics and Russia’s foreign policy towards the changing global politics. I will also focus on Putin’s elevation once again as president and his foreign policy objectives in upcoming international politics.

Russia in first decade of 21st Century

Before 1991, Russia as part of the USSR was a Super Power along with the US (Zhuplev 2008). But, Wallender and Celeste (2003) said that, after the dissolution of the USSR, there was a complete makeshift in foreign policy making, Russia started focusing on emerging nations, mostly on the Asia so that they can tackle Western countries hegemonic domination on many of the global affairs. Putin came into the presidency in 2000, many people were amused when he was made president by Yeltsin, and some people were expected some hope in Putin as they all were disappointed with the first ten years of Yeltsin period. The main and primary objectives of Putin initial stage were;

- To strengthen the Russian State
- Growth and stabilization of the economy, and revival of manufacturing and managing energy resources.
- Restoring Russian status as a global player in World Affairs (Wallander 2003)

Further, Putin started focusing on strengthening the Russian State because it was shattered and undermined after 1991, with political instability, and with the loosely structured federal nature of Russia. Putin re-centralized the political system putting an end to fissiparous tendency of the some of the republics. The cause of destabilized economy led for international aid, which was weakening Putin, so, he changed growth strategies and put them on track by increasing energy exports, which stimulated economic growth and even paid their all international debts within the short span of time.

Putin wanted to change phase in 1990’s, by restoring Russian power status. For the first time, when, Putin introduced foreign policy concept of Russia (FPCR) in 2000, he flaked US’s unilateral decisions on many number of International Affairs, he mentioned that, Unilateral actions and decisions of the US on many global affairs has divided the World, might become the reasons to escalate tensions around the World and a cause for concern in multilateral relations,

that has led to strife in religious and national harmony (Foreign Policy Concept, 2000). That shows how he was critical of US domination in global affairs. After that, Considering the US involvement in Central Asian affairs, Russia wanted to balance in global affairs and the (Central Asian States) CAS² as Russian sphere of influence and economic cooperation. Russia established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 with China along with the five Central Asian Republics.

The primary objectives of this organization is to eliminate three challenges from this region, they are, terrorism, extremism and separatism, and extending mutual cooperation in military, security, economic and cultural relations (Aris 2009). Thus, the increasing closeness among these states have paved the way for elimination of long lasting border disputes, establishing varied forms of cooperation with China in trade, commerce and security, and participating in global governance. Over all Russia started re-emerge in global affairs during Putin regime.

When Medvedev became president in 2008, he proposed a foreign policy concept of Russian Federation. The world was bemused and critical at Russian priorities in the upcoming international relations. Medvedev's proposal were based on the Russian constitution, federal laws, international treaties in which Russia was part of, and international law principles, and also the national security strategy of the Russian Federation. It clearly mentioned to create multipolar world order on the basis of objectives of the United Nations Principles (Foreign Policy Concept of Russia 2008). The shift from West to East of Russian foreign policy turned towards Asian Pacific region considering the importance of the Asian Pacific region countries stake in global foreign, trade and commercial relations. Medvedev prioritized the East with emphasis on China, ASEAN, besides Japan also (Harris 2005). This is also evidence that the emergence of China would have beneficial as well challenges for Russian foreign policy.

Later, he tried to balance the power shift from West to East under Putin guidance, and he critiqued the US missiles that were kept in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and he went on emphasizing that new cold war seeds are being planted (Kanet 2010 ; 217). Then, the major impact on Russian foreign policy during the period of Medvedev was the war with Georgia, signing of new START treaty between the US and Russia, and its good relations with Europe (ibid). Furthermore, the important aspect of this period was that Medvedev and Obama met twelve times. It was the first time in the US-Russia history for presidents as to meet so many times. But, the trust was short-lived as Russia and the US have had few different positions like

the one on Libya issue, when there was voting in the Security Council on NATO involvement on Libya, Russia was absent. It opposed Western countries sanctions on Iran nuclear issue Russia choose to put prevent and disagreements for example, abrogated some of the trade deals which had been put in place earlier. One important incident during his period was, it offered Europe a Euro Atlantic Security treaty to decrease the US involvement in the Europe, but, owing to its misconceptions and undisclosed objectives of this treaty, Europe aborted it. Russian reorientation of the Asia policy created by Medvedev can considered a breakthrough in foreign policy. Russia joining in the WTO is also an important step (Strategic Comments 2012).

The Kosovo independence is one of the negative blots on Russian foreign policy (Baranovsky 2008). Russia tried to prevent NATO from expansion and focused more on Asian affairs, by emphasizing on Rising Power States, like, China, India, and Brazil, and, the negative aspect of his foreign policy was to support Iran issue for Western countries trade sanctions on Iran's nuclear program. In fact, it brought negativity to his foreign ministry in domestic level also. Medvedev encouraged developing nations to participate and play key role in changing world politics. But is also saw failure in Libya issue and ongoing Syria issue for Russian foreign policy. Over all it was more indicative foreign policy rather than Putin's commanding foreign policy.

Foreign Policy of Russia, and the concept of Multipolarity

The concept of multipolarity is not very recently origin, the features of multipolarity had during World War I and World War II, we even could notice them since the emergence of industrial revolution in the Europe, for instance, 1648, 1815 conferences. As far as Russia is concern, the collapse of the USSR severely affected Russian politics. Thus, the phenomenon of multipolarity sought to promote by Russian foreign policy makers and put it in their foreign policy, because the promotion of US as a global hegemony increased rapidly since the disintegration of USSR. This was unbearable for Russia as it was shattered with the collapse of Soviet Union disintegration and caused evermore blow to the Russian federation foreign policy.

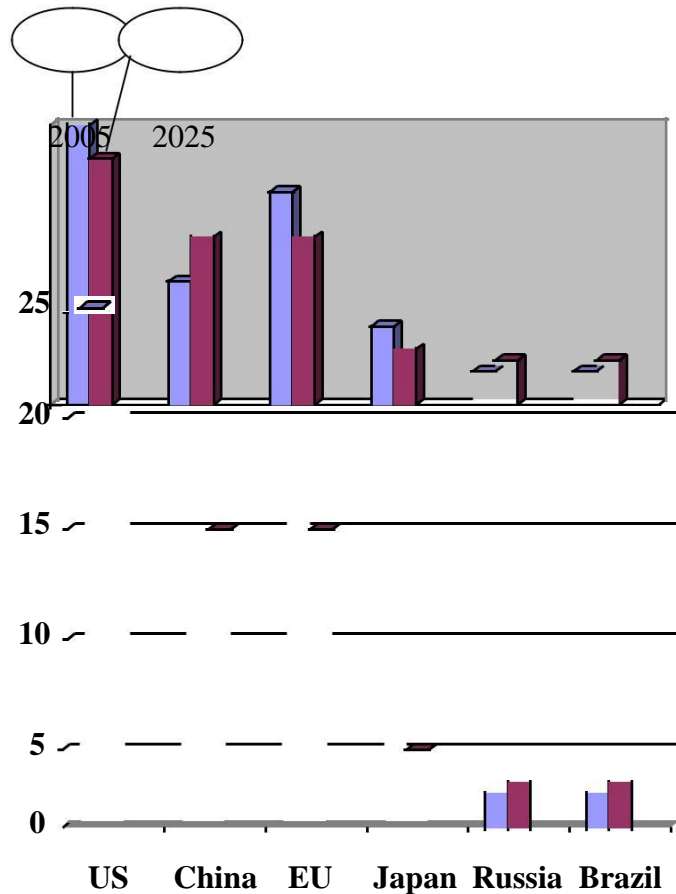
Incorporation of multipolarity concept in Russian foreign policy started since 1996. Yevgeny Primakov was made as foreign minister of the Russian Federation during the period of 1996-98 (Mankoff 2007). The new policy recognized the importance of the non-Western regions of the globe, such as, Central Asia, Asian continent, African continent in foreign policy, and believed in multilateralism and Institutionalism (Io 2002;88). In fact Russia sought to establish the multipolar world order ¹⁰on the basis of UN as the highest decision making body and signed treaties with many countries, for example, in 1997 Russian president Yeltsin and China's

president Jiang Zemin declared to the world that, Joint Declaration on multipolar World and the formation of New International Order“ (lo 2002; 86). In the recent developments in Russian foreign policy is the most consistent and frequent aspect discussed is the call for the reestablishment of a multipolar international relations, in which all prominent powers, along with all emerging powers will have parity voice on whole world affairs, in fact, this theme is the central point of Russian political leaders in recent past (Kanet 2010; 205 and Foreign policy concept 2000 and 2008).

Then, what is multipolarity? It deals with the majority states domination in World Affairs, no country is superior or inferior, every state have their say and stake on any Global issue”. Russia promoted this concept through multilateralism, since the beginning of the 1991(lo 2002; 86-90), It has participated in a number of global forums, USSR, which was very self-suffered and isolation during the Cold War period (Schirm 2009). Due to the rise of third world countries, majorly countries like China, India and Brazil made to talk about the multipolar world order in present international relations.

Russia in Global and Regional Governance

Probably, in world history, for the first time global politics have been changing peacefully without any political upheavals, wars or collapse of empire states (modern empire states). Ikenberry (2006; 7) said that “ old order has been destroyed by war and newly powerful states try to reestablish basic organizing rules and arrangements, the great moments of international order building have tend to come after major wars, as winning states have under taken to reconstruct the postwar world. For example, certain years stand out as critical turning point in international relations, 1648,1713,1815,1919, and 1945 (Ikenberry 2006; 6). In support to the aforementioned statement the system of bi-polar world was replaced by Uni-Polar world with the dissolution of the great power empire USSR, and emergence of newly independent fifteen states in international arena. The Unipolar world order system gave way to multipolar world order, especially with the revival of Russia and emergence of China, Brazil, India. It indicates how power would be by 2025-

Figure 4.1: Global Power of the some of the Countries by 2025.

Source: Global trends 2025, A transformed world. P. No.28

International Scholars, politicians, and, the Western world have started talking about the global south, the Southern world playing a prominent role in many global forums, and raising their voice firmly on many global issues. Schirm (2010) analyzed that, the reasons for reemergence of these countries is, their demographic dividend and geographic location, their economic and military capacities, besides their high political ambitions and they strive for the democratic distribution of power in global governance.

Kadakin (2012) says that the emergence of China, India, Brazil and Russia has given the vision of the multipolar world. The important aspect of these countries is that they are extending greater cooperation amongst themselves and establishing regional and inter-regional groups, and the cooperation at multilateral level can enable them exercise greater leverage in world politics,

especially for third world politics. For example, the US „reset“ Asia made China and Russia made very close relations and also on number of global issues like, Syria, Korean crisis (Salitsky 2013; Graziani 2012). On top of that Putin (2013) recently before starting Durban summit said that, the BRICS would become from dialogue forum to full-fledged group in coming days while strategically dealing with multitude of global issues (Novosti 2012).

In this critical juncture Russia’s role is very important as an erstwhile super power, because it is the only country in modern international history which gave importance to the third world countries and supported national liberation and anti- colonial movements since the beginning. Since the second half of the 1990, Russia encouraged the South to cooperate regionally and inter-regionally, offered greater cooperation in forming and making geographical groups, cooperative groups, without concerning about their regional background. Thus, Russia role is very crucial here, a pioneer and promoter of the multipolarity with Putin playing a major role after he became president of Russian Federation. He sent emissaries to the different parts of the world (mainly to the third world) to inform them about the changes in his foreign policy. His intention to form the Eurasian Union in upcoming years is also on track with the Custom Union with Kazakhstan and Belarus. This way they will be able to challenge western hegemony right away, and would make Russia one of the power centers of the world politics (Putin 2011).

The interesting aspect in Russian politics is that Russian people also want to make Russia into one of the great power center. The Survey conducted by the Leveda Center institution shows how Russian people wanted to make Russia as great power status country. In this Survey the majority of the people (40%) have supported that Russia has to change a lot. It is great fillip to Putin's ambition to form the 'Eurasian Union' in coming days.

Table 4.1: Do you support the opinion that Russia should restore its status of “Great Empire”?

	All replies, %
Definitely support	40
Probably support	38
Probably not support	12
Definitely not support	2
Don’t Know	7

Source; Levada Center, Nationwide survey, 21-24 January 2011, N=1600

The above survey says, 40 per cent are definitely supporting, 38 per cent are probably supporting this idea, that means 78 per cent of the Russians are in positive to make Russia as one of the great power center in world politics. Then, question arises, how should Russia go with them? There are different key regions in the world, some are very important, and some have fewer stakes in decision making of the world affairs, it has to change their foreign policy accordingly the regions importance to tackle the Western hegemonic domination on global politics. I have classified the regions according to the importance and their say in world politics. They are as below –

Russia and Central Asia

There are five countries in this region, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is considered to be one of the most prominent region in the world due to its geographical location, cultural similarities and economic ties with Russia (Kanet 2010; 162). Central Asian region is very crucial for Russian security as NATO would be withdrawing from Afghanistan by 2014. Russia's national Security strategy (2009) declared that, developing bilateral and multilateral relations with CIS states is inevitable with Collective Security Cooperation Organization (CSTO) due to the US involvement and NATO's expansion. The growing influences of China and US have potential to concern and also due to Syria and Iran issue. Medvedev (2012) says, whatever is happening in Syria and with Iran is very sad, further, the central Asian stability is utmost important for Russian foreign policy, he added. The most important concern for Russia in coming days would be NATO's withdrawal as it would great threat to Russian security with terrorism, drug-trafficking and so and so forth. SHUSTOV (2012) says that the US military base in Kyrgyzstan have annoyed Russia a lot. All would be decided in Putin's Eurasian Union by inclusion of these five regions, the role of SCO would have underlined point here in keeping the Central Asia in coming days as NATO's withdrawal could cause to blossom terrorist outfits, separatist a chance to de-stabilize the region. Much is depended on how Russia and China coordinate on Central Asian affairs to contain US involvement in it.

Russia and South Asia

South Asia is one of the prominent region for Russian foreign policy to capture its growth rate in coming years, there are somewhere around seven to eight countries, considered to be one of the volatile region in the world due to the India-Pakistan unending rivalry, which could escalate war

between these two countries. China and the US have been involved in South Asian affairs. Russia also has engaged, especially with India in with this region. Afghanistan and Pakistan shared a border with Central Asian states, due to the geographical location of the Central Asian region Russia will have to focus on it. The reason for that is terrorism, and the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan by 2014 is a concern for Russian security. Russia should start encouraging the SCO to play a key role in coming years for greater security challenges from Russian security perspective.

In southern part, the two island nations, Sri Lanka and Maldives are very important owing to their geographical location, and Indian Ocean's importance in the international relations. There is one saying, "if at all third world war will take place it would be based on water itself", especially, China's role is very important here, because, in the name of humanitarian assistance it is deeply involving in the South Asian affairs, especially in Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, thus, to contain external pressures in this region it should improve its strategic partnership with this region as soon as possible.

Another important aspect of this region is to consider this - that India and its growth rate has been high and will continue in the coming years. India is deemed to be one of the fastest growing countries in the present world along with China and Brazil; it is second most populous country after China. Belokrenetskiy (2013) says that, in 20 years of international relations, India's growth rate in GDP will be somewhere around 7 to 7.5 percentage annually, its share in global GDP would be 5.4, and by 2020 it would be 7.2 Percentages. Its GDP will exceed \$8 trillion, and, its Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) will be third in the world, and it would be \$ 3 trillion at the current exchange rate.

These figures show how India is growing in very rapidly. Hence, to sum it, Russia's relations with India support multipolarity, and for that, India's role is very priceless for Russia to contain China.

Russia and Asia Pacific Region

Due to Obama's reset policy with Russia in the Asia Pacific region, world politics gravity is shifting towards this region as never before, especially because of Russia's, China's, and

Japanese powers. “With the Asia Pacific region progressively moving to the center of global politics and economics, the Northeast is definitely becoming the regional center of gravity, attracting the colliding interests of great powers including China, Japan, the U.S. and Russia. As a result, stability in North East Asia is now of global significance” (Gubin and Lukin 2013).

Deemed to be Asia's Western countries region, one of the most advanced region in the world as China is leading economy, is a key country in the region, also Japan. The Umbrella of ASEAN is within the region is a key regional organization with strengths and to Russia, China and US relations. Especially in the polarized Korean Peninsula, The conflict in the South China Sea, East China, Kurile island dispute and Senkaku island dispute, so on and so forth (Gubin and Lukin 2013). However, the growing misconceptions between China and Japan have potential for conflict in the region. The US factor is important here as Obama announced a reset of the Asia Pacific region in his second presidential regime. But, one important aspect of this region is, the US also has to placate China with whom the US has close economic ties, and Japan is also important for them. These are the characteristics of the globalized world that Russia can work to its favor.

Russia and Latin America

The importance of the Latin America is huge that it could play pivotal role in international relations in near future as earlier the Cold War period reflected the prominence of the region with the Cuban Missile crisis, But, the important aspect is the growing of left center governments and, increasingly independent, strategic policies that challenges the Western countries globalization phenomenon. For Russia and the US, strategically this region is very important due to the geographical location abundance of natural resources, and the growth rate of Brazil and its political clout along with Venezuela, Ecuador and Cuba is very crucial here. The growing negativity against the US involvement in this region is mounting amongst people here in the Latin American countries.

In the coming years the Latin American region is very crucial for Russia and the BRICS. Davydov (2013) pointed out the importance of the region. He said that, the region is strategically very important in next decade due to its democratization process, its blossoming rapidly, and, its technological revolution, modernization process after the 1980's is very impressive. He says that, the region comes under the 'middle category' in development process in world economic

development indicators, adding 15 per cent of land mass to the world geography, with 8.5 per cent of population in world, accounting 6.2 in global total production by 2007 in GDP terms.

Russia has insufficient trade in this region, but have the potential to play greater role in it (Davydov 2013), as for Russia is concerned Russia is not giving importance to this region in terms of economic and trade, emphasizing on political clout, which could undermine in its position. Growing the economy of the region it should focus on economic and trade relations, henceforth, the region would turn towards Russia's leadership.

Russia and the West Asia

Relations between Russia and Middle East basically revolves around energy, military and security, and, Russia's and the US's competition for political and economic gains in West Asian energy and politics. It is known fact that, Russia supports Palestine's independence since the beginning, and supported Palestine applied for UN observer status country. Russia opposed the NATO involvement in Iraq even though it supported the war on terror program issued by Bush administration (Mankoff 2008; 121). It is well known that Russia is the largest seller of military equipment for the majority of the Middle Eastern countries, for instance, Star and Richard Felix (2000) said that, it sold 7 billion dollar worth of military equipment between 1992 and 1998 to West Asia.

The current Arab Crisis and instability is making Russia to return its economic interests in the region, and also its political interests. The region is important for the Russia's aspiration for become great power status. Though Russia failed in the Libya crisis, and has been supporting Syria president Assad. Russia's involvement in the Arab crisis is to resolve the political upheavals in an amicable manner, in fact, that is the primary importance of Russian foreign policy (Russian Council for International Affairs, 2013). It is true that comparing the impact of the "Arab spring" on Russian security, the Arab people are not opposed to Russia but to US intervention.

Russia and Europe

The EU matters a lot for Russia in a number of aspects. The first is, its geographical location, after the EU's enlargement program in 2004, amongst them four new members, including Estonia and Latvia, which are deemed to be having largest Russian minorities in this territory, and they share a border of 2200 kilometers along with the EU countries. The most important thing is that the enlarged EU is surrounded by the Kaliningrad region. It is an enclave of 90000 people

(Lynch; Dove, 2004), which is strategically very important from the Russian point of view. In an interview for Italian press, Putin says that, “For us Europe is a major trade and economic partner, and our natural and most important partner, besides in the political sphere also, and of course Russia is located in Europe territory not with the US and thus Europe is very prominent for us (Putin interview in 2003; Lynch: Dove).

The growing imbalance between the US and the EU is very evident, we could see it on number of issues, for example, and France and Germany have not been supportive on NATO's involvement in Iraq war. In this instance Russia is actively involved with the EU and its member countries in order to erase the differences and misconceptions on specific issues like in the Arab crisis and any plan of the EU's on its expansion towards east and besides NATO also.

Conclusion

Waltz (1993) says that, “the multipolar world was highly stable, but it is very war-prone. The bipolar world has been highly peaceful, but unfortunately less stable than its predecessor”. The arguments which were put forward by Kenneth Waltz in a way are not deniable, there have been no state of wars since the collapse of USSR as such to mention that changed the stability of the more stable present world politics, some of the incidents which have caused conflicts but sorted out by effective diplomacy. Again, Worsforth (2003), said, 'Unipolar world is very ambiguous, with the United States as leader, and that configuration both is prone to peace and durable'. Some of this is true in one sense in fact, as the period after 1991 was completely checkered, unilateral, very centric, deficit democratic decision making on a number of global affairs. This was evident in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan case. The epicenter of power was the US, which enforced its national interests on other countries territory with immense expansion of their security forces.

Over all Russia's growth as a global power at this critical juncture of world politics is inevitable, and imminent. The foreign policy concept has given Putin immense scope to evaluate it and play active role in global politics in the near future. If he can coordinate the many crucial regions such as, Central Asia, Asia Pacific, Europe, South Asia, Middle East. Recently popularizing Arctic region with its abundance of natural resources, will give Putin the opportunity to play effective role in world politics. The pivot of world politics is, the rising power status of countries, such as, China, India, Brazil (BRICS), it is not exaggerating to say that, real international politics will depend on how BRICS maintain strategic relations with them. Hence, Russia has immense opportunity to exploit the situation that prevails in the present international relations to tackle Western hegemonic domination.

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