

# Russia's Strategic Shift from European Integration to Eastern Alliances after the War in Ukraine: A Postcolonial Perspective

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## Abstract

The geopolitical landscape of the 21st century has witnessed significant shifts, none more pronounced than Russia's strategic realignment from a focus on European integration to forging alliances with key Eastern powers. Russia's strategic shift from European integration to Eastern alliances following the Ukraine war, is analysed through a postcolonial perspective. The study aims to assess the historical context of Russia's relationship with Europe, analyse its realignment towards the East, explore the postcolonial implications of rejecting Western-dominated systems, and evaluate emerging alliances with key Eastern powers. The nature of the study was qualitative, utilizing a thematic analysis, content analysis, examining official statements, and relevant scholarly articles from 2002-2023. The findings reveal that the Ukraine crisis acted as a critical turning point, deepening Russia's disillusionment with the West. Western sanctions, imposed after the annexation of Crimea, accelerated Russia's pivot towards the East, fostering stronger economic and political ties with China, India, and other non-Western states. This shift is framed within Russia's broader postcolonial resistance to Western hegemony, where sovereignty and self-determination emerge as central themes. The study further highlights Russia's efforts to challenge Western-dominated institutions by promoting a multipolar world order and Russia's realignment is not only a pragmatic response to isolation but also an ideological assertion of autonomy in the face of perceived Western neo-colonialism. The paper concludes that Russia's evolving alliances with Eastern powers reflect a postcolonial agenda to resist Western dominance and reimagine its global role, underscoring the country's long-term strategy to redefine the international order.

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## Keywords

Russia, Eastern Alliances, Postcolonial, Ukraine War, European Integration, Sovereignty

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## 1. Introduction

Russia's relations with the EU and the U.S. were complex but relatively cooperative. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia sought closer ties with Europe, joining international bodies like the G8 and engaging in trade with the EU, its largest trading partner (Katzenstein & Weygandt, 2017). However, tensions escalated after NATO's eastward expansion and the 2008 Georgia conflict, with growing mistrust between Moscow and the West (Singh, 2023). Against this backdrop, the geopolitical landscape of Europe and its periphery has undergone dramatic changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, with Russia at the centre of many of these shifts. Following the dissolution of the USSR, Russia found itself in a precarious position, grappling with its diminished global influence and internal socio-economic crises.

In the post-Soviet years, Russia initially sought closer ties with Europe, exploring integration into European political and economic systems. The 1990s were characterized by a period of relative openness to the West, with Moscow joining international institutions such as the G8 and engaging in dialogues with the European Union. Russia's alignment following the Ukraine conflict inside the New Silk Road framework, highlights the transformation of its geopolitical position in Eurasian trade. In response to Western sanctions, Russia has recalibrated its geopolitical importance, shifting its focus towards Asian nations like China and developing other economic pathways. This response illustrates the resilience of Russia's policies in the face of upheavals in global power dynamics (Trenin, 2022).

The end of the Cold War brought the promise of a new era of cooperation between Russia and Europe. In the early 1990s, Russian leaders, including Boris Yeltsin, pursued policies aimed at integrating the country into the Western-dominated international order. These efforts included seeking membership in Western institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and forging economic partnerships with European nations (Lo, 2015). Despite these early efforts at rapprochement, Russia's relationship with Europe began to sour in the late 1990s and early 2000s. One of the key factors behind this deterioration was the eastward expansion of NATO, which Moscow viewed as a direct threat to its security. The inclusion of former Warsaw Pact countries and former Soviet republics into NATO was seen by Russia as a violation of the informal agreements reached at the end of the Cold War (Frear, 2015). Tensions between Russia and the West were further exacerbated by the "color revolutions" in the post-Soviet space, particularly in Georgia and Ukraine, which brought pro-Western governments to power.

From Moscow's perspective, these uprisings were the result of Western interference in its sphere of influence, designed to weaken Russia and extend Western hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2014).

The Cold War entrenched an adversarial relationship between Russia and the West, with Europe serving as the primary threat of ideological and military competition between the two powers. A study finds that the annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked a turning point in Russia's relations with Europe and the West. The international community, led by the United States and the European Union, responded to the annexation with a series of economic sanctions targeting key sectors of the Russian economy, including finance, energy, and defence (Galeotti, 2022). Faced with these unprecedented challenges, Russia accelerated its efforts to deepen ties with Eastern powers, particularly China, which had emerged as Russia's most important economic and strategic partner.

A study conducted by Lazreg and Wilson identified two key factors of Russia's strategic realignment from European integration to Eastern alliances that are grounded. First, Russia's leadership increasingly views the West, particularly the United States and the European Union, as inherently hostile to its interests. This perception is reinforced by the expansion of NATO, Western support for opposition movements in Russia and its neighbours, and the imposition of economic sanctions. In response, Russia has sought to reduce its dependence on Western markets and technologies by diversifying its economic partnerships, particularly in Asia (Lazreg, 2020). Second, Russia's pivot to the East reflects a recognition of the shifting balance of global power. As China's influence grows and the United States becomes more focused on Asia, Russia sees an opportunity to position itself as a key player in a multipolar world, where power is more evenly distributed among major global actors (Wilson, 2019).

One of the most significant aspects of Russia's realignment is its growing partnership with China. The relationship between Moscow and Beijing has deepened considerably in recent years, particularly in the economic and military spheres. Bilateral trade between the two countries has expanded significantly, with Russia becoming a key supplier of energy to China, particularly in the wake of Western sanctions on Russian oil and gas (Tsvetov, 2016). In addition to economic ties, Russia and China have also strengthened their military cooperation, conducting joint military exercises and coordinating their positions on key international issues, such as North Korea and Syria (Lo, 2015). By aligning itself with other non-Western powers, particularly China and India, Russia is attempting to carve out a new role for itself in a multipolar world, where power is more equitably distributed.

After reviewing several pieces of literature on this particular topic, no large research has yet been done on Russia's Strategic Shift from European Integration to Eastern Alliances after the War in Ukraine: A Postcolonial Perspective as the objectives of this study. Understanding Russia's strategic pivot from European integration to Eastern allies following the Ukraine war is critical for understanding

the larger geopolitical realignments changing the global order. Applying a post-colonial perspective calls into question mainstream narratives, stressing themes such as sovereignty, opposition to Western dominance, and the rise of multipolarity, all of which have far-reaching academic and policy ramifications.

The study seeks to evaluate the historical framework of Russia's connection with Europe, analyse its shift towards the East, investigate the postcolonial ramifications of rejecting Western-dominated systems, and appraise new relationships with significant Eastern powers. By identifying some of gap by addressing four research questions like a) How has the historical relationship between Russia and Europe influenced the current geopolitical landscape of Russia following the Ukraine conflict? b) What key factors contributed to Russia's strategic realignment from European integration to forming Eastern alliances after the Ukraine war? c) In what ways does Russia's rejection of Western-dominated systems reflect postcolonial dynamics, and what implications does this have for its role in global politics?

Understanding the historical context of Russia's interactions with Europe is crucial, as it provides insights into how past grievances, alliances, and conflicts have shaped contemporary dynamics. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the shifting geopolitical landscape surrounding Russia, which can help various stakeholders—policymakers, scholars, and analysts—understand the complexities of contemporary international relations. Therefore, it is high time to conduct this study.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The nature of the study as a qualitative methodology employing archival method, content analysis, and thematic analysis to explore the intricacies of Russia's geopolitical shift from European integration to Eastern alliances following the Ukraine war. The combination of these methods has allowed for a rich, multidimensional understanding of Russia's historical context, its strategic realignment, the postcolonial implications of its actions, and the formation of new alliances with key Eastern powers.

We used archival method and secondary sources to gather historical documents that trace Russia's relationship with Europe and its subsequent geopolitical shifts. As outlined by Hill, archival method offers a critical method for uncovering the "hidden" dimensions of state behaviour and diplomatic decision-making, providing insights that contemporary analysis might miss (Hill, 2003). In the similar way, Yin think that archival method allows a study to establish a clear historical foundation (Yin, 2009). Moreover, content analysis in the study has utilized to systematically examine texts and media representations related to Russia's foreign policy realignment. content analysis is particularly useful for exploring how geopolitical shifts are represented in public and academic discourse (Neuendorf, 2017). Similarly, Elo and Kyngäs demonstrated that the content analysis method is well-suited to studying the construction of media narratives, geopolitical, and

the framing of events (Kyngäs & Elo, 2008).

This has involved an in-depth review of academic publications, news articles, and official statements from Russian and international media outlets. By focusing on high-impact journals, we have identified key discourses surrounding Russia's actions and the ways in which its geopolitical moves are interpreted both within Russia and abroad. This method has enabled us to detect recurring themes, such as the portrayal of Russia's pivot to the East as a pragmatic response to Western sanctions and the broader framing of this shift as part of a global realignment towards multipolarity. And finally, we have analysed data thematically. Thematic analysis has been employed to identify and explore key patterns and themes across the collected data. By coding the archival materials and content analysis findings, we have highlighted significant themes, such as Russia's rejection of Western dominance, its embrace of sovereignty narratives, and its deepening alliances with China, India, and other Eastern powers.

### 3. Result

We discussed the findings using the theme analysis described in the methodological sections. The research questions were answered with data analysed from existing literature representing a range of articles. We reviewed and manually coded each objective to answer study questions. The interpretation of the literature was discussed issue-wise within a unifying framework and recurring topics.

Russia's relationship with Europe has been shaped by a complex and often contradictory history, moving from periods of cooperation to confrontation. The post-Soviet period saw Russia attempting to integrate with Europe, seeking economic and political partnerships after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the 1990s, Russia embraced neoliberal reforms, aiming to build strong economic ties with Europe and become part of the broader Western system (Frear, 2015). However, this period of alignment with the West was short-lived. Tensions began to emerge in the early 2000s, particularly as NATO expanded eastward to include former Soviet states. Russia saw NATO's enlargement as a direct threat to its security and regional influence, marking the beginning of its strategic divergence from the West (Tsygankov, 2012). Findings of the study are based on theme and sub-theme.

#### 3.1. Russia's Relationship with Europe and Shaped the Post-Ukraine Geopolitical Landscape on Historical Context

##### 3.1.1. Historical Evolution of Russia-Europe Relations

**Table 1** shows a simplified timeline of the Historical Evolution of Russia-Europe Relations where we have seen that the timeline underscores a gradual shift in Russia's geopolitical orientation, starting with initial hopes of cooperation with Europe in the early 1990s and culminating in a marked break after the Ukraine crisis in 2014. The early post-Soviet years were defined by Russia's attempts to integrate into European political and economic frameworks, but these efforts were hindered by divergent strategic interests. The late 1990s to early 2000s saw growing disillusionment as NATO expanded into Eastern Europe, creating

**Table 1.** Represents a timeline of the Historical Evolution of Russia-Europe Relations.

Stage	Description	Source
Early 1990s: Post-Soviet Integration Attempts	Russia seeks integration with Europe through neoliberal reforms and building political and economic partnerships.	Sakwa (2017)
Late 1990s: Rise of Tensions	NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe increases friction between Russia and Europe.	Tsygankov (2019)
2004-2013: Growing Divergence	NATO's eastward expansion and the EU's influence in former Soviet states lead to growing political tensions between Russia and Europe.	Mankoff (2009)
2014: The Ukraine Crisis	Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine mark a breaking point in Russia-Europe relations.	Mearsheimer (2014)
Post-2014: Western Sanctions and Pivot East	Russia's isolation from Europe due to sanctions leads to a strategic pivot towards China and other Eastern powers.	Connolly (2018); Gabuev (2016)

Source: Sakwa (2017); Tsygankov (2019); Mankoff (2009); Connolly (2018); Gabuev (2016).

security concerns for Russia (Tsygankov, 2012). By the 2000s, under Putin, Russia began to assert itself more forcefully, particularly through the use of energy exports as leverage over European nations (Proedrou, 2012). Moreover, the finding anticipated that the Ukraine crisis in 2014 became the pivotal turning point, leading to Russia's growing isolation and the imposition of sanctions by Western powers, pushing Russia towards alliances with China and other Eastern nations (Connolly, 2018).

### 3.1.2. The Ukraine Crisis as a Turning Points and Russia's Paradigm Shift

The Ukraine crisis marked a significant turning point in Russia's geopolitical strategy, leading to several key shifts in its relations with Europe and the broader international community.

**Table 2.** Russia's paradigm shifts due to Ukraine crisis.

Thematic Category	Description	Relevance (%)
Shift in Geopolitical Alliances	Russia's realignment from Europe towards Eastern powers like China and India.	
Western Economic Sanctions	Impact of sanctions imposed by the EU and the U.S. on Russia's economy and global stance.	
Russia's Pivot to Eastern Powers	Strengthening of economic, military, and political ties with China and other non-Western states.	
Deterioration of Russia-Europe Relations	Significant decline in diplomatic and economic relations between Russia and Europe.	
Increased Nationalism within Russia	Rise in domestic nationalism as a response to Western isolation and pressure from sanctions.	

Source: Adapted by Authors, 2024.

According to **Table 2** reveals that one of the most prominent changes was

Russia's shift in geopolitical alliances, moving away from Europe and towards stronger ties with Eastern powers like China and India. This realignment was driven by increasing tensions with Western countries and the need to secure alternative strategic partnerships (Gabuev, 2016). Additionally, Western economic sanctions played a major role in this transformation, as the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the EU severely impacted Russia's economy, forcing it to diversify its global economic relationships (Connolly, 2018). In response to these sanctions, Russia began its pivot to Eastern powers, especially focusing on strengthening its political, economic, and military relations with China. This shift not only provided Russia with an alternative market but also helped to reinforce its global influence outside the Western-dominated system (Gabuev, 2016).

The deterioration of Russia-Europe relations further exacerbated this shift. Relations with Europe had been deteriorating since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which led to widespread international condemnation and the breakdown of several diplomatic and economic channels (Mearsheimer, 2014). Internally, the crisis fuelled increased nationalism within Russia, as the Russian government leveraged the narrative of Western opposition to strengthen domestic support. This rise in nationalism was a direct response to Russia's growing isolation, with the Kremlin using it to consolidate political power and maintain internal stability despite external pressures (Tsygankov, 2012). Together, these dynamics reshaped Russia's international strategy, pushing it to redefine its global partnerships and assert its independence from Western influence (Frear, 2015).

### **3.1.3. Western Sanctions and Russia's Isolation**

Western sanctions, imposed following the Ukraine crisis, had a profound impact on Russia's international position and its domestic economy. These sanctions were implemented by the United States, the European Union, and other Western allies in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine. The sanctions primarily targeted sectors such as energy, finance, and defence, aiming to weaken Russia's economic capabilities and curb its geopolitical ambitions (Gould-Davies, 2003). As a result, Russia found itself increasingly isolated from global financial markets and Western economies, leading to severe disruptions in its trade and investment flows (Aslund, 2019). After the financial sanctions, forcing and rely more heavily on domestic resources and alternative markets. With Western credit lines cut off, Russian firms struggled to refinance debts, leading to increased economic volatility (Connolly, 2018). They also imposed sanctions on Russia's energy sector, oil, and gas extraction. Western companies withdrew from joint ventures with Russian firms (Wojtula, 2020).

In response to this economic isolation, Russia pivoted towards strengthening its relationships with non-Western countries, particularly China, as part of a broader strategy to mitigate the effects of sanctions. The growing economic and political partnership with China provided Russia with much-needed alternatives

to Western trade, investment, and technology (Kaczmariski, 2013). The combination of Western sanctions and falling oil prices in 2014-2015 created a severe economic recession, prompting the Russian government to adopt austerity measures and expand state control over the economy (Nguyen & Do, 2021). The overall impact of Western sanctions on Russia has been complex, pushing the country into greater geopolitical and economic isolation while simultaneously forcing it to redefine its global alliances and economic strategy.

### 3.1.4. Russia's Strategic Responses to European Rejections

In the wake of the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent breakdown of relations with Europe, Russia developed a series of strategic responses aimed at countering the political and economic rejections it faced from the West. One of the key responses was Russia's pivot towards Eastern alliances, particularly strengthening ties with China, India, and other non-Western powers. This reorientation signalled a major shift in Russia's foreign policy, driven by the need to compensate for the loss of European markets and partnerships (Korolev, 2021). Russia's growing energy partnership with China is a prime example of this strategic shift. With European energy markets becoming less accessible due to sanctions and diplomatic tensions, Russia rapidly expanded its gas and oil exports to China.

Projects like the Power of Siberia pipeline were launched, solidifying energy ties between the two countries and creating an alternative market for Russian energy resources (Henderson, 2020). In addition to forging new alliances, Russia also focused on reasserting its global influence through military interventions and diplomatic manoeuvres. This assertive foreign policy was a direct response to Russia's exclusion from European political forums. Furthermore, Russia intensified its domestic policy of self-sufficiency and economic resilience. In response to the sanctions and the broader economic fallout from its isolation, the Kremlin promoted import substitution policies to reduce dependency on Western goods and technologies (Johan, 2002). This shift involved significant state investment in domestic industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, aiming to insulate Russia from further economic pressures. Although these measures have had mixed results, they reflect a broader strategy of resilience in the face of Western rejection.

Russia also adopted a more assertive stance in international organizations, using its veto power in the United Nations Security Council and seeking to influence global governance through forums like the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). These efforts highlighted Russia's desire to create a multipolar world order where it could act as a counterbalance to Western dominance (Ambrosio, 2005). Overall, Russia's strategic responses to European rejection have been multifaceted, involving both domestic and international adjustments.

## 3.2. Russia's Strategic Realignment from European Integration to Eastern

Russia's strategic realignment from European integration to Eastern alliances, ac-

celerated by the Ukraine crisis, reflects a major shift in its foreign policy. Faced with Western sanctions and diplomatic isolation, Russia pivoted towards strengthening ties with China, India, and other non-Western powers.

### 3.2.1. Post-Ukraine Geopolitical Shifts of Russia's

**Table 3.** Outcomes of Russia's Post-Ukraine Geopolitical Shift.

Factors	Outcomes
Western Isolation	Sanctions and diplomatic rejections accelerated Russia's pivot to non-Western powers
Shift to China & India	Deepened strategic and economic ties, including energy deals and military cooperation
Energy Rebalancing	Expansion of energy exports to China through projects like the Power of Siberia
Multilateralism	Russia's active role in BRICS and SCO to counterbalance Western influence
Challenge to Western Hegemony	Emergence of a more multipolar global system, where Russia plays a central role

Source: (Gabuev, 2016; Ambrosio, 2016; Lo, 2015).

**Table 3** highlight that a visual and analytical overview of Russia's strategic adjustments post-Ukraine. The sanctions imposed by Western nations, alongside diplomatic rejections, were key drivers in pushing Russia to seek alternative partners in the East. China and India emerged as critical allies, with whom Russia strengthened economic and strategic ties, particularly in energy and military cooperation (Gabuev, 2016). Multilateral organizations such as BRICS and SCO offered Russia a platform to challenge Western-dominated global governance and promote a multipolar order (Ambrosio, 2016). In this realignment, Russia not only compensated for the economic fallout from Western sanctions but also found new pathways to assert its global influence. This pivot can be seen as both a response to immediate geopolitical constraints and a long-term strategy to counterbalance Western hegemony (Lo, 2015).

### 3.2.2. Russia's Shift to Multilateralism in the East

As part of Russia's strategic shift following the Ukraine crisis, it has embraced multilateralism in the East, significantly deepening its participation in regional organizations and partnerships. We have drawn a table that help to understand the findings.

According to **Table 4**, Russia's adaptation to its growing estrangement from Europe and the broader West, aiming to create alternative alliances that ensure its global influence and economic survival. The engagement in multilateral platforms like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has been crucial for this strategy.

**Table 4.** Multilateral platforms and partnerships in Russia's shift to the east.

Multilateral Platform/Partnership	Key Eastern Partners	Areas of Cooperation	Strategic Significance
BRICS	China, India, Brazil, South Africa	Economic collaboration, political influence	Diversification of partnerships, counterbalance to Western dominance
Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)	China, India, Central Asia	Security cooperation, military collaboration	Regional security, joint military exercises
Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus	Economic integration, infrastructure development	Regional economic leadership, reducing reliance on Western markets
Russia-China Partnership	China	Energy exports, military technology, trade	Strategic cooperation, energy security
Russia-India Partnership	India	Défense technology, trade, political cooperation	

Source: Adapted by Authors, 2024.

The BRICS alliance provides Russia with a unique platform to collaborate with emerging economies, challenging Western financial institutions and advocating for a multipolar world (Ambrosio, 2016). Within BRICS, Russia finds support for its geopolitical views, particularly in areas like energy cooperation, financial independence, and opposition to Western sanctions (Lo, 2015). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, co-led by Russia and China, is crucial for Russia's military and security strategy, facilitating joint exercises and counterterrorism activities in Central Asia (Gabuev, 2016). The EAEU, led by Russia, is a regional economic integration initiative aimed at countering Western economic pressures by fostering closer economic ties with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus (Tsygankov, 2012). The EAEU has become a key tool for Russia to project its economic influence in post-Soviet space while reducing its economic reliance on Europe. In conclusion, Russia's shift to multilateralism in the East is driven not just by economic necessity but also by geopolitical strategy.

### 3.3. The Postcolonial Implications of Russia's Rejection of Western-Dominated Systems

Russia's shift from European integration to Eastern alliances, particularly after the Ukraine crisis, represents more than just a geopolitical realignment. It reflects a deeper, postcolonial resistance to Western-dominated systems, characterized by the rejection of Western political, economic, and cultural hegemony. The post-Ukraine era has seen Russia redefine its role in the international system, distancing itself from Western-centric institutions and ideologies while forming strategic partnerships with non-Western powers.

#### 3.3.1. Russia's Narrative of Postcolonial Resistance to Western Hegemony

Table 5 reveals that Russia's narrative of postcolonial resistance to Western

**Table 5.** Russia's narrative of postcolonial resistance.

Theme	Description	Key Narrative
Critique of Western Unipolarity	Rejection of the West's dominance in global governance and institutions, promoting a multipolar world order	Russia positions itself as a challenger to the U.S.-led global order
Strategic Alliance with Non-Western Powers	Focus on strengthening alliances with China, India, and other countries marginalized by Western influence	Russia and its Eastern partners share a common goal of resisting the West
Rejection of Western Liberal Values	Russia opposes Western liberal democracy and human rights norms, framing them as tools of imperialism	Western values are seen as mechanisms of control in postcolonial discourse
Narrative of Victimization and Resistance	Russia frames itself as a victim of Western aggression and sanctions, using this narrative to legitimize its resistance	Russia portrays its actions as a form of resistance to Western aggression

Source: Adapted by Authors, 2024.

hegemony revolves around the critique of Western unipolarity and the promotion of a multipolar world order. Russian elites frequently argue that the U.S. and its Western allies exert excessive control over global institutions like the UN, IMF, and World Bank, thereby marginalizing non-Western powers (Lo, 2015). This narrative is central to Russia's diplomatic efforts to strengthen its alliances with countries such as China and India, which share similar concerns about Western dominance (Tsygankov, 2012). Another key theme is Russia's rejection of Western liberal values which views as tools of imperialism used to undermine non-Western states (Mearsheimer, 2014). The narrative of victimization is also prominent, with Russia portraying itself as a target of Western sanctions and aggression, using this victimhood as a basis for its resistance against Western hegemony (Lo, 2015).

### 3.3.2. Sovereignty and Self-Determination in Russian Discourse

**Table 6** demonstrates in Russia's sovereignty and self-Determination to western are following the table:

**Table 6.** Russia's sovereignty and self-Determination to Western Region.

Theme	Frequency of Occurrence	Key Narratives
National Sovereignty	High	Emphasizes protection of Russian territorial integrity and independence from Western influence.
Rejection of Western Hegemony	High	Criticism of Western efforts to impose democratic values and political systems on other nations.

**Continued**

Défense of Regional Influence	Medium	Focus on Russia's right to influence its neighbours and protect Russian-speaking populations abroad.
Cultural and Historical Identity	Medium	Russia's unique cultural and historical identity as a justification for independent political choices.
Self-Determination	Medium	Asserts Russia's right to chart its own political, economic, and cultural trajectory.

Source: Adapted by Authors, 2024.

National sovereignty is a dominant theme in Russian political discourse, frequently referenced as a *Défense* mechanism against Western pressure and perceived intervention. The narrative of protecting Russia's territorial integrity and maintaining independence from foreign interference has been central in official speeches and statements (Clunan, 2018). Another prominent theme is Russia's rejection of Western hegemony, which is consistently framed as an effort to resist the imposition of Western political and ideological systems, particularly those that promote liberal democracy. Russia positions itself as standing against colour revolutions and other forms of political interference (Mearsheimer, 2014). Additionally, regional on its role as a protector of Russian-speaking populations in the post-Soviet space, especially in Ukraine. This underscores the Kremlin's justification for actions like the annexation of Crimea as a *Défense* of ethnic Russians (Tsygankov, 2012). The discourse also frequently emphasizes multipolarity, advocating for a global order where Western dominance is replaced by more balanced power distribution among nations, especially with non-Western alliances like China and India. Finally, cultural and historical identity is cited as a key driver of Russia's sovereign choices, underscoring the uniqueness of Russia's path in contrast to Western political models (Lo, 2015).

#### 4. Discussion

This discussion analyses Russia's geopolitical reorientation after the Ukraine war, focusing on how postcolonial themes manifest in its rejection of Western-dominated systems and its pivot to Eastern alliances. The findings across multiple themes, including Russia's historical context with Europe, its response to the Ukraine crisis, the impact of Western sanctions, and its strategic responses, all contribute to understanding this shift. By connecting these findings to postcolonial theory, we explore Russia's efforts to assert sovereignty, reject Western hegemony, and reimagine its role in global geopolitics.

According to result, Russia's relationship with Europe has been historically complex. The post-Soviet period saw attempts by Russia to integrate into European political and economic structures. However, the events following the Ukraine

crisis in 2014 marked a significant turning point. The crisis fractured Russia's hopes for deeper European integration, solidifying its geopolitical isolation (Sakwa, 2017). By 2022, this trend culminated in a decisive geopolitical shift toward the East, underpinned by the sense that European integration was not only unattainable but also undesirable for Russia's postcolonial identity (Lo, 2015). The imposition of Western sanctions following the annexation of Crimea marked a turning point in Russia's economic and political strategy. Rather than capitulating to Western pressure, Russia doubled down on its rejection of Western institutions, aligning itself with emerging Eastern powers. Sanctions effectively pushed Russia to pursue self-reliance through import substitution policies and to deepen economic ties with non-Western countries, particularly China and India (Rutland, 2014). Russia has changed position by alliances with east to Russia positions itself as a global power that resists the West's economic and political dominance (Tsygankov, 2012).

Russia's actions in Ukraine and its alliances with non-Western powers are framed as part of a broader postcolonial resistance to Western neo-colonialism. By asserting its right to self-determination, Russia seeks to carve out a new global role where it is not merely a subordinate to Western-dominated international institutions (Fritzen, 2022). According to the findings show that Russia's rhetoric is replete with allusions to a multipolar world, characterised by a more equitable distribution of power among states. This narrative portrays Russia not as a pariah, but as a leader in opposing Western hegemony, thereby redefining its global role. This statement is relevant to the Ambrosio (Ambrosio, 2016). These alliances also highlight a postcolonial effort to resist Western models of economic and political governance, as Russia and its Eastern partners seek to construct alternative frameworks that reflect their unique political cultures and histories (Clunan, 2018).

## **5. Recommendations for the Future Policy Directions**

### **5.1. Strengthen Diplomatic Channels with Non-Western Powers**

To effectively increase its global influence, Russia should adopt a proactive approach in deepening its relationships with key non-Western powers such as China and India. This can be achieved by intensifying economic cooperation through joint ventures, trade agreements, and infrastructure development projects that align with shared strategic interests. Politically, Russia can enhance bilateral dialogues and promote common positions in global governance forums. Militarily, expanded joint exercises, defense agreements, and technology-sharing initiatives could strengthen mutual trust and interoperability. Active participation in multilateral organizations like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) should be leveraged to provide a unified platform for addressing global challenges, countering Western dominance, and projecting a multipolar worldview. By taking these steps, Russia can create a robust network of alliances that reinforces its sovereignty and diversifies its international partnerships.

## 5.2. Invest in Economic Self-Sufficiency and Resilience

As Western sanctions limit access to European markets, Russia should prioritize policies that promote domestic economic growth, innovation and self-sufficiency. Increasing investment in technology, agriculture, energy and other industries will help reduce dependence on the Western economy and enhance the ability to withstand external economic pressures. Such an approach would strengthen the Russian economy and protect it from future sanctions.

## 5.3. Emphasize the Multilateral World Order in the Diplomatic Narrative

Russia should advocate for a multilateral global order and position itself as a challenger to Western-dominated institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. By aligning itself with countries that share a common vision, Russia can build unity and redefine its role in global governance. This diplomatic stance highlights its commitment to sovereignty and strategic autonomy, appealing to countries wary of Western influence.

**Table 7.** Expected outcomes to clarify Russia's potential policy directions in relation to future foreign and domestic objectives.

Policy Recommendation	Key Concepts	Strategic Goals	Expected Outcome
5.1 Strengthen Diplomatic Channels with Non-Western Powers	Deepen partnerships with non-Western powers, esp. China and India; multilateralism (BRICS, SCO)	Counterbalance Western influence, enhance sovereignty, promote multipolarity	Increased influence in global affairs; reduced Western hegemony
5.2 Invest in Economic Self-Sufficiency and Resilience	Focus on domestic growth; invest in technology, agriculture, and energy	Reduce dependency on Western economies, enhance economic stability and innovation	Strengthened economy, improved resilience against sanctions
5.3 Emphasize Multilateral World Order in Diplomatic Narrative	Promote multilateralism; challenge IMF and World Bank dominance	Reposition Russia as a leader in global governance, increase alignment with like-minded nations	Enhanced global influence, stronger alliances with non-Western countries
5.4 Strengthen Energy Cooperation with Eastern Allies	Expand energy trade with China, India; infrastructure projects (Power of Siberia pipeline)	Mitigate European market losses, build secure energy partnerships	Diversified markets, reduced dependency on Western consumers
5.5 Leverage Cultural Identity in Foreign & Domestic Policy	Promote unique Russian culture and history; emphasize sovereignty	Reinforce national unity, attract like-minded allies, project soft power	Strengthened national identity, greater appeal among non-Western nations
5.6 Promote Alternative Governance Models through Multilateralism	Support SCO and BRICS as alternatives to Western liberal democracy models	Lead in promoting sovereignty and cultural diversity, offer governance alternatives	Attraction of non-Western countries seeking independence from Western frameworks

**Continued**

5.7 Build Defense & Security Alliances in Asia	Strengthen defense ties through SCO, bilateral security pacts with China, India	Enhance regional security influence, counterbalance Western military alliances	Greater military preparedness, improved balance of power in Asia
5.8 Engage in Public Diplomacy to Support Russian Policies	Promote resistance to Western intervention; highlight sovereignty and cultural pride	Appeal to global audience critical of Western policies, improve international image	Increased support among countries with postcolonial views, boosted Russian soft power
5.9 Expand Domestic Support for Nationalism and Resilience Policies	Focus on import substitution, traditional values; national resilience	Strengthen internal unity, portray resilience as a patriotic duty	Increased public support for foreign policy, enhanced national unity
5.10 Expand Strategic Alliance in Southeast Asia	Deepen ties with Vietnam, Indonesia; enhance Asia-Pacific engagement	Broaden geopolitical influence in regions less affected by the West	Strengthened Southeast Asia relations, diversified global partnerships

Source: Adapted by Authors, 2024.

**Table 7** breaks down each recommendation by key concepts, strategic goals, and expected outcomes to clarify Russia's potential policy directions in relation to future foreign and domestic objectives.

#### 5.4. Strengthen Energy Cooperation with Eastern Allies

To mitigate the impact of losses in European markets, Russia should step up energy trade with China, India and other non-Western markets. By expanding infrastructure such as the Power of Siberia pipeline, Russia can build a secure and profitable alternative to stabilize its economy amid geopolitical changes. It also diversifies Russia's global partnerships and reduces its dependence on Western markets.

#### 5.5. Leverage Cultural Identity in Foreign and Domestic Policy

Russia's unique cultural and historical identity should be promoted as the basis for independent political and social choices, resonate with the domestic population and attract support from non-Western allies. This focus on cultural identity strengthens Russia's position as a sovereign state independent of Western influence, promotes national unity and provides support for the direction of its foreign policy.

#### 5.6. Promote Alternative Governance Models through Multilateralism

By strengthening ties with organizations such as the SCO and BRICS, Russia can promote a governance model that rivals Western liberal democracies, rather than sovereignty-centric policies. This allows Russia to lead a coalition that supports national sovereignty and cultural diversity, appealing to countries seeking alter-

natives to Western structures.

### **5.7. Building Defense and Security Alliances in Asia**

Strengthening defense ties with Asian countries through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and bilateral agreements with China and India will enhance Russia's military preparedness and regional influence. This strategy strengthens Russia's position as a security provider in Asia, countering the Western military alliance and maintaining the balance of power in a region where Western influence is strong.

### **5.8. Engage in Public Diplomacy to Gain Support for Russian Policies**

Russia should emphasize its resistance to Western interventionism in the media and public statements and promote national sovereignty, independence from external control, and cultural pride. This narrative aligns with a postcolonial perspective, appeals to a global audience critical of Western intervention, and enhances Russia's image as a defender of sovereignty.

### **5.9. Expand Domestic Support for Nationalism and Resilience Policies**

Building on the rise of nationalism, Russia could emphasize policies that resonate with its people, such as import substitution and the promotion of traditional values. This nationalist approach strengthened internal unity, positioned Russia's resilience as a patriotic response to Western pressure, and garnered public support for its geopolitical decisions.

### **5.10. Expand Strategic Alliance in Southeast Asia**

In order to diversify the alliance, Russia should strengthen economic, political and military relations with Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia. This outreach supports Russia's engagement in the Asia-Pacific region and building partnerships in regions less influenced by the West, consistent with Russia's goal of building a multifaceted global influence.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings presented throughout this paper demonstrate how Russia's rejection of Western-dominated systems and its realignment with Eastern powers reflect a postcolonial shift in global politics. By resisting Western hegemony, asserting its sovereignty, and reimagining its global role, Russia is engaging in a postcolonial project of self-determination and resistance. The findings of the study underscore that Eastern alliances are not merely a geopolitical strategy but also an ideological statement, where Russia, much like other postcolonial nations, seeks to challenge and reshape the global order. The tables and content analysis support this assertion, showing that Russia's discourse is filled with postcolonial themes of re-

sistance, sovereignty, and a multipolar future. Russia's postcolonial resistance, particularly following the Ukraine conflict, emphasizes national sovereignty and self-determination, challenging the West's political and economic values. This rejection is seen as a necessary step to preserve Russia's autonomy and influence in a multipolar world. In this light, Russia's alliances with non-Western powers symbolize economic and political cooperation, a shared vision of a multipolar world, and a common postcolonial agenda. The Ukraine war transformed Russia from a European integration state to a powerful advocate for a multipolar order.

### Author Contributions

Konstantin Moskalenko (KM) led the data collection, conducted the secondary analysis, and prepared initial drafts of the manuscript. Yu Xunda (YX) contributed to the study's conceptualization and design. Mohammad Anisur Rahaman (MAR) assisted with data interpretation and refinement of the manuscript. All authors contributed to revisions, read, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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