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**Basic Concepts of Russian Geopolitics After 2022:
The Global Majority and Minority**

To understand the fundamental concepts and assumptions shaping contemporary Russian geopolitics, it is necessary to examine not only official state documents but also quasi-encyclopedic and quasi-academic publications such as *The New Diplomatic Dictionary*, which outline the key ideological elements underpinning Russia's vision of the international order.¹ The political foundations of Russian geopolitics were formalized in "The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation", adopted in 2023.² Equally important are the public statements and written commentaries of Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, particularly those published in *Russia in Global Affairs*.³

Russian geopolitical concepts are crafted to appear scholarly, but their main purpose is to legitimize the Kremlin's foreign policy and promote a new global architecture in cooperation with states of the Global South. Lavrov, Putin, and pro-government propagandists draw heavily on themes such as multilateralism, a polycentric world, the anti-NATO character of BRICS, and Eurasianism. In 2023, Polish analytical institutions—among them OSW and PISM—examined these new geopolitical assumptions.⁴ Yet new documents and reports continue to emerge, using a vocabulary that deserves close analysis in order to understand the worldview advocated by Russian diplomacy. Grasping this language is particularly important in light of Russia's geopolitical offensive since late 2024, exemplified by Putin's political maneuvering with Donald Trump over Ukraine and by efforts to promote Russian geopolitical narratives across Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

This commentary opens a series devoted to Russian geopolitics. We begin by examining Russia's understanding of the global order and the notion of the so-called "collective West."

World

Russian geopolitical ambitions aim at redefining the basic diplomatic principles of international relations. Moscow's central accusation against the current order is its "unilateral" nature—supposedly dominated by the United States and the "collective West" (This is, of course, a Russian oversimplification that ignores the complexity of the international system). According to Moscow, this Western-led order has become obsolete as Asian powers have risen and Russia has regained influence since the collapse of the USSR.

Drawing on terminology from mainstream international relations scholarship, Russia promotes a vision of a multilateral, polycentric, and multipolar world. Behind these slogans, however, lies a drive to overturn the

¹ See <https://dipslo.ru> [25.11.2025].

² See https://gdansk.mid.ru/pl/rosja_polska/o_rosji/koncepcja_polityki_zagranicznej_federacji_rosyjskiej [25.11.2025].

³ S. V. Lavrov, *On Law, Rights and Rules*, „Russia in Global Affairs” 2021, 19(3), pp. 228-240; S. V. Lavrov, *The World at a Crossroads and a System of International Relations for the Future*, „Russia in Global Affairs” 2019, 17(4), pp. 8-18; S. V. Lavrov, *Genuine Multilateralism and Diplomacy vs the “Rules-Based Order”*, „Russia in Global Affairs” 2023, 21(3), pp. 104-113; S. V. Lavrov, *The UN Charter Should Become the Legal Foundation of a Multipolar World*, „Russia in Global Affairs” 2025, 23(2), pp. 43-49; S. V. Lavrov, *The UN Must Again Become a Center for Harmonizing the Actions of Nations*, „Russia in Global Affairs” 2025, 23(1), pp. 124-135.

⁴ W. Rodkiewicz, *Antykolonialny sojusz z Globalnym Południem*. Nowa „Koncepcja polityki zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej”, „Komentarze OSW” 2023, nr 506; A. Legucka, *W kierunku Eurazji – nowa koncepcja polityki zagranicznej Rosji*, „Biuletyn PISM” 2023, nr 55.



post-war Euro-Atlantic order and replace it with a new balance of power resembling a “Yalta 2.0” (see [IEŚ Commentaries, no. 1299](#)), based on sovereign equality and great-power compromise.

The Russian narrative begins with the following diagnosis: the West has imposed “**Western universalism**” and “**liberal globalism**” on the world through its political and economic dominance, using international institutions—including the UN—to enforce its will on the so-called “**world majority**.” This “world majority” has become a central concept in Russian discourse since 2022, linking demographic weight to political legitimacy. It encompasses states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America which, unlike the “**Western minority**,” represent the vast majority of the world’s population (the **Global South**). In Russian rhetoric, this “world majority” symbolizes a community resisting **neocolonialism**, “**Western hypocrisy**,” and double standards. Russia presents itself as the natural leader and defender of their interests.

The Western model of international politics is labeled by Moscow as the “**rules-based order**.” According to Russia, it rests on arbitrary and opaque rules designed to preserve United States and their allies’ hegemony. In contrast, Russia claims to champion “**sovereign internationalism**” and “**genuine multilateralism**,” allegedly rooted in UN legal principles.

Moscow uses the United Nations as a tool to legitimize its actions and to highlight what it frames as the superiority of the “world majority” over the West. It calls for Security Council reform favoring non-Western states. The UN thus becomes both an ideological battleground and a symbol of a polycentric world in which Russia casts itself as guardian of legalism and advocate of sovereign equality.

The UN Charter is portrayed as the sole legitimate foundation of the international order and as the means to restore a balanced distribution of power in the spirit of a “new Yalta.” Russia depicts itself as the Charter’s “guardian,” defending its principles (while selectively applying them). A central concept here is “**indivisible security**”—the idea that no state may enhance its own security at the expense of others. Russia presents this as a legacy of OSCE documents and uses it to justify opposition to NATO enlargement. According to Moscow, it is Western violations of “indivisible security” that have caused the recent escalation of crises in Europe.

The West

For decades, Russian geopolitical thinking has relied on the notion of the “**collective West**”—a constructed political entity comprising the United States, EU member states, NATO, and Indo-Pacific allies. In this narrative, the West forms a unified bloc with shared strategic interests, seeking to maintain global dominance, impose its norms, and contain the influence of Russia and China. The term functions as a conceptual framework for depicting the West as a hegemonic force opposed to multipolarity and as Russia’s main geopolitical adversary, as well as the adversary of the Global South.

A central theme in Russian foreign policy rhetoric is the accusation that NATO embodies **imperialism**, **neocolonialism**, and **moral decline**. In the Russian view, the Western world—above all the U.S. and the EU—has never abandoned its colonial instincts. Western elites, imagined as the “**golden billion**” (a reference to the demographic weight of the “collective West”) aim to preserve their dominance through the imposition of rules, sanctions, and ideology. The West is thus depicted not as a community of shared values but as a mechanism of global control that entrenches structural inequalities through international institutions, the media, and the financial sector.

Closely tied to this is the concept of “**exceptionalism**,” which Russia attributes to the “collective West”—the belief in its own superiority and its right to judge other states and violate international law in pursuit of its interests. In this context, Josep Borrell’s comparison of Europe to a “garden” surrounded by a “jungle” is frequently cited. In Russian interpretation, it reveals a racist and colonial mindset—a sense of civilizational superiority that manifests as “**democratic imperialism**.” Russia contrasts this with its own vision of a world composed of equal civilizations, one without centers and peripheries, without “gardens” and “jungles.”

Following Donald Trump’s second electoral victory in the United States, Russian geopolitical discourse registered a noticeable shift. Although the U.S. remains part of the “collective West,” the Trump administration is portrayed



as challenging the traditional notion of “Western universalism.” Trump, viewed as someone open to pragmatic deals with Russia and China, inspires hope in Moscow for a swift resolution of the war in Ukraine and for the launch of a new international architecture.

Russia perceives similar tendencies in certain political movements in Europe and the United States that advocate foreign policies rooted in geopolitical revisionism—particularly efforts to weaken the EU and NATO. Among these “sovereigntist” forces, Russia includes both populist governments (e.g., Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Robert Fico in Slovakia) and opposition groups such as Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Conclusions

Russian geopolitics blends traditional imperial motifs—drawing on both Soviet and tsarist concepts of spheres of influence (as seen in the historical narratives discussed in [IEŚ Commentaries, no. 1463](#))—with a strongly anti-Western message. It is not simply a theoretical framework for understanding global politics but a political instrument designed to justify Russia’s actions internationally and legitimize its confrontational posture toward the West.

At the heart of this doctrine is a vision of a multipolar world—a system grounded in a “fair balance of power” in which no single state defines the rules. Multipolarity is presented as the ideological opposite of the “rules-based order,” understood as U.S. and Western dominance. In this context, Russia positions itself as the representative of the global majority and the defender of sovereign equality, presenting its foreign policy—despite its aggressive nature—as a struggle to restore a just international system.

The ideological foundation of Russian policy rests on several key assumptions: the belief in Western decline and moral decay, the need to restore the “historic Russian space,” and the call for equal cooperation among civilizations in a polycentric world. Russia portrays itself as a guardian of international law and UN legalism, while reinterpreting these principles to legitimize its own expansionist actions.

More broadly, this doctrine reflects a global contest over how to define the principles of the modern international order. For Russia, geopolitics serves as an instrument for building influence, shaping international perceptions, and justifying its claims to regional dominance—framed in terms of a new Yalta-style arrangement dividing the world into spheres of influence. Although Russia presents this vision as just, it is in fact rooted in strict hierarchy rather than genuine sovereign equality. Even if this worldview may appear incoherent or unscientific, its potential appeal to countries of the Global South and East should not be underestimated. It plays a significant role in Russia’s efforts to gain an advantage in the ongoing multidimensional cognitive war.