

Russia's "Multilateral Strategic Stability" Proposal Could Bring "Balance" to South Asia

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Russian media reported that the "multilateral strategic stability" proposal by some of the country's leading experts to actively prevent a military confrontation between nuclear powers runs counter to Moscow's current foreign policy, though its possible promulgation would represent a victory by the "Progressive" faction of its "deep state" over the "Traditionalists" and potentially return Russia to its originally envisioned "balancing" role in South Asian affairs.

The "Multilateral Strategic Stability" Model

Russia's publicly financed international media outlet [TASS](#) reported in its recent press review on Kommersant's article about the proposal put forth by some of the country's leading experts to promote the new concept of "multilateral strategic stability" (MSS), which the outlet noted runs counter to Moscow's current foreign policy. The gist of the idea is that "Russia's traditional strategic stability concept is outdated", thus making "the country's highly valued mechanisms of limiting armaments...ineffective and even senseless." The document that they presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs importantly states that "today the nature of strategic stability is multilateral - involving China and other nuclear states, while a non-nuclear conflict and its consequences can be compared with a nuclear one and there are higher chances than before that it may trigger the use of nuclear weapons." That's why the "experts suggest coining a new term - 'multilateral strategic stability', [which] implies that nuclear powers must prevent any military confrontation between each other - both deliberate and unintended - since any standoff could spark 'a global nuclear war'."

"Deep State" Drama

By all indications, it appears as though the "Progressive" faction of the Russian permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies ("deep state") is lobbying hard to counteract the revived influence of their "Traditionalist" rivals after the latter succeeded in returning their country's foreign policy back to its historic roots last week following through the [informal alliance](#) that was sealed with India during Modi's participation in the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok as President Putin's guest of honor. The author wrote two years ago about how "[Russia's Foreign Policy Progressives Have Trumped The Traditionalists](#)" after Moscow began to actively pursue its 21st-century grand strategic vision of becoming the [supreme "balancing" force](#) in Afro-Eurasia, which later led to "[Russia's 'Deep State' Divisions Over South Asia Spilling Over Into The Public](#)" in the aftermath of Russia "[Returning To South Asia](#)" through its proposal to host Indo-Pak peace talks earlier this year. Those plans were nearly scuttled after India's "[Israeli](#)"-like unilateral moves in Kashmir last month compelled Russia to extend its [full support to New Delhi](#) and

[seemed to spell the end](#) of the “Progressive’s” brief reign.

The “deep state” struggle for influence isn’t over, though, at least if the latest MSS proposal is anything to go by. Its possible promulgation would represent a marked departure from Russia’s “Traditionalist” position of staying out of bilateral disputes between nuclear powers such as India and Pakistan and instead encourage a more active effort to mediate or “balance” between them in pursuit of peace and the avoidance a military confrontation that could spark “a global nuclear war”. That’s not at all what India would want to see happen after it invested billions of dollars in military-technical and energy deals with Russia in the hopes of “buying off” Moscow and preventing the “Progressives” return to power there. Nevertheless, the MSS proposal is extremely pragmatic and will likely be received very well by Russian diplomats, even if their positive reaction to it isn’t made public given how sensitive of a foreign policy shift it would be, especially regarding Russian-Indian relations if ever enters into practice. One possible indication that this could be the case comes from former Ambassador and current Vice President of the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs Gleb Ivashentsev.

E-CPEC+

Mr. Ivashentsev told Nezavisimaya Gazeta earlier in the week (as reported by [TASS](#) in the context of their daily press review) that “Russia cannot act as an intermediary (in Kashmir)...however, we must promote a rapprochement between the two countries”, which was an extremely bold statement to make given his country’s official position on the matter. That strongly hints that there’s serious interest in the Russian “deep state” to “recalibrate” their recent foreign policy “adjustment” in full-fledged partisan favor of India in order to make it more “balanced”, which would by default work out to the “Progressives’” advantage. Such a change wouldn’t be just for the strategic sake of it either, but could possibly be driven by Iran’s reported plans to build a [CPEC-parallel pipeline \(E-CPEC+\) to China](#), a game-changing megaproject that Russia could participate in if it allows its offshore reserves in Iran to be transported through this pipeline and/or uses its world-class technical expertise to construct it. Any move in that direction could help Russia retain “balance” in its new relations with India but also just as importantly promote peace in South Asia too.

The MSS speaks about the need to actively “prevent any military confrontation between [nuclear powers] - both deliberate and unintended - since any standoff could spark ‘a global nuclear war’”, and while Russia isn’t able to mediate between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, it could “balance” out its regional investments in the former through its prospective leading participation in the latter’s E-CPEC+. The more economically connected that Russia becomes with the [global pivot state](#) of Pakistan (including through the [RuPak rail proposal](#) via Central Asia & Afghanistan that could become the main component of [N-CPEC+](#)), the less likely it is that India will seriously consider behaving aggressively against Islamabad out of concern that its informal ally’s investments might be impacted as “collateral damage”. The greater the tangible stake that Russia has in Pakistan, the more involved it would naturally become in promoting peace between this nuclear power and India in accordance with the strategic precept guiding the MSS proposal. Without any “skin in the game” in Pakistan, Russia’s efforts to prevent a military clash in the region would be unconvincing and ultimately futile.

Overcoming The Kashmiri Obstacle

India is powerless to prevent Russia from investing in a purely apolitical project such as E-

CPEC+ if its partner is sincerely interested in doing so and desires the resultant aforementioned strategic gains that this would entail, but it might try to wage a low-intensity infowar out of desperation to pressure it against doing so, though going too far with this could risk undermining the hard-fought trust recently built between the two by amounting to blatant interference in its affairs. The most likely narrative approach that could be relied upon in this scenario is to emphasize how the Russian Ambassador to India [explicitly said](#) that his country recognizes India's recent moves in Kashmir to be an "internal matter" and that "our views are exactly the same as India's", which implies full endorsement of New Delhi's maximalist claims towards the [Kashmir Conflict](#). That said, such an interpretation is merely an assumption, since Russia has the narrative leeway to assert that it set a "balanced" precedent and also therefore regards Gilgit-Baltistan (through which E-CPEC+ would traverse) as Pakistani territory, thus settling any Indian concerns over the legality of this move.

So long as Russia has the political will to defy Indian pressure (however direct or indirect it may be), it can return to its original plans of "balancing" South Asian affairs instead of privileging India over the rest of the region. The odds of this happening would become even more likely if the "Progressives" succeed with their plan to get the Foreign Ministry to promulgate the MSS proposal as its official policy, as this would then become the structural framework through which their active "balancing" efforts as practiced by the "energy diplomacy" of participating in E-CPEC+ would become institutionally justified. It might still take a while for the "Progressives'" vision, which may have actually been "ahead of its time" when it first began being practiced a few years ago, to catch on with the rest of Russia's "deep state" and convince them of the useful flexibility of their MSS model as compared to the extant rigid one being defended by the "Traditionalists", but the very fact that it's being so prominently reported on by Russia's publicly financed international media strongly suggests that there's some degree of behind-the-scenes support for at least floating the idea in the public domain at this time.

Concluding Thoughts

The author [previously wrote](#) about how Russia is in the midst of two systemic transitions in the political (Post-Putin 2024, PP24) and economic ("Great Society"/"National Development Projects") spheres, but now one can say that it's also experiencing a similar systemic transition in the diplomatic one as well seeing as how the MSS is the natural evolution of Russian foreign policy in the [emerging Multipolar World Order](#), especially if it intends to indefinitely remain the leader of the fledgling new Non-Aligned Movement (Neo-NAM) that it wants to lead throughout this century ([whether by itself](#) or [jointly with India](#)). Although the diplomatic transition was recently suspended in the South Asian sense out of financial considerations stemming from the planned multibillion-dollar deals that Russia later clinched with India in exchange for its partisan support of New Delhi's actions in Kashmir, most of those agreements have been finalized after last week's Eastern Economic Forum so India can no longer use them as "blackmail" leverage for pressuring Russia not to invest in E-CPEC+. Simply put, India already moved so close to Russia that it can't disengage, thus leaving it no choice but to accept Moscow's will.

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