

# Russia's Vision of Multipolarity – Spheres of Influence and Subjugation of Nations

**R**ussia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shaken the global order, exposing the fragility of the rules-based international system. While Western governments rallied behind Ukraine early on, their efforts have struggled to resonate beyond North America, Europe, and the Pacific. In Asia, South America, and Africa, Russian propaganda has gained traction, shaping pro-Russian views. Even some Central and Eastern European governments have openly sided with Moscow. More recently, pro-Russian narratives have gained ground in the U.S. and Western Europe, further undermining Western unity.

The Trump administration's [shift](#) on Ukraine—first signaled at the February 2025 Munich Security Conference and crystallized in the Oval Office clash with Volodymyr Zelenskyy—revealed that

sympathy for Russia's stance is no longer fringe in Washington. This shift reflects not just a policy change but a broader embrace of a multipolar world where power dictates respect and where might is right.

## Bipolar Multipolarity: Russia's Imperial Blueprint

As the Trump administration shifts closer to Russia's position on Ukraine, it is also sidelining Europe, excluding the EU and NATO from key security discussions. By dropping support for Ukraine's NATO membership and marginalizing European allies, the U.S. is reinforcing a model where major powers decide security matters without smaller nations—a long-standing Russian [goal](#).



**SHOTA GVINERIA**  
Contributor

Ambassador Shota Gvineria joined the Baltic Defence College as a lecturer in Defence and Cyber Studies in July 2019. He is also a fellow at the Economic Policy Research Center since 2017. Previously, Amb. Gvineria held various positions in Georgia's public sector, including Deputy Secretary at the National Security Council and Foreign Policy Advisor to the Minister of Defense. From 2010-14, he served as the Ambassador of Georgia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and later became the Director of European Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Amb. Gvineria, with an MA in Strategic Security Studies from Washington's National Defense University, also earned MAs in International Relations from the Diplomatic School of Madrid and Public Administration from the Georgian Technical University.



© GEOPOLITICS

Trump's [rhetoric](#) on controlling Greenland and [clashing](#) with Canada, both founding NATO members, further normalizes the idea of using national security to justify territorial ambitions, echoing the logic of revisionist powers like Russia and China.

Russia capitalizes on these fractures, promoting its multipolar vision as a fairer alternative to “Western hegemony.” In truth, it is a return to spheres of influence where power overrides law and sovereignty. Any U.S.-Russia deal will have consequences far beyond Ukraine, reshaping European and global security.

**Russia's push for a multipolar world is rooted in the Primakov Doctrine of the 1990s which laid out three enduring goals: countering U.S. dominance, restoring Russian influence in the post-Soviet space, and halting NATO expansion.**

Russia's push for a multipolar world is rooted in the Primakov Doctrine of the 1990s which [laid out](#) three enduring goals: countering U.S. dominance, restoring Russian influence in the post-Soviet space, and halting NATO expansion. These goals have guided Moscow's foreign policy ever since, culminating in the December 2021 ultimatums to [NATO](#) and [the U.S.](#), demanding a rollback of Western military presence near Russia's borders.

This strategic vision is not reactive but deeply embedded in Russia's worldview—where great power status is tied to territorial control. Vladislav Surkov's 2019 [essay](#), Putin's Lasting State, reframed expansion as an existential imperative, positioning Russia as a civilizational alternative to the West and promoting its authoritarian model globally, from Belarus and Georgia to Hungary, Venezuela, and beyond.

Even in the 1990s, Moscow never accepted the Soviet collapse as a loss of imperial privilege. De-classified talks between Clinton and Yeltsin confirm that post-Cold War Russia still saw itself as entitled to influence its former empire. Putin's [speeches](#), [epistolary addresses](#), and actions have only made this more explicit.

**With the West divided and pro-Russian leaders gaining ground in Europe, Moscow's decades-long ambition to replace the liberal order with one built on power and spheres of influence is closer than ever to becoming a reality.**

The war in Ukraine is Russia's boldest move yet to formalize its sphere of influence and reshape the global order. With the West divided and pro-Russian leaders gaining ground in Europe, Moscow's decades-long ambition to replace the liberal order with one built on power and spheres of influence is closer than ever to becoming a reality.

## Not a Peace Deal but a New Global Balance

With no path to military victory in Ukraine, Putin has shifted to a war of attrition, aiming to wear down Western support and force Ukraine into a settlement on Russia's terms. This strategy relies on political fatigue in the West—and, unexpectedly, the Trump administration's willingness to pressure Kyiv into concessions, including abandoning NATO ambitions and accepting territorial losses.

Putin's apparent [openness](#) to Trump's ceasefire proposal is a smokescreen. His only real offer—a brief pause in strikes on energy infrastructure—serves Russian interests while maintaining aggression. His so-called “peace plan” is, in reality, a blueprint for Ukraine's capitulation. Putin's conditions include erasing the root causes of the con-

flict by denying Ukraine's right to determine its own future, refusing to negotiate with President Zelenskyy as a direct call for regime change, halting all foreign military aid to Ukraine as a demand for its demilitarization and vulnerability, and insisting on one-on-one talks with the U.S. in an attempt to sideline Ukraine and European stakeholders, reducing Ukraine from a sovereign nation to an object of negotiation.

**While the White House emphasized only the limited positive aspect of talks, Putin's bold declaration made his real intentions clear: his objective is not peace but Ukraine's submission.**

The stark contrast between Putin's ambitions and the official readout from the White House is telling. While the White House [emphasized](#) only the limited positive aspect of talks, Putin's bold declaration made his real intentions clear: his objective is not peace but Ukraine's submission.

Indications on one of the most critical aspects to be addressed through diplomatic discussions—Ukraine's territorial integrity—do not look promising. The U.S. stance allows the Kremlin to extend focus from Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk to Kherson and Zaporizhzhia - Ukrainian regions now claimed under Russian law as Russian territories. From Russia's legal standpoint, there is no distinction between Crimea and these newly annexed territories. Alarmingly, one of the key U.S. negotiators, Steve Witkoff, appears to [echo](#) Russia's stance even on these outrageous claims, raising serious concerns that Washington's negotiating team may be tacitly legitimizing Russia's territorial ambitions under the guise of pragmatism of peace-making.

If the United States sustains its support for Russia's positions, it will indeed validate Putin's long-term strategy of outlasting Western resolve. How-

ever, the real danger goes beyond Ukraine. Putin's conditions for peace are not limited to retaining occupied Ukrainian territories; they are rooted in his broader vision of a new multipolar world order where Russia's spheres of influence are formally acknowledged and respected far beyond Ukraine. His ambitions extend to reshaping global power dynamics and reasserting Russian control over the former Soviet sphere of influence. If the West allows Russia to dictate the terms of peace, it will not just mean the loss of Ukrainian sovereignty but a fundamental shift in the balance of power that undermines Euro-Atlantic security and global stability.

**If the West allows Russia to dictate the terms of peace, it will not just mean the loss of Ukrainian sovereignty but a fundamental shift in the balance of power that undermines Euro-Atlantic security and global stability.**

The ongoing diplomatic dynamics suggest that Putin is imposing a zero-sum game, blackmailing Ukraine and the West to accept these "new realities" just as he did with Transnistria, Abkhazia, Tskhinvali, Crimea, and Donbas at different points in time. Expecting Putin to compromise and return annexed or occupied territories without serious pressure is entirely unrealistic since, at this point, negotiations seem to be going under Russia's conditions.

Some argue Trump's team is prioritizing a quick pre-election win over a just peace or pursuing a "reversed Kissinger" strategy to realign with Moscow against China. Whatever the motive, the result risks legitimizing Russia's vision of a multipolar world with formalized spheres of influence. In turn, striving towards multipolarity is a rare example of a strategic alignment between Russia and China. Thus, if materialized, the new multipolar world will be a great strategic victory for Russia's

and China's long-standing revisionist policy aimed at revising and taking down the rules-based international system.

## The Multipolar Trap: What Russia's Vision Means for the West

For countries long in Moscow's shadow, it is clear: only a decisive Russian defeat in Ukraine can dismantle the Soviet legacy and halt the Kremlin expansionism. However, in Western capitals, this remains a fringe view. Trump's pivot from "whatever it takes" to "end the war at all costs" plays into Putin's hands. Without a strong, unified Western stance, the danger grows that power politics, not international law, will decide Ukraine's fate.

A real success for Ukraine requires a decisive shift: an unambiguous strategic communication campaign affirming that nothing is off the table and the West's objective is the full restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, backed by the delivery of all necessary weapons to achieve it, and sealed with credible security guarantees. The recent U.S.-Ukraine meeting in Jeddah briefly [revived](#) hopes that Ukraine's national interests and international norms might still shape any future peace deal. However, the reversing dangerous trend toward a multipolar trap still looks real and scary.

Putin's vision of multipolarity is well articulated—and, simply put, it echoes the logic of the old Warsaw Pact and the [Iron Curtain](#). In practical terms, it means that whatever the West may say about events in Russia's so-called neighborhood, Moscow will either absorb the territory, pull it into one of its integration structures, such as BRICS, the Eurasian Union, or the CIS, or bind it into some form of "Union State." This is the core of the threat: the re-establishment of a Russian sphere of influence under the guise of multipolarity. Yet what remains

dangerously unclear is whether the West—particularly the U.S. administration—fully understands what entering into any tacit or explicit multipolar arrangement with Russia would entail for a number of Eastern European states. What would it mean for the Euro-Atlantic security architecture? What norms would be compromised, and whose sovereignty would be up for negotiation?

Three key questions follow. First of all, *is the U.S. ready to accept a multipolar order shaped by Russia, China, and other authoritarian regimes?* Washington's retreat from long-standing commitments—such as its [hesitation](#) on NATO enlargement and failure to uphold assurances from the Bucharest Summit and Budapest Memorandum—suggests it may be edging toward de facto acceptance of a Russian version of multipolarity. Ukraine's sovereignty has become the test of whether the U.S. still supports a rules-based international order.

Second, *can the West stay unified—or will the U.S. and Europe become separate poles in a fractured world?* The transatlantic unity that once defined the West is under severe strain. NATO's coherence is weakened by uncertainty from Washington. Meanwhile, the EU faces growing internal divisions, with Hungary and Slovakia obstructing key foreign policy decisions. Europe finds itself entangled in a tech war with China, a defense standoff with Russia, and a trade imbalance with the U.S. Post-Brexit, the concept of a "coalition of the willing" may emerge as a stopgap, but without unified leadership, the West risks fragmenting into distinct and potentially competing centers of power.

*The third inevitable question is whether a new arms race can be avoided in this freshly baked multipolar world.* With the blatant violation of the Budapest Memorandum and doubts over NATO guarantees, the foundation of global non-proliferation is [eroding](#), and nuclear deterrence is seen as the only realistic guarantee of security. This is already prompting [discussions](#) in Europe about alternative

defense models, including France offering a nuclear umbrella to Poland. Simultaneously, Baltic and Polish defense ministers [recommend](#) withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention to allow landmines as a last-resort border defense against Russia. As deterrence erodes, a dangerous global arms race looms. Authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and China, which do not rely on public opinion for their policy-making, can undoubtedly keep pace, leaving a serious question about whether affluent Western economies can afford to pay for more guns at the expense of public welfare or to what extent the patience of democratic electorates will support such a drive for larger military expenditures.

These questions, and the lack of answers thereto, lead to one conclusion - Russia's "multipolarity" is not a fair alternative—it is a threat to sovereignty, security, and the rules-based order. And the West must confront this reality before it is too late.

## What Russia's Multipolar World Means for Georgia

***Russia's push for a multipolar world raises urgent concerns for small states like Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia—nations whose security is deeply tied to Ukraine's fate. If, after years of resistance, Ukraine is pressured into accepting a deal that rewards Russian aggression and is brokered without its full consent, it would set a dangerous precedent.***

Russia's push for a multipolar world raises urgent concerns for small states like Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia—nations whose security is deeply tied to Ukraine's fate. If, after years of resistance, Ukraine is pressured into accepting a deal that rewards Russian aggression and is brokered without its full consent, it would set a dangerous prece-

dent. It would send a clear message that the use of force to redraw borders and dictate terms is once again a legitimate tool of statecraft—especially in Russia's neighborhood.

Such an outcome would cast doubt on the future of Europe's eastern frontier. What credibility would remain in the promise of Western integration for states that have made painful sacrifices to move closer to the EU and NATO? Can the EU or the U.S. realistically reclaim influence in Eastern Europe under current conditions—or will the region be surrendered, incrementally, to Moscow's sphere of control?

Nowhere is this dilemma more acute than in Georgia. A peace deal that compromises Ukraine's territorial integrity would embolden Moscow's efforts to dominate the so-called "near abroad" and devastate Georgia's long-term security. It would confirm that the West is either unwilling or unable to protect its partners in Russia's shadow.

Even in a more hopeful scenario—where Ukraine secures new security guarantees and a clear path to the EU—Georgia may still be left behind. The ruling Georgian Dream party continues to steer the country away from the West, aligning with anti-democratic forces and [isolating](#) Georgia from any emerging security framework. Government statements [blaming](#) Georgia for past conflicts only help Putin frame the country as part of Russia's rightful sphere, undermining any Western claim to engagement.

***If Ukraine is ultimately absorbed into Russia's orbit, it will not just end Kyiv's European aspirations—it will extinguish hope for a democratic, sovereign future across the entire Eastern Neighborhood.***

If Ukraine is ultimately absorbed into Russia's orbit,

it will not just end Kyiv's European aspirations—it will extinguish hope for a democratic, sovereign future across the entire Eastern Neighborhood. The broader Black Sea region will inevitably face growing instability, deeper authoritarian entrenchment, and a dangerous new normal where small states can no longer choose their destiny.

To prevent a dangerous rollback of democratic progress in the region, the West must adopt a clear and bold strategy for Georgia. There should be no room for speculation about restoring relations with the current regime. Instead, it must be made

unmistakably clear to Georgia's overwhelmingly pro-Western society that the Georgian Dream's path—one that isolates the country from Western interests and values—poses a direct threat not only to its Euro-Atlantic future but also to its territorial integrity and sovereignty. A strong, coordinated response is needed: robust sanctions targeting the regime's leadership and a meaningful support package for democratic actors and institutions. This would send the right message—that the West stands with the Georgian people and that those fighting for Georgia's freedom and democracy are not left alone against Russia and its local proxies ■