



Navigating Peace and Stability in The Dominance of Major Global Powers in Interstate Competition

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Abstract

This conference paper presents an academic adaptation of Professor Georgy Toloraya's presentation at the Jakarta Geopolitical Forum X, examining the implications of an emerging multipolar international order through the concept of Comparative Power. The presentation argues that conventional measures of state power based primarily on economic or military capabilities are insufficient to explain the increasingly complex distribution of influence in contemporary international relations. Instead, a broader comparative framework is introduced, incorporating historical, institutional, political, cultural, technological, and strategic dimensions to classify states according to their functional roles within the international system. The presentation further examines Russia's strategic position as a sub-superpower, the significance of the Russia-China partnership, the complementary role of BRICS+, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the Eurasian Economic Union alongside the United Nations, and the growing importance of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, in supporting a more inclusive multipolar order. Practical opportunities for cooperation are identified in energy security, food security, defence technology, peaceful nuclear applications, digital innovation, education, and multilateral dialogue. The presentation concludes that multipolarity represents an emerging equilibrium that should be strengthened through inclusive cooperation, strategic partnerships, and pragmatic multilateral engagement.

Keywords: BRICS+, Comparative Power, Indonesia, Multipolarity, Russia-Southeast Asia Relations

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Published by Lemhannas Press.

Introduction

The contemporary international order has undergone profound transformation since the end of the Cold War. Assumptions of a stable international system centred upon a limited number of dominant powers have gradually given way to a more fragmented geopolitical landscape characterised by shifting strategic alignments, emerging centres of influence, and increasing institutional pluralism. These developments have altered the position of many states, including Indonesia, whose accession to BRICS reflects its growing role within global governance and the wider international system.

These developments also call into question conventional approaches to measuring state power. Traditional classifications generally rely on economic size, military capability, or political influence as the principal indicators of international status. However, these measures are becoming increasingly inadequate for explaining the diverse roles assumed by states within an evolving multipolar order. The presentation therefore introduced the concept of Comparative Power, which evaluates states through a broader combination of political, economic, military, historical, institutional, cultural, technological, and strategic dimensions. This framework provides a more comprehensive basis for understanding how states influence the international system beyond conventional measures of national capability.

Building upon this perspective, the presentation proposed a comparative taxonomy of state power to explain the different functions performed by countries within the emerging international order. The framework serves as the foundation for examining Russia's strategic position, the development of the Russia-China partnership, the contribution of non-Western multilateral institutions, and the expanding opportunities for cooperation between Russia and Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, within an increasingly multipolar world.

Result and Discussion

The proposed Comparative Power framework provides an alternative perspective for understanding the contemporary international order by moving beyond conventional classifications based solely on economic size, military capability, or political influence. Instead, it evaluates states through a broader combination of historical, institutional, political, cultural, technological, and strategic factors, recognising that international influence is increasingly determined by a state's functional role within a multipolar system rather than by material capability alone.

Based on this framework, the presentation classified the international hierarchy into several categories of comparative power. At the highest level are the System Architects,

represented by the United States and China, which possess comprehensive capabilities enabling them to shape international rules, influence global governance, and determine the strategic direction of the international system. The second tier comprises Sub-superpowers, represented primarily by Russia and, potentially, India. These states possess sufficient strategic capability to influence the balance among major powers, exercise significant geopolitical leverage, and affect international outcomes, although they do not independently establish the rules governing the international order.

The next level consists of Great Powers, including countries whose influence derives from a combination of political authority, economic capability, military strength, historical legacy, institutional position, and soft power. Beyond this group, the presentation introduced the category of Upper-middle Powers, describing states that function as regional anchors, geopolitical stabilisers, or asymmetric strategic actors. Countries including Indonesia, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Israel, and several others occupy this category because they exert considerable regional influence while simultaneously balancing relationships among larger powers. The remaining Middle Powers continue to contribute to regional and international cooperation, although their influence is generally exercised within the existing international framework rather than through the creation of new international norms.

Applying this comparative taxonomy, the presentation examined Russia's strategic position within Asia. Russia was presented as a country that enjoys relatively favourable relations across the region because, unlike many external powers, it does not carry a colonial legacy in Southeast Asia. Russia's long-term strategic partnership with China was described as comprehensive and based upon shared strategic interests rather than a formal military alliance directed against other countries. According to the presentation, this partnership currently represents the strongest period of bilateral relations in recent history and constitutes an important pillar of regional stability.

The discussion further highlighted the strategic importance of ASEAN, India, and Indonesia within Russia's broader Asian policy. ASEAN was recognised as an important model of non-aligned, consensus-based regionalism whose centrality should be preserved. The presentation emphasised support for ASEAN's unity and expressed concern regarding attempts to divide the organisation into competing geopolitical blocs. India was identified as another significant strategic partner whose growing international role requires Russia to maintain balanced relations with both New Delhi and Beijing. Indonesia was described as a natural leader of the Global South, reflecting its demographic scale, growing international influence, membership of BRICS, and capacity to promote constructive dialogue among developing countries. The presentation further noted the positive momentum in bilateral relations between

Russia and Indonesia, supported by expanding political dialogue and economic cooperation.

Turning to global governance, the presentation reaffirmed Russia's continued support for the central role of the United Nations despite acknowledging its institutional limitations. Rather than replacing the United Nations, organisations including BRICS+, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) were presented as complementary mechanisms capable of strengthening international cooperation. These institutions provide additional platforms for political dialogue, economic cooperation, and regional security while supporting greater representation of the Global South within the evolving international system.

The presentation subsequently identified several practical areas in which Russia and Southeast Asian countries could strengthen cooperation. These include energy security, food security, defence and technical cooperation, the peaceful application of nuclear technology, space cooperation, digital and technological development, and broader political engagement through BRICS+. Beyond sectoral cooperation, the presentation proposed the establishment of an informal strategic dialogue resembling a "Counter Davos", bringing together policymakers, scholars, former political leaders, military practitioners, journalists, and business representatives to discuss long-term solutions to contemporary geopolitical, economic, technological, and security challenges. Indonesia was proposed as a suitable venue for the first meeting of the proposed dialogue platform, given its growing international standing and its capacity to facilitate inclusive dialogue between the Global South and the wider international community.

Conclusion

The presentation concluded that the contemporary international order should be understood through a broader conception of comparative power rather than conventional measures based solely on economic or military capability. Within an increasingly multipolar environment, states perform different strategic functions according to their relative capabilities, institutional influence, historical experience, and geopolitical position. This perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of how countries contribute to international stability and cooperation beyond traditional power hierarchies.

The presentation further emphasised that Russia supports an inclusive multipolar order by upholding the central role of the United Nations while encouraging complementary cooperation through organisations including BRICS+, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the Eurasian Economic Union. At the regional level, ASEAN centrality, balanced relations with

China and India, and deeper engagement with Southeast Asia were identified as important components of Russia's long-term strategic approach.

Finally, the presentation highlighted Indonesia's growing importance as a leading country of the Global South and an increasingly influential participant in global governance. Expanding cooperation in energy, food security, defence, peaceful nuclear technology, digital innovation, education, and multilateral dialogue offers practical opportunities to strengthen Russia–Southeast Asia relations. The presentation concluded by reaffirming that multipolarity represents a new equilibrium, and that constructive cooperation, inclusive dialogue, and pragmatic partnerships remain essential for navigating an increasingly complex international environment.

Publication Note

This article presents an academic adaptation of the presentation delivered at the 10th Jakarta Geopolitical Forum (JGF X) 2026. Editorial revisions were limited to structure, language, and readability, while the speaker's original arguments, meaning, and policy recommendations remain unchanged.

References

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