



Michael Staack

## Multilateralism and Multipolarity

Structures of the Emerging World Order

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**The international system is undergoing a fundamental transition from unipolarity to multipolarity and is facing a growing importance of Asia in world politics. In order to accomplish global governance in the 21st century, the multipolar state-system needs to be complemented by and linked with a dense network of multilateral cooperation.**

Until the middle of the 20th century, periods of multipolarity were much more common than those of unipolarity. The current transition may therefore be regarded as a return to the international system's 'normality'. However, the current power shifts distinctive feature is that it does not only occur in the political West but is also characterized by the re-emergence of Asia in general and the comeback of China and India in particular. By following their own agenda in world politics, these emerging powers are limiting the governance capabilities of the leading

Western power centers, USA and European Union. The emerging multipolarity does not yet in itself constitute an adequate system of global governance – multilateral cooperation is required. A multilateral system must incorporate actors from the economy and civil society. There are several indicators pointing towards the rising powers readiness to integrate themselves into the present structures of the international order. Their main objective is to shape and reform that order according to their own agenda and to increase their influence as a result of their growing importance.

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