

Re-Examining Multi-Polarity as a Concept & as a Practical Reality: Scrutinizing the Rise of Emerging Powers and the World Order

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ABSTRACT: This paper critically examines the claims surrounding the emergence of a multipolar global order, using a qualitative methodology grounded in theoretical analysis and case study evaluation. While the decline of U.S. hegemony is often cited as the catalyst for multipolarity, the study argues that structural, institutional, and ideological factors continue to sustain U.S. dominance. By analyzing the roles of China and Russia as alternative poles, the research identifies their internal constraints, asymmetrical partnerships, and limited global appeal. The paper concludes that the fragmented and interdependent nature of contemporary power dynamics challenges the viability of a fully multipolar order, emphasizing the absence of cohesive alternatives to the U.S.-led system. This study contributes to ongoing debates on power transitions and the future of global governance.

KEYWORDS: Multipolarity, U.S. Hegemony, Emerging Powers, Global Power Dynamics, International Relations Theory

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Introduction

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the global order witnessed the unchallenged dominance of the United States, marking an era of unipolarity. This era was dubbed the "unipolar moment" by academics like Charles Krauthammer, who emphasized the extraordinary concentration of power in the hands of one state (Krauthammer, 1991). The unmatched technological, financial, and military advantages of the U.S. as well as the institutions and alliances mostly built under its direction, the United States established its hegemony in world politics (Ikenberry, 2001). The claim that the post-Cold War system was distinctively unipolar was supported by the fact that no country in recent history had attained such a thorough lead across all facets of power.

However, debates over a possible transition to multipolarity gained traction as the United States' relative influence declined. According to academics like Barry Buzan and Amitav Acharya, the unipolar system is under threat from the emergence of nations like China and Russia and the transfer of power to regional players (Buzan, 2004), (Acharya, 2014). Although there is evidence of a decline in the United States, some theorists like Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth warn that no other state or coalition has yet proven to be able to equal the United States thoroughly across all or some areas along the parameters of which the order of the

world politics is to be measured (Wohlforth, [2016](#)). These discussions frequently run the danger of being oversimplified since they mostly concentrate on material capabilities while ignoring the strategic and structural prerequisites for an order whose theoretical justification is consistent with its actual manifestation.

By going beyond crude measures like the rise and fall of major powers, this study aims to re-examine the idea of multi-polarity. It highlights that the balance of power, alliance structures, and strategic harmony among revisionist powers are crucial determinants of whether multi-polarity is established or might arise, drawing on Kenneth Waltz's theory of structural realism. Although they are frequently depicted as rivals to American hegemony, revisionist states like China and Russia have not yet established the strong, long-term partnerships required for a harmonious multipolar system (Acharya, *The Multipolar World and its Challenges*, 2018). Furthermore, as Mearsheimer points out, the endurance of any international system depends on the level of harmony between strategic interests and interconnections of key actors as well as power shifts, which can make simple polarization models more difficult to understand (Mearsheimer, [2003](#)).

A historical lens will be employed to compare contemporary claims of multi-polarity with the multipolar order of 19th-century Europe and transitions to bipolarity during the Cold War. Scholars like Paul Kennedy argue that the European balance-of-power system succeeded in maintaining multi-polarity due to the strategic interdependence of great powers (Kennedy, [1987](#)). In contrast, the Cold War's bipolarity emerged because the two dominant powers, the U.S. and the USSR, were able to outmatch others in both material and ideological terms. To assess whether the global political, military, and economic dynamics in contemporary international relations meet the state of affairs of multipolarity. Or there is a more complex state of affairs in this particular form of order which defies the traditional concepts of polarization.

This paper aims to objectively evaluate the structural conditions that are required to have that idealized form of this particular conceptualization of order by considering both historical and theoretical factors and the respective theoretical paradigm this approach necessitates. Without having an advocacy of the arguments in favor or against this conceptualization of the order, this paper critically evaluates the theoretical foundations & their manifestations as a practical reality.

Literature Review

The evolution of the power systems and their distribution on a global level helps in acquaintance with the concept as well as a manifested practice of a state of affairs. Historians like Paul Kennedy characterized the European order of the 19th century as multipolar which was based on the balance of power among major states e.g. France, Britain, Russia, etc. This order survived somehow with varying degrees of applicability over the years until WW1, which was what we can term a "Critical Juncture" paving the way for its ultimate collapse. Other theorists e.g. the leading figures of structural realism like Waltz, analyzed and argued about the inherent instability of the multipolarity due to reasons ranging from the complexities in the distribution of power and the precarious balance of power that might emerge among numerous states (Waltz, [1979](#)). Similarly, Morgenthau observed such structures as susceptible to conflict the reason of which was that states in this structure navigates. He viewed such systems as prone to conflict because states must navigate kaleidoscopic alliances to maintain equilibrium (Morgenthau, [1948](#)). Henry Kissinger in contrast argues that the relative

stability of the order of the 19th century was attributed to the shared values and formal diplomatic ideas, approaches, and practices. This, according to him was one of the reasons that aided in the restrained and responsible behaviors the state showed by providing a framework of normativity to the delicate balance of power & the precarious approach of 'Realpolitik' which consequently led to the overall preservation of balance (Kissinger, [1994](#)). The analysis was criticized by scholars like E. H. Carr who, by highlighting and exploring the relationship between the power and dominance of the European states with colonialism and its associated strategies & objectives of exploitation, explored the parameters that were previously overlooked in the existing accounts (Carr, [1939](#)).

Analyzing the theoretical perspective on power distribution, Realism, particularly its structural variant, provides a foundational framework for analyzing multipolarity. Waltz argues that the distribution of capabilities among states determines systemic stability, with unipolar and bipolar systems being more stable than multipolar ones (Waltz, [1979](#)). This perspective is challenged by proponents of neoliberal institutionalism like Keohane, who emphasize the role of institutions in mitigating anarchy and fostering cooperation, even in multipolar settings (Keohane, [1984](#)).

Constructivist scholars, such as Wendt, shift the focus from material capabilities to the shared ideas and identities that shape international interactions (Wendt, [1999](#)). They argue that a multipolar order can stabilize if states develop norms prioritizing collective security over competition. Acharya challenges Western-centric interpretations by extending this viewpoint by emphasizing the importance of regionalism and the Global South's involvement in redefining the parameters of multipolarity (Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, [2014](#)).

The growth in the relative power of China and Russia has rekindled discussions regarding the re-emergence of a multipolar order. According to academics like Buzan, these states' expanding economic and military prowess portends a departure from US unipolarity (Buzan, [2004](#)). Allison concurs, pointing out that China's Belt and Road Initiative is a calculated attempt to restructure international economic governance to its advantage (Allison, [2017](#)). However, opponents such as Nye warn against overestimating the erosion of US dominance, emphasizing its lasting soft power and technical supremacy (Nye, [2011](#)). Wohlforth also argues that although new powers are challenging American supremacy, they do not have the normative impact and unified coalitions needed to create a genuinely multipolar system (Wohlforth, [1999](#)).

Strong alliance frameworks, common governance standards, and parity among major powers are all necessary for a multipolar order to be viable. Ikenberry contends that the post-World War II liberal order's tenacity shows how crucial institutional frameworks are to preserving systemic stability (Ikenberry, [2001](#)). As governments vie for regional supremacy, Mearsheimer contends that the lack of a unifying hegemon in a multipolar world raises the possibility of violence. Similarly, Brooks and Wohlforth point out that globalization and economic interconnectedness make it harder to draw distinct boundaries of competition and confound conventional power relations. They contend that cooperative procedures that go beyond the competitive logic of multipolarity are necessary in light of technology breakthroughs and transnational issues like climate change etc. (Wohlforth, [2016](#)).

There are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding multipolarity as a theory as well as an empirical state of affairs, despite a wealth of research. Transnational concerns and the influence of non-state actors are often overlooked in favor of state-centric theories. Additionally, not enough research has been done on how artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, and digital technologies affect the distribution of power among great powers in different domains from the parameters of which one can analyze the order and state of affairs of global politics. By highlighting the significance of regional powers and alternative governance models, Acharya advocates for a more inclusive strategy that takes into account viewpoints from the Global South (Acharya, [2018](#)).

This study emphasizes that to evaluate the feasibility of multipolarity concepts in the modern international system, an alternative, impartial, and empirical examination is required. By filling up these gaps, this research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of whether the current state of the world order is consistent with the historical and theoretical definitions of multipolarity.

Research Methodology

Through a critical analysis and analytical examination of the assertions, this work challenges the traditional and prevailing conceptualization of multipolarity. This necessitates reading the body of current literature to comprehend the arguments and supporting evidence. These many assertions provide a common understanding of the nature of the order and its evolution.

The research methodology begins with a comprehensive literature review, which explores key theoretical debates on world order, including perspectives on resilience, revisionism, and potential transformations in the global system. This review is followed by a detailed analysis of specific claims, such as the inevitability of a multipolar world order, the roles of China and Russia as definitive poles in this emerging order, and the notion that the decline of U.S. hegemony is the primary driver of multipolarity. These claims were scrutinized from multiple theoretical and historical perspectives, assessing their validity and consistency with current geopolitical realities.

To scrutinize, claims would be evaluated on the parameters ranging from historical patterns, and power shifts in contemporary international politics to its peculiarities, etc. While not relying on any single approach, this paper uses the theoretical and empirical methods of scrutiny to evaluate the credibility of the view in question.

The Nature of World Order: Resilience, Revisionism, and the Prospects of Transformation

The power distribution and the legitimacy of the rules that govern the relations and interactions between the sovereign states make any conceptualization of the world order tied to the former. As Kissinger argues the world order as a practical reality does not arise spontaneously from some kind of arrangement of power and its distribution but also necessitates an underlying consensus on the rules and principles that govern and regulate these relations and interactions (Kissinger, [2014](#)).

The contemporary rule-based order which was established in the aftermath of the world war symbolizes its nature and behavior (Ikenberry, [2011](#)). Institutions like the United Nations, WHO etc. serve as apparatuses

and platforms for the promotion of democratic norms and collective security. On the other hand, the revisionist states consider this order as serving the interest of the United States which was predominantly influenced by it since its establishment. They advocate for a system that better accommodates their rise and influence.

This calls into question whether revisionism is required, inevitable, or even possible, as well as how flexible the existing system is. Examining this assertion exposes significant conflicts between the validity of calls for modification and the stability offered by the current system. According to historical precedents, when international systems neglect to confront new realities or integrate new power centers, they frequently experience crises of legitimacy. The dissolution of the Concert of Europe during World War I, for example, demonstrated how an antiquated system could not adapt to changing alliances and new powers, opening the door for the League of Nations (Gagarin, 2006). Nonetheless, the modern liberal order is particularly resilient, in part because of its institutional inclusion. The current order gives revisionist countries like China and Russia platforms to influence global governance while preserving its overall structure by allowing them to participate in important forums like the G20 and the UN Security Council (as permanent members).

The argument that the liberal system would inevitably deteriorate cannot be completely rejected, notwithstanding its flexibility. Revisionist discourse is fuelled by discontent with Western domination and the selective application of values like sovereignty and human rights (Acharya, 2014). However, the chances of revisionism succeeding are weakened by a few things. In the first place, the lack of a logical alternative framework makes it more difficult for revisionist powers to win over many people. In contrast to the liberal system, which provided a coherent vision after 1945, the revisionist demands of today lack a common conceptual foundation. Second, major obstacles to dramatic transformation are posed by the global economy's interconnectedness, which is strengthened by international organizations. Third, the present order's structural benefits, including the incorporation of revisionist nations into important institutions, prolong its existence. Last but not least, the instability of India's alliance with the United States or the conflicts between China and Russia serve as examples of the lack of trust and cooperation among revisionist countries, which further undermines the viability of developing a workable alternative.

It's also oversimplified to say that a new global order will inevitably emerge when U.S. power declines. The liberal order's inclusive qualities, historical endurance, and structural advantages imply that, despite the obvious discontent with the existing system, its renewal or adaptation—rather than its destruction—is more likely. The unique feature of the existing system is its capacity to include revisionist states while upholding general Western standards. Because of this dichotomy, revisionist governments are paradoxically able to both criticize and depend on the current system. Only when a serious legitimacy crisis—like a catastrophic war between superpowers or a worldwide economic collapse—forces a reassessment of the current system will the pivotal moment for change probably come?

The Inevitability of a Multipolar World Order

One of the most frequently cited claims in academic and policy circles is that the global power structure is inevitably transitioning toward multipolarity. Scholars such as Charles Kupchan argue that the decline of U.S. hegemony, combined with the economic and political rise of states like China, India, and Russia, marks the

beginning of a multipolar era (Kupchan, [2012](#)). This perspective is often reinforced by global power indices (e.g., GDP, military capabilities, technological innovation) that indicate a narrowing gap between the United States and other major powers (Lawson, [2015](#)). Moreover, Acharya suggests that multipolarity is inevitable and desirable, as it reflects a more equitable distribution of power. (Acharya, [2014](#))

While the inevitability of multipolarity appears compelling at first glance, it is subject to significant scrutiny. Realist scholars like John Mearsheimer emphasize that power transitions are rarely linear or predictable (Mearsheimer, [2003](#)). Historical precedents, such as the post-Napoleonic Concert of Europe and the bipolarity of the Cold War, show that systemic transformations often require a critical juncture, such as major wars or economic collapses, to restructure the existing order (Kennedy, [1987](#))

Claims on multipolarity might not have the required empirical support in the absence of a comparable event. Furthermore, some theorists, like as William Wohlforth, contend that unipolarity's structural durability has been understated, especially in situations where one state (like the United States) retains overwhelming influence in the military, economy, and ideology (Wohlforth, [1999](#)). The persistence of liberal international institutions is also emphasized by academics such as G. John Ikenberry as a stabilizing element that slows down fast systemic change. The idea that multipolarity is a normal development is called into question by this.

The assertion of inevitability oversimplifies the complexity of global power relations when examined more closely. Even if the rise of nations like China and India is undeniably altering the global order, the fundamental advantages that the United States enjoys are not immediately undermined by their ascent. Additionally, internal issues like economic disparity, political unpredictability, and strategic division among possible "poles" threaten the unity required for a real multipolar regime (Ikenberry, 2011). These narratives are further complicated by the importance of global norms, such as the liberal international order and the United States' persistent soft power (Brands, [2016](#)). As a result, the idea that multipolarity is inevitable is still more of an ideal than a proven fact at this point.

Definitive Poles

The claim that China and Russia are the undisputed poles of a new multipolar system has drawn a lot of attention in scholarly and political discussions. Supporters emphasize that Russia's military power and China's unparalleled economic growth are important factors that threaten American hegemony and that their cooperation in organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS further supports this claim (Zakaria, [2008](#)), (Allison, [2017](#)). They must be examined to see whether they can maintain this status in a multipolar environment, though, given the complex reality of their geopolitical, economic, and strategic stance.

The post-World War II structural advantages of the U.S.-led system are largely responsible for its attractiveness on a worldwide scale. The U.S. utilized its economic dominance, technological innovation, and military superiority to shape institutions like the United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, and NATO, which reinforced what was termed as 'rule-based international order' (Ikenberry, [2001](#)). Unlike China, which has struggled to export its vision, the U.S. leveraged its cultural and ideological soft power to propagate ideas of liberty, democracy, and free markets. These ideas, while inconsistently applied (e.g., supporting dictatorships

or overthrowing governments), found fertile ground globally due to historical advantages such as the widespread use of English as a market language on political and economic levels, a decolonized world eager for development models, and the adaptability of American institutions to global integration.

The centralized, authoritarian state-driven style of Chinese administration, in contrast, lacks the adaptability and a global even regional appeal of values. While China's cultural and political uniformity, geographic limitations, and lack of language accessibility hinder its ability to develop a compelling story for global adoption, the United States marketed its system as flexible and inclusive, even while selective in practice (Nye, [2004](#)). In addition, the U.S.'s supremacy in international financial, cultural, and communication networks maintained the appeal of its order, an area in which China falls far behind.

Despite being vital, the relationship between China and Russia exhibits notable imbalances that call into question their equal standing as poles. Russia's growing reliance on China raises concerns about its independence, especially in light of Western sanctions following the invasion of Ukraine. Russia is now considered a "vassal state" by academics due to its dependence on Chinese technology, oil markets, and financial institutions (Lo, 2017). Because of this dynamic, Russia is less seen as a co-equal pole and more as a player that supports China's goals.

In a similar vein, China itself has significant obstacles in claiming global leadership. Although its governance approach is effective and less susceptible to lobbying, it is viewed as autocratic and unsustainable on the inside. Its location, encircled by regional powers like South Korea, Japan, India, and Russia, presents ongoing challenges from the outside. China's aspirations for hegemony are further limited by its incapacity to articulate a cohesive global vision and its emphasis on national renewal rather than global supremacy (Fairbank, [1992](#)). China lacks the universality of culture and ideology that enabled the United States to create and maintain its system, despite its economic might.

A multipolar system is made more complicated by the ambiguity of revisionist nations like China, Russia, and India. Their interconnectedness and conflicting interests make it difficult for all three to align as unifying poles, even as they all contest elements of the US-led system. India's strategic alliance with the United States, especially through the Quad, shows that it supports American objectives to restrain China while also attempting to maintain its strategic independence (Pant, [2021](#)).

An additional degree of complexity is introduced by economic interconnectedness. China's exclusion from the global economy would have disastrous effects, in contrast to the West's relatively easy exclusion of Russia during the invasion of Ukraine. Such exclusion is unrealistic given China's pivotal position in global supply networks and its economic interconnectedness with both developed and poor nations (Acharya, [2014](#)). Because of this interdependence, no state—including the United States—has the power to completely control or bar another from the international system.

The claim that China and Russia are definitive poles in a multipolar world is significantly weakened by their internal constraints, ambiguous revisionist goals, and the complex interdependence that characterizes the modern international system. While the U.S. successfully leveraged its structural advantages to build an appealing and resilient global order, neither China nor Russia has managed to replicate such universal appeal.

China's struggles to sell its vision globally, Russia's subordinate position in their bilateral dynamic, and the ambiguous roles of other key states like India highlight the transitional, fragmented nature of the current global system rather than a clear shift to multipolarity.

Decline as the Primary Driver

The transition to multipolarity is often attributed mostly to the waning of U.S. hegemony. Due to a variety of circumstances, including protracted nation-building initiatives and strategic setbacks in too ambitious international operations, the United States' relative power—which is defined as its capacity to influence global behavior—has diminished. Policymakers, academics, and international political analysts all largely agree that this does not guarantee the establishment of a truly multipolar world system. Mistakes like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which depleted financial resources and damaged the United States' reputation internationally, and the War on Terror, which spent more than \$4 trillion without producing any meaningful strategic advantages, have in fact caused the country's power to decline. (Bilmes, [2010](#)). Additionally, its backing of governments with a dismal record on human rights, like Israel and the Gulf monarchies, has undermined its moral authority and called into doubt its assertion that it promotes universal democratic norms (Chomsky, [2003](#)), (Blum, [1995](#)).

It cannot ignore the strategic, political, and economic ramifications of these failures and defeats.

Notwithstanding these losses, the United States' fundamental advantages make its collapse more relative than absolute. It has historically been shielded from the destruction of world conflicts by its geographic remoteness from other superpowers, a shield that keeps bolstering its stability and influence on a worldwide scale (Mearsheimer, [2003](#)). The United States is also able to stay at the forefront of technical and military innovation because of its enormous economic base and unmatched investment in R&D. It has a special ability to influence international norms and policies because of its worldwide interactions with both state and non-state actors. English's language supremacy as an inherited global medium reinforces its capacity to construct global discourse and spread narratives, maintaining its cultural and ideological appeal (Grazia, [2005](#)), (Bayles, [2014](#)).

Perceptions of the United States' collapse have been heightened by significant domestic issues. Its capacity to develop a foreign policy has been hampered by political polarisation, as seen by arguments between isolationist Republicans and interventionist Democrats. These discussions highlight larger worries about the boundaries of American authority, especially in the wake of decades of abuse. Nevertheless, due to structural imperatives and bipartisan consensus, its foreign policy on important topics like NATO, the Indo-Pacific, and counterterrorism exhibits remarkable stability despite these divides (Lee, [2009](#)). The institutional inertia that underlies U.S. policy is highlighted by the fact that once administrations take office, campaign pledges of revolutionary transformation frequently give way to practical modifications (Fukuyama, [2014](#)).

The attractiveness of its societal model, which maintains its appeal despite its shortcomings, is another element that helps explain why its soft power has endured. Because it offers political freedom, economic opportunity, and a diverse culture that can accommodate talent from around the world, the United States continues to be a desirable destination for people from post-colonial countries (Kerr, [2018](#)), (McHale, [2005](#)).

The United States maintains policies that allow it to access global intellectual and cultural resources, assuring the survival of both its hard and soft power, despite obstacles like the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment during the Trump administration (Wilson, [2019](#)). This societal openness stands in stark contrast to possible rivals like as China, whose authoritarian rule, cultural homogeneity, and inward-looking government approach restrict its attractiveness on a global scale (Lipset, [1996](#)), (Hartz, [1955](#)).

Because of its special status of what we can call “A big Interprise” operating under the pretense of a nation-state, the United States can interact with a wide range of actors worldwide (Chomsky, [2003](#)), (Greider, [1992](#)). Its cultural exports, top-notch colleges, and the universally proclaimed and post-colonially embraced principles of liberty and democracy—even in areas that are critical of its foreign policy—all contribute to its soft power. In the same way, it gains from its alliances, albeit they are changing as allies like Europe and Japan want more independence (Merkl, [2005](#)). The United States still has a lot of power, though, as seen by its capacity to influence international security and economic policy.

Potential rivals to American supremacy must contend with their constraints. Chinese economic might notwithstanding, the country is unable to express a global philosophy or vision that is on par with American values. It is unable to establish a hegemonic position because of its autocratic government, lack of soft power appeal, and regional rivalries (Mosher, [2001](#)). Due to its population decline and economic vulnerability, Russia mostly functions as a regional power with little global impact. Despite being a developing power, India's capacity to successfully project influence is limited by internal socioeconomic inequities, the contradiction of independence and post-colonial legacies, and an inconsistent foreign policy. Although there is a fall in U.S. hegemony, it is neither complete nor adequate to fulfill the requirements needed to build a multipolar system. The longevity of its supremacy is built-in structural advantages, societal appeal, and an unequalled capacity to connect with and influence a vast array of global entities. Its institutional stability, cultural openness, and soft power guarantee its continued importance in the world order.

Conclusion

The complex and fragmented nature of the order becomes very obvious to be observed while scrutinizing the rationale of the claims. However, the relative power of the U.S. has declined as evidenced by its overreach and ambitious foreign campaigns costly enough to have serious political and economic implications, this decline doesn't liken the emergence of a truly multipolar order. The United States, as a central actor with definitive structural advantages ranging from ideological, and political as well as the peculiar nature of its nation-state continues to shape & influence the global political landscape. As alternative poles, China and Russia's aspirational positions are nevertheless limited by ideological flaws, economic reliance, and regional conflicts that hinder them from offering a universal or cohesive vision of world leadership.

Even while the idea of multipolarity is frequently addressed, it runs the risk of oversimplifying how dynamic and interconnected world power is. The world is not yet characterized by distinct poles but rather by dispersed and issue-based power centers, as seen by the revisionist states' fragmented alignment, economic systems' interconnectedness, and their unclear global objectives. This calls into question the conventional view of multipolarity and invites academics and decision-makers to reconsider whether such a paradigm reflects the complexity of contemporary international relations.

There are important ramifications for global governance from these results. The effectiveness of cooperative procedures and international institutions might be compromised in the absence of a strong pole with the ability to exercise decisive leadership, which could result in increased instability. However, the systemic inertia of current institutions and power structures limits the potential it presents for middle powers and regional players to take more active roles.

Examining the global order in its entirety again reveals that, despite its shortcomings, the current U.S.-led system exhibits the flexibility and tenacity that have enabled it to endure through pivotal moments. The current transitional phase may signify a gradual renewal of the current system or a fragmented shift towards multipolarity, depending on frameworks such as Kissinger's cyclical understanding of world orders. The persistent attractiveness of U.S. institutions and ideals, however, along with the limits of its opponents, imply that a full departure from the existing system remains improbable in the near future.

This analysis and its conclusion must not be understood as deterministic as the infamous "End of History" Rather it analyzed and scrutinized the logic behind some ideas that assert the establishment of multipolarity and as these ideas came up from the diverse sectors of academia to policymakers alike, this manufactured what we can term as "Doctrinal Blindness" which demands scrutiny of those claims that provides a conceptual foundation to this phenomenon.

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