

Editor's Introduction

Security in the Age of Multipolarity

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Dear Readers,

We are honored and excited to share with you Volume 13 of the Fletcher Security Review. This edition of the Fletcher Security Review arrives as the underpinnings of the international security status quo are under threat.

The status quo of the rules-based order set in motion after World War II is being tested. As China continues to challenge the balance of power in the Pacific, the United States, the traditional lynchpin of the liberal international order, has shifted to a foreign policy more skeptical of the multilateral system.

Among this upheaval to the international order, middle powers have begun to acknowledge the need for a new system that diversifies security and increases their bargaining power. The European Union embodies this drive for change. While traditionally a close ally of the United States, the collection of European states with diverse foreign policies and military capabilities has recognized a need to reduce its reliance on America – a shift which itself may lead to an identity crisis for the Union.

Any discussion about the shifting world order today would be remiss if it did not also explore the impact of technological innovation. Both a cause and symptom of instability, the development of Large-Language-Model Artificial Intelligence is proceeding at a pace that vastly exceeds the capability our governments have to regulate them. AI technologies now have the potential both to be used as tools to wield in state competition and to fundamentally transform society.

This international landscape is one in which the international order is being tested – not just by its traditional state leaders, but also by the shifting dynamics of who holds corporate influence and power. We publish this edition at a time when state leaders and technology magnates alike hold the power to shape the future of international security.

These coalescing challenges and growing fractures in the international system inspired this year's theme: Security in a Multipolar World. To properly understand the implications of multipolarity, we considered it vital to source authors from a diverse set of backgrounds and viewpoints. We are incredibly excited to share the results of this search with you. Our authors have examined the implications of the changing world across regions and domains; they have even disputed the premise of multipolarity. From discussions about the shifting multipolar nuclear order, to populism, and to Great Power Competition in the age of AI, these pieces seek to offer a glimpse of where our international system is headed. We hope this issue can serve to enhance discussions around the fundamental conceptions and future of international security.

We would also like to take this space to acknowledge the loss of Professor Richard Shultz. The Director of the International Security Studies Program at Fletcher and the progenitor of this journal, Professor Shultz was a leader, mentor, and role model to generations of ISSP students, including us. We hope he'd be proud of this volume, and he will be dearly missed.

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