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Call for Papers
2026 EWIS Workshops, İzmir
Deconstructing the Multiplexity of Emerging Powers: Hierarchies, Discourses, and Strategies

The concept of *multiplexity* has gained wide currency in debates on global order, suggesting a transition from a Western-centric hierarchy toward a more plural and institutionally diverse international system (Acharya 2014; Flockhart 2022). Emerging powers are often portrayed as central agents of this transformation. Through practices such as multi-alignment (Patalano 2022), institutional diversification (Cooper & Farooq 2016), and the proliferation of alternative platforms—BRICS+, AIIB, SCO, MIKTA, I2U2, as well as numerous minilateral and informal forums—these actors are commonly understood as drivers of post-Western pluralization.

Despite its descriptive appeal, however, multiplexity remains under-theorized and insufficiently problematized. A critical reading suggests that multiplexity may itself reproduce new hierarchies, inequalities, and forms of exclusion rather than transcending them.

First, multiplexity can generate a hierarchy of "order-makers" by privileging certain emerging powers—particularly large BRICS actors—as architects of a new global order, while relegating smaller Global South states to reactive or secondary roles. Second, although multiplexity purports to capture Global South agency, the concept is predominantly produced, theorized, and validated within Global North epistemic communities, thereby reproducing subtle but persistent knowledge hierarchies. Third, the normative aura surrounding multiplexity—often equating plurality with progress—risks obscuring structural inequalities, coercion, and illiberal practices embedded in emerging power politics. Crucially, multiplexity does not merely overlook inequality; it can actively mask the autocratization of the non-Western order. As scholarship on democratic backsliding and authoritarian diffusion demonstrates (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019; Bank & Weyland 2020), emerging powers increasingly engage in practices such as regime protection, digital authoritarianism, securitization of dissent, and selective norm contestation. Many institutions celebrated as emblematic of multiplexity—such as BRICS+, the SCO, Gulf–Asia minilaterals, and Eurasian security forums—function as illiberal governance spaces. These arrangements are often premised on mutual non-interference, sovereignty absolutism, and implicit exchanges of regime-stability guarantees. The discourse of multiplexity tends to sanitize or depoliticize these dynamics by framing them as legitimate variations in institutional design rather than as manifestations of authoritarian consolidation.

At the same time, emerging powers actively instrumentalize multiplexity as a strategic narrative. It legitimizes their pursuit of autonomy vis-à-vis Western institutions, provides symbolic capital for status-seeking behavior, and justifies issue-specific and exclusionary institutional arrangements at regional and interregional levels. In this sense, multiplexity operates as a political technology: it enables emerging powers to frame their actions as contributions to global pluralism even when those actions reinforce regional domination, shrink civic space, or facilitate the diffusion of illiberal norms. Taken together, these dynamics invite a rethinking of multiplexity not as an inherently emancipatory or analytically neutral concept, but as a contested discourse embedded in power–knowledge relations and deeply entangled with the autocratization of the non-Western order.

Key Question
The workshop invites papers that address the following overarching question:
Does the discourse of multiplexity generate new forms of hierarchy and obscure the autocratization of the non-Western order, or is it primarily a strategic narrative instrumentalized by emerging powers to expand autonomy, influence, and status?

Themes and Questions
Submissions may engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:
- How multiplexity is mobilized to justify institutional experimentation and alternative governance arrangements;
- How multiplexity produces epistemic, normative, and political hierarchies within the global order;
- How multiplexity intersects with processes of authoritarian diffusion within and across emerging power–led institutions;
- The role of discourse, status-seeking, and strategic narratives in sustaining multiplex arrangements;
- Comparative and critical perspectives on emerging powers, Global South agency, and illiberal governance.

The workshop welcomes theoretical, conceptual, and empirical contributions that critically interrogate multiplexity and its implications for global order, governance, and democracy.