

AREA Research Workshop

Rhetoric and Evidence of Leadership Aspirations in East Asia: Immaterial as well as material sources of leadership and implications for regional governance patterns

Duisburg, Building SG, Room SG 183, Geibelstraße 41,

Wednesday, 6 November 2019, 11 h to 17 h

Outline

In East Asia, leadership matters. In the absence of strong regional multilateral institutions that allow for collective problem solving and regional governance, the evolving regional order is largely informed by the quest for regional leadership amongst regional as well as external actors. Especially when compared to the European process of regional integration, East Asian regional dynamics provide for an important research case in terms of governance and its impact on the construction of regional order.

Both China and Japan are engaged in strengthening and consolidating their role as major players (“leaders”) in the Asia-Pacific region, with implications also for the global, multilateral level. While this development has been going on for many years, a number of factors make it highly relevant to take a closer and fresh look: First, the unilateralism of the Trump administration in the US has accelerated the activities and reactions of state and non-state actors in the region, including new institutional configurations. Second, because of the time that has passed since China and Japan have intensified their activities, considerable evidence has become available to evaluate the outcome of their moves relative to the rhetorics. Third, aspiration for leadership is always shrouded in communication that may to some extent hide the true motives behind action.

The analysis of cognitive priors and rhetorics refers to the immaterial factors of regional leadership. However, it is also the resource-base, i.e. material factors like economic and technological power, military capabilities and geography that define the evolution of regional leadership in East Asia and related patterns of governance.

Several sub-topics are distinguished (see session titles below) to study the immaterial and material sources for regional leadership in East Asia and their implications for the shaping of the region in terms of patterns of governance.

Programme

11:00 Opening remarks

Sebastian Bersick and Werner Pascha

11:15 Session 1: Cognitive priors and rhetoric: focuses on the analysis of immaterial factors of regional leadership

Xi Jinping's diplomatic references to historiographical and literary texts

Jörg Plassen

12:00 Session 2: National strategies: the country-focused analysis of regional leadership

China's pursuit of leadership in global financial governance

Jörn-Carsten Gottwald

Japan's role in the East Asian region and beyond: Leader, innovator, follower?

Werner Pascha

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 Session 3: Interaction, including the role of regional institutions: the multilateral-focused analysis of regional leadership

Leadership and Connectivity: China, the European Union, and the Belt and Road Initiative

Sebastian Bersick

Redefining 'Leadership': Chinese Think Tank Debates on China's Global Strategy

Nele Noesselt

15:00 Coffee Break

15:15 Session 4: The resource-base: focuses on the material factors of regional leadership in East Asia

The Material Factors for China's Regional Leadership: The Case of the BRI

Yuan Li

16:00 Discussion: The way forward

17:00 Closing