



RESEARCH PROGRAMME OF THE FINNISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FOR 2017–19

General information:

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) was established by an Act of the Finnish Parliament. According to the law, the purpose of the Institute is to conduct research on international politics and economy as well as matters relating to the European Union. The Institute's research is required to meet high scientific standards. At the same time, the approaches and topics of the research should be conducive to public debate and support political decision-making. Multidisciplinary approaches and interaction between disciplines form a central characteristic of the institute's research profile. Research is conducted according to established research ethics for human, social and behavioural sciences.

The FIIA's research is independent as stipulated by law. The Board of the Institute is appointed by Parliament, and the Board, in turn, approves the overall research programme. The Institute's director, programme directors and research staff share the responsibility of implementing the agenda in a manner that complies with pertinent scientific criteria and makes a significant contribution to society. The directors and research staff should also procure external funding in order to guarantee the academic credibility of the Institute's work and to consolidate its research agenda.

The diversity of the FIIA's target audience is given full consideration in the dissemination of the institute's research output. Researchers are expected to partake in the debates of their own respective fields by publishing their results in international as well as domestic scientific journals and other publications. The FIIA's own line of publications is used for effective research-based commentary for policy-making and public debate. The institute's homepage, other media and seminars offer a rapid outlet for presenting viewpoints that are backed by research findings.

An inspiring and creative research environment, where researchers have access to sufficient intellectual support for their work, is indispensable for nurturing active research. The research programme will have an organisation and an administration that encourages interaction and cooperation between researchers and across research teams. The structure of the programme must be clear in terms of job descriptions and responsibilities. It must, nevertheless, also be able to accommodate additional research topics that may arise during the course of the programme term.

The FIIA's research programme will be implemented in close cooperation and reciprocity with other Finnish and international research groups and research institutes. The FIIA is embedded in a distinctly international framework. The institute and its researchers are widely networked and its body of researchers spans different nationalities. Visiting researchers on both long and short terms support the implementation of the programme. The FIIA's Scientific Advisory Council plays an important role in advancing the Institute's international connectivity.

The structure of the research programme:

The basic structure for implementing the research programme consists of three individual research programmes.

This three-programme structure has proved to be a viable model for an organisation of the FIIA's size; during the past programme terms it has led to very little isolation of the research programmes into "silos" – rather, there has been vibrant collaboration between them. To facilitate the management and administration of the programmes, the aim is to make them as equal-sized as possible. The Center on US Politics and Power which relies partly on external funding functions alongside the three programmes.

Enhancing the multidisciplinary character of the FIIA's research remains a priority. In addition to political and area studies, the Institute will seek to increase expertise particularly in political economy and international law, as well as historical research to the extent deemed appropriate. International recruitment of researchers provides a wider perspective to the research themes studied at the FIIA, and supports the Institute's international role.

The thematic focuses and research questions of the research programmes:

The thematic focuses of the three research programmes should be clear and well-structured to maintain the Institute's strong international profile and expertise. Yet the programme must also consider the critical needs of Finnish foreign and European policy-making and the expectations that are placed on the Institute in this regard.

The EU research programme

At the FIIA, the primary focus of EU research is, on one hand, on the EU's common policies in what the Institute perceives as key areas (external relations, the main developments of the Union, and its core political system) and on the other hand on the policies of the key member states in these fields.

The first focus area of EU research is on the Union's external action and the different dimensions of the Union's global role. The FIIA is the only actor in Finland covering this field, as the country's other economic and sectoral research institutes concentrate on the Union's internal policies. The EU's external relations, including their leadership and decision-making, are studied comprehensively, but special weight is placed on the EU's relations with Russia and the Eastern Neighbourhood. Research on these countries is supported by the expertise of the FIIA research programme on the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood and Russia. This expertise represents the most important area for the Institute's international profile. The study of the EU's relations with the MENA region and Turkey continues to provide critical information regarding among other things the causes and management of the refugee crisis. The study of EU politics with respect to its area of freedom, security and justice supports this field of expertise.

Another focus of the research on the Union's external relations concerns the Union's security and defence policy. The research is meant to support Finnish decision-making and Finland's influence. In this area of research, there is an emphasis on the configuration of the field's central actors, as well as on identifying key aspects of the exercise of power and of the rationale of actions in this field. In this context, the topic of Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy is also studied.

A new addition to the Institute's research on the EU's external relations is the study of the Union's external economic relations and trade policy.

The second broad focus area in the Institute's EU research is concerned with the Union's major developments and the directions of European integration. These include the analysis of the Union's political/governmental character (federalisation), trends of differentiation, and important questions regarding the political legitimacy of the integration (opposition to integration and the polarisation of EU-opinion). Analysing the consequences of the British EU referendum is an essential task in this context.

Questions regarding the exercise of power in the EU (relationships between the institutions, the democratic system of the Union) form the third focus area of the EU programme. The way these questions are approached at depends on the most current issues in the Union at each point in time. The FIIA must maintain a strong expertise in questions of EU decision-making, all the more because no other Finnish research institute focuses primarily on them.

The study of the European policies of major EU member states is related to the above-mentioned focus areas of the programme and provides insights into the dynamics between the member states. The research relies on understanding the historical identities of key EU countries and the domestic factors affecting their EU policies.

The EU's Eastern Neighbourhood and Russia research programme

The research programme deals mainly with Russia's foreign and security policy, as well as the domestic factors behind these policies. In the study of Russian foreign and security policy, the foremost emphasis is on Russia's policy towards its European neighbourhood, its relationship to EU and NATO, and its policies in the Baltic Sea Region. Attention is also paid to Russia's strategic vision and policies concerning the development of global and European security architectures, as well as the Russian role in them. On the other hand, Russia's relationship with Finland and Finland's role in Russian foreign and security policy are also covered.

To gain an understanding of Russian foreign policy, it is vital to examine the role of domestic factors. In light of the current development of Russian economy and society, the importance of these factors will arguably only grow in the coming years. During the new programme period, extensive research will be conducted on the impact of domestic factors on the substance of Russian foreign policy, as well as the mechanism of interaction between foreign and domestic policies. The development of the Russian political system and the ideological basis of Russian foreign policy will also be given careful consideration.

Russian policies in the Arctic region will be researched during this programme period as an integral part of the study of Russian foreign and security policy. As a whole, the FIIA Arctic research has a wider geographical focus and can be based in any of the three research programmes.

The second focus of the research programme is on the EU's Eastern Partnership countries, especially Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, and Moldova, and their political developments, foreign policies and relations with the EU and Russia. The regional setting with its power dynamics and the significance of domestic factors in foreign policy also belong to the subject matter of the research in the programme.

The Global Security research programme

The research programme will concentrate first of all on the evolving global power relations and their functional logic. The focus is on the foreign policy and global role of major actors such as the United States and China. Research on great power politics will be carried out in the regional contexts of Europe and transatlantic relations, whereas the Institute's strong scholarship on Asia will deal mainly with the political developments in the Asia-Pacific region. The main trends and changes in the foreign policies of United States and China, as well as the international and domestic factors driving these changes will be among the topics of research.

In order to form a picture of the overall dynamics of the global power system, the programme will also incorporate expertise on other major regional actors (BRICS and especially India) and forms of regional cooperation.

The second focus area of the programme is the study of global governance, including its key institutions in areas of global governance that are of central importance for the EU and for Finland. These include global security policy and the functioning of the UN in particular. The topics of security cooperation and the most relevant institutions from Europe's perspective, such as NATO and the OSCE, will also be part of the research agenda; and represent a theme which is shared with the EU research programme. Research dealing with security political institutions will stress questions such as the institutions' capacity to function, their internal power dynamics and trends of change.

Besides global and European traditional security, the issues of climate and energy policy as well as the evolving cybersecurity regime will receive due attention in the programme. All the elements of global governance being studied will be approached both as political and as normative systems, which is why multidisciplinary expertise has a special significance.

The third focus area of the programme consists of research into the wide-ranging religious and ideological motivations behind international conflicts. The role of political Islam in international affairs is among the central topics. This is a cross-cutting theme common to all three programmes. In the framework of this theme, the particular implications of non-state dividing lines and actors (including terrorism) for the FIIA's principal focus areas are examined.