

RESEARCH PLAN OF THE FINNISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS RESEARCH PROGRAMME PERIOD 2023–2025

8 April 2022

General

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) is a research institute that aims to produce high-quality research, support political decision-making, and participate in public debate in Finland and internationally. The Institute was established by the Parliament of Finland in its centennial plenum in June 2006 and the Parliament also provides the Institute's basic funding. The Institute is autonomous in its research activities.

Research at FIIA is guided by the Executive Board. The Executive Board decides on the targeting of research activities for each research period. Done every three years, this also defines the priorities of research at the Institute. The priorities are reflected in the programme structure, which is approved by the Executive Board.

At FIIA, research is primarily conducted under research programmes. The organisation and administration of each research programme are arranged to enable interaction and cooperation between researchers and research groups.

Four research programmes have been decided upon for the programme period of 2023–2025. The programmes are:

1. Finnish Foreign Policy and Northern European Security
2. The European Union and Strategic Competition
3. Russia, the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, and Eurasia
4. Global Security and Governance

Three of these programmes (the European Union and Strategic Competition; Russia, the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, and Eurasia; Global Security and Governance) have remained unchanged for more than ten years, and they are considered to constitute an essential part of research at FIIA. Finnish Foreign Policy and Northern European Security, which has previously been a research project at the Institute, will begin as a new research programme.

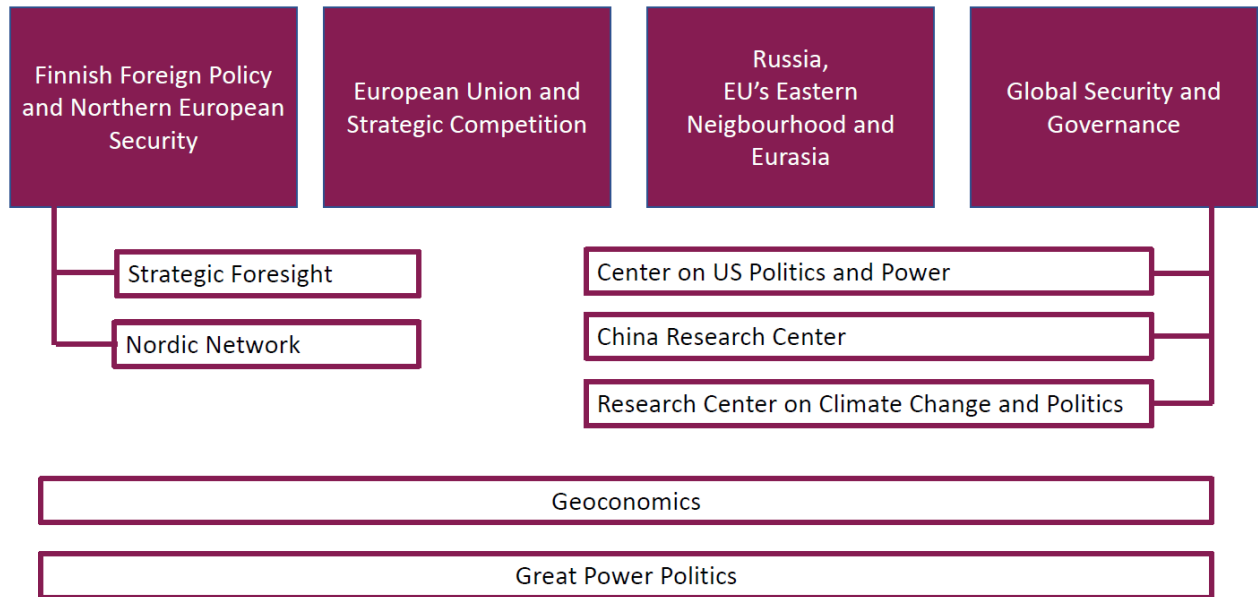


Figure: Structure of FIIA research programmes in the 2023–2025 programme period.

During the 2023–2025 programme period, two cross-cutting themes will also be supported: geoconomics and great power politics. These cross-cutting themes prevent research from siloing, and support interaction between researchers as well as separate topical research projects.

Since 2013, one research centre, the Centre on US Politics and Power, has operated under FIIA. For the 2023–2025 programme period, a separate China Research Centre will also be established under the Global Security and Governance research programme. At the same time, strengthening climate-related research at FIIA has also been proposed. Compared to research programmes, research centres are smaller and more closely outlined projects. Their research themes have become an established part of FIIA’s permanent activities. Research centres bring the immediate supervisors closer to the research of key themes and organise the implementation of research within the scope of the relevant research programme. In addition, research centres also support the facilitation of thematic external funding to FIIA as well as increase the visibility of key competence areas of the Institute (and its researchers) that are also important more broadly in the society.

At FIIA, research is coordinated internally as well as in close cooperation and interaction with other Finnish and international research groups and organisations. The Institute operates firmly in the international frame of reference. FIIA and its researchers have built diverse networks, and FIIA’s research staff is international. International researcher visits of different durations support the implementation of the research programmes. FIIA’s Scientific Advisory Council plays an important role in the development of international connections and the evaluation of the scientific quality of the research.

1. Finnish Foreign Policy and Northern European Security

The Finnish Foreign Policy and Northern European Security research programme – to be launched in 2023 – produces strategic research on Finland’s foreign and security policy and changes in Finland’s immediate security environment. The programme’s key mission is to evaluate Finland’s foreign, security and defence policy and, more broadly, Finland’s role in international relations. Regionally, the programme focuses on Finland’s immediate security environment, with a special emphasis on key dynamics and actors that have direct implications on Finnish national security. Furthermore, the programme produces research on developments related to security and geostrategy in Northern Europe more broadly: the Nordic countries, the Baltic Sea region, and the Arctic.

Research in the programme focuses on the following themes:

1. Foundations of and changes in Finland’s foreign, security and defence policy
2. Finnish security of supply and national/regional resilience policy as well as comprehensive security
3. Regional developments and relationships in the Nordic countries
4. Russia’s foreign, security and defence policy relative to Finland and its immediate security environment
5. Geostrategic development of the Arctic, and security in the Baltic Sea region
6. Special features of Finland’s external relations regarding the European Union

Research on these themes focuses on the frameworks of Finland’s foreign policy decision-making and the related planning, as defined in the Government reports on foreign and security policy, other strategic policy papers, and documents related to the security of supply. Even though research activities focus on Finland, the programme’s analytical approach is comparative, while addressing also systemic level dynamics.

The new research programme has four key research tasks:

1. To support the accumulation of research and knowledge on Finland’s foreign and security policy and the related decision-making by conducting analysis on themes and dynamics that have a direct impact on Finland’s national security.
2. To act as a national hub in Finland’s foreign policy research by producing studies and hosting events, in which various partners can participate.
3. To develop international networks in foreign and security policy research in Northern Europe, especially by supporting the development of Nordic research cooperation.
4. To support public discussion on the theme in the media and in the civil society more broadly.

The programme's activities also cover two of FIIA's key research emphases in the form of research projects. As a rule, these projects will be run by senior level Leading Researchers.

Strategic Foresight: The project provides strategic level foresight analysis for the Finnish Parliament and more broadly to support Finnish decision-making.

Nordic Network: The project is part of and supports the network of Nordic institutes of international affairs and research projects related to the Nordic thematic.

The programme also supports FIIA's cross-cutting themes – geoeconomics and great power politics – insofar as they are significant in understanding Finland's national security and the EU's policy initiatives relevant for Finland's foreign and security policy.

2. The European Union and Strategic Competition

The European Union and Strategic Competition research programme produces research and information on European Union and its role in a time of growing strategic competition. The main focus of the research programme is, on one hand, on the EU's common policies especially in the fields of EU's external relations, the development of integration and the EU's core political system, and on the other hand, on the policies of key member states in these fields.

EU's external relations and the different dimensions of its global role form the key area of research. FIIA is the only research institute in Finland covering this field, whereas the country's economic and other sectoral research institutes concentrate on the Union's internal policies.

Research in the programme focuses on the following themes:

1. EU's global role and possibilities for action in times of strategic competition
2. Development of EU's common foreign and security policy, common security and defence policy, and European defence cooperation
3. Major development paths of the EU and European integration, and the exercise of power in the Union
4. Evolution of European policies of major EU member states

The EU's global role and possibilities for action are examined against the backdrop of changing international environment. Consequently, the EU's external relations in an era of increasing strategic competition constitutes a key research focus of the programme. Alongside the research on the EU's foreign policy, the aim is to strengthen research on the EU's external economic relations (e.g. trade policy and sanctions policy) and the green and digital transitions. This supports FIIA's cross-cutting research theme on geoeconomics and supplements Institute's research on great power relations (the US, China and Russia).

Research on the EU's common foreign and security policy, common security and defence policy, and European defence cooperation constitutes a traditional key focus area of FIIA's EU research. This supports decision making in Finland and Finland's ability to influence decision making in the Union. Interfaces between the EU's internal and external security, such as border security, counter-terrorism, and responding to cyber threats and other broader security threats and risks are related to this research field. Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy also falls within this research theme.

Research on the EU's external relations also focuses strongly on EU's international partnerships in the Middle East and Africa, based on expertise on these regions. Research on the EU's southern neighbourhood serves key information needs of Finland and the EU related to the diverse implications of strategic competition and the range of factors influencing migration and its management.

A third key focus area in FIIA's EU research concerns the EU's major development trajectories (including federalisation and differentiation) and the exercise of power in the Union. Important questions regarding the political legitimacy of integration in the post-pandemic Union constitute a key cross-cutting theme in different fields of FIIA's EU research. Research on the exercise of power in the EU (relations between the EU institutions and the EU's democratic system) focuses on the key political developments in and reforms of the Union. FIIA must maintain strong expertise in questions related to decision-making and the exercise of power in the EU, as no other Finnish research institute focuses primarily on these topics.

The study of European policies of major EU member states is related to the above-mentioned three other key focus areas of the programme and provides insights into the dynamics between the member states. This research takes into consideration the historical identities and domestic factors of key EU member states, and evaluates how they affect their EU policies. The assessment of the EU policies of the large member states, in particular, and on changes in them, belong to the key topics of research aiming to support Finnish decision-making.

The programme also continues active research cooperation and networking with Finnish and international research institutions focused on the study of the European Union.

3. Russia, the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, and Eurasia

Russia, the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, and Eurasia research programme analyses key processes affecting foreign and security policy east of the EU, with a special emphasis on Russia.

Research in the programme focuses on the following themes:

1. Political and economic development in Russia, its foreign and security policy and relations with the West and China
2. Political dynamics in the post-Soviet space

3. Western policy practices and initiatives in the region east of the EU

The ways in which Russia's domestic and foreign policy change are significant for Finland and the EU as a whole. The key task of the research programme is to produce analytical information on these interlinked research themes. The significance of this key task is made more apparent by the situation of conflict between Russia and the West, and by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The research programme examines the dynamics of Russian policy: actors, networks and changes in interests and power. Furthermore, the programme studies the strategic thinking and the ideas that steer Russia's foreign policy and compares them with political practice in governance. The transformation of Russia's governance in a broader context of autocratic governance systems in Eurasia forms a fundamental frame of reference for the research of the ongoing processes.

The research programme also examines more broadly change factors in the Russia-EU common neighbourhood. Uncertainties related to future changes, possibly insufficient resilience in the region when it comes to economic and social challenges, and security threats present a significant challenge for the whole of Europe. Questions related to energy, governance models, societal changes, political trends and security strategies are highly sensitive in the entire region. The war in Ukraine and the extended political crisis in Belarus are the primary research areas of the programme. Research on Central Asian states is increasingly important, as Russia and China attempt to maintain or increase their role in the region.

The programme examines the development of Western approaches to the region. Debate on Europe's policies towards Russia as well as the EU's Eastern Partnership with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan remain at the core of research, as does the debate on bilateral relations. Research on the ways in which the EU's policies are interpreted in the Eastern Partnership region and what practical impact different forms of policy have regionally also plays an important role.

Research conducted under the programme supports FIIA's cross-cutting theme of geoeconomics. The analysis of significant projects related to energy and infrastructure development in Eurasia are particularly relevant. The programme supports also FIIA's other cross-cutting theme of great power relations and is engaged in close cooperation with its research centres focused on great power research (the USA and China). Research cooperation also includes the maintenance of external networks with Finnish and international research institutions on programme's research thematic.

4. Global Security and Governance

The Global Security and Governance research programme aims to increase understanding on and anticipate the evolving nature of international economic and political relations in a situation where great powers, regional power politics and connectivity (e.g. infrastructure, social media, and data flows) are strengthening.

Research in the programme focuses on the following themes:

1. Systemic level analysis of changing world politics, especially geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics, different forms of power in various domains, as well as multiplicity of actors
2. Strategic competition for global leadership, especially between the United States and China
3. Old and new challenges of global governance in a changing global order, especially global climate change and politics related to it.

The programme examines the increasingly complex world and its system-level ordering, focusing on the themes of power, actors and governance. This entails research emphasis on the manifold means of exercising power and using force, the multiplication and diversification of actors as well as intensifying power politics. The competition for global leadership by means of geoeconomics and technology in venues ranging from institutions to global commons (e.g. cyber, space, maritime transport and infrastructure) is at the core of the research programme in a situation where democratic and authoritarian models of governance are increasingly in competition with each other.

The programme's research agenda includes specific geographical areas and priorities related to global governance. The need to understand the rivalry between the United States and China, their geostrategic competition, and the underlying internal and regional drivers and consequences are key research challenges. These topics are analysed also in the context of the cross-cutting research theme of great power politics together with Russia, the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, and Eurasia research programme.

The programme focuses increasingly on global governance research in a situation where many key institutions, such as the UN system and the World Trade Organization (WTO), have to respond to a decline in multilateralism. Similarly, climate change is both a governance challenge and a driver of crises, conflicts and related geopolitical challenges. In addition to challenges arising from new threats, the programme focuses on understanding traditional questions in a changed context. Producing research-based information in traditional key areas of global governance, such as war and peace, arms control, human rights and international law, as well as in a growing number of new fields of governance, including cyber, space and fields enabled by new technologies, form a key part of FIIA's innovative research.

The research programme also covers key research questions related to Africa, India and South America. These include the impact of population growth on regional stability and the changed role of great power relations.

The research programme functions as an anchor for FIIA's certain key research themes:

The Centre on US Politics and Power has been operating under FIIA since 2013. It functions in conjunction with the programme, focusing on the United States' global great power role,

transatlantic relations and democratic vulnerabilities.

Research on China's politics will be organised in the form of a research centre during the programme period. The purpose of the China Centre is to provide information on the impact of China's stronger role in Asia and globally. The research aims to analyse geostrategic thinking in China, China's internal dynamics and drivers of its external relations, China's regional role and the impact of its great power role on the global normative structure and the dynamics of global governance.

Strengthening climate-related research, including the establishment of an externally funded research centre on the politics of climate change, has been proposed. The Research Centre on Climate Change and Politics would operate under the programme and examine the global climate challenge and its consequences to politics, security and geopolitics. This would include, for example, the analysis of policies of the major powers/economies in relation to the challenge of climate change as well as the political implications of the Paris Agreement. FIIA had a research programme related to climate questions until 2011. Now, demand for this theme is increasing from the perspectives of politics, geoeconomics and geopolitics. FIIA aims to respond to this structural and global key challenge by increasing related research and external research funding.

The research programme also supports the cross-cutting theme of geoeconomics and acts as a leader of related research at FIIA. Under the programme, the Research Director of geoeconomics is responsible for the continuity of research on the theme at FIIA, cooperation between different programmes, the maintenance of networks, and research funding. Research on the theme examines the different forms of economics and power politics, as well as new fields of activity, ranging from infrastructure to sanctions and technology and its regulation. Research will also examine such emerging phenomena as the impact of social media on democracy and the drivers of change produced by technological innovation.

The programme also continues active research cooperation and networking with Finnish and international research institutions related to its thematic.