

## Conference report

# The FISA2022 Conference brought together scholars to discuss multilateralism and its ruptures

## Summary

The FISA2022 Conference was held 6–7 May 2022 in Tampere, Finland. The conference was organised at the Rosendahl Hotel in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, the Foundation for Foreign Policy Research, and Tampere University. The Finnish International Studies Association (FISA) has worked to advance the field of international studies in Finland since 1993. FISA aims at promoting multidisciplinary research, maintaining a network of active people, and providing a link between academics and practitioners within the field. To achieve these aims, FISA organises a conference every three years. The previous conferences were organised in 2016 at Aulanko, Hämeenlinna, and in 2019 at Majvik, Kirkkonummi. The conference provides a comprehensive, timely, and multidisciplinary overview of the state of International Relations and gathers researchers and policy makers.

The theme of the FISA2022 conference was Multilateralism and its Ruptures. Political developments in the last decade, notably the rise of authoritarian regimes and bilateral agreements and the weakening of international institutions has led to observations that the age of multilateralism in international politics is over.

In the beginning of the 2020s, the future of multilateralism has looked slightly brighter with Joe Biden's presidency, China's turnaround in climate politics, EU's post-Brexit outlook, and the new international networks brought about by pandemic cooperation. Sadly, Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine made the conference theme even more relevant.

The keynote speeches and presentations at FISA2022 analysed the horizon of multilateral global politics from various perspectives. The conference comprised of two keynote speeches and 15 panels with 49 presentations. The panel topics included the theory and history of international relations, foreign and security policy, conflict and crisis management, development cooperation, hybrid threats, international law, Finland's foreign relations, the EU's security policy, East Asian politics, Russian politics as well as the meaning of colors and senses in international politics.

The keynote speakers of the conference were professors Anu Bradford from Columbia University and Ole Wæver from the University of Copenhagen. In her speech, titled "Battle for the Soul of the Digital Economy" and delivered remotely from New York, Bradford talked about the global power battle over control of the digital economy. Wæver's keynote speech, titled "Global security dynamics before and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine", examined global security dynamics from different theoretical perspectives.

The concluding plenary investigated what could be considered relative blind spots in the field of international studies. Many flash in and out of academic and political discussion, and this periodic exposure makes it difficult to grasp the intricacies of various contexts. The "blindness" can also affect imbalances of power between communities and localities: tensions of coloniser-colonised persist in public imaginaries and sometimes even in the field

of IR. These dimensions may not attract the most intensive gaze of IR researchers, forming malleable and moving blind spots, which this plenary tried to look at more intensely.

The plenary discussed global health and social policy, security studies, international organisations, and global climate policy. As a solution, the plenary discussed a deeper understanding of "the human element", multilateralism, and interdisciplinarity. Panelists in the debate, organised by the *Politiikasta* journal, were researchers Anna Kronlund, Mikko Rökköläinen, Tiina Vaittinen, and (with remote connection) Leena Vastapuu. The debate was chaired by Mikko Poutanen.

## What was discussed at FISA2022?

### The Politics of the Arctic

Monica Tennberg presented a paper on environmental issues and cooperation in the Arctic from a governance perspective. The paper argued that while early Arctic cooperation in the 1990s focused on issues such as advancing knowledge on environmental problems and role of indigenous peoples in the cooperation, today the focus is on intensive exploitation of natural resources on one hand and on sustainable development on the other.

The paper approached the development of the region from a governance perspective, which, it argued, can shed new light on old assumptions regarding political agency and the rationality and effectiveness of cooperation in the Arctic region, considering the different power relationships, resistance, and conflicts that define the region and the actors there.

Liisa Kauppila's paper was an Arctic case study of China's global economic regions and the future of multilateral cooperation. The aim of the paper was to analyse a China-led process of regionalisation from the perspectives of relationality and theories of practice. The paper argued that to understand the spatial dimensions of China's rise, it is necessary to question traditional, Eurocentric understandings of regionalisation as a process that results in clearly defined territorial spaces and institutions that promote multilateralism.

The paper presented a new angle to the study of global regionalisation processes, the so-called global economic regions perspective. From this new perspective, the paper approached China-led regionalisation by defining regions as spaces of flows, which connect China to several different economic clusters across the globe. The main aim of such spaces is to guarantee the continuity of global flows that are critical for China's economic growth and internal stability, as well as to spread China's influence globally.

The case study of the Arctic region emphasises the way the Chinese government takes advantage of both multi- and bilateral practices as part of its regionalisation strategy. Its results question the idea of regionalisation as a process that is in principle multilateral and enhances global and regional stability and helps evaluate the challenge posed to multilateral cooperation by the spatial thinking that guides China's (foreign) policy.

In her paper on China's Arctic Politics and Changing Northern Security, Sanna Kopra analysed the changes brought about by China's increasing Arctic presence for the Northern region, essential for Finland's defense and for the global balance of power. The paper observed that China had, in the last decade, become increasingly interested in exploiting the natural resources exposed by climate change in the Arctic region, which has brought local actors and Arctic states new economic opportunities, but also concerns regarding environmental protection, human rights, and crude power.

Even though China's military presence in the region has so far not increased, worries regarding the security implications of its growing presence have increasingly been aired. In addition to analysing the aforementioned questions, the paper aimed at identifying potential regional cooperation channels, which could balance the security implications of China's presence.

## Perspectives on Security in Northern Europe

In his paper, titled "Small States and Great-Power Coercion: Lessons from the 1958 Fenno- Soviet 'Nightfrost' Crisis", Matti Pesu analysed the so-called

Nightfrost Crisis that erupted between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1958 from the point of view of what the crisis can teach us about coercion and asymmetric state relations in today's world. In the Nightfrost Crisis, the Soviet Union successfully pressured Finland to change a newly elected Finnish government, one which did not please the Soviet leadership.

Pesu claimed that similar processes of coercion from bigger and more powerful towards smaller and weaker states increasingly take place in today's international relations and sought to draw lessons from why the Soviet coercion effort on Finland was successful for how small states can handle such coercion in the future.

Antti Seppo analysed the transformation of German strategic culture, specifically regarding the use of multilateralism in its security and defense policy discourse in the past 30 years, 1990–2020. Seppo observed that while Germany initially emerged as a strong advocate of multilateralism after the Cold War, the commitment has proven more difficult to see through in the areas of security and defense than originally foreseen. The paper thus analysed how the meanings assigned to multilateralism have changed in the German discourse, and thereby drew a detailed picture of the motivational basis of contemporary German defense policy.

## Africa in the Contest over Global Normative Order

Against a background of increased geopolitical and geoeconomic competition on the African continent, this working group noted an increase in contestation towards the "liberal normative order" by African actors. To assess this phenomenon, the working group invited contributions that explored these spaces, practices, and discourses of contestation. It invited papers that encompass actors from the grassroots to states and regional organisations.

The five papers that were presented explored 1) Rwandan non-alignment in (anti)LGBTI politics, 2) the mobilisation of soft power through the expansion of cultural institutes by China, Turkey, India, and Russia on the African continent, 3) African stances in global COVID politics, 4) labor digitalisation for

African street vendors, and 5) African positioning towards the UN's efforts to build partnerships with transnational corporations.

The papers were presented by PhD researcher Hinni Aarninsalo (SOAS, University of London), Senior Researcher Liisa Laakso (Nordic Africa Institute), PhD researcher Natalie Ruvimbo Mavhiki (University of Helsinki), Postdoctoral Researcher Ilona Steiler (University of Tampere), and PhD researcher Eva Nilsson (Hanken School of Economics).

The working group had a lively discussion about the presented papers that covered a wide range of actors and countries with diverse political positionings. The increase of external influence especially by Russia over African opinions on different normative orders and the European failure to win over China in a battle over narratives in COVID politics were noted. The group also confirmed earlier findings about the majority of African governments aiming to balance between great power politics, to stay somewhat non-aligned, and to aim to benefit from all sides.

## Behind the Veil of Multilateralism

The panel discussed the alleged decay of multilateralism through different theoretical and empirical perspectives. Its shared question was to discuss whether multilateralism actually played such a dominant role at all, or has multilateralism actually worked as a veil, under which various bargaining processes between states and other actors are still the dominant mode of cooperation?

In her paper, Anna Kronlund discussed the concept of legitimacy and its political use in the debates of the United Nations (UN). Special interest was focused on how different conceptualisations of legitimacy effected UN's agency to operate in various contexts. Tyyne Karjalainen and Ville Savoranta focused in their papers on EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and especially on its civilian aspect. Ville Savoranta introduced the concept of multiplicity, from IR theory, and applied it in his analysis of EU's CSDP interventions. In their joint paper Savoranta and Karjalainen discussed the topic of the alleged move in CSDP away from altruistic peace ideals towards security interests of the Member States themselves, revealing a truth

which is more complex than often realised and highlighting the bargaining processes that are elemental in the decision-making processes leading to actual CSDP intervention.

Finally, Tanja Tamminen took the audience on the field level of civilian crisis management operations, with an analysis of EU's civilian CSDP mission in Ukraine, how it has projected multilateralism on the ground, with a focus on tackling organised crime that is a theme that can be both altruistic and selfish, from the Member State perspective.

As a conclusion, the panel found that in many cases, instead of using monolithic concepts, such as the EU or UN, it is a more analytic and revealing approach to deconstruct collective subjects and look under the veil of multilateralism to better see and understand the political agency and activity behind multilateral action on the world sphere.

## Sensing IR

The Sensing IR panel took upon itself to explore the other senses through which the international, its crises, practices, ruptures, and multiple forms of violence and domination are also felt besides the traditional focus on large-scale organised physical violence. In the panel, Lisa Glybchenko discussed how the definition of peace remains a thorny and difficult problem in research in peace and conflict, despite also being a nodal point in that discipline, and showed how visual interventions developing and using coloring exercises could both cast some light on the inconsistency of theory and open up practical spaces for thinking and doing peace.

Juha Vuori and Rune Saugmann introduced their project on the role and agency of color in IR. Both marginalised and central, material and ephemeral, color and color use is as fundamental to the day-to-day practice and lived experience of international politics as it is marginal to the academic discipline.

## Technology Development, Power, and Security

Rapidly accelerating technological development has a significant impact on politics and thus also on international relations. In great power competition,

technological development has been politicised and gained new strategic importance. The control of technologies has become a fundamental resource for soft power and economic dominance. Technology policy has also become an integral part of the policy discussion related to various domains of national security, examples being cyber, 5G telecommunications, and artificial intelligence.

The security implications of technology development were discussed in three presentations from different perspectives: governmental authority, business angle, and academic role. The role of technology as a part of security policy was elaborated by professor Pekka Appelqvist from the Ministry of Defence. CTO Pertti Lukander from Nokia Mobile Networks talked about how to steer and support global technology leadership through regulatory work and cooperation. Professor of Practice Valtteri Vuorisalo from Tampere University discussed the impact of data-centricity to individuals and international politics.

## **Foresight in International Relations: How and Why?**

The operating environment is complex and rapidly changing, which challenges our thinking and actions. We must be prepared for surprises and unlikely events and developments, even if we focus on probabilities and continuity. Foresight means strategic thinking, discussion, and analysis; it is an ability to encounter the future, influence it, and prepare for different futures. The future is characterised by uncertainty; however, it can be tolerated and managed through foresight methods and processes. Combining multiple types of expertise is also emphasised in foresight; without a wide range of networks, foresight is neither of high quality nor relevant.

Foresight and strategic planning are well-established activities, especially in large companies, and they are also strongly evolving in the public sector. Many research institutes and think tanks are doing futures work, and individual researchers and research communities have also increasingly shown interest in foresight; among other things, they have participated in the foresight processes of various actors.

The panel noted, among other things, that the key task of foresight is to increase understanding. At the same time, it increases our preparedness for the future; our ability to receive potential futures with preparedness. Foresight also increases the opportunity to exert influence in advance and thus promote the desired future. The instability of the security environment and drivers of change in the operating environment highlight the critical nature of foresight.

The panel stressed the importance of combining broad-based expertise and developing foresight skills and the foresight mindset as critical factors. The panel also expressed a strong willingness to engage in joint foresight, especially in cooperation between researchers and authorities.

## **The Role of Expertise and Knowledge in International Politics**

In the paper titled “Towards an epistemic community on the global governance of black carbon emissions”, Pami Aalto and Anna Claydon from Tampere University explored ways of enhancing global governance of black carbon emissions, a key short-term measure for mitigating climate change. Yet global mitigation efforts suffer from unequally distributed benefits, as economic sectors and social activities implicated by mitigation vary across countries.

The paper analysed the politics of mitigation in this fragmented context, using a database of documents by involved international, regional, and industrial organisations, focusing particularly on the different cognitive frames found in the documents. The paper argued that shared problem definitions, as observed in the frames, would indicate the emergence of an epistemic community of black carbon governance, which could help the mitigation efforts.

Taking a rather different viewpoint to the role of expertise in international politics, Laura Nordström from the University of Helsinki presented a paper analysing the role of experts from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank in the Eurozone crisis decision-making. Specifically, the paper focused on the spring 2010 negotiations on the first financial



rescue package to Greece and the European Stability Fund. The analysis was based on a large, original set of interviews with EU and Member State officials, as well as on official documents and statements. It illustrated the role of experts at a pivotal moment in the EU's history.

Finally, Johanna Ketola and Katri Mäkinen-Rostedt from the universities of Turku and Tampere presented a scoping review on the role of scientific knowledge in legitimisation narratives in international politics during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their paper argued that the use of science has not yet realised its potential in enabling transparent, neutral multilateral decision-making, but that instead of shared analysis and concerted action, uncoordinated and state-centric responses emerged in the EU during the COVID-19 crisis. The paper also presented a first attempt at analysing what may be the main challenges for EU science diplomacy in multilateral settings.

## Connectivity and Superregional Politics in the Indo-Pacific

Connectivity, broadly defined as “all the ways in which states, organizations (commercial or else) and societies are connected to each other and interact across the globe” (Ries, 2019), is key to processes of regional integration. It can result in cooperative, synergetic linkages in terms of infrastructure, capital, knowledge/expertise, and dialogue/capacity-building. However, it is also increasingly becoming an area of great-power competition, in particular in the context of aiming to counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The panel on “Connectivity and superregional politics in the Indo-Pacific” explored how different actors in the Indo-Pacific region have sought to engage in connectivity and infrastructure development. The paper by Bart Gaens, Ville Sinkkonen, and Henri Vogt examined connectivity from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, tying it in with the idea of the Indo-Pacific as a “superregion”, i.e., a region defined not so much by geographical borders but rather by connections and flows of different kinds.

Focusing on China's economic statecraft, the paper

by Mikael Mattlin and Matt Ferchen drew attention to the significant gap between strategies/ambitions and effectiveness/outcomes. In a paper co-authored with Marcin Kaczmarek, Kristiina Silvan looked at Russia's connectivity strategies in Eurasia and emphasised the prevalence of (power) political logic over practical economic rationale.

Tyine Karjalainen assessed the EU's Global Gateway connectivity strategy in the context of the conventional role of the EU in global affairs as a value-based norms-diffuser. Finally, the paper by Katja Creutz explored how China and Japan's respective influences in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) can be harnessed to address climate change and consequently development in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

## The European Union as a Global Actor

This panel tackled the issue of EU external action and autonomy, combining insights from both already published research and ongoing projects. The large questions of EU competencies, the role of the member states in security and defense, and the ways the EU's power and position are seen by different actors in the challenging international setting all came up. Overall, the notion of strategic autonomy – timely because of the EU Strategic Compass – was a theme that came up in the discussions.

Teemu Rantanen tackled the question of how the use of different forms of power is constructed in the EU's foreign policy discourse. Shedding light on operational code analysis, he gave examples of how the parliamentary speeches of three High Representatives of the EU's foreign and security policy can be analysed and how that analysis contributes to the understanding of, for instance, shared beliefs.

Tero Poutala presented an article on geo-economic competition and the challenges of managing dependencies in the EU–China context, and particularly in the cases of 5G suppliers and critical port infrastructure. Ossa's paper took up the importance of studying the US perspectives and perceptions of the EU's strategic autonomy. At the same time, it discussed the method of studying elite

perceptions, and studying the influencers, or those who attempt at influencing elite perceptions.

## The Nordics and the Future of Multilateralism

This panel discussed various aspects of Nordic cooperation and “Nordicness” in a transforming international and multilateral landscape. Mariette Hägglund’s talk focused on Nordic cooperation in security of supply and crisis preparedness, not least against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Hägglund, the Nordics’ whole-of-society approach make them relatively well prepared, but as small countries they would benefit tremendously from increased cooperation.

Hanna Tuominen presented ongoing work on Nordic–Baltic cooperation at the UN Human Rights Council. The argument is that in recent years, Nordic and Baltic cooperation has increased in importance, as EU positions have not always satisfied the ambitious norm entrepreneurship agendas of the Nordics.

Saila Heinikoski presented a paper on Finnish and Swedish positions to discussions of making hate speech an EU crime. While the Nordics very much want to contribute to the fight against hate speech, freedom of speech remains a pillar of Nordic conceptualisations of democracy. Moreover, there is also a danger that following the EU on this point would weaken the Nordic legal family. Hanna Ojanen gave an interesting comparative and theoretical analysis of the special resilience of the Nordic institutions (Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers), in spite of them having been criticised as dull and superfluous at various occasions in history.

In his comments, Johan Strang highlighted historical continuities and recent transformations in Nordic cooperation. There were also many questions from the 10–15 people in the audience, concerning both Finnish policies and the relations between Global, European, and Nordic frameworks for cooperation.

## Half a Century of Finnish Peace Studies: Junior Researchers’ Perspectives on Bridging Theory and

## Practice

The panel was comprised of junior researchers affiliated with the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), chaired by Robert Imre. The overall objective of the panel was to explore how the Finnish peace research can be practically applicable to the conflicts outside Finland or can introduce fresh perspectives for peacebuilding.

It discussed the EU’s necropolitics over the refugees crossing the Mediterranean (Bram De Smet), how the transportation processes affect the heterogenous Nordic Somali diasporas (Cæcilie Svop Jensen), the solidarity of various Iranian women’s activisms across differences (Zahra Edalati), imagining national security through the South Korean military refusers (Ihntaek Hwang), and how to employ the constructive potential of images’ openness and ambiguity for peace (Rasmus Bellmer).

By introducing this research, the panel showed how the Finnish peace research has been widening and deepening through incorporating the gendered, every day, corporeal, diasporic, and aesthetic perspectives. The panel also suggested how the Finnish peace research can produce creative-yet-realistic and on-the-ground approaches for more sustainable peacebuilding.

## Diplomacy, Foreign Policy and Changes in Multilateralism Before and After the End of Cold War

This panel took a roundtable format, with some shorter, informal presentations or inputs and a lively discussion among the panelists and the audience. The overarching theme of the panel was taking a historical perspective on international relations, focusing particularly on the pivotal period around the end of the Cold War and its aftermath in the 1990s. The panel argued that this transformative moment marked also a watershed in many practices of multilateralism.

While interpretations of the period are politically disputed, presently it is also possible to study it with primary archival sources. The panel focused on Finland’s position in multilateral communities on one hand, and the communities themselves and

their diplomatic practices, particularly in Europe, on the other.

Tuomas Forsberg both chaired the session and gave input on the topic of the Finns' views on Russia and its development in 1992–1995. Juhana Aunesluoma's talk focused on the interplay and uneasy coexistence of old and new concepts of security in the Baltic Sea Region in the 1990s. Johanna Rainio-Niemi's presentation analysed how "Finlandisation" had been viewed both domestically and abroad in the period surrounding the end of the Cold War. Finally, Juha-Matti Ritvanen's presentation looked at the relations between NATO and Finland in the aftermath of the Cold War, in 1992–1997.

## Global Security

In his paper, titled the "United Nations, the Challenge of International Piracy and Intra-organizational Tensions", Teemu Häkkinen analysed multilateral cooperation regarding piracy in the Somalian coast, particularly the role of the UN, in the period of 2007–2012. During this time, piracy in the area became a major problem for international seafaring, but also one that could eventually be solved with international cooperation.

Guaranteeing the security of seafaring and especially trade routes is a relevant theme for multilateral cooperation, as well as for the legitimacy of the UN in solving global disputes. The presentation analysed the different interests and actors at play, representing the local, national, and global levels, as well as the tensions within the UN itself.

Matti Puranen and Juha Kukkola's paper on the "Eurasian Security System: The Relations between China, Russia and the United States in light of Complex Systems Theory" attempted to recast the security dilemma posed by the complex China–Russia–US relations and argued that rather than viewing the relations in light of each state's strategic goals, focus should be put on the inter-state relations and system-level factors.

The paper built a theoretical model of a "security system", based on concepts derived from complex systems theory. A security system was defined as an ever-changing territorial arrangement, defined by history, geography, and other systems, binding

together states and other notable actors. The article presented a case study of the Eurasian security system, analysing it from the perspectives of both its internal relations and external interactions. The article aimed at explaining how internal, often territorially limited, conflicts could produce larger ones, which affect the balance and behavior of the entire system.