



UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

**INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDIES**

**THE DIMENSIONS
OF GREAT POWER
COMPETITION**

Centre for the Study of
Global Power Competition
June 2023

Centre for the Study of Global Power Competition

University of Surrey

16 June 2023

Organiser

- Dr Nicholas Kitchen, University of Surrey

Paper Presenters

- Dr Sabrina Arias, University of Pennsylvania
- Ms Julia Carver, University of Oxford
- Ms Carmen Chas, University of Kent
- Dr Chris Featherstone, University of York
- Mr Fabio Figiaconi, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Dr Mikolaj Firlej, University of Surrey
- Dr Tom Furse, City University of London
- Dr Patrick Gill-Tiney, University of Oxford
- Dr Amelia Hadfield, University of Surrey
- Dr Anisa Heritage, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
- Dr Tamas Meszaros, Keio University
- Dr Robert Ralston, University of Birmingham
- Mr Samuel Seitz, University of Oxford
- Dr Martin Smith, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
- Dr Tom Watts, Royal Holloway University of London

Participants

- Prof Sir Mike Aaronson, University of Surrey
- Dr Andrene Aaronson, FCDO
- Dr Joshua Andresen, University of Surrey
- Dr Laura Chappell, University of Surrey
- Dr Simon Curtis, University of Surrey
- Mr Andrew Dennis, MOD
- Dr Lucas De Oliveira Paes, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
- Mr Matthew Harris, MOD
- Dr Malte Kaeding, University of Surrey
- Mr Joss Meakins, MOD
- Dr Adam Quinn, University of Birmingham
- Dr Taz Rajwani, University of Surrey
- Mr Dominic Rose, MOD
- Prof Jamie Shea, University of Surrey

“A really excellent event, well organised and highly impactful.”

Event Themes

1. The IAS research workshop hosted by CGPC in June 2023 was convened on the basis of an open call for papers, intended to test the limits of how ‘great power competition’ is understood and operationalised in contemporary research. This built on an exploratory workshop at EWIS in 2022 on ‘re-theorising great power competition’, which had highlighted the need for research on power competition to be far broader than historically such work had been, and to encompass the myriad dimensions of power.
2. In this sense, the workshop was exploratory rather than purposive: how are people currently thinking about the dimensions of great power competition? Are researchers working on particular aspects of systemic competition aware of how work is being done in other disciplinary contexts or on other dimensions of power?
3. While exploratory, by bringing together a diverse set of topics and perspectives, we sought to transcend disciplinary and subject boundaries, and draw links between research areas, and theoretical and methodological approaches.
4. The first panel, on International Order, was premised on the idea that systemic competition takes place not in a vacuum, but within established norms, institutions, and practices of prevailing international order. The papers on this panel addressed how those forces of order exercise their own influence over the dynamics of competition, and the strategies states adopt.
5. The second panel, on Technological Competition, showcased how changes in technology at the leading edge of the mode of power can shift how power operates, and the resources required to exert influence, in a given era. Technological possibilities can change more quickly than ideological and organisational systems, with such change accelerating in the fourth industrial revolution. So competition to own the future at the leading edge of power is a crucial component– and perhaps, given the prohibitive costs of contemporary major power war – the sufficient element, of great power competition.
6. The third panel, on Periphery Dynamics interrogated how great power competition is experienced by others as a structural phenomenon: something that is ‘happening’. How do states beyond, but impacted by, great power competition, respond to the constraints and opportunities it creates?
7. The fourth panel, on Great Power Strategies, noted that the existence of great power competition across multiple dimensions of power implies that great powers develop strategies for competing and managing their relationships. How are those strategies developed, and how do they interact with each other?



“The workshop exceeded my expectations. The presentations and discussions were highly enriching.”

Next Steps - Outcomes

8. The workshop produced stimulated a number of important conversations around the nature and dynamics of contemporary great power competition, and the requirements of future research. Particularly notable was the scope of the subject under study: systemic competition is a multi-faceted phenomena, in which dyadic relationships of power are subsumed within wider structures and networks, and whilst there is clearly significant evidence of major powers competing in specific domains and over specific dimensions of power, their overlapping relationships and interdependencies are significant.
9. This multi-dimensional character of systemic competition requires the integration of multiple disciplinary perspectives in sustained programmes of multi-disciplinary research, in particular, work that is less state-centric, and explores great power competition from the perspectives of political elite and military networks, cities and financial centres, material and digital infrastructure, and epistemic communities.
10. Emerging technologies and spheres of competition are suggestive of a changing mode of power in which the dimensions of power that structurally matter are augmented or replaced by other dimensions of power. Further research is required both to conceptualise this change in power itself, and identify the risks it poses for the management of competitive dynamics both in existing capabilities and in the potential leading dimensions of power of the future.
11. Given the multidisciplinary nature of the workshop, papers will be published individually by authors within disciplinary outlets, and the outputs collected together on the CGPC website.
12. A digest of the workshop, including key findings from papers and outlining requirements for future research was produced for the Secretary of States' Office for Net Assessment and Challenge within the Ministry of Defence, for circulation within relevant departments and national security agencies of the UK Government.
13. As a result of the workshop, a number of the participants are involved in writing a major network grant to UKRI.



Acknowledgements

14. We gratefully acknowledge the support of our sponsors: the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Surrey and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Scaling Innovation Fund.
15. We would like to thank Mirela Dumic and Louise Jones from IAS, and Jennifer Mathew from CGPC, for their excellent administrative support.
16. We would particularly like to thank all the academic and UK Government attendees for their informed and enthusiastic participation in the event, and we look forward to pursuing more research together in the future.