



— GEOPOLITICS PROGRAMME —

Baltic

PROMOTING THE STUDY OF BALTIC GEOPOLITICS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Department of Politics and
International Studies



CENTRE FOR
GEOPOLITICS

The background of the slide is a photograph of a large, historic stone building, likely a part of the University of Cambridge, viewed through a large, arched stone opening. The building features a prominent central tower with a clock face and a large Gothic-style window. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The text is overlaid on the image in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

**A new Baltic
Geopolitics
Programme
at the
University of
Cambridge**

TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION AND THE UK'S ROLE IN IT

Despite Britain's importance to the Baltic over the past 500 years or so, and the Baltic's importance to Britain, knowledge and understanding of this relationship is very limited. Now that the UK has exited the ordering system of the European Union and the Baltic Sea region confronts new challenges, this situation is neither acceptable nor sustainable, as recent events dramatically illustrate.

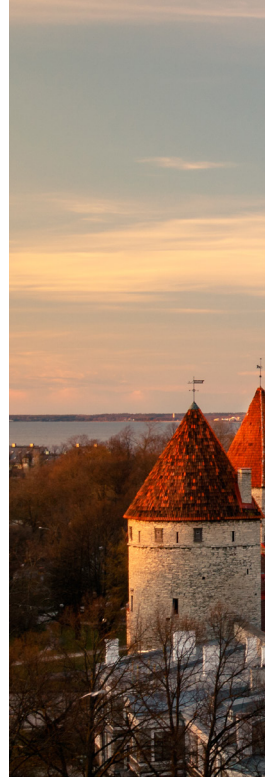
Both the history and current challenges of the Baltic Sea region require more research and understanding. The Centre for Geopolitics is bridging this gap by establishing a Baltic Geopolitics Programme, launched in early 2021, and promoting the study of the Baltic Sea region within the University of Cambridge, and beyond.

Our Director, Professor Brendan Simms, and the Rt Hon Charles Clarke, former UK Home Secretary, are leading this initiative. It operates within the Centre's broader 'European' research strand. Our central organising principles are that we need to learn from history, focus upon the whole Baltic sea region and the Britain – Baltic relationship, emphasise the geopolitical dimensions of the issues we consider and engage both academics and practitioners.

Why is the Baltic Region important?

THE BALTIC – DEFINED
HERE AS THE LITTORAL
OF DENMARK, ESTONIA,
FINLAND, GERMANY, LATVIA,
LITHUANIA, NORWAY,
POLAND, RUSSIA, AND
SWEDEN – HAS BEEN AN
AREA OF CONSIDERABLE
IMPORTANCE TO ENGLAND,
SCOTLAND AND THEN THE
UNITED KINGDOM.

In the 16th and 17th Centuries it was a vital trading partner and source of fish, timber, furs, and many other products. In the 18th and 19th Centuries, the Royal Navy drew most of its naval stores from the Baltic, watched jealously over the balance of power in that region and intervened against Russia. In the 20th Century Britain encouraged the independence of the Baltic states in 1918-19 and fought both the Bolsheviks and the Nazis there. Later, the Baltic states, which regained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1990-91 and then secured membership of the European Union





and NATO, were supported by the British government. Today British forces provide the backbone of NATO deterrence against Vladimir Putin in Estonia.

Despite this history, there is a considerable ignorance in the contemporary UK about the area. Much of its history, language and culture is not taught in our universities.

The Centre for Geopolitics, which is part of the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) at the University of Cambridge, is helping

to fill this gap. We have established a fully funded Baltic Geopolitics Programme, centred on the study of the modern history (from about 1600) and current geopolitics of the Baltic Sea region, with a particular emphasis on relations with Britain. We organise both in-person and on-line historical and contemporary events; we collaborate with other universities and foundations in both the UK and the Baltic Sea region, and we are building a caucus of those interested in Baltic issues at Cambridge.

Events and Activities



The Centre for Geopolitics hosts an exciting programme of events on Baltic history and politics, including regular events on contemporary Baltic geopolitical problems. Invited speakers cover the entire Baltic Sea region and its relationship with the UK over the past half-millennium. Historians, politicians, and diplomats approach questions of the utmost importance from diverse perspectives. We also co-sponsor events on relevant themes with partner universities, both virtually and in-person.

ROUNDTABLE

Brendan Simms and Charles Clarke convene regular Baltic roundtables. These closed high-level discussions focus on challenging issues such as China's ambitions in the Baltic Sea Region and Germany's new Ostseepolitik.



TEACHING

Since October 2021, Brendan Simms has been teaching a course on Britain and the Geopolitics of the Baltic (c.1600-the present) aimed at MPhil students in the Department of Politics and International Studies. The Centre also organises a termly Graduate Research Seminar in Baltic Geopolitics.

We have secured valuable funding support to build our academic strength, including the appointment of Donatas Kupciunas as Research Associate, with other research appointments to be made soon. Our ambition is by 2025 to endow a lectureship and chair capable of supporting PhD candidates.

The Programme's online launch took place on 20 January 2021. Key participants included the President of Estonia HE Kersti Kaljulaid, and Professor John Bew, the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser. Over 300 people from the UK and across the Baltic Sea region participated.

We have been very encouraged by the response to our initiative and are seeking to raise funding to support both the academic positions we intend to establish at the University of Cambridge and a range of other events and projects.



An aerial photograph of the Baltic Sea region, showing the coastlines of Sweden, Finland, and the Baltic states. A semi-transparent satellite-style map is overlaid on the image, highlighting the geographical context of the network. The map shows the Baltic Sea, the Gulf of Bothnia, and the surrounding landmasses. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

An informal network connecting scholars from leading universities and research institutes from across the UK and the Baltic area to build and disseminate knowledge on the history and politics of the greater Baltic region.


The network was launched with ten founding partners surrounding the Baltic and is open to further institutions and scholars from the region, and possibly elsewhere. We are developing a range of academic and student exchanges.

Baltic Geopolitics Network

THE CENTRE FOR GEOPOLITICS IS THE CONVENING PARTNER IN A NEW BALTIC GEOPOLITICS NETWORK:

PARTICIPANTS

- Baltic Defence College
- University of Cambridge, Centre for Geopolitics
- University of Copenhagen, Centre for Military Studies
- University of Eastern Finland, VERA Centre for Russian and Border Studies
- University of Gdańsk, Faculty of History
- University of Glasgow, Baltic Research Unit
- University of Greifswald, Historical Institute
- University of Helsinki, Aleksanteri Institute
- Klaipėda University, Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology
- University of Iceland, Institute of International Affairs
- University of Latvia
- Södertörn University, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES)
- Stockholm School of Economics
- University of Southern Denmark, Department of History
- University of Szczecin, Institute of History
- University of Tartu, Johann Skytte Institute of Political Studies
- University of Toronto, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy
- University of Turku
- Uppsala University, Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies
- University of Vilnius



We confront the major problems of world order, past, present and future. By applying historical analysis, political science and the experience of practitioners to the world's most pressing geopolitical challenges, we offer a deeper understanding of where these challenges have come from, how they may develop and how they might be resolved.

About the Centre for Geopolitics



WE DO THIS BY:

Understanding – we conduct rigorous scholarly research into historical and contemporary geopolitical challenges and grand strategy.

Educating – we teach and inform current and future global decision makers and the wider public.

Connecting – we bring together the worlds of academe, government, civil society, politics and business.

Shaping – we engage creatively to re-frame current geopolitical problems to shape debate and generate solutions

CONTACT US

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