**EISA Workshop Proposal: (Re-)Theorising Great Power Competition**

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In the last decade, the concept of ‘great power competition’ has been resurrected by pundits and decisionmakers alike, to describe both the nature of contemporary international politics and the tasks of statecraft. Today, the acronym GPC dominates –substitutes for? – strategy debate in Washington and London, and is invoked in the capitals of self-identified great powers and middle powers alike.

But the return of great power competition – whether in fact or in discourse – poses some important theoretical questions about exactly what kind of competition is being referenced. At one level, great power competition is a mundane statement of the reality of international anarchy. At another, it is an edict to compete – but over, or for, what? It is rarely clear if GPC is to be understood as a consequence of ongoing power shifts, or the outcome of state strategies.

This panel therefore interrogates how we should think about great power competition theoretically. What exactly does it mean to invoke GPC as a descriptive, structural, or normative claim? If great power competition went away, why has it returned, and to what purpose? How does the form, object, or mode of competition change over time, as technologies, norms, and the rules of international order evolve? Perhaps most fundamentally, given the history of great powers, how might GPC end?

The workshop offers the opportunity to understand not just the approaches of great powers to GPC, but the strategies of middle powers and small states caught in the crossfire. It connects issues of security, technology, law, and political economy; of international structure and the agency of both states and the institutions of international order.