



# Erkko Lecture Wrap-Up

written by Allegra  
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Jane Cowan's inaugural lecture at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies is insightful in more than one way not least because it resonates with the current resurgence of nationalism across the globe and how it is played out at the UN.



*She asks what happens when ‘self determination’ and ‘justice’ are defined at the League of Nations (the precursor of the UN) and how such definitions jar with the complex realities of everyday life.*

She illustrates how and why those who govern use the term ‘minority’, why certain groups resist it, and looks at the politics of language use and admissibility to show how petitions made to the League of Nation were used to construct and resist national identities.

To round off this thematic week, we have dug into our archives and propose three posts that may be read in dialogue with the #ErkkoLecture. [In this author conversation](#), Heath Cabot reflects on her 2014 book on the Greek asylum crisis and asks how we can think about justice outside the formal framework of judgment.



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[Miia Halme-Tuomisaari takes us](#) to a surprisingly tiny room within the confines of Palais Wilson in Geneva, where the UN Human Rights Committee hear states present their periodic reports.

In *Human Rights as War by Other Means: Peace Politics in Northern Ireland*, Jennifer Curtis depicts the ways in which human rights theory and practice have overwritten other narratives of the conflict and even undermined the gains of the peace process, thus continuing the war ‘by other means’, as [Aditi Surie von](#)



[Czechowski writes in her review.](#)

As two cherries on top of the pre-Christmas cake, we offer you a [comprehensive bibliography of recent titles on human rights](#), as well as an earlier [tribute to Jane Cowan on the occasion of her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday](#).