



POLS 367 | Conflict and Security: Russia, Eastern Europe, and NATO (1.0 Unit*)

Instructor: Dr. J. Francisco Lobo

Time: TBD

Location: Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia

Number of hours: 75 (5 academic hours per week, over the course of 15 weeks)

**One Bryn Mawr unit is equal to four undergraduate semester credits*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Provides a historical survey of the region beginning in the first half of the 20th century, with particular attention to the world wars, the holocaust, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of the USSR, ethnic conflicts, the war in Ukraine, immigration, and the current security situation under an increasingly strained rules-based international order. The course is designed to examine the transformation of regional states' national security strategies, priorities and threat perception. Students will examine such questions as: What trends can be identified in the regional politics of Eastern Europe over the past century? How might identifying those trends help to avoid future crises? What are the major obstacles to peace and stability in Eastern Europe today? How has Russia's influence in the region altered over the course of history? How will the diminishing role of the U.S. and growing role of China affect the security of East European states? Specific emphasis will be put on the "borderlands" threat perception, issue securitization, prioritization and subsequent policy formation of the small states within the framework of the EU and NATO's strategies in response to contemporary external challenges.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course will provide students with understanding of:

- key concepts, actors and institutions in the legal and political framework of European security policy;
- historical roots and current socio-political context of threat perception and policy responses of Eastern European countries in regards with challenges posed by external actors and processes;
- individual and country group specifics of national security interests within EU and NATO frameworks; and
- specific national perspectives (i.e. "small states", "borderland"/"periphery", post-colonial perspectives), in regards to security challenges, perception and policy response.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students interested or specializing in government and political science, international relations, international law, post-colonial studies, intelligence studies, security studies and especially in Russian and Eastern Europe area studies.

FLAGS

Global Cultures

This course is flagged as a Global Cultures course. Global Cultures courses are designated to increase student awareness towards cultural groups outside of the United States. Therefore, it should be expected



that a larger portion of the course readings and assignments will cover specifics, techniques and ideologies related to at least one non-US cultural and social group.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance in this class is required. Make-up work will be allowed in exceptional cases, such as during documented medical leave, religious holidays, military service or family emergencies. It is required to notify the responsible instructor in writing, as soon as possible, in order to arrange for the make-up work. You are allowed to miss up to two undocumented absences without attendance repercussions. Each further undocumented absence will lower your course grade by two points (after the second absence 100-2.0 = maximum grade of 98, etc.). Students who arrive over 15 minutes late without a valid excuse will not receive credit for attending. Religious holidays will be respected but absences due to religious holidays must be notified in advance.

DISCUSSION RULES

As this class has a discussion component and group work covering potentially sensitive topics, including political views and national security, please observe the following rules during the discussions and working in groups: (1) listen carefully and be respectful to the other participants in the discussion or group, (2) be sure that you understand the positions and opinions stated and ask for clarification, if necessary and (3) offer your viewpoint in respectful and non-confrontational manner, in order to achieve constructive dialogue with the instructor and your colleagues.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should notify the program coordinator who will pass the information to the responsible instructor to make appropriate arrangements. You are also advised to contact Tallinn University Student Support Centre:

<https://www.tlu.ee/en/student-support-centre>

OFFICE HOURS

Students in this course are encouraged to take advantage of instructor's weekly office hours for material clarification and guidance for midterm papers and presentations. Meetings must be arranged in advance.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Grading will consist of:

Category	% Points
In-class participation and group work	10%
In-class quizzes	30% (3 quizzes x 10% each)
In-class group presentations	30% (3 presentations x 10% each)
Final in-class exam	30%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
4.0 Scale	4	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.0	0.0
% Points	94–100	90–94	87–90	84–87	80–84	77–80	74–77	70–74	60–70	0–60

READING LOAD



Participants in the course are expected to read from around 40 to 70 pages per week. Students are expected to budget their time accordingly, as complete all required reading selections prior to a particular class for which they have been assigned. In addition to reading the assigned texts, students are responsible for independently finding, reading and analyzing necessary sources for their presentations.

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION

The class combines lectures, seminars and group-work sessions. During lectures, students are expected to participate answering the instructors' questions and giving feedback multiple times during each session. During seminars, students present their home assignments and also are expected to take part in discussing other students' presentations. Group-work sessions are conducted in small groups, and then the results are reported to the instructor and fellow students who provide feedback. Thus active participation, rather than just voicing the correct answer, is very important for our progress. Simple passive attendance will not count as in-class participation. Participation will be graded on a one time basis at the end of the semester with an overall weight of 10%. Please, see the rules regarding the discussion participation.

IN-CLASS QUIZZES

This class has three in-class quizzes on paper that will be administered monthly. The quizzes consist of 10-15 closed and 3-5 open-ended questions each and are given after each corresponding topical course module/theme. The quiz should be taken within one academic hour.

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

The presentations will be prepared individually and in groups on the topics selected from the list provided by the instructor in Moodle one week before each presentation is due. The assignment instructions will be distributed via Moodle.

FINAL IN-CLASS EXAM

The exam will be conducted in written format and will consist of two parts: quiz with 20 closed and open-ended questions and a written assignment. The exam should be taken within four academic hours.

REQUIRED TEXTS

These are the texts that contain the required reading for this course:

- Česnakas, G., & Juozaitis, J., eds. (2022). *European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security: in the Shadow of Power*. Taylor & Francis Unlimited.
- Ferguson, Niall (2018). "The Myth of the Liberal International Order." *Indian Strategic Studies*, 2018. <https://www.strategicstudyindia.com/2018/01/the-myth-of-liberal-international-order.html?m=1>
- Galeotti, Mark (2023). *The Weaponisation of Everything. A Field Guide to the New Way of War*. Yale University Press.
- Goodrich, Leland (1947). "From League of Nations to United Nations." *International Organization* 1, 1, pp. 3-21.
- Haslam, Jonathan (2025). *Hubris*. Belknap Press.
- Laruelle, M., & Radvanyi, J. (2018). *Understanding Russia: The Challenges of Transformation*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lobo, Francisco and Falken, Grant B. (2025). Global Governance and the Use of Force. In: Houghton, Ruth, O'Donoghue, Aoife, and Cher Weixia Chen (Eds.), *Research Handbook on Global Governance*. Edward Elgar.

- Lobo, Francisco (2025). *The Praeter-Colonial Mind. An Intellectual Journey Through the Back Alleys of Empire*. E-IR.
- McGlynn, Jade (2023). *Memory Makers*. Bloomsbury.
- Ploky, Serhii (2023). *The Russo-Ukrainian War*. Allen Lane.
- Rongved, G. F., ed. (2025). *European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future*. Routledge.
- Seely, Bob (2025). *The New Total War. From Child Abduction to Cyber Attacks and Drones to Disinformation*. Biteback.
- Smith, S. J., & Tomić, N. (2024). Defence and security. In: Costello, R., & Robinson, N., eds. *Comparative European Politics: Distinctive Democracies, Common Challenges*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press.
- Snyder, Timothy (2015). *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. Vintage.
- Sperling, James and Webber, Mark (Eds.) (2025). *The Oxford Handbook of NATO*. Oxford University Press.
- Tannenwald, Nina (1999). "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use." *International Organization* 53, 3, Summer pp. 433–468.
- Tsygankov, A. P. (2019). *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Vindman, Alexander (2025). *The Folly of Realism. How the West Deceived Itself About Russia and Betrayed Ukraine*. Hachette.

Additional and optional reading, when necessary, will be uploaded to Moodle to corresponding lecture units.

COURSE CONTENT

Class	Topic	Required Reading	Assignment
1-2	Introductory session. Course overview. Defense and security: methodological considerations. Key historical events of the 20th century Europe: an overview	Smith, S. J., & Tomić, N. (2024). Defence and security. In: Costello, R., & Robinson, N., eds. <i>Comparative European Politics: Distinctive Democracies, Common Challenges</i> . Second Edition. Oxford University Press. Snyder, Timothy (2015). <i>Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin</i> . Vintage	
3-4	Europe after WW1: new alliances, new threats	Goodrich, Leland (1947). "From League of Nations to United Nations." <i>International Organization</i> 1, 1, pp. 3-21 Mulle, D., Rodogno, D., & Bieling, M. (2023). <i>Sovereignty, Nationalism, and the Quest for Homogeneity in Interwar Europe</i> . Bloomsbury Academic.	Presentation 1
5-6	WW2, the Holocaust, and establishing of a new world order: discussion sessions	Lobo, Francisco (2025). <i>The Praeter-Colonial Mind. An Intellectual Journey Through the Back Alleys of Empire</i> . E-IR Ferguson, Niall (2018). "The Myth of the Liberal International Order." <i>Indian Strategic Studies</i> , 2018.	

		https://www.strategicstudyindia.com/2018/01/the-myth-of-liberal-international-order.html?m=1 Hartman, A., & Heuser, B., eds. (2001). <i>War, Peace, and World Orders in European History</i> . Routledge.	
7-8	Cold War: bipolar world in a fragile balance	Tsygankov, A. P. (2019). <i>Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity</i> . Rowman & Littlefield. Tannenwald, Nina (1999). "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use." <i>International Organization</i> 53, 3, Summer pp. 433–468.	Quiz 1
9-10	Dissolution of the Soviet Union: new borders, new conflicts, new security threats	Savranskaya, S., Blanton, Th., & Zubok, V., eds. (2010). <i>Masterpieces of History. The Peaceful end of the Cold War in Europe, 1989</i> . CEU Press. Vindman, Alexander (2025). <i>The Folly of Realism. How the West Deceived Itself About Russia and Betrayed Ukraine</i> . Hachette	Presentation 2
11-12	European integration and expansion of NATO	Sperling, James and Webber, Mark (Eds.) (2025). <i>The Oxford Handbook of NATO</i> . Oxford University Press. SMITH, M., & TIMMINS, G. (2000). The EU, NATO, and the Extension of Institutional Order in Europe. <i>World Affairs</i> , 163(2), 80-89. Saydak, P. A. (1998). Nato Enlargement and Stabilizing Central and Eastern Europe: The First Wave and Beyond. <i>The Polish Review</i> , 43(3), 337-354. Ušiak, J. (2018). The Security Environment of the V4 Countries. <i>Politics in Central Europe</i> , 14(2), 21-37.	
13-14	The war in Ukraine: new challenges for Europe's total defence	Plokhyy, Serhii (2023). <i>The Russo-Ukrainian War</i> . Allen Lane. Seely, Bob (2025). <i>The New Total War. From Child Abduction to Cyber Attacks and Drones to Disinformation</i> . Biteback. Glebov, S. & Kuzmin, D. On the way to Ukraine's total defence system. In: Rongved, G. F., ed. (2025). <i>European Total Defence: Past, Present and Future</i> . Routledge.	Quiz 2
13-14	National perspectives. Russia. Internal threats. Social and political issues	Laruelle, M., & Radvanyi, J. (2018). <i>Understanding Russia: The Challenges of Transformation</i> . Rowman & Littlefield.	

		McGlynn, Jade (2023). <i>Memory Makers</i> . Bloomsbury.	
15-16	Russia and NATO: myths and facts	Haslam, Jonathan (2025). <i>Hubris</i>. Belknap Press Kramer, M. (2009). The myth of a no-NATO-enlargement pledge to Russia. <i>The Washington Quarterly</i>, 32(2), 39-61. Rühle, M. (2014). NATO enlargement and Russia: discerning fact from fiction. <i>American Foreign Policy Interests</i>, 36(4), 234-239. Tsygankov, A. P. (2019). <i>Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity</i>. Rowman & Littlefield. Ziegler, C. E. (2016). Russia as a nationalizing state: Rejecting the western liberal order. <i>International Politics</i>, 53(5), 555-573.	
17-18	National perspectives. Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary: different trajectories of "Return to Europe"	Tulmets, E. (2017). <i>The West, the East and the rest. The foreign policy orientations of Central Eastern European countries</i> .	
19-21	National perspectives. Poland: new important actor. Spoiler or a Rival Power? The cases of Bulgaria and Romania	Greskovits, B., & Bohle, D. (2001). Development paths on Europe's periphery: Hungary's and Poland's return to Europe compared. <i>Polish Sociological Review</i>, 3-27. Bechev, D. (2017). <i>Rival Power: Russia's Influence in Southeast Europe</i>. Yale University Press.	Quiz 3
22-24	National perspectives. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania "in the growing shadow of Russia"	Česnakas, G., & Juozaitis, J., eds. (2022). <i>European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security: in the Shadow of Power</i> . Taylor & Francis Unlimited (chapters on the Baltic states)	Presentation 3
25-26	Challenges – energy and economy	Galeotti, Mark (2023). <i>The Weaponisation of Everything. A Field Guide to the New Way of War</i>. Yale University Press. Liedtke, S. (2017). Chinese energy investments in Europe: An analysis of policy drivers and approaches. <i>Energy Policy</i>, 101, 659-669. Nosko, A., & Mišík, M. (2017). No united front: The political economy of energy in Central and Eastern Europe. In <i>Energy Union</i> (pp. 201-222). Palgrave Macmillan, London. Ah-Voun, D., Chyong, Ch. K., & Li, C. (2024). Europe's energy security: From Russian	

		dependence to renewable reliance. <i>Energy Policy</i> , 184, 1138-56.	
27-28	Challenges – terrorism, organized crime, corruption and migration	Lobo, Francisco and Falken, Grant B. (2025). Global Governance and the Use of Force. In: Houghton, Ruth, O'Donoghue, Aoife, and Cher Weixia Chen (Eds.), <i>Research Handbook on Global Governance</i>. Edward Elgar. Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index. Krastev, I., & Holmes, S. (2018). Imitation and Its Discontents. <i>Journal of Democracy</i>, 29(3), 117-128. Stępką, M. (2022). <i>Identifying Security Logics in the EU Policy Discourse The "Migration Crisis" and the EU</i>. Springer.	
	Final in-class exam		Final group presentations