

European Security: The EU and Sweden in a Turbulent World Order

Spring 2026

Lecturer: August Danielson & Per Ekman

Email: august.danielson@liu.se & per.ekman@hhs.se

Lectures: Thursdays, 9:15-12:15

Office hours: appointment

Room: see schedule

SSE course code: BE 938

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine shocked the world, not least the member states of the European Union (EU). It forced these member states to recalibrate their perceptions of the stability of the norm of territorial integrity and the role of the EU in providing security for the continent. Alongside various other significant factors and events, including the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU, China's progressively assertive and coercive foreign policy, and the elections of Donald J. Trump in 2016 and 2022, European security is arguably facing its most uncertain period since the conclusion of World War II.

In this course, we will study the impact of this new security situation in Europe and the new challenges it has created for the EU, and for Sweden in particular. The overarching aim of the course is to understand and assess the past, present, and future of European security. To do so, the course will draw upon perspectives developed in International Relations (IR) and European Studies. We will investigate the motivations behind the diverse positions of European states through an exploration of historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors. Additionally, we will identify the roles of EU institutions, NATO, and the transatlantic relationship in the development of the EU as a foreign policy actor.

The course is structured into four comprehensive modules, covering diverse aspects of European security. These modules encompass: 1) the historical evolution of European security, 2) theoretical frameworks employed in studying European security, 3) the challenges inherent in European security cooperation, and 4) an exploration of the prospective future for both Swedish and European security.

Within the modules, participants will engage in reflection on questions pertaining to the historical trajectory and underlying reasons for the specific development of European security integration and Swedish security policy. However, the course's primary objective extends beyond mere familiarity with the current state of European security. It is designed to cultivate a nuanced understanding of the varied theoretical perspectives that shape assessments of contemporary developments and challenges faced by European states.

By the conclusion of the course, participants will not only possess a comprehensive grasp of European security but will also have honed the ability to discern and evaluate differing theoretical viewpoints. The course thus aspires to equip students with analytical tools, enabling them to critically assess scholarly work and theoretical perspectives within, but also beyond, the fields of IR and European studies.

More specifically, by the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- 1) Analyze and describe the sources of European security integration – how and why European states cooperate on foreign and security policy.
- 2) Describe the roles and mandates of the main institutions that structure European foreign and security policy.
- 3) Understand, summarise and discuss a selection of the main approaches to theorising European security integration.
- 4) Understand how foreign policy positions are negotiated and adopted within the framework of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).
- 5) Explain the main dividing lines between the EU member states regarding the EU's foreign and security policy.
- 6) Present and discuss scholarly work in the field of IR and European studies with their peers.

Readings

There are two required books for this course, as well as a number of articles and reports. The required books are:

Mérand, F. (2008). *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State*. Oxford University Press.

Gsthöl, S. & Schunz, S. (Eds.). (2021). *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

The other readings will be available for download on the course website.

Course requirements and examination

1. Seminar presentation and participation (20%)

Reading course materials and preparation for discussion is required before the seminars. This entails reading the course material thoroughly and analytically. During the seminars, you are expected to provide your thoughts on the texts, including potential critique, something that you did not understand, or perhaps an issue or aspect that you would like to discuss in more detail.

For each seminar (starting from the second seminar), one or two students will provide presentations related to the course material that you have read that week. Presentations should be roughly 10 minutes long and should not make summaries of the chapters or articles, since everyone has read them, but directly tackle some of the main issues and problematize them. Given the time constraints of a presentation, think about rephrasing the text in terms of a general theme or a question that you are going to answer for your public. It is well advised to think about other readings and about possible comparisons and discussions/debates between them and the text. The expression of your thoughts (and questions), even tentative but supported by argument, is mandatory. In addition, the presenter should provide at least three questions that can structure the beginning of the seminar discussion. The presenter should, if all functions well, not need to explicitly justify the questions and comments he/she raises, since they are but

the consequence of the analytical reading. This said, some questions can be of a more personal interest, because the presenter has previous experiences or knowledge which can be associated with the readings and which could become an interesting piece for discussion.

2. Participation in a role-playing exercise on EU foreign policy and a position paper prior the exercise (20%)

In week 9 of the course, you will get the opportunity to apply your new understanding of European security through a role-playing exercise on EU foreign policy decision-making. The structure and format of this exercise will be communicated well in-advance of the seminar. Prior to the seminar, you are expected to formulate a position paper (roughly 500-750 words) for the member state that you will represent. This paper should outline your member state's overarching foreign policy position(s) on the topic(s) that will be debated and negotiated during the role-playing exercise.

3. Final essay (60%)

The final assignment of the course is to write a longer essay (roughly 3000 words). The topic is of your choice. The only requirement is that the paper in some way relates to the themes of the course (e.g. European security, Swedish security policy, transatlantic relations). You are expected to use and incorporate what you have learned through the course readings, although you are not limited to only use this literature when writing the essay.

Due to the structure of the course, you will be expected to write the final essay throughout the course period, not just in the final week of the course. At the end of seminar 3 and 6, we will have a discussion of individual research questions for your final essays. Prior to these seminars, you should have prepared an introduction to your research topic as well as a potential question that you want to answer.

There is no set structure for the essays, as this largely depends on what you want to do. However, some general recommendations can be outlined. 1) You should aim to define and justify the precise problematique you would like to explain or understand about an event or theme. (Note: this should involve some literature review of the event / theme that helps you to situate the precise problematique). 2) Specify the body of knowledge – empirical, theoretical or both – to which your analysis will speak and potentially contribute. 3) Specify the aim of the analysis, such as, among others: hypothesis testing, theory comparison, theory development, empirical assessment. 4) Formulate a precise question to be answered.

One tip is that smaller, well-defined topics, where aims are explicit, concrete and manageable, tend to produce better papers than broad and sweeping topics that lead to vaguer lines of reasoning and unclear answers.

Google Classroom

The Swedish Program uses the Google Classroom platform for all its courses. On the course Classroom page, you will find the readings, assignments, and lecture notes, as well as links to useful resources for further study. The course platform is also where you will submit your assignments. It also functions as a discussion forum outside of class: you are highly encouraged

to participate in extending class discussions by posting questions and links throughout the semester. I will use the course platform to post links to articles and books that are relevant to the class, as well as reminders of deadlines and questions I have for you as a group outside of class.

Student Attendance

Our policy is that attendance is required for all classes. If a student is considerably late for class, this may be counted as an absence. Excused absences can include illness or an unexpected emergency such as the death of a family member, but not leisure travel. Students should always contact their instructors to request permission for any excused absence as early as possible. In case of doubt, also contact the Director. For repeated absences, whether excused or unexcused, the instructor can decide to require the student to complete additional work. The instructor might also lower a student's grade in case of unexcused or even in case of frequent excused absences.

Academic Dishonesty

In the unfortunate case of any kind of cheating or plagiarism, students receive an automatic F for the exam or paper in question. Moreover, the student may also receive an immediate F for the course. Such a decision will be made in consultation with the Director and Executive Director. Any form of academic dishonesty is a violation of our code of conduct, and as such, may result in further disciplinary actions. While we expect the policy on AI-assisted writing to evolve further, the Program's current policy is as follows. AI-assisted writing is a tool, similar to relying on outside sources. Just as with outside sources, AI-assisted writing is permissible as long as its use is properly documented and does not substitute for students' doing the actual writing work. For all written take-home assignments, students who have used AI to assist them are required to submit a summary describing how they have used AI to help them complete the assignment (producing text, proofreading, finding citations, etc). In addition, students also have to clearly indicate which passages have been produced or assisted by AI, for example in a footnote that details how AI was used in that particular instance. Failure to acknowledge one's use of AI to complete an assignment will count as academic dishonesty and be subject to the same penalties as outright plagiarism or other forms of cheating. AI must never be used for "creative" work, like generating ideas, comparing theories, etc.

Late assignments

Assignments that are submitted after the deadline and without prior agreement will be marked down. The late penalty will be progressively more severe the later the assignment is submitted.

Laptops & phones

You may only use electronic devices for note-taking and solving group assignments. One [cannot be engaged in the class](#) while scrolling social media or browsing the internet (even if only to look up something relevant to the class discussion). Moreover, it is distracting for other students and discourteous toward them. In particular, phone use is strictly prohibited during class time (unless I explicitly state otherwise). If I see you using a phone during class, I will mark you as absent.

Part I: Institutions and historical perspectives on European Security

1) What is European Security? (Thursday, 22 January 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Mérand, F. (2008). Introduction. In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 1-26): Oxford University Press.

Mérand, F. (2008). What is European Defence? In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 27-43): Oxford University Press.

2) History of European security 1 – Internationalization, Europeanization and crises (Thursday, 29 January 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Mérand, F. (2008). The Internationalization of European Armed Forces. In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 44-69): Oxford University Press.

Mérand, F. (2008). The Europeanization of Foreign Policy. In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 70-92): Oxford University Press.

Mérand, F. (2008). European Security in Crisis. In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 93-112): Oxford University Press.

3) History of European security 2 – The creation of the EU as an international actor? (Tuesday, 3 February 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Mérand, F. (2008). Constructing European Defence. In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 113-135): Oxford University Press.

Mérand, F. (2008). Conclusion. In *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (pp. 136-159): Oxford University Press.

Drieskens, E. (2021). Actorness and the Study of the EU's External Action. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 27-39): Bloomsbury Publishing.

Optional reading:

Hill, C. (1993). The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31, 305-328.

Tocci, N. (2017). From the European Security Strategy to the EU Global Strategy: explaining the journey. *International Politics*, 54, 487-502.

Part II: Theoretical approaches to the study of European security

4) Theoretical perspectives on the study of European security 1 – Europeanization and theories of integration (Thursday, 12 February 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Schimmelfennig, F. (2021). EU External Governance and Europeanization. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 117-133): Bloomsbury Publishing.

Niemann, A., & Bergmann, J. (2021). Theorizing EU External Action: A Neofunctionalist Perspective. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 165-180).

Moravcsik, A., & Emmons, C. (2021). A liberal intergovernmentalist approach to EU external action. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 181-196): Bloomsbury Publishing.

**5) Theoretical perspectives on the study of European security 2 – The ‘isms’
(Tuesday, 17 February 2026, 9.15-12.00)**

Hyde-Price, A. (2021). EU External Action from a Realist Perspective. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 151-164): Bloomsbury Publishing.

Rumelili, B. (2021). Constructivism and the Role of the ‘Other’ in EU External Action. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 197-212): Bloomsbury Publishing.

Guerrina, R. (2021). Gendering EU External Action: Feminist Insights. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 256-270): Bloomsbury Publishing.

Fisher-Onar, N., & Nicolaïdis, K. (2021). The Decentering Agenda: A Post-Colonial Approach to EU External Action. In S. Gsthöl & S. Schunz (Eds.), *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (pp. 288-304): Bloomsbury Publishing.

Part III: Challenges to European security

6) The role of Ukraine in European security (Thursday, 26 February 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Plokhly, S. & Sarotte, M.E. (2020). The Shoals of Ukraine: Where American Illusions and Great-Power Politics Collide. *Foreign Affairs*, 99(1), 81-95.

Ikenberry, J.G. & Harold, J. (2025). Would a Peace Deal in Ukraine Last? Two Centuries of History Offer Lessons for How to Forge a Durable Agreement. *Foreign Affairs*.

Anghel, V. (2025). EU Enlargement: A Strategic Imperative for Survival. *Sieps*, 1-3.

7) Atlanticism vs strategic autonomy (Thursday, 5 March 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Howorth, J. (2019). Strategic Autonomy: Why It’s Not About Europe Going it Alone. *European View*, 18(2), 254-254. <https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/strategic-autonomy-europe.pdf>

Damen, M. (2022). EU strategic autonomy 2013–2023: From concept to capacity. Briefing, EU strategic autonomy monitor. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733589/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733589_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733589/EPRS_BRI(2022)733589_EN.pdf)

8) The domestic challenge – “spoilers” in the EU foreign policy decision-making process (Thursday, 12 March 2026, 9.15-12.00)

- Orenstein, M. A., & Kelemen, R. D. (2017). Trojan horses in EU foreign policy. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(1), 87-102.
- Juncos, A. E., & Pomorska, K. (2021). Contesting procedural norms: the impact of politicisation on European foreign policy cooperation. *European security*, 30(3), 367-384.
- Koenig, N. (2020). Qualified Majority Voting in EU Foreign Policy: Mapping Preferences. *Jacques Delors Centre*. https://hertieschool-f4e6.kxcdn.com/fileadmin/user_upload/20200210_Policy_Brief_QMV_Koenig.pdf

9) Decision-making in the Foreign Affairs Council – Role playing exercise (Thursday, 19 March 2026, 9.15-12.00)

- Dennison, S., Franke, U. E., & Zerka, P. (2020). The Nightmare of the Dark: The Security Fears That Keeps Europeans Awake at Night. *European Council on Foreign Relations*.
https://ecfr.eu/special/the_nightmare_of_the_dark_the_security_fears_that_keep_europeans_awake_at_n

Part IV – The future of Swedish and European security

10) The Russian threat to European Security (Thursday, 9 April 2026, 9.15-12.00)

- Götz, E., & Ekman, P. (2024). Russia’s War Against Ukraine: Context, Causes, and Consequences. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 193-205.
- Kendall-Taylor, A. & Kofman, M. (2025). Putin’s Point of No Return How an Unchecked Russia Will Challenge the West. *Foreign Affairs*, 104(1), 72-87.

11) Swedish security policy – from non-alignment to NATO (Thursday, 16 April 2026, 9.15-12.00)

- Aggestam, L., & Hyde-Price, A. (2025). ‘Crossing the Rubicon’: Explaining Sweden’s decision to join NATO. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 27(4), 1267-1291.
- Brommesson, D., Ekengren, A. M., & Michalski, A. (2022). Sweden’s Foreign and Security Policy in a Time of Flux. *The Swedish Institute of International Affairs*.
<https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/ui-publications/2022/ui-brief-no.-7-2022.pdf>
- Deterioration of the security environment – implications for Sweden (2022).
<https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2022/05/ds-20228/>

12) Transatlantic relations and the future of European security – Demise or perseverance? (Thursday, 23 April 2026, 9.15-12.00)

Trachtenberg, M. (2024). *Is There Life After NATO?* Cato Institute.

<https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/2024-10/policy-analysis-982.pdf>

Niblett, R. (2017). Liberalism in retreat: the demise of a dream. *Foreign Affairs*, 96, 17.

Ikenberry, G. J. (2022). Why American Power Endures: The US-Led Order Isn't in Decline. *Foreign Affairs*, 101, 56.