Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

TEACHING GUIDE

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE

GRADO EN RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES (INGLÉS)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

Q2803011B UNIVERSIDAD REY JUAN CARLOS
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Publication date: 05-07-2026

I.-Subject Identification	
Type	OBLIGATORIA
Teaching period	2 course, 1Q semester
Nº of credits	3
Language in wich the subject is taught	English

II.-Presentation

In line with the general objectives of the Degree in International Relations, this course introduces students to the core concepts, debates, and challenges of international security and defence. a field of study that lies at the very centre of the discipline. Its principal aim is to provide a solid, specialised, and multidisciplinary grounding that enables students to understand the factors, actors, and dynamics shaping security in the contemporary international system, and to prepare them for access to further specialised or postgraduate study programmes.

The study of security and defence has acquired particular relevance in recent years. The reconfiguration of the world order, the intensification of great-power competition, the return of interstate warfare, the transformation of armed conflict, and the emergence of new threats and risks have placed these questions at the centre of the international agenda. Understanding global politics today is impossible without engaging with them. The course therefore equips students with the conceptual and analytical tools required to interpret these changes and to assess their implications for states, international organisations, and societies.

The course constitutes an initial academic introduction to the field known as Security Studies, a recognised subfield of International Relations. Because security (and strategy in particular) is best approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, the course integrates knowledge from political science, international law, history, geography, economics, sociology, technology, and strategic studies. This makes it possible to examine both traditional conceptions of security, centred on the state, defence, and the use of force, and broader approaches that incorporate political, economic, social, human, energy, environmental, and technological dimensions.

Security is, moreover, a complex, contested, and constantly evolving concept, frequently charged with values and emotion. There is no single way of defining what should be protected, against which threats, and through which instruments. For this reason the course does not adopt or defend a single theoretical position; instead, it offers an overview of the key concepts, theoretical approaches, perspectives, institutions, and contemporary challenges that define the field. Topics include theories of security, strategy, and defence; armed conflict and deterrence; security organisations; hybrid threats; and the new challenges arising from technological and geopolitical change.

The ultimate objective is for students to develop the ability to analyse (independently, critically, and rigorously) the main issues and organisations of international security and defence, to identify their causes and consequences, and to evaluate the responses formulated by the different international actors. In doing so, the course also lays the groundwork for more advanced specialised and postgraduate study.

To this end, students are expected to engage in sustained reading (monographs, selected academic texts, case studies, contemporary analyses of specific issues, and curated online resources). Assessment combines a final multiple-choice examination with continuous evaluation, the latter based on reading comprehension, practical exercises, structured debates, seminars, presentations, and active participation.

III.-Learning outcomes

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CG02. Students must be able to apply acquired knowledge to professional work and posses the skills that can be demonstrated by means of reasoning and defence, as well as problem-solving.
CG04. Students must be able to transmit information, ideas, problems and solutions to others, be they specialised or not.
CE07. Students must be capable of identifying and independently analysing the main features of International security, defence and threat.
CE09. Students must be aware of and understand the basic features of the globalisation of social, economic and political activity as well as the functioning of international organisations.
CE18. Students must acquire their own skills to carry out professional activities within the framework of international relations and protection of rights.

- Key for degrees not adapted to RD 822/21: **CB** - basic competences, **CG** - generic competences, **CE** - specific competences, **CT** - transversal competences.
- Key for degrees adapted to RD 822/21: **CON** - knowledge, **COM** - competences, **HAB** - skills.

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IV.-Contents

IV.A.-Syllabus

Thematic Unit	Topic	Sections
I. International and global Security	Topic 1: General considerations	The concept of security and defence. What is security Studies
	Topic 2: National and international security	National security as an ambiguous symbol. The national security problem in International Relations
	Topic 3: Policymaking conflicts and dilemmas	Qualifying the nature of interests and objectives. Domestic and foreign policy objectives
	Topic 4: Approaches to security	Traditional and new approaches to security
	Topic 5: Sectors of security	From military to enviromental security
	Topic 6: Critical security studies	Redefining security
	Topic 7: A new agenda for international security and defence?	Security in the twenty-first Century
II. Power and International System	Topic 1: The concept of power	Defining and estimating power
	Topic 2: Elements of power	Relationship between capabilities and power
	Topic 3: Power and capabilities	Types of power and capabilities
	Topic 4: The International System: Anarchy and sovereignty	The security dilemma
	Topic 5: Balance of power	Concept and theory of balance of power
	Topic 6: Types of powers	Great powers and middle powers
	Topic 7: Power distribution in the international system	The distribution of power among States. The power transition theory
	Topic 8: Hegemony and military Alliances	Purposes of the military Alliances. NATO and regional alignments
	Topic 9: Strategy and Statecraft	Strategies available to States
	Topic 10: Racionality and the prisioner's dilemma	Main game theories
III. Theoretical Approaches to Security	Topic 1: A realist theory of international politics	Basic features of the realist theory, major divisions and ongoing debate. Realism and war
	Topic 2: Liberalism	Features of the liiberalist approach to security. Collective Security. Democratic Peace. Human rights and democracy
	Topic 3: Social Theories	Constructivism and Marxism. Identities and ideas. World system theory
	Topic 4: Peace Studies	Definition and main characteristics of peace studies
	Topic 5: Critical Security Studies	Critical Theory. Constructing security. Post-structuralism. Post-modernism
	Topic 6: Securitization	The Copenhagen School and limitations of the securitization model
	Topic 7: Past, present and future of security studies	Changes and challenges

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IV. Security Dimensions and Issues	Topic 1: Military Security	Approaches to military security
	Topic 2: Human and Societal Security	Concept's intellectual and empirical purpose
	Topic 3: Environmental Security	Environmental change and national security
	Topic 4: Economic Security	Contemporary thinking on economic security
V. Security actors and institutions	Topic 1: The United Nations	Main UN organs and actors. Twenty-first-century challenges
	Topic 2: Security and Defence Alliances	Alliance theory: NATO and other regional defence alliances
	Topic 3: Regional Institutions. Special attention to the EU	The origins and development of regional security institutions. The CSDP under the Lisbon Treaty
	Topic 4: The Spanish Security and Defence Policy	The National Security Strategy
VI. Contemporary Security Challenges	Topic 1: Irregular Warfare	New Wars, globalisation and failed States. The use of non-State actors as proxies
	Topic 2: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)	NCB capabilities
	Topic 3: The Defence Trade	The International Arms Trade in Conventional Weapons
	Topic 4: Terrorism	Terrorism in perspective. Internaitonal response to terrorism
	Topic 5: Coercitive diplomacy and humanitarian interventions	The prohibition of use of force and the R2P principle
	Topic 6: Arms Control and Disarmament	Main concepts and dynamics
	Topic 7: Energy Security	Energy Security and human insecurity
	Topic 8: Cyber-Security	Cyber Defence and Cyberterrorism
	Topic 9 Enviromental Security	Security implications of the environmental change
	Topic 10: Health and Security	Healt, human and food security
	Topic 11: Crime and Security	Transnational crime as a threat to national security
	Topic 12: Intelligence and Security	The role of intelligence in National and International Security

IV.B.-Training activities

Type	**Title**
Resolution of exercises, problems, case studies	Practical problems solving based on case studies/exercises proposed by the professor.
Practical sessions	Seminars and conferences.
Lectures	Readings: see bibliography.

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Fecha firma: 13/11/2026 18:45 | Hash: 99ec51d1c7a58417f25cd42ad9f0a379.

Theoretical sessions	Presentations by the professor and/or other invited speakers on current issues related with the course, with previous preparation by the student required (materials will be provided by the professor).
Oral presentations	Presentations by the students. Individual oral presentations by the students on different topics proposed by the professor related with the course.
Other activities	Reading control.

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Fecha firma: 13/11/2026 18:45 | Hash: 99ec51d1c7a58417f25cd42ad9f0a379.

V.-Student workload	
Theoretical sessions	20
Resolution of exercises, problems, case studies, etc.	8
Practical sessions in experimental, technological and clinical laboratories, fieldwork, etc.	0
Tests and/or exams	2
Academic tutorials	10
Related activities: conferences, seminars, etc.	14
Preparation of theoretical sessions and self-study	3
Preparation of practical tasks, exercises, case studies, projects, etc.	13
Preparation for tests and/or exams	20
Total student workload	90

VI.-Methodology and academic programme

Type	Period	Content
Theoretical sessions	Week 1 to Week 16	Lectures by the professor and invited speakers on relevant current topics related with the course.
Seminars	Week 3 to Week 12	In the classroom, at the University and outside University.
Theoretical sessions	Week 1 to Week 12	Readings (see bibliography).
Academic tutorials	Week 1 to Week 16	Tutorials at the University.
Practical sessions	Week 2 to Week 16	Short readings, practical cases, activities, class discussions and students oral presentations.
Tests and/or exams	Week 8 to Week 8	Reading control. Date: TBD.

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Fecha firma: 13/11/2026 18:45 | Hash: 99ec51d1c7a58417f25cd42ad9f0a379.

VII.-Assessment methods

The general assessment method is continuous as established in the *Regulation for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes* of Rey Juan Carlos University.
All the assessment systems established in the degree report must be employed, except for those that have a minimum weight of 0%, which can be used by professors in the academic years they consider relevant. Each assessment system may be applied through one or more assessment activities, consistent with the system. No assessment activity can exceed individually 60% of the overall grade for the subject.
The sum of non re-evaluable activities cannot exceed 40% of the overall grade for the subject and, in general, should not have an established minimum grade (except for practical activities in which, strictly speaking, the conditions of the ordinary call cannot be reproduced in the extraordinary call).
Those students who do not manage to pass the subject in the ordinary call, or do not attend this first call, may attend the extraordinary call only for failed re-evaluable assessment activities.
The distribution and characteristics of the assessment activities are described below.

VII.A.-Description and weight of the assessment activities

Assessment activity	Minimum Grade	Percentage	Contents
Final exam	5. Reassessable. A passing grade is required for the mark to be combined with the ordinary assessment.	60%	All the topics of the syllabus
Reading control	5. Non-reassessable.	10%	Selected reading
Short readings, case studies, oral presentations, seminars and conferences. Delivered through the virtual campus	No. Non-reassessable.	30%	All the topics of the syllabus

VII.B. Assessment of students with academic exemption from class attendance

Having Academic Exemption from Class Attendance (DAAC) does not imply that students are automatically exempt from participating in the continuous assessment activities or in the training activities of compulsory attendance as established in the teaching guide. Once the exemption has been granted, students must contact the subject's teaching staff, who will propose the adaptations he/she may consider relevant, as long as they guarantee the acquisition and adequate assessment of the learning goals established. Students must maintain adequate communication with the teaching staff so that they may provide information on the dates for training and assessment activities, if these are not established in the programme and available for students at the time of achieving the exemption.
Subject with possibility of academic exemption: Yes.

VII.C. Review of assessment activities

In accordance with the Regulation for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes of Rey Juan Carlos University.

VII.D.-Students with a disability or special educational needs

In order to guarantee equal opportunities, non-discrimination, universal accessibility and academic success, students with disabilities or especial education needs may request curricular adaptations to follow their studies. These adaptations will be provided by the Unit of Attention to People with Disabilities of Rey Juan Carlos University, in accordance with the regulation which regulates the service for the Attention of People with Disabilities at the University. This Unit will issue a report for curricular adaptations, so that students with disabilities or special education needs must contact the service (at e-mail discapacidad.programa@urjc.es) in order to provide relevant information for different educational alternatives.

VII.E.-Academic behaviour, academic integrity and honesty

Rey Juan Carlos University is fully committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty, so studying at the URJC means assuming and subscribing to the values of integrity and academic honesty set out in the University's Ethical Code. To support this process, the University has Rey Juan Carlos University's Academic Conduct Regulation as well as different tools (anti-plagiarism, supervision...) that offer a collective guarantee for the full development of these essential values.

Q2803011B UNIVERSIDAD REY JUAN CARLOS
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VIII.-Teaching resources and materials

Basic bibliography

TEXTBOOK — Collins, A. (Ed.). (2025). *Contemporary security studies* (7th ed.). Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/contemporary-security-studies-9780198895442 *(Oxford Learning Link: https://learninglink.oup.com/access/collins7e)*

TEXTBOOK — Baylis, J., Wirtz, J. J., & Johnson, J. L. (Eds.). (2022). *Strategy in the contemporary world: An introduction to strategic studies* (7th ed.). Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/strategy-in-the-contemporary-world-9780192845719

(PRACTICAL CASES!) — Hough, P., Moran, A., & Pilbeam, B. (2025). *International security studies: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). London & New York: Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/International-Security-Studies-Theory-and-Practice/Hough-Moran-Pilbeam/p/book/9781032641058

Williams, P. D., & McDonald, M. (Eds.). (2023). *Security studies: An introduction* (4th ed.). London & New York: Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Security-Studies-An-Introduction/Williams-McDonald/p/book/9781032162737

READING — Kaplan, R. D. (2025). *Waste land: A world in permanent crisis*. New York: Random House.

Consultation bibliography

- Baylis, J., Smith, S., & Owens, P. (Eds.). (2023). *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations* (9th ed.). Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-globalization-of-world-politics-9780192898142
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- Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T., & Simmons, B. A. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of international relations* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE. https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/handbook-of-international-relations/book234093
- Dodds, K. (2019). *Geopolitics: A very short introduction* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/geopolitics-9780198830764
- El Orden Mundial. (2025). *Las fuerzas que mueven el mundo: La geopolítica y la economía global en mapas*. Barcelona: Ariel. ISBN 978-84-344-3965-8.
- Flint, C. (2022). *Introduction to geopolitics* (4th ed.). Abingdon & New York: Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Introduction-to-Geopolitics/Flint/p/book/9780367686758
- Freedman, L. (2013). *Strategy: A history*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/strategy-9780199325153
- Gaddis, J. L. (2018). *On grand strategy*. New York: Penguin Press. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/529363/on-grand-strategy-by-john-lewis-gaddis/
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- Kissinger, H. (2014). *World order*. New York: Penguin Press. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/316669/world-order-by-henry-kissinger/
- Lundestad, G. (Ed.). (2013). *International relations since the end of the Cold War: New and old dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/international-relations-since-the-end-of-the-cold-war-9780199666430
- Mansbach, R. W., & Pirro, E. B. (2023). *Introduction to global politics* (4th ed.). Abingdon & New York: Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Introduction-to-Global-Politics/Mansbach-Pirro/p/book/9781032020501
- Reus-Smit, C., & Snidal, D. (Eds.). (2008). *The Oxford handbook of international relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-international-relations-9780199585588
- Wallensteen, P. (2023). *Understanding conflict resolution* (6th ed.). London: SAGE. https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/understanding-conflict-resolution/book277848

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Weblinks of Interest
- United Nations (UN)
General Portal: https://www.un.org/en/
Secretary-General: https://www.un.org/sg/en
General Assembly: https://www.un.org/en/ga/
Security Council: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/
Peacekeeping Operations: https://peacekeeping.un.org/en
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
Official Website: https://www.nato.int
2025 Summit Information: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/235800.htm
- OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)
Official Website: https://www.osce.org
- European Union (EU)
General Portal: https://europa.eu/
EU External Action Service (EEAS): https://eeas.europa.eu
Council of the EU / CSDP: https://www.consilium.europa.eu
European Defence Agency (EDA): https://www.eda.europa.eu
European Security and Defence College (ESDC): https://esdc.europa.eu
EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS): https://www.iss.europa.eu

IX.-Professors	
Name and surname	LUCÍA MANTECÓN DÍAZ
E-mail address	lucia.mantecon@urjc.es
Campus	Madrid - Vicálvaro
Category	Investigador
Person responsible for the subject	No
Tutorial timetable	Para consultar las tutorias póngase en contacto con el/la profesor/a a través de correo electrónico
Number of quinquennia	0
Number of sexennia	0
No. of positive evaluations by Docentia	0
Name and surname	VICENTE GARRIDO REBOLLEDO
E-mail address	vicente.garrido@urjc.es
Department	Derecho Público II
Campus	Madrid - Vicálvaro
Category	Catedrático/a de Universidad
Academic degree	Doctor
Person responsible for the subject	Yes

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Tutorial timetable	Para consultar las tutorias póngase en contacto con el/la profesor/a a través de correo electrónico
Number of quinquennia	5
Number of sexennia	4
No. of positive evaluations by Docentia	5

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