

FUNDAMENTALS OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Professor: Olivier Schmitt
Academic Year 2026/2027: Fall semester

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Olivier Schmitt

Title: Professor and head of research

Organization/Affiliation: Institute for Military Operations, Royal Danish Defence College

Short biography: Olivier Schmitt is professor and head of research at the Institute for Military Operations at the Royal Danish Defence College. He is also a senior non-resident associate fellow at the NATO Defence College, and an associate at RAND Europe. He is associate editor of the European Journal of International Security and a board member of the Journal of Strategic Studies and of the Review of International Studies.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: What is international security?

Description:

This session introduces the contested concept of “international security”. It presents the various understandings of the term, and the consequences of choosing one understanding over the others.

Required readings:

- David Baldwin, “The Concept of Security”, *Review of International Studies*, 23/1, 1997, pp. 5-26.
- Jonna Nyman, “Securitization Theory”, in Laura J. Shepherd (ed.), *Critical Approaches to Security. An Introduction to Theory and Methods*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, pp. 51-62.
- Roland Paris, “Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?”, *International Security*, 26/2, 2001, pp. 87-102.
- Patrick Porter, “Taking Uncertainty Seriously. Classical Realism and National Security”, *European Journal of International Security*, 1/2, 2016, pp. 239-260.

Session 2: Grand strategy and military strategy

Description:

This session introduces students to key concepts of grand strategy and military strategy. It discusses the interactions between different levels of strategy-making, and the reasons why military power is a complex instrument of statecraft.

Required readings:

- Lawrence Freedman, "Strategy, The History of an Idea", in Hal Brands (ed.), *The New Makers of Strategy. From the Ancient World to the Digital Age*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2023, pp. 17-40.
- Marina Henke, "Best Practices in Grand Strategy Design", *Texas National Security Review*, 8/2, 2025, pp. 97-108.
- Robert J. Art, "To What Ends Military Power?", *International Security*, 4/4, 1980, pp. 3-35.
- Jon R. Lindsay and Erik Gartzke, "Politics by Other Means: The Comparative Advantages of Operational Domains", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 45-5, 2022, pp. 743-776.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 1 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Session 3: War and its causes

Description:

This session discusses the main explanations for the causes of war, and the consequences in terms of policy-making.

Required readings:

- Ann Hironaka, *Tokens of Power. Rethinking War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017. Read chapter 4, "Great Power Competition and the Causes of War", pp. 101-133.
- Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited", *World Politics*, 50/1, 1997, pp. 171-201.
- Lauren Wilcox, "Gendering the Cult of the Offensive", *Security Studies*, 18/2, 2009, pp. 214-240.
- Dominic D. P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, "Bad World: The Negativity Bias in World Politics", *International Security*, 43/3, 2018/2019, pp. 96-140.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 2 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Session 4: Statecraft (I). Diplomacy and cooperation

Description:

This first session on statecraft discusses the possibilities and challenges of establishing diplomatic relations and ensuring international cooperation.

Required readings:

- Stacie E. Goddard, Paul K. MacDonald and Daniel H. Nexon, "Repertoires of Statecraft: Instruments and Logics of Power Politics", *International Relations*, 33/2, 2019, pp. 304-321.
- Lynn Kuok, "China's Legal Diplomacy", *Survival*, 65/6, 2023, pp. 159-178.
- Vincent Pouliot, "Hierarchy in Practice: Multilateral Diplomacy and the Governance of International Security", *European Journal of International Security*, 1/1, 2016, pp. 5-26.
- Olivier Schmitt, "How to Challenge an International Order. Russian Diplomatic Practices in Multilateral Security Organizations", *European Journal of International Relations*, 26/3, 2020, pp. 922-946.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 3 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Group A prepares the news analysis.

Session 5: Statecraft (II). Coercion and deterrence

Description:

This second session takes the opposite perspective and looks at the issues of coercion and deterrence as tools of statecraft.

Required readings:

Robert J. Art and Kelly M. Greenhill, "Coercion, An Analytical Overview", in Kelly M. Greenhill and Peter Krause (eds.), *Coercion. The Power to Hurt in International Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 3-32.

Erica Lonergan, "Minding the gap? The strategic logic of cyber coercion in theory and practice", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 49/1, 2026, pp. 5-33.

Samuel Zilincik and Tim Sweijs, "Beyond Deterrence: Reconceptualizing Denial Strategies and Rethinking their Emotional Effects", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 44/2, 2023, pp. 248-275.

Scott Fischer et al., "China, DIME, and innovative deterrence methodology: How authoritarian states react to deterrence activities through information", *European Journal of International Security*, 2025.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 4 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Session 6: Statecraft (III): Subversion and covert action

Description:

This third session completes the sequence on statecraft by looking at the tools of subversion and covert action.

Required readings:

- Rory Cormac and Richard Aldrich, "Grey is the New Black: Covert Action and Implausible Deniability", *International Affairs*, 94/3, 2018, pp. 477-494.
- Lennart Maschmeyer, "The Subversive Trilemma. Why Cyber Operations Fall Short of Expectations", *International Security*, 46/2, 2021, pp. 51-90.
- Austin Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War", *International Organization*, 70/1, 2016, pp. 103-131.
- Joshua Rovner et al., "Sand in the gears: Sabotage in world politics", *European Journal of International Security*, 2025.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 5 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Session 7: Context (I) : A changing global order

Description:

This first session on the context of international security introduces the key dynamics of the current global (dis)order.

Required readings:

- Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony. The Unraveling of the American Global Order*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.
Read chapter 2: "The American Hegemonic System in Theoretical and Historical Perspective", pp. 18-53.
- Stacey Goddard and Abraham J. Newman, "Further Back to the Future: Neo-Royalism, the Trump Administration, and the Emerging International System", *International Organization*, 79/1, 2025, pp. 12-25.
- Roland Paris, "The Right to Dominate: How Old Ideas about Sovereignty Pose New Challenges for World Order", *International Organization*, 74/3, 2020, pp. 453-489.
- Sheena Chestnut Greitens and Isaac B. Kardon, "Security without Exclusivity: Hybrid Alignment under U.S.-China Competition". *International Security*, 49/3, 2025, pp. 122–163.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 6 prepares the discussion on the readings.
Group B prepares the news analysis.

Session 8: Context (II): Climate change and international security

Description:

This second session of context discusses the key challenge of climate change.

Required readings:

- Joshua W. Busby, *States and Nature. The Effects of Climate Change on Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022. Read chapter 2 “Conceptualizing Climate and Security”, pp. 19-36, and chapter 3 “The argument, method and mechanisms”, pp. 37-70.
- Matt McDonald, “Immovable Objects? Impediments to a UN Security Council Resolution on Climate Change”, *International Affairs*, 99/4, 2023, pp. 1635-1651.
- Duncan Depledge, “Low-Carbon Warfare: Climate Change, Net Zero, and Military Operations”, *International Affairs*, 99/2, 2023, pp. 667-685.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 7 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Session 9: Context (III): Economic security and geo-economics

Description:

The third session on context explores the issue of economic security and its impact on international relations.

Required readings:

- Petter Y. Lindgren and Kristin P. Waage, “Methods of economic statecraft: A typology and an agenda for research”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 2026.
- Henry Farrell and Abraham J. Newman, “Weaponized Interdependence. How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion”, *International Security*, 44/1, 2019, pp. 42-79.
- Victor A. Ferguson, “Economic Lawfare: The Logic and Dynamics of Using Law To Exercise Economic Power”, *International Studies Review*, 24/3, 2023, viac032
- Olivier Schmitt and Anna Vlasiuk Nibe, “Proxies, Partners or Opponents? Towards a Typology of Business/Government Relations in Geoeconomic Competition”, *Law and Geoeconomics*, 1/1, 2025, pp. 141-173

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 8 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Session 10: Issues (I): Nuclear weapons and deterrence

Description:

This session discusses the core issue of the presence and management of nuclear weapons in the 21st century.

Required readings:

- Michael C. Horowitz, "Nuclear Weapons", in Dan Reiter (ed.), *Understanding War and Peace*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 339-370.
- Caitlin Talmadge, "Multipolar Deterrence in the Emerging Nuclear Era", in Vipin Narang and Scott Sagan (eds.), *The Fragile Balance of Terror. Deterrence in the New Nuclear Age*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2023, pp. 13-38.
- Andrew Futter and Benjamin Zala, "Strategic Non-Nuclear Weapons and the Onset of a Third Nuclear Age", *European Journal of International Security*, 6/3, 2021, pp. 257-277.
- James Johnson, "GenAI and synthetic foresight at the brink: The future of nuclear crisis decision-making", *European Journal of International Security*, 2026.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 9 prepares the discussion on the readings

Group C prepares the news analysis.

Session 11: Issues (II): Soft power, propaganda and disinformation

Description:

This second session is devoted to the contemporary challenges of propaganda and disinformation.

Required readings:

- James J. Forest, *Digital Influence Mercenaries. Profits and Power through Information Warfare*, Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2022. Read chapter 1, "The diverse landscape of digital influence mercenaries" and chapter 2, "Digital Influence Methods".
- Paul Charon and Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer, *Chinese Influence Operations. A Machiavellian Moment*, Paris, Irsem, 2021. Read the executive summary, and the first part "Concepts".
- Olivier Schmitt, "When are Strategic Narratives Effective? The shaping of political discourse through the interaction between political myths and strategic narratives", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39/4, 2018, pp. 487-511.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 10 prepares the discussion on the readings

Session 12: Issues (III) : Class choice

Description:

This session will discuss a topic that will be selected in class with the students. Readings will be updated accordingly.

Assignment for this session (if applicable):

Group 11 prepares the discussion on the readings.

Final exam is due later.