

## HUMAN SECURITY

Professor: **Shahrbanou TADJBAKHS**

Session: **July 2025**

Language of instruction: **English**

Number of hours of class: **36**



### Objective of the Course

The course on Human Security is designed to heighten the sense of empathy in students by making them aware of the implications of crisis situations – be they wars, pandemic, environmental catastrophes, financial crisis, etc. – on the everyday lives of people in multi-dimensional ways. It introduces students to a broader conception of “security,” one which concerns itself not just with the stability of the state, but also with preventing and alleviating risks to people’s survival, livelihoods and dignity.

The course uses an inter-disciplinary and interactive approach that looks at the intersection between the academic fields and policy practices of development, security studies and human rights. Students will learn how to define, critique and measure human security. They will learn how to design programmes and evaluate existing national security strategies from this perspective. They will examine the multiple consequences of contemporary crises (COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and in the Middle East, irregular migration, violent extremism, financial crisis) etc. on people’s fears, wants and indignities and think of multi-dimensional solutions. They will conduct field work among refugees in order to see their perspectives. They will also hear directly from professionals from the UN on their experiences working in the field.



### Summary

Traditional security thinking and the tools of national security, i.e., military force, often prove inadequate when it comes to protecting the lives and well-being of people threatened by crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, economic crisis, wars, violent extremism etc. The pandemic for example had devastating impacts on the economic, food, personal, environmental, and political security of states and people everywhere in different ways and to different degrees. Insecurity spread in a domino

effect across people, nations and sectors. The same can be said about the multi-dimensional impacts of the war in Ukraine, in the Middle East or climate change globally: These crises impact people first and foremost in multi-dimensional ways. Solutions are therefore needed that can capture mutual vulnerability between insecurities, but current narrow national security strategies and concepts are not designed to respond to such complexity.

The course on Human Security introduces students to a broader conception of “security,” one which concerns itself not just with the stability of the state, but also with risks to people in their everyday lives. Human Security goes beyond stability to encompass other ways that the survival, well-being, and dignity of people can be ensured: managing pandemics, saving jobs in the midst of a financial crisis, having access to reliable supply of quality food and clean water, being protected from pollution, being free from gross violations of human rights, etc.

The course combines lectures, case studies, discussions, and interactive group exercises to highlight linkages between theory and practice in every session. Students will learn how to define, critique and measure human security. They will learn how to design programmes and evaluate existing strategies from this perspective, while analyzing contemporary crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Working in groups, students will also conduct fieldwork and interviews among at-risk populations, such as refugees, in order to analyze people’s own experiences with security and insecurity in their lives. Finally, students will get a chance to interact with guest lecturers, practitioners who have built careers in the UN on applying the human security concept and who will provide tips on working with people and communities in the field.

#### Requirements for validation:

This course will be an interactive seminar. Students are expected to do the readings before the sessions in order to participate actively and fully. Requirements include:

- A 15-minute presentation of a refugee case study as part of a group: **25%**
- A 15-minute oral presentation of a HS case study as part of a group during exam week; **30%**
- A 2-hour exam administered during exam week **35%**
- Active participation in debates; and discussions based on readings: **10%**



## **Organisation of the course**

- **Session 1:** Introduction to class modality, expectations
- **Session 2:** Introduction to Human Security
- **Session 3:** Relationship to Traditional Security
- **Session 4:** Relations with the Development Approach
- **Session 5:** Security/Development Nexus
- **Session 6:** Measuring Human Security
- **Session 7:** Programming and Policy Tools

- **Session 8:** Peacekeeping, Responsibility to Protect
- **Session 9:** Peacebuilding
- **Session 10:** Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Part I: Causes
- **Session 11:** Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Part II Responses
- **Session 12:** Case Studies: National Security Strategies
- **Session 13:** The Refugee Experience (Presentations)
- **Session 14:** HS Analysis of the COVID-19 Crisis and Responses
- **Session 15:** HS and International Organizations
- **Session 16:** Conclusions: Wither Human Security
- **Session 17:** Working in the Development and Humanitarian Field (Guest speakers)



## Professor's Biography



**Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh** is a professor, researcher and UN Consultant who specializes in human security, peacebuilding, counter-terrorism and radicalization, with geographic specialization in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

At Sciences Po, she teaches within the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA), Master's Level courses on Human Security and a course on Understanding and Responding to Violent Extremism as well as a course on Human Security within the Summer School Program. As an academic, Tadjbakhsh has taught as Adjunct Professor at the Geneva Graduate Institute, at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and has been a visiting professor at universities in Kabul, New Delhi, Pretoria, Moscow and Dushanbe. She was a research fellow at the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (2010-2016). She is author of more than 30 academic and policy publications, among them *A Rock Between Hard Places; Afghanistan in its Regional Security Complexes* (with Kristian P. Harpviken) (Hurst Publishers, 2016), *Editor of Rethinking the Liberal Peace: External Models and Local Alternatives* (Routledge 2011) and *Author with Anuradha Chenoy of Human Security: Concepts and Implications* (Routledge, 2007). As a full-time staff at UNDP and then as a consultant for various UN agencies for the past 25 years, she has been developing strategic documents, policy papers, trainings and evaluations at the national, regional and global levels on development and security issues. She has helped the UN Country Offices in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Haiti and the Gambia in developing or evaluating joint programmes on Human Security. As policy advisor, trainer and drafter, she helped teams preparing National Human Development Reports for UNDP. She has helped the UN Human Security Unit develop guidelines for operationalizing the Human Security Approach and conducts trainings for UN staff and governments and

evaluations of programmes. She helped draft two joint Plans of Actions for the Implementation of the UN Global Counter Strategy in Central Asia (2011 and 2021) for the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) and the UN Office on Counter Terrorism (UNOCT). As Advisor to the Government of Kazakhstan during their Presidency of the Security Council in 2018, she helped draft and negotiate a Code of Conduct for the Achievement of a World Free of Terrorism which was signed by more than 70 countries. She has helped prepare national Plans on Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism for the countries of Central Asia and is now working on the return and repatriation of Foreign Fighters from war zones. Tadjbakhsh holds a Bachelor's Degree from Georgetown University (1987), a Master's Degree (1991) and a Doctoral Degree (1994) from Columbia University. She is Iranian-American and a resident of France.