

**Ketian Vivian Zhang**  
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4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030

EDUCATION

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**, Ph.D., Political Science (2018)

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**, B.A. (*Phi Beta Kappa*), Political Science (with distinction) and Sociology (2012)

ACADEMIC  
POSITION

**George Mason University**

Associate Professor (with tenure), Schar School of Policy and Government, 2025-present

- Director, International Relations Task Force

Assistant Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government, 2019-2025

**The Penn Project on the Future of US-China Relations** (2024-2025)

Fellow, National Security

PAST POSITIONS/  
AFFILIATIONS

**Stanford University** (October 2018-July 2019)

Postdoctoral research fellow, Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center

**Harvard Kennedy School** (2017-2018)

Pre-doctoral research fellow, International Security Program, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

**George Washington University** (2016-2017)

Pre-doctoral research fellow, The Institute for Security and Conflict Studies

**Tsinghua University** (2015-2016)

Visiting student, Department of International Relations

**The China National Institute of South China Sea Studies** (2016)

Visiting scholar

BOOKS

[China's Gambit – The Calculus of Coercion](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024)

Runner-up and honorable mention in the 2019 Kenneth N. Waltz Prize from the American Political Science Association for best dissertation written in the field of security studies

Media coverage in *VOA Chinese*, *BBC Vietnam*

Book talks given at: [CATO Institute](#), University of Maryland, [University of Notre Dame](#), University of Pennsylvania, John Quincy Adams Society, Geneva Graduate Institute, University of Kansas (as part of the China Town Hall event by NCUSCR)

Reviews:

- *World Politics*, forthcoming
- *International Studies Review*, forthcoming
- *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 140, Issue 1, Spring 2024, Pages 193–195

- H-Diplo | Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum Roundtable Review 16-24
- *Perspectives on Politics*, Volume 22, Issue 4 (December 2024)
- H-Net Reviews, May 2024
- Vijay Gokhale, former Indian foreign secretary and Ambassador to China, *The Hindu*, February 16, 2024

Second book project: *Economic Interdependence and Rising Power Grand Strategies*

PEER-REVIEWED  
JOURNAL  
ARTICLES

“Alliances with Chinese Characteristics? The Contents and Rationale of China's Strategic Partnerships,” *International Politics*, June 2025,  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-025-00701-0>.

- Dataset: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WHKPDO>

“Just Do it: Explaining the Characteristics and Rationale of Chinese Economic Sanctions,” *Texas National Security Review*, Vol 7, Issue 3 (Summer 2024),  
<https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/54044>.

“Chinese Military Coercion in Sino-Indian Border Disputes,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 32, No. 141 (May 2023), pp. 399-416,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2022.2090081>.

“Explaining China’s large-scale land reclamation in the South China Sea: Timing and rationale,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 46, Issue 6-7 (2023), pp. 1185-1214,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2022.2040486>.

“Signals, Deterrence, and QUAD,” *Asia Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (October 2022), pp. 43-48,  
<https://www.nbr.org/publication/minilateral-deterrence-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

“Bringing the Economy Back In: Economic Development and China’s Grand Strategy,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, January 2022,  
<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Jan/05/2002917948/-1/-1/1/JIPA%20-%20ZHANG%20-%20JAN%2022.PDF>.

“Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing’s Use of Coercion in the South China Sea,” *International Security*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Summer 2019), pp. 117-159,  
[https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00354](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00354).

Winner of the 2019 International Studies Association Patricia Weitsman Award for the best graduate student paper in security studies

Reviewed by Audrye Wong at H-Diplo/ISSF:  
<https://issforum.org/articlereviews/134-cautious>

Correspondence:

Tongfi Kim, Andrew Taffer and Ketian Zhang, “Correspondence: Is China a Cautious Bully?,” *International Security*, Vol 45, Issue 2 (Fall 2020)

PEER REVIEWED  
BOOK CHAPTERS

Book chapter on China’s grand strategy in *Comparative Grand Strategies in East Asia* (Forthcoming with Georgetown University Press, 2025)

Book chapter on Nationalism and China’s anti-foreign protests, in *The Sources of Great Power Competition: Rising Powers, Grand Strategy, and System Dynamics*, Routledge Studies in US Foreign Policy series, (London: Routledge, 2024)

“China's Military Coercion: Patterns and Rationale,” in James A. Siebens ed., *China's Use of Armed Coercion: To Win Without Fighting*, Routledge Asian Security Studies Series

(London: Routledge, 2023)

EDITOR  
REVIEWED BOOK  
CHAPTER

“Beijing's Nonmilitary Coercion – Tactics and Rationale,” in Tarun Chhabra, Rush Doshi, Ryan Hass, and Emilie Kimball eds., *Global China: Assessing China's Growing Role in the World* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021)

WORKS-IN-  
PROGRESS

“Economic Interdependence and Rising Power Grand Strategies – Comparing China and Germany” (article version of the second book project)

“Evaluating the Effectiveness of the PLA in China’s Southeast Asia strategy,” with Abdallah Ali and Vasilii Nosnov<sup>1</sup>

“Third Party Intervention and Alliance Choices in the Chinese Civil War.”

“A Campaign Analysis of PRC Submarine Blockade Against Taiwanese Shipping.”

POLICY  
PUBLICATIONS

“The PLA As a Part of PRC Strategy in Southeast Asia,” in Benjamin Frohman and Jeremy Rausch eds., *The PLA in a Complex Security Environment: Preparing for High Winds and Choppy Waters* (Washington D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2025).

“Conflict Scenarios between the United States and China at Sea,” Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy, 2023.

“The Quad and Sino-Indian Relations,” China-India Brief #207, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, July 16, 2022, <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/publications/center-publications/publication-article/detail/the-quad-and-sino-indian-relations>

“The Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, 1995-1996” in “Deterrence in Southern Asia,” Nuclear Learning initiative, *Stimson Center*, [www.stratlearning.org](http://www.stratlearning.org)

“Chinese Coercion in the South China Sea: Resolve and Costs,” *Policy Brief (International Security)*, Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center, January 2020.

“Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing’s Use of Coercion in the South China Sea,” *Ambassador's Brief*, August 18, 2019.

“A View from the United States,” National Commentaries, *The Asan Forum*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (May-June 2019).

“China is pushing back against Taiwan for these three reasons,” *Washington Post/Monkey Cage*, April 8, 2019.

“Chinese non-military coercion—Tactics and rationale,” *Brookings Institution*, January 22, 2019.

“‘Patriots’ with Different Characteristics: Deconstructing the Chinese Anti-Japan Protests in 2012,” *Précis*, *MIT Center for International Relations*, 2015 (Spring).

MEDIA  
COVERAGE/  
INTERVIEWS

*WSJ, Washington Post, CBS, Financial Times, BBC, BBC Vietnam, Economist, PRI, Politico, RFA, The Hill, The Wire China, USA Today, The Express, Defense One, BloombergQuint-India, The Hindu, The Hindustan Times, India Today, The Philippine Star, El Pais, The Storm Media, Weekendavisen*

<sup>1</sup> Ali is a Mason alum and Nosnov is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Mason’s Schar School.

“How China Uses Economic Sanctions,” Podcast with War On the Rocks, Nov 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/11/how-china-uses-economic-sanctions/>.

“Cautious Bully,” Podcast with Pekingology at CSIS, May 20, 2021, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/pekingology/id1525445350>

“China’s Maritime Coercion,” Podcast with the China Centre at the University of Oxford, May 12, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bu7v9manzeQ>

John Reed and Christian Shepherd, “Manila confronts Beijing’s ‘utter disregard’ for law in South China Sea,” *Financial Times*, April 8, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/1ec532e8-2ed0-44ea-82ce-942b74b9b8d3>

Center for International Maritime Security’s Sea Control podcast, April 4, 2021, [https://sea-control.simplecast.com/episodes/sea-control-237-sansha-city-in-chinas-south-china-sea-strategy-with-zachary-haver-dr-ketian-zhang-ccu\\_onIR](https://sea-control.simplecast.com/episodes/sea-control-237-sansha-city-in-chinas-south-china-sea-strategy-with-zachary-haver-dr-ketian-zhang-ccu_onIR)

Jude Blanchette, “Beijing’s visions of American decline,” POLITICO China Watcher at *Politico*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-china-watcher/2021/03/11/beijings-visions-of-american-decline-492064>

Interview with the Young China Watchers, “Voices on China,” January 30, 2021, <https://www.youngchinawatchers.com/interview-ketian-vivian-zhang/>

Interview with *The Express*, “Taiwan showdown: China WILL invade if major red line is crossed - world on brink,” September 26, 2020, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1340139/taiwan-news-china-news-invasion-red-line-usa-military-drills-pla-rocket-force>

Interview with *BloombergQuint-India*, “Why China Bullies? Expert Decodes Xi Jinping’s Aggressive Moves,” June 25, 2020, <https://www.thequint.com/news/world/why-is-china-a-cautious-bully-expert-decodes-chinas-lac-aggression>

Interview with David Rennie at the *Economist*, later reported here at Chaguan (David Rennie), “Why China bullies,” *The Economist*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/china/2020/06/18/why-china-bullies>

Interview with *Radio Free Asia*, May 14, 2020, [https://www.rfa.org/english/video?v=1\\_rmaddymm#.Xr8EGhwJEik.twitter](https://www.rfa.org/english/video?v=1_rmaddymm#.Xr8EGhwJEik.twitter)

Podcast: “Chinese Coercion in the South China Sea,” with Admiral Scott Swift and retired diplomat Susan Thornton, *Belfer Center* at Harvard Kennedy School, November 14, 2019, <https://www.belfercenter.org/offthepage>

Interview with *BBC Newshour*, November 3, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w172wq50hpbvj8w>

Interview with Critical State, *Public Radio International*’s weekly Global Security newsletter, October 28, 2019, <https://prx.cmail19.com/t/ViewEmail/i/5033BEE881AFE1822540EF23F30FEDED/E37655C451D32BD3948D468F162BC46E>

“Full steam ahead: naval competition with China,” Podcast, *War On The Rocks*, December 21, 2018.

ACADEMIC BOOK  
AND ARTICLE  
REVIEWS

Book review of *War and Peace in the Taiwan Strait* by Scott L. Kastner, *Political Science Quarterly*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/psquar/qqad090>

H-Diplo Roundtable XXIII-10 on Lüthi. *Cold Wars: Asia, The Middle East, Europe Positive? Negative? Complicated?* November 8, 2021, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/8889443/h-diplo-roundtable-xxiii-10-1%C3%BCthi-cold-wars-asia-middle-east>

“Strategies, Signals, And Conflict Propensity: Rising States, Declining States, And Contemporary U.S.-China Relations,” *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, Issue 2 (August 2020), pp. 161-172, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2020.20>.

Book review of *How China Sees the World: Han-Centrism and the Balance of Power in International Politics* by John M. Friend and Bradley A. Thayer, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 135, Issue 1 (Spring 2020), pp. 149-150.

H-Diplo/ISSF Roundtable 11-19 on *Rebranding China: Contested Status Signaling in the Changing Global Order*, July 10, 2020, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/11-19-pu>

*Europe and China's sea disputes: between normative politics, power balancing and acquiescence* by Andrew Cottey, *H-Diplo/ISSF*, <https://issforum.org/articlereviews/135-europe>.

SELECT GRANTS,  
FELLOWSHIPS,  
AND AWARDS

Australian National University Visiting Fellowship (\$9,000, 2025)  
George Mason University Schar School Outstanding Scholar Award (2024)  
The Charles Koch Foundation Research Grant (\$35,000, 2024)  
Ralph E. Powe Junior Faculty Enhancement Awards (\$10,000, 2020-2021)  
Japanese Studies Fellowship, The Japan Foundation (2020-2021)  
2019 International Studies Association Patricia Weitsman Award for the best graduate student paper in security studies  
Postdoctoral Fellowship, Shorenstein APARC, Stanford University (2018-2019)  
The Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Dissertation Fellowship (2017-2018)  
Pre-doctoral Research Fellowship, Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School (2017-2018)  
Pre-doctoral Research Fellowship, George Washington University (2016-2017)  
Smith Richardson Foundation World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship (2016)

SELECT INVITED  
TALKS

Department of Defense, June 2025  
Peking University, June 2025  
Princeton University, Nov 19, 2024  
George Washington University, Nov 6, 2024  
Foreign Policy Research Institute, Jul 8, 2024  
University of Kansas, Apr 2024  
University of Southern California, Mar 2024  
University of Virginia, Feb 7, 2024  
American University, Dec 7, 2023  
NBR and INDOPACOM Annual Conference on the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, June 9-11, 2023  
Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto, Feb and Mar 2023  
Georgetown University, Nov 28, 2022  
U.S. State Department, Nov 3, 2022  
U.S. Air War College, Oct 26, 2022  
TedxGeorge Mason, May 3, 2022  
University of Washington International Security Colloquium, Mar 4, 2022  
Harvard University, Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement, Apr 16, 2021  
The University of Pennsylvania, Feb 18, 2021

University of Oxford, Dec 4, 2020  
 The Canada-China Roundtable, Department of Finance Canada, Oct 22, 2020  
 Foreign Correspondents' Club China, June 25, 2020  
 Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, Aug 2020  
 Center for Security Policy Studies, George Mason University, Feb 21, 2020  
 Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, Apr 16, 2019  
 U.S. Naval War College, Dec 12, 2018  
 Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School, Mar 8, 2018  
 Department of Political Science, Brown University, Nov 1, 2017  
 LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, Oct 25, 2017  
 The Ash Center at the Harvard Kennedy School, Sep 26, 2016

CONFERENCES  
 AND  
 PRESENTATIONS

American Political Science Association: 2024 (P, D), 2021 (P), 2019 (D), 2018 (P, O), 2016 (P), 2015 (P, D)

International Studies Association: 2025 (P, D), 2024 (P, D), 2022 (P), 2021 (P, O, D, C), 2020 (P, O, D, C), 2019 (P, O, D), 2018 (P), 2016 (P, O)

Annual Meetings (P = paper author & presenter, O = panel organizer, D = discussant, C = Chair)

Peace Science Society (International) Annual Conference: 2019 (P)

Midwest Political Science Association: 2015 (P), 2023 (C, D)

International Security Studies Section of ISA & the International Security and Arms Control Section of APSA (ISSS-ISAC): 2014 (P)

OTHER  
 CONFERENCES/  
 WORKSHOPS  
 (INVITED  
 PARTICIPANT)

Conference on Great Power Competition and Cooperation, Yale, May 2025  
 Gates Forum, William & Mary, Dec 2024  
 China conference, University of Maryland, Apr 2024  
 "Cooperation, Competition, and Conflict in East Asia" at William & Mary, Feb 2024  
 "Reimagining Alliances," VCU/University of Maryland, Nov 7-8, 2023  
 The Graduate Research and Development Network on Asian Security (GRADNAS), Panel Discussion: China and the Region, Oct 23, 2023  
 Oxford-UKM Workshop on "Bounding Power in the Island Chains," Sep 2022  
 "Coercion and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," Stimson Center, Sep 2022  
 "The Future of U.S.-China Relations," MIT Starr Forum, Feb 24, 2022  
 "Minilateral deterrence in the Indo-Pacific virtual workshop," Australian National University and Stanford University, Feb 10, 2022  
 "U.S. & China: At the Brink?," Hayden Center at George Mason University, Nov 23, 2021  
 "IR Theory and China-India Relations" Conference, University of Denver/National University of Singapore, Nov 19-21, 2021  
 "Rising Powers: History and Strategy," Virginia Military Institute, Nov 15, 2021  
 Workshop on the Future of Alliances in Asia, School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, Oct 30, 2020  
 Social Science Reading Group, CISAC, Stanford University, May 23, 2019  
 China Social Science Workshop, Stanford University, Feb 20, 2019  
 International Security Studies Research Workshop, Yale University, Sep 21-22, 2018  
 Bridging the Gap New Era Foreign Policy Workshop, American University, Mar 2018  
 Boston International Security Graduate Conference, Feb 23, 2018  
 Harvard International Security Conference, Oct 14, 2017  
 Harvard-MIT-BU Chinese Politics Workshop (CCPRW), Oct 4, 2017  
 Emerging Scholars in Grand Strategy Conference, Notre Dame University, May 26, 2017  
 Research in Progress Workshop, George Washington University, Feb 6, 2017  
 China and International Relations Graduate Research Workshop, Penn CSCC, Nov 2016  
 The National Institute for South China Sea Studies of China, Apr 7, 2016  
 China Institute of Boundary and Ocean Studies of Wuhan University, Apr 20, 2016

Tsinghua University of China, Sep 24, 2015

# TEACHING, SERVICE, AND ADVISING

Grand Strategy (grad level); Chinese Foreign Policy (undergrad level); Introduction to International Politics (undergrad level); Chinese Foreign Policy (grad level)

Ph.D. dissertation committee member:

- Defended: Hyun Jung (Henry) Kim; Matt Fay; Lauren Sidrow
- In progress: Brian Davis; Connor Monie; Matt Kuhlman; Georgios Zacharias; Becca Earnhardt; Stephen Gailliot

Faculty mentor for Ph.D. students:

- Matt Kuhlman
- Trinh Nguyen
- Mathew Ha

Faculty mentor for undergrad honors program and URAP (undergrad RA program):

- Completed: Jenna Pan (honors thesis), Lesley Chen (honors thesis), Charrerko Walker (honors thesis), Ninya Khabush (honors thesis), Yulin Wu, Noah Schwartz, Abdallah Ali, Pearl Matibe, Kevin Lightner, Tenzin Tsering, Yara Hussein, Anthony Guzman, Remmy Salinas Calderon, Luke Smith, Kayla Repuyan, Declan Holmes, Lesley Chen, Ian Chai, Gabriel Yossick, Ninya Khabush, Xiaofan Zhang, Yuchen Yin, Aidan Fernandes
- In progress: Shikhar Chaturvedi, Kerry Bishop, Ryan Afshar

Schar School Ph.D. students IR comprehensive exam committee member: Spring 2022; Summer 2022; Spring 2023; Summer 2024; Winter 2025

Member of the George Mason University Grand Challenges Committee, 2024-2025

Member of the George Mason University Boren Committee

Member of the Schar School search committee for the tenure-track position on international security and law, fall 2022

The MIT Kaufman Teaching Certificate (awarded June 2015)

# SERVICE TO THE FIELD

Reviewer (academic journals and presses), *International Security*, *World Politics*, *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Affairs*, *Security Studies*, *Asian Survey*, *Asian Security*, *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, *Issues & Studies*, *The Singapore Economic Review*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *Contexto Internacional*, *Pacific Review*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *China: An International Journal*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Texas National Security Review*, *Oxford University Press*, *Cambridge University Press*, *Cornell University Press*

Coordinator, Harvard-MIT-BU Chinese Politics Workshop, 2013-2015

# MEMBERSHIP

American Political Science Association; International Studies Association

# RESEARCH SKILLS AND TRAINING

Chinese: native  
English: proficient  
Japanese: beginner

Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR), Syracuse University, June 2015

Completion of the Kaufman Teaching Certificate Program (KTCP) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2015 Spring)

2018 RAND Nuclear Strategic Stability Boot Camp, August 2018

Fieldwork conducted: Summer 2013 (2 months, China); Winter 2014 (1 month, China); Summer 2014 (6 weeks, China); Winter 2014 (1 month, China); July 2015 to July 2016 (12 months, China); August 2016 to May 2017 (9 months, Washington D.C.); Winter 2017 (1 month, China), Summer 2017 (2 months, China), Winter 2018 (1 month, China), Spring 2018 (2 weeks, China), Winter 2019-2020 (2 months, China), Spring 2023 (1 week), Summer 2024 (2 months), Summer 2025 (1 month, China), Summer 2025 (1 month, Australia)

## REFERENCES

M. Taylor Fravel  
Arthur and Ruth Sloan Professor of Political  
Science  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)  
[fravel@mit.edu](mailto:fravel@mit.edu)

Richard Samuels  
Ford International Professor of Political Science  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)  
[samuels@mit.edu](mailto:samuels@mit.edu)

Vipin Narang  
Professor of Political Science  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
(MIT)  
[narangv@mit.edu](mailto:narangv@mit.edu)

Stephen Van Evera  
Ford International Professor of  
Political Science  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
(MIT)  
[vanevera@mit.edu](mailto:vanevera@mit.edu)