

Kai Quek

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Citizenship: Singapore

I study strategic interactions in international relations, with a focus on US-China interactions. I am interested in (1) state-to-state signaling, (2) the deescalation of crises and conflicts, and (3) the origins of collective beliefs such as nationalism. My theoretical research on signaling has established [new general signaling mechanisms](#) in political science. My empirical research on deescalation opened the genre of real-world crisis management experimentation, by developing the [first large-scale experiment in international security for managing a live real-world dispute](#). The experiment measured the nationalistic backlash leaders face for backing down in a territorial crisis, and tested strategies the government can use to reduce the backlash and decrease the risk of war.

EDUCATION

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

PhD in Political Science, 2013

Presidential Fellowship, 2007

Cornell University

BA in Economics and Government, 2005

Presidential Research Scholarship, 2002

APPOINTMENT

The University of Hong Kong (HKU)

Associate Professor of Politics, 2019

Assistant Professor of Politics, 2013

FELLOWSHIPS & COURTESY APPOINTMENTS

Cornell University, Center for the Study of Economy and Society

External Fellow, 2024 –

National University of Singapore

Visiting Senior Fellow, 2022-2024

The University of Hong Kong

Outstanding Young Researcher, 2018

(First awardee from social science faculty since 2010)

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

RESEARCH STREAMS:

- **S** = SIGNALING
 - **D** = DEESCALATION OF CONFLICT AND PREVENTION OF WAR
 - **C** = CHINA
 - **M** = MASS BELIEFS: ORIGINS AND INTERACTIONS
-

Deescalating a Trade War (with Eddy Yeung)

Cambridge University Press (Elements in International Relations Series)

Accepted for publication ^{D, C}

How Intractable is the Security Dilemma? (with Mark Bell)

Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2025 [C](#), [M](#)

Win-Win Deescalation (with John Koo)

International Studies Quarterly, 2024 [D](#), [C](#)

**Perspective Taking and Security Dilemma Thinking:
Experimental Evidence from China and the United States**

(with Ryan Brutger and Joshua Kertzer)

World Politics, 2024 [C](#), [M](#)

**Managing the Costs of Backing Down: A “Mirror Experiment”
on Reputations and Audience Costs in a Real-World Conflict**

(with Shoko Kohama and Atsushi Tago)

Journal of Politics, 2024 [D](#), [S](#)

Self-Reported Political Ideology (with Eddy Yeung)

Political Science Research and Methods, 2024 [M](#)

- FEATURED IN THE ATLANTIC
- EDITOR’S COMMENTARY IN GOOD AUTHORITY (FORMERLY MONKEY CAGE IN WASHINGTON POST)

Do States Really Sink Costs to Signal Resolve? (with Dan Altman)

Journal of Global Security Studies, 2024 [S](#)

Managing Nationalism: Experiments in China (with Samuel Chan)

Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2024 [M](#), [C](#)

The Sources of National Pride: Evidence from China and the United States

(with Jiaqian Ni and Mengqiao Wang)

Nations and Nationalism, 2024 [M](#), [C](#)

What is a Patriot? (with Eddy Yeung and Mengqiao Wang)

Foreign Policy Analysis, 2024 [M](#), [C](#)

Reneging on Alliances: Experimental Evidence

(with Mark Souva and Weifang Xu)

Research and Politics, 2023 [M](#)

Asymmetrical Fairness in Trade Preferences (with Injoo Sohn)

Research and Politics, 2023 [M](#), [C](#)

Relative Gains in the Shadow of a Trade War (with Eddy Yeung)

International Organization, 2022 [D](#), [M](#)

Untying Hands: Deescalation, Reputation, and Dynamic Audience Costs

British Journal of Political Science, 2022 [S](#), [D](#)

Conditioning China’s Influence (with Courtney Fung, Enze Han, Austin Strange)

Journal of Contemporary China, 2022 [C](#)

Four Costly Signaling Mechanisms

American Political Science Review, 2021 ^S

- HKU RESEARCH OUTPUT PRIZE 2022
- APPLIED IN REPORT THAT TRIGGERED OPENAI IMPLOSION IN 2023: [REPORT](#), [NYT](#), [TECH NEWS](#)

Public Attitudes on Internal and Foreign Migration: Evidence from China

(with David Andrew Singer)

Public Opinion Quarterly, 2021 ^C

Guns and Butter in China (with Xiao Han and Michael Sadler)

China Quarterly, 2020 ^C

- INVITED COMMENTARY IN THE WASHINGTON POST

Violence Exposure and Support for State Use of Force in a Non-Democracy (with Yue Hou)

Journal of Experimental Political Science, 2019 ^C

- BEST JEPS ARTICLE AWARD, AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Authoritarian Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace (with Mark Bell)

International Organization, 2018 ^{M, C}

Can China Back Down? Crisis Deescalation in the Shadow of Popular Opposition (with Alastair Iain Johnston)

International Security, 2017/18 ^{D, C}

- FEATURED IN THE ECONOMIST
- REPRINTED IN ESSENTIAL READINGS IN WORLD POLITICS, WW NORTON (7TH EDITION)

Type II Audience Costs

Journal of Politics, 2017 ^{D, S}

Are Costly Signals More Credible? Evidence of Sender-Receiver Gaps

Journal of Politics, 2016 ^S

Nuclear Proliferation and the Use of Nuclear Options: Experimental Tests

Political Research Quarterly, 2016 ^D

Rationalist Experiments on War

Political Science Research and Methods, 2015 ^D

Discontinuities in Signaling Behavior upon the Decision for War: An Analysis of China's Prewar Signaling

International Relations of the Asia Pacific, 2015 ^{S, C}

Closeness Counts: Increasing Precision and Reducing Errors in Mass Election Predictions (with Michael Sances)

Political Analysis, 2015 ^M

- ADOPTED BY AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY (ANES) 2016

**WORKING PAPERS
(Select)**

Signal, Noise, and Politics

Are Costly Signals Perceived Asymmetrically?

The Robustness Properties of Grand Strategies

Are There 1,271 Types of Nationalism?

Collaborations

Heterogenous Chinese Nationalism

(with Erin Carter Baggott, USC / Alastair Iain Johnston, Harvard)

Collaborations (Students from HKU)

Counterfactual Experiments on Pathways to Conciliation
(with Jiaqian Ni, Berkeley)

Deescalating an Accidental Crisis (with Zenobia Chan, Princeton)

How to Deflate a Dispute (with Gabriel Fung, Oxford)

War Apologies in the Shadow of Chinese Nationalism
(with Jiaqian Ni, Berkeley)

**GRANTS
(>HK\$100,000)**

HKU Seed Funding for Basic Research, 2023-25 (HK\$150,000)

University Research Output Prize, 2022 (HK\$120,000)

GRF Grant, Hong Kong Research Grant Council, 2020 (> HK\$800,000)

HKU Outstanding Young Researcher, 2018 (HK\$300,000)

ECS Grant, Hong Kong Research Grant Council, 2016 (> HK\$400,000)

HKU Seed Funding for Basic Research, 2014-16 (> HK\$200,000)

**INVITED TALKS
(Recent)**

2024: Stanford, USC, Harvard, MIT, Dartmouth, Waseda (Japan)

2023: Cornell, Oxford, Waseda (Japan), SMU (Singapore)

2019: Princeton, Cambridge, ANU (Australia)

2018: Harvard, MIT, Waseda (Japan)

**CONFERENCES
(Recent)**

2025: APSA, ISA, PIPC

2024: APSA, PIPC, Academia Sinica

2023: APSA, MPSA, PIPC

2022 (Online): APSA, ISA, MPSA

2021 (Online): APSA, ISA, PIPC

2019: APSA, ISA, MPSA, Pacific International Politics Conference (PIPC)

SERVICES

Internal

Chair, Department Research Postgraduate Committee, 2019 –
Deputy Chair, Department Research Postgraduate Committee, 2017-19
Head of Department (Acting), 11/2019, 5/2024
Exceptional Hiring Committee (Appointed by Provost), 2023-24
Headship Recruitment Committee (Elected by Department), 2023-24
Senior Recruitment Committee in IR (Elected by Department), 2024-25
Taskforce for Hong Kong General Social Survey, 2023 –

Faculty Research Advisory Panel, 2024 –
Faculty Summative Peer Review Panel for Teaching, 2024 –
Faculty Human Resource Committee, 2021-24
Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, 2014-20
Faculty Library Committee, 2014-19
Department Methods Working Group, 2015
Hiring Committee (IR), 2015-16, 2019-20, 2023-24
Hiring Committee (Methods), 2020-21
Hiring Committee (Public Administration), 2021-22
Hiring Committee (Sociology), 2021-22
Hiring Committee (Data Science/Methods Hub), 2020-21, 2023

External

Chair, Experimental Research Section, MPSA Annual Conference, 2020
Co-Organizer, Workshop on Measuring China's Influence, HKU, 2020
Co-Organizer, Asian PolMeth, Society of Political Methodology, 2020
Co-Organizer, Pacific International Politics Conference, 2018

Editorial

Board of Editors (Elected), *International Organization*, 2023 –
Editorial Board (Appointed), *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 2024 –
Editorial Board (Appointed), *International Relations of the Asia Pacific*, 2024 –
Editorial Board (Appointed), *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2023 –
Editorial Board (Appointed), *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 2018 –

Reviewer

American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review,
British Journal of Political Science, Chinese Journal of International
Politics, Conflict Management and Peace Science, European Journal of
International Relations, Foreign Policy Analysis, International Interactions,
International Organization, International Relations of the Asia Pacific,
International Security, International Studies Quarterly, Journal of Conflict
Resolution, Journal of Experimental Political Science, Journal of Peace
Research, Journal of Politics, Political Psychology, Political Science
Research and Methods, World Politics, Hong Kong Research Grant Council,
Oxford Encyclopedia of Crisis Analysis (External Assessor)