

PPA Talk Series 2025-26:

The Political Construction of Friends & Foes

 **October 27, 2025 (Monday)**

 **4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.**

 **Room 966, 9/F, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU**

Speaker

Professor Steve Chan
College Professor of Distinction Emeritus
University of Colorado, Boulder



Biography

Prof. Steve Chan is College Professor of Distinction Emeritus at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He was the Director of Farrand Residential Academic Program, Chair of the Political Science Department, and Director of the International Affairs Program at that institution. He received the Karl W. Deutsch award of the International Studies Association, Boulder Faculty Assembly Award for Excellence in Research, and CU Parents Association's Marinus Smith Award for excellence in teaching. Chan's research interests focus on international relations, political economy, foreign policy, decision-making, and East Asia. While a political scientist specializing in international relations and concentrating mostly on Sino-American relations in his recent research, his approach has been deliberately cross-national and interdisciplinary, relating to anthropology, economics, geography, history, psychology, public administration, and sociology. His publications include twenty-eight books and over two hundred articles and chapters. His articles have appeared in journals published in the U.S., Britain, China, Denmark, Japan, Korea, Norway, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Spain, and Taiwan. He is also a co-editor, along with Kai He and Rumi Aoyama, for the Cambridge University Press's Elements Series for Indo-Pacific Security.

Abstract

The designation of friends and foes in international relations reflects political entrepreneurship to promote popular narratives, frame public discourse, and influence policy agenda and debate. It is often a top-down process initiated by the political elite, with mass opinion following leaders' efforts to explain international relations and to reconstruct its history. This explanation and reconstruction often do not reflect accurately historical reality and can in fact be highly distorted and misleading. Despite the myth of public opinion informing leaders' policies in a democracy, the causal process usually works in the other way, with mass opinion responding to changes in official policies and narratives. This presentation will draw on examples from U.S. relations with Britain, Germany, Japan, Russia/the USSR, and China.

Moderator

Prof. Enze Han
Associate Professor
Department of Politics and Public Administration, HKU



Registration (first-come-first-served)
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