

FIONA S. CUNNINGHAM

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Assistant Professor of Political Science, 2021-
Faculty Fellow, Perry World House
Faculty Affiliate, Center for the Study of Contemporary China
Faculty Associate, Browne Center for International Politics

YALE UNIVERSITY

Visiting Fellow, Department of Political Science, 2024-5

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, 2019-21
Member, Institute for Security & Conflict Studies

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Post-Doctoral Fellow, Center for International Security and Cooperation, 2018-9

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Cyber Security Project, Belfer Center for Science and
International Affairs, 2017-8

EDUCATION

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Ph.D., Political Science, 2018
Member, Security Studies Program

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Bachelor of Laws (Honors), 2010

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Bachelor of Arts (Honors), Politics and International Relations, 2008

BOOKS

Under the Nuclear Shadow: China's Information-Age Weapons in International Security,
Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton University Press, 2025)
Reviewed in *Choice*, *Arms Control Today*
Coverage in *The Wire China*, *Global China*, *ChinaTalk*, *New Books Network*, *Thinking
the Unthinkable*

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

“China’s Test of the Nuclear Revolution: Technology, Great Power Competition, and the Nuclear Balance” *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 48, No. 2 (2025)

“Strategic Substitution: China’s Search for Coercive Leverage in the Information Age” *International Security*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2022)

“The Maritime Rung on the Escalation Ladder: Naval Blockades in a U.S.-China Conflict” *Security Studies* Vol. 29, No. 4 (2020)

- Runner-up for the 2021 Best Research Article on U.S. Foreign Policy and Grand Strategy Prize awarded by the America in the World Consortium
- Also published in Jonathan D. Caverley, Peter Dombrowski (eds), *Security Studies in a New Era of Maritime Competition* (Routledge, 2023)

“Preparing the Cyber Battlefield: American and Chinese Perspectives on Cyber Escalation Risks” *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 3 No. 4 (Fall 2020) (with Ben Buchanan)

- Revised version published in Robert Chesney, James Shires and Max Smeets (eds), *Cyberspace and Instability* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023)

“Dangerous Confidence? Chinese Views on Nuclear Escalation,” *International Security*, Vol. 44 No. 2 (Fall 2019) (with M. Taylor Fravel)

- Reviewed in *H-Diplo/ISSF*

“Assuring Assured Retaliation: China’s Nuclear Posture and U.S.-China Strategic Stability,” *International Security*, Vol. 40 No. 2 (Fall 2015) (with M. Taylor Fravel)

UNDER REVIEW

“Other than Law: Legitimizing China’s Nuclear Weapons Strategy” conditionally accepted at *Security Studies*

“Escalate to Survive? Nuclear Weapons in Contemporary Great Power Conflict” (with Kristin Ven Bruusgaard)

WORK IN PROGRESS

“China’s Nuclear Arguments: Building a Domestic Coalition for Arsenal Modernization”

“Seeking Political Leverage: China’s Belated Rise in the Nuclear Domain”

“China’s Rejection of Tactical Nuclear Weapons in the Late Cold War”

“Reunification Without Fighting” (with Jennifer Lind)

OTHER PUBLICATIONS (SELECTED)

“Chinese Assessments of Starlink and U.S.-China Space Relations,” Commentary, *CSIS Interpret: China*, December 2024

“The Unknowns About China’s Nuclear Modernization Program,” *Arms Control Today*, June 2023

“Accommodative Signaling and the Role of Risk,” invited response to Erica Lonergan and Shawn Lonergan, “Cyber Operations, Accommodative Signaling, and the De-Escalation of International Crises,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2022)

Invited review of Brendan Rittenhouse Green, *The Revolution that Failed: Nuclear Competition, Arms Control, and the Cold War*, for H-Diplo Roundtable XXIII-11, November 2021

“Cooperation Under Asymmetry? The Future of U.S.-China Nuclear Relations,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2021)

- Earlier version published by the University of Pennsylvania’s Project on the Future of U.S.-China Relations, September 2020

“Managing U.S.-China Nuclear Risks: A Guide for Australia,” Policy Brief, United States Studies Centre, University of Sydney, September 2020

“The Role of Nuclear Weapons in China’s National Defence,” in Rory Medcalf, Katherine Mansted, Stephan Frühling and James Goldrick, *The Future of the Undersea Deterrent: A Global Survey* (Canberra: Australian National University, 2020)

“Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Systems of the People’s Republic of China,” NAPSNet Special Reports, Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 2019

“Alliances, Extended Deterrence, and Managing Escalation in East Asia,” in Sharon Stirling (ed.) *Shifting Dynamics: Next Generation Assessments on Asian Security* (Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2016) (with Rupal N. Mehta)

“Why China Won’t Abandon its Nuclear Strategy of Assured Retaliation,” Policy Brief, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, December 2015 (with M. Taylor Fravel)

“The Trinity and the Dragon: Reconciling Finance, Human Rights and the Environment in China,” *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (2012) (with David Kinley)

Disarming Doubt: The Future of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in East Asia (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2012) (co-edited with Rory Medcalf)

“The Stellar Status Symbol: True Motives for China’s Space Program,” *China Security*, Vol. 5 No. 3 (2009)

MEDIA

“More Than Just Nuclear: Risk Reduction in the China-US Relationship,” *The Diplomat*, November 10, 2023

“China’s nuclear arsenal is growing. What does that mean for U.S.-China relations?” *The Monkey Cage/Washington Post*, November 11, 2021 (with M. Taylor Fravel)

“Was China Behind Last October’s Power Outage in India? Here’s What We Know,” *The Monkey Cage/Washington Post*, April 29, 2021

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

2025-6	Stanton Foundation Nuclear Security Grant
2024, 2025-7	Korean National Commission for UNESCO Grant (with Prof. Lynn Meskell)
2024-7	Penn Global Research and Engagement Grant (with Prof. Lynn Meskell)
2023-4	Paul Olum Grant, Ploughshares Fund
2022-3	John H. McArthur Research Fellowship, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada
2022-3	Defense Threat Reduction Agency Grant (with the National Bureau of Asian Research)
2021-5	Perry World House Faculty Fellowship
2021	Runner-up, Prize for Best Research Article on U.S. Foreign Policy and Grand Strategy, America in the World Consortium
2020-1	Stanton Foundation Nuclear Security Junior Faculty Fellowship, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
2019	Lucian Pye Award for best dissertation, MIT Political Science Department
2018-9	Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program (declined)
2018-9	Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Dickey Center, Dartmouth University (declined)
2017-8	Stanton Nuclear Security Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, RAND Corporation (declined)
2016	Smith Richardson Foundation World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship
2015-16	China Confucius Studies Program Ph.D. Research Fellowship, Renmin University
2013, 2015	MIT Center for International Studies Summer Research Grant
2012-13	Walter A. Rosenblith MIT Presidential Graduate Fellowship
2010	University of Sydney Undergraduate Academic Merit Prize
2007	University of New South Wales Harvard Travel Scholarship
2007	Chinese Government Scholarship

INVITED TALKS

2025 Center for Strategic and International Studies; Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University; International Relations Seminar, Political Science, Stanford University; Seminar XXI, Center for International Studies, MIT; Nuclear

- Security Program, Yale University; Perry World House, University of Pennsylvania; Project on Managing the Atom, Harvard University; Center for International Security Studies, Princeton University; Nuclear Security Program & Brady-Johnston Book Series, Yale University; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University; Burkle Center for International Relations, UCLA; British International Studies Association; Asia New Zealand Foundation
- 2024 Center for American Studies, Fudan University; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Initiative for U.S.-China Dialogue, Georgetown University; Grand Strategy and Nuclear Security Program, Yale University; National Institute of Defense Studies, Tokyo; China and International Politics Conference, Yale University; Seminar XXI, Center for International Studies, MIT; Nuclear Policy Working Group, University of California, Berkeley; Columbia University International Politics Seminar; Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University; Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict; Space Policy Institute, George Washington University; Penn China Engagement Forum, Penn-Wharton China Center (Beijing); Penn Project on the Future of U.S.-China Relations, Penn-Wharton China Center; Visiting Lecture Series, Defence Attaché Office, Australian Embassy to China
- 2023 Program on Science & Global Security, Princeton University; Norwegian Intelligence School; Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies; Beijing Xiangshan Forum; Deterrence Workshop, Bridging the Gap-U.S. State Department; Sasakawa Peace Foundation; Center for Peace, Hiroshima University; NATO Nuclear Policy Symposium; Australia-Japan-U.S.-UK Track 1.5 Strategic Dialogue; Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University; Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States; *World Politics*, Princeton University; Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University; Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University; Lansing Lee/Bankard Seminar in Global Politics, University of Virginia; Penn Project on the Future of U.S.-China Relations, University of Pennsylvania; Nuclear Security Symposium, International Security Studies, Yale University; Asia Security Project, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University; HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, NATO; Seminar XXI, Center for International Studies, MIT; School of International Studies, American University; Cyber Strategy Symposium, Georgia Institute of Technology; Initiative for U.S.-China Dialogue, Georgetown University; Hague Program on International Cybersecurity; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- 2022 International Relations & International Security Studies Joint Seminar, Yale University; Perry World House, University of Pennsylvania; Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University; Notre Dame International Security Center Seminar, University of Notre Dame; International Relations Seminar, Dickey Center, Dartmouth College; Sigur Center for Asian Studies, George Washington University; Institute for Security & Conflict Studies, George Washington University; Future Warfighting Symposium, Naval War College; Los Alamos National Laboratory; Center for Global Security Research,

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Hague Center for Security Studies; East Asia Strategy Forum, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada & Institute for Peace and Diplomacy

- 2021 Workshop in International Politics, University of Chicago; Monday International Relations Thought Series Colloquium, University of California, Berkeley; Strategic and Operational Research Department Workshop, Naval War College; Forum for International Institutions and Global Governance, Temple University; Strategic Deterrence Exercise Workshop, Naval War College; Changing Character of War Centre, Oxford University; Institut Français des Relations Internationales; Asia Studies Program Roundtable, Georgetown University; Initiative for U.S.-China Dialogue, Georgetown University; Nuclear Planning Directorate, NATO; Hoover Institution and U.S. Cyber Command; Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Centre for International Security, Hertie School; U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission
- 2020 Stanton Foundation Nuclear Security Seminar; Browne Center & Center for the Study of Contemporary China, University of Pennsylvania; Center for International Security Studies, Princeton University; Center for the Study of WMD Spotlight Seminar, National Defense University; Strauss Center, University of Texas; Oslo Nuclear Project, University of Oslo; Hague Centre for Strategic Studies; Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- 2019 Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University; Young Scholars in International Relations Conference, Browne Center, University of Pennsylvania; Nuclear Policy Working Group, University of California, Berkeley; Nuclear Scholars Research Initiative Workshop; Georgetown University International Theory & Research Seminar; Center for Security Studies, Georgetown University; Naval Postgraduate School; Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies; NC3 Systems and Strategic Stability, Nautilus Institute
- 2018 Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University; Political Science Department, Brown University; Political Science Department, George Washington University; Schar School, George Mason University; School of International Studies, American University; Bush School, Texas A&M University; Bridging the Straits Conference, Naval War College; Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University; Emerging Scholars in Grand Strategy Conference, Notre Dame International Security Center
- 2017 Institute for Security and Conflict Studies, The George Washington University; Cyber Security Project Seminar Series, Belfer Center, Harvard University; Project on Nuclear Issues, Center for Strategic and International Studies; Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments
- 2016 PIIC Beijing Seminar on International Security

2015 China-U.S. Young Scholars Dialogue, China Institute of International Studies; Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University; Nuclear Scholars' Research Initiative Workshop

2014 Institute for Security and Conflict Studies, The George Washington University

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

APSA Annual Conference 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023, 2024, 2025

ISA Annual Convention 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS

Affiliate, Center for Nuclear Security Policy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2025-)

Expert Associate, National Security College, Australian National University (2023-)

Nonresident Scholar, Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2021-)

Research Affiliate, Security Studies Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2020-)

Nonresident Fellow, Foreign Policy and Defence Program, United States Studies Centre, University of Sydney (2020-)

Affiliate, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University (2019-)

International Studies Association (2014-)

American Political Science Association (2014-)

Futures Council, National Security College, Australian National University (2017-2020)

Carnegie International Policy Scholars Consortium and Network (2017-2019)

German Marshall Fund Young Strategists Forum (2016)

CSIS Pacific Forum Young Leaders Program (2015-2019)

Solicitor of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory (admitted 2012)

TEACHING & ADVISING

PSCI 6401: Strategic Studies, University of Pennsylvania graduate seminar

PSCI 4450: Chinese Foreign Policy, University of Pennsylvania undergraduate seminar

PSCI 1401: International Security, University of Pennsylvania undergraduate lecture

IAFF 6168: Coercion in Peacetime and War, GWU MA seminar (2019)

PSC 2449: International Security Politics, GWU undergraduate lecture (2019)

Summer Workshop on the Analysis of Military Operations and Strategy, Columbia University,
China's military lecture and seminar for graduate students and faculty (2022-2025)

Public Policy and Nuclear Threats Boot Camp, UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation,
China lecture for graduate students and early career professionals (2025)

SERVICE

Reviewer, *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Science Review*, *Asian Survey*, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *China Quarterly*, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *International Interactions*, *International Organization*, *International Security*, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Journal of Cybersecurity*, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, *Journal of Politics*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Nonproliferation Review*, *RUSI Journal*, *Security Studies*, *Texas National Security Review*, U.S. State Department, *World Politics*

2023-	Organizing Committee, New Faces in Chinese Politics Conference
2024	Chinese Domestic Politics Search Committee, University of Pennsylvania
2023-4	Diversity Committee, Political Science Department, University of Pennsylvania
2023-4	Undergraduate Executive Committee, Political Science Department, University of Pennsylvania
2021-3	Executive Committee, Center for East Asian Studies, University of Pennsylvania
2022	Fellowship Committee, Perry World House, University of Pennsylvania
2018	International Relations Search Committee, Political Science Department, MIT
2015, 2016-7	Co-chair, Women in International Politics and Security
2014-5	Coordinator, Working Group on the Strategic Use of Force, MIT
2014-5	Coordinator, Nuclear Weapons Working Group, MIT

OTHER EXPERIENCE

2010-11	Research Assistant to Prof. David Kinley, Faculty of Law, University of Sydney
2009-12	Research Associate, Nuclear Policy, Lowy Institute for International Policy
2009-10	Law Clerk, Mallesons Stephen Jaques (now King & Wood Mallesons, Dec-Feb)
2008	Executive Editor, <i>UNSW Law Journal</i>

LANGUAGES

Mandarin Chinese, French

Updated September 2025