

Michael F. Joseph

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · SECURITY & FOREIGN POLICY · APPLIED METHODOLOGY

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Academic Appointments

UC San Diego

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE & DATA SCIENCE (BY COURTESY)

San Diego, CA

2021 – Present

Yale University

HENRY CHAUNCEY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

New Haven, CT

2018 – 2020

Education

The George Washington University

PH.D., POLITICAL SCIENCE

Washington, DC

2019

The Australian National University

M.A., STRATEGIC STUDIES

Canberra, Australia

2010

The University of New South Wales

B.A., INTERNATIONAL STUDIES & ECONOMICS

Sydney, Australia

2007

Publications

BOOK

The Origins of Great Power Rivalries. Cambridge University Press. July, 2026.

- Develops original theory of whether and when great-power relations devolve into large-scale mistrust and competition, or remain peaceful. Mechanism explains puzzles of effective diplomacy and threat perceptions.
- Introduces diverse normative preferences and historical attachment into a model of great power competition.
- Explains U.S. reactions to China's rise using hundreds of novel elite interviews and policy analysis.
- Recovers nuanced intelligence practices through survey experiments with CIA, State, and Defense personnel.
- Traces every great-power rivalry since 1850 via medium-*n* and historical case analysis, anchored by a detailed account of Anglo-Russian relations at the origins of the Cold War.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

1. "The Domestic Sources of International Trust," with Roseanne McManus & Michael Goldfien. *American Political Science Review*, 2026. (*First View*)
2. "Elite Partisan Disagreement and Military Victory: Evidence from South Korean Battle Experiments," with Joon H. Chung & Hui S. Park. *American Political Science Review*, 2026. (*First View*) **Award:** Best Paper, Conflict Processes Section, APSA
3. "Explaining Peace During Long and Rapid Power Shifts: A Theory of Grand Bargains," with Mathias Frenthem & William Spaniel. *British Journal of Political Science*, 55(e47), 2025.
4. "Secret Innovation," with Michael Poznansky. *International Organization*, 78(4), 2024.
5. "When Do Leader Attributes Matter? Evidence from the President's Daily Brief," with Michael Goldfien & Daniel Krmaric. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 41(4), 2024. **Award:** The Palmer Prize
6. "The Domestic Sources of International Reputation," with Michael Goldfien & Roseanne McManus. *American Political Science Review*, 117(2), 2023.
7. "Perceptions of Leadership Importance: Evidence from the President's Daily Brief," with Michael Goldfien. *Security Studies*, 32(2), 2023.
8. "Do Different Coercive Strategies Help or Hurt Deterrence Success?" *International Studies Quarterly*, 67(2), 2023.
9. "Shooting the Messenger: The Challenge of National Security Whistleblowing," with Michael Poznansky & William Spaniel. *Journal of Politics*, 84(2), 2022.
10. "A Little Bit of Cheap-Talk is a Dangerous Thing: States Can Communicate Intentions Persuasively and Raise the Risk of War." *Journal of Politics*, 83(1), 2021. **Award:** Best Paper, Formal Theory Section, APSA

11. “Media Technology, Covert Action, and the Politics of Exposure,” with Michael Poznansky. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(3): 320–355, 2018.
12. “Are Coups Really Contagious? An Extreme Bounds Analysis of Political Diffusion,” with Michael K. Miller & Dorothy Ohl. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 62(2): 410–441, 2018.

REVISE-AND-RESUBMIT

- “Cover Stories,” with Matthew Malis. *American Political Science Review*
- “Pre-hacking: Pre-registration Practices in Political Science.” *American Political Science Review*

PUBLIC WRITING

- “The Prospects for a Negotiated Peace in Ukraine Are Bleak.” *Monkey Cage, Washington Post*, 2022.
- “National Security Whistleblower Reform Is a Sticky Wicket.” *War on the Rocks*, 2019.

ACTIVE PROJECTS (AVAILABLE ON REQUEST)

- 3 other papers under review, 7 drafted manuscripts covering threat assessments, the reputation for resolve, International Order, and survey and theoretical methodology, and military and intelligence effectiveness.

Grants & Fellowships

GRANTS

- 2024–2027 **National Science Foundation**, “How International Reputation Accrues across Multiple Policy Domains,” co-PI with Roseanne McManus. Security & Preparedness Program (Awards 2342950/2342951). **\$450,000**.
- 2016 **Sar & Britta Levitan Endowment**. **\$20,000**.
- 2015 **Herbst Family Graduate Endowment**. **\$20,000**.

FELLOWSHIPS

- 2026 Australian National University, Research School of Social Sciences, In-Residence Fellowship.
- 2016–2018 The Bradley Foundation, Bradley Fellow in Foreign Policy. **\$35,000**.
- 2015–2018 Institute for Security and Conflict Studies, In-Residence Research Fellowship, Elliott School of International Affairs.

Honors & Awards

- 2025 **Best Paper, Conflict Processes Section**, American Political Science Association
- 2024 **The Palmer Prize**, Conflict Management and Peace Science
- 2021 **Best Paper, Formal Theory Section**, American Political Science Association

Invited Talks & Workshops

- 2026 Stanford, Political Science; Duke University (“Multi-dimensional Reputation”). Stanford, FSI (“Origins of Great Power Rivalries”). Florida State University (“Pre-hacking”).
- 2025 UC, San Diego, GPS (“Pre-hacking”).
- 2024 Washington University in St. Louis; University of Southern California (“Unattributable Coercion”).
- 2023 UCLA (“Cover Stories”); UC Riverside (“Unattributable Coercion”).
- 2022 UCLA; UC Berkeley (book project); Ohio State (“The Efficiency–Resilience Trade-off”).
- 2021 University of Pittsburgh; University of Sydney; The Australian National University.
- 2020 Princeton; Penn State; ANU (“Origins of Great Power Rivalries”); Vanderbilt (“More Talk, Less Action”).
- 2015–2019 Yale University, MacMillan International Relations Seminar; University of Rochester; University of Southern California, Formal Models in International Relations; Harvard International Security Conference; Triangle Institute for Security Studies, New Faces in International Security; American University, Political Violence Workshop; University of Virginia, Lansing B. Lee Jr. Seminar in Global Politics.

Conferences Presentations: I regularly present and serve as a discussant or panel chair at major conferences including ISA, APSA, MPSA, and Peace Science.

Teaching

COURSES: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

- *Spies: Intelligence and U.S. National Security* (undergraduate)

- *Theories of Technology and National Security* (undergraduate)
- *Data Science for National Security* (undergraduate, cross-listed with the Data Science Program)
- *Field Seminar in International Security* (PhD seminar)

COURSES: EXECUTIVE & POLICYMAKER

- *Military Applications of Data Science* — Department of Defense (2018)
- *Interstate Conflict* — U.S. Army contract, officers & government personnel (2015–2016)
- *Asia-Pacific Security* — U.S. Army contract (2015–2016)
- *Decision Making in Crisis* — U.S. Army contract (2014–2016)

PHD DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBER:

- Yujia Wan, Nicholas Smith, Naho Ohta, Joon Chung, Adam Wu, Gordon Richmond.

Service & Professional Activities

- **Section Head, International Security**, Midwest Political Science Association, 2023.
- **Referee:** American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, International Organization, International Studies Quarterly, International Security, Security Studies, British Journal of Political Science, Journal of Theoretical Politics, Political Science Research and Methods, Journal of Conflict Resolution, International Interactions, Conflict Management and Peace Science, Defence and Peace Economics.
- **Member:** American Political Science Association; International Studies Association; Peace Science Society.
- **Conferences:** Organized and convened workshops at APSA, ISA, MPSA, and the Peace Science Society.

Select Professional Experience

Performance Systems Inc.

Washington, DC

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH & EVALUATION

2015 – 2017

Designed RCTs, surveys, and evaluations of USG overseas programs; trained 350+ military and civilian personnel on decision-making in conflict zones, culture and conflict zone analysis.

Management Systems International

Baghdad, Iraq & Washington, DC

ANALYST FOR POLICY & PROGRAMS

2010 – 2013

Supported USG project to rebuild the Iraqi civil service; built statistical cost-measurement tools underpinning the first U.S.–Iraq MOU on civil-service reform.

Various departments

Australia

PUBLIC POLICY CONSULTANT

2008 – 2010

Built risk-assessment frameworks and large-scale workforce analytics across 60 public-sector departments.

United Nations

Amman, Jordan

JUNIOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICER

2006 – 2007

Developed indicators and surveys that informed an overhaul of education programs for 400 schools and 40,000+ refugee students across four countries.

Methods & Skills

Theoretical Methods

Game theory, decision theory, agent-based modeling.

Quant Methods

Causal inference (Survey, natural & conjoint experiments), frequentist (e.g. time-series cross-sectional, Heckman selection), generalizability (e.g. sensitivity analysis, extreme bounds analysis, BERT, random forrst), measurement (latent space, supervised neural nets, prompt engineering on LLMs), forecasting (e.g. neural nets, random forrest).

Qual Methods

Elite interviews, war-game design, analytical narratives, comparative case analysis.

Archival Research

U.S. National Security Archive; CIA CREST; Foreign Relations of the United States; British National Archives; Reagan Presidential Library.

Programming

R, Stata, Python, SQL, MATLAB, Qualtrics, L^AT_EX, Claude Code.

Languages

English (native); Arabic (intermediate).

Trust & Security

TS/SCI with full-scope polygraph (CIA; not activated).

References

- **James Morrow** — University of Michigan
- **David Lake** — University of California, San Diego
- **Kenneth Schultz** — Stanford University
- **Charles Glaser** — Massachusetts Institute of Technology