

Zheng Zhou

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RESEARCH STATEMENT

- ♦ I study how perceived social exclusion and identity-based threats fuel political radicalization and erode democratic legitimacy. My research centers on identity anxiety and symbolic threat as psychological mechanisms driving far-right support and undermining ontological security. At its core, my research asks how exclusion-induced identity anxiety reshapes political behavior across levels, from individual attitudes to public trust and collective alignment. Drawing on comparative public opinion surveys, I investigate how historical cognition and economic precarity interact with political dissonance to generate nationalist backlash, especially in contexts of social duress.
- ♦ Methodologically, I integrate causal inference techniques, formal modeling, and survey experiments with visual and computational analysis. My research traces how emotion, belief, and information environments jointly structure political behavior and collective alignments under social duress.
- ♦ **Primary fields:** Political psychology; nationalism and identity; far-right politics; ontological security
- ♦ **Methods:** Causal inference; survey and experimental design; formal modeling; mixed and visual analysis

EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Institut d'études politiques de Paris (Sciences Po)	Paris, France	08/2024-Expected 06/2026
♦ Major:	Master of Research in Political Science (General Track)	
♦ GPA:	16.8/20	
Southeast University (SEU)	Nanjing, Jiangsu, China	08/2019-06/2023
♦ Major:	Bachelor of Laws in Political Science & Public Administration	
♦ GPA:	3.73/4.0(WES), 88.79/100	

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Quantitative Research Training Certificate (Python-based data analysis and text mining methods)	
ISSS, Peking University	05/2024

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Patriotism or Pressure? Public Opinion and China's Ontological Security in the South China Sea Dispute (APSA 2025 Panelist)	03/2025-09/2025
♦ Investigated how patriotic orientations and perceived security dilemmas jointly shape Chinese public support for maritime conflict escalation. Leveraged replicated survey and experimental data from China and the U.S., integrating perspective-taking experiments, moderated mediation models, and a Monte Carlo – based dynamic game-theoretic simulation.	
♦ Found that nationalism robustly predicts hawkish preferences, with effects magnified under heightened threat attribution. Simulations reveal that a 1 SD increase in nationalism raises the likelihood of mutual escalation by ~33%. Scenario sensitivity analyses highlight how shifts in public opinion can destabilize equilibrium outcomes, reinforcing escalation spirals and constraining ontological security strategies.	
Dissonance or Dialogue? Divergent Korean Public and State Views on Japan Ties (APSA 2025 Panelist & Under Review)	03/2025-09/2025
♦ Explored public–state divergence in South Korea's Japan policy using Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Developed the concept of “consistency gap” to explain resistance arising from the clash between historical perceptions and pro-reconciliation diplomacy under the Yoon administration. Built on two waves of nationally representative Korea – East Asia Perception Survey (2022 & 2023), examined how historical cognition and identity anxiety shape policy attitudes, moderated by hope and cross-cultural exposure.	
♦ Applied multivariate regression, GAM, interaction models (Johnson–Neyman), and dual-path mediation analysis. Developed a formal model of strategic emotional adjustment to simulate psychological responses under identity tension. Findings inform how collective memory and identity constrain diplomatic legitimacy in democratic contexts.	
From Exclusion to Radicalization: Identity Anxiety and Far-Right Support in Post-COVID Europe (Published in the European Social Survey Student Contest)	02/2025-05/2025
♦ This paper proposes a psychological model linking perceived social exclusion to increased far-right support through identity anxiety. Drawing on Social Identity and Group Threat theories, it argues that exclusion heightens symbolic threat, especially under moderate economic anxiety and low political trust. Using ESS Rounds 9 & 11,	

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CHES scores, and COVID-19 policy data, the study constructs indices via LASSO and applies a Difference-in-Differences design alongside mediation and non-linear interaction models.

- ♦ Findings highlight identity anxiety as a key mechanism and reveal how structural exclusion, emotional strain, and political trust interact to drive radical-right alignment.

Spectacle Sovereignty and Visual Dissent: COVID-19 Governance in China's

02/2025-05/2025

Digital Public Sphere

- ♦ Introduces the concept of “spectacle sovereignty” to analyze how the Chinese state used curated visual infrastructures, such as health codes, press visuals, and infographics, to perform legitimacy during the 2022 lockdown. Through qualitative visual content analysis of state and citizen-generated materials, it shows how minimalist acts of visual dissent, including the white paper protest, disrupted the regime's epistemic authority.
- ♦ Highlights the politics of visual silence, symbolic absence, and circulation under censorship. Contributes to debates on digital authoritarianism, crisis communication, and affective governance in constrained media environments.

Research on China's High-Speed Rail Investment in Southeast Asia from the

06/2024-12/2023

Perspective of Power Asymmetry (ISA 2025 Panelist)

- ♦ Explores China's high-speed rail diplomacy in Southeast Asia as a form of infrastructural statecraft to perform external sovereignty under asymmetric power relations. Drawing on IR theories of power asymmetry, the study categorizes China's investment narratives into macro, meso, and micro levels, and uses the Jakarta-Bandung HSR project as a focused case. Traces how great power influence and respect for small-state autonomy are co-articulated to maintain strategic legitimacy.
- ♦ The paper situates HSR initiatives within evolving China-US competition and was ranked Top 10% among undergraduate theses. Presented at ISA 2025 panel “Changing Dynamics of Chinese Foreign Policy.”

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

APSA Annual Meeting 2025 (Vancouver, September 2025)

- ♦ Dissonance or Dialogue? Divergent Korean Public and State Views on Japan Ties, Poster presentation, Division: Political Psychology
- ♦ Patriotism or Pressure? China's Ontological Security in the South China Sea Dispute, Paper presentation, Fields: Public Opinion, Political Psychology, International Security

ISA Annual Convention 2025 (Chicago, March 2025)

- ♦ Research on China's High-Speed Rail Investment in Southeast Asia from the Perspective of Power Asymmetry, Panel: Changing Dynamics of Chinese Foreign Policy: From Technology to Trade

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant Intern, Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University (CISS)

03/2024-09/2024

- ♦ Participated in research work on China-related topics with the Global Governance Group and the Europe Group, closely monitoring global trends in China's EV automobile industry, studying Trump's statements in the context of the 2024 U.S. election, and tracking hot topics in China-Europe relations as well as the latest developments in Europe's relations with Taiwan

Research Assistant Intern, Center for Global Studies, Tsinghua University

06/2023-04/2024

- ♦ Responsible for translating and reviewing articles sourced from internationally renowned magazines and think tanks such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *National Interest*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Brookings Institution. It covers global hot topics, including the Russia-Ukraine war, global governance, Southern countries, US domestic affairs, and China-Russia relations. More than 60 translated and reviewed articles are published in the *D&C Monthly Forum*

Entry Author in TikTok Encyclopedia Project, ByteDance

08/2023-01/2024

- ♦ Engaged in writing entries related to international political science terminology, determined the writing structure by referencing sources like Annual Review of Political Science, International Studies Review, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, and authoritative documents from domestic and foreign governments, as well as renowned international political science journals and publications

HONOURS & AWARDS

France Excellence China: Social Security Scholarship, *Campus France*
Outstanding Graduate, *Southeast University*

2024-2025
2023

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First Class Scholarship (Top 5% in university), *Southeast University*

2022-2023

SKILLS & LANGUAGES

- ♦ **Statistical Analysis** R, STATA, Python, SPSS, Mplus
- ♦ **Causal Inference & Modeling** Difference-in-Differences, LASSO, Interaction Models, Mediation Analysis, Generalized Additive Models, Monte Carlo Simulation, Game-theoretic Modeling
- ♦ **Mixed Methods** NVivo, Visual Coding, Content Analysis, Absence Ethnography, Survey Design
- ♦ **Languages & Standardized Tests** Mandarin: (native)
English: IELTS 7.5 (Listening: 7.5 | Reading: 8.5 | Writing: 6.5 | Speaking: 6.5)
GRE: 325 (Verbal: 160 | Quantitative: 165 | AWA: 3.5)
French & Japanese: Intermediate