Brett V. Benson

Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University
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Academic Appointments

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University (2013–present)
Faculty Associate, Asian Studies Program, Vanderbilt University (2006–present)
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University (2006–2013)
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Princeton University (2010–2011)

Education

Ph.D., Political Science, Duke University, 2006
M.A., Economics, Duke University, 2006
B.S., Philosophy and Mandarin Chinese, Brigham Young University, 1998

Research Interests

International security; alliance politics and deterrence; crisis bargaining; political economy of conflict; China-centered security relations, including East Asia and Taiwan; emerging technologies, AI, and information warfare.

Publications

Books

- *The Window Before: The Politics of Alliance Implementation* (with Bradley C. Smith). Oxford University Press, 2025.

- *Constructing International Security: Alliances, Deterrence, and Moral Hazard.* Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Journal Articles

- "Commitment Problems in Alliance Formation" (with Bradley C. Smith). *American Journal of Political Science*, 2022.

- "Changing Capabilities, Uncertainty, and the Risk of War in Crisis Bargaining" (with Adam Meirowitz and Kristopher W. Ramsay). *Research & Politics*, 2016.

- "Assessing the Variation of Formal Military Alliances" (with Joshua D. Clinton). *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2016.

- "Inducing Deterrence Through Moral Hazard in Alliance Contracts." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2014.

- "Ally Provocateur." *Journal of Peace Research*, 2013.

- "Unpacking Alliances." *Journal of Politics*, 2011.

- "Economic Interdependence and Peace." *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2007.

- "Public Opinion, Foreign Policy, and the Security Balance in the Taiwan Strait." *Security Studies*, 2005.

Policy & Public Scholarship

- 2026. "How A.I. Answers Your Question May Depend on Your Politics" (with Brett Goldstein), *Bloomberg*, February 5.

- 2026. "The Fog of AI: What the Technology Means for Deterrence and War" (with Brett Goldstein), *Foreign Affairs*, January 6.

- 2025. "The Era of A.I. Propaganda Has Arrived, and America Must Act" (with Brett Goldstein), Guest Essay, *New York Times*, August 5.

- 2022. "Why it makes sense for the U.S. to not commit to defending Taiwan," *Washington Post*, May 25.

- 2022. "NATO's membership rules invite conflict — and benefit Putin" (with Bradley C. Smith), *Washington Post*, February 22.

Current Research

- *Kicking the Can Down the Road: Taiwan and the Politics of Buying Time* (under review).

- "Dynamic Economic Dependence, War, and Strategic Derisking" (under review).

- "Establishing Deterrence" (under review).

- "Alliances and Relationships" (working paper).

Fellowships, Grants, & Research Support

- Foreign Policy Research Grant, Stand Together Trust, 2020–2023.

- Visiting Research Fellowship, Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in residence at Academia Sinica, Taiwan, 2020–2021.

- Quantitative and Analytical Political Science Program Fellowship, Princeton University, 2010–2011.

- POSCO Fellowship, East–West Center, Honolulu, HI, Summer 2010.

- Internal research grants, Vanderbilt University, 2007–2008.

- Program for Advanced Research in the Social Sciences Fellowship, Social Science Research Institute, Duke University, 2003–2004.

Teaching

Introduction to International Politics; Strategy and International Politics; International Politics of East Asia; Political Economy of Conflict.

Invited Policy & National Security Engagements (Selected)

Council on Foreign Relations; U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs; U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; U.S. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party; U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary (including the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property).

Invited Academic Talks & Workshops (Selected)

U.S. Military Academy at West Point; Princeton University; Yale University; Columbia University; New York University; RAND Corporation; Academia Sinica; National Chengchi University; National Taiwan University; Fudan University; Peking University.

Invited Podcasts

Lawfare Podcast; Recorded Future News Podcast; Quantum Potential (Vanderbilt University).

Last updated: February 2026