



Sigur Center
for Asian Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

ASIAN CONNECTIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE

SIGUR CENTER FOR ASIAN STUDIES

JUNE 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2

ASIAN CONNECTIONS

Message from the Director

3

FEATURES

Taiwan Roundtables & Conferences & Sigur Specials

Uyghur Studies Initiative

National Resource Center

Taiwan Education & Research Program

17

SPOTLIGHT

Students Nazia Kazi & Santiago Ravello

Alumnus Yerin Jun

20

INSIGHT

Affiliated Programs

21

HIGHLIGHTS

Awards & Achievements



Dear friends,

The Sigur Center for Asian Studies is stronger than ever. Our community is growing. Our profile continues to rise.

This fall, we found out that the Sigur Center is one of America's top ten largest and most active Asian studies centers. I am very grateful to the previous directors who grew the Sigur Center from a small collection of policy specialists into the interdisciplinary, comprehensive research institute it is today. Our activities in the 2024–2025 academic year have been aimed at living up to our role as DC's leading source of scholarly expertise on Asia.

This year, we boasted eighty-six affiliated faculty and hosted twenty-five visiting scholars. Our community will continue to grow as, in the coming year, we offer new ways for regional scholars to affiliate with us. A new graduate student associate program will give rising stars opportunities to present their research and pursue professional development.

Over 400 members of the GW community attended our Lunar New Year party in January, which we organized jointly with the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures and the Institute for Korean Studies. Faculty, staff, and students shared a moment of joy and education about East Asian cultures. Representatives of the DC Mayor's Office and honored alumni joined us for food and games from across East Asia.

Funding for research and study is more important than ever. I can announce that we have secured a new grant of \$100,000/year to support Taiwan programming over the next five years. Meanwhile, we are proud to have awarded our second annual Gitter Fellowship for the study of Chinese. Between the Sigur Center proper, the Taiwan Education and Research Program, and the Uyghur Studies Initiative, we have awarded sixteen faculty and student research grants for Summer 2025 and look forward to the fruits of their work.

We capped off this year of achievement with our annual Gaston Sigur Memorial Lecture, which this year was delivered by Nirupama Rao, former Indian ambassador to China and the US. Her expert comment on the future of China-India relations—a perennial topic of concern—filled the City View Room.

Nevertheless, this academic year has seen the world enter an unpredictable period. Our East Asia National Resource Center, which we co-direct with the Institute for Korean Studies, faces a particularly uncertain future in the face of cuts to its funder, the Department of Education. The Sigur Center is well-positioned to navigate this new environment, and we will act nimbly and creatively to see us through.

Yours,

Dr. Eric Schluessel

Director of the Sigur Center for Asian Studies
Associate Professor of History and International Affairs



India's Foreign Policy and the China Factor

On April 15, Ambassador Nirupama Rao, a distinguished scholar and retired Indian Foreign Service officer, delivered the Gaston Sigur Memorial Lecture and an insightful analysis of the India-China relationship rooted in her extensive experience as an diplomat in both Beijing and Washington.

Amb. Rao's candid remarks offered insight into India's decision-making processes as it navigates shifting environments both in the Pacific and in the Himalayas. She dissected the "delicate balance" that India has learned to strike with China even as it navigates "a vast, submerged terrain of strategic rivalry, mistrust, and competition for influence across the region."

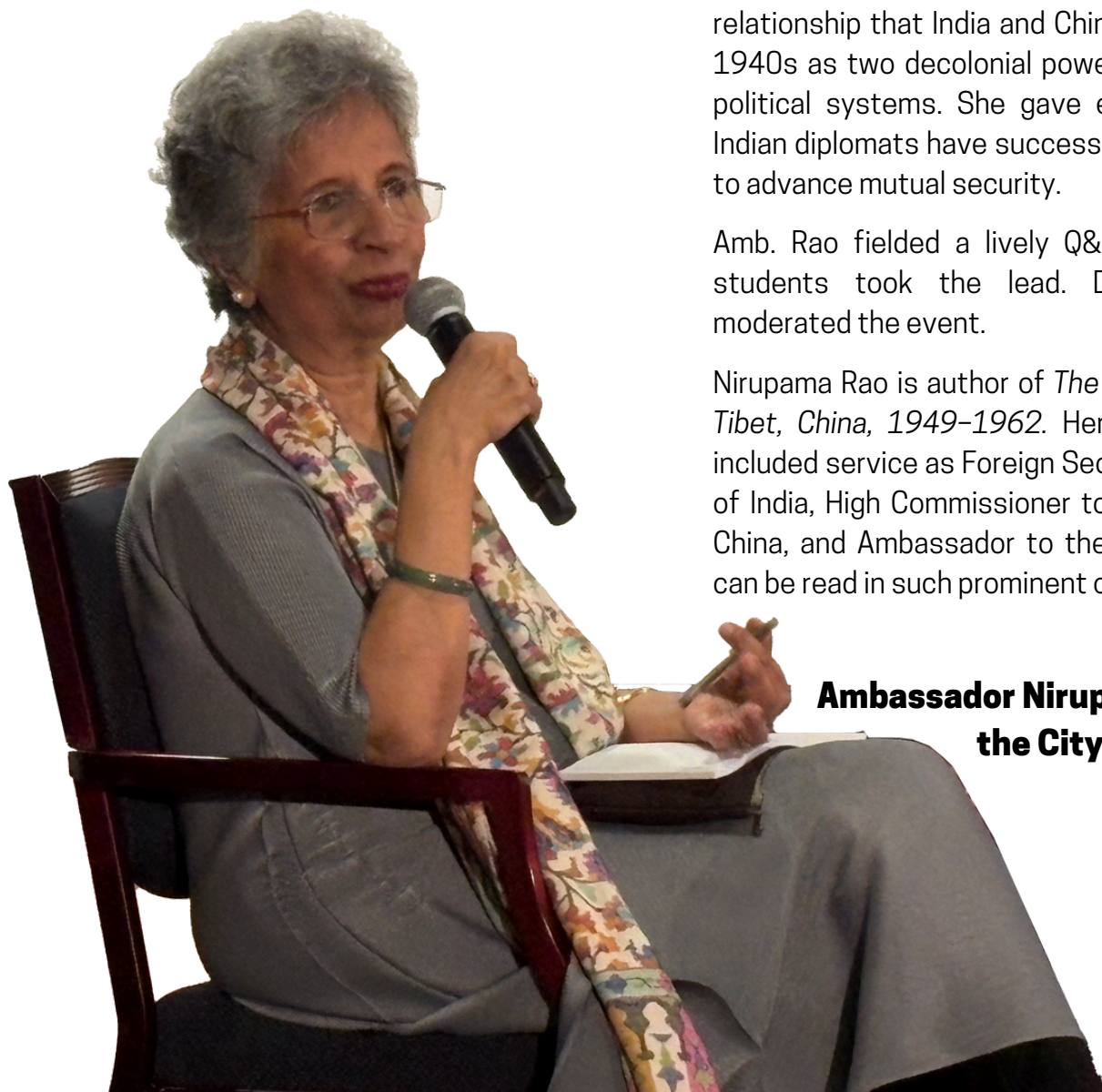
Amb. Rao's lecture explored the complex drivers shaping India's outlook and behavior against the backdrop of global and regional developments, including the intensifying US-China strategic competition.

Yet she rooted her remarks in a subject dear to her heart: history. Amb. Rao reflected on the short but intense relationship that India and China have had since the late 1940s as two decolonial powers with radically different political systems. She gave examples of how today's Indian diplomats have successfully drawn on that history to advance mutual security.

Amb. Rao fielded a lively Q&A, in which our own GW students took the lead. Director Eric Schluessel moderated the event.

Nirupama Rao is author of *The Fractured Himalaya: India, Tibet, China, 1949-1962*. Her four-decade-long career included service as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, High Commissioner to the People's Republic of China, and Ambassador to the United States. Her work can be read in such prominent outlets as *Foreign Affairs*.

**Ambassador Nirupama Rao at
the City View Room**



Pulse Check on Taiwan's Democratic Resilience: Institutions, Domestic Debate, and New Governance Frontiers

The Sigur Center examined the vibrant forces of Taiwan's democracy, looking at the 2024 election, which resulted in the first divided government since 2004, and the overall evolution of domestic political dynamics, which has given rise to social movements like the Bluebird Movement and civil society demonstrations such as the 2014 Sunflower Movement. This event also discussed new internal, external, and social security challenges.

Panel 1: Elections, Political Upheavals, and Domestic Discourse in Taiwan

Dr. Chiaoning Su examined President Lai's leadership against the backdrop of changing political dynamics. Dr. Dennis Lu-Chung Weng looked at how strategic collaboration with the U.S. and other democratic allies can bolster Taiwan's security. Dr. Austin Horng-en Wang analyzed the role of public opinion and its implications for US-China-Taiwan relations.



Panel 2: The Health and Future Frontiers of Taiwan's Democratic Institutions

Dr. Yin Liu began by looking at the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and Taiwan's response, specifically examining state capacity and expertise. June Lin and Dr. Kharis Templeman concluded by examining how democracy will persist and work under a divided government.



Dr. Chiaoning Su

Associate Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Public Relations, Oakland University



Dr. Dennis Lu-Chung Weng

Associate Professor of Political Science, Sam Houston State University



Dr. Austin Horng-En Wang

Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Nevada, Las Vegas



Dr. Li-Yin Liu

Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Dayton



June Lin

Senior Program Manager for Asia-Pacific Programs, National Democratic Institute



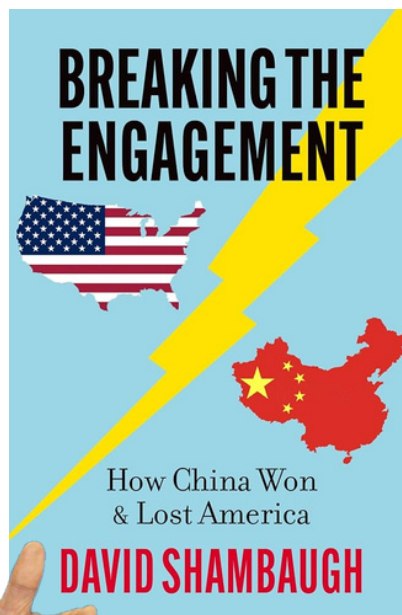
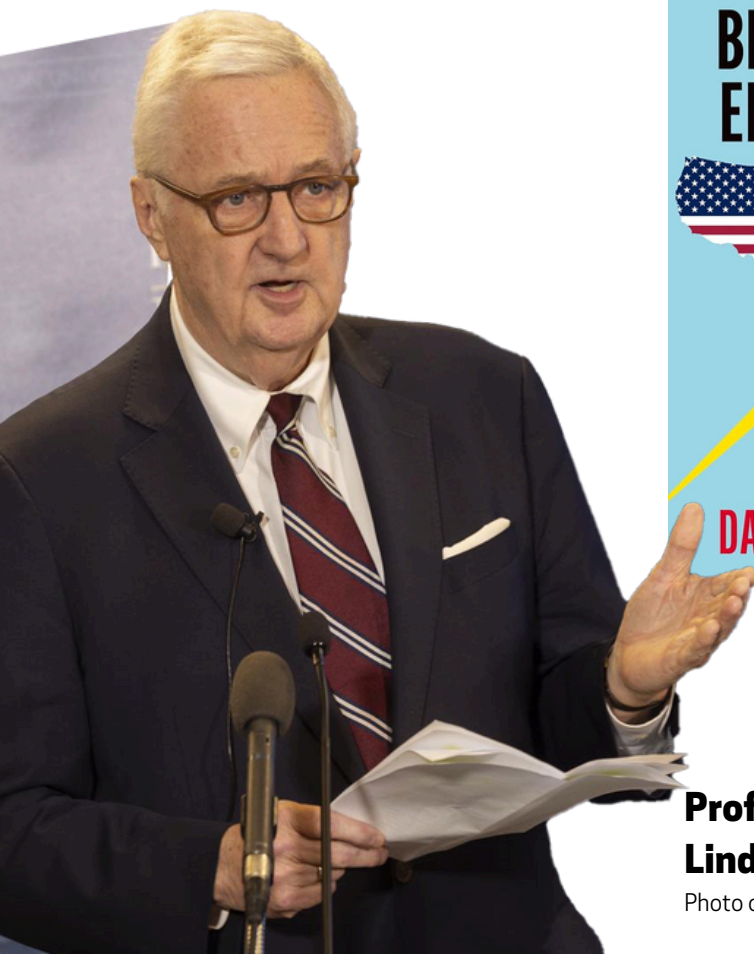
Dr. Kharis Templeman

Research Fellow, the Hoover Institution

Book Launch: *Breaking the Engagement: How China Won & Lost America*

Gaston Sigur Professor and China Policy Program Director David Shambaugh's new book, *Breaking the Engagement: How China Won & Lost America*, was launched for the first time on May 6. The Sigur Center for Asian Studies co-sponsored the event with the Elliott School's Book Launch series. Prof. Shambaugh's book traces the history of US-China relations since 1972 with consideration to both governmental and non-governmental actors. It argues that assertive Chinese actions and unrealistic U.S. expectations have given way to the current period of U.S.-China friction. Chinese President Xi Jinping, he writes, has accelerated, but did not start, the overall trend of disengagement. The book also highlights the rise of anti-China sentiment in the United States and the "counter China coalition."

Professor Shambaugh is the author of more than thirty-five books and the founding Director of the China Policy Program at the Sigur Center. *Foreign Policy* named *Breaking the Engagement* one of the most anticipated books of 2025.



Prof. Shambaugh in the Lindner Commons

Photo credit: Lily Speredelozzi (GW Today)



Gitter Prize Winner

Congratulations to Sandy Fauré, this year's winner of the David Gitter Fellowship for Advanced Chinese Language Study! The Gitter Prize funds a full year of Chinese-language study for an Elliott School graduate student.

Sandy Fauré is an MA in Asian Studies candidate. Since performing field research in Yilan County in 2018 under a Henry Luce grant, Sandy has held an interest in Taiwan's subnational governance and vibrant civil society. Academically, Sandy has studied Taiwan's right to collective self-defense under international law, the end of martial law under Chiang Ching-kuo, and the foreign policy doctrine of Tsai Ying-wen. He hopes to spend his career contributing to constructive U.S.-PRC-Taiwan relations. Sandy will study Mandarin at National Taiwan University during the 2025-2026 academic year.

***Nikah*: A New Uyghur Film**

On October 25, the Sigur Center's Uyghur Studies Initiative held a film screening of *Nikah* with filmmakers Dr. Mukaddas Mijit and Bastien Ehouzan. The film explores the dual pressures that Uyghur women face from traditional Uyghur society and the encroaching and ever-present Chinese state. Framed through the journey of the main character, Dilber, tries to find a husband in order to satisfy her mother and escape from China.

The Sigur Center partnered with Harvard University and New York City's Asia Society to bring the film on its first North American tour.

Dr. Mijit and Ehouzan held a lively and emotional Q&A with the audience, which included students, scholars, government workers, activists, and many members of the DC area's Uyghur community. The directors answered questions about the Uyghur diaspora, the role of women, and the power of film to bring pressing issues to light.



Dr. Mukaddas Mijit is an ethnomusicologist, filmmaker, dancer, and choreographer, born in Ürümchi in the Uyghur region. She is a postdoctoral fellow at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Bastien Ehouzan is co-founder of KIDAM, a film production company founded in 2010. He has partnered with the production company L'Endroit since 2018. *Nikah* is his first medium-length film.



Dr. Mukaddas Mijit and Bastien Ehouzan in conversation with the audience and Sigur Director Eric Schluessel

Local Partnerships, Global Impact: U.S.-Taiwan Subnational Diplomacy

Where does U.S.-Taiwan relations happen? Often, even international politics is local.

On December 2, the Sigur Center hosted a conversation on robust approaches to subnational diplomacy that have transformed local approaches into global movements. We were joined by Prof. Sara Newland (Smith College), a globally recognized scholar of local politics in China and Taiwan, and by Wen Chyi Chiu, Chairwoman for Taipei Sister Cities.

Prof. Newland's remarks demonstrated the particular power that subnational diplomacy can have in international relations. Person-to-person and place-to-place relations can bypass the complex U.S.-Taiwan dynamic and the formal constraints in which national engagement must operate.

The panelists looked at how the U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative has fostered exchanges that led to major investments in semiconductor manufacturing and other advanced technologies. This has deepened social, political, and economic ties on both sides.

Wen Chyi Chiu highlighted Taipei Sister Cities's role in connecting the cities of Phoenix and Taipei to support and maintain U.S.-Taiwan relations and further technological innovations. The panelists' remarks also focused on the difficulties of advocating for U.S.-Taiwan ties in the midst of the always-complicated U.S.-Mainland relationship.

Assistant Director Richard Haddock, who co-leads the Taiwan Education and Research Project, moderated the discussion.



Prof. Sara Newland
Associate Professor of
Government
Smith College



Wen Chyi Chiu
Chairwoman
Taipei Sister Cities



Richard Haddock
Assistant Director,
Sigur Center for Asian Studies
Co-Director, Taiwan Education
and Research Project

Why Taiwan?

A Message from the Director

The Sigur Center and GW boast one of America's most vibrant scholarly programs for the study of Taiwan's politics, society, and arts. Why here, and why now?

Taiwan Studies isn't just about an island. When we look closely at Taiwan past and present, we witness thousands of years of migration and change, empires layered upon empires, the complicated legacies of the twentieth century, and a future that is equal parts tech-driven optimism and geostrategic uncertainty.

Sitting here in the heart of DC, we like to center perspectives on Asia that are often peripheralized. Doing so brings nuance to our conversations around policy, especially on technology, trade, defense, and democracy. Taiwan Studies offers a unique lens to think about the big questions. We are proud that hundreds of people join us every year in looking through it.

Bills, Budgets, and Brawls: Understanding Taiwan's Legislative Crisis



On March 4, the Sigur Center hosted a roundtable discussion on the current legislative crisis in Taiwan. Over the past year, the resilience of Taiwan's democratic system has come into question. Intense partisan competition, high-stakes negotiations, and controversial policies have made Taiwan's domestic future uncertain just as the international scene is shifting around it.

Our panel of leading experts and practitioners analyzed the roots and ramifications of the ongoing legislative turbulence. Panelists further discussed how this legislative crisis has significant ramifications for diplomatic, national security, and geo-economic efforts for Taiwan. Taiwanese civic leader Ipa (Hsiao-wei) Chiu began the discussion and examined how Taiwanese people participated in digital civic engagement during the legislative crisis. Dr. Wei Ping-Li discussed the role of disinformation in the 2025 Taiwan Budget Debate. Finally, Thomas J. Shattuck considered how Taiwan's constitutional crisis fits into the wider global context.



Ipai (Hsiao-wei) Chiu

Cofounder of g0v.tw, a civic tech community in Taiwan, starting from 2012. Ipa is also a writer and documentary director, focusing on civic engagement and public participation. At g0v.tw, she works to promote online collaboration between civil society and the public sector.



Dr. Wei-Ping Li

Postdoctoral research at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland and a research fellow at the Taiwan Factcheck Center. Dr. Li's research focuses on disinformation, fact-checking, social media content moderation, and privacy issues in the digital era.



Thomas J. Shattuck

Senior Program Manager at the University of Pennsylvania's Perry World House. Mr. Shattuck is a 2024-25 non-resident WSD-Handa Fellow at the Pacific Forum, a 2024-25 non-resident Research Fellow at the Modern War Institute at West Point, and a 2025 fellow with Atomic Anxiety in the New Nuclear Age.

The First 100 Days: Trump 2.0 and New Dynamics in U.S.-Taiwan and Cross-Strait Relations

On April 24, we held a timely event examining President Donald Trump's second-term administration and policy toward U.S.-Taiwan and cross-Strait relations. The conference opened with a keynote by Andrea Yi-Shan Yang, Deputy Representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO), who described current U.S.-Taiwan priorities and fielded a live Q&A.

Panel 1: Assessing Change and Continuity in U.S.-Taiwan Relations

In the morning session, Mr. Rupert Hammond-Chambers examined the 2017 shift in U.S.-Taiwan policy from accommodating China to a more pragmatic and opportunistic approach. He emphasized the opening of economic relations and Taiwan's critical role in semiconductor production, arguing that a second Trump term holds potential for deepening economic ties and securing supply chains. Dr. John Tai focused on the security dimension of U.S.-Taiwan relations, highlighting President Tsai Ing-wen's efforts to enhance military readiness and expand the defense budget. Concluding the panel, Ms. Tiffany Ma analyzed Trump 2.0's trade policies, underscoring the importance of the U.S.-Taiwan trade relationship and the need for increased Taiwanese defense spending amid evolving U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy.

Mr. Rupert Hammond-Chambers

President, US-Taiwan Business Council



Dr. John W. Tai

Professional Lecturer
The George Washington University



Ms. Tiffany Ma

Senior Vice President and Director for
Geopolitics and Communications, The
Asia Group (TAG)



Andrea Yi-Shan Yang

Deputy Representative, TECRO



Dr. Dean P. Chen

Professor of Political Science,
Ramapo College of New Jersey



Mr. Kitsch Liao

Associate Director, Global China Hub,
the Atlantic Council



Ms. Cheryl Yu

China Studies Fellow, The Jamestown
Foundation



Panel 2: Evaluating New Developments in Cross-Strait Relations

In the afternoon session, Dr. Dean Chen examined the evolving triangular relationship among Taiwan, China, and the U.S., emphasizing the 2017 diplomatic shift driven by intensifying great power competition, anti-globalist currents, the pandemic, and emerging AI technologies. These developments, he argued, reinforced state centralization. Mr. Kitsch Liao then analyzed Taiwan's security landscape under Trump 2.0, identifying two key challenges: the PRC's legal status as a non-adversary and the lack of a credible U.S. security guarantee. Concluding the panel, Ms. Cheryl Yu discussed growing CCP covert operations in Taiwan, noting a rise in espionage cases targeting military personnel.

The Future of U.S. Policy and the Indo-Pacific



Youngjoo Jang
Visiting
Research Fellow,
Center for East
Asian Peace and
Cooperation
Studies,
Ritsumeikan
University



Robert Sutter
Professor of
Practice, the
George
Washington
University



Drew Arveseth
Director for the
Korean
Peninsula and
Mongolia, U.S.
National
Security Council



Bumsoo Kim
Director,
Institute for
Peace and
Unification
Studies, Seoul
National
University

In early January, the Sigur Center co-hosted a conference with the Institute for Korean Studies, the East Asia National Resource Center, the Taiwan Education and Research Program, the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University, and the Center for East Asian Peace and Cooperation Studies at Ritsumeikan University to discuss the future of U.S. policy and the Indo-Pacific.

The first panel focused on grand strategy in the Indo-Pacific. Prof. Robert Sutter discussed possible actions by President Trump's new administration and the consequences of disengagement from the region. Dr. Youngjoo Jang talked about Prime Minister Ishiba's hopes and the increasing focus on security in the U.S.-Japan relationship. Drew Arveseth talked about North Korea's capabilities, including its troops in Ukraine, which, he suggested, necessitate a strong U.S. alliance with South Korea and Japan. Professor Bumsoo Kim considered potential challenges in the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance, such as cost-sharing for U.S. troops stationed in South Korea.

The second panel tackled new problems facing the next administration. Prof. Inwook Kim presented on the need for crisis stability on the Korean peninsula. Ilaria Mazzocco discussed U.S.-China trade, overcapacity, and tensions over trade surpluses. Dr. Prashanth Parameswaran analyzed U.S.-ASEAN opportunities and challenges, showing how ASEAN nations are likely to lean more on China as the new administration further pushes them to hedge. Ann E. Kowalski explained how it is likely that the trade relationship with Taiwan will expand, especially when it comes to semiconductors. However, she pointed out, Congress has historically viewed Taiwan policy as within their purview, and that was unlikely to change. Prof. Tashi Rabgey talked about U.S.-South Asia and U.S.-China ties under the new administration.



Inwook Kim
Associate
Professor,
Sungkyunkwan
University



Ilaria Mazzocco
Senior Fellow,
the Center for
Strategic &
International
Studies



**Prashanth
Parameswaran**
Fellow, the
Wilson Center



Ann E. Kowalski
Senior Fellow,
the Global
Taiwan Institute



Tashi Rabgey
Research
Professor, the
George
Washington
University



不亦乐乎? Foggy Bottom, Beijing, the Ways Between —and Now I'm Back?

In January, the Sigur Center for Asian Studies was delighted to host distinguished alumnus and author Peter Rupert Lighte (BA 69). Dr. Lighte met with students and community members in the Chung-wen Shih room, where he talked about his experiences at GW and the Sigur Center's predecessor, the Center for Sino-Soviet Studies.

When Dr. Lighte was an undergraduate here, the Center was a second home for him, and the storied China historian Prof. Franz Michael his mentor. Yet the Center was caught up in protests against the US's involvement in Vietnam. The time at the Center and his education in Chinese culture encouraged Dr. Lighte to pursue a Ph.D. centered on Chinese history and philosophy. While he went on to a career in Beijing, he never forgot his time at the Sigur Center.

In the early 1970s, Dr. Lighte earned his PhD in Chinese history at Princeton. He then went on to a decades-long career in international finance. He is the author of *Straight Through The Labyrinth: Becoming A Gay Father in China*, *Host of Memories: Tales of Inevitable Happenstance*, and *Pieces of China*.

Dr. Lighte regaled us with stories and life lessons drawn from years of following unexpected opportunities and reflecting on the *Book of Changes*. We learned about the long legacy of China studies here at GW and the many applications of an international affairs education.



Peter Lighte in the Chung-wen Shih Conference Room

To our Alumni

When Peter visited us this winter, it reaffirmed to me that the work of the American university is good work. We train people not for a single function, but to be curious, capable, and ready for anything. Then we send them out into the world and cheer for their success.

The Sigur Center does that work through the BA and MA in Asian Studies and through our many fellowships for students.

This year, at the Asian Studies graduation, I told our grads that they will always have a home here in the Asian Studies Suite. I meant it. Come visit anytime.



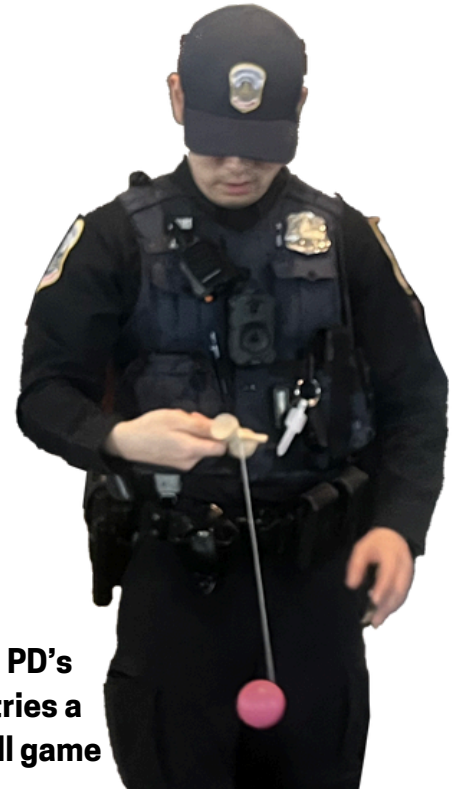
Over 400 people joined us for

Lunar New Year 2025!

In January, Sigur partnered with the GW Institute for Korean Studies, East Asia National Resource Center, Taiwan Education and Research Program, and Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures to host a celebration of the Lunar New Year. Volunteers taught Korean games, Japanese crafts, Chinese calligraphy, and traditional Chinese opera. Guests tried on opera clothes, ate food and snacks from across East and Southeast Asia, and learned more about Asian Studies at GW.



Director Eric Schluessel and TERP graduate assistant David Feng prepare samples of Taiwanese teas



A member of Metro PD's Asian Liaison Unit tries a Korean cup-and-ball game





The village of Tuyuq in Turfan

Uyghur Studies Initiative

We are happy to say that GW is now a strong center for Uyghur studies. The anonymous endowment that established the Uyghur Studies Initiative at the Sigur Center, after its many years under the care of our friends at IERES, has enabled the blossoming of Uyghur language teaching and scholarship on the Uyghur region and diaspora right here in DC.

One of our most popular events was in the fall, when the Sigur Center organized the first American tour of an important new Uyghur film, *Nikah* (“The Wedding”). The film documents the life of a young woman in Xinjiang as she navigates her family’s pressure to marry and the encroaching surveillance state. Over 120 people joined us for the movie and for a lively talk-back with the directors, Dr. Mukaddas Mijit and Bastien Ehouzan. The event demonstrated the high interest in Uyghur studies among our students, the public sector, and, of course, members of the DC area’s large Uyghur diaspora community.

This year, our experienced and beloved instructor, Mustafa Aksu, offered Uyghur at both the introductory and intermediate levels. Uyghur language has also gained an official home at GW’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures!

Cuts to federal funding could endanger our ability to teach both levels of Uyghur in coming years, as one level is funded through our East Asia National Resource Center by the Department of Education. No matter what, we will do our best to continue to offer both levels—and ideally beyond—through endowment funding and other gifts. This kind of continuity is vital to building a program.

In the summer of 2024, the Uyghur Studies Initiative funded several graduate students to pursue original research on Uyghur history and to study Uyghur language at the famed CESSI summer program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Three more are funded for 2025.

Finally, globally recognized scholar of Uyghur culture and public sector practitioner Dr. Elise Anderson offered a graduate-level course on “The Xinjiang Crisis” to very positive reviews. We are proud to support teaching and learning about every aspect of Uyghurs and the Uyghur region, from politics to poetry and everything in between.

Wait for more exciting programming to come next year. Uyghur studies has a secure home here in Foggy Bottom.

Rug from the Uyghur region, GW Textile Museum, 2021.8.1





East Asia National Resource Center

The East Asia National Resource Center, housed at the Elliott School, is supported by the Title VI provision of the 1965 Higher Education Act and is jointly managed by the Sigur Center and the GW Institute for Korean Studies. The NRC enhances GW's ability to engage the broader public community, including students, K-12 educators, Minority Serving Institutions, policymakers, and the public on issues of importance in East Asia.

Events & Seminars

The **China Peripheries Seminar** brought six expert scholars of China's contested borders. Rebecca Clothey spoke on Uyghur diaspora communities; Nicole Willock, on interactions between Tibetan Buddhist elites and the Chinese state; Denise Ho, on encounters along the Hong Kong-Shenzhen border; Tashi Rabgey, on China's development policy in Tibet; Amy Liu, on Taiwanese attitudes towards immigrants; and Sean Roberts, on Uyghur participation in the Syrian Civil War. Over 200 people joined the seminar, which remains one of our most popular events.

Four **Diversity in Asian Studies** events focused on disability in East Asia. One highlight was the NRC's screening of the film "Mark: A Call to Action," a documentary about the life of Dr. Mark Bookman, a disabled scholar who advocated for greater accessibility in Japan. Director Ron Small and Mark's father, Paul, joined us. The series culminated in a conference on disability rights in East Asian democracies, which featured presentations by scholars from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

The **East Asian Intersections** events featured interdisciplinary research: Sunhee Koo introduced the culture of folk drumming among Zainichi Koreans in Japan. Don Wyatt spoke about evidence for the presence of Africans in Early Modern China. Tze Loo discussed indigenous focus on sacred sites overseen by female ritualists in Okinawa.

Outreach to Minority-Serving Institutions

In October, NRC staff visited our friends at **Spelman** and **Morehouse Colleges** to give guest lectures and discuss GW's programs in international affairs and Asian studies.

In April, five Spelman students and their faculty advisor came to GW for our flagship professional development program. Among other activities, students attended lectures by GW faculty and heard presentations from the DC Office of the Okinawa Prefectural Government. They went on site visits, including to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and TECRO's Twin Oaks. Students also met with Dean Alyssa Ayres and Lakeisha Harrison, Assistant Dean for Student Services, Diversity Equity, and Inclusion, to discuss their future career paths.

K-16 & Language Outreach

The **Jr. Japan Bowl (J2B)**, a trivia competition on Japanese language and culture for students in grades 1-8, had over 600 registered participants! Over 140 came to the finals of **J.LIVE TALK**, a Japanese-language speech contest for college undergraduates. The Ambassador of Japan presented awards to both programs' directors and top performers at the Japanese Embassy. Over 78 students participated in the **Mid-Atlantic Korean Speech Contest**. Meanwhile, GW's **Uyghur language program** continued to provide two levels of instruction thanks to NRC support. It is one of the only Uyghur language programs in the U.S.

Prof. Liana Chen hosted a virtual workshop on teaching Chinese using large language models. Over 450 teachers from multiple countries participated!

The **Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)** program provided tuition and living stipends for six graduate students studying at GW and summer language study for an additional four students.

TAIWAN EDUCATION & RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Taiwan Education and Research Program (TERP) delivered another successful year of intersectional and holistic activities centered on conversations not just about Taiwan, but with Taiwan—elevating Taiwanese and Taiwanese American expertise.

In fall 2024, TERP carried out a prestigious Spotlight Taiwan grant, supported by Taiwan's Ministry of Culture, to host three interrelated events on Taiwanese and Taiwanese American identities. The first event, "Beyond Boba: Taiwan's Culinary Culture in a Global Context," explored Taiwanese history through the evolution of its cuisine and featured a lively snack and tea sampling session, drawing 74 participants both in-person and online. The Spotlight Taiwan grant also supported a screening of *Love Boat: Taiwan*, followed by a discussion with director Valerie Soe, and TERP's inaugural Taiwan Humanities Virtual Symposium, "Taiwanese Americans: Voices through the Arts," which convened guest speakers from across industries and around the world. These events exemplified TERP's mission to cultivate a dynamic and globally engaged Taiwan Studies community at GW.

In spring 2025, TERP hosted its annual Taiwan Humanities Lecture on "From Traditional Chinese Opera to the World Stage: The East-West Cultural Collision of Contemporary Legend Theatre." Acclaimed actor and artistic director Po-Cheng "Howie" Chu delivered an insightful lecture complemented by electrifying demonstrations of Chinese opera performance techniques, including interactive segments. TERP strengthened its partnerships by co-sponsoring events with the Sigur Center, the NRC, GWIKS, and the Global Taiwan Institute, covering topics from U.S. Indo-Pacific policy to disability rights in East Asia's democracies.

Beyond public programming, TERP significantly expanded Taiwan Studies capacity at GW. The program awarded a \$15,000 scholarship to a GW graduate student, provided travel funding for GW faculty and students to pursue Taiwan-focused research, and supported coursework such as the graduate and undergraduate seminar "Women in Asia." TERP is now preparing to host the fourth consecutive GW Strait Talk conflict engagement symposium in May 2025, affirming its central role in sustaining a thriving Taiwan Studies ecosystem at GW.

TAIWAN STUDIES RESEARCH FELLOWS

Each academic year, TERP selects a small cohort of graduate and undergraduate students from a competitive university-wide application pool to be Taiwan Studies Research Fellows. Fellows work with a faculty mentor to produce an original research contribution on any aspect of Taiwan Studies. Fellows then present on their respective research topics in an interactive roundtable with GW faculty, staff, and students, as well as friends and family. The 2024-2025 Taiwan Studies Research Fellows:



Dayna Bailey

Research Project: "To Hell and Back – The Influence of the Video Game 'Devotion' on Taiwanese Guanluoyin Folk-Religious Practice"

Faculty Advisor: Prof. Xiaofei Kang



Fiona Stokes

Research Project: "Dinner at Air Force Village No. 2"

Faculty Advisor: Prof. Patricia Chu



Kyle Nguyen

Research Project: "Assessing the Intricacies of Taiwan's Southbound Policy and its Effects on Regional Activity in Overall East Asia"

Faculty Advisor: Sunggun Park

A NEW ERA OF TAIWAN STUDIES AT GW: GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT & WHAT'S TO COME

The Sigur Center for Asian Studies and the Taiwan Education and Research Program power a vibrant and active Taiwan Studies ecosystem at GW: from hosting annual policy and humanities conferences, to awarding student and faculty language and research grants, to supporting Taiwan scholarship and pedagogical development, GW stands out as a leading academic hub for the study of Taiwan in the greater DC area.

And now, Taiwan Studies at GW is about to step into its most exciting chapter yet.

We are elated to announce that we received a highly prestigious and competitive five-year \$100,000/year grant from the Taiwan Ministry of Education to support our robust Taiwan programming! The grant comes at a pivotal moment as Taiwan is more visible and consequential than ever on the world stage with regard to geoeconomics, technology, diplomacy, security, governance, and popular culture. The grant is also a boon to our operations as we navigate current financial challenges facing the university and uncertainties regarding changes in federal funding.

The main theme of the grant is “Taiwan in the Digital,” and we plan to leverage our faculty, student, staff, and community expertise to explore new intersections and chart new frontiers between Taiwan Studies and topics such as emerging technologies, digital humanities, e-governance, and curricular development. Led by Sigur Center Director Eric Schluessel and co-led by faculty and administrators at the Sigur Center, TERP, the Global Resources Center at the Gelman Library, and the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, the new grant promises to be an ambitious and collaborative interdepartmental endeavor that will spotlight Taiwan Studies across the university.

What will the new grant support? Three main areas: 1) new Taiwan Studies resources for faculty and students at GW, including scholarships, curricular development awards, and open access publication awards; 2) new public outreach opportunities and events to center GW as the premier Taiwan Studies hub in the DC area, including an annual Taiwan Digital Humanities conference and a “Taiwan 101” seminar for researchers and policymakers; and 3) new ways to collaborate with Taiwan Studies programs nationally and internationally to highlight GW as a global nexus for Taiwan affairs, including a new research development program with Morehouse College and an international Taiwan book talk series.

It is a momentous and exciting time for Taiwan Studies at GW, and we are thrilled to share this moment with you. Stay tuned for announcements on these exciting new opportunities and more, set to start this coming fall semester!

Richard J. Haddock

Assistant Director, Sigur Center for Asian Studies
Co-Director, Taiwan Education & Research Program



Yerin Jun, MA '23

ALUMNI: Yerin Jun

SPOTLIGHT

Originally from South Korea, Yerin Jun pursued her undergraduate studies in International Affairs at the University of Georgia. With a longstanding interest in Asia and global policy, she sought out graduate programs that offered both academic depth and professional opportunity. The Elliott School's Master's Program in Asian Studies stood out for its interdisciplinary curriculum, proximity to policy institutions in Washington, D.C., and the dynamic community fostered by the Sigur Center for Asian Studies.

As a student at GW, Yerin immersed herself in the vibrant intellectual and professional environment the program offered. She recalls many memorable events hosted by the Sigur Center and the GW Institute for Korean Studies (GWIKS), where she was a fellow. These events allowed her to engage directly with policymakers, scholars, and diplomats, an experience that was a stark contrast to her undergraduate years. One highlight was attending a lecture by a former Korean Prime Minister, a moment that deeply influenced her understanding of high-level policymaking and international engagement.

Yerin now serves as the Government Affairs and International Trade Policy Assistant Manager at POSCO America, the U.S. office of one of South Korea's largest conglomerates and the world's seventh-largest steelmaker. In her role, she tracks U.S. policy developments affecting steel and trade, coordinates strategic outreach with key stakeholders, including Congress, government agencies, think tanks, and industry associations, and helps position POSCO as a constructive partner in U.S.-Korea economic relations.

Reflecting on her time at GW, Yerin highlights the challenges of navigating job hunting as an international student, particularly the stress of visa sponsorship and balancing professional development with academic demands. She credits the support of the Asian Studies faculty, particularly Program Director Professor Gregg Brazinsky, and the wider alumni network for guiding her through those difficult moments. It was, in fact, a connection with an alumna of the program that opened the door to her current role at POSCO.

To current and prospective students, Yerin offers this advice: "Take full advantage of what the Asian Studies program offers. Attend events, talk to your professors, and don't hesitate to reach out to alumni. Every opportunity to connect can open doors, expand your perspective, and shape your future. If I could go back, I'd speak up more and take even greater initiative."



Nazia, driven by a deep interest in South Korean protest culture and language, joined GW's Asian Studies Program. Nazia's first semester brought unexpected transitions, including adjusting to life in a new city without an established support system. Through community-building within the Asian Studies program and the opportunities offered by GWIKS and the Sigur Center, Nazia found both belonging and direction. Nazia encourages students to take risks, pursue funding, and prioritize well-being as they navigate their academic and professional journeys.



What drew you to GW's Asian Studies Program after undergrad?

I graduated from the University of Georgia with degrees in Political Science and International Affairs. I developed a strong interest in South Korean political protest culture and began learning Korean. A study abroad program in Seoul during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed me to local protests and deepened my interest in Korean media and politics. After graduation, I interned at the Human Rights Measurement Initiative and the Georgia State Assembly, which confirmed my desire to pursue a career in Asian foreign affairs. GW's Asian Studies program, with its strong language component and location in D.C., was at the top of my list.

What has been the biggest challenge you've faced in your academic and professional journey?

As a daughter of Asian immigrants, there were clear expectations—doctor, engineer, lawyer—but I pursued a different path. Navigating that pressure while managing real-life challenges like housing insecurity made things tough. I moved three times in my first semester alone, which deeply impacted my focus. People often say to leave your personal issues at the door, but that's not realistic. My biggest takeaway is that we all need to be kinder to ourselves, especially when entering new spaces, whether it's a city, university, or field.

Was the Asian Studies program able to

support you during these challenging times?

Absolutely. Some of my closest friends are from the program. The Sigur Center and GWIKS provided opportunities beyond the classroom, including events that gave me space to think beyond personal stressors. Those events, and the community I found here, were incredibly valuable. I didn't have a support system in D.C. at first, but I built one gradually—and the Asian Studies cohort played a big part in that.

What led you to study in Singapore as part of your Asian Studies MA?

I wanted to understand how ASEAN countries are responding to geopolitical pressures like the South China Sea tensions and the rise of information warfare. Studying in Singapore has allowed me to engage with diverse perspectives. It's helped me see how narratives are shaped—and why security discourse matters.

Do you have a favorite memory from your time at GW?

One of my core memories is organizing my first panel, "The Future of BRICS Partnerships with Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand," through the Organization of Asian Studies. I coordinated everything—panelist outreach, event planning, and budget—and secured Sigur Center sponsorship. It gave me a real sense of confidence and belonging at GW. It showed me that I could contribute meaningfully to academic dialogue and sparked new ideas for my future career.





Santiago Ravello, MA '25

After spending three and a half years teaching English in Japan, Santiago applied to GW to study Asian Studies and expand his career horizons. His time in Japan led him to focus on U.S.-Japan relations and people-to-people diplomacy. While at GW, Santiago immersed himself in the GW and DC Asian Studies community by attending events, taking on part-time jobs, joining student groups, and even starting his own language exchange. These activities were key to building community and finding friends in the Asian Studies program.

Throughout your educational and professional journey and time at GW, what's been the biggest challenge you've faced?

So the biggest challenge has been a work-life balance. But I think finding that balance, finding where it's okay to say, I don't have to take every single opportunity in front of me, is a good challenge that doing this master's program has helped me deal with.

While at GW, I was a student. I was also working. I was also in the Organization of Asian Studies, first as the Japan Chair and then as the Vice President. I also ran a Japanese-English language exchange program out of Bethesda. I was able to pack into my schedule a lot of things I wanted to do and a lot of things I thought would be beneficial. I learned where I was able to push myself in those, and also where I was able to let myself have more fun and take advantage of all the opportunities that are in DC and are offered at GW.

How has language learning influenced your life?

Language learning sent me to Japan to work for three and a half years to give me all this professional experience that made me think about working in international affairs, that doing this kind of low-level people-to-people diplomacy sounds interesting. And also, learning languages then propelled my studies, such as with FLAS, the Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship.

Do you have any advice for any prospective GW Asian Studies students?

I think GW has a lot of funding opportunities that it only takes an email to find out about. And it's these funding opportunities that let me do my graduate degree here. So my first piece of advice is definitely search out the funding opportunities. There's probably something for you.

My next piece of advice would be to definitely go to the events. The Sigur Center and Elliott School get amazing guests. They always get amazing topics. It's a really good place to see classmates and talk about whatever the topic is with similar-minded people. And then also meet the people who are doing the research themselves, because if they're in person, you can come up to them and say, "Hey, I thought what you said was fascinating. I'm studying this. I'd love to exchange cards." You can do professional networking, and then you're also just learning.

Finally, I would say, take the language studies seriously. Language is a skill that can take you really, really far. Learning a language only ever opens doors. And the more you learn the language, the more you open the door.

CHINA POLICY PROGRAM (CPP)

The China Policy Program was created to build upon the Elliott School's longstanding expertise and involvement in US-China relations and contemporary Chinese affairs. It primarily serves as an outreach program to the policy community in Washington, officials, and China specialists around the world, the media, and the public.

David Shambaugh

shambaug@gwu.edu



RISING POWERS INITIATIVE (RPI)

The Rising Powers Initiative is a multi-year, cross-national research effort that examines the role of domestic identities and foreign policy debates of aspiring powers in Asia. The RPI brings together an internationally recognized team of scholars from both the United States and across the globe to analyze and compare the foreign policy thinking in today's rising powers.

Deepa Ollapally

deepao@gwu.edu



Uyghur Studies Initiative (USI)

The Uyghur Studies Initiative began in 2010 at IERES. In 2024, it received a \$1 million endowment and moved to Sigur. The USI supports humanities teaching and research on the Uyghur homeland and diaspora. It funds Uyghur language classes at multiple levels, graduate student research support, and public events.

Eric Schluessel

schluessel@gwu.edu



TAIWAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAM (TERP)

The Taiwan Education and Research Program was established in 2004 to promote and support academic and policy-related study and research on the history, international relations, and contemporary political, economic, and social development of Taiwan. TERP created and supports the Taiwan Resource Center at GW's Gelman Library.

Alexa Alice Joubin

ajoubin@gwu.edu



Richard Haddock

rhaddock@gwu.edu



TIBET GOVERNANCE PROJECT

The Tibet Governance Project advances scholarship, research, and new perspectives around key issues related to governance and public policy in contemporary Tibet. Research initiatives and activities produce fresh insights, analyses, and approaches towards understanding the social, economic, and institutional challenges faced by Tibetans in the region.

Tashi Rabgey

trabgey@gwu.edu



MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC (MRIAP)

The Memory and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific (MRIAP) program promotes the study of ongoing "memory wars" as well as reconciliation efforts. MRIAP's cataloging of official statements, scholarly works, and news articles on the subject make it easier for people to become aware of conflict resolution and confidence-building efforts in the region.

Daqing Yang

yanghist@gwu.edu



Mike Mochizuki

mochizuk@gwu.edu



**Janet Steele**

Fulbright Senior Specialist
Summer Faculty Research Award
The Sigur Center for Asian Studies

**Xiaofei Kang**

Joseph Levenson Book Prize
The Association for Asian Studies

**Donald Clarke**

Jerome A. Cohen Lifetime Achievement Award
American Association of Law Schools Section on East Asian Law and Society

**David Shambaugh**

Distinguished Fellowship Hoover Institution, Stanford University

**Robert Sutter**

Joseph P. Dymond Writing in the Disciplines Distinguished Teaching Award
The George Washington University

**Eric Schluessel**

China Fellow
The Wilson Center

19

FACULTY AWARDS

**Jeffrey Ding**

China Fellow
The Wilson Center

**Shawn McHale**

Fellowship, Collegium Lyon;
Foreign Research Directorship,
École Pratique des Hautes Études

**Aman Luthra**

Shapiro Policy Research Fellow
GW Institute of Public Policy

**Steven J. Balla**

Fulbright Specialist Award

**Young Hoon Kwak**

Donald S. Barrie Award
Project Management Institute

**Shaista E. Khilji**

Fulbright Specialist Award

**Attiya Ahmad**

Summer Faculty Research Award
The Sigur Center for Asian Studies

**Daqing Yang**

Summer Faculty Research Award
The Sigur Center for Asian Studies

**Stephen B. Kaplan**

Summer Faculty Research Award
The Sigur Center for Asian Studies

**Alexa Alice Joubin**

Summer Faculty Research Award
Taiwan Education & Research Program

**Gregg Brazinsky**

Summer Faculty Research Award
Taiwan Education & Research Program

**Liana Chen**

Summer Faculty Research Award
Taiwan Education & Research Program

FALL 2024- SUMMER 2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

Areas where Sigur Summer Faculty Grant Awardees Conducted Research:

Indonesia, Taiwan (ROC), Vietnam, China (PRC), the United Kingdom

Areas where Sigur Summer Student Grant Awardees Studied:

India, Bangladesh, Taiwan (ROC), China (PRC), Japan, South Korea



57

GW Study Abroad
Programs in IPR*



7

Elliott School
Partnerships in
IPR



13

Total Countries in
GW-IPR Exchanges



411

IPR International
Students to GW
(Bachelor's)



152

IPR International
Students to the
Elliott School



1,644

IPR International
Students to GW
(Graduate)

DONATE



The Sigur Center for Asian Studies is grateful to individuals, foundations, and corporations for their support. By giving to the Sigur Center for Asian Studies, you support our students, our special events, and our research. A gift to the Sigur Center helps us advance our mission of improving the quality and reach of scholarly research on Asian affairs, fostering US-Asian scholarly interaction, and stimulating the development of the next generation of Asian scholars, analysts, and policymakers.

Those interested in donating to the Sigur Center for Asian Studies may contact Assistant Programs Director **Sean Dolan** at **seandolan@email.gwu.edu** OR visit the link below to donate:

[Go.GWU.EDU/SigurSupport](https://go.gwu.edu/SigurSupport)

CONTACT US

1957 E St. NW, Suite 503

Washington, DC 20052

sigur.elliott.gwu.edu

(202) 994-5886 | gsigur@gwu.edu

Sigur Center
for Asian Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Editor

Adam Bubanich, Program Coordinator

Designer

Adam Bubanich, Program Coordinator

Contributors

Renee Bergeon, Events Assistant

Selina Lam, Project Assistant

Madison Cassel, Events Assistant

Mark Sheehan, Events Assistant