**Research Statement**

**Raymond Kuo**

Among the most important issues in current International Relations research are international order and military coercion. These issues are significant because they raise questions about the stability of contemporary security networks, their capacity to accommodate rising powers, and states’ ability to deter challenges and signal intentions. My research asks a series of questions about the relationship between international order, alliances, and force employment.

I use a multi-method approach. Quantitative data analysis systematically discerns broad, historical patterns in international and domestic political behavior, while historical case studies and elite interviews assess the causal microfoundations of these puzzles. Computational techniques allow me to obtain and parse text data, and I have learned new methods – like computer-assisted text analysis, agent-based modeling, and synthetic controls – to more rigorously test my arguments. In prior work, I studied questions of international law and communal conflict, as well as the biological vs. social determinants of human political behavior.

My research agenda is comprised of three strands:

1. The sociological dynamics of international order and alliances;
2. The acquisition, employment, and political effects of military weapons technology; and
3. Foreign and interstate security policy in East Asia.

*First, my research looks at the sociological dynamics of international order and alliances*. It builds on the work of John Ikenberry (Princeton), Ashley Leeds (Rice), and Daniel Nexon (Georgetown). Under anarchy, we expect states exhibit diverse foreign policies and strategies, especially for their military alliances.

This expectation is wrong. My first book – Following the Leader: International Order, Alliance Strategies, and Emulation – reveals that, in any year, over 75 percent of states adopt identical security strategies. Sociological concerns about status and rank drive this isomorphism, spreading international security order through two network/diffusion mechanisms. This book is forthcoming from Stanford University Press in summer 2021.

My 2020 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* article and three working papers build on this approach to explain when states participate in secret alliances, as well as reassessing alliance reliability. In future research, I will apply this sociological lens to questions of alliance burden-sharing; domestic hegemonic support for the international order; the political and positional dynamics of orders’ declines; and a deeper exploration of secondary state policy options under different international security regimes.

*Second, my research examines the acquisition, employment, and political effects of military weapons technology*: How states acquire coercive material power, the strategies towards which they use it, and the effects of those strategies. This work adds to recent studies on military technology, innovation, and production by Michael Horowitz (UPenn), Julia Macdonald (University of Denver), Jacquelyn Schneider (Stanford), and Andrea and Mauro Gilli.

My 2019 article in *International Migration* examines unmanned air strikes in Pakistan, finding that have no effect on socioeconomic stability, despite popular and policy consensus that they do. I also have two working papers in this research area. Brian Blankenship and I use a relational contracting framework to argue that joint military exercises effectively deter further military challenges, but only if embedded within interstate alliances. This paper has an R&R at the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Furthermore, Jennifer Spindel and I used Python webscraping to create an original dataset on the national origins of military weapon systems. Our paper introducing this new dataset and whether it creates “path dependency” in longitudinal arms sales is currently under review.

In future research, I will examine how coups and human rights considerations affect arms transfers; when states choose to rely on a single supplier for their arms or diversify their sources; and the conditions under which “single source” states switch to alternate suppliers.

*Finally, my research examines foreign and interstate security policy in East Asia*. I particularly focus on regional responses to China’s military modernization and strategy. My second book – *Contests of Initiative: Confronting China’s Gray Zone Strategy* – is forthcoming from Westphalia Press in Winter 2020. It delineates three courses of action for the U.S. and its regional security partners to confront and possibly rollback Beijing’s sovereignty assertions in the South and East China Seas. This project was funded by the U.S. Army External Research Associates Program.

Moreover, in “Terrorism in Xinjiang?”, published in *Ethnopolitics* with Liza Steele, we analyze and offer policy solutions for the conflict between Han Chinese and Muslim Uighurs. My work as a foreign policy analyst at the Democratic Progressive Party (Taiwan) inspired a working paper – “Trouble in Paradise: Arms Sales vs. Alliances” – which is currently under review. I use statistical methods and a case study on South Korea in 1970-1 demonstrating that patrons view alliances and arms as substitutes, not additive signals of support. This carries contemporary policy implications for Taiwan, where the government often views U.S. arms sales as hints of deeper support, raising misperception and entrapment risks.

My prior peer-reviewed publications examined the moral and biological bases of human conflict in *International Security* and *International Relations*. In total, as of September 2020, my research includes two forthcoming, peer-reviewed books and five peer-reviewed journal articles. Google Scholar indicates that my work has been cited 27 times. I have three journal articles currently under review (one with an R&R), two nearly complete working papers, and two works in progress.