Shiyan Cao

+1 3123203879 shiyan@uchicago.edu shiyan.academic.ws

Education

University of Chicago 2022 – 2027 (expected)
PhD in Political Economy
Dissertation Committee: Alvaro Delgado-Vega; Wioletta Dziuda; Scott Gehlbach *(chair)*; Robert Gulotty; Konstantin Sonin.

London School of Economics and Political Science 2020 – 2021
MSc in Political Science and Political Economy (Distinction)

Zhejiang University 2016 – 2020
BA in International Politics

Research Interests

International Relations; Comparative Politics of Nondemocracies; Formal Political Theory

Working Papers

The Trade Dilemma and Its Resolution: Great-Power Bargaining over Trade and Policy (with *Lingnan He*)

Abstract: How can a country engage economically with an adversary while preventing that adversary from using the resulting economic power against it? Under what conditions can such engagement succeed? We develop a dynamic model of trade and political conflict between a dominant country and a weaker country. Trade benefits both countries but also increases the weaker country's future capacity to pursue more aggressive policies. Absent an agreement, the outcome is all-or-nothing: the dominant country either trades indefinitely while tolerating policy divergence or refuses to trade altogether. We show that a self-enforcing, informal agreement can sustain an intermediate outcome in which trade continues while the weaker country limits political divergence. Such an agreement is maintained by the dominant country's ability to threaten the temporary suspension of trade following political deviation. It is sustainable only under two conditions: the weaker country must value future trade sufficiently to accept policy concessions, and the dominant country must not value trade so highly that suspending it is no longer a credible threat.

[Paper]

Competing Rallies in Authoritarian Regimes

Abstract: How do rulers and opposition use competing political rallies to gain support from pivotal actors? I model rallies as Blackwell experiments that generate information about the regime. The ruler and the opposition interact repeatedly, deciding whether to call a rally and what information structure to employ. At each stage, a pivotal elite may end the contest by choosing a side. The theory predicts that the sequence of rallies depends on relative strength: the weaker side initiates a rally due to the risk that the game may end. The stronger side responds with a counter-rally only if the previous rally draws a high turnout. When the two sides differ greatly in strength, rallies tend to be more informative; when they are relatively equal in strength, the sequence of rallies and regime survival become less predictable. These results provide a theoretical foundation for studying competing rallies using case studies and empirical analysis.

[Paper]

Publications

Information Asymmetry and Cross-Class Coalitions in Economic Liberalization
accepted, Journal of Comparative Economics

[Paper]

Work in Progress

Alliance Formation under Great Power Competition

When Do Alliances Form and Whom Do Adversaries Attack?

Competing Rallies after Political Scandals: Evidence from Brazil (with *Natalia Lamberova*)

Friend or Enemy? Dynamic Communication under Uncertainty (with *Krisha Mehta*)

Conferences & Summer Schools

Workshop on Relational Contracts, Barcelona, Spain	2026
American Political Science Association (APSA)	— (scheduled)
Ronald Coase Institute Workshop on Institutional Analysis, Mexico City, Mexico	— (scheduled)
American Political Science Association (APSA)	2025
Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)	—
Formal Theory Conference, Washington University in St. Louis	—
EITM Summer Institute, University of Michigan	—
Comparative Politics and Formal Theory Graduate Poster Session, Stanford University	—

Teaching Assistant Experience

Graduate

Analytical Politics I (Formal Theory)	Winter 2025
Analytical Politics II (Formal Theory)	Spring 2025
Economic Development and Policy	Fall 2025

Undergraduate

Introduction to Comparative Politics	Fall 2024

Awards

Summer Research Award, Political Economy Program, University of Chicago	2023–2026
PSPE Best Overall Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science	2021

Service

Coordinator, Formal Theory Workshop, University of Chicago	2025–2026

Skills

Software: Stata, LaTeX, R
Languages: English (fluent), Chinese (native), Russian (B1)

References

Scott Gehlbach
Department of Political Science
University of Chicago
gehlbach@uchicago.edu

Wioletta Dziuda
Harris School of Public Policy
University of Chicago
wdziuda@uchicago.edu

Robert Gulotty
Department of Political Science
University of Chicago
gulotty@uchicago.edu

Konstantin Sonin
Harris School of Public Policy
University of Chicago
ksonin@uchicago.edu