Felix Brender 王哲謙

PhD (LSE) · International Relations & Security · Global China & Taiwan

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RESEARCH PROFILE

International Relations scholar working on international security, political order, Global China, and Taiwan. My research examines how security, legitimacy and political order are produced and sustained in practice, drawing on multilingual, fieldwork-based research across East Asia and Africa, particularly where formal structures are weak, contested or politically ambiguous. One strand develops a relational approach to security from ethnographic research on Chinese actors in conflict-affected South Sudan, extending to peacebuilding, microgeopolitics and China's evolving security role in the Arab world. A second examines the making of political identity and community in Taiwan, particularly through transitional justice, memory and contested sovereignty, with related work on recognition, diplomacy and Taiwan–Somaliland relations.

Research areas: *international security; relational security; Global China; conflict and peacebuilding; microgeopolitics; political and regional order; China in Africa and the Arab world; Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific; recognition and diplomacy; qualitative, multilingual and fieldwork-based methods.*

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS & RESEARCH POSITIONS

Hou Family Fellow in Taiwan Studies **09/2026 – 08/2027**
Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA
Postdoctoral research on Taiwan, examining political identity, memory, transitional justice and contested political order, with related work on diplomacy and international recognition.

Project Associate **02/2023 – 08/2026**
LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK
Editor of China Dialogues (LSE IDEAS / China Foresight): commissioning, substantively editing and coordinating expert contributions on China's international relations and global politics.

Part-Time Faculty Lecturer **01/2026 – 05/2026**
The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, China
Course convenor and lecturer for undergraduate courses *International Organisation* & *Intro to Diplomacy*.

Graduate Lecturer **09/2025 – 05/2026**
Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China
Teaching Chinese-to-German interpreting on the MA in Interpreting Studies.

Graduate Research Assistant, Taiwan as a Pioneer (TAP) Project **10/2024 – 01/2026**
University of Trier, Trier, Germany
Research on Taiwan's international positioning and its relevance to European and Indo-Pacific security, including Chinese-language source analysis and policy-facing dissemination.

Visiting Researcher **04/2024 – 06/2024**
Centre for International Studies (CERI), Sciences Po, Paris, France
Doctoral research visit under the supervision of Professor Thierry Balzacq; supported in part by a competitive GO LSE mobility grant.

Visiting Researcher **02/2024 – 03/2024**
Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa
Doctoral research visit under the supervision of Professor Maxi Schoeman; supported through LSE travel and departmental research funding.

Visiting Scholar **2023**
University of Juba, Juba, South Sudan
Hosted during doctoral fieldwork on Chinese communities and relational security practices in Juba.

EDUCATION

PhD, International Relations **2020 – 2025**
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), London, UK
Thesis: "Casting the Security Net: A relational reading of how Chinese residents create, perform and experience security in Juba (South Sudan)." Supervisor: Professor Chris Alden.
Examiners: Professor Omar McDoom (LSE); Professor Daniel Large (Central European University).

MSc, International Relations — Distinction **2017 – 2018**
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), London, UK
Dissertation: "Will The Dragon Bring Peace? Liberal Peacekeeping, 'Developmental Peace' and Chinese UN-led and bilateral peacekeeping in (South) Sudan." Recipient of the LSE IR Philip Windsor Dissertation Prize.

Postgraduate Diploma, Conference Interpreting **2013 – 2014**
University of Leeds, Leeds, UK
Professional conference interpreting qualification in English, Chinese, and German, supported and recognised by EU and UN interpreting services.

MA, Social Anthropology with Vietnamese — Distinction **2012 – 2013**
SOAS University of London, London, UK
Fieldwork-based thesis on Vietnamese boat refugees, first-generation Taiwanese identity, belonging, and memory in Taiwan.

BA, Southeast Asian Studies & Sinology — First Class Honours **2009 – 2012**
SOAS University of London, London, UK
Completed a four-year degree programme in three years; research included Chinese-language study and work on Southeast Asian politics, society, and culture.

Chinese and International Law — auditing **2008 – 2009**
China University of Politics and Law, Beijing, China

CURRENT RESEARCH & WRITING

Security in Relation — monograph project **ongoing**
Relational security and everyday political practice
Book project developed from multilingual ethnographic research on relational security and everyday protection among Chinese communities in conflict-affected South Sudan.

Microgeopolitics — theoretical project **ongoing**
Small-scale politics of global power
Research on how political power and international security become operative through everyday practice, situated relationships and organisational routines.

Taiwanese Identity, Transitional Justice & International Recognition **2020 – present**
Taiwan Studies
Research on Taiwanese political identity, transitional justice and political memory, alongside international recognition and diplomacy under contested sovereignty.

China, Security & the Africa–Middle East Nexus **2024 – present**
Global China / International Security
Research on China's security practices, foreign policy and diplomacy across Africa and the Middle East, including the roles of regional governments and informal political arrangements.

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Edited volumes

Keyser-Verreault, A., Perkuhn, J.-M. & Brender, F. (eds.) (2027). Taiwan Studies Reconfigured: Islands of Inquiry. Routledge. Open access; available online in 2026.

Journal articles

Brender, F. (2022). "Teaching Sleeping Dogs New Tricks? Transitional Justice as Identity-Building." Open Cultural Studies, 6(1), 12–24.

Journal manuscripts submitted

Four journal manuscripts submitted for peer review (2026), addressing international security, political order, Global China and diplomatic communication.

Additional research in preparation

Further work on Taiwanese political identity and diplomatic recognition, and on China's international relations and global security practices.

Book chapter submitted

Book chapter on citizenship, equality and legal reform in contemporary Taiwan — submitted to volume editors.

Book chapters & reference works

Brender, F. (forthcoming). "People of and by the Sea: Materiality of the Ocean in Creating and Maintaining Taiwanese Identity through Foreign Policy." In Sybille Reinke de Buitrago & Dana Trif (eds.), Materiality and Foreign Policy. Palgrave Macmillan.

Brender, F. (forthcoming). "From Commission to Ministries: German Encounters in Taiwan's Transitional Justice, 2016–2024." In Ann Heylen & Jens Damm (eds.), Taiwan as a Contact Zone.

Brender, F., Heneghan, M. & Sandeman, H. (2026). "No End of a Disgrace: Guantanamo and the Justification of Human Rights Abuses by Russia and China." In Richard Kotter, Sara Birch, Hugh Sandeman & Andy Worthington (eds.), The Long Road to Closing Guantanamo: Action, Accountability and Justice, pp. 162–193. Ethics International Press.

Keyser-Verreault, A., Perkuhn, J.-M. & Brender, F. (2027). "Introduction: Reconfiguring Taiwan Studies through Methodological Innovation." In A. Keyser-Verreault, J.-M. Perkuhn & F. Brender (eds.), Taiwan Studies Reconfigured: Islands of Inquiry. Routledge. Open access; available online in 2026.

Brender, F. (2023). "Transitional Justice." In Hsin-huang Michael Hsiao (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Taiwan Studies. Brill.

Book review

Brender, F. (2021). Review of Uwe Behrens, Feindbild China. Was wir alles nicht über die Volksrepublik wissen. ASIEN, 158/159, 226–227.

POLICY & PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

Brender, F. (11 Nov 2026). "China's Graduation Is Not a Single Event." Global Policy (Opinion & Analysis).

Brender, F. (18 Aug 2026). "Indonesia Has More Nickel Partners. Its Value Chain Is Still China-Centred." Ask the Experts, LSE IDEAS / China Dialogues.

Brender, F. (4 Aug 2026). "China after October 7: Selective Neutrality and the Politics of 'Principle'." Telos Insights.

Brender, F. (24 Apr 2026). "China's Strategy of Staying Out of Iran." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (21 Nov 2025). "An Exhibition of 'Civilizations' in Beijing, and the Narrative China Is Quietly Writing." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (7 Nov 2025). "UN Celebrates Chinese Peacekeepers in South Sudan Even as Questions Linger Over What Was Achieved." China Global South Project.

Perkuhn, J.-M., Su, Y.-H. & Brender-Wang, F. (29 Oct 2025). "On Alert: How People in Taiwan See Threats in Daily Life." CommonWealth Magazine (Taipei).

Brender, F. (12 Sep 2025). "Tianjin Summit in Review: The Winner Takes It All (But Not Much)." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (18 Jul 2025). "Disorder as Strategy at the Gate of Tears." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (30 Jun 2025). "Strategic Illusions: How China's Development-First Approach Undermines Its Security Aims in South Sudan." China-Africa Security Radar.

Brender, F. (21 Mar 2025). "Bridges, Yes, Bandages, No: China Won't Fill America's Aid Shoes." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (21 Feb 2025). "Beware False Idols: The Pitfalls of Copy-Paste Development Models." China Global South Project.

Magnus, G., Gaston, S. & Brender, F. (2024). "Ask the Experts: What Does Trump 2.0 Mean for China?" LSE IDEAS China Dialogues.

Brender, F. (19 Jul 2024). "With a Little Help From My Friends: What Russia and North Korea's Defense Treaty Tells Us About Global China." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (26 Apr 2024). "Words Come Easy, Action Does Not: China in the Context of Sudan." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (7 Mar 2024). "Letting Some Get Wealthy First." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (16 Feb 2024). "Drawing in the Relational Net of Influence & Power." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. & Fiala, L. (27 Oct 2023). "China's New Defense Minister Comes at a Critical Time." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. & Fiala, L. (20 Oct 2023). "Can't Be Ambiguous and Mediate: The Limits of China's Involvement in Israel-Palestine." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (29 Sep 2023). "Running Into BRICS Walls: Enlargement Won't Help BRICS Establish a New World Order." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (14 Jul 2023). "Re-Election of China's Man at the Food & Agriculture Organization Could Reverberate in the Global South." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (2 Jun 2023). "China's Groundhog Day in Sudan." China Global South Project.

Brender, F. (28 Apr 2023). "Taiwan's 'Look South' Policy Aims to Reduce Dependency on China." China Global South Project.

Alden, C., Brender, F. & Fiala, L. (17 Mar 2023). "How Significant Is China's Role in the Saudi-Iran Rapprochement?" China Global South Project.

MEDIA & EXPERT COMMENTARY

BBC Chinese (4 Nov 2026). "APEC 峰会前，美智库解析"技术民族主义"下的中俄军工合作细节与限度" ["Ahead of APEC: The details and limits of China–Russia defence-industrial cooperation under technological nationalism"]. Quoted on China's leverage over Russia, its incentives concerning a Ukraine ceasefire, and China–Russia defence-industrial ties.

Channel NewsAsia (15 Oct 2026). "Why a Remote Philippine Island Chain Near Taiwan Is Drawing China's Attention." Quoted as an expert on Batanes, Taiwan Strait security, Philippine–US–Japanese defence cooperation, Chinese maritime pressure and territorial narratives.

BBC Chinese (1 Sep 2026). "上合組織 25 週年：中國舞台、伊朗考驗，還是『清談場所』？" ["SCO at 25: China's stage, Iran's test, or a 'talk shop'?"]. Expert commentary on China, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the institutional politics of an emerging multipolar order.

Devex (4 Dec 2025). "After USAID exit, China hasn't moved to fill Asia's funding gap." Interviewed as an expert on Chinese development finance, the withdrawal of USAID, and Beijing's approach to development cooperation in Asia.

GovPod (21 Feb 2024). "Post-Election Analysis: Taiwan." Podcast expert interview on Taiwan's 2024 election, China, democracy, and regional politics.

Explore China 探索中国 (23 Apr 2022). "Work as a Conference Interpreter (Chinese–German–English)." Video interview.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Course Convenor & Lecturer **2026**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen

- International Organisation — undergraduate course.
- Introduction to Diplomacy — undergraduate course.

Seminar Leader / Graduate Teaching Assistant **2021 – 2023**

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

- Contemporary Issues in International Relations — seminar leader for LSE BSc International Relations students.
- Global Politics in the 21st Century — seminar leader for the UC Davis visiting programme at LSE.
- Theory and Practice of International Relations — seminar leader for the Universidad Europea de Madrid visiting programme at LSE.

- Dissertation support: one-to-one guidance for BSc International Relations students completing final dissertations.

Course Convenor & Lecturer, Conference Interpreting **2015 – 2023**
Heidelberg University
- MA Conference Interpreting: Simultaneous Interpreting German into English I–III and Consecutive Interpreting German into English I–III.
- Responsibility for the German-to-English teaching schedule and advanced dummy-booth practice sessions; pastoral support for MA students.

Graduate Lecturer **2025 – 2026**
Shanghai International Studies University
Chinese-to-German interpreting on the MA in Interpreting Studies.

Lecturer in Conference Interpreting, Chinese–English **2016 – 2017**
University of Leeds
Chinese-to-English consecutive and simultaneous interpreting on the MA Conference Interpreting; grading of final examinations.

Teaching Fellow **2015**
University of Bonn
- Introduction to Linguistics (Chinese); Advanced Chinese Translation; Introduction to Chinese Interpreting; Advanced Standard Chinese (Mandarin) Grammar; Preparing for the HSK Exam.
- Restructured and designed course outlines; supervised and graded BA dissertations and MA final translation projects.

FIELDWORK

Taipei, Taitung & Kaohsiung, Taiwan **2024**
Taiwan Studies fieldwork
Approximately 2.5 months of Mandarin-language fieldwork with practitioners, legislators, and civil-society actors on transitional justice, political memory, and identity formation; supported through a Taiwan as a Pioneer travel grant.

Juba, South Sudan **2023**
Doctoral fieldwork
Three fieldwork trips involving participant observation among the Chinese community in Juba and interviews with diplomatic, business, UN, and other international stakeholders; second trip hosted by the University of Juba. Research conducted in Chinese, English, and Arabic.

Taipei, Taiwan **2013**
MA fieldwork
One month of Mandarin- and Vietnamese-language fieldwork with Vietnamese boat refugees, later immigrants, and first-generation Vietnamese-Taiwanese communities on identity, belonging, and memory.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (selection)

2026. "Floors, Fences, and Familiarity: Micro-Spatial Cues in the Making of Security in Juba." ISA International Security Studies Section (ISSS), Los Angeles, CA, USA.

2026. "Security as a Condition of Research: Relational Access and Ethnographic Knowledge in Juba." ISA International Security Studies Section (ISSS), Los Angeles, CA, USA.

2026. "Security in Relation: Everyday Relational Security Among Juba's Chinese Community, South Sudan." European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference, Lisbon, Portugal.

2026. "Performing Taiwan: Somaliland and the Reconfiguration of Diplomatic Identity in Africa." European Association of Chinese Studies, Venice, Italy.

2025. "Beyond Liberal Peace? The Limits of China's 'Developmental Peace' in (South) Sudan." African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, USA.

2025. "Relational Security as Ontological Security: Chinese Micro-Practices in South Sudan." ISA International Security Studies Section, Washington, DC, USA.

2025. "Ubuntu with Chinese Characteristics – Towards New Chinese Security Paradigms?" International Studies Association Annual Convention, Chicago, USA.

2025. "Justice at Last? Mechanisms/Features of Exclusion in Transitional Justice as an Identity-Building Project." Taiwan as a Contact Zone Workshop, Vienna, Austria.

2024. "People of and by the Sea: The Materiality of the Sea and the Construction of Taiwanese Identity." European International Studies Association Annual Conference, Lille, France.

2024. "Security in a Hot Climate: Reflections on Participant Observation as a Tool to Explore Chinese Microgeopolitical Security Practices in Juba (South Sudan)." AISAC, Padua, Italy.

2023. "Community is Safety: A Relational Reading of (In)security among the Chinese Community in Juba." ISA–ISSS, Colorado Springs, USA.

2023. "Friendship for Sale? On Limited Implementation of Financial Incentives and Investment as Foreign-Policy Tools." EISA, Potsdam, Germany.

2022. "Engaging with Juba/South Sudan — Towards New Chinese Security Paradigms?" African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, USA.

2021. "Sleeping Dogs Won't Lie Long — Transitional Justice under Tsai Ing-Wen." DGA Biennial Conference, virtual.

Invited talks & workshops

2024. "China & Taiwan Crisis Simulation Workshop." Designed and led for the LSE Political Risk and Investment Society, London.

2023. "Life Is More Fun (and Safer) When You've Got Friends: Chinese Relational Approaches to Security." LSE Global China Working Group, London.

2023. "Friendship for Sale? Financial Incentives as a Structural Tool in US–China Competition in the Global South." EISA Early Career Workshop, Potsdam.

2023. "No Risk, No Fun? Challenging Academic Representations of Chinese Risk Tolerance." Iserlohn China Workshop, Germany.

2022. "會議口譯人生 / Aus dem Alltag eines Konferenzdolmetschers." Texte, Termini und Transfer Workshop, University of Bonn; delivered in Chinese and German.

2022. "Neuland China? Eine ganz kurze Einführung." Invited talk for the Association of Founders and Entrepreneurs Germany (VGSD); delivered in German.

2022. "Hic Sunt Dragones: Chinesische Sicherheitspolitik und die UN im Südsudan." Invited lecture, Bundesverband Sicherheitspolitik an Hochschulen (BSH); delivered in German.

2022. "Sleeping Dogs and Other Beasts: Transitional Justice as Identity-Building in Taiwan." Centre of Taiwan Studies, SOAS University of London.

2022. "Tianxia Ping'an – Peace All Over the World: Diverging Discourses on Chinese Security Approaches in the Chinese and Western Academies." Iserlohn China Workshop, Germany.

AWARDS, GRANTS & FUNDING

2026. Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem — awarded for 2026/27; declined.

2024. Taiwan as a Pioneer Travel Grant ("TAP Reisestipendium").

2024. GO LSE Mobility Grant / Fellowship support at Sciences Po.

2023. Sir Patrick Gillam Fund scholarship for fieldwork.

2023. Language tuition funding for Kiswahili.

2021–2023. LSE Postgraduate Travel Fund for conference participation.

2021–2023. Departmental conference funding.

2022. Global South Award.

2022. Dominique Jacquin-Berdal Award.

2022. Open-access publication funding.

2018. LSE IR Philip Windsor Dissertation Prize for best IR dissertation.

EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE

Editor, China Dialogues (LSE IDEAS / China Foresight), 2023–2026. Commissioning and substantive editing of research and policy analysis on Global China.

Co-editor, Taiwan Studies Reconfigured: Islands of Inquiry (Routledge, 2027; open-access edition available online in 2026). Scholarly development and editorial coordination of a multi-author research volume.

ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Service to universities

2020–2022. Member, LSE Research Students' Consultative Forum.

2020–2023. Member, LSE IR Colloquium; head in 2022/23.

2020–2022. Member, LSE IR Staff–Research Student Liaison Committee.

2020–2022. LSE IR PhD cohort representative.

2017–2018. LSE MSc International Relations student representative.

2012–2013. SOAS MA Social Anthropology student representative.

2015–2023. Pastoral support for MA Conference Interpreting students at Heidelberg University.

2020–2023. Pastoral support for LSE BSc International Relations students, including students with special adjustments.

Service to the field

2023–present. Member, Admissions Committee (AuA), German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD) in the BDÜ; committee lead since July 2024.

2020–present. Mentor, German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD) in the BDÜ.

2019–present. AIIC Germany liaison to the UN Negotiation Delegation (NegDel) in Geneva.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Consultant & Conference Interpreter **2014 – present**

InOtherWords GmbH 《換言之》語意文化工作室

Strategic communication, multilingual advisory work, and simultaneous/consecutive conference interpreting across governmental, international-organisational, academic, legal, and corporate settings. Assignments include work with parliaments and ministries, the EU and UN family, research institutions, and multinational companies, requiring discretion, rapid briefing, political judgement, and accurate communication across Chinese, English, and German.

Co-founder & Conference Interpreter **2021 – present**

con:sens language professionals

Co-founded and manage a professional language-services partnership. Responsibilities include client acquisition and relations, international conference delivery, recruitment and coordination of multilingual teams, logistics, and contract administration.

PROFESSIONAL & ACADEMIC MEMBERSHIPS

2025–present. Member, AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters).

2023–present. Member, European International Studies Association (EISA).

2023–present. Member, International Studies Association (ISA).

2020–present. Member, African Studies Association.

2018–present. Member, German Association of Asian Studies.

2017–present. Member, Chatham House.

2014–present. Senior member, German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD) in the BDÜ.

LANGUAGES, METHODS & SKILLS

Languages

- English (UK), Mandarin Chinese and German — professional conference interpreting languages; French — working proficiency.
- Taiwanese Hokkien, Spanish, and Indonesian — full professional proficiency.
- Modern Standard Arabic, Juba Arabic, and Vietnamese — reading and fieldwork proficiency.
- Kiswahili — beginner; supported through funded study.

Research methods & training

- Qualitative and ethnographic fieldwork; semi-structured interviews; participant observation; text and discourse analysis; multilingual source analysis; Bayesian reasoning; advanced policy analysis.
- 2026. CITI Program, Harvard University — IRB: Social & Behavioral Research Investigators (Basic Course); completed 20 October 2026; valid until 20 October 2029. Certificate
- 2023–2025. i-intelligence — OSINT & HUMINT Investigation Training; certified coursework in open-source and human-source intelligence collection, source validation and investigative research, particularly the dark web and Arabic-language and Middle Eastern online environments.
- 2026. International Location Safety — E-Travel Safety & Security Training (e-TSS, online); completed 9 November 2026.
- Security Awareness & First Aid (SAFA/HEAT), International Location Safety, 2023–2026.