

# SEMINAR SERIES

## DELI YANG

**JEREMIAH SULLIVAN FELLOWSHIP AWARDEE - POLI SCI, PHD**  
**NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE POLITICS OF APOLOGY**

**Tuesday, October 7th**

**5:00 PM – In-person & Zoom**

**Coble Hall #108**

### ABSTRACT & BIO

Despite a broader international trend of countries issuing apologies for historical actions—and appeals by Japanese survivors and advocacy groups—the United States has never apologized for its use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This project examines why an apology has not occurred. I begin by analyzing cross-national patterns in the timing and function of political apologies, which tend to be issued only after bilateral relations have improved to at least a neutral level. In such contexts, apologies often serve to consolidate or reinforce cooperation. The U.S.–Japan case is notable because the two states have maintained close and stable relations for decades. I argue that the absence of a U.S. apology reflects several

constraints: the distinctive characteristics of nuclear weapons; domestic backlash to apology-making in the U.S.; concerns about weakening the credibility of extended deterrence; limited diplomatic incentives given the strength of the existing alliance; and broader security priorities in East Asia that diminish the perceived value of apology. The case contributes to international security scholarship by showing how characteristics of nuclear weapons, alliance stability, and regional security considerations can reduce the likelihood of international apologies, even when the conditions typically associated with apology-making are present.

*Deli Yang is a PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He specializes in International Relations. His research examines how countries use public diplomacy tools to transition from hostile to peaceful, and potentially cooperative, relations. This agenda intersects with broader themes in international security and conflict resolution. His work has been published in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.*



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