

# Spencer D. Bakich

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## Current Position

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### **Virginia Military Institute:**

Professor of International Studies, 2021-present  
National Security Program, Director, 2016-present

**Miller Center, University of Virginia:** Senior Fellow, 2021-present

## Education

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**University of Virginia:** Ph.D., Politics, 2006; M.A., Foreign Affairs, 1998

**James Madison University:** B.A., International Affairs, Economics, 1996, *Magna Cum Laude*

## Previous Positions

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**Virginia Military Institute:** Associate Professor of International Studies, 2016-2021

**University of Richmond:** Visiting Lecturer in Political Science, 2015-2016

**University of Virginia:** Lecturer in Politics, 2015-2016

**Sweet Briar College:** Government and International Affairs, Associate Professor (2013-2015), Assistant Professor (2007-2013), Visiting Assistant Professor (2006-2007).

**University of Virginia:** Adjunct Professor of Politics, 2006-2007

## Books

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### **Monographs**

*The Gulf War: George H. W. Bush and American Grand Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2024).

*Success and Failure in Limited War: Information and Strategy in the Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and Iraq Wars*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

### **Edited Volumes**

*The Sources of Great Power Competition: Rising Powers, Grand Strategy, and System Dynamics*, with J. Patrick Rhamey, Jr. (New York: Routledge, 2025).

## Refereed Articles and Book Chapters

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“The Iraq War and the Battle for Strategic Solvency,” in Michael Nelson, Barbara Perry, and Russell Riley, eds., *43: The Presidency of George W. Bush* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2022).

“Global Hegemony and American Foreign Policy: From the Cold War’s End to 9/11,” in Tyson Reeder, ed. *Routledge History of U.S. Foreign Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

“Signalling Capacity and Crisis Diplomacy: Explaining the Failure of ‘Maximum Pressure’ in the 2017 U.S.-North Korea Nuclear Crisis,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 45:5 (2020), 692-717.

“The Persian Gulf War,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, June 2019).

“The Reluctant Grand Strategist at War: Diplomacy and Force in Bosnia and Kosovo,” in Michael Nelson, Barbara Perry, and Russell Riley, eds. 42: *The Presidency of Bill Clinton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

“Institutionalizing Supreme Command: Explaining Political-Military Integration in the Vietnam War, 1964-1968,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22:4 (2011), 688-711.

“Storming to Partition: Croatia, the United States, and Krajina in the Yugoslav War,” (with John Ashbrook) *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 21:4 (2010), 537-560.

“The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation: Working Document or Anachronism?” *Conflict Studies*, 301 (London: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1997), 1-30.

“Toward a New Quality: Russian Military Doctrine and Eurasian Security,” *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 21:1 (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Social and Economic Studies, 1996), 3-24.

## **Non-Refereed Publications**

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### ***Essays and Commentary***

“Kim Jong-un's Demand for Self-Reliance Risks North Korean Lives,” *The National Interest* June 25, 2021.

“A Donald Trump Second Term: A Dangerous Time for U.S.-North Korea Relations?” *The National Interest*, September 20, 2020.

“The Korean War as Allegory,” *The National Interest*, July 6, 2020.

“President Bush Learned from His Missteps. Here's How Trump Can, Too,” (with Barbara A. Perry), *USA Today*, November 1, 2019.

“Conceptualizing Emerging Strategic Challenges in the Cyber Age,” *The Strategy Bridge*, December 12, 2016.

“Reviewing Success and Failure in Limited War: A Response to Dixon,” *The Strategy Bridge*, March 16, 2016.

“Legitimacy, Strategy, and the Islamic State,” *The Strategy Bridge*, December 9, 2015.

“Can Cooler Heads Prevail in U.S.-China Military Relations?” *The Strategy Bridge*, June 18, 2015.

“Life Beyond Yeltsin: Policy, Not Personality,” *The Washington Post*, October 18, 1997.

### **Book Reviews**

*Isolation and Engagement: Presidential Decision Making on China from Kennedy to Nixon* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), by William Waltman Newmann, in *Congress & the Presidency*, 51:1 (2024).

“Proof of the Bomb: The Influence of Previous Failure on Intelligence Judgments of Nuclear Programs.” *Security Studies*, 28:2 (2019): 1-39, by Cullen G. Nutt, in *H-Diplo/ISSF*, June 2019.

*Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism: U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security, 1920-2015* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), by Melvyn P. Leffler, in *The Strategy Bridge*, July 16, 2018.

*The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), by Lukas Milevski, in *The Strategy Bridge*, September 21, 2016.

*War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), by Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris, in *The Strategy Bridge*, Aug. 17, 2016.

*Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), by Andrew Mertha, in *Perspectives on Politics*, 13:2 (June 2015), 598-600.

*An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), by Maartje Abbenhuis, in *H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews*, January 2015.

### **Conference Papers**

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“How Many Strategies Are There? Conceptualizing Strategic Mechanisms in Theories of Victory,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, September 2025.

“Theories of Victory: A Typology of Strategic Mechanisms,” paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting, April 2025.

“A Liberal Among Realists: George H. W. Bush and America’s Liberal Grand Strategy, 1989-1992,” paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting, April 2022.

“Learning and Grand Strategy: The Rise and Fall of the ‘New World Order’,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, September 2020.

“Signaling Capacity and Crisis Bargaining in Northeast Asia,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, August 2019.

“Information Institutions, Tacit Bargaining Capacity, and Escalation in War,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, August-September 2018.

“The Institutional Determinants of Escalation Control in War,” paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting, April 2017.

“International Security Orders: A Typology and Hypotheses,” paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting, April 2016.

“Negotiating Over Fighting: Information, Commitment, and Intra-War Tacit Bargaining,” paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting, April 2014.

“Coercive Diplomacy, Crisis Management, and Contests for Access,” with Dennis Smith, paper presented at the International Security Studies Section-International Security and Arms Control annual conference, 2013.

“Bargaining Over Fighting: Strategic Assessments and Tacit Bargaining in Limited War,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, August 2013.

“Initial Strategies and the Stability of War Aims: Evaluating the Roles of Endogenous and Exogenous Information in Conditioning War Termination,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, August 2011.

“A Tale of Two Cultures: Information Sharing versus Organizational Culture in the Battle Over Strategy in the Vietnam War, 1964-1968,” paper submitted to the International Studies Association annual meeting, April 2010.

“The Sinews of Grand Strategy: Hypotheses on Information Management and Limited War Outcomes,” paper presented at the International Studies Association annual meeting, April 2009.

“Limited Wars and Information Networks,” paper presented at the 2nd Annual Graduate Student Conference, Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics, University of Virginia, 2006.

“Strategy and Information Overload: Avoiding Extreme Balancing in Limited Wars,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, August 2004.

“Hypotheses on Operational Power, the Offense-Defense Balance, and War,” paper presented at the International Studies Association annual meeting, April 2001.

“Social Origins of Military Doctrine,” paper presented at the International Studies Association annual meeting, April 2000.

## **Invited Talks**

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“George Bush as Grand Strategist: How the Gulf War Mattered to American Statecraft,” George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum (Texas A&M University), October 16, 2025.

Broadcast as “George H.W. Bush—Persian Gulf War Strategist,” *American History TV*, C-Span, January 17, 2026.

“The China Challenge,” Virginia Economic Development Program, Virginia Leaders in Export Trade (VALET) annual meeting, April 23, 2025.

“U.S.-China Relations: A Grand Strategic Perspective,” Richmond World Affairs Council, Richmond, VA, January 13, 2025.

“The Upcoming US Presidential Elections and Their Consequences on the Global Security Architecture,” Leaders Meet the Coatings Industry, Zurich, CH, October 3, 2024.

“Counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan: Strategy and (Oral) History,” Midwestern State University-Texas, Wichita Falls, TX, March 21, 2023.

“Signaling Capacity and Crisis Diplomacy: Explaining the Failure of ‘Maximum Pressure’ in the 2017 U.S.-North Korea Nuclear Crisis,” Faculty Brown Bag Seminar, Virginia Military Institute, November 8, 2019.

Program Faculty (three lectures), “Bush 41: The Pivotal Presidency,” Washington & Lee University, July 21-24, 2019.

“Civil-Military Relations and Strategic Decision Making: A Survey of the Literature” Conference on Civil-Military Relations and Grand Strategy, The Project on Civilian-Military Educational Cooperation, Colorado Springs, CO, June 8-9, 2018.

“Information Institutions, OODA Looping, and the Third Offset,” DEF[x]W&M, Defense Entrepreneurs Forum, Williamsburg, VA, February 20, 2016.

“Learning How to Lead: Anthony Lake and the Evolution of America’s Bosnia Policy,” Honors Colloquium, Sweet Briar College, October 8, 2014.

“From Tonkin to Tet: Reconsidering America’s War in Vietnam,” Longmont (CO) Rotary Club, October 29, 2013.

“Success and Failure in Limited War: Implications for Policy and Intelligence Assessment,” book round-table discussion hosted by the National Intelligence Council, Central Intelligence Agency, Langley, VA, June 20, 2013.

“Threat Assessment and the Rise of China,” Great Decisions Lecture Series, Lynchburg, VA, February 7, 2013.

“The Arab Spring and American Grand Strategy,” Alumnae Reunion Lecture, Sweet Briar College, May 21, 2011.

“Special Envoys in American Foreign Policy,” Great Decisions Lecture Series, Lynchburg, VA, March 4, 2010.

“Afghanistan 2009: A Strategic Appraisal,” Ethics and Public Policy Discussion Series, Sweet Briar College, October 14, 2009.

“Talking to Our Enemies: Smart Power and the Future of U.S. Foreign Policy,” Great Decisions Lecture Series, Lynchburg, VA, February 21, 2008.

## **Symposia**

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“The Philippines’ Perspective: Current Global Security Challenges” (with Philippine Naval Attaché Capt. James F. Lugtu and David Gray), Virginia Military Institute, 23 October 2025.

“Revisiting the George H. W. Bush Presidency” (with Frederick McClure, Mary Kate Cary, and Barbara Perry), Miller Center, University of Virginia, October 9, 2025.

“UK's Perspective: Current Global Security Challenges” (with British Defence Attaché RADM Tim Woods CBE and David Gray), Virginia Military Institute, October 24, 2024.

“Colliding Crises: The Israel-Hamas Conflict and the War in Ukraine,” Miller Center, University of Virginia, November 2, 2023.

“Japan’s New National Security Strategy” (with Defense and Naval Attaché RADM Takaaki Hayamizu, JSDF and David Gray), Virginia Military Institute, October 19, 2023.

“‘Undaunted’: A Former CIA Director’s Fight Against America’s Enemies” (with John O. Brennan and Barbara Perry), Miller Center, University of Virginia, September 13, 2022.

Conference Organizer (with Patrick Rhamey), “Rising Powers: History and Strategy,” Virginia Military Institute, November 14-15, 2021.

“The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War” (with Craig Whitlock), Miller Center, University of Virginia, October 21, 2021.

Council on Foreign Relations University and College Educators Workshop, New York, NY, April 11-12, 2019.

“Countering Cyber Threats: Government and Private Sector Responsibilities,” panel moderator, Commonwealth Cyber Fusion 2017, Lexington, VA, February 24, 2017.

Institute for Presidential Studies Workshop, Miller Center, University of Virginia, March 26-27, 2015.

Symposium on the Clinton Administration, sponsored by the Clinton Presidential Center and the Miller Center, University of Virginia, Little Rock, AR, November 13-14, 2014.

Unified Quest 2014 Deep Futures War Game, National Strategy Workshop (Blue Strategic Framework), sponsored by the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), April 1-4, 2014.

Unified Quest 2014 Strategic Trends Seminar, sponsored by the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), College of William and Mary, January 7-10, 2014.

Summer Workshop on the Analysis of Military Operations and Strategy (SWAMOS), Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University, 2001.

Offense-Defense Theory: Retrospectives and Future Directions, conference co-sponsored by Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA) and Georgetown University’s Center for Peace and Security Studies, September 21-22, 2000.

## **Presidential Oral Histories**

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*Presidential Oral History Program, Miller Center, University of Virginia, interviewer*

United States Ambassador to the United Nations for Management and Reform Chris Lu (Biden), November 20, 2025.

Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes (Obama), August 26, 2024, February 18 & April 8, 2025.

Director of National Intelligence ADM Dennis Blair (Obama), November 21 & 25, 2024.

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel (Obama), April 30, 2024.

Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Mara Rudman (Obama), March 14, 2024.

Commander United States Special Operations Command and Joint Special Operations Command ADM William McRaven (Obama), November 1, 2023.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ADM Michael Mullen (Obama), March 1 & 13, 2023.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Joseph Dunford (Obama), October 4, December 12, 2022.

Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan (Obama), May 17 & 19, 2022.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates (Obama), April 12 & 20, 2022.

Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Commander United States Central Command (CENTCOM) GEN David Petraeus (Obama), March 9 & 26, May 19, July 23, 2021.

Undersecretary of Defense (Policy) Ambassador Eric Edelman (Bush 43), June 2, 2017.

Commander United States Central Command (CENTCOM) GEN John Abizaid (Bush 43), September 15, 2016.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Peter Pace (Bush 43), January 19, 2016.

Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan LTG Douglas Lute (Bush 43), September 3, 2015.

Army Chief of Staff and Commander Multi-National Force-Iraq GEN George W. Casey (Bush 43), September 25, 2014.

National Security Council Staff Special Adviser Peter D. Feaver (Bush 43), January 10-11, 2012.

Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ADM David E. Jeremiah (Bush 41), November 15, 2010.

Ambassador to Iraq and Pakistan Ryan Crocker (Bush 43), September 10-11, 2010.

## **Grants and Awards (VMI)**

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Jackson-Hope Prize for Excellence in Scholarly Work, Virginia Military Institute, 2025.

Distinguished Teaching Award, Virginia Military Institute, 2023.

Outstanding Faculty Award, State Council of Higher Education in Virginia, 2023.

Charles Koch Foundation Grant in Support of Grand Strategy Research, 2022

Jackson-Hope Grant: \$205,000 to fund National Security Program (2021-2026), 2022

Department of Defense Senior Military Colleges Cyber Leadership Development Grant: \$1,475,000 to develop VMI's Cyber Defense Lab (contributing author), 2021

Jackson-Hope Faculty Development Leave (half-year), fall 2020

Inductee, Virginia Military Institute Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa, October 11, 2018

Jackson-Hope Grant for Faculty Travel, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2024, 2025.

## **Media**

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Interviewed by Tim Benson, *ill Literacy: Books with Benson* (The Heartland Institute), 9/24/2024.

Quoted in Haley Bull, "Comparing Biden and Trump on the Global Stage." *Scripps News*, 6/7/2024.

Quoted in Ilmo Ilkka, "A Calculating Defender of Democracy," *Helsingin Sanomat* (Finland), 8/7/2023.

Interviewed by iHeartRadio 580 CFRA Ottawa on Russia-Ukraine War, 2/22/2023.

Interviewed by WXFR Roanoke on Russia-Ukraine War, 11/16/2022.

Interviewed by Sarah McConnell, *With Good Reason*, on U.S.-China relations, 9/16/2022.

Interviewed by WIQO 100.9 Lynchburg on President-elect Trump's foreign policy, 11/17/2016.

"Defense Budgeting and American Grand Strategy," Virginia Military Institute, 6/21/2016.

Featured *Inside Charlottesville With Coy Barefoot*, WCAV CBS 19, 6/29/2014.

Interviewed by Coy Barefoot on *Inside Charlottesville*, WCHV 107.5 FM, 6/26/2014.

Interviewed by WIQO 100.9 Lynchburg on ISIS in Iraq, 6/24/2014.

Interviewed by WLNI 105.9 Lynchburg on Syrian civil war, 6/7/2013.

Interviewed by WSET-TV on death of Osama bin Laden, 5/2/2011.

Interviewed by WLNI 105.9 Lynchburg on Afghanistan War, 6/24/2010.

Quoted in Tamara Lytle, "Experts: Nobel a Gift and a Curse for Obama," *AOL News*, 12/10/2009.

## **Professional Experience and Service**

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External Manuscript Reviewer, Cornell University Press, University Press of Kansas, Routledge, Pearson Longman Press, *Security Studies*, *Journal of Military History*, *International Journal of Nuclear Security*, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *European Journal of International Relations*.

External Tenure and Promotion Reviewer, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2025; University of West Florida, 2018

External Honors Examiner in International Relations, Department of Politics, University of Virginia, 2009, 2014, 2015, 2017

Program Assistant, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Virginia, 2000-2006

Program Assistant, Middle East Studies Program, University of Virginia 2000-2006

## **Additional Conference Participation**

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Discussant, "Alliance Commitments, Trust, and Strategic Trade-Offs" and Chair, "Military Strategy, International Institutions, and Crisis Management," APSA annual meeting, September 2025.

Discussant, "Deterrence, Coercion, and Conflict" and Chair, "New Research on Economic Sanctions," MPSA annual meeting, April 2025.

Chair and Discussant, "American National Security Decision-Making at the Principal Level" and "Alliance Management and the Future of Alignment," MPSA annual meeting, April 2022.

Chair, "Civil-Military Relations," APSA annual meeting, August 29, 2019.

Discussant, "Covert Action and Intervention in Foreign Policy," APSA annual meeting, August-September 2018.

Chair and Discussant, "Cyber-Security and Counterterrorism," MPSA annual meeting, April 2017.

Chair and Discussant, "Grand Strategy: Theory and Evidence," MPSA annual meeting, 2016.

Discussant, "The Origins of Modern Insurgency: Case Studies on the Evolution of Irregular Warfare," APSA annual meeting, 2014.

Chair and Discussant, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria," APSA annual meeting, 2014.

Discussant, "Weapons of Mass Destruction: Arming and Disarming," MPSA annual meeting, 2014.

Discussant, "Causes and Consequences of Military Intervention," ISSS-ISAC annual conference, 2013.

Discussant, "Foreign Aid and Foreign Policymaking," APSA annual meeting, 2013.

Chair, "Sources of Power and Security," APSA annual meeting, 2011.

Chair and Discussant, "Military Power in a Changing World," ISA annual meeting, 2009.

## **Professional Affiliations**

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American Political Science Association  
International Studies Association  
Midwest Political Science Association

## **Courses Offered**

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National Security Policy  
Strategy and Power  
Strategy and Cybersecurity  
U.S.-China Relations  
National Security Capstone

## **Service and Appointments (VMI)**

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Tenure and Promotions Committee (2023-2026), Chair 2025-2026  
Institute Honors Committee (2019-2024)  
Library Committee (2021-2023)  
Virginia Cyber Fusion Executive Planning Committee (2016-2021)  
Adviser to the Class of 2021 (2017-2021)  
Cadet Educational and Professional Opportunities Committee (2016-2018)  
Senior Capstone Assessment Committee (2016-2018)