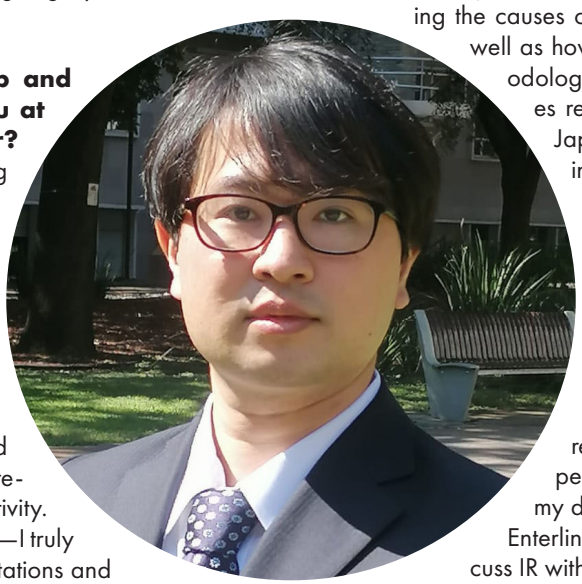
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Makito Takei

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR | TECNOLOGICO DE MONTERREY

How did you learn about APSA? When did you become a member of APSA, and what prompted you to join?

I became a member of APSA in 2017, shortly after graduating from a master's program at Waseda University in Japan. I first learned about APSA when my thesis advisor told me something along the lines of, "If you don't apply to and participate in prestigious international conferences like APSA, you are not a real political scientist." (I'm exaggerating slightly, but the nuance was like this.)



How have APSA membership and services been valuable to you at different stages of your career?

I attended the APSA Annual Meeting for the first time in 2017, and since then, I have participated almost every year. I earned my MA degree from a Japanese university in 2017, entered the PhD program at the University of North Texas in 2018, and joined Tecnologico de Monterrey in Mexico in 2023 after completing my PhD. Before, during, and after my doctoral studies, APSA has remained the center of my research activity. It doesn't matter where or when I live—I truly enjoy listening to fascinating presentations and reconnecting with old and new friends. Also, every year at APSA, an informal dinner for Japanese political scientists, known as the "Japan Dinner," is held, and I always look forward to talking with my Japanese colleagues. Every time I attend APSA's Annual Meeting, I feel like these interactions at APSA are the reasons why I study political science and international relations.

APSA offers many grant opportunities that support its members. When the pandemic began in 2020, like many others, I struggled and often wondered, "Why stay in the US if I cannot meet professors and colleagues in person?" I was devastated, but receiving the APSA Member Relief Grant in 2022 made me feel connected and valued as part of the community. Also, APSA was generously awarded a travel grant this year, which is significant for scholars who belong to non-Western universities.

APSA member since 2017

Can you tell us about your professional background and your research?

I am a scholar specializing in international relations (IR) with a focus on quantitative methods. Before moving to the US, I was an exchange student at National Taiwan University from 2014 to 2015. That experience deepened my interest in understanding the causes of international conflict and war, as well as how to prevent them. Regarding methodology, although qualitative approaches remain dominant in the field of IR in Japan, Waseda University is unique in having many political science and international relations professors who employ quantitative methods and formal models. My time at Waseda had a profound influence on my academic trajectory. At the University of North Texas, I learned a great deal from outstanding scholars in international relations and political science. I especially miss my weekly meetings with my dissertation committee chair, Andrew Enterline. It was always enjoyable to discuss IR with him in his office.

I basically have two main lines of research. First, I am interested in costly signals in international relations, with a particular focus on tying-hands strategies. While the literature suggests that leaders make credible international commitments by increasing domestic audience costs or international reputation costs, the evidence on the effectiveness of tying-hands signals remains mixed. In my published and ongoing studies, I examine how effective tying-hands actually are. For example, a paper I published in *International Studies Quarterly* uses a conjoint experiment conducted in the US to show that public threats are somewhat more credible than private ones, with domestic audience costs serving as the mechanism behind their credibility. In another study, published in the *Journal of Experimental Political Science* (i.e. the APSA Experimental Research Section journal), I find that international audiences punish countries that violate previous peace commitments, especially when the violators are rival states. This suggests that international reputation costs may function as tying-hands signals in providing assurances. I hope to publish many more studies on this topic in the near future.

My second line of research focuses on replication studies

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in IR. I am not only working on projects that replicate previous studies, but also exploring ways to promote and normalize replication research within the field. My first academic publication, co-authored with my colleague Phil Paolino and published in *Foreign Policy Analysis*, is a replication study that failed to reproduce the main finding of a prominent experimental study on audience costs published in a top political science journal. I am very proud of this work because it represents good normal science. However, through this process, I realized that replication studies are still quite rare in political science generally, and in IR specifically. Therefore, my current mission is to identify barriers to replication research, such as prevailing intellectual norms and incentive structures, and to work toward normalizing replication in our discipline. Together with my colleague, I'm now organizing a virtual research workshop sponsored by the International Studies Association next year, which will be an important first step.

Which APSA programs or events would you recommend to people who are not members of the association, and why?

One APSA program I strongly recommend is APSA eJobs. Since many universities and institutions, not only in the US but worldwide, post their job openings here, it is an essential, first-hand resource for anyone on the academic job market. When I first entered the job market in the fall of 2022, I was focused on positions in the US, but APSA eJobs made me aware of opportunities at non-US universities, such as my current institution, Tecnologico de Monterrey. Here, the teaching load is roughly equivalent to that at US research universities, and the faculty's research activities, including conference participation, are fully supported. Using APSA eJobs was truly an eye-opening experience.

Another highly recommended program is the APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants, which award $10,000–$15,000 to dissertation projects each year, which is an exceptional amount for graduate students. Although my own application was not successful, preparing the materials helped sharpen my dissertation project, and the referees' comments were extremely valuable.

Because APSA has supported my research activities and professional growth, I am now striving to give back. My participation in the APSA Mentorship Program as a mentor reflects this commitment. This program matches mentees, including undergraduates, graduate students, or junior faculty, with experienced mentors. While I am not sure how my mentees feel, I have certainly enjoyed mentoring young, aspiring political scientists who I believe will soon become leaders in the field.

Is there anything else you'd like people to know about you or the work that you do?

I'm a huge NBA fan, and my favorite team is the New York Knicks. I'd be delighted to travel anywhere to give a talk, especially if it means I can catch an NBA game while I'm there.



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