

SARA PLANA

splana@mit.edu

EDUCATION

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, MA, 2015-2021

PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, Security Studies Program, expected May 2021.

- Dissertation: “Cooperative Coercion: Explaining (Un)Reliability of Proxy Armed Groups”
- Committee: Roger Petersen (chair), Fotini Christia, Barry Posen

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

- Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, Government, secondary in English, May 2012.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2020-2021 **Predocctoral Fellowship**, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, International Security Program, Harvard Kennedy School
- 2020-2021 **Jeanne Guillemin Prize**, MIT Center for International Studies
- 2019-2020 **World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship**, Smith Richardson Foundation
- 2018-2019 **Jennings-Randolph Peace and Security Scholar**, United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Minerva Research Initiative (*declined due to technicality*)
- 2016-2021 **National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship**, NSF
- 2016 **Ithiel de Sola Pool Fellow**, MIT Political Science Department
Awarded to an outstanding first-year student in MIT Political Science
- 2015 **Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) Scholar**, HSF Scholarship Program
- 2012 **Summa Cum Laude** for senior thesis entitled “Civil-Military Criminals: An Analysis of Wartime and Postwar Violence Variation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia”
- 2012 **Thomas T. Hoopes Prize**, Harvard University
Awarded to my senior thesis for outstanding scholarly work and research across the college
- 2012 **Eric J. Firth Prize**, Harvard University
Awarded for best undergraduate thesis on democracy’s relationship to defense of peace and freedom

PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

- May 20, 2020 [“War Isn’t \(Quite\) the Right Metaphor for COVID-19.”](#) with Sanne Verschuren in *Political Violence at a Glance*.
- May 8, 2020 [“Why Proxy Wars Endure & Why They End.”](#) in Proxy Wars Initiative, a Carnegie Corporation-funded project.
- Mar 17, 2020 [“Proxy War: The ‘Least Bad Option’ or the ‘Second-to-Last Resort’?”](#), as part of “Book Review Roundtable: Understanding Proxy Warfare,” *Texas National Security Review*.
- Jan 24, 2019 [“Trump wants a safe zone in Syria. Is that even possible?”](#), in MonkeyCage blog, the *Washington Post*.
- June 4, 2018 [“Podcast: The Future of Force.”](#) for War on the Rocks.

- Dec 19, 2017 [“Civil-military relations under President Trump.”](#) for *précis*, a student newsletter for MIT’s Center for International Studies.
- Oct 25, 2017 [“What Political Science Tells Us About the Risk of Civil War in Spain.”](#) in War on the Rocks.
- Apr 21, 2017 [“Rationality and Sarin Gas: What Social Science Tells Us About Assad’s Chemical Weapons Attack.”](#) with Matthew Cancian in Modern War Institute.
- Aug 16, 2016 [“Maybe U.S. police aren’t militarized enough. Here’s what police can learn from soldiers.”](#) with Rachel Tecott in MonkeyCage blog, the *Washington Post*.

WORKING PAPERS

["Loyalty Can't Be Bought: Explaining Military Defection during Civilian Uprisings against Autocracies"](#)
(under review at *International Security*)

[“Anatomy of a Safe Area: The Military Requirements of Humanitarian Protection During Civil Wars”](#)

"Making Sense of Grand Strategy: What We Know and What We Still Have to Learn"

(work in progress) "Proxies" and the Public: Public Support for Military Aid to States and Militias

(work in progress) with Meg Guliford. “Sustain, Change, or Terminate: Explaining Shifts in External Support in Civil Wars”

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Reviewer *International Security*

Sept-Dec 2019 **Member, International Relations/Security Studies Faculty Search Committee**, MIT Political Science Department
Reviewed applications and helped hire two junior faculty members in security studies

Nov 2018-present **New Era Fellow**, New Era Workshop, Bridging the Gap Project
Organize yearly workshop for graduate students interested in policy-relevant research, including reviewing applications, designing breakout sessions and other programming, and leading discussion at the workshop itself

Jan 2018-present **Co-Founder and Organizer**, [Future Strategy Forum](#)
Co-founded annual conference series, “Future Strategy Forum,” which brings together prominent female academics and practitioners in international relations to discuss major themes in U.S. foreign policy, with the dual aims of bridging the academic-policy divide and empowering women in this field; secured sponsorship from Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Smart Women, Smart Power and Kissinger Center at John Hopkins SAIS; responsible for determining yearly theme and programming details, including panelist and speaker invitees, and seeking and managing other sponsors

Sept 2017-Sept 2019 **Co-Chair**, Women in International Politics and Security (WIPS), MIT
Organized events in the Boston area to connect women in academic and policy-related careers in international politics and security, including panels, workshops, and informal gatherings

- Sept 2017-
May 2018 **Co-Chair**, Security Studies Working Group, MIT
Organized weekly student presentations on works in progress related to security or conflict
- 2016-May
2018 **Mentorship Coordinator**, MIT Political Science Graduate Student Council
Organized mentorship programs for Political Science graduate students, including institutionalizing advice to incoming students and connecting mentor-mentee pairs
- 2014-2018 **Vice President**, HSA Alumni Graduate Board
Organized outreach programs and events to connect current students and alumni; give advice and mentorship to current students

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Jun-Aug
2017 **Research Assistant**, for Professor Roger Petersen, MIT
Assisted in data collection and write-up for a chapter of Professor Petersen's upcoming book project on the Iraq War
- Jun-Aug
2016 **Research Assistant**, for Professor Fotini Christia, MIT
Collected and analyzed data for Professor Christia's working papers, including performing preliminary statistical analysis on a dataset and constructing a new detailed, digital map of the city of Baghdad
- Oct 2012-
Jan 2013 **Research Assistant**, for Professor Stephen Rosen, Harvard University
Researched autobiographies and speeches of Egyptian presidents to identify Egyptian perceived threats and fears that could contribute to a formulation of nuclear policy; wrote paper with findings and created a set of maps showing trend analysis of geographic threats to Egypt since 600 CE
- Mar-Jun
2011 **Research Assistant**, for Dr. Luise Druke via Faculty Associates Program, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs
Researched successes and failures of United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) missions 1989-present; edited and wrote portions of a UNHCR research paper as part of 60th anniversary of UNHCR

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Jan 2020 **Instructor**, "All the President's Generals: Civil-Military Relations in the US and Beyond," MIT
Designed syllabus and taught course on comparative civil-military relations; topics included the causes and consequences of coups and military governments, legacy of military rule, public trust in the military, integration in the military, and the military-industrial(-tech) complex
- Jan-Jun 2018 **Teaching Assistant**, "U.S. Military Power" (Professor Barry Posen), MIT

WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES, AND TALKS

- May 28, 2020 [Enhancing Diversity and Strengthening Inclusion in Efforts to Bridge the Academia-Policy Gap](#), Bridging the Gap Project, virtual panel

Aug 2019 **American Political Science Association (APSA) Conference**, Washington, DC
Mar 2019 **International Studies Association (ISA) Conference**, Toronto, Canada
2018-2019 **Carnegie International Policy Scholars Consortium and Network (IPSCON)**
June 2018 **Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR)**
April 2018 **International Studies Association (ISA) Conference**, San Francisco, CA
April 2018 **Harvard-MIT-Yale-Tufts Political Violence Conference**, Medford, MA
Feb 2018 **Boston International Security Graduate Conference**, Boston, MA
Jul 2017 **Olympia Summer Academy, Conflict & Political Violence Course**, Nafplio, Greece
Mar 2017 **New Era Foreign Policy Conference**, Bridging the Gap Project

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Fluent Spanish (written, spoken, reading proficiency). Beginner Modern Standard Arabic.
Proficient in R, LaTeX, Adobe CS Suites (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Acrobat Professional). Familiar with ArcGIS, Analyst's Notebook.