

Fellows



Ari Blumenthal

Washington University, St. Louis, Class of 2028

Ari is a junior at Washington University in St. Louis studying political science, with minors in Jewish, Islamic, & Middle East Studies and entrepreneurship. Originally from the Washington, D.C. area, his interests center on American politics, national security, the Middle East — particularly the Israel-Iran power struggle — and defense technology. Ari recently conducted research at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, examining U.S. public opinion, super PACs, congressional approaches to national security, and the 2026 midterms. At WashU, he is a member of TAMID Group's consulting track and serves as President of the Alexander Hamilton Society chapter. As a National Defense Fellow, Ari hopes to deepen his understanding of defense and military affairs while learning from leading policymakers and national security practitioners.



Ashley Burgess

Clemson University, Class of 2027

Ashley Burgess is a senior honors mechanical engineering student and Lyceum Scholar at Clemson University. She has worked on vehicle integration and polar projects competencies at the Naval Information Warfare Center (Atlantic). She later spent two semesters at Dority & Manning, P.A., a boutique intellectual property firm. She is an alumna of both Hudson Political Studies and Hertog Security Studies—fellowships that have nurtured her love for scholarly journalism. On campus, Ms. Burgess is a Clemson National Security Scholar and leads the Alexander Hamilton Society Chapter and the T.S. Eliot Literary Society. Her interdisciplinary coursework focuses on the great books of political theory, Putinism as Neo-Stalinism, and the relationship between private religious belief and public political life. Ms. Burgess is especially interested in the role of journalism in the court of public opinion. While originally from Summerville, SC, she enjoys rich cultural ties to central Brazil.

**Devin Bush****Yale University, Class of 2029**

Devin is a sophomore at Yale University studying political science with a particular interest in U.S. national security, foreign policy, and East Asian affairs. At Yale, he serves as Executive Officer of the Alexander Hamilton Society, where he helps organize discussions with prominent scholars, policymakers, and practitioners on American grand strategy and international affairs. He is also pursuing Chinese language studies and has developed a particular interest in U.S.-China strategic competition and defense policy. Through Yale Naval ROTC, Devin is preparing to serve as a naval officer while continuing to develop his academic and professional interests in national security. He hopes to pursue a career at the intersection of military service, defense policy, and American foreign affairs.

**Sophia Calkins****Dartmouth University, Class of 2028**

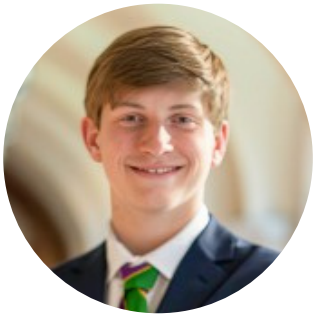
Sophia is a junior at Dartmouth College pursuing a double major in Economics and Government, with specializations in International Security and Economic Statecraft. She is Vice President of the Alexander Hamilton and John Quincy Adams societies and Senior Publishing Editor for the World Outlook Journal for International Affairs. She also competes on the Women's Varsity Squash Team. Sophia spent last spring working at the Economic Research and Statistics Division at the World Trade Organization. She is particularly interested in the convergence of economics and national defense. As relative power balances shift away from the US' unipolar moment, the constraints on American policymakers increase, and opportunity cost becomes more important. Through the National Defense Fellowship, she is looking forward to learning more about how national security policymakers analyze these tradeoffs.

**Eliza Dysart****University of Florida, Class of 2028**

Eliza is a senior at the University of Florida studying public relations and political science, with interests in national security, defense policy, and the ways media coverage shapes public understanding of war and U.S. foreign policy. Her interest grew through studying how conflicts are framed for American audiences and how those narratives can influence public support, perceptions of military action, and broader debates over the United States' role abroad. That interest became more tangible through her work at the Pentagon, where she supported a congressionally mandated military financial readiness campaign and contributed to a Report to Congress on military compensation. As a National Defense Fellow, Eliza hopes to deepen her understanding of defense strategy, civil-military relations, and the institutions that shape national security policy. Over the next five years, she hopes to pursue a career in federal service focused on national security, public policy, and strategic communication.

**Aarushi Garg****University of Texas, Austin, Class of 2027**

Aarushi is a senior at the University of Texas at Austin, double-majoring in International Relations & Global Studies and Plan II Honors. Her interest in cyber policy grew through her work as a GRC Analyst at the Regional Security Operations Center, where she conducts vendor risk assessments for Texas public institutions. This spring, Aarushi interned at FDD's Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation and co-authored federal regulatory comments on cybersecurity and critical infrastructure risk. This summer, she also attended NATO's CyCon conference in Estonia through the Obama-Chesky Voyager Scholarship for Public Service, where she began focusing on the institutional and defense-side questions underlying cyber strategy. She aspires to a career translating cyber capability into federal decision-making at agencies like CISA, on Capitol Hill, or within U.S. Cyber Command. Through the National Defense Fellowship, she hopes to build a working understanding of defense as an institution: how it budgets, resources, and translates strategy into capability.

**Truman Hill****Vanderbilt University, Class of 2028**

Truman is a junior at Vanderbilt University, majoring in political science and earth science while minoring in national security. He is the vice-president of Vanderbilt's chapter of the Alexander Hamilton Society. He became interested in defense policy while interning in the House of Representatives, participating in professional-development programs with the Center for Maritime Strategy and the US-Asia Institute. He is particularly engaged with defense-industrial policy and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and West Africa. Through the National Defense Fellowship, he hopes to deepen his understanding of civil-military relationships, defense budgeting, and the future of warfare. After graduation, he hopes to work as a Congressional staffer with portfolios covering defense and trade policy.

**Raymond Jiang****Harvard University, Class of 2028**

Raymond is a junior at Harvard College studying applied mathematics, alongside a Russian language citation. His interest in U.S.-China strategic competition grew out of time in the Office of Senator Markwayne Mullin and at the Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP), where he conducted net assessment research on the U.S. and Chinese defense innovation ecosystems, presented weekly findings for the Presidential Tech Brief from a tool he developed to flag national security risks in Chinese state media, and live-demonstrated an autonomous robot he built for senior defense officials. Raymond serves as co-president of Harvard's Alexander Hamilton Society chapter, speaks Mandarin, and enjoys running ultramarathons in his free time. As a National Defense Fellow, he hopes to deepen his understanding of how American grand strategy translates technological advantage into deterrence.

**Charles Kay****University of Maryland, Class of 2027**

Charles is a senior at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he studies Public Policy. He is passionate about countering transnational criminal and narcotics organizations, inspired by his parents, who worked in the field. Charles is currently an intern in the United States federal government and previously interned at the United States Department of the Treasury and in the office of United States Senator John Kennedy. An alumnus of the Ronald Reagan Institute's Academy for Civic Education and Democracy and Civic Leaders Fellowship, he looks forward to reconnecting with friends from RRI and meeting new ones. Through the National Defense Fellowship, Charles hopes to better understand how the United States can adapt its defense posture and industrial base as attention shifts toward counternarcotics operations and transnational threats in Central and South America and the Caribbean. After graduation, he hopes to continue his career in federal service supporting America's national security.

**Thomas Kerber****University of Notre Dame, Class of 2027**

Thomas is a senior at the University of Notre Dame majoring in Global Affairs and completing a certificate in international security. His interests lie in the U.S. intelligence sphere, particularly great-power competition and how U.S. engagement and influence shape international security. He previously interned at the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, developing a passion for international relations. He has also interned with the Environmental Law Institute and works as a research assistant, contributing to work on environmental security and conflict. Thomas is the co-president of Notre Dame's Alexander Hamilton Society and the co-president of Notre Dame's International Security Undergraduate Fellowship. Post-graduation, Thomas aims to pursue a career in national security and intelligence. Through the Hamilton National Defense Fellowship, Thomas is excited to engage with peers and practitioners to develop a better understanding of how U.S. grand strategy is formulated to advance national security interests.



Carter McDonald
Wake Forest University, Class of 2027

Carter is a student at Wake Forest University double-majoring in Politics & International Affairs and Economics with a minor in Latin American Studies. Carter's focus on national security grew out of his research tracking Chinese geoeconomic trends and his experience supporting congressional defense oversight on Capitol Hill. Carter has always been drawn to the intersection where economic power, defense strategy, and public policy meet. As a Reagan National Defense Fellow, Carter hopes to sharpen my understanding of alliance dynamics, defense acquisition, and national security strategy. Over the next five years, Carter aims to launch a career in public service, working either on Capitol Hill or within the Department of Defense, helping navigate strategic deterrence and great power competition.



Wes McGovern
New York University, Class of 2028

Wes is a junior at New York University studying international relations with a minor in finance. He became an international relations major because of Ronald Reagan's diplomacy and a shared belief in "peace through strength." That belief drew him to defense policy and to deterrence theorists like Wohlstetter, Wolfowitz, and Weinberger. He put that interest to work at the Reagan Foundation, as a civic education intern. This past summer, Wes interned for Rep. Cliff Bentz (OR-02), where he conducted legislative research, and drafted his own domestic energy security legislation that was introduced in the House. Through the National Defense Fellowship, he hopes to see how strategy is built and argued by the practitioners who carry it out — connecting theory with execution — and over the next five years, plans to attend law school and begin a career in defense policy, working on the strength that keeps the peace.



Lucy McLaren
Vanderbilt University, Class of 2028

Lucy is a junior at Vanderbilt University studying Political Science and Asian Studies with a concentration in Chinese. Growing up traveling between China and the U.S. has made her particularly interested in China's influence in U.S. institutions and the regulations surrounding private sector engagement with Chinese companies. Lucy pursued these interests through an internship with the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party last summer. She is also an alumna of the Ronald Reagan Institute's Academy for Civic Education and Democracy. On campus, Lucy serves as the Vice President of Communications for the Alexander Hamilton Society and is a National Security and Emerging Threats Research Fellow for the Vanderbilt Institute of National Security. After completing her undergraduate degree, she aspires to attend law school and focus on national defense law. Through the National Defense Fellowship, Lucy looks forward to connecting with policy professionals and peers who share her interest in strengthening U.S. national security amid emerging threats.

**Peter Murray****George Washington University, Class of 2027**

Peter is a second-year MA student at GWU's Elliott School of International Affairs, studying security policy with a concentration in US national security. He is especially interested in the strategic challenges Russia poses to US and European security, intelligence issues, and the role of religion in international affairs. Alongside his studies, he is a staff assistant at the Ronald Reagan Institute. Previously, Peter taught government and European history at an all-boys high school, and he holds a BA and MSt in theology from the University of Oxford. As a National Defense Fellow, he looks forward to deepening his understanding of US defense policy with his peers. Over the next five years, Peter hopes to support US foreign policy in the State Department or the Intelligence Community.

**Mohammad Mustafa Nasrat****Pepperdine University, Class of 2028**

Mohammad Mustafa is a first-year master's student at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Public Policy, where he studies Middle Eastern policy. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley, where his coursework in foreign policy and experience co-founding a national security strategy course deepened his interest in strategy and the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. Mohammad Mustafa's academic interests lie at the intersection of regional security, emerging technologies, and national security strategy, with a particular emphasis on strategic development and the role of information in shaping sound policy. His professional experience includes research, data analysis, and policy support roles across the public and private sectors. Most recently, he interned in the U.S. House of Representatives. Through the National Defense Fellowship, Mohammad Mustafa hopes to deepen his understanding of U.S. defense policy, learn from national security professionals and leaders, and prepare for a career in national security and public service, contributing to the development of effective U.S. defense and foreign policy.

**Tessa Peterson****Southern Methodist University, Class of 2027**

Tessa Peterson is a senior at Southern Methodist University, double majoring in political science and psychology with minors in Russian and international affairs. Growing up in a rural Texas town, she developed an early interest in public service that evolved into a focus on U.S. foreign policy and national security. Tessa has experience interning at the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, law firms in Dallas and Prague, the Department of Defense, and as an undergraduate research assistant. At SMU, Tessa serves as Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, in Student Senate, and as president of the Alexander Hamilton Society. After graduating, Tessa plans to pursue a career in national security law.

**Isaac Salmon****American University, Class of 2029**

Isaac Salmon is a sophomore at American University studying computational physics, mathematics, and economics, and an Army ROTC cadet at Georgetown University who will commission in 2029. He is interested in how new technologies shape energy and national security policy. Isaac serves on the executive board of his Alexander Hamilton Society chapter and has conducted research on missile interception platforms at the University of Memphis. He was a student researcher on NASA's Artemis II mission and, in 2026, a radiation hardening fellow at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division, studying radiation effects on microelectronics. He is now an operations intern at Symphony Space. As a National Defense Fellow, Isaac looks forward to learning more about the defense industrial base, nuclear deterrence strategy, and defense policy.

**Krishna Shah****Duke University, Class of 2027**

Krishna is a senior at Duke University studying Economics and Public Policy with a minor in Political Science. Informed by her heritage and upbringing in Miami, she has a keen interest in examining Latin American economic development and democratic institutions. She is currently completing her thesis on quantifying the economic domestic impacts in Panama following the US invasion and regime change in 1989. She has previous research experience on the lasting impacts of Peru's civil war on intimate partner violence, in addition to writing papers discussing economic growth in Brazil and Puerto Rico. On campus, she serves as AHS president at Duke's Chapter, having been a member since her freshman year and interned at AHS headquarters this past summer. As a National Defense Fellow, Krishna looks forward to examining how strategic defense approaches differ between regions and are interconnected with other facets of governance such as international trade and political freedoms. She hopes to pursue a career dedicated to public service, diplomacy, and democratic leadership.

**Alexa Sohn****University of Michigan, Class of 2028**

Alexa is a sophomore at the University of Michigan double majoring in international studies (with a concentration in international norms, security, and cooperation) and political science. Her interests lie at the intersection of artificial intelligence, national security, defense policy, and law, and she hopes to pursue a career as an attorney. At Michigan, Alexa is a Donia Human Rights Fellow, a councillor on the LSA Honor Council, and a General Assembly Committee Director for Model United Nations. This past summer, she received multiple competitive University of Michigan grants and fellowships to pursue a human rights research internship in Vienna, Austria. As a Reagan National Defense Fellow, Alexa hopes to deepen her understanding of U.S. defense and foreign policy and explore how policymakers can address the legal, strategic, and ethical challenges posed by rapidly evolving technologies, particularly artificial intelligence.

**Arianna Villarreal****Southern Methodist University, Class of 2026**

Arianna is a senior at Southern Methodist University majoring in Economics and Public Policy. Having spent half her life in Latin America, she developed a deep interest in the political and economic institutions that shape the region and the role the United States can play in fostering stability. Through the National Defense Fellowship, she hopes to sharpen her analysis of how drone warfare is reshaping transnational organized crime in the region. She aspires to build a career advancing regional security and defense cooperation across the Western Hemisphere. Arianna has interned at the American Enterprise Institute and currently serves as the Global Policy Intern at the Bush Center, focusing on CRINK. She is also the founder of the Alexander Hamilton Society chapter at SMU and previously served as Student Representative to the Board of Trustees.

**Naveen Wineland****Gettysburg College, Class of 2027**

Naveen Wineland is a senior at Gettysburg College, double majoring in International Affairs and East Asian Studies. His research focuses on U.S.-China military competition, naval strategy, and industrial policy. Naveen served as president of the Alexander Hamilton Society at Gettysburg and has held multiple research positions at the Eisenhower Institute, where he was managing editor of its student policy paper. He has studied at National Taiwan University in Taipei, focusing on Mandarin and cross-strait relations, and has interned at the U.S. Trade Representative's front office and on the Hudson Institute's National Security and Technology team. He is currently interning with the House Select Committee on the CCP. As a National Defense Fellow, Naveen hopes to deepen his understanding of the defense policy tools available to compete with China. He plans to pursue graduate study in security policy and build a career in national security focusing on the Indo-Pacific.