

EDUCATION

- University of Virginia**, Ph.D., Foreign Affairs 2026
Major Field: Comparative Politics, *Minor Field:* International Affairs
Dissertation Title: “Beyond Paper Tigers: Municipal Politicians and Democratic Resilience at the Grassroots”
Committee: Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner (Chair), John Echeverri-Gent, Anne Meng, Neeti Nair (History), and Adam Ziegfeld (Temple University)
- George Washington University**, M.A., International Affairs 2019
Thesis: “Perceptions of India and Japan’s Membership in the Quadrilateral: Realist Concerns or Symbolism?”
Committee: Deepa Ollapally (Chair) and Michael Mochizuki
Capstone: “Australia’s Threat Perception of Chinese Maritime Military Expansion”
Sponsor: Center for Strategic and International Studies
- George Washington University**, B.A., International Affairs, *Magna Cum Laude* 2017
Senior Thesis: “Rewarding the Disloyal: BJP Candidate Nominations in the 2014 Indian Elections”
Advisor: Adam Ziegfeld

PUBLICATIONS

- Kumar, T., Saunik, D., Kruks-Wisner, G., Nissa, B., & Ranjan, M. (n.d.). *(Un)willing partners? Bureaucratic interest and barriers to co-production with citizens in capacity-constrained settings* [under review]
- Kapur, A., Kruks-Wisner, G., & Saunik, D. (forthcoming). “Covid-19 in the village: Citizens, state, and hybrid local actors.” In *Unequal Contagion: Citizenship, Democracy, and the Politics of Covid-19 in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Saunik, D. and Ziegfeld, A. (2025). “When Does Electoral Cooperation End? How Relative Changes in Popular Support Undermine Election Alliances in India.” *Studies in Comparative International Development*.
- Saunik, D., Kapur, A., Kruks-Wisner, G., & Mayberry, J. (2021). State-society synergy at COVID-19's invisible front lines. *Economic and Political Weekly*.

ARTICLES IN PROGRESS

- “Survival Strategies: Resilient Local Representation in Everyday Democracy.”
- “What Drives Variation in Subnational Party Systems? The Case of India,” (with Carol Mershon).

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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| Clifford Roberts Graduate Fellowship, Eisenhower Institute at Gettysburg College | 2024-2025 |
| UVA Dumas-Malone Graduate Research Fellowship | 2023-2024 |
| Society of Fellows Summer Grant, University of Virginia | 2023 |
| Junior Fellow, Society of Fellows, University of Virginia | 2022-2023 |
| UVA Politics Quandt Fund Award | 2022 |
| UVA Arts Humanities and Social Sciences Summer Research Award | 2022 |
| Elliott School of International Affairs Travel Award | 2019 |
| GW Global Initiative Graduate Fellowship | 2017-2019 |
| Elliott School of International Affairs Graduate Fellowship | 2017-2019 |

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Democracy, Bureaucracy, Decentralization, Accountability, Party Systems, and India.

FIELD RESEARCH

27 months of field research in India (MH, MP, and Delhi) with 500 interviews and 450 surveys.

One month of field research in Australia (NSW and ACT).

PRESENTATIONS

South Asia Centre, University of Virginia	2026
“Representation Against the Odd in Urban India”	
Midwest Political Science Association (selected)	2026
“Survival Strategies: Resilient Local Representation in Everyday Democracy”	
Governance and Local Development Institute Annual Conference, University of Gothenberg	2025
“Covid-19 in the village: Citizens, state, and hybrid local actors.”	
American Political Science Association	
“Local democratic backsliding? Urban Governance in India When Decentralization Fails.”	2024
“When Does Electoral Cooperation End? Theory and Evidence from India.”	2022

TEACHING

Instructor of Record

University of Virginia

- PLCP 2500: Hidden Work of Democracy Summer 2026
- ISM University of Management and Economics, Vilnius, Lithuania
- POL 147: Democratic Participation, State-Society Relations, Welfare Institutions Spring 2024

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Virginia

- PLIR 2020: Foreign Policy of the Powers (John Owen) Spring 2026
- PLAP 3350: American Congress (Justin Kirkland) Fall 2025
- PLCP 2420: Politics of Modernity (John Echeverri-Gent) Spring 2023
- PLIR 1010: International Relations (Peter Furia) Fall 2022
- PLCP 3110: Politics of Western Europe (Gerard Alexander) Spring 2022
- PLCP 3120: Politics of Developing Areas (Robert Fatton) Fall 2021

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant

- Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner, University of Virginia 2020-2022
- Deepa Ollapally, George Washington University 2017-2019

SERVICE

Grader, Qualitative and Mixed Methods (Graduate Seminar; Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner)	Spring 2026
Coordinator, Lansing Lee/Bankard Seminar in Global Politics	2021-2026
Editorial Assistant, American Journal of Political Science	2021-2022
Grader, Russian Politics (Allen Lynch)	Spring 2021
Grader, Russia in World Affairs (Allen Lynch)	Fall 2020

COMMENTARY

2018. “Art of the Chieftaincy.” Sigur Center for Asian Studies. *Asia Report* 42: 1-5.

2017. “Asia’s Reckoning: China, Japan, and the Fate of US Power in the Pacific Century.” Sigur Center for Asian Studies. *Asia Report* 38: 1-5.

LANGUAGES

English (native), Hindi (native), Marathi (advanced), Urdu (advanced), German (advanced), French (advanced), and Spanish (intermediate).