


# Byunghwan ‘Ben’ Son

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## Current Academic Positions

- George Mason University (Fairfax, VA)
  - Associate Professor (with tenure), [Global Affairs Program](#) 2020–current
    - \* Assistant Professor, Global Affairs Program 2014–2020
  - Director, [Asia–Pacific and Northeast Asian Studies](#) 2014–current
  - Associate Director, [Korean Studies Center](#) 2020–current
  - University Affiliate Faculty, [Schar School of Policy and Government](#) 2021–2022

## Previous Academic Positions

- [The College of Wooster](#) (Wooster, OH)
  - Gillespie Visiting Professor (VAP), [Political Science](#) 2013–2014
- [University of Missouri-Columbia](#) (Columbia, MO)
  - Graduate Instructor, [Political Science](#) 2011–2013
- [Korean Air Force Academy](#)
  - Instructor, [Department of Military Strategy](#) 2003–2007

## Education

- University of Missouri-Columbia (Columbia, MO)
  - PhD, Political Science 2007–2013
    - \* Dissertation: Democratization and Exchange Rates
    - \* Dissertation Advisor: Dr. [Jonathan Kriekhaus](#)
- [Yonsei University](#) (Seoul, South Korea)
  - MA & BA, [Political Science](#) 1997–2003

## Research & Teaching Areas

Politics of Global Finance; Comparative Political Economy; Politics in Asia; Causal Inference; Democratization; Democratic Backsliding; Democratic Support; Inequality & Contentious Politics; Political Communication; Computational Text Analysis; Quantitative Methods

## Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles Published

- 2024. “Consequences of Democratic Backsliding in Popular Culture: Evidence from Blacklist in South Korea.” *Democratization*. Forthcoming. [\[Journal Link\]](#)[\[PDF\]](#)
- 2024. “Foreign Policy Consequences of Democratic Backsliding: The Case of the Comfort Women Agreement 2015” *The Pacific Review* Forthcoming. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2024. “The Political Economy of Life Satisfaction: Democracy, National Wealth, and Personal Income” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. 36(1): 1-14. (with Nisha Bellinger and Jonathan Kriekhaus). [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2024. “Foreign Pop Culture and Backlash: the case of non-fan K-pop Subreddits during the pandemic” *Journal of Cultural Economics*. 48(1): 117–143. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2022. “The Health Cost of Autocratization” *Journal of Development Studies*. 58(5): 873-890. (with Nisha Bellinger). [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)  
— Winner of the **Dudley Seers Memorial Prize**
- 2021. “Security Threats and Investment: North Korean Threats and the South Korean Stock Market” *Pacific Focus*. (with Chungshik Moon). 36(3): 544-569. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2021. “Presidential Approval Ratings and Foreign Exchange Market: The Case of the Korean Won during the Park Government” *Asian Survey*. 61(5): 767–796. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2020. “Doi Moi and Vietnamese Threat Perception of Chinese Economic Growth,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 21: 179-193. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2020. “Interpersonal Trust and Confidence in Labor Unions: the case of South Korea,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 20: 267-290. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2020. “Democracy and Reserves,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 16(3): 417–437. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2019. “Political Parties and Foreign Direct Investment Inflows Among Developing Countries” *Political Studies* 67: 712–731. (with Nisha Bellinger) [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2018. “The Mysterious Overvaluation of KRW in the 1990s,” *The Pacific Review* 31: 573– 597. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2018. “Democratization and Currency Crises in Latin America,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21: 442–463. (with Jonathan Kriekhaus) [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2016. “Are the Poor the Weak Link? Democratic Support and Income Levels in Post-Crisis South Korea,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 16: 219-237. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2016. “Policy Choices in Tough Times: The case of democratization and currency defense,” *International Political Science Review* 37: 453-469. [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2015. “Economic Coercion and Currency Crises in Target Economies,” *Journal of Peace Research* 52: 448-462. (with Dursun Peksen) [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2014. “Inequality and Democratic Support,” *Journal of Politics* 76: 139-151. (with Jonathan Kriekhaus, Nisha Bellinger, and Jason Wells) [\[Journal Link\]](#); [\[PDF\]](#)

## Projects in Progress/Under-review

- “Developmental State Revisited: Foreign Reserves of Asian Emerging Economies”
- “Income Levels and Institutional Confidence”
- “K-pop and Male Masculinity” (with Dae Young Kim)
- “Fan Perspectives on Racism in K-pop” (with Dae Young Kim)
- “Nationalism and Petition” (with Myunghee Lee)
- “A tale of two crises” (with Nisha Bellinger)
- “Democratic Backsliding and Financial Data Transparency”

## Book Review

- 2024. *Supercorporate: Distinction and Participation in Post-hierarchy South Korea* by Michael Prentice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022. xiii, 248 pp. ISBN: 9781503631878.
  - *Journal of Asian Studies* 83(1): 187–188. [\[Journal Link\]](#)

## Other Writings & Media Appearances

- “South Korean Democracy Prevailed. But it wasn’t guaranteed” 2024
  - Op-ed in [MSNBC](#)
- Comments on the US Presidential Election 2024
  - interview in [“This is Washington”](#), Voice of America Radio, Korea
- Comments on South Korea’s Space Program 2024
  - featured in [“South Korea Is Gearing Up to Become Space Powerhouse”](#) Bloomberg
- Comments on the politics of the doctors’ strike in South Korea 2024
  - featured in [“How row over medical school thwarted Korean president,”](#) Times Higher Education
- Comments on the Legislative Election in South Korea. 2024
  - featured in [“‘Lame Duck’ S. Korean President Reels From Election Debacle”](#) AFP (The Barron’s)
  - featured in [“South Korea General Election: Four Key Figures”](#) AFP (The Barron’s)
- [“Democratic Backsliding as a Threat to Regional Cooperation in East Asia”](#) 2023
  - Korea On Point
- “Income inequality: A distant but significant threat to South Korea’s democracy” 2022
  - in R. Hass & P. Kim Eds., [Democracy in Asia](#). Policy Brief. Brookings Institution. Washington DC.
- “The Retreat from Kabul is NOT a sign of declining American Hegemony” 2021
  - [Pressian](#) (Korean).
- Comments on [“Korea-US Summit 2021”](#) NewsUp, CBS Radio (Korean) 2021
  - also featured in [Nocut News](#); [Hankookilbo](#) (Korean).
- “The Causes of Biden’s Victory and its Implications” [Pressian](#) (Korean) 2020
- “Is Authoritarianism Bad for the Economy?” (with N. Bellinger) [The Conversation](#) 2019
  - Translated in Portuguese at [Gazeta do Povo](#).
- “Party Systems Matter for FDI Inflows” [PSA Blog](#) 2019

## Invited Talks, Lectures, Panels & Roundtables

- “Inequality and Democracy in South Korea” 2022  
— Democracy in Asia Workshop. Brookings Institution. Virtual.
- “Big Data Panel Discussion” 2022  
— Urban Research Hub Method Series, [CSSR](#), GMU
- “South Korea’s role in regional economic architecture and supply chain resilience” 2021  
— Workshop (roundtable). Brookings Institution. Virtual.
- “[The End of War Declaration in the Korean Peninsula and Vision 2030](#)” 2021  
— Round Table. [Institute of National Security and Strategy](#). Virtual.
- “Democratic Backsliding and Human Security” 2021  
— Public Lecture. [Hankuk University of Foreign Studies](#) Virtual.
- “Affective Polarization and Right-Wing Populism” 2021  
— Public Lecture. ‘EverySecondSaturday7PM’ (local activists’ society) Virtual.
- “Autocratization and Public Health Outcomes” 2020  
— Invited talk. [Institute of Korean Studies](#). University of Missouri, Columbia. MO. Virtual.
- “Presidential Impeachment in South Korea and Financial Market” 2017  
— Invited talk. Korean Studies Center. George Mason University, Fairfax. VA.
- “Obama Administration’s Pivot to Asia” 2016  
— Invited Talk (student-organized). George Mason University, Fairfax. VA.
- “KRW in the 1990s” 2016  
— Public Lecture. Korean Studies Center. George Mason University, Fairfax. VA.
- “Is Democratization to Blame for the Economic Difficulties of S. Korea?” 2014  
— Invited Talk. George Mason University, Fairfax. VA.
- “Territorial Disputes in East Asia” 2013  
— Guest Lecture. [Lincoln University](#). Jefferson City, MO.
- “Democratization and Exchange Rate Policies” 2013  
— Invited Talk. Korean Fellow Society, Harvard University, Boston MA.

## Grants, Awards, & Fellowships

- [4VA Grant](#). \$15,000 2022  
— with Dae Young Kim (GMU) Younga Jung (GMU), and Yoon Hwa Choi (UVA)  
— [Commonwealth of Virginia](#)
- [Faculty Research and Professional Development Award](#). \$14,288 2020  
— with Dae Young Kim and Younga Jung, [College of Humanities & Social Sciences](#), GMU
- Global Democracy Fellow. \$2,000 2017  
— [Korean Democracy Foundation](#)
- [Faculty Research and Professional Development Award](#). \$3,636 2016  
— [College of Humanities & Social Sciences](#), GMU
- Online Course Development Grant. \$4,000 2016 to 2017  
— [GMU Online Course Development Institute](#)
- [J.G. Heinberg Fellowship](#). 2009–2010  
— One semester’s tuition and stipend. University of Missouri
- [Brain Korea 21 Scholarship](#). 2002  
— Stipend of about \$3,600. Yonsei University, South Korea.

## Conference Presentations

*The latest 10 projects.*

- “Income Levels and Institutional Confidence”
  - International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. 2025
  - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Virtual. 2021
  - International Studies Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA. 2015
- “Fandom and Political Participation: the case of K-pop fans”
  - International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. 2025
- “Democratic Backsliding and Central Bank Independence”
  - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA. 2024
- “Democratic Backsliding and Financial Statistics Transparency” (w/ Chungshik Moon)
  - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA. 2024
  - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. 2024
- “Fiscal Policy Regimes in Asia Across Two Crises” (w/ Nisha Bellinger)
  - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA. 2024
  - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. 2024
- “Behavioral impacts of K-pop” (w/ Dae Young Kim)
  - Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, Washington DC. 2024
- “K-pop and Male Masculinity” (w/ Dae Young Kim)
  - Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA. 2023
- “Fan Perspectives on Racism in K-pop” (w/ Dae Young Kim)
  - Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, Washington DC. 2024
  - Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA. 2023
- “Nationalism and Petition”
  - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada. 2022
- “Blacklists Killed Movie Starts”
  - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Virtual. 2022

## Courses Taught

- George Mason University
  - Economic Globalization and Development (MA) every semester
  - Interdisciplinary Research Method (MA)
  - Capstone Seminar (MA)
  - Case Studies in Globalization: Globalization in Asia (MA)
  - Globalization in Asia (BA) every other year
  - Introduction to Global Affairs (BA)
    - \* Online section development [GMU OCDI](#) 2017
    - \* recognized as “[Outstanding](#)” teaching by GMU multiple years
  - Korea in Global Perspective (BA & MA)
- The College of Wooster
  - Independent Studies supervisor for nine senior students
  - International Political Economy
  - Introduction to International Relations

- East Asian Politics
- University of Missouri-Columbia
  - East Asian Politics
  - Introduction to International Relations
- Korean Air Force Academy
  - Readings on the First World War
  - Introduction to Defense Studies
  - Arms Control
  - The Sociology of Civil-Military Relations

## Services

- To Global Affairs Program (GLOA), GMU
  - Search Committee
    - \* chair, Assistant Professor, GLOA-SIS joint hire 2021
    - \* chair, Associate Professor, GLOA-Communication joint hire 2020
    - \* member, GLOA Director 2020
    - \* member, Term Assistant Professor (Songdo Campus) 2019
    - \* chair, Graduate Coordinator 2019
    - \* chair, Assistant Director 2018
    - \* chair, Graduate Coordinator 2018
    - \* member, Assistant Director 2016
  - GLOA Multi-Year Term Faculty Renewal Committee 2021
  - GLOA Bylaw Committee 2020–current
  - Curriculum/Academic Advising GLOA BA/MA students 2014–2020
  - Graduate Admission Committee, Global Affairs 2015–current
  - Executive Committee, Global Affairs 2015–2020
  - Organizer, GLOA Faculty Brownbag 2016–2017
  - Director Renewal Committee 2016, 2023
  - Textbook Renewal Committee (GLOA 101) 2016
- To the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), GMU
  - Curriculum Committee 2025 to 2026
  - Intellectual Life of the College Committee 2023 to 2026
  - Senior Leadership Committee 2020 to 2023
  - Director, Asia-Pacific & Northeast Asian Studies Minor 2014–current
  - Term Faculty Promotion Committee. MCL. 2021
  - Judge, Diversity Webpage Re-design Competition. Dept. of Psychology 2019
  - Judge, Annual CHSS Undergraduate Research Symposium 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019
  - Adviser for visiting scholars, [Korean Studies Center](#) 2016–current
  - Search Committee
    - \* member, RELI/MCL joint, Assistant Professor 2024
  - Dissertation Committee

- \* Yukiko Furuya, Sociology 2016–2020
- To George Mason University
  - Faculty discussant for Mason Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference 2023
  - Focus Group for Tenure-track Faculty Experience 2016
  - Panelist, New Faculty Orientation 2015
  - Grant Proposal Reviewer
  - \* Provost Multidisciplinary Research Initiatives. 2015, 2016
- To the profession
  - Editorial Board 2019–Current
    - \* [East and West Studies](#) (interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal)
  - Reviewer for publishers: Routledge
  - Reviewer for peer-reviewed journals: *American Journal of Political Science*; *Arts and International Affairs*; *Asian Survey*; *British Journal of Political Science*; *Comparative Political Studies*; *Comparative Politics*; *Defence & Peace Economics*; *Economics & Politics*; *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*; *European Journal of Korean Studies*; *Foreign Policy Analysis*; *Global Perspectives*; *International Interactions*; *International Political Science Review*; *International Studies Quarterly*; *International Studies Review*; *Japanese Journal of Political Science*; *Journal of Asian Studies*; *Journal of Conflict Resolution*; *Journal of East Asian Studies*; *Korea Observer*; *Pacific Focus*; *Pacific Affairs*; *Political Research Quarterly*
  - Discussant / Chair
    - \* APSA 2014, 2017, 2019, 2024
    - \* MPSA 2014, 2019, 2021, 2022
    - \* [GWIKS](#) Workshop 2021
    - \* DC-Area Comparativist Workshop 2017, 2019
    - \* DC-Area International Relations Workshop 2024
  - Conference/Section/Panel Organized
    - \* Association of Korean Political Studies, Related Group Section 2023-2024
      - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting. Philadelphia. PA.
    - \* [The Korean Wave in North America](#) 2021
      - Virtual. With Dae Young Kim and Younga Jung (GMU)
  - Professional Leadership
    - \* Vice President, [Association of Korean Political Studies](#) 2024-2026

## References

- Dr. Jonathan Kriekhaus. University of Missouri-Columbia
- Dr. Cooper Drury. University of Missouri-Columbia
- Dr. Matthew Krain. The College of Wooster

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