








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 2014–2020
 - Director, [Asia–Pacific and Northeast Asian Studies](#) 2014–current
 - Director, [Korean Studies Center](#) 2025–current
 - * Associate Director 2020–2025
 - University Affiliate Faculty, [Schar School of Policy and Government](#) 2021–2022

Previous Academic Positions

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

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) 1997–2003
 - MA & BA, [Political Science](#)

Research & Teaching Areas

Politics of Global Fiance; 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

- 2025. “K-pop Fan Perceptions and Negotiation of Alternative Forms of Masculinities.” *Journal of Men’s Studies*. Forthcoming. (with Dae Young Kim). [\[Journal Link\]](#) [\[PDF\]](#)
- 2024. “Consequences of Democratic Backsliding in Popular Culture: Evidence from Blacklist in South Korea.” *Democratization*. 31(8): 1798-1822. [\[Journal Link\]](#)[\[PDF\]](#)
- 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”
- “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”
- “Democratic Backsliding and Central Bank Independence”
- “Democratic Backsliding and Financial Markets: the Case of South Korea in 2024-5”

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 (excluding GLOA in-house talks)

- “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.

- “Democratic Backsliding and Financial Markets: the Case of South Korea in 2024-5”
– International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH. 2026
- “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
– International Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Seoul, South Korea. 2025

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)
 - Global Affairs Capstone (BA)
 - Globalization in Asia (BA) every other year
 - Global Politics and Revolutions (BA)
 - 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 Advisory 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
 - GLOA promotion video 2022
- 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
- External 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
 - Models for GMU promotional materials 2019, 2025
- To the profession
 - Editorial Board 2019–Current
 - * [East and West Studies](#) (interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal)
 - Reviewer for book proposals
 - * Routledge 2024
 - Reviewer for grant proposals
 - * APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant Review Panel 2025
 - Discussant / Chair
 - * APSA 2014, 2017, 2019, 2024
 - * MPSA 2014, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2025
 - * [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 Young A Jung (GMU)
 - Professional Leadership
 - * Vice President, [Association of Korean Political Studies](#) 2024-2026
 - 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*

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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