

# Baker Briefing

Research from the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy

December 2022



## Leadership & Governance



### Dilution of Expertise Leads to Misinformation

An idea could be trending online, but at that point it might actually be misinformation that is trending, not the original idea. The *dilution of expertise* is the process that Baker Center affiliate [Alex Bentley](#)'s co-authored research says leads to that misinformation. Experts post their original idea online, which then continues to get copied and reshared, oftentimes with comments being added or removed. The end result being that what is trending is far away from the expert's original idea.

This can be seen in many important issues today, such as climate change, health concerns and election results, that are widely discussed online. Read *Dilution of expertise in the rise and fall of collective innovation*, published in the *Nature Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* [here](#).



### Thinking Outside of the Lunchbox

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) feeds 30 million children a year, yet the program is not without critics.

In a study of Corvallis, Oregon co-authored by Baker Center fellow [Mike Jones](#), a policy narrative framework was used to analyze narratives around the lunch program. The study found parents, caregivers, parent teachers association leaders and cultural groups view the children as the victims and the community institutions and advocates in the role of either the hero or villain.

Their paper, *Thinking outside of the lunchbox: A narrative policy framework analysis of school lunch policies*, can be found [here](#).



### Impacts on Student Loan Debt

Student loan debt has become prominent in today's news cycle, and performance-based funding (PBF), a policy where a portion of state funding is based on how well the public colleges and universities perform, could have an effect not only on the level of that debt but also on the ability to pay it off. But research by Baker Center affiliate [Robert Kelchen](#) finds no such result.

In his research using the first comprehensive dataset of PBF policies, he found no effects of PBF on student debt in two-year schools and even some evidence of increased debt among university students from wealthier families.

Kelchen's article, *The Effects of State Performance Funding Policies on Student Loan Debt*, can be found [here](#).



### Carole Myers

Baker Center expert [Carole Myers](#) recently completed a two-week faculty fellowship at the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain. During her residency, Myers led discussions on policymaking, advocacy, how media engagement can influence and support policymaking and advocacy, as well as the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Future of Nursing report. Myers also established a new

research partnership with the University of Navarra School of Nursing faculty to examine media competencies among nurses in Spain.

## Global Security



### Baker Center's Partnerships in South Korea Continue to Strengthen

As a part of the Baker Center's Global Catalyst grant from the Center for Global Engagement, GS Director [Krista Wiegand](#), post-doctoral fellow [Sojeong Lee](#) and affiliate [Wonjae Hwang](#) traveled to South Korea for their second meeting

with Yonsei Institute for North Korean Studies and Jeju Peace Institute. While in Seoul, they met with the Asan Institute to discuss research on South Korean foreign policy.

At a joint conference on foreign policy, security and development on the Korean Peninsula hosted by the three partners, Wiegand and Lee presented their paper *Walking a Fine Line: Trilateral Tensions between South Korea, Japan, and the United States*. Wonjae, Wooyeal Paik from Yonsei University and Haeyong Lin from Jeju Peace Institute presented their coauthored paper, *The U.S. China Competition and Restructuring Global Supply Chains*. This paper demonstrates the intended joint research collaboration among our institutes, an important outcome of official partnerships.



### Can Health Aid Help a Donor State's Status

Many countries are still struggling to cope with the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent research conducted by Baker Center affiliate [Wonjae Hwang](#) indicates that countries, even those historically seen as unfriendly, could receive

positive public opinion when they provide health aid to another country, especially another country that is in significant need.

This research explored how health aid from China and the U.S. affected the public's opinion of the donor countries and highlights that the U.S. – China strategic competition continues to grow significantly surrounding global health aid policy.



### Interstate Hostility and Maritime Crime

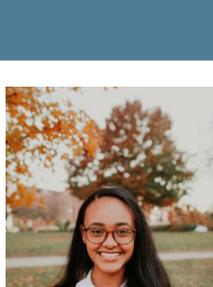
The University of Tennessee is known for its research in maritime security.

Recent work by Baker Center senior fellow [Brandon Prins](#) and former Baker post-doctoral fellow Aaron Gold exemplifies this

expertise. They show that non-state criminals (pirates, smugglers and illegal fishermen) can avoid capture if they operate in contested border regions. In those regions, rival countries don't interfere to avoid creating more costly conflicts.

Their paper, *Interstate Hostility and Maritime Crime: Evidence from South East Asia*, provides important guidance for global efforts to counter transnational criminal organizations and their illicit activities in maritime spaces.

## Student Spotlight



Reem Wolde is a Baker Center Washington fellow, ambassador and Global Security student researcher. After graduating in the spring of 2024 with a major in Political Science and Middle East Studies, she plans to pursue a law degree with an international law certification.

*"The Baker Center is one of my favorite components of UT. It provides the opportunity to experience firsthand what a career in public policy or international relations looks like."*

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