



CEACOP VIRTUAL SEMINAR

Korea's Path to Modernization: Japan as a Strategic Means

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[zoom registration](#)



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Abstract

This talk explores how early modern Koreans perceived Japan when they struggled to modernize their country in the late 19th and early 20th-century. Despite a long history of rivalry and conflict, Korea (then the Chosŏn dynasty [1392-1910]) regarded Japan as a model for Western-style modernization, deeply impressed by its rapid and remarkable transformation after the Meiji Restoration (1868). This shift paralleled the experiences of other non-Western countries grappling with the challenge of rebalancing the power asymmetry with the West. By examining the discourses on Japan in early modern Korea, this talk aims to help us gain a novel understanding of how Koreans reconceived their long-time adversary as a great source of national inspiration during the early stage of Korea's modernization.

About the Speaker

Bul-ran You is a political theorist, currently working for Seoul National University's Living and Learning (LnL) Initiative. He received his Ph.D. in the history of political thought from Tokyo University and has since focused on the philosophical and political interactions between East Asian countries during the early modern period. His expertise spans Korean political philosophy, Japanese political philosophy, and the modernization of East Asia. His research has been published in various journals such as *Korea Journal* and *Korean Political Science Review*. He is the author of *Korean Politics and Political Ideologies* (2018), *Post Eurocentrism: Reconstructing History of Korean Political Philosophy* (2022, co-authored), and *Beyond the Instrumental Relationship—Korea and Japan* (2023), all in Korean.