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## Review Essay

# A Sketch of North Korean Studies in South Korea: The Current Status and the Prescriptions to Establish Its Identity as an Independent Discipline\*

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As part of an effort to redefine the identity of North Korean studies, this study analyzes research trends in Master's and Doctoral dissertations published in South Korea prior to 2008. The analysis verifies its multidisciplinary characteristics as an area studies, diversity of research areas and subjects, and quantitative and qualitative development; as such, effective management of the related department and systematic activities of relevant scholarly societies provide a new opportunity for systematically improving the quality of North Korean studies. Establishing roots as an independent discipline and establishing its identity requires advancements in three aspects: vitalization and expansion of support for North Korean studies at the government level, long-term support for systematic management of the related curriculum at the university level, and revitalization of the research on more various areas by the academic needs at the academic level. Most importantly, efforts to reduce perception gaps in identity among scholars are vital.

**Key words:** North Korean studies, identity, area studies, multidisciplinary approach, interdisciplinary research

## I. Introduction

Studies on North Korea have been more sensitively influenced by the political and ideological relationship between South and North Korea than any other study. This area remained a minor area of academic interest until the end of the 1980s; consequently, it was treated distantly by the general social science's main interests and has yet to emerge from its backwardness in terms of research quality. The

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collapse of socialist states in Eastern Europe starting in the late 1980s raised numerous academic debates on the framework for studies on North Korea, including insiders' versus outsiders' approaches and idiosyncrasy versus generality of the North Korean system. Such debates have served as the momentum to move one step up in quantitative and qualitative levels.

Until the mid-1960s, North Korean studies remained at the preliminary level of journalism or policy-expository level; they began to establish a more appropriate base of academic support only later. The creation of the National Unification Board in 1969 was the starting point for stimulating academic and political interests in studies on North Korea. The end of the Cold War to a certain degree relaxed ideological restrictions that had limited scholars' academic freedom, thereby giving scholars a chance to carry out full-scale research on North Korean issues that had previously been taboo in South Korea (Ch'oe 2003, 11).

Research on North Korea did not begin because of an interest in specific areas of human life like the traditional disciplines (e.g., politics, sociology, economics, law), but rather due to political interests and needs in North Korea related to the divided peninsula. As a result, studies on North Korea in South Korea – unlike most area studies – have the general characteristics of area studies as well as “must-theoretic” ones or “oughtness” due to the distinct “studies on a part of own-nation” (Kang 1999, 13). Thus, studies on North Korea have a much shorter history and involve fewer researchers than other academic fields. However, considering the country's growth during the past 20 years, it is timely at this point to deliberate carefully upon its identity academically as serious deliberation will act as an important driving force for North Korean studies to self-generate as an organized academic discipline.

As part of an effort to redefine the identity of North Korean studies, after a brief explanation on the short history of the field, this study analyzes the research trends in Master's and Doctoral dissertations published in South Korea prior to 2008. The analysis verifies its multidisciplinary characteristics as an area studies, diversity of research areas and subjects, and quantitative and qualitative development; as such, effective management of the related department and systematic activities of relevant scholarly societies provide a new opportunity for systematically improving the quality of North Korean studies. Although this study may not have incorporated illustrative research into the qualitative trends of North Korean studies by analyzing a few representative works, it does provide a meaningful look at the current state of North Korean studies to those interested in the study of North Korea, particularly to English readers.

## II. Development of North Korean Studies

Early studies on North Korea were primarily limited to political science, but improved North – South relations and increased research interests in North Korean issues have demassified scholars’ majors. During the past two decades, such studies’ quantity and quality, including research results like dissertations, books, and papers, specialized research institutes, academic journals, and relevant scholarly societies like the Korean Association of North Korean Studies (KANKS) and the Association of North Korean Studies (ANKS), have grown explosively.<sup>1)</sup> More recently, academic concerns about the identities of the studies have started in earnest, further befitting quantitative and qualitative development in this area.

Furthermore, recent professional researchers have been trained systematically. Starting with the Department of North Korean Studies in Dongguk University in 1994, some universities like Myongji and Korea University have established undergraduate programs for studying North Korean issues. Some universities have operated graduate programs and produced a number of graduate and Doctoral students exploring North Korean studies or unification.<sup>2)</sup> These organized educational institutions play an important role in promoting the debate on the identity of North Korean studies, thereby facilitating their development.

The first research to provide an overview of trends in studies on North Korea was conducted by Sang-u Yi of the “Pukhan Yŏn’ gu” (North Korean studies) in *Kongsan’gwŏn Yŏn’gu Hyŏnhwang (Studies of Communism and Communist Countries in Korea)* (1981). The author analyzed the data offered from the National Unification Board.<sup>3)</sup> Meanwhile, On-chuk Yi’ s “Pukhan Sahoe Yŏn’ gu ūi Hyŏnhwang kwa Pangbŏplonjŏk Kwaje” (Research on North Korean Society: Methodological Aspects) (1982) systematically organized and quantitatively analyzed research results according to data types and

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1) Just a few years ago, professional research infrastructures for North Korean studies in South Korea were relatively insufficient. According to Kim’ s research, few think-tanks in South Korea focus on Korean policy issues or include Korea as part of their overall research activities. Based on information from the World Directory of Think Tanks (1998 and 2002) of the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) in Japan, Kim briefly introduced 26 institutions, including eight in South Korea, 12 in the United States, and others in Sweden, Japan, Germany, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom (Kim 2003, 193-215).

2) The degree varies from university to university. Although the department of North Korean studies in Dongguk University offer a political science degree, the University of North Korean Studies (formerly known as the Graduate School of North Korean Studies, Kyungnam University) as well as the Master’ s and Doctoral Interdisciplinary Program in North Korean Studies at Ewha Womans University, the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Korean Unification Studies at Yosei University, and the Department of North Korean studies in Korea University offer degrees in North Korean studies (*Pukhanhak*), unification (*Tongil-Hak*), and arts, respectively.

3) In 1990, the status of the board was raised to the level of a vice prime ministerial ministry and it authorized the coordination of policy-related ministries. It was renamed *Tongilwŏn* (former name, *Kuktotongilwŏn*), but its English name remained the same. In 1998, under the government reorganization program, it was renamed the Ministry of Unification.

subjects. A more systematic approach was used by the Institute of North Korean Studies (INKS). “Han’guk Hakgye ūi Pukhan Yŏn’gu Ŏdi-ggaji Watnŭnka: Pukhan Kwankye Sŏksa-Paksa Hakwi Nonmun Moklok” (Currents of the North Korean Studies in South Korea: List of Dissertations) (1986) in *Pukhan* (North Korea), which introduced 289 dissertations, including 269 Master’ s and 20 Doctoral dissertations.

The first serious efforts to collect and analyze research results qualitatively occurred in Sŭng-sŏp Song’ s “Pundan ihu Pukhan Yŏn’ gu ūi Hyŏnjuso rŭl Chindan handa: Sŏksa-Paksa Hakwi Nonmun ūl Chungsim ūlo” (Diagnosis of Present Status of North Korean Studies after the Division: Focusing on Dissertations) (1995) and “Pukhan Kwanyŏn Yŏn’ gu Tonghyang ūi Kyeryangjŏk Punsŏk: Sŏksa-Paksa Hakwi Nonmun ūl Chungsim ūlo” (A Quantitative Analysis of the Trends in North Korean Studies: Focusing on Dissertations) (1998). Another remarkable milestone was KANKS’ s efforts to understand the development of studies on North Korea that approach such studies as an academic discipline in *Pundan Pansegi Pukhan Yŏn’gusa (History of North Korean Studies for the Divided Half Century)* (1999). In every chapter, an expert in a specific area related to North Korea (e.g., politics, economy, military) analyzes a number of studies, including its past trends and future prospects. Some suggestions addressed in the research, including approach and methodology, infrastructure, and interactions with North Korean scholars for the development of studies on North Korea, remain valid.

Previous research on the trends in studies on North Korea all focused on ascertaining and reaffirming the variability in the research areas and subjects, whereas the current study does not. The understanding of the trends in this area has been developed quantitatively as well as qualitatively thus far and serves as the beginning point of this study. By providing a new opportunity to systematically improve the quality of studies on North Korea, this research attempts to ascertain its multidisciplinary characteristics as an area studies and then provide extended suggestions for turning this area of study into an academic discipline. This study provides a clue for promoting its academic position far beyond the differences of perspectives and views among scholars. It is expected that this would be one of underlying causes to ensure that experts use more analytical approaches and balanced perspectives in their research areas.

### **III. North Korean Studies as a Multidisciplinary Field**

To analyze North Korean research trends in domestic Master’ s and Doctoral dissertations published prior to 2008, a web search engine was used to perform the appropriate searches. The search engine used was the Research Information Service System (RISS)<sup>4)</sup> provided by Korea Education and Research

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4) <http://www.riss.kr/index.do>. At the time of search, it was at [www.riss4u.net](http://www.riss4u.net).

Information Service (KERIS). Title of dissertations and keywords parameters were used for the search. To select only North Korea-related studies, “Kim Il Sung,” “Kim Jong Il,” “*nambuk*” (North-South), “*pukgoe*” (North Korean puppet regime), “*pukhan*” (North Korea), “*pukhaek*” (North Korean nuclear), “*saetōmin*” (North Korean defector), “*t’albuk*” (escaping from North Korea), “*t’ongil*” (unification), and “*hanbando*” (Korean peninsula) in Korean were employed as search words. Some dissertations were eliminated from the search results to filter out studies in areas deemed to be uncertain – namely, dissertations on case studies of unification countries such as Germany, Vietnam, and Yemen that did not provide implications for the Korean peninsula; dissertations on South Korea’s unification policy, but not comparative analysis on unification policies between the two Koreas; and dissertations on surrounding great powers’ (e.g., the United States, China, Russia, Japan) foreign policy toward the Korean peninsula or Northeast Asia.

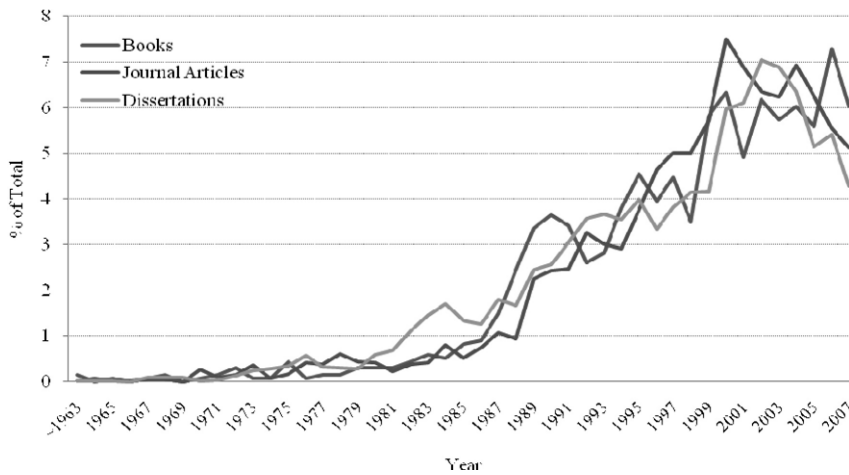
As previously mentioned, studies on North Korea have been expanded quantitatively as well as qualitatively for the past 20 years. North Korea-related research results such as books,<sup>5)</sup> journal articles,<sup>6)</sup> and dissertations began to increase rapidly beginning in 1989 and again in 2000 (see Figure 1). Such increases indicate that studies on North Korea have been affected by North Korean issues, inter-Korean relations, and international situations such as the fall of socialism, Roh Tae Woo administration’s Nordpolitik, the North Korean nuclear issue in the late 1980s, and the inter-Korean Summit in 2000.

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5) In the case of books including translations and compilations, the web search engine used was the National Assembly Library’s (<http://www.nanet.go.kr>) digital library; title and keyword searches were used. Some books were eliminated from the search results, including data books (e.g., handbooks, statistics, glossaries, yearbooks, white papers, and regular reports), propaganda publications from government agencies and public corporations, travelogues, memoirs, conference proceedings, and commemorative collections. Search words used are the same as those in the dissertation case.

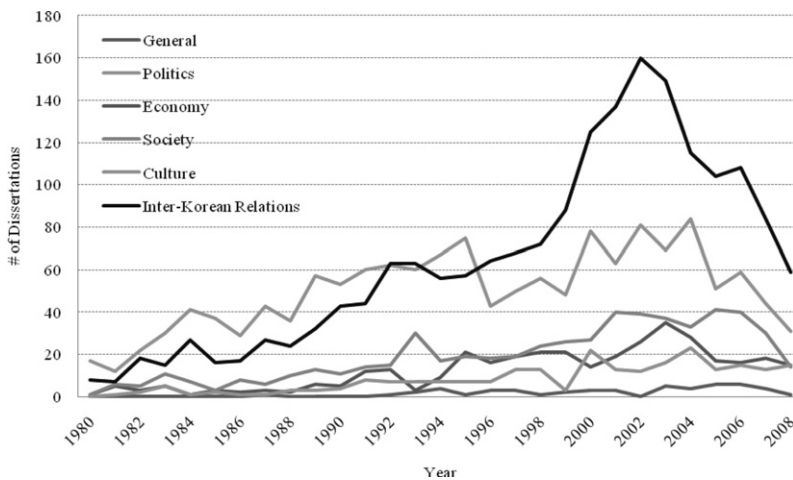
6) In the case of journal articles, web search engines used were the Korean Studies Information Service System (KISS) provided by Korean Studies Information Co., Ltd., available at <http://search.koreanstudies.net>, and DBpia provided by Nurimedia Co., Ltd., available at <http://www.dbpia.co.kr>; title and keyword search options were used. Some articles were eliminated from the search results, such as conference papers and posters, [research] series, book chapters, newsletter articles, data-books, and case-books. Search words used are the same as those in the dissertation case.

<Figure 1> Annual Research Growth in Studies on North Korea

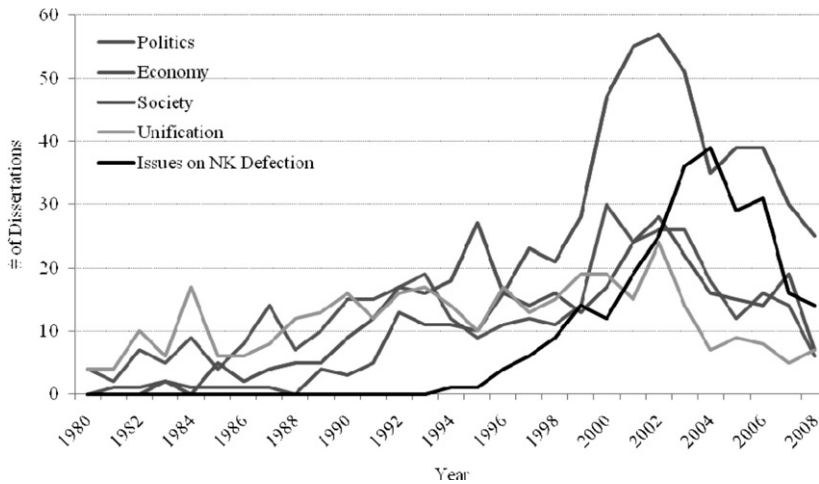


A couple of matters are salient on the research fields of respective dissertations. What is especially noteworthy is that researches on inter-Korean relations had increased more than all the other research fields such as politics, economy, society, and culture especially for the period from the late 1990s to the early 2000s (see Figure 2). In particular, research subjects such as the issues on North Korean defection and on society among the research field of inter-Korean relations had proliferated from the early 2000s (see Figure 3). This is related to, and a mirror image of the changes in South – North Korean relations due to the possibility of total breakdown in North Korea, the second nuclear crisis with the highly-enriched uranium (HEU) program, global concern about increasing North Korean defectors, North Korean human right issues, and so on.

<Figure 2> Trend of Research Fields in Studies on North Korea



<Figure 3> Trend of Research Subjects on Inter-Korean Relations



A total of 4,650 Master's and Doctoral dissertations (4,394 Master's and 256 Doctoral) were published prior to 2008 (see Table 1). Dissertations of special graduate schools (SGSs)<sup>7)</sup> make up 46.28 percent (2,152 dissertations) of the total. General graduate schools (GSs) ranked second with 39.63 percent (1,843 dissertations), while independent professional or special graduate universities (PSGUs)<sup>8)</sup> and professional graduate schools (PGSs)<sup>9)</sup> accounted for 7.1 percent (330 dissertations) and 6.99 percent (325 dissertations) respectively. Various PGSs and SGSs have established Master's programs in most universities, but few have established Doctoral programs, which explain the small number of Doctoral dissertations from these institutions, which focus on professionalism, practicality, and on-the-job

7) These include graduate schools of education, public administration, public health, journalism and mass communication, law, economics, public affairs, peace studies, business and administration, national strategy, arts, policy, unification policy, peace and security, policy development, unification, social development, railroad science and technology, sports and leisure studies, agricultural and animal science, regional development, international strategy, international cooperation, real estate studies, logistics, industrial art, trade, mass communication, digital culture, public administration and policy, policy sciences, NGO, education policy, sports science, social and cultural studies, tourism, public administration local autonomy, newspaper, economic policy, urban science, social education, Christian care and counseling, architecture and urban design, government and business, and national defense strategy. In Korea, special graduate schools' names follow current trends, such as the Graduate School of Social and Cultural Studies at Hanman University (previously called the Graduate School of Regional Development).

8) These include the Korea National Defense University (former name, National Defense College), University of North Korean Studies, Academy of Korean Studies, Korea National University of Education, International Graduate University for Peace, and some theological universities such as Seoul Theological Universities and the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission.

9) These include graduate schools of international studies, theology, information, communication (and art), social welfare, business, law, politics (and leadership), unification and security, social science, small business, engineering, economics and commerce, international trade, lifelong education, (world) mission, and politics and economics.



reeducation. Students who earn a Master’s degree from a PGS or SGS generally enter a Doctoral program in a GS for academic purposes.

<Table 1> Number of Dissertations by Graduate Program

(Master’s/Doctoral)

Graduate Programs	At University			Professional or Special Graduate University	Total
	(General) Graduate School	Professional Graduate School	Special Graduate School		
Number of Diss.	1,843 (1,614/229)	325 (313/12)	2,152 (2,145/7)	330 (322/8)	4,650 (4,394/256)

Yonsei University, Dongguk University, Korea University, Seoul National University, and Kyung Hee University have the greatest number of dissertations per institution, respectively. These five institutions account for 35.12 percent of the total number of dissertations (see Table 2). In regard to exclusively Doctoral dissertations, Seoul, Korea, Kyung Hee, Kyungnam, and Dongguk University account for 36.33 percent of all Doctoral dissertations.

<Table 2> Number of Dissertations by University and Rank

Rank			University	Number of Diss.		
Total	Master’s	Doctoral		Total	Master’s	Doctoral
1	1	11	Yonsei University	479	471	8
2	2	5	Dongguk University	345	331	14
3	3	2	Korea University	294	276	18
4	4	1	Seoul National University	284	258	26
5	5	2	Kyung Hee University	231	213	18
6	6	9	Hanyang University	157	148	9
7	7	13	Sogang University	133	126	7
8	9	11	Dankook University	132	124	8
9	10	4	Kyungnam University	130	113	17
10	8	18	Ewha Womans University	129	125	4
11	13	6	Konkuk University	119	106	13
12	11	15	Sungkyunkwan University	115	109	6
13	14	8	Kyonggi University	114	104	10
14	15	9	Chung-Ang University	110	101	9
15	12	36	University of North Korean Studies	109	108	1
16	16	13	Chosun University	97	90	7
...	...	...	...	...	...	...
21	21	7	Pusan National University	71	60	11

Within GSs in the five universities producing the most dissertations, dissertations in Departments of Political Science and Public Administration account for the greatest portions of the total (see Table 3). However, the Department of North Korean Studies has more dissertations than Political Science in Dongguk University and more than Public Administration in Korea University. In Seoul National University, the Department of Education produced the most. The Graduate School of Business produces the most within PGSSs (except in Seoul National University) and within SGSs (except in Korea University). In regard to Doctoral dissertations only, the number of dissertations in the Department of Political Science is higher than any other department in the five universities producing the most dissertations.

<Table 3> Number of Dissertations at Universities Producing the Most Dissertations by Graduate Program  
(Master's/Doctoral)

Graduate Program		Dongguk University	Korea University	KyungHee University	Kyungnam University	Seoul N University	Yonsei University
G S	Education	4	11	3	4 (3/1)	67 (61/6)	12 (11/1)
	NK Studies	47 (44/3)	17				
	Political Sci	26 (22/4)	76 (64/12)	26 (17/9)	22 (9/13)	51 (43/8)	51 (49/2)
	Public Admin	61 (57/4)	8 (7/1)	21 (16/5)	11 (8/3)	9	57
	Others	20 (17/3)	42 (37/5)	5 (1/4)	3	68 (56/12)	128 (123/5)
	Sub-total	158 (144/14)	154 (136/18)	55 (37/18)	40 (23/17)	186 (160/26)	191 (183/8)
P G S	Int'l Studies		6			8	
	Business	10	8	11	3		11
	Others	4	1	6		1	6
	Sub-total	14	15	17	3	9	19
S G S	Education	16	36	35	18	5	39
	Public Admin	157	7	111	69	80	196
	Policy Studies		79				
	Others					4	
	Sub-total	173	125	159	87	89	269
Total		345 (331/14)	294 (276/18)	231 (213/18)	130 (113/17)	284 (258/26)	479 (471/8)

Yonsei University produces more SGS Master's dissertations (57.11 percent, 269 dissertations) than any other of the top five universities; the dissertations in its Graduate School of Public Administration accounts for 72.86 percent (196 dissertations) of all SGS dissertations. At Kyungnam University, the



17	17	7	Sociology <sup>1</sup>	59	53	6
19	20	7	Politics [and Leadership] <sup>2</sup>	46	40	6
21	21	10	Commerce and Trade <sup>1</sup>	42	37	5
22	25	6	Korean Language and Literature <sup>1</sup>	38	31	7
27	29	7	History <sup>1</sup>	30	24	6
31	33	10	Physical Education <sup>1</sup>	23	18	5
33	36	10	Academy of Korean Studies <sup>4</sup>	21	16	5
39	43	13	Social Welfare <sup>1</sup>	15	11	4
40	45	13	Psychology <sup>1</sup>	14	10	4

- 1) GS. In addition, the Department of Business has 45(42/3), Mass Communication has 37(36/1), and Ethics has 31(28/3).
- 2) PGS. In addition, the Graduate School of Social Welfare has 35(33/2), Unification and Security has 33(33/0), International Studies has 30(30/0), and Theology has 30(28/2).
- 3) SGS. In addition, the Graduate School of Economics has 24(24/0) and Journalism and Mass Communication has 23(23/0).
- 4) PSGU. In addition, Korea National University of Education has 62(60/2) and theological universities have 52(52/0).

The Department of Political Science (38.28 percent, 98 dissertations) assigns the greatest weight to Doctoral dissertations, followed by Departments of Public Administration, Law, Education, and Economics. In the case of PGSs of Politics, all Doctoral dissertations – including three in North Korean studies, two in political science, and one in public administration – are from the Graduate School of Politics and Policy at Kyonggi University. As a whole, although these main areas remain strong, research areas such as Korean language and literature, history, sociology, commerce and trade, physical education, social welfare, and psychology are being expanded.

Slight differences of the title given in the degrees occur based on the university, but they are closely related to majors. A degree in education can be awarded to students who majored and graduated from the Department of Education in a GS, SGS of Education, or a university of education (e.g., Korea National University of Education); consequently, degrees in education account for 24 percent – a significant portion (see Table 5). A degree in political science ranks second with 20.45 percent, followed by public administration with 18.95 percent, North Korean Studies with 7.68 percent, and economics with 3.76 percent. In Doctoral dissertations only, a degree in political science accounts for 39.45 percent of the total.

&lt;Table 5&gt; Number of Dissertations by Degree and Rank

Rank			Degree <sup>1</sup>	Number of Diss.		
Total	Master's	Doctoral		Total	Master's	Doctoral
1	1	2	Education	1,116	1,094	22
2	3	1	Political Science	951	850	101
3	2	3	Public Administration	881	860	21
4	4	7	North Korean Studies	357	346	11
5	5	6	Economics	175	162	13
6	6	12	Business Administration	136	132	4
7	7	9	International Relations	126	121	5
8	8	4	Law	115	101	14
9	9	8	Social Welfare	97	87	10
10	10	22	Theology	87	86	1
11	11	4	Literature	80	66	14
12	11	22	Communication	67	66	1
13	13	16	Area Studies	57	55	2
14	14	9	Trade	53	48	5
15	15	31	Korean Unification Studies	40	40	0
16	16	12	Sociology	35	31	4
17	18	9	Physical Education	26	21	5
...	...	...	...	...	...	...
20	23	14	Engineering	12	9	3
22	27	14	Psychology	10	7	3

1) Every university and graduate school names the degrees differently; when unclear, the name of the major is used instead.

To sum up, studies on North Korea as a multidisciplinary field have been developed as area studies within and among various disciplines. It is still concentrated in a handful of universities, graduate schools, departments, or professional institutions. However, the unequal distribution of a specific department and degree is of secondary importance given the difference of the academic and practical interests and importance of North Korean studies among the disciplines. The efforts to establish this area of study, which began with quantitative and qualitative growth of the research results, continue to accelerate with qualitative development of North Korean studies related to education and society.

## IV. The Identity of North Korean Studies as an Academic Discipline

Most area studies are quasi-disciplinary forms because a multidisciplinary approach (i.e., an interdisciplinary approach in various independent academic disciplines) is a prerequisite for such research.<sup>10)</sup> Area studies have been considered a fundamental component of comparative studies.<sup>11)</sup> Since area studies is a part of social science, scientific theory and methodology are needed for academic endeavors. Thus, it is reasonable to expect researchers in area studies to have the experience to make proper use of theories, methodologies, and methods in their respective disciplines (Yi 2001, 7).

Established disciplines like politics, economics, and sociology have developed theories and methodologies as core requisites in their degree programs. Some theories have the same name among the academic areas and both affect and are affected, although they differ from one another in substance. Researchers in area studies have worked and developed theories and methodologies within a certain disciplinary field.<sup>12)</sup> It is common that researchers seeking a Ph.D. in area studies have learned and received degrees in their existing disciplines. Therefore, the results achieved thus far in area studies are not from those who have endeavored in that purpose on a path of discovery for their own theory and methodology, but rather those who have applied them from their particular discipline as occasion demands.

Nothing much in theory and methodology has been formed or developed in studies on North Korea itself. The fact that most graduate students in newly founded graduate programs as well as special or professional graduate schools since the mid 1990s have been those who majored in political science, public administration, or economics in undergraduate programs makes it difficult to say that North Korean studies is an independent field at the academic level. Consequently, North Korean studies in social science use various multidisciplinary approaches and have fallen under the quasi-disciplinary category until now.

The relationship among academic disciplines is expressed as an interdisciplinary relationship. The term interdisciplinary is used to describe studies that use methods and insights from more than two

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10) Debates have consistently focused on the current situation, problems, and identity of area studies in South Korea, led by the International Association of Area Studies (IAAS, *International Area Studies Review*), the Korean Association of Area Studies (KAAS, *Korean Journal of Area Studies*), and others. The problems of theory, methodology, and identity impact North Korean studies.

11) Basically, area studies focus on analyzing "what," while comparative studies focus on "how to analyze" (Zahariadis 1997, 3-4).

12) To learn about the politics in a nation or region, researchers in political science have to seek to master its history, languages, economy, etc., as well. Within social sciences, researchers in area studies are multidisciplinary, especially in political science (Bates 1997, 166).

disciplines or traditional fields of study, so that scholars who have various theoretical and methodological backgrounds can research various issues together. As they are linked to each other based on their interdisciplinary approach, one necessarily borrows concepts, theories, and methodologies from another. Thus, particular theories have far-reaching academic effects on many disciplines; furthermore, other disciplines adapt them with related concepts and methodology, thereby further advancing them (Yi 2001, 13, 19).

Unintended side effects of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches include Campbell's "Leonardesque aspiration," which refers to the goal of creating current Leonardos who are competent in all sciences (Campbell 2009, 329-30).<sup>13)</sup> A scholar generally sticks to the research subject, methodology, and theory exclusively within his or her own discipline background and draws a sharp dividing line with other disciplines. Thus, an interdisciplinary research can bring about a less contributive result by paying no attention to or not considering the theory and method in the specific discipline. In addition, by using the inversed situation, that researcher is engrossed in other disciplines and ignores his or her own, and less professional results according to his or her discipline standards can be produced (Yi 2001, 22).

Various interdisciplinary approaches are possible or required, especially in social science, because disciplines are piled up one on another, creating "doubleness" or "superimposition." Thus, the more diversified the research topics are in certain academic disciplines, the more overlapped the theories, methods, and subjects are with other disciplines. The fact that this doubleness is being intensified means, inversely, that it can hardly be said that the discipline – even an established academic one – is completely independent. Furthermore, existing disciplines are not the results of systemic and logical deliberations, but of political and social processes (i.e., "politicization" and "socialization"), especially within the bureaucratically organized educational system of universities. Gownsmen in universities have promoted institutionalization and routinization (Wax 2009, 79-82) of the academic disciplines in the social science field into mutually exclusive and exhaustive ones.

How has this affected North Korean studies? The enrichment of the depth and breadth of the research is evident in studies on North Korea, too. The quantitative and qualitative growth of studies on North Korea has facilitated scholars' approach to research in a more inter- and multidisciplinary approach and led research to be more professionally comprehensive. Thus, it is time to firmly establish this area's identity and the disciplinary position of North Korean Studies, which already exist in some undergraduate and graduate programs, as one academic discipline. Expanding research areas and subjects have solidified the position of political economy, political sociology, and political psychology – disciplines accepted in some Western universities – just as politics, economics, sociology, and

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13) In this sense, an expert in North Korean politics or an expert in North Korean economy is the proper name rather than an expert in North Korea.

psychology were once independent academic disciplines.

## V. Conclusion: Perspectives on Consolidation of Identity

The diversity of research areas and subjects, the quantitative and qualitative expansion of academic results, the systematic training of experts on North Korean issues, and the invigoration of the relevant organizations<sup>14)</sup> increase the chances for North Korean studies to develop its position into an independent discipline. Research activities on North Korean issues are occurring at research institutes as well as educational institutions, including the Asiatic Research Institute (ARI) at Korea University established in 1957, IFES at Kyungnam University in 1973, the Center for Korean Unification Studies at Yonsei University in 1996, the Institute for North Korean Studies at Korea University in 1998, the Institute for North Korean Studies at Dongguk University in 2000, and the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University in 2006. Non-governmental institutes such as INKS established in 1971 and the Sejong Institute in 1983 as well as the government-affiliated Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) established in 1991 are additional examples of institutions promoting such studies.

Maintaining a secure and stable identity requires the vitalization of relevant institutes and academic associations. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance what status North Korean studies has and what is done institutionally at the university and government levels. This is why a debate on the identity of North Korean studies should not take place at an abstract academic level only, as the study itself is institutionalized while being strongly influenced by the educational system and professional interests. Most research on the current status and problems of area studies in South Korea emphasize the necessity to recruit human resources, find financial resources, establish academic and educational environments, etc. (Yi and Kwōn 1998; Yi 2000, 1-21; Chōn 2002, 29-53; and Kim 2006, 5-25). North Korean studies share such problems with area studies. Thus, problems facing North Korean studies, tasks to ensure such studies are rooted in an independent discipline, as well as maintaining a firm identity could be reviewed from three aspects.

First, in a policy aspect, the vitalization and expansion of support for North Korean studies at the government level is needed. Studies of North Korea originate from the particularity of the divided Korean peninsula; as such, they must be developed by addressing political needs. Although the Cold War has ended, North Korean studies' quantity and quality were influenced by the deadlock and conflict or progress of relationship between the two Koreas. Thus, to guarantee consistent quantity and quality, as

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14) For more information about the educational institutions, research institutes, and scholarly associations and journals, see Lim et al. (2009, 245-62).



in other disciplines, the government's constant interest and support (without being controlled by inter-Korean relations) are required.

Second, in an educational aspect, long-term support for systematic management of the related curriculum at the university level is needed. Although related classes have been developed in some universities, most are introductory courses. Thus far, the universities offering graduate courses in North Korean studies are few: Dongguk University (since March 1994), Ewha Womans University (since March 1998), Korea University (since March 1997), Yonsei University (since March 2004), and the University of North Korean Studies (since March 1998). Each has a well-rounded curriculum, but the available classes are basically fixed each term to four to eight classes from March 2007 to March 2009, except the University of North Korean Studies, which offered 21 to 26 classes.<sup>15)</sup> Though well-rounded, the curriculum is nominal not only because it is operated to reflect students' interests according to current trends, but also because the programs lack the human resources necessary for teaching. Thus, developing a practical and substantial curriculum as well as material and human resources for effective operation requires support at the university level.

Finally, in an academic aspect, revitalization of the research in more diverse areas based on academic needs at an academic level is needed. As evident in existing disciplines, diverse theories and methodologies above all else should be developed and revitalized for developing North Korean studies. As theories and methodologies are developed through cooperation with the philosophy of science, they will be closely linked to academic curiosity, thereby generating academic interest and desire. Thus, research not only for practical purposes, but also for academic needs should be actively conducted by academics; these efforts can be maximized with appropriate support in the political and educational aspects mentioned above.

As shown in the expression of "whether area studies is academic studies and studies on the area are policy-oriented studies ... whether area studies is used for department name and studies on the area are used for interdisciplinary programs" (Chön 2002, 37), the issue of area studies' identity is also valid to North Korean studies. It is important for North Korean studies to have a solid position as a completely independent discipline. Furthermore, efforts to resolve different perceptions of the studies of North Korea or reduce perception gaps in the area's identity among scholars are vital.

It is accepted that without vigorous qualitative analysis of the research it is difficult to understand the trends and the meaningfulness of the work that has taken place thus far. However, it is hoped that both

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15) This is based on data from their homepages and academic information sites. Available at <http://nk.dongguk.edu> and <http://gs.dongguk.edu> about Dongguk University, <http://home.ewha.ac.kr/~nk21> and <http://graduate.ewha.ac.kr> about Ewha Womans University, <http://nknology.korea.ac.kr> and [http://graduate.korea.ac.kr/nok\\_01.htm](http://graduate.korea.ac.kr/nok_01.htm) about Korea University, <http://web.yonsei.ac.kr/ikus1/index.htm> and <http://graduate.yonsei.ac.kr> about Yonsei University, and <http://www.nk.ac.kr> about the University of North Korean Studies.

the author and the readers will be in a better position to carry out such research in the future with this work on the current state of North Korean studies in Korea. The acceleration of globalization after the 1990s has also increased interdependency among countries. Indeed, interdependency among Northeast Asian countries surrounding the Korean peninsula has strengthened extremely rapidly. With the internationalization of North Korean issues, the quantitative and qualitative growth of North Korean studies is increasingly speeding up as if it reflects the international trends. To establish this area as an independent discipline, North Korean studies should be academically focused on North Korea itself, examining the questions related to what it is and why it does, as well as practically focused research on North Korean issues, such as what it does and what it should do. These efforts should be based on a serious and comprehensive discussion about the identity of North Korean studies among researchers involved in the area.

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## 동아시아 지역단위의 식량안보체계 구축을 향하여: 2007-08년 쌀값 파동의 교훈을 중심으로

김동엽

동아시아 국가들은 개별적으로 자국의 식량안보 문제에 대해 전적인 책임을 감당해 왔다. 개별국가들은 식량안보를 확보하기 위한 유일한 방안으로 자급자족 상태의 구현을 상정한다. 그러나 식량안보의 위협은 점점 더 다양해지고 또한 예기치 않은 곳에서 나타남에 따라 개별국가 단위의 접근이 더욱 어려워지고 있다는 현실을 깨닫기 시작했다. 특히 2007-08년 동아시아에 불어 닥친 쌀값 파동은 식량안보문제에 대한 기존의 개별적 접근방법이 오히려 전반적인 상황을 악화시킬 수 있다는 교훈을 남겼다. 이러한 교훈에 입각하여 동아시아 국가들의 지도자들은 식량안보를 확보하기 위한 지역단위의 체계를 모색하기 시작했다. APTERR의 제도화는 지역단위의 식량안보 확보를 위한 진일보한 움직임으로 평가된다. 시작단계에 있는 APTERR은 지역국가들 간의 상호 신뢰를 구축한다는 의미가 강하다. 일단 지역 국가들 간에 동아시아 지역단위의 식량안보체계가 신뢰할 만한 것이라는 확신을 심어주게 되면, 그 동안 개별적으로 추구하던 자급자족 정책을 내려놓음으로써 개별국가들의 식량안보에 대한 부담을 줄일 수 있게 될 것이다.

주제어: 식량안보, 지역협력, 동아시아, 2007-08 식량위기, APTERR

## 한국에서의 북한학 연구: 북한연구의 현황 및 정체성 확립 방안

김용순 · 이은국 · 송해경

본 연구는 북한학의 정체성을 정립하기 위한 노력의 일환으로 2008년까지 한국에서 발간된 석·박사논문 중 북한관련 연구의 경향, 특히 학위수여기관을 중심으로 한 양적 분석을 시도하고 있다. 관련 학과의 효과적인 운영과 관련 학회의 체계적인 활동이 북한학의 질적 발전에 새로운 기회를 제공하고 있음을 전제하고, 본 연구는 먼저 북한학의 지역연구로서의 학제적 접근 방법과 연구분야 및 주제의 다양성, 그리고 연구의 질적·양적 발전을 확인하고 있다. 북한학이

정체성을 확립하고 독자적인 학문으로서 확고히 자리매김 하기 위해서는 다음의 세 가지 측면에서 체계적인 노력이 요구된다: 첫째는 북한학의 활성화와 확대를 위한 정부차원에서의 지원, 둘째는 관련 교과과정의 체계적인 관리를 위한 학교 차원에서의 장기적인 지원, 셋째는 연구자 차원에서 학문적인 요구에 의한 다양한 분야에 대한 연구의 재활성화 노력이다. 무엇보다 중요한 것은 북한을 연구하는 학자들 사이에서 북한학의 정체성에 대한 인식의 차이를 좁히는 것일 것이다.

**주제어: 북한학, 정체성, 지역연구, 학제적 접근, 학제간 연구**