

North Korean Studies as a Developing Field*

Jae-Cheon Lim · Eun Kook Lee** · Yongsoon Kim

Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to facilitate the expansion of scholarly discussions by addressing the importance of developing North Korean Studies as an academic field. Our decision to write this paper was influenced by the following three factors—the increasing number of North Korea experts with diverse academic credentials, the rapid accumulation of publications about the state, and the establishments of educational institutes of North Korean Studies. In this paper we define North Korean Studies, its boundaries and its status. Here, North Korean Studies is defined as a field where the politics, economics, and socio-cultural phenomena in North Korea are studied, as well as inter-Korean relations. Among the great variety of potentially relevant publications it could encompass, the field only proposes to include scholarly works on North Korea and Korean unification. We maintain that North Korean Studies should be categorized as area studies rather than comparative studies, even though it has a comparative origin. The viability of North Korean Studies becoming a field depends on whether it can establish a stable mechanism for reproducing itself. This paper reviews the four requirements necessary for the studies to develop into an academic field, which are as follows: educational and research institutes, an established methodology, scholarly associations and journals, and stability maintenance.

Key words: North Korean studies, unification studies, area studies, comparative studies, methodology

I. Introduction

Since Korea was divided into North and South Korea in 1945, research on North Korea has demonstrated more sensitivity to the two Koreas' political situations than any other research field in South Korea. During the Cold War, the majority of publications on North Korea were South Korean government propaganda that condemned both communism and North Korea, and that publicized the

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** Eun Kook Lee is the corresponding author.

South's legitimacy over the North. Even scholarly writings were published only under the explicit or tacit permissions of the South Korean government.

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s marked a turning point in the evolution of North Korean Studies in South Korea. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union allowed scholars more academic freedom to study both communism and North Korea. The democratization of the South Korean government in the late 1980s also allowed more diverse topics on North Korea to be officially sanctioned, even ones that had been forbidden during the Cold War. In addition, North Korean Studies has grown alongside the rapidly developing inter-Korean relations over the last decade. In other words, concurrent international and domestic changes contributed to a favorable environment for the growth of scholarly interest in North Korea.

Besides situational factors outside the academy, three internal factors contributed to the growth of North Korean Studies. First, a number of scholars in diverse disciplines began writing articles and books about North Korea. At an earlier stage of North Korean Studies, political scientists usually studied North Korea. North Korean Studies was thus considered to be the domain of political science. After the Cold War, however, political science no longer monopolized North Korean Studies, as many scholars with different academic backgrounds (sociology, economics, law, and history) contributed to the research. With increasing number of scholars engaging in North Korean Studies, some of them began to develop scientifically executed studies on North Korea through data collection, precise research methodology, and theoretical frameworks. They were actively involved in academic debates on the framework for North Korean Studies including insiders' versus outsiders' approaches to North Korea, and the idiosyncrasy versus the generality of the North Korean system (Choe 2003, 11; Song 1995, 205-218 & 251-262; Kang 1998, 7-41; Kim 1998, 43-64; Pak 1997, 160-187; Ku 2003, 280-305).

Second, the increase in publications about the North produced in recent years has also contributed to the development of North Korean Studies, particularly over the last ten years. The rising numbers of research institutes, scholarly associations, and academic journals on North Korean Studies facilitated its growth. The third factor that affected the rise of North Korean Studies is the founding of educational institutes in several universities. Since the Department of North Korean Studies was created in the Graduate School of Public Administration, Kyungnam University, in 1989, several universities (Dongguk, Myongji, Korea, Ewha, University of North Korean Studies, and Yonsei) have established undergraduate or graduate programs of North Korean Studies. Graduate programs in these universities have especially played a critical role in developing North Korea experts.

The three factors mentioned above—North Korea experts with diverse academic credentials, an

accumulation of publications about the North, and the establishments of educational institutes of North Korean Studies—have been influential in our choosing to write this paper. The main goal of this paper is to facilitate the expansion of scholarly discussions by addressing the importance of developing North Korean Studies as an academic field.

This is not the first time that the issue of North Korean Studies being an academic field is raised. In 1999, several scholars analyzed a number of research areas in North Korean Studies, including its past research and future prospects, in *Pundan pansegi Puk-Han yŏn'gusa (History of North Korean Studies for the Divided Half Century)*. In the book, Kang Sŏng-yun (1999, 18-19) addressed the questions of “approach and methodology,” “infrastructure,” and “interactions with North Korean scholars” for the development of North Korean Studies.

In spite of its significance, Kang’s writing has remained introductory, failing to stimulate much scholarly discussion about the prospect of North Korean Studies growing into an independent discipline. As mentioned above, North Korean Studies has been rapidly developing over the ten years, since Kang’s work in 1999. Given the growth of North Korean Studies, we believe that it is time to deliberate its further disciplinary development. For this purpose, we will propose a definition for North Korean Studies, for its boundaries and for its potential status. In addition, this paper will review the necessary requirements for North Korean Studies to become an academic field.

II. Definition, Boundaries, and Status of North Korean Studies

1. Definition and Boundaries

How do we define North Korean Studies? The term “North Korean Studies” has been used among North Korea specialists. Like other area studies, such as American Studies, Chinese Studies, or Japanese Studies, North Korean Studies may be employed to refer to studies of the area of North Korea. Unlike other area studies, however, North Korean Studies is uniquely meaningful in the context of Korea being divided into two states and pursuing national unification. Thus, it often deals with unification issues as well as the delimited area of North Korea. In this paper, North Korean Studies is defined as a field where the politics, economics, and socio-cultural phenomena in North Korea are studied alongside inter-Korean relations.

Some North Korea specialists prefer the term “Unification Studies” to North Korean Studies (Yi 1998). The research subjects of the two studies are not mutually exclusive, however. In practice, they

have the same analytical targets: North Korea and Korean unification. Whether researchers use “Unification Studies” or “North Korean Studies” depends on whether they focus on Korean unification or on North Korea in their research field. In this case, we employ the term “North Korean Studies” because we place North Korea at the center of the studies and unification as a peripheral but related question.

How then do we determine the boundaries of North Korean Studies? What do we include or exclude in establishing these? In outlining the boundaries of North Korean Studies, we borrow the concepts of “focus” and “locus” from Robert T. Golembiewski(1977, 7)'s use of these terms to schematize the evolution of public administration. “Focus” refers to the research targets of a discipline (the “what”), and “locus” to the places that engender specific disciplinary products (the “where”).

By using the two notions, we specify the purview of North Korean Studies according to three following classifications. First, by the “locus” of publications on North Korea, we separate civilian from governmental publications. The publications produced in the civilian sector are included in North Korean Studies, while most of the governmental sector publications are excluded. Among governmental sector publications, only scholarly works that resulted from government projects or are funded by the government are included in North Korean Studies.

Second, we subdivide the civilian publications on North Korea into academic and non-academic ones. In other words, the works written in non-academic “locus” do not belong to North Korean Studies because we believe that the studies should be located within the academy. Thus, non-academic writings, like North Korean travel essays and journalistic commentary, are excluded.

Third, regardless of whether works are written by North Korea experts or non-North Korea experts, we include any scholarly writings in North Korean Studies as long as their “focus” is on North Korea. We often encounter non-North Korea experts’ scholarly literatures whose main topic is North Korea. These literatures should be included in North Korean Studies.

Among the three classifications above, the first two are categorized according to “locus” and the last according to “focus.”

2. Status

Area studies has traditionally been considered to be part of comparative studies (Zahariadis 1997, 4). Similarly, North Korean Studies was regarded as a subfield of comparative politics within the South Korean academy at an early period in its development. Political scientists who studied

comparative communism used to write about North Korea (Choe, 10). Although area studies originates in comparative studies, the two disciplines differ on several points.

First, area studies and comparative studies show symbolic distinction in their framing terminology. The name “comparative studies,” including comparative politics and comparative sociology, emphasizes the discipline’s research methodology (“comparison”), while area studies emphasizes its research subject (“area”). In other words, comparative studies suggests the how of the analysis (Zahariadis, 3), while area studies indicates the what.

Second, the two studies are distinctive in their research goals and geographical scales. Comparative studies seeks similarities and differences between countries through comparison and contrast (Zahariadis, 3), while area studies looks to discover certain implications through an in-depth research of one area. Comparative studies is cross-national and thus exceeds geographic boundaries. In principle, it can compare all countries in the world. Yet area studies are geographically limited by nature.

Third, area studies is “multidisciplinary in inclination and training. In addition to knowing the politics of a region or nation, [area specialists] seek also to master its history, literature, and languages. They not only absorb the work of humanists but also that of other social scientists.” Additionally, “the professional audience of area studies consists of researchers from many disciplines, who have devoted their scholarly life to work on the region or nation” (Bates 1997, 166). Comparative studies does not necessarily require comparativists to acquire diverse disciplinary knowledge, however. In some cases, it would be unrealistic for comparativists to master the languages of all the countries that they compare if they study several countries.

Fourth, comparative studies requires that researchers develop theories and test hypotheses more than area studies does. Area specialists tend to emphasize cultural contexts and obtain data of a specific nation or region, while comparativists try to collect cross-cultural data sets beyond national boundaries and, from their research, attempt to find general theories that are not context bound (Bates, 166).

The aforementioned distinctions, however, should not be regarded as absolute but rather as relative. Rather than mutually exclusive, area studies and comparative studies are complementary and interdependent. Area studies has produced a great number of case studies and developed case study methodologies, which supports the research of comparativists who obtain the data they need from area studies. Area specialists also employ theories developed by comparativists to apply to specific area phenomena. Area specialists’ applications of comparative theories to case studies contribute to comparative experts’ theoretical generalizations (King et al. 1994, 44-45).

How then should North Korean Studies be categorized as a branch of learning? Area studies or comparative studies? We maintain that, as the term implies, North Korean Studies fits better intellectually and practically with area studies.

As mentioned before, an area specialist must be proficient in the language(s), history, politics, and economy of the country that he or she specializes in. For their intellectual development, it is necessary for area specialists with varied academic backgrounds to interact with each other. With the status of area studies, North Korean Studies could facilitate academic exchanges among such diverse specialists by encouraging the formation of scholarly associations and holding academic conferences.

In North Korean Studies, there are three professional groups. The first group consists of scholars who study North Korea's domestic politics, economy, or culture. The second includes those analyzing North Korea's diplomatic relations with other countries. The last group includes comparativists who compare North Korea with other socialist countries in policy or non-policy areas. That is to say, specialists on North Korean domestic sectors, international relations experts, and comparativists compose the primary professional audience of North Korean Studies. In this diverse scholarly arrangement, it would be less practical to characterize North Korean Studies as comparative studies than as area studies.

We recognize that tensions exist among the three professional groups. Specialists' differing analytical approaches toward North Korea result in different research focuses. For example, while specialists of North Korean domestic sectors tend to emphasize the peculiarity of North Korea, comparative experts tend to stress the features that North Korea has in common with other socialist countries (Ku, 281; Ryu 2001). Thus far, the academic tension between the two professional groups appears to have had a positive impact on the development of North Korean Studies. For the reader, the former shows the peculiar features of North Korea, while the latter provides the similarities between North Korea and other socialist countries. Debates between the two groups encourage each side to develop more refined arguments in order to defend or offend the other.

III. Requirements for an Independent Field

Although the research subject of North Korea exists, and scholars study it, North Korean Studies will not automatically develop into an independent academic field. Without both specialists' conscious efforts and other material bases, it will not evolve into a field. Whether North Korean Studies will become a field is related to the question of whether it can establish a stable mechanism

for reproducing itself. Regarding the establishment of a reproduction mechanism for North Korean Studies, we will review the following four factors in this paper: educational and research institutes, methodology, scholarly associations and journals, and stability maintenance.

1. Educational and Research Institutes

Of key importance in developing North Korean Studies into an academic field are the academic departments and graduate programs of North Korean Studies in universities. The departments and programs educate students in the scholarship and practice of and provide an “organizing focus” (Golembiewski, 5) for North Korean Studies. Without these educational institutes, it would not be realistic to raise the possibility of a North Korean Studies field. Just as the department of political science plays a key role in making political science a discipline in the South Korean academy (Kim 1994, 10), we expect the educational organizations to be the foundational structure for the advancement of North Korean Studies.

As said before, the first educational institute was the Department of North Korean Studies at the Graduate School of Public Administration in Kyungnam University in 1989, which evolved into the University of North Korean Studies at the graduate level. Since then, Dongguk, Myongji, and Korea Universities opened the Department of North Korean Studies both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Ewha University established North Korean Studies and Yonsei University opened Unification Studies both in interdisciplinary graduate programs <Table 1>.

<Table 1> Educational Institutes on North Korean Studies

Educational Institutes	Establishment	Other
University of North Korean Studies	March 1998	Changed from Department of North Korean Studies, Graduate School of Public Administration, Kyungnam, 1989
Department of North Korean Studies, Dongguk	March 1994	
Department of North Korean Studies, Myongji	February 1995	
Department of North Korean Studies, Kwandong	March 1996	Changed to Department of Politics and Diplomacy, March 2006
Department of North Korean Studies, Korea	March 1997	
North Korean Studies, Ewha	March 1998	Interdisciplinary graduate program
Department of North Korean Studies, Sunmun	March 1998	Changed to Department of Northeast Asian Studies, March 2008
Unification Studies, Yonsei	March 2004	Interdisciplinary graduate program

Although Kwandong and Sunmun Universities both established a Department of North Korean Studies, they changed them to the Department of Politics and Diplomacy (Kwandong) and the Department of Northeast Asian Studies (Sunmun) due to a lack of student interest, among other reasons <Table 1>.

Besides the educational organizations, research institutes on North Korea and unification are also important actors in building up North Korean Studies. The Asiatic Research Center at Korea University was the first such organization. Founded in 1957 at the peak of the Cold War, it began to tackle North Korean issues of academic interest (An 1982, 381-382). Since 1958, its journal, *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, has produced a number of articles on North Korea and unification as well as more generally on Asia.

<Table 2> Main Research Institutes for North Korean and Unification Studies

Institutes	Establishment	Other
Institute of North Korean Studies	1971	
Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University	1973	Changed from Institute for Korean Unification Affairs in 1972
Institute for Peace Affairs	1983	
Korea Institute for National Unification	1990	
Center for Korean Unification Studies, Yonsei University	1995	
Sejong Institute	1996	Changed from Ilhae Foundation
Institute for North Korean Studies, Korea University	1998	
Institute for North Korean Studies, Dongguk University	2000	Changed from Security Institute
Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University	2006	

Since then, other research institutes specializing in North Korea and unification have been built, including the following: the Institute of North Korean Studies, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies (Kyungnam University), the Institute for Peace Affairs, the Korea Institute for National Unification, the Center for Korean Unification Studies (Yonsei University), the Sejong Institute, the Institute for North Korean Studies (Dongguk University), the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies (Seoul

National University), the Institute for North Korean Studies (Korea University), and others <Table 2>. These institutes have produced a number of publications on North Korea and unification and played a role in upholding and expanding North Korean Studies.

2. Methodology

North Korean Studies' expansion into a field also depends on its methodological development. The definition of methodology varies among scholars. Although some use methodology and method interchangeably, the two concepts should be differentiated. Here, methodology broadly refers in a research to "a whole range of strategies and procedures that include: developing a picture of an empirical world; asking questions about that world and turning these into researchable problems; finding the best means of doing so—that involve choices about methods and the data to be sought, the development and use of concepts, and the interpretation of findings (Alasuutari et al. 2008, 1)." On the other hand, methods as a part of methodology mean "techniques of gathering and analyzing data (Alastalo 2008, 26)."

Methodology is an underdeveloped element of North Korean Studies. Unlike other area studies, North Korean Studies has defects in its developing methodology because it is not possible to conduct fieldwork in North Korea (Kang Söng-yun, 18). North Korea's isolationism does not allow outsiders to perform scholarly fieldwork in its territory, which is forbidden to bring back to the outside world as much records as possible about how North Koreans live.

Another methodological difficulty in North Korean Studies relates to the questionable reliability of statistics distributed from North Korea. Besides the difficulty of acquiring information from the secluded North Korean society, the North Korean government has also been known to manipulate its statistical information according to its political purposes and to release it to the external audiences accordingly. This manipulation destabilizes the reliability of North Korean statistics, which limits the employment of statistical methodology in North Korean research.

In spite of the external limits constraining its development, there have been some efforts among North Korea specialists towards improving their methodologies. These efforts include scholarly discussions on what perspectives specialists should adopt in analyzing North Korea (e.g. insiders' versus outsiders' perspectives on North Korea) and on whether or not comparative approaches can be applied in the analysis of North Korea (e.g. the idiosyncrasy versus the generality of the North Korean system) (University of North Korean Studies 2003; Song, 205-218 & 251-262; Kang 1998, 7-41; Kang 1990, 11-37). We, however, cannot deny that, while scholars in other social sciences have

focused a great deal of effort on developing their methodologies, specialists in North Korean Studies have focused relatively little on this kind of endeavor.

Until now, there has been a great challenge to methodological development within North Korean Studies: methodological unbalance. Qualitative methods have been overwhelmingly used by North Korea specialists. In other words, methodological bias has been prevalent in North Korean Studies. In a situation where field work in North Korea is impossible, literature, published in North Korea and imported to South Korea, and North Korean defectors to South Korea are the main research subjects in North Korean Studies. North Korea specialists depend heavily on methods like content analysis of the literature or interviews with the defectors for their analysis. Most research results from the content analysis and interviews have been obtained through qualitative methods, not quantitative ones (Ko 2006). Historiography has usually been combined with contextual reading. There have been fewer research results obtained through statistical methods or mathematical formation (Kim 1995; Yi, 2004; Kwon & Lim 2006; Yang, 2006; Lee 2007).

In fact, students in North Korean Studies generally display a negative attitude toward quantitative methods. They have tended to communicate that “quantitative explanations are artificial” and “oversimplify social phenomena” (Bailey 1982, 32). The minimal availability of statistics on North Korea and the questionable reliability of those that are available have strengthened this negative attitude toward quantitative methods. However, qualitative methods are not superior to quantitative ones and vice versa. Each side has its own merits. Qualitative methods are good for broad explanations of one or a small number of cases (King et al., 4) and quantitative methods are appropriate for finding causal relationships between variables and for achieving more defined accounts through modeling (Bailey, 32).

This methodological bias has been a great obstacle obstructing theory building in North Korean Studies. A great number of case studies have been conducted in North Korean Studies where qualitative methods have been employed. A case study usually focuses on a specific event, policy, or issue. By nature it is very difficult to generalize or duplicate research implications for theory building from the case study (King et al., 4).

In order to accumulate the research results from previous case studies into theoretical models, previous research hypotheses should be tested with quantitative methods. That is to say, specialists should test other specialists’ theoretical assumptions and refine them through causal analysis. Qualitative research should be supported by quantitative research in order for theory building to occur. However, the methodological partiality mentioned above has limited this kind of theoretical development. At this moment, the methodological balance between quantitative and qualitative

methods is necessary to facilitate theory building in North Korean Studies.

In conclusion, the current methodological partiality should be overcome in North Korean Studies in order for it to develop as an academic field. Besides only using qualitative methods, North Korea specialists need to more actively employ quantitative methods in their analysis. If they are not proficient in quantitative methods, the specialists need to cooperate with quantitative method specialists for their research.

Educational institutes of North Korean Studies should strengthen methodological education and teach both qualitative and quantitative methods in undergraduate and graduate courses. The students need to learn how to establish research questions, develop hypotheses (or theory), collect data, test hypotheses with data (or apply theory to phenomena) and interpret research results. The institutes should train their students to master either of the two methods properly, according to their research types, in writing their research reports.

3. Scholarly Associations and Journals

Scholarly associations and journals help an academic discipline to grow. Through meetings, conferences, and publications, the scholarly association facilitates contact and exchanges among members, encouraging them to foster knowledge of their disciplinary area. Publishing its issues at regular intervals, the journal encourages scholarly discussions on diverse themes and issues.

There are two associations for North Korean Studies: Puk-Han yŏn'gu hakhoe (Korean Association of North Korean Studies: KANKS) and Puk-Han hakhoe (Association of North Korean Studies: ANKS) both of which are based in South Korea. The KANKS was established by North Korea specialists in December 1996 and the ANKS was by the Institute of North Korean Studies (INKS) in January 1984. The KANKS has published its semiannual journal *Puk-Han yŏn'gu hakhoebo* (*North Korean Studies Review*) since 1997 and the ANKS has an annual journal *Puk-Han hakbo* (*Journal of North Korean Studies*), which the INKS has issued since 1977.

The roles of scholarly associations and their journals are important towards North Korean studies' building up its identity as a field. As aforementioned, there are specialists with diverse academic backgrounds in North Korean Studies. Except for those in some departments and research institutes of North Korean Studies, a number of North Korea specialists work in different academic or non-academic arenas. Under the circumstances, it is not easy for the specialists to experience a community of North Korea specialists without belonging to an association. By providing them with a space for their specialty and by promoting scholarly exchanges, the associations for North Korean

Studies and their journals contribute to building up the identity of North Korean Studies.

But the activities of the KANKS and the ANKS are relatively weak, compared with scholarly associations in other academic fields. The associations should promote scholarly publications among North Korea specialists. For examples, the *Journal of North Korean Studies* publishes its issue only once year. It needs to be developed to at least a semiannual journal to encourage scholarly contributions.

In addition, the KANKS and the ANKS should make efforts to internationalize the North Korean Studies of South Korea by incorporating foreign North Korea specialists as members. The associations should also have academic exchanges with foreign specialists through annual international conferences. The *North Korean Studies Review* and the *Journal of North Korean Studies* should be ready to run non-Korean language articles as well as Korean ones and be distributed to universities in foreign countries for Korea specialists.

4. Stability Maintenance

As said in the introduction, the ebbs and flows of North Korean Studies have been deeply affected by inter-Korean relations and government unification policy. North Korea specialists may agree that the establishment of South Korea's Ministry of Unification founded in March 1969 was a special event in the development of North Korean Studies. The South Korean government's unification policy of the 1970s played a role as a catalyst in the evolution of North Korean Studies. The ministry stimulated scholars' interest in North Korea through seminars, research projects, and the research journals *Kukt'o t'ongil (National Unification)* and *T'ongil ch'ongch'aek (Unification Policy)* (An, 383; Ch'ön 2008, 2).

In particular, the end of the Cold War and the democratization of South Korean society in the late 1980s became favorable situational factors for the development of North Korean Studies. When the South Korean government adopted its engagement policy toward North Korea during the last ten years, North Korean Studies grew rapidly. Most departments and graduate programs of North Korean Studies were established during the 1990s and the 2000s. A number of research institutes of North Korean Studies also appeared in the same period <Table 1 and 2>.

North Korean Studies' situational sensitivity has not always positively impacted its development. When the government set up the unification policy to expedite inter-Korean relations, North Korean Studies also grew. When the opposite occurred, the studies declined. In order for North Korean Studies to develop into an academic field, it must be able to maintain its stability regardless of

changing external situations. Its sensitivity to external situations is one of the biggest challenges that North Korean Studies currently faces in its evolution as a field.

Another challenge against North Korean Studies is the narrow market for North Korea specialists and graduates of North Korean Studies. As in the cases of the Department of North Korean Studies in the Kwandong and the Sunmun University, students, particularly undergraduate ones, hesitate to apply for the department because North Korean Studies does not appear to provide them with good job prospects after their graduation.

In a sense, the sensitivity issue relates closely to the job market issue because the progress in inter-Korean relations tends to expand the job market for North Korean Studies. In other words, if the government improves relations with North Korea, it needs more North Korea specialists who work for inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation. More inter-Korean improvement demands more North Korea specialists, which may create more markets for North Korean Studies to a certain extent, and vice versa.

Regarding stability maintenance, another critical issue restrains the expansion of North Korean Studies: whether North Korean Studies would become obsolete after Korean unification. This issue represents North Korean Studies as potentially becoming irrelevant. Combined with the current dismal North Korean economic conditions and North Korea's instability, this potential irrelevance weakens North Korean Studies. As long as North Korea specialists do not provide answers to this issue, the growth of North Korean Studies will be constrained.

In conclusion, as many experts concur, a North Korean Studies that deals with North Korean and inter-Korean issues cannot function independently of the destiny of North Korea and development in North-South Korean relations. If its growth and decline are inevitably affected by external situations, the key remaining issue for North Korea specialists would be how and how much North Korean Studies will be able to minimize the impact of external changes on itself and create prospects for and academically stable future for itself.

IV. Conclusion

Thus far, we have addressed the issues surrounding North Korean Studies being a developing field. Compared to the North Korean Studies of the 1970s and 1980s, it has grown quickly since the 1990s: the increasing number of experts on North Korea with diverse academic credentials, the accumulation of publications about the North, and the establishments of educational and research institutes of North

Korean Studies all point to its growth as a field. Given the rapid development of the studies, we believe that it is time to take into consideration North Korean Studies becoming a field.

In this paper, North Korean Studies is defined as a field where the politics, economics, and socio-cultural phenomena in North Korea are studied, as well as inter-Korean relations. In order to delimit its range, North Korean Studies excludes all government publications on North Korea, except those developed through government research projects and written by scholars. It also excludes non-academic publications within the civilian sector. North Korean Studies only encompasses scholarly works on North Korea and Korean unification.

We maintain that North Korean Studies should be understood to be an area studies, rather than as part of comparative studies, although it has a comparative origin. There are specialists with diverse expertise within North Korean Studies such as specialists of North Korean domestic issues, comparativists, and international specialists. It would be easier to bind these diverse specialists together into area studies than comparative studies.

To develop North Korean Studies into an independent field, North Korea specialists must make conscious efforts. Regarding this issue, we have reviewed four factors: educational and research institutes, methodology, scholarly associations and journals, and stability maintenance. The educational institutes play the organizational role of focusing North Korean Studies by developing North Korea specialists, while research institutes contribute to the growth of North Korean Studies through their voluminous publications.

Methodological underdevelopment has obstructed North Korean Studies' advancement as a field. Qualitative methods have been dominant in the studies to date and there have been few quantitative research results. The methodological unbalance between quantitative and qualitative methods has limited theory building in North Korean Studies. Solving this unbalance would benefit the studies' methodological development as well as its advancement.

The scholarly associations and their journals can build a sense of community by bringing together varied North Korea experts into one organization and promoting scholarly discussions and publications. To improve North Korean Studies, the associations should not only encourage scholarly contributions to their journals, but also internationalize North Korean Studies by including foreign North Korea specialists in their membership and publishing their articles in foreign languages.

Regarding the issue of stability maintenance, the three challenges of situational sensitivity, students' job prospects, and the destiny of North Korea will continue to influence the ebbs and flows of North Korean Studies in the future. How and how long North Korean Studies endures depends on how North Korea specialists cope with the challenges and reduce their negative impact on the studies.

Conclusively, what we have argued in this paper does not conclude the questions surrounding North Korean studies as a field. Instead, it offers an introductory argument for the purposes of facilitating discussions of the topic among North Korea specialists. We hope that the specialists engage together in developing North Korean Studies into an academic field.

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- Jae-Cheon Lim(임재천)은 2007년 미 하와이대학교에서 정치학 박사학위를 취득하였으며, 현재 고려대학교 북한학과 조교수로 재직 중이다. 전공분야는 북한정치이며 주로 리더십 및 제도가 관심분야다. 대표논문으로는 “Institutional Change in North Korean Economic Development since 1984: The Competition between Hegemonic and Non-hegemonic Rules and Norms” (Pacific Affairs, Spring 2009)가 있으며 대표저서로서는 Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea (London: Routledge, 2009) 등이 있다.
- Eun Kook Lee(이은국)는 1991년 미 시카고대학교에서 박사학위를 취득하였으며 현재 연세대학교 행정학과 교수로 재직 중이다. 전공분야는 공공선택, 정책분석이며 주로 군비경쟁 및 선거와 경제가 관심분야다. 대표논문으로는 “한국의 국방비와 경제성장간의 인과성분석”(『정책분석평가학회보』 2002)이 있으며 대표저서로서는 『남북한군비경쟁론』(서울: 대영문화사, 2007), 『한국의 선거와 경제』(서울: 도서출판 나남, 2008) 등이 있다.
- Yongsoon Kim(김용순)은 2008년 연세대학교 정치외교학과에서 박사학위를 취득하였으며, 현재 Duke University에 방문 연구원으로 가 있다. 전공분야는 북한 정치이며 주로 북한외교정책, 북미관계, 정치 심리가 관심분야다. 대표논문으로는 “북한의 대미 강압홍정 외교행태에 관한 연구: 선군 리더십을 중심으로”(『한국정치학회보』 2009) 등이 있다.

<국문초록>

발전하는 학문분야로서의 북한학

임재천 · 이은국 · 김용순
(고려대, 연세대, 듀크대)

본 논문은 북한학이 하나의 학문분야로써 지속적인 발전을 위해 필요한 요건들에 대한 학술적인 논의를 촉진함을 목적으로 작성되었다. 특히, 본 논문은 냉전 이후 급속하게 발전하고 있는 북한연구에서의 다음 세 가지 배경—다양한 전문분야에서의 북한연구가의 등장, 북한관련 논문 및 저서의 급속한 양적 팽창, 북한연구의 교육 및 연구기관의 성장—을 바탕으로 북한학의 독자적인 정체성 모색을 위한 논의 주제들을 제공한다는 점에 있어서 그 의의가 있다고 할 것이다. 본 논문은 크게 두 부분으로 나뉘는 바, 첫째, 북한학에 대한 정의 및 범주와 위상, 둘째, 독자적인 학문적 위상을 위한 필요조건들이다. 저자들은 비록 북한학의 뿌리가 비교연구에서부터 기원하고 있지만, 하나의 독자적인 지역학으로 발전되어야 한다고 주장하며, 북한학의 범위를 북한과 남북관계관련 일련의 정치·경제·사회문화 현상들에 대한 연구들로 한정하고 있다. 또한 북한학이 하나의 독자적인 학문분야로써 재생산체계를 갖기 위해 교육 및 연구기관의 성장, 방법론적 발전, 학회와 학술지의 발전, 그리고 북한학의 안정성의 확보 등이 이루어져야 한다고 주장하고 있다.

주제어: 북한학, 통일학, 지역학, 비교연구, 방법론