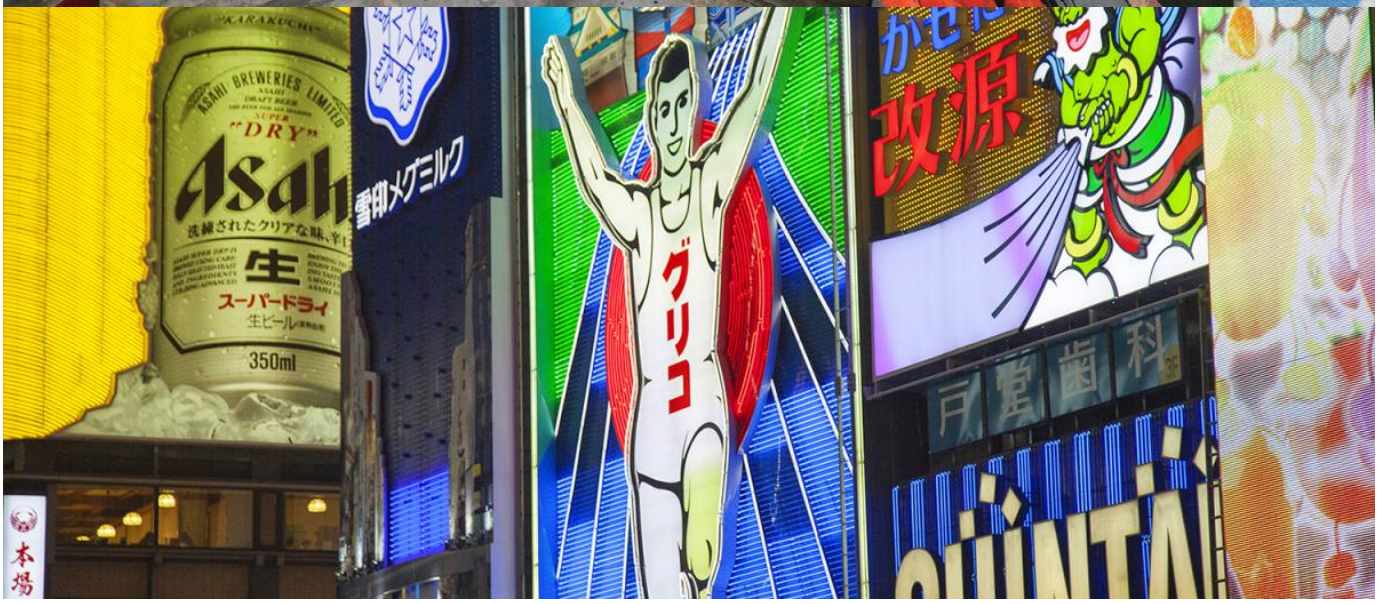
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The Rise of Global Studies in East Asia: Institutions and Ideology in National Education Systems

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Over the past 25 years, hundreds of global studies (GS) programs have been established at universities around the world, and have proven popular with students. Nevertheless, some trends have raised concerns about the future of GS, especially in North America and Europe. One has to do with the lifecycle of an interdisciplinary field. When GS first emerged, inquiries into globalization were outside the paradigms of traditional disciplines. Since then many GS themes and questions have become legitimate areas of inquiries within the traditional disciplines. This raises the question of redundancy and continued university support for GS programs. The second concern is about globalization itself. The victories of Brexit and Donald Trump could appear as the decline of the liberal ideology of “open” borders that has enabled the most recent wave of globalization. This raises questions about the ongoing relevance of and support for GS as a field centered on the study of globalization.

This essay considers the prospects of global studies programs in East Asia. The aforementioned concerns of disciplinary competition and anti-globalization are muted in China, Japan, and Korea where the position of GS in universities is very different than in North America and Europe, and the commitment of East Asian states to globalization remains strong. Therefore, this essay shows that even though nearly all GS programs around the world share similar concepts and methodologies, their situations and prospects vary by national political contexts.

East Asia is a crucial region for the field of global studies. There are dozens of GS programs at the undergraduate and graduate level in Japan, and many more around Asia. Japan has been a pioneer, with the world’s first GS program founded in 1997 at Hitotsubashi University and the first PhD in Global Studies started in 2005 at

Sophia University. Additionally, students from Asia account for the majority of the world's international students, and many study in other Asian countries, often in such English-taught programs as GS.

National Projects of Higher Education Reform

Global studies programs at Chinese, Japanese, and Korean universities occupy a certain position in national projects that link higher education reform to elite concerns of national economic competitiveness. This link began in the late twentieth century as rising wages undermined East Asian export economies based on cheap labor. This led government and business elites to view higher education as a means to increase national "human capital" in order to move to higher "valued-added" economies. This, in turn, led to national projects to create "world-class universities" for purposes of economic competitiveness and national prestige.

National education ministries have pressured universities to increase competitiveness, often involving teaching and publishing in English and increasing the number of foreign students. This trend began in Japan[1] in the 1980s with an "internationalization" project to increase the number of foreign students at Japanese universities, then expanded in the early 2000s to a comprehensive "globalization" of universities. Similar projects appeared in China[2] and Korea[3] starting in the 1990s.



Global studies programs have proven to be well positioned in these national projects, for various reasons. First, they typically have an English-taught curriculum and cosmopolitan student and faculty body, characteristics that government education authorities see as incubators for teaching skills deemed essential for national global competiveness. These skills, often called “global competencies” and other such terms, basically consist of English language ability and personal ease in multi-cultural settings. Therefore, university support for establishing GS programs is strong. Furthermore, English-taught GS programs are not seen as redundant with traditional disciplines, because the latter are taught in national languages.

Secondly, a GS program can increase the number of English-taught courses. This helps universities achieve targets for “globalization,” as one key measure is English-taught classes. While faculty in traditional disciplines usually resist having to teach in English, this is not the case in GS.

Thirdly, the English-taught curricula of global studies programs facilitate student exchanges and partnering with foreign universities. The establishment of exchanges and new joint and dual degrees provides universities with numerical measures towards “globalization.” Also, since GS faculty members come from diverse national

backgrounds and have completed their graduate education abroad, they have the international contacts and experience to create and operate new transnational degrees.

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Fourthly, GS programs are receptacles for international exchange students and degree students seeking to study in English. This helps institutions meet numerical targets of international students, while more broadly supporting government policies to encourage “highly skilled migrants.” The idea is that offering English-taught programs will encourage international students to come to seek degrees, and then remain after graduation to work. This is seen as contributing to national “human capital,” and helping to compensate for declines in the workforce due to aging populations.

Fifthly, GS programs can help a university play the global rankings game. One strategy is to increase faculty publications in English, which are counted in rankings, unlike publications in the national language. Hiring faculty who are already fluent in English is one way to achieve this. Therefore, GS programs, which are staffed by faculty capable of lecturing in English—often nationals with foreign degrees and international scholars—support this effort.

Ideologies and Opportunities among Faculty and Students

Of course, the faculty members have their own distinct agendas for global studies programs. In some universities, GS programs can reorient area and international studies programs towards more contemporary issues, a process also seen in North America and Europe. An example is the Graduate Program in Global Studies (GPGS) at Sophia University, which builds on the university’s traditional strengths in area studies and its sixty-year history of offering English-taught courses. In other universities GS has taken the form of innovative programs, such as the Institute for the Study of Global Issues at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, which seeks to “deurocentrize” GS, and the Critical Global Studies Institute at Sogang University in

Korea, which studies “globalization from below.”



Other GS programs emphasize national perspectives on their countries in global context. This is especially apparent among undergraduate programs targeting international and exchange students. An example is the Global Studies in Japanese Culture Program, which is opening at Japan’s Waseda University in 2017. The emphasis of such programs on media and popular culture also dovetails with such governmental soft power projects as *Cool Japan*[4] and *Hallyu* (Korean Wave).[5]

Other programs emphasize subnational histories, such as “Glocal Chaoshan” studies at China’s Shantou University Center for Global Studies, which examines regional outmigration and cultural flows.

Additionally, GS programs facilitate efforts of faculty to secure government and university research funding. This reflects expanding support for interdisciplinary research on globalization. For example, the Center for the Study of Globalization opened in China in 2013 through a partnership of Chinese and foreign universities,

the United Nations, and the local Chinese government, while in 2015 “global studies” was added as a funding category by Japan’s national research agency. GS programs are good platforms to obtain funding because they are one of the few areas in East Asian universities with interdisciplinary character, multi-national personnel, and English publications desired by funding agencies while their teaching and research is all about globalization. An example is the *Globalization of Japanese Cuisine* project at Sophia University’s GPGS, which also indicates a link between studies of cultural globalization and soft power concerns.

Global studies programs also appeal to faculty on the practical grounds of fostering a cosmopolitan campus environment. As noted above, having a GS program enables a university to hire faculty of diverse national backgrounds. This is quite different than in the traditional disciplines where existing faculty are for various reasons less receptive to having international colleagues. Also, GS programs encourage greater cosmopolitanism among students, especially at the graduate level where the student body is largely composed of international students.

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This cosmopolitanism can be seen in the overrepresentation of universities with Christian backgrounds in the establishment of GS programs. Examples are the Catholic schools of Sophia in Tokyo and Sogang University in Seoul, as well as Hong Kong Baptist University. This reflects the fact that in Asian countries, where Christianity is a minority religion, it can be a progressive force. The commitment of students at these universities to such universal values as human rights and democracy has been widely noted in the activism of students from Sophia University and Hong Kong Baptist University in, respectively, the Students for Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDS)[6] movement in Japan and the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong.[7]



Prospects for Global Studies in East Asia

For all of the reasons discussed above, global studies in East Asia faces relatively bright prospects to fill a niche for interdisciplinary English-taught programs in the social science and humanities. Although their numbers are still relatively small, existing programs are doing well and new ones are being launched in order to meet national priorities with respect to globalization and global universities. In the context of state goals of “globalization,” often narrowly defined as commitments to national economic competiveness and openness to “global talents,” global studies programs play an outsized role in promoting the mobility of students and faculty as well as empirical and critical research on globalization.

Editor's note: This essay introduces a *global-e*series titled “Global Studies in East Asia.” It consists of four additional essays presented at the symposium “Global Studies in Japan and East Asia” held on November 12-13, 2016 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Graduate Program in Global Studies at Sophia University. David L. Wank, a sociologist and faculty member in the program, is guest editor of the series.

Notes

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“Glico Man” and other signage above Dotonbori canal, Osaka, Japan 2014
Credit: Tommaso Durante, *The Visual Archive Project of the Global Imaginary*.
http://www.the-visual-archive-project-of-the-global-imaginary.com/visual...

Busan, South Korea

“Shantou revisited - Organic Regeneration of the Historic Downtown”
Image credit: Connecting Cities
http://www.connectingcities.eu/shantou-revisited/

Hong Kong, “umbrella revolution” sit-in protest in the city’s financial district.
The National, September 30, 2014
http://www.thenational.ae/world/east-asia/in-pictures-hong-kongs-umbrell...

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