

Special Issue: New Approaches to North Korean Politics

After Reunification: The Search for a Common Korean Identity

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**Abstract:** Whilst most of the literature focusing on the Korean peninsula has concentrated on how to achieve unification through confidence-building measures, dialogues, negotiation and diplomacy, little attention has been paid to how a unified Korean identity, a core component of any potential reunification scheme could develop and be sustained. The paper addresses this gap by: (1) defining what national identity is, and how Korean identities have been formed, (2) outlining how both South and North Korea have understood and used the concept of national identity, (3) suggesting possible grounds on which the two Koreas could build a new, common national identity.

**Keywords:** South Korea, North Korea, National Identity, Reunification, Nation-Building

**Highlights:**

- National identity concept exists in both North and South Korea and the concept is managed mostly by the elite powers in both countries.
- Both Koreas base their national identity on similar concepts (namely history, ethnocentrism and culture).
- Both countries affected by globalisation and struggling to maintain a consistent national identity over the years.
- Both Koreas have an uneasy relationship with anything ‘external’ to their homogeneous group and loss of homogeneity seen as a threat by both

## **Introduction**

While most of the literature focusing on the Korean peninsula has concentrated on how to achieve unification, and has thus extrapolated on confidence-building measures, dialogues, negotiation rounds, diplomatic openings as well as practical discussions on infrastructure, taxation and property rights, the nature of the Korean tensions has detracted researchers from advancing models of sustained unification. The Korean peninsula is widely known for remaining one of the only few parts of the world where remnants of the Cold War are still preventing peaceful coexistence. As a result of the partition of Korea after World War Two both Koreas have presented themselves as being the only legitimate entity having the “right to define and govern citizens of its counterparts as its own political subjects” (Park and Chang, 2005). Some have argued that the political vacuum that has been left after the Japanese occupation has led both Koreas to develop ‘dualistic and antagonistic’ identities (Bleiker, 2001).

Igniting a new strand of intellectual enquiry and research that assumes reunification as a positive development and that deals with forward policies, thus bypassing current debates that present only bleak prospects for the peninsula and that argues about the prevalence of costs and dangers when it comes to a potential reunification, the project focuses on three factors that will need to be considered in order for a potential Korean unification to be successful. Those factors, reconciliation, mutual trust and common identity are dependent from one another: in order for an eventual unification to be sustainable, it is not enough to state that both Koreas must be unified under one system. Indeed, this would assume a top-down approach, meaning that governmental structures, legal systems, economic policies as well as other components of a country would be

remoulded in order to accommodate both North and South Koreans. However, unification must address the emotional and personal component of what a country is made of: individuals. As such, it is insufficient to assume that people will naturally develop a sense of unity and belonging to a reunified Korea, as such processes are extremely complex. In essence, a Korean reunification will necessarily lead to the construction of a new nation, and as such of a new national identity: this is, for all purpose, nation-building. In Bloom's words, nation-building means "both the formation and establishment of the new state itself as a political entity, and the process of creating viable degrees of unity, adaptation, achievement and a sense of national identity among the people" (1990). In order to assess how a new Korean national identity could be created, the research will progress in three steps: (1) Defining what national identity is, and how Korean identities have been formed, (2) Outlining how both South and North Korea have understood and used the concept of national identity, (3) Find possible grounds on which the two Koreas could build a new, common national identity.

It is hypothesized that each country understands national identity differently, with North Korea sponsoring a top-down approach in which being North Korean is generally directly by the regime, and which allows little room for any development at the individual level. For South Korea, it is hypothesized that national identity was also mostly created under a top-down approach during the post-war period, but that after the 1980s and economic development, newer generations have a more fluid and sometimes confused understanding of their own national identity. Emphasis will also be put on new immigration patterns to South Korea that have started to redefine South Korean understanding of 'multiculturalism' and 'ethnocentrism'.

## **Defining National Identity**

The concept of a national identity, or a form of national consciousness, predates by far our general understanding of the nation-state system being born out of European wars and resulting in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Indeed, Smith traces the beginnings of national consciousness to the war between the Scots, French and English, with the caveat that such movements were not secular ones. Essentially, it is not “until the American and French Revolutions that nationalism appears as a ‘fully-fledged secular ideology’” (Smith, 1992). National identity is therefore the resulting feeling associated with the concept of a nation which Smith comprehensively defines as “a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (1991). A national identity gives people a sense of belonging and a way to relate to one another through a heightened ‘awareness of affiliation’ (Keane, 1993) but differs from a state’s identity: while being born out of similar factors such as people, geography, religion and customs, a state is clearly different because it incorporates governing structures through regimes (Choi, 2010). Thus there appears to be, according to Jones and Smith, two largely different yet related concepts to form a national identity: on the one hand, ascriptive qualities such as ethnicity and kinship provide a more organic and biological grounding in one’s relationship to a group, while on the other hand a voluntaristic set of qualities such as civic roles and duties determines one’s place within a polity (2001). The relationship between the ethnic and civic components of a nation is far from being straightforward, as there appears to be an inherent tension between the two, especially when considering that the examples of ‘nation-state’ that would consist of only one ascriptive group (a

homogeneous ethnic group for example) evolving within the realms of the state as defined classically in International Relations as being composed of a fixed population, fixed border, a government and an ability to enter into relations with other state is all but non-existent nowadays: Japan, Israel and the Koreas are often referred to as near nation-states in that sense, largely because of their homogeneously-perceived population, while many European states and the United States, obviously, are disqualified as nation-states because of their pluri-ethnic backgrounds. In essence, though it is generally accepted that “national identity is part of one category of collective identities, namely those with a territorial reference” (Kohli, 2000). There are many debates in the literature about whether a national identity is more of a political unit or a rather ascriptive one, and especially how national identity is projected, taught, reinforced, and recognizable. Other debates also pertain to how national identity fluctuates: this is important as it leads to questions on whether a national identity can be defined and managed, and especially on whether a particular national identity is considered at risk if it is being changed. Such discussions also lead to important normative questions on whether or not national identities can, and should be protected, or whether they should evolve and mirror evolution seen in societies and states.

The consensus is that national identity lies first and foremost within people of a specific nation, regardless of whether the concept is sustained from the people up to the state structure as a bottom-up approach, or whether it is defined and managed by a regime and regulating people as a top-down process. Because national identity can be understood as being a group identity according to Schlesinger’s work (1991), values, myths, traditions and collective memories shared and perpetuated by one people allow for a common sense of unity to be developed and maintained. The concept of place is noted as especially important by Jacobi and Stokols, as place

can be seen as a way for individuals to be bound together, but also as enabling groups to sustain a common identity over long periods of time, hence creating ‘historical traditions’ (1983). National identity can also be expressed through tangible means such as banknotes, hymns, stamps and foods, though Unwin and Hewitt note in their work on Eastern European currency design post-Soviet Union the paucity of research in that particular domain when compared to the amount of knowledge gathered by geographers when connecting people and places (2001). Eventually, most national identities are carried through ‘regulated’ knowledge transmission and acquisition processes such as education (Choi, 2011), with schooling systems providing a top-down approach through which nationhood can be fostered by a specific government (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). With educational systems providing the matrix for national identity to develop, especially by focusing on historical and civic elements that should be acquired while growing up, the concept of pride is largely seen as being one of the most recognizable manifestations of national identity. With national pride being defined as “the positive affect that the public feels toward their country as a result of their national identity” (Smith et al., 1998), Chung and Choe suggest that national pride can be found in a variety of mediums such as science, economy, or the arts, with national pride in sports being especially important for relatively small countries (2008).

While factors such as historical events, places, religions, and national heroes might appear perennial, a multitude of factors from war to economic development can have a significant impact on national identity as well. As such, national identity should also be understood as an evolving concept functioning in a similar fashion to how one’s individual identity is constructed and Erikson’s proposition that individual identity is being constantly

renegotiated as a response to one's environment is a useful parallel to how a national identity might be fluctuating (1956). Because national identity is connected to most aspects of a group through their history, places, governmental structures and sense of pride, just about every country would be interesting in maintaining a strong feeling of national identity in order to both foster unity from within as well as communicating this unity to outsiders that might be seen as a threat, or what Triandafyllidou calls a 'significant other'(1998). A 'significant other' allows for one group to develop its own identity in relation to, as well as by differentiating itself from another group that could be "a neighbouring group which shares a set of cultural traditions and/or historical experiences while the nation is perceived as a significant other because it threatens the sense of distinctiveness and uniqueness of the latter," a concept extremely salient in the context of the two Koreas (Triandafyllidou, 1998). From then on, contenting national identities can either manage or fail to coexist: Guetzkow's outlook allows for identities to, in theory at least, manage a rather peaceful coexistence if they are differentiated enough to each be able to fulfil a specific need (1955) but Kwon's more realistic (and pessimistic) proposition suggests that the need to strengthen one's national identity more often than not leads to competition, contention and conflict between countries (2011b).

### **Understanding Korean identity**

The concept of a Korean identity differs from the general understanding of what a national identity is, mostly because of the fact that the Korean nation as a group has been split in two since the end of World War Two. As a result, forces highlighted above and known to influence the formation of a group identity and therefore of a national identity such as

government structures, education, relation to territory and especially the links one group entertains with its own history are different for North and South Koreans, thus leading to two separate identities emanating from a single overarching Korean identity largely definite in terms of one unique race. Hence, Korean identity for both groups has been associated with ethnic nationalism in some cases, but highlighted as not being sufficient-enough to really understand the complexity that exists in each group, and especially how the two groups understand each other as well (Shin and Burke, 2008). North and South Koreans therefore clearly exhibit separate traits such as conflicting identities, dissonance, opposition, and security-derived expression of self, all compounded by the legal question of which group represents the ‘true’ and ‘original’ Korean population. Yet, despite those differences, Koreans as people also are a homogeneous group: this blood-based homogeneity sometimes brings both identities together toward the will to reunify.

Park and Chang provide a clear explanation of the dilemma that lies at the core of North and South Korean people, by suggesting that “the discrepancy between a single ethnic identity and the reality of political divides produces dissonance in identity maintenance” (2005). What is more difficult to assess in the literature, however, is whether a single Korean identity, born out of centuries of traditions and consolidated during the Japanese occupation has now been stretched in two different and opposing directions because of the ideological and political models imposed by the DPRK leadership on the one hand, and successive South Korean presidencies on the other hand, or whether conflicting identities have been developed in both Koreas in order to compete against one another. While it is generally assumed that North Korea’s national identity is monolithic because of the nature of the regime and the lack of political freedom, it is

questionable whether there also exists only one South Korean national identity. In this regard, Suh suggests that South Koreans are divided in regards to understanding how their relationship with the United States oscillates between alliance and dependency, and this in turn affects their own national identity (2004). What has been clearly delineated in the literature, however, is how both Koreas appear to have built their identities on what Bleiker calls ‘negative terms’ (2001), essentially because both Pyongyang and Seoul have developed political systems that claim they represent (short of being actually implemented, but at least rhetorically) the entirety of the Korean peninsula, as well as the entirety of the Korean people. Discrete citizenships (one Korean being a South Korean citizen cannot also be a North Korean citizen and vice-versa) means that Korean identities appear to have become mutually-exclusive, mostly because of security concerns and because of the relationship both Koreas have developed with the United States. This dual national identity is expressed in the most obvious way by the need to use different names when referring to the two Koreas, with Paik suggesting that “national identity for a contemporary Korean is at the very least double, namely as a member of the Korean nation and a citizen of either of the divided states” (2000). The concept of one Korean nation is by far one of the most important unifying characteristics for both Koreas apart from pre-division history, and a “strong, almost mythical vision of homogeneity permeates both parts of Korea (Bleiker, 2001). The simple fact the Korean people have remained an almost homogeneous ethnic group over the years has led both countries to argue that the Korean partition has been an unnatural event that has severed the nation in two: there is an ever-present notion that eventually, Korean people should become one again and in the meantime, maintaining ethnic purity is taking a rather important position in North Korea but to some extent in South Korea as well.

## **Characteristics of South and North Korean National Identities: What we Know.**

Both South Korean and North Korean identities have been studied in the past, though there is no encompassing work that has been able to clearly map out each identity's boundaries and their evolution over time. Consulting a wider body of literature enables a consolidated vision of what each national identity is, what reinforces it, and surprisingly how similar some major components are, despite a general understanding of antagonistically-constructed characters.

With the South Korean state legally established in 1948, most national identity characteristics first appeared through a political construction and a quest for legitimacy that was especially consolidated under the Park Chung Hee regime, and which was largely focused on “the formation of anti-communist consciousness” (Choi, 2011), with North Korea being “undoubtedly an important element in South Korea’s concept of national identity” (Shin and Burke, 2008). The Korean case is therefore more typical than not, with one national identity being strengthened because of a significant contending identity hence echoing Triandafyllidou’s idea of a significant other. State-designed legislations were also put in place in order to consolidate a national identity by excluding the possibility of any sympathy toward North Korea, and even though the past two decades have shown less antagonizing policies toward Pyongyang and especially because of protesters in 1987 seeking more freedom and leniency from the government, Seoul still employs National Security Law principles that restrict freedom to politically support the North (Bleiker, 2001). South Korean political life is far from being a unanimous entity: Kim Dae Jong’s Sunshine Policy that was initiated during the 1990s led to Seoul becoming polarised and divided on ways to engage North Korea, with Choi’s research

showing that “Seoul’s engagement policy initiated a politics of identity reformation between Sunshine’s proponents and opponents”(2010). The development of a civil society in South Korea has been noted as a central element in the redefinition of both South Korean politics and South Korean national identities (Shin and Burke, 2008): as a result of South Korea’s unprecedented economic and political liberalisation, globalisation has swept the country and has affected many aspects of the society, leading to question which direction the country is taking, and how its national identity is being shaped. New politics have been put in place to start to regulate immigration, a very new phenomenon for South Korea as the country had been an ‘exporter’ of human capital, but never a destination of choice for immigrants, especially those from less developed South Asian countries. Korean politicians have therefore spent time devising policies such as the Korean Overseas Act which would regulate overseas ethnic Koreans’ rights vis-à-vis their homeland and aim to strengthen the Korean ethnic nation (Park and Chang, 2005), while at the same time having to address concerns of their homogeneous population becoming ‘diluted’ because of more frequent mixed marriages, resulting in the state having “more difficulties trying to impose its ethnocentric interpretation of nationhood upon its citizens” (Chung and Choe, 2008). It has been difficult to accurately analyse the effects that domestic policies and outside forces such as globalisation have had on the South Korean population, and there does not appear to be a clear and delineated national identity within the country. Analyses based on the 2003 Korean General Social Survey have shown two extremely interesting trends, however: South Korea appears to be a low-trust society, with more than half of the population not trusting people in position of power, both at the national and local level (Chung and Choe, 2008), and the population seems to be still very hopeful for Korean unification to take place, at some point, which would entail a stronger Korean nation less influenced by foreign countries (Park and

Chang, 2005). These two tendencies lead to questions regarding how a national inclusive identity could be fostered within the South Korean society, as a top-down approach might not be necessarily accepted by a population that is more and more accustomed to freedom and critical thinking brought about by democratisation and globalisation.

North Korea's development of its own national identity has not been entirely different from South Korea's journey. The establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was based on socialist identities bolstered by the Soviet Union, and in direct opposition to how South Korea developed its political and economic system as well, but with a difference: according to Kwon, South Korea focused on *gungmin*, or 'nation' whereas North Korea focused on *inmin* or 'people', with both countries' population belonging to the same *minjok*, or 'ethnic nation' (2011a), though the term *minjok* has been largely used to describe Koreans who adhered to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il's ideological construction, hence minimizing the number of South Korean people who could be counted as being part of *minjok* (Lee, 2010). A top-down system delineated what the North Korean national identity was by concentrating only on Kim Il Sung and its persona and history, therefore reducing the population to being his own *inmin* (Kwon, 2011b) while at the same time conducting 'myth-cleaning' by eradicating from school curricula and general propaganda historical figures that predated the Korean partition, and which could therefore had been building blocks for both South and North Korean identities (Lee, 2010). The fall of communist ideologies in many parts of the world including the Soviet Union's collapse led the North Korean elite to strengthen some of its national symbols in order to create a new set of myths for its people, and the education system was used as an integral part of the identity reinforcement process. Schools had already been used since the late 1960s to promote

the Great Leader's activities during and after the Japanese occupation (Lee, 2010) but recent studies on North Korean schooling give impressive numbers: indeed by the time a student reaches university, about 40 percent of subjects taught are exclusively about political education (Byman and Lind, 2010). Additionally, a large part of North Korean national identity is based on the politics of exclusion and dichotomy especially targeted at Japan and then at the United States. Indeed, Lee's comprehensive studies of North Korean textbooks has shown that North Korea depicts Japanese especially in past historical contexts, while Americans are represented as an ever-present and contemporary threat (2010), with Kim suggesting that "representation of the Japanese...are twice as numerous as depictions of American" (1990a). Those depictions are also often accompanied by derogatory statements that often involve racial commentaries, hence hinting at North Korean national identity as being based on racial tendencies as well as xenophobia (Byman and Lind, 2010).

### **National Identity: How Close Apart are the two Koreas?**

Assuming that the two Koreas will at one point in time be reunited, the construction of a national identity will be an imperative for any unified society to survive. In order to do so, communication and the ability that both Korean groups will have when they relate to one another are essential characteristics that will need to be developed and fostered. In order to reach this stage, the nature of both South and North Korean identities should be examined in order to understand how they each define themselves, and also how they define each other. Because media has been understood as being an important political actor in both South and North Korean contexts, relaying elite positions as well as shifting political opinion (Shin and Burke, 2008), an

analysis of both South Korean and North Korea media in relation to national identity over time could provide salient answers in trying to understand:

Q1: If the concept of national identity exists in both South Korea and North Korea?

H1: One would expect the term 'national identity' to be identifiable in a number of news articles, thus confirming that 'national identity' is a concept that is regularly presented, discussed and to some extent analysed in both North and South Korean news outlets, given that previous research presented above has identified the concept in a number of contexts already.

Q2: If such concept exists, how different is it for both Koreas?

H2: One would expect the concepts to differ from one another, mostly because the two Koreas have been previously identified in the literature as 'significant others' and 'enemies', and because the vastly different domestic contexts and the lack of substantive interactions between the two Koreas would most likely mean that concepts have evolved differently. One would especially expect the concept to be more challenged and compromised within the South Korean context given Seoul's evolution and bouts with globalisation.

Q3: How is the concept formed and managed, and sustained?

H3: One would expect to find that the context of national identity is largely present in elite-driven political contexts as well as via discussions regarding education, as those factors have previously been identified in both North Korea and South Korean contexts.

Q4: How stable are the identities over time?

H4: One would expect to find that identities on the Korean peninsula are still largely informed by the security context, and that national identities could potential relax and appear as more compatible and less mutually-exclusive in times of ‘relative’ peace and cooperation between the two Koreas whereas the concept might be seen as more divergent and incompatible in times of ‘relative’ security strain.

In order to answer those initial questions, a content analysis of both North Korean and South Koreans news was conducted.

**Table 1. Newspaper List and Article Representation**

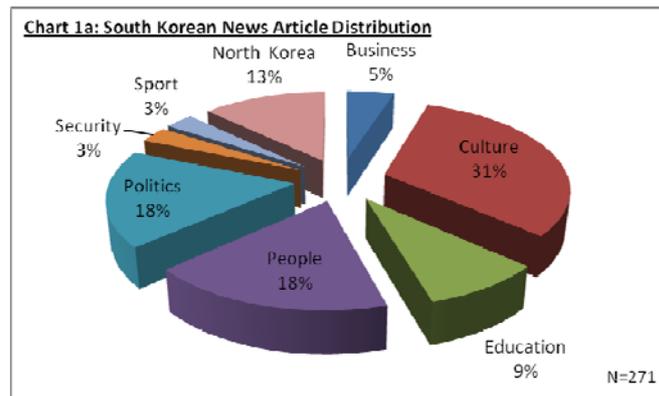
<b>South Korea</b>	<b>North Korea</b>
Korea Times (41%)	Korea Central News Agency (83%)
Korea Herald (41%)	Pyongyang Times (14%)
Choson Ilbo (18%)	Rodong Sinmun (3%)

The South Korean news coverage consisted of a more conservative news outlet (Choson Ilbo) and a more liberal stance provided with the Korea Times and Korea Herald. The North Korean news coverage was largely based on the KCNA’s articles and Pyongyang Times. It is recognised that some discussion could not be necessarily captured as the study was conducted with English materials. However, the strict coding treatment applied here provides for a robust

analysis. Each news outlets was searched for articles containing ‘national identity’, ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘Korean identity’, yielding more than 2,065 articles. After articles irrelevant or duplicated were removed, 104 articles were selected and coded for North Korea, whereas 271 articles were selected and coded for South Korea. After a content analysis, each article was tagged as belonging to two general categories:

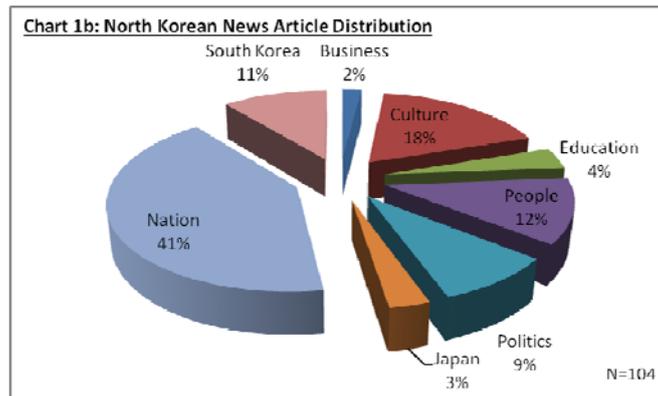
<b>1(a) South Korean categories</b>		<b>1(b) North Korean categories</b>	
<b>Business</b>	South Korean companies, economic impact, market and trade liberalization	<b>Business</b>	Domestic production, wages
<b>Culture</b>	Cultural events in South Korea and Korean cultural events abroad, historical cultural symbols, arts, pop culture	<b>Culture</b>	Cultural events in North Korea and Korean cultural events abroad, historical cultural symbols, arts, classical music, folk culture
<b>Education</b>	Ministerial decisions, schooling and its effects, young people, learning, Korean language abroad	<b>Education</b>	Language, schooling
<b>People</b>	Ethnic Koreans overseas, immigrants to South Korea, Korean citizens	<b>People</b>	Ethnic Koreans overseas, North Korean citizens
<b>Politics</b>	Domestic political groups, government policies, president and government actions	<b>Politics</b>	Kim family
<b>Security</b>	Military, inter-Korean relations	<b>Japan</b>	Past historical relationship, war crimes
<b>Sports</b>	Olympic games, domestic and overseas sporting events	<b>Nation</b>	Juche ideology, Workers’ Party.
<b>North Korea</b>	North Korean leadership, North Korean society	<b>South Korea</b>	South Korea-United States relationship, South Korean society

Charts 1a and 2b show the general breakdown of articles according to 8 general categories relevant articles were found to belong to.



Most of the articles that discussed the concept of national identity did so in relation to ‘Culture’ predominantly, with a large number of articles discussing various cultural initiatives related to arts, music, food, and writing which were supporting a traditional understanding of Korean identity through arts and crafts. The ‘Politics’ category was also very largely represented, with most of the articles focusing on internal political divisions between the Conservatives and the Liberals, with a strong emphasis on whether pursuing a ‘Northern’ policy along the lines of Kim Dae Jung’s Sunshine Policy compromises a national identity. South Korean news also largely focused on ‘People’, essentially talking about the overseas Korean community, as well as challenges faced by South Korea in accommodating foreigners and immigrants. The ‘Education’ category was also of concern, with discussion regarding the role of history in curriculum as well as the predominance of English being seen as damaging to the national identity. ‘North Korea’ was also notably discussed, especially in relation to reunification efforts, and conversely as a threat to South Korea. Other lesser categories included ‘Security’, ‘Sport’ and ‘Business’,

focusing mostly on how South Korea's national identity can be boosted through accomplishments through sports and flagship brands.



A large amount of articles focused on the concept of 'Nation', with many repetitive and verbatim articles on how Juche should be preserved. 'Culture' was also very prominent, with themes extremely similar to those present in South Korea, namely the protection of a genuine Korean identity that is based on traditions, writings, music and arts. Japan was treated extensively in the 'People' category, with a number of articles talking about overseas Korean population in Japan and their link with the 'homeland'. South Korea was also discussed, especially to deplore its loss of national identity due to international interference. The 'Politics' category was largely focusing on the Kim rulers and their representation around the country, and could be associated closely with the 'Nation' category. 'Business', 'Education' and 'Japan' formed a very small amount of articles.

In order to understand how the various issues have been represented over time, the data was also arranged as time-series with Charts 2a and 2b showing the trend evolution.

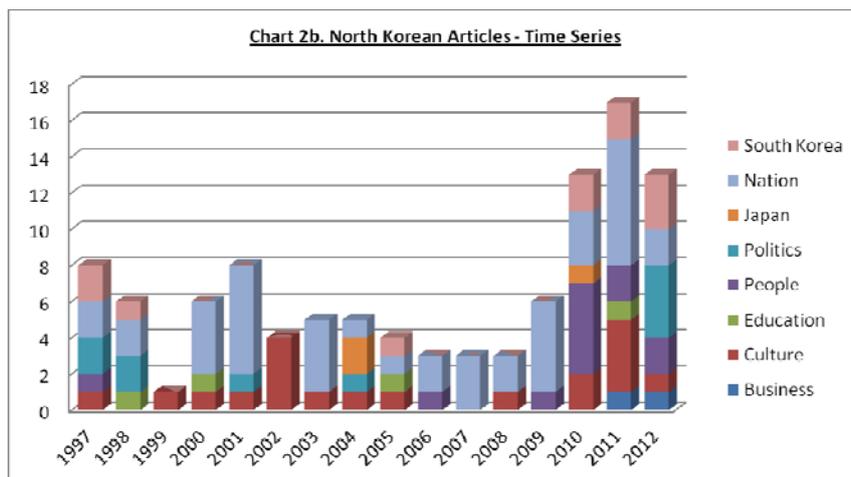
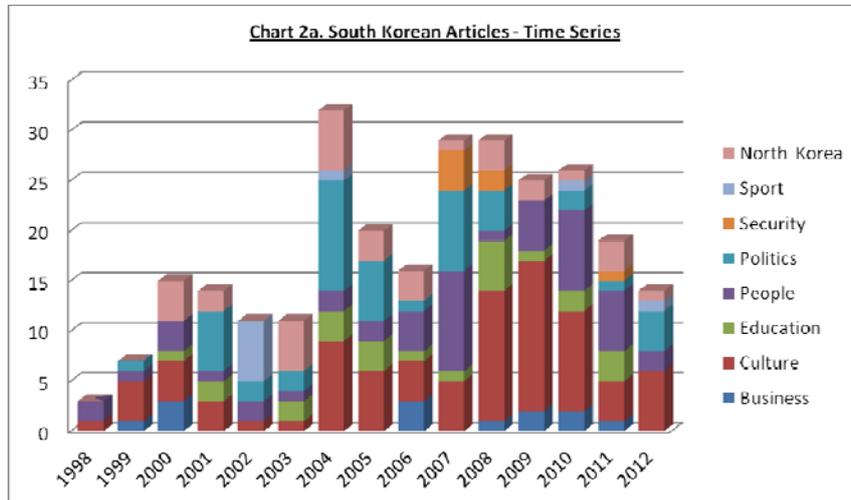


Chart 2a and 2b clearly shows that ‘Culture’ is an issue that has been treated by both South and North Korea on almost a yearly basis when talking about national identity. It might therefore provide one of the ‘connecting’ points that could be useful to foster a common identity eventually. The issue of ‘Politics’ for South Korea and ‘Nation’ for North Korea are also

consistently present across the years, with ‘North Korea’ and ‘South Korea’ also represented consistently across the years as well. There are a number of issues that appear to be presented on each graph mostly for circumstantial reasons: ‘Sport’ is especially flaring in 2002 for South Korea, the year Seoul and Tokyo hosted the World Cup. ‘Security’ also appears in 2007, 2008 and 2011 for South Korea, at times of confrontation and contention with North Korea.

**Table 2. Subcategories, per Country**

<b>South Korea</b>		<b>North Korea</b>	
Culture	86 (32%)	Nation	44 (42%)
People	50 (18%)	Culture	19 (18%)
Politics	48 (18%)	People	12 (12%)
North Korea	34 (13%)	South Korea	11 (11%)
Education	24 (9%)	Politics	9 (9%)
Business	13 (5%)	Education	4 (4%)
Sport	9 (3%)	Japan	3 (3%)
Security	7 (3%)	Business	2 (2%)

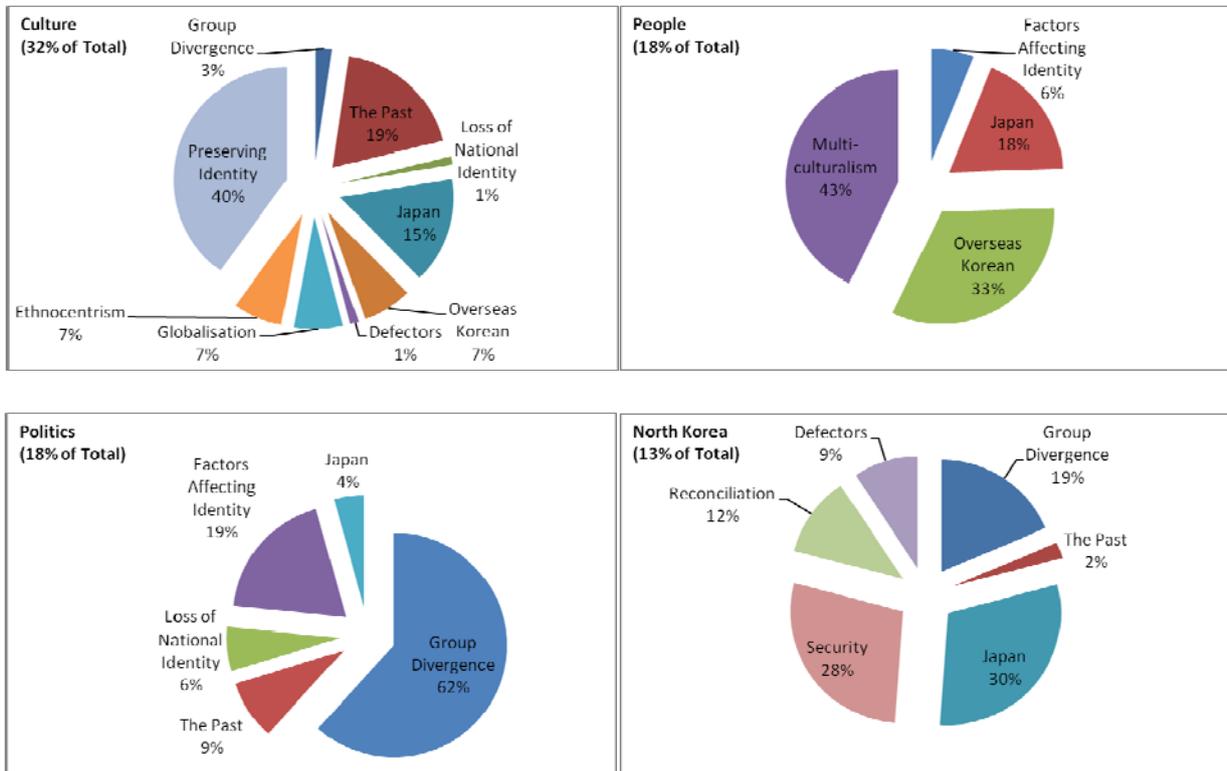
Table 2 present Subcategories per country. For South Korea, ‘Culture’, ‘People’, ‘Politics’ and ‘North Korea’ represent rather large amount of articles compared to the four other categories, and represent 81% of the total amount of data. For North Korea, ‘Nation’, ‘Culture’, ‘People’ and ‘South Korea’ also represent the largest amount of articles compared to the four other categories, adding up to 83% of all the data. South Korea’s ‘Politics’ category is akin to

North Korea's 'Nation' given the North Korean regime, so for both North and South three categories ('Culture', 'People', and 'Politics'/'Nations') are the most represented, with the significant other 'North Korea' and 'South Korea' making the 4<sup>th</sup> largest category. Each of these categories was further investigated and coded according to Tendencies.

<b>3(a) South Korean Tendencies</b>		<b>3(b) North Korean Tendencies</b>	
<b>The Past</b>	Cultural artefacts, national holidays, pre-1945 history	<b>The Past</b>	Cultural artefacts, national holidays, pre-1945 history
<b>Japan</b>	World War II, colonial reminders, rewriting of history	<b>Japan</b>	World War II, colonial reminders, rewriting of history
<b>Factors Affecting Identity</b>	Domestic political decision, nationalism and globalisation	<b>Factors Affecting Identity</b>	Bourgeoisie and imperialism
<b>Overseas Korean</b>	Diasporas, education, Korean adoptees, Korean-Americans	<b>Overseas Korean</b>	Koreans in Japan
<b>Group Divergence</b>	Ruling party versus opposition, engagement policies toward North Korea	<b>Juche</b>	Preserving national identity, patriotism, Kim family
<b>Loss of National Identity</b>	Identity and economics, history textbooks	<b>Preserving Identity</b>	Culture, music, literature, arts, education and patriotism
<b>Multiculturalism</b>	Naturalized Korean citizens, ethnicity, foreign brides	<b>Homogeneity</b>	5,000-year history, Korean blood
		<b>Reunification</b>	Patriotism, unity through blood
		<b>Anti-US</b>	Fighting to keep Juche alive
		<b>Anti-Imperialism</b>	National self-respect

Results for both South Korea and North Korea are presented in Charts 3a and 3b.

**Chart 3a. South Korean Themes, by tendencies**



**Culture:** most of the articles related to culture focused on how Korean cultural elements are guarantors of a specific Korean national identity, and should be used to foster such identity. As a counterpart group, a large number of articles focusses on how losing cultural traditions such as cooking, wearing traditional dress or overseas Koreans no longer speaking Korean language would amount to endangering Korean identity and leading to its loss. The effects of globalisation, mainly how South Korea had to content with new forces such as migrants as well as a larger Korean diaspora group lead to debates within political parties about what solution, if any, could be found to maintain a discrete Korean identity through culture. Lastly, the weight of

the past as well as Korean's difficult history with Japan also created a third stream of articles, with debate regarding how preserving culture in light of adversity would make a strong Korean nation.

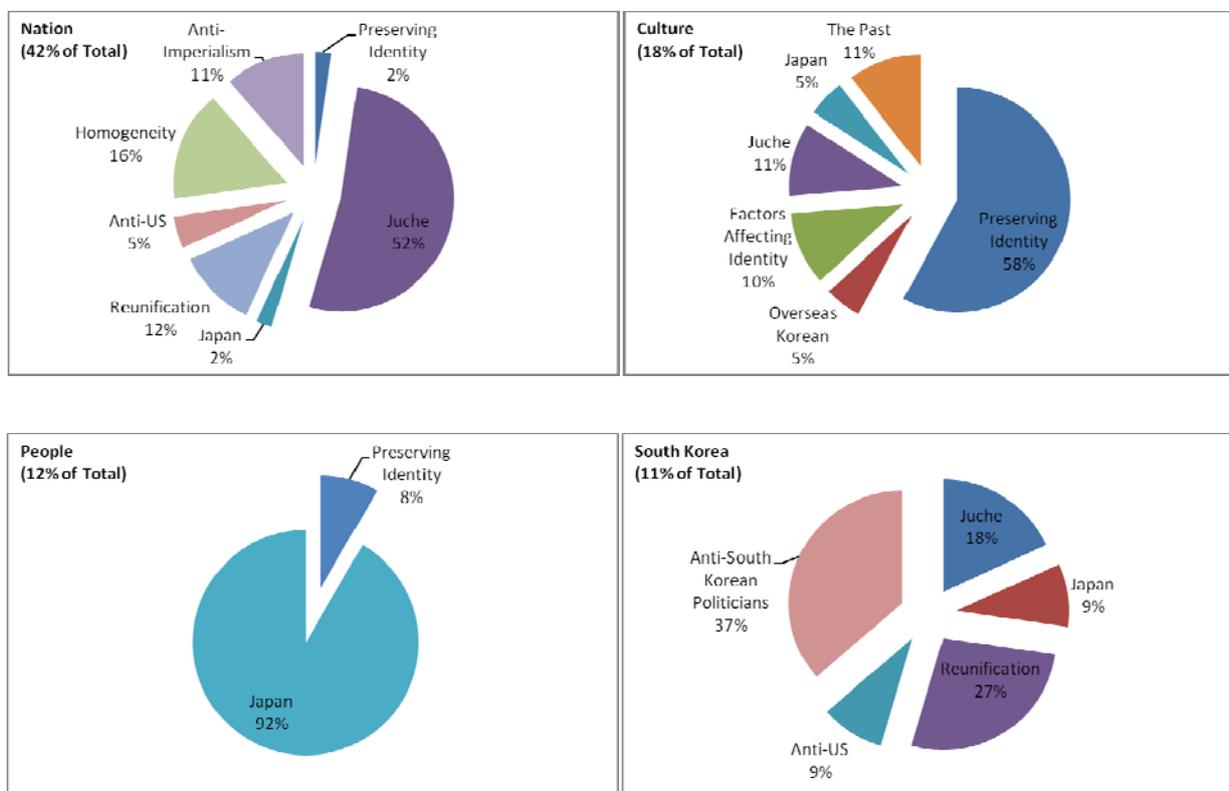
**People:** while Japan keeps on being an important presence within the South Korean news when it comes to how Korean people were divided by their neighbour's imperialistic actions in the past, most of the discussion within the 'People' category is centred on how multiculturalism within South Korea is challenging and changing national identity. This is accentuated by a sense of pull and push when it comes to the overseas Korean population, with a focus on actions helping to foster a sense of Korean identity abroad by promoting culture and educational links, but also using new medium such as popular culture.

**Politics:** a very large part of the articles focusses on political group divergence over what policies to develop and actions to take in order to counterbalance changes seen within the South Korean society. The 'Politics' category provides very factionalized results, and shows very clearly that the Korean political class is clearly at odd with how fast South Korea is changing and how national identity is being affected by such changes. There is no discussion, however, of what essentially constitutes a national identity, with the concept being de-facto used without much in-depth analysis, thus showing that there has been little space within Korean politics to debate of such topic, mostly because of the rapidity of changes within the society necessitating rapid actions.

**North Korea:** traditional concerns regarding how to deal with the significant other are clearly related within this category, with many articles focusing on group divergence, namely conservative and more liberal forces arguing on how to engage Pyongyang. The constant is that engaging is seen as a potential weakening of a South Korean national identity, mostly because of

North Korean untrustworthy behaviour, but a large number of articles also argues for considering reconciliation. Koreans exiled in Japan makes up for a large part of the articles as well along with how to deal with Korean defectors, thus providing yet another overseas group that South Korea appears unsure of how to deal or contend with.

**Chart 3b. North Korean Themes, by Tendencies**



**Nation:** more than half of the content regarding nation is linked with Juche ideology, and especially how elements of the Juche ideology form the basis of a national identity. Those elements are not clearly explained, but are linked to concepts such as socialism and revolution. The idea of a homogeneous nation also appears to support the concept of national identity, while

the rest of the articles focusses on elements that are threatening to the concept of national identity such as imperialism, American policy and the role of Japan within the Korean division.

**Culture:** Preserving national identity through cultural heritage and events is largely represented, and a wealth of articles focusses on the Kim family's support of the arts and contact with artists, and ministries and institutions supporting arts, especially musical performances, to embody Korean national identity. Imperialist and foreign currents also appear to undermine such as identity, with Juche policies being represented in the arts, and therefore constituting a valuable support to the presentation of a Korean national identity.

**People:** The overseas Korean population in Japan is seen as a prime example of a fight for the preservation of a genuine Korean identity with their attempt to not be completely assimilated within the Japanese society, but the articles also focus on specific historical cases that perpetuate the ideas that Japan attempted to destroy Korean identity long time ago by restricting Korean's choice of names, for example.

**South Korea:** South Korea's politicians, and especially those who proclaims hard-line policies against North Korea appear to be endangering North Korea's identity, but national reunification is an important aspect of this category as well, with a clear impetus within North Korea to consider that a national identity must focus on Korean-ness, and therefore must exclude actors such as the United States or Japan.

### **Anatomy of a Korean National Identity**

Despite research showing that both North and South Korea appear to have developed different national identities mostly because of their diverging environments, evolution, and

interactions with the world, the current analysis finds surprising results: both Koreas base their national identity on similar concepts (namely history, ethnocentrism and culture), and both Koreas have an uneasy relationship with anything 'external' to their homogeneous group (the United States is an obvious element of distress for North Korea, but is also destabilising and contentious within the South Korean society). Despite the fact that both Koreas treat each other as 'significant other' and understand that they are each other's 'security concerns', most of the discussions and information emanating from both countries do not question the fact that reunification should happen, which also confirms Shin and Burke's findings that "the North is therefore a 'Korean' issue, inseparable from inter-Koreans relations" (2008). The concept of reunification is used, however, in both North and South Korean political contexts to advance political groups (or maintain the elite's hold on power in the case of North Korea).

The South Korean discussion of North Korea activities and North Korea identity is rather limited, and stems from characteristics that have already been defined in the literature, namely the fact that the South Korean government has not encouraged much analysis and study of its Northern counterpart apart from right-wing analysis in the 1970s (Lee, 2010). South Korea also focuses on concepts that are associated with North Korea, such as the security conundrum, but equally important is the North Korean overseas population in Japan and the North Korean defectors. The importance of 'Political Group Divergence' within South Korea reinforces the notion that South Korean politics are split between at least two political factions, basically along the classic 'dove-hawk' decision-making pattern. North Korea is no longer considered and depicted in a demonized way, however, which is a statement that is still consistent with Jager's mid-1990s findings about how American imperialism and the relationship between the United

States and the South Korean government was more of a contention when trying to achieve reunification than Pyongyang itself (Jager, 1996). Instead, South Korea is clearly concerned with the question of homogeneity, and how to manage the effect of globalisation and the perceived loss of national identity and true Korean characteristics because of immigration and emigration patterns. Concerning patterns of ethnocentrism are also discussed in the articles, with immigrants to South Korea noting the difficulty they face becoming part of the Korean society, and being treated as lesser citizens. Associated with how North Korea is also portrayed, through defectors' struggle mainly, this leads to questions regarding how inclusive South Korean people could be when considering 'others', given their already marked hierarchical understanding of races and non-Korean people. The same concerns can also be applied to North Korea: it is known from previous studies on textbooks that Pyongyang tends to portray South Koreans either as political elite enemies, or as peasants (Lee, 2010). The evidence found in the news article seem to confirm this trend, as well as reinforce the fact that North Korea also sees South Korean population and therefore identity as being depraved, mostly because of foreign ideals being implemented, as well as because of a loss of homogeneity due to mix-marriages, or the concept of 'contamination by association' as highlighted by Byman and Lind (2010). When considering both South Korean and North Korean tendencies to consider outside influence as compromising to their own identity, it might be reasonable to assume that both countries might be unwilling to see their civic identity move away from their baseline to converge somewhere in the middle. Homogeneity and the concept of one Korean race and history, however, means that ethnic identity is a bond that cannot be broken between the two Koreas. The fact that South Korea has to now accommodate a number of foreigners appear to also be counterbalanced by the fact that Seoul is working on creating and maintaining a Korean national identity outside of its own

borders focusing on overseas Koreans and attempting to instil more 'Korean-ess' in them through arts, culture and educational exchanges.

The two Koreas' national identities converge on a large number of ways, however. First, there is little discussion in South Korea, and not much at all, for more obvious leadership control reason in North Korea, about how national identity is determined. It appears to be a process that is directed, in both cases, by government structures, and there is a dominance of political actors associated with the concept of national identity. Nation-building is therefore a political elite concern, and both Koreas have used education as a means to consolidate both the civic and ethnic aspect of national identity. Both countries have also been affected by globalisation and outside influences, and have been struggling to maintain a consistent national identity over the years. This is represented clearly in North Korea by a large number of articles concerned with upholding the Juche values as well as combating 'imperialism' but equally so in South Korea with concerns over how national identity and especially Korean language, tradition, and ways should be protected despite the country's obvious participation in the global world. Robinson told us of the importance of the Korean struggle between the national, and the anti-national (Robinson, 1984). Almost thirty years later, the concern over how to protect a Korean national identity is a constant in both Koreas, and another important factor to consider in the future. The understanding of one ethnic group that shares a long history has been fuelling efforts of dialogue and reconciliation, and has led to the historic family meetings in 2000. Kim had suggested that following the initial South and North Korean dialogues of the mid 1980s, North Korea has started to drop some of its aggressive rhetoric that had been aimed at the South Korean population (1990b). This trend is confirmed when considering how North Korea and South

Korea conceives of each other in terms of national identity in Charts 3a and 3b. Eventually, two dominant characteristics emerge from the study: first, culture is the most common important vehicle to communicate, manage and maintain national identity, second, the common past and especially Japanese colonialism as well as China's imperialist claims over the peninsula is central to how both North Korea and South Korea define what has threatened their national identity. Both Koreas have also worked jointly to raise awareness to UNESCO of several monuments and sites, and have worked jointly as well to ensure that Koguryo burial mounds would retained as being first and foremost a Korean site. Eventually, a unique Korean national identity appears to be rising from the Korean people having been attacked, colonised and divided, regardless of how both states define their civic identities.

### **Conclusion: Whither Koreas, Present, and Future**

The current analysis represents a first step in trying to understand the nature of a contemporary national identity concept in both South Korea and North Korea. As such, the study had simple aims which are often difficult to clearly demonstrate: to identify whether the concept of national identity is relevant to contemporary Korean peninsula, how do the Koreas define their own national identity and how the concept sustained domestically, and identity is how similar or different the identities are from one another. In the future, a subsequent part of the project, now that the perimeters of Korean national identities have been established, will deal with investigating how other countries and systems have managed diverging identities, and trying to understand what could be of help in the Korean context.

As it stands, there are a number of important points that need to be made: there is indeed a national identity concept in both North and South Korea, and the concept is managed mostly by the elite powers in both countries, with each governing structures trying to manage changes that come from external, and sometimes internal forces. There is an obvious lack of dialogue on the concept of identity, when it comes to both Koreas, however, as most of the interaction that the two Koreas have with one another are of a security-oriented nature. This had been established by Bleiker more than ten years ago (Bleiker, 2001), and still remains true today, thus making the need for a different substantive dialogue between the two Koreas obvious. Another difficulty to dialogue and constructive engagement is dealing with North Korea's apparent abnormality, and especially its historical legacy. Because of National Security Laws in place in South Korea, there is a real dichotomy when considering the North: indeed, there is a sense of oscillation between the will to engage, and the need to be secure. This situation is similar to how many Western countries treated Eastern European countries after the fall of Communism, with, in the West, a "temptation to view history and memory in Eastern Europe as out of control, with tribal passions blood feuds and primitive ethnic strife threatening stability in Europe" (Esbenshade, 1995) The same situation is true within North Korea, where the South has often been seen as 'sleeping with the enemy' because of its partnership with the United States. Can the two Koreas remember to forget, when the time comes, however? Perhaps a few missed opportunities were, after all, the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games and Soccer World Cup 2002 and the notable absence of North Korea from the organising comity. The flag swap mishap at the beginning of the 2012 London Olympics that saw the North Korean Womens' soccer team associated with the South Korean flag before their game start is a painful reminder of the inner attachment to one's citizenship. Is a civic concept stronger than ethnic and historic nationalism, however? The remembrance and

celebrations of Korea's most traditional ways appear as a potential key in developing a unified national identity. Exciting meetings such as North Korean children performance in Seoul in June 2000, or the fact that a number of South Korean cinemas have started to establish links with the North is of major importance (Bleiker, 2001). Some of those interactions might not always have to necessarily be directed by the state, at least in the case of South Korean initiatives, and the range of potential connecting points is very large: news articles that focused on culture explored historical roots and collection through museums, theatre productions, traditional musical instruments as well as a number of initiatives to provide cultural awareness of overseas Korean citizens. Such programs could indeed provide a gateway to gently remind one of their roots.

If both Koreas sees themselves as part of the same ethnic group and as having the historical paths, traditions, and roots, then one of the hurdles that must be conquered is the depiction of the Koreas as Triandafyllidou's 'significant others', a concept that seems to have been lessened over the past few years as less antagonism between the two nations and how they portray each other has been noted. Choi talks about how "reconciliation through engagement in a protracted conflictual relationship has to successfully win out over the old idea of containment" (2010). One of the factors that can win over containment is a change of politics, both in the South and in the North, and that would focus on retaining constructive elements from the past while agreeing to forget about conflict. Given the attachment both Koreas have had to restoring past wrongs committed by Japan and China, it is unclear how successful such a mission would be. Perhaps the fact that moving past a conflictual history with a 'significant other' has happened successfully in other parts of the world is also key in considering the Korean case as potentially promising case as well.

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