

***Uri nara, our nation: Unification, identity and the emergence of a new nationalism amongst South Korean young people.***

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## **DECLARATION**

Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis is my own work.

Emma Campbell



## Preface

I first encountered Korea in 1996 when I was studying Chinese at a university in Beijing. Aside from a large group of British students from the University of Leeds, of which I was one, most other students learning Chinese were from South Korea. By the late 1990s, South Korean students already constituted the majority of foreign students in China. My room-mate was Korean as were most of my friends and as we spoke to each other in our common language Chinese I first came to discover Korea.

My Korean friends introduced me to Korean food in restaurants run by *Chaoxianzu* or *Joseonjok* (Korean-Chinese) in the small Korea-town that had emerged to service the growing South Korean community in Beijing. During that stay in Beijing I also travelled to North Korea for the first time and then in the following year, 1998, to Seoul.

It was during the 1990s that attitudes to North Korea amongst young South Koreans appear to have started their evolution. These changes coincided with the growth of travel by young South Koreans for study and leisure. Koreans travelling overseas were encountering foreigners of a similar age from countries such as the UK and discovering that they had more in common with them than the *Joseonjok* in the Korean restaurants of Beijing or North Koreans who, as South Koreans would soon learn, were facing starvation and escaping in ever growing numbers into China.

South Korea also had its own problems in that period. In the late 1990s, the South Korean economy faced near collapse following the 1997 Economic Crisis. For the first time, South Korea faced redundancies and the collapse of huge *chaebol* including the Daewoo and Hanbo conglomerates. In December of the same year, the veteran opposition leader Kim Dae Jung was elected to power becoming the 8<sup>th</sup> President of South Korea after his inauguration in February 1998. By 1999, the economy had experienced a dramatic recovery and Kim embarked on his Sunshine Policy toward North Korea. This culminated in 2000 with the historic summit in Pyongyang between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Il Sung, leader of North Korea. This did nothing to slow the increasing numbers of North Koreans arriving in the South but it did make South Koreans more conscious of the North and its problems. Just at the time when many in South Korea began to understand the vulnerability of the South Korean economy and society to global economic and financial events, they also started to

comprehend the dire situation of North Korea and the reality of the challenges that unification might bring.

Although my first visit to the Korean Peninsula was the trip I made to North Korea in 1997, it was the modern, fun, fashionable South Korea that attracted me to Korean culture. All the British students studying with me in Beijing were impressed by the South Korea students' array of electronic equipment in their dormitory rooms. We watched Korean dramas with them which they translated into Chinese for us. We drank coffee together in the smart Korean-style coffee shops that had sprung up in Beijing and ate *patbingsu*, a delicious dessert made of shaved ice and sweetened red bean paste topped with condensed milk. I copied the style of my female Korean friends, with their immaculate make-up and attention to style. I read, for the first time, the story of South Korea's economic and political rise.

Looking back to this period in my life, the beginnings of this thesis were already in play. The pace of globalisation was picking up and new networks were beginning to develop. Typical young South Koreans were having more contact with *Joseonjok* either at home or abroad and they were also learning more about North Koreans. The manifestations of South Korean global-cultural nationalism: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status were just beginning to be formed. Hints at the possibility of foreigners being accepted into Korean society were starting to show – foreigners and Koreans mingled as friends easily and the first Korean-speaking foreigner became a television star in South Korea<sup>1</sup>. However on my first trip to Seoul in 1998 I was conscious that, as a tall, blonde, foreign female, I was still seen as something unusual. When I travelled around Korea with my Korean friends I sensed that I attracted a lot of attention.

The shaping of the South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism was beginning to be seen when I returned to Seoul in 2007 to carry out my research for this thesis. In Seoul, at least, people seemed unperturbed dealing with foreign customers. In shops or cafes the young people behind the counter were happy to converse in either English or Korean. Often I was served in restaurants by *Joseonjok* who quietly conversed in Chinese with me out of earshot of the Korean customers. It was relatively easy to meet North Koreans – students at my university, through church or community groups or volunteer English language classes. I

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<sup>1</sup> The first mainstream non-ethnic Korean TV personality was *Ida Daussy*. *Daussy* is a French-born naturalised citizen of Korea who married a Korean man in 1991 and gained widespread popularity on television as a presenter and guest on a variety of Korean television shows <http://ida-daussy.com/index.php> (viewed 14/08/2011).

joined the alien registration queue at immigration with Iraqis, Somalis, Swedes, Kazakhs, Belarusians, Nigerians, and Chinese. And for the first time, when I am in a nail salon of all places, and in front of other colleagues and customers, the young manicurist says openly and passionately ‘I hate the idea of unification’.

Alongside the inspiration gained from my ongoing love of Korea, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. I would first like to thank the Chair of my supervisory panel Professor Paul Hutchcroft for his guidance, encouragement and enthusiasm for my work. He is wise and thoughtful and yet welcomes challenge and debate from his students. And although extremely busy as Director of ANU’s School of International, Political and Strategic Studies is absolutely committed to his students and can always find time for an uplifting anecdote to lighten any thesis meeting!

Next, I am grateful to my supervisor Professor Hyung-a Kim. Professor Kim recognised the importance of my research right from the beginning and has supported me throughout my PhD. She has been extremely generous in sharing both her knowledge and contacts enabling both my fieldwork and writing. Professor Kim has often welcomed me to her home where I discovered that she is not only a great academic but also a great cook of Korean food!

Third, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Ed Aspinall, who although joined my panel at the later stages of my thesis writing, always found time to support and guide my work throughout my period at ANU. My understanding of nationalist theory, in particular, developed as a result of his knowledge and guidance. He is also a great head of department who has encouraged a warm, friendly and fun atmosphere in the Department of Political and Social Change.

The Korean Studies department at ANU reach out to all students of Korea, whatever their discipline: Professor Ken Wells sponsored my application to ANU; Professor Hyae-weol Choi provides wonderful leadership to the Korean community at ANU and gave me advice on a number of chapter drafts; and Dr. Ruth Barraclough has been a great support to both my thesis writing and Korean language learning. I would like to thank International Relations Professor Bill Tow who provided me with the opportunity to publish my first journal article. The Korea Institute Post-doctoral Fellow, Dr. Park Sang-young was a great mentor and *sonbae* as I completed my thesis. I also wish to thank all of the academics, staff and students in my department who have supported me throughout the PhD process.

I would especially like to thank Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki who has been a mentor and friend to me. She provided me with many wonderful opportunities to develop my academic skills and career and showed me the power of academia to effect real change. She is a truly wonderful academic, activist and person.

I was supported for three years by a Korean Studies of Australasia-Korea Foundation Postgraduate Fellowship. The Korea Foundation is a fantastic supporter of students of Korean studies. I am also grateful for the generous fieldwork funding received from the Cheung Kong Endeavour Research Fellowship, the Australia-Korea Foundation and the ANU.

My research assistant Sohn Yelin has been central to the success of this project. Yelin is brilliant, bright and committed to many activist causes and it was fun and inspiring to work with her. I want to thank my ‘Korean family’ at the *hasukjip* who take care of me like a daughter and sister whenever I am in Korea and my friends Chang Eun-shil and Park Hyun-a. Professor Park Myung-gu and all the team at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies were kind and generous hosts to my research in Korea. I am also grateful to my wonderful friends Lee Eun-koo and Lee Ja-un who inspired me to become interested in North Korea with their amazing work.

Thanks go to my friends Scott and Katrina who have been so kind to me, in particular taking care of my cat during my fieldwork and to Masha and Timo who welcomed me to Canberra when I first arrived. Yonjae, Jeongyoon and little Gitae are wonderful friends in Canberra who always had time to help me with Korean language, to share interesting articles and discuss the issues on Korea raised by this thesis. I also want to thank my best friends Ruth and Keri in the UK who always make me smile.

As a dual Australian and British national, I chose to do my PhD in Australia in part to get to know the country and my family here. I have loved every minute of living in Australia. I want to thank Fran, Bruce, Marianna and Tom for encouraging me to do my PhD in the first place and looking after me so well. I also want to thank Sally and Ross for providing me with a home away from home and Mary, Cousin Bill and Bruce for providing me with a bit of luxury from time to time! I want to thank all of my Australian family who have welcomed me so warmly especially my lovely cousin Meg.



Finally, thank you to my parents who are wonderful, kind and caring people and my inspiration for all I do in life. They have supported me absolutely throughout this thesis including the arduous task of proof-reading carried out with complete dedication and love by my Father. This thesis is dedicated to my Father Quentin Campbell and his mother, my Grandmother, Norma Campbell, also known as the artist Norma Norton, in recognition of the special place Australia and my Australian family will always have in my life.



## Glossary of terms

<i>Bukhan</i>	North Korea (South Korean terminology)
MR: <i>Chaebol</i> RR: <i>Jaebeol</i>	Large Korean conglomerates such as Samsung
<i>Chaoxianzu</i>	Chinese term for Korean-Chinese
<i>Daehanminguk</i>	The Republic of Korea
<i>Danil minjok</i>	One ethnic nation
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
GNP	Grand National Party
<i>Han minjok</i>	One people
<i>Hanbok</i>	Korean traditional dress (South Korean terminology)
<i>Hanguk Saram</i>	A citizen of South Korea
IPUS	Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University
<i>Isipdae</i>	Twenty-somethings
<i>Jaeil gypo</i>	Korean term for Koreans living in Japan
<i>Joseon saram</i>	A citizen of North Korea
<i>Joseonjok</i>	Korean term for Korean-Chinese
KBS	Korea Broadcasting System
<i>Koryoin</i>	Ethnic-Koreans from the former USSR
<i>Namhan</i>	South Korea (South Korean terminology)
North Korea	The Democratic People's Republic of Korea
PCNB	Presidential Council on National Branding
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
<i>Sa-il-gu</i>	April 19 <sup>th</sup> Revolution, the student uprising against the Rhee Syngman government in 1960
SNU	Seoul National University
SERI	Samsung Economic Research Institute
South Korea	The Republic of Korea
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
<i>Uri</i>	Our, we, us
<i>Uri nara</i>	Our nation
<i>Zainichi</i>	Japanese term for Koreans living in Japan



## Notes on terms and romanisation

The term 'Korea' is used both to refer to the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and pre-partitioned Korea. South Korea is used for emphasis where required. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is referred to throughout as North Korea.

All Korean words have been romanised according to the Revised Romanisation system. Exceptions are names of authors who have published in English using a different spelling and where well known names of people, places or publications use another form of romanisation, for example Park Chung Hee or newspaper titles such as the *Chosun Ilbo*. Korean names are written according to the standard usage in Korean with surnames preceding given names. I have included surname and given names for all references using Korean names.

This thesis is written using British English. Date order reflects British English usage (day, month, year). American English may be used in the bibliography according to the original book title, journal title and so on.



## Abstract

### ***Uri nara, our nation: Unification, identity and the emergence of a new nationalism amongst South Korean young people***

This research project investigates the growing ambivalence and antagonism of South Korean young people toward unification with North Korea. Historically, ideas of nation and identity, and thus unification, have been based upon the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of all Korean people. More recently, there has emerged a new type of nationalism based on strikingly different notions of identity. This work addresses the central puzzle of how long-held views of Korean nation and national identity have been challenged so dramatically in recent years – in particular amongst the young.

Using data obtained from over 90 interviews, surveys and other documentary evidence collected in the field, I show how negativity toward unification with North Korea is increasing and argue that a new *South Korean nationalism* has arisen amongst South Korea's young people. This new nationalism is demonstrated both by the changing attitudes to unification and North Korea and by a growing sense of national pride and confidence in South Korea. The new nationalism can be described as a *globalised-cultural nationalism*, reflecting the central role played by globalisation in its construction and expression.

This work contests the assumption that unification 'is the hope of all Koreans' and the inevitable outcome for the Korean peninsula. It contributes to understanding short-term challenges as more North Koreans move to the South and provides insights into longer-term preparations for possible reunification. From a theoretical perspective, this thesis builds upon existing nationalist literature by exploring the development of nationalism in established nations, and describing the importance and role of globalisation in the evolution of modern nationalist sentiment.





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nationalism amongst South Korean young people***

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Declaration of originality</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Glossary of terms</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Notes on terms and romanisation</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>xxiii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>xxv</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. The aims of this thesis and the central puzzle it addresses	3
1.2. Theoretical framework: the three levels of nationalism	4
1.2.1. Causal theories of nationalism and the analysis of the emergence of nations	6
1.2.1.1. Primordialism	7
1.2.1.2. Constructivism	8
1.2.1.3. Instrumentalism	9
1.2.2. Types and categories of nationalism	10
1.2.3. Manifestations of nationalism	12
1.3. Defining nationalism	13
1.4. A brief history of Korean nationalism	14
1.5. Current discussions of Korean nationalism	19
1.6. Chapter outline	23
<b>2. Korea's nationalist student movement</b>	
2.1. Introduction	29

2.2. The colonial and pre-division era	31
2.3. <i>Sa-il-gu</i> and the demise of the Rhee Syngman regime	33
2.4. Park Chung Hee's rise to power, normalisation of relations with Japan and <i>Yusin</i>	37
2.4.1. Park Chung Hee's rise to power	37
2.4.2. Korea-Japan normalisation negotiations	40
2.4.3. The student movement under the <i>Yusin</i> Constitution	42
2.5. The 1980s, Gwangju and anti-Americanism	45
2.5.1. The Gwangju Democratic Uprising	46
2.5.2. Anti-Americanism	48
2.5.3. Unification	50
2.6. The 1990s	52
2.7. Conclusion	52
<b>3. Changing attitudes to unification and the formation of <i>uri nara</i> in the image of the South</b>	
3.1. Introduction	55
3.2. 'North Korea fatigue': Falling interest in North Korea and unification amongst young people	57
3.3. Ambivalence and antagonism towards unification	62
3.4. Pro-unification sentiment	64
3.5. Perceptions (and realities) of difference between North and South Korea	66
3.5.1. Language	68
3.5.2. Perceptions of difference in lifestyle	70
3.5.3. Tangible differences	72
3.6. Motivations for unification – <i>han minjok</i> and <i>uri nara</i>	73
3.7. Motivations for unification – South Korean motivations for unification	78
3.8. Undertones of colonisation	80
3.9. The meaning of ' <i>uri nara</i> '	85
3.10. Conclusion	87
<b>4. Modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status: The manifestations of South Korea's new nationalism</b>	
4.1. Introduction	91
4.2. Modernity	92
4.2.1. The modern nation and national pride	92
4.2.2. A modern culture and national pride	95

4.3. Cosmopolitan-enlightenment	101
4.3.1. The environmental and well-being movement and national identity	102
4.3.2. <i>Savoir faire</i> , worldliness and national identity	105
4.4. Status	112
4.4.1. The importance of national status	113
4.4.2. <i>Hallyu</i>	116
4.4.3. Historical accuracy	117
Dokdo	117
History textbooks in Japan	118
The East Sea / Sea of Japan	119
Goguryeo	119
4.5. Conclusion	122
<b>5. The emergence of a globalised-cultural nationalism</b>	
5.1. Introduction	125
5.2. Globalised-cultural nationalism, inclusion and the new South Korean national unit	127
5.2.1. Globalised-cultural nationalism and the Korean media	130
5.2.2. Mixed-race Koreans and globalised-cultural nationalism	132
5.3. Exclusion and the new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism	135
5.3.1. The ‘hierarchical nation’	139
5.4. Class and cultural nationalism	142
5.5. Conclusion	145
<b>6. The role of globalisation, democracy and banal nationalism in the emergence of a new South Korean nation</b>	
6.1. Introduction	147
6.2. Globalisation	148
6.2.1. Attitudes to globalisation	148
6.2.2. Globalisation, global networks and travel	151
6.3. Democracy	159
6.3.1. Popular sovereignty	161
6.3.2. Immigration	164
6.3.3. Education	168

6.3.4. Taiwan, ‘Taiwanisation’ and democracy	170
6.4. Banal nationalism	173
6.4.1. Patterns of belief and practice and flagging the nation of Korea	173
6.4.1.1. In politics	173
We, our, us: <i>uri</i>	174
Naming of the nation	175
History	176
North Korea	177
6.4.1.2. Newspapers and media	178
<i>Uri nara</i>	179
North Korea and the ‘other’	181
Patriotism and nationalist sentiment	182
6.4.2. The universal code of nationality	183
6.4.3. Forgetting the North	184
6.5. Conclusion	185
<b>7. Globalisation and the manifestations of South Korean nationalism</b>	
7.1. Introduction	187
7.2. Globalisation, national branding and the characteristics of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status	188
7.2.1. Branding Korea	191
Transcript of G20 Summit advertisement	192
Transcript of PCNB ‘Global Citizens’ advertisement	195
Transcript of KOBACO ‘I am Korea’ advertisement	197
7.2.2. The ‘Korean Brand’ and expressions of globalised-cultural nationalism	198
Contributive Korea	198
Innovative Korea	199
Captivating Korea	199
Multicultural Korea	201
Global Korea	201
7.2.3. Interaction between the <i>isipdae</i> ’s national aspirations and the ‘Korea Brand’	202
7.3. Globalisation, neo-liberal values and South Korean nationalism	203
7.3.1. Cosmopolitan-enlightenment	204

7.3.2. Modernity	209
7.3.3. Status	210
7.4. Conclusion	212
<b>8. Globalisation, the competitive society and risk: Embracing, adopting and accepting the South Korean identity</b>	
8.1. Introduction	215
8.2. Globalisation and the rise of competition in South Korean youth society	216
8.2.1. Education	216
8.2.2. Employment	222
8.3. The 1997 Economic Crisis and German Unification: Concerns of South Korean <i>isipdae</i>	228
8.3.1. The 1997 Asian Economic Crisis	228
8.3.2. German Unification	230
8.4. Adoption and acceptance of a South Korean identity: Instrumental choices and constructed identities	232
8.5. Conclusion	239
<b>9. Conclusion</b>	
9.1. Introduction	241
9.2. Overview of theoretical framework and contributions	241
9.3. Empirical findings	244
9.3.1. The emergence of the South Korean nation	244
9.3.2. Globalised-cultural nationalism	246
9.3.3. The role of construction and choice in the emergence of South Korean nationalism	247
9.4. The wider implications of the emergence of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism	251
9.4.1. Exclusion	251
9.4.2. Unification	253
<b>Appendices</b>	255
Appendix 1 Methodology	255

Appendix 2	Information sheet for interviewees (in English translation)	269
Appendix 3	Information sheet for interviewees (in Korean)	271
Appendix 4	Consent form (in English translation)	273
Appendix 5	Consent form (in Korean)	275
Appendix 6	Interview questions for students	277
Appendix 7	Inauguration speech of President Roh Moo-hyun (in Korean)	279
Appendix 8	Inauguration speech of President Roh Moo-hyun (in English translation)	285
Appendix 9	Inauguration speech of President Lee Myung-bak (in Korean)	291
Appendix 10	Inauguration speech of President Lee Myung-bak (in English translation)	311
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>323</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Appearance of North Korea and unification-related words in two student newspapers	61
Table 2	Attitudes to unification by age	63
Table 3	South Korean perceptions of language difference between North and South Korea	68
Table 4	‘One people’ as a motivation for unification by age	74
Table 5	Motivation for unification with the North amongst South Korean young people	79
Table 6	What territory constitutes ‘ <i>uri nara</i> ’?	86
Table 7	The nation with whom South Korean young people feel most closely associated	95
Table 8	Importance of tradition in South Korea by age group	97
Table 9	Requirement for South Korean citizenship of Korean ethnic ancestry by age group	128
Table 10	Geographic distribution of Korean diaspora (2011)	137
Table 11	Attitudes toward ethnic diversity by age group	139
Table 12	Growth in number of South Korean travellers aged 21-30	152
Table 13	Destinations of South Korean travellers aged 21-30	154
Table 14	Ranking of fifty national brands in 2009	190
Table 15	Number of young people with NEET status (not in education, employment or training) in South Korea	223
Table 16	Comparisons between actual and reservation wage	225





## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Theoretical framework for analysing the newly emerged South Korean nationalism	6
Figure 2	The ‘School Food’ chain and examples of its modern Korean menu	100
Figure 3	Examples of Dokdo campaign advertisements placed in international media	118
Figure 4	The nation’s weather	180
Figure 5	Examples of G20 Summit logos and promotion across Seoul	192
Figure 6	Images from the G20 Summit advertisement	193
Figure 7	Images from ‘Global Citizen’ advertisement	196
Figure 8	Image from the ‘I am Korea’ advertisement	197

## Chapter One

### Introduction

*Unite our country! Korea is one!*

Im Su-gyeong, the South Korean student who travelled illegally to Pyongyang in 1989 to attend the 13th Annual International Student Youth Festival. She was arrested and jailed on her return to the South.

*To be honest, I don't care if unification is achieved or not.*

South Korean university student in 2010.

It is June 2010 in Seoul. South Korea is in the midst of the 2010 Football World Cup and I am watching television. 'Dasihanbeon' (one more time), demands the South Korea Telecom advertisement, calling on South Korean players and fans to repeat their performance during the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup. The World and Olympic Champion ice skater Kim Yu-na and Korean boy band 'Big Bang' perform their 'Shouting Korea' soccer supporters' song and dance (on behalf of Hyundai Motors). In fact, almost every advertisement references the South Korean soccer team in some way, and by the end of the five minute commercial break the viewer's patriotic devotion to the South Korean team and nation is sealed. After some contemplation, I consider that this selection of advertisements sums up my academic research: we witness the vigour of Korean youth, the strength of South Korean nationalism, the ubiquitous presence of Korea's economy and the *chaebol*<sup>1</sup> and the power of national symbols – as well as the perfect absence of North Korea.

The absence of North Korea or the North Korean soccer team from a selection of advertisements would be less notable but for the fact that this was the first Football World Cup where teams from both the North and the South participated. Korea, albeit divided, is said to be a nation built

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<sup>1</sup> Revised Romanisation is *Jaebeol*.

upon ethnic nationalism (Shin, Gi-wook 2006) and the idea of *danil minjok* (a single ethnic nation), where the majority of people hope for unification (Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, 2010). In the past, elites have even discussed the prospect of unified Korean teams competing in international sporting events. The deafening silence regarding the North Korean team during coverage of the Football World Cup was painfully conspicuous, however, when set against the fever-pitched atmosphere surrounding South Korea and its team. South Korean games brought hundreds of thousands of supporters onto the streets to watch their team on huge screens. North Korean games attracted only a few spectators who stopped by chance to watch<sup>2</sup>. North Korea may as well have been any other minor nation participating in the tournament. Indeed, the South Korean audience were more interested in the teams of Brazil, Argentina and England than the team of their brothers in the North.

It was not always like this. Despite the division of Korea following the Second World War, and the subsequent catastrophe of the Korean War that pitched the North against the South, definitions of nation and nationalism amongst young people in the South had included the territory and people of the North. This inclusion was evident in the rhetoric and actions of the South's youth and student movement, a movement which defined and influenced much of the oppositional political ideology throughout the authoritarian era (Lee, Namhee 2007). The nationalist discourse of the student movement demanded democracy and development in South Korea and opposed perceived neo-colonialist relationships with Japan and the United States. Underlying this, however, was a strong nationalism that called for the reunification of the Korean peninsula and the unity of the North Korean and South Korean people. This unification-based nationalism continued until the 1990s. The nationalist nature of the Korean student movement from the colonial period until the 1990s is discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

By the late 1990s, however, attitudes to unification and North Korea were changing. Unification no longer played a prominent role in the discourse of the student movement and young people. Opinion polls on unification began to show a trend toward more negative sentiment. With the arrival of the new millennium, anecdotal evidence – and gradually survey data – was suggesting

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<sup>2</sup>I watched the North Korea versus Portugal game on one of the giant screens set up along the banks of the Han River in Seoul. At the beginning of the game there were just a handful of people watching with me. Audience numbers did increase throughout the game but this was by chance as people on their evening stroll stopped and joined the small crowd.

that young people were not only becoming increasingly hesitant and nervous about unification, but a growing number were explicitly opposed to unification (Breen, 2008; Lee, Sook-jong 2006). These evolving views are examined in Chapter Three.

In this thesis, I argue that these changing attitudes to unification and identity provide evidence for the emergence of a new nationalism and national identity amongst young people in South Korea. This generation of South Korean young people in their twenties, known in Korean as the *isipdae*, has been constructed and shaped by an entirely new South Korean context. They have grown up knowing only a democratic, economically prosperous and stable South Korea. These young people have no memory of relatives and family in the North and no experience of the authoritarian era or the democracy movement. They are highly educated, well travelled, technologically savvy and fashion conscious. Their life experiences are different in almost every way to that of their parents' and grandparents' generations. Korea is a country transforming so quickly that even oldest and youngest siblings can find themselves growing up in very different worlds. Given the dramatic pace of change in South Korea, I argue that South Korea's twenty-somethings are not only part of a different generation but also a different nation. They define themselves and their national identity in terms wholly unfamiliar to those in the older generations. This is the first generation which defines itself in terms of the southern part of the peninsula only. This is the first generation of *South* Koreans.

### **1.1 The aims of this thesis and the central puzzle it addresses**

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the emergence of a new sense of the South Korean nation and nationalism. My central puzzle is how long-held ethnically-based views that drove a demand for unification have been challenged so dramatically in recent years – especially amongst the young. In answering this puzzle, I will establish the following:

- *An emerging South Korean nation, nationalism and national identity amongst young South Koreans.* I demonstrate that for many South Korean twenty-something young people, their nationalism and national identity is expressed in terms of the Republic of Korea, South Korea, only. This group of young people define *uri nara*, meaning 'our nation', as South Korea.

- *This new South Korean nationalism represents a new category of nationalism: a globalised-cultural nationalism.* I show how this new South Korean nationalism manifests itself in the lives of South Korean young people through the characteristics of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status. I categorise this new South Korean nationalism emerging amongst young people as a globalised-cultural nationalism. It is a nationalism that requires adherence to definite cultural norms in order for an individual to be included in the national unit. The globalised element of this new nationalism represents the importance of concepts of the global and international in its expressions and formation.

The ‘globalising’ of a national identity is an interesting paradox. The cosmopolitan and international elements of this nationalism, and how they define rather than undermine the emerging South Korean national identity, are explored in this thesis.

- *Young people are adopting and accepting this new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism because of the changes brought about by the globalisation of South Korean society.* I show how young people have been encouraged to reject a unified identity and embrace the South Korean national identity following the rise in neo-liberal values and the intense competition experienced in South Korean society. These neo-liberal challenges, which came about because of South Korea’s globalisation, have been compounded by a fear of unification and its possible consequences. I argue that as a result, young people are actively embracing, adopting and accepting this new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework: the three levels of nationalism**

In the discussion of the new South Korean nationalism that is emerging amongst South Korea’s young people, I use three levels of theoretical analysis. First, I examine *how South Korean nationalism and the South Korean nation has come into existence*, using the ‘causal theories’ of nationalism proposed by scholars such as Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson and Elie Kedourie. These authors have presented tools of analysis that help us understand nationalism through their primordialist, constructivist and instrumentalist theories of the

emergence of nations. I suggest that the constructivist and instrumentalist approaches are most useful for understanding this new South Korean nationalism<sup>3</sup>.

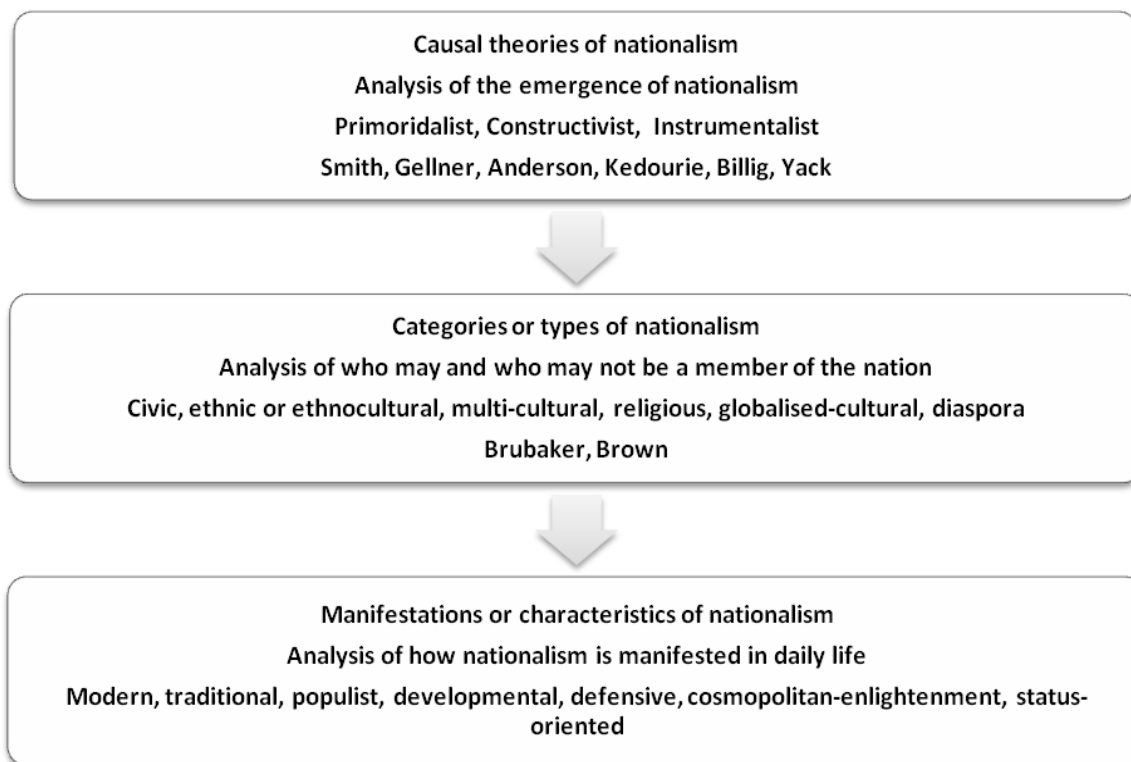
Next, an analysis of the ‘category’ or ‘type’ of nationalism provides an understanding of *the nature of the nationalism that has come into existence*. Categories of nationalism include civic, ethnic, religious, or multicultural. A category or type of nationalism describes who may or may not qualify to be accepted within the nation – types or categories are about membership, and the rules for membership. An ethnic nationalism, for example, may exclude someone based on their ethnicity or ancestry. A civic nationalism may preclude potential members because of their political affiliation.

Finally, I argue that nationalism can be understood at a third level, namely *the manifestations or characteristics of nationalism and nationalist sentiment*. Characteristics or manifestations of nationalism are not ‘types’ in themselves but expressions of national identity in daily life that help us to identify the category of nationalism that is salient. They provide the evidence for, and description of, the particular category of nationalism. Examples of nationalist manifestations might include an emphasis upon adherence to cultural tradition or directing anger toward those who associate outside of the ethnic group. These manifestations may suggest the existence of an ethnic nationalism. Figure 1 below describes my theoretical framework for analysing this new South Korean nationalism emerging amongst young people.

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<sup>3</sup>I use the terms ‘primordialist’, ‘constructivist’ and ‘instrumentalist’ as proposed by Crawford Young (1983). Young writes about these terms in relation to the rise in cultural pluralism and conflict within nations. Although Young’s focus is on changes to identities within multi-ethnic societies, I find Young’s categorisation useful for discussing the causal theories of nationalism.

Figure 1 Theoretical framework for analysing the newly emerged South Korean nationalism



### 1.2.1 Causal theories of nationalism and the analysis of the emergence of nations

Central to theoretical debates on nationalism are discussions around the constructivist, instrumentalist and primordialist analyses of the origins of nations. One of the most vibrant debates has taken place among the now ‘classical school’ of nationalism whose proponents include Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and Elie Kedourie. These scholars are united in their claim that nationalism is a relatively recent phenomenon and the core mode of identity in modern society. They differ, however, as to how and why nations first come into being. Primordial ideas of nationalism advanced by Smith propose that nations are deeply rooted in history arising from what Smith terms an ‘ethnie’ and it is this history upon which the modern nation is built (Smith, 1986). Countering this argument are constructivist or modernist scholars, such as Gellner and Anderson, who point to social interactions, processes and networks that arose only in the modern era and provided the basis for the construction of nations.

Instrumentalists, such as Kedourie, believe that nations are created by social and political actors and are used to justify a secondary purpose. The question asked by this thesis is how and why the new South Korean nationalism has emerged amongst young people. In the following section, I explore each of these schools of nationalism and their possible usefulness in analysing the emergence of the new South Korean nation and nationalism.

### **1.2.1.1 Primordialism**

The primordialist construction of nationalism contends that nations are natural and perpetual. David Brown (2000: 6) writes that primordial approaches ‘depict the nation as based upon a natural, organic community, which defines the identity of its members, who feel an innate and emotionally powerful attachment to it’.

Anthony Smith is one of the main proponents of the primordialist approach although he does not use the term himself<sup>4</sup>. Smith writes that ‘by relating nations and nationalism to prior ethnic ties and sentiments, it becomes possible to grasp the hold that particular nations still possess over so many individuals’ (Smith, 2000: 77). Smith refers to this requirement of antiquity as an ‘*ethnie*’: ‘named units of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites’ (Smith, 2000: 65; 2008: 30-31). It is from these *ethnie*, Smith argues, that nations emerge in the modern era.

Whilst Smith agrees that ‘the majority of present-day nations emerged in the last two centuries, both the concept of the nation, and some well-known examples of national communities and national sentiments long predated the advent of modernity’ (Smith, 2008: 184). Furthermore, Smith argues that there is no sign that the importance of ethnic ties is waning in contemporary nations and contemporary nationalism as ‘predicted by so many liberal observers’ (Smith, 2008: 188). Whilst the primordialist approach is much critiqued it is worth considering because of its influence in the everyday understanding of Korean nationalism. This is discussed below in section 1.4 where I summarise the prominence of ideas of ethnic and primordial nationalism in

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<sup>4</sup>Smith might term his approach ‘ethnicsymbolic’ rather than primordial or perennial. However, for the purposes of this analysis, Smith’s emphasis on past culture, tradition, ethnicity and his belief in the pre-modern existence of national communities and sentiment mean that I class his analysis as primordial (Smith, 2000: 62-63).



many older conceptions of Korean nationalism. Theorising on the South Korean case this thesis joins those who refute the primordial analysis of the origins of nations.

### **1.2.1.2 Constructivism**

The constructivist approach (sometimes known as the modernist approach) which I use in the analysis of the emergence of South Korea's globalised-cultural nationalism, purports to show that nationalism is socially constructed, formed by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction. In other words, the identity of the community is constructed by these shared ideas, rather than given by nature through ancestry or based upon perennial cultural traditions. The constructivist conception of nationalism is exemplified by the writings of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson.

Gellner argues that nationalism is brought about by modernisation in the mode of industrialisation (not necessarily capitalism) (Gellner, 1983). Industrialisation requires the formation of an educated population and a high culture created through a universal education system. This enables members of the community to interact, communicate and transfer skills to facilitate industry and production. This high culture gives definition to the community and thus gives rise to the national unit. When this national unit coincides with the political unit, a nation is achieved.

Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* similarly argues that nations and nationalism are rooted in modern processes, albeit through a different mechanism. A nation, he says, is an 'imagined community' where one member is able to conceive of others being part of the same nation, without necessarily knowing or meeting them. These imagined communities are formed through networks that circumscribe the nation. Anderson argues that the most important of these networks in the formation of nationalism is the spread of print media and capitalism, or 'print capitalism'. In particular, he highlights the rise of a vernacular press which formed a unified field of exchange through a common reading language. Newspapers, for example, enabled one member of a community to imagine other members of the same community without ever

encountering them personally<sup>5</sup> (Anderson, 1983: 62). Administrative pilgrimages, the movement of central officials to remote regions for the purpose of administering the colony, also gave rise to imagined communities within delineated administrative borders. As these officials travelled between the outposts and the centre, colonial bureaucrats, fellow travellers and local residents become aware of each other as members of the same administrative community and an imagining of commonality began to arise (Anderson, 1983: 55-56).

I use a constructivist approach to analyse the emergence amongst young people of the new South Korean nation based upon globalised-cultural nationalism. Instead of industrialisation and print capitalism as the force behind the construction of nationalism, I examine the role of globalisation, democracy and 'banal nationalism'. I approach this by combining the classic constructivist analyses of the origins of nations with contemporary constructivist models that allow for a more relevant application of constructivist theory. For example, Michael Billig's theory of banal nationalism is useful. This theory refers to the banality of everyday events such as language, flying the national flag or the presentation of news stories in the media. He shows how these events serve to promote nations, nationalism and identity in established nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States. A second contemporary constructivist account is Bernard Yack's analysis of the role of democracy in promoting the formation of national units and nationalism. I use these contemporary constructivist approaches, alongside an analysis of the role of globalisation, to examine the emergence of a new South Korean nation and nationalism from the existing concept of the ethnic Korean nation particularly amongst young people.

### **1.2.1.3 Instrumentalism**

An instrumentalist analysis of nationalism views the emergence of nationalism as a tool that is used by social or political actors for achieving a separate and distinct goal. Brown<sup>6</sup> (2000: 13) states that this approach 'explains ethnic and national identities not as natural instinctual ties to

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<sup>5</sup>Anderson writes 'early gazettes contained – aside from news about the metropole – commercial news (when ships would arrive and depart, what prices were current for what commodities in what parts), as well as colonial appointments, marriage of the wealthy, and so forth....In this way, the newspaper quite naturally, and even apolitically created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers, to whom these ships, brides, bishops and prices belonged. In time, of course, it was only to be expected that political elements would enter in' (Anderson, 1983: 62).

<sup>6</sup>Brown terms this construct of nationalism 'situational' nationalism rather than instrumentalist.

organic communities, but rather as resources employed by groups of individuals for the pursuit of their common interests<sup>7</sup>. One of the proponents of this instrumentalist approach to nationalism is Elie Kedourie. Kedourie argues that nationalism is an instrument used by governing elites to create a justification for governing. Opening his book, *Nationalism*, Kedourie (1974) writes:

Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organisation of a society of states. (Kedourie, 1974: 1)

The instrumentalist analysis of the formation of nations is a useful adjunct to a constructivist approach in the analysis of the emergence of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism. I use an instrumentalist approach to argue that the adoption and acceptance of the South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism by young people has been a conscious choice in order to protect their common interests and goals. It reveals a bottom-up, and broadly collective and societal, choice amongst growing numbers of young people to actively accept and adopt this new national identity and reject unification and a unified identity. The findings are different to those revealed by most instrumentalist analyses in the existing theoretical literature, which tend to unearth top-down or elite manipulation of nations and nationalism to achieve distinct aims. This has important implications for the emergence of nationalism in comparative contexts.

### **1.2.2 Types and categories of nationalism**

In this section, I introduce the nature and characteristics of the new South Korean nationalism. In other words, I identify the ‘category’ or ‘type’ of this new national identity. By identifying the category of nationalism that has emerged, I can gain an understanding of who may and who may not qualify for membership of the South Korean nation. In other words, the central feature of a ‘category’ or ‘type’ of nationalism is its role in determining membership of the national unit.

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<sup>7</sup>Brown continues ‘as the type of threats of opportunities with which people are faced change, so do their options and their responses. Thus, both the utility of ethnicity and nationalism, and the form which they take, will vary in response to changing situations’ (Brown: 2000: 13).

Brubaker (1998: 298) writes that ethnic and national groups should not be assumed to be ‘sharply bounded, internally homogeneous “groups”’. Instead, ‘groupness’ and ‘boundedness’ must thus be taken ‘as *variable*, as *emergent properties* of particular structural or conjunctural settings’. Nations are being continually shaped by the shared experiences of their peoples and elites. For example, post-modern networks and ties such as those based upon gender, globalisation and universal human rights have affected the evolution of nations as units of association. Because nations are constantly changing, Brubaker challenges scholars to expect evolution in the types of nationalism and national identity operating inside those societies. The Korean peninsula, although divided into two political units, was originally conceived by young South Koreans as a single national unit. However, in the case of South Korea, changing attitudes to unification signalled a possible evolution in the nature of identity and nationalism. What I will show in this thesis is that the nationalism in existence during earlier student movements has not simply changed. Instead, an entirely new nation and nationalism has emerged.

The question, therefore, is what type of nationalism has emerged in South Korea? The most common dichotomy in nationalist categorisation is civic versus ethnic nationalism<sup>8</sup>. Brown defines ethnic nationalism, or as he prefers, ethno-cultural nationalism, as ‘a sense of community which focuses on belief in myths of common ancestry, and on the perception that these myths are validated by contemporary similarities of physiognomy, language or religion’ (Brown, 2000: 51). Civic nationalism, he writes, is ‘a sense of community which focuses on the belief that residence in a common territorial homeland, and commitment to its state and civil society institutions, generate a distinctive national character and civic culture, such that all citizens, irrespective of the diverse ancestry, comprise a community in progress with a common destiny’ (Brown, 2000: 52).

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<sup>8</sup>Brubaker and Brown both argue against the ‘bad’ ethnic and ‘good’ civic distinction and labels. Brubaker argues that this characterisation is unhelpful as individual civic or ethnic nationalisms may vastly differ depending on how they are manifested and expressed in their respective nations (Brubaker, 1998). Brown argues that both types have the possibility to be either liberal or illiberal, depending upon the origins of the civic or ethnic nationalism: nationalism which is ‘reactive in origin and which is articulated by a marginalised group, is more likely to emerge in an illiberal form; but such illiberalism is not fixed, since it depends upon how nationalist elites portray the nation’s enemies’ (Brown, 2000).

Types of nationalism, however, have increased in number as nationalisms continue to evolve in this changing world. Possible types or categories might include cultural nationalism; trans-border (diaspora) nationalism; multicultural nationalism; or religious nationalism. Multiple categories of nationalism might operate at any one time in a nation, for example ethno-cultural and ethno-religious nationalism. For those who argue that ethnic and cultural nationalisms are always concurrent, the rise of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism demonstrates how ethnic nationalism and cultural nationalism can be separate categories of national identity. The key to adequately categorising such nationalism is to understand and detail the characteristics or manifestations of the respective nationalism in operation as discussed in the next section.

From this growing list of types or categories, a third possible categorisation for the new South Korean identity can be found, namely multicultural nationalism. Brown writes that multicultural nationalism ‘offers a vision of a community which respects and promotes the cultural autonomy and status equality of its component ethnic groups’ (Brown, 2000: 126). Critics of multicultural nationalism point to its potential to discourage a national community and to allow ethnic communities to live separately and distinctively (Lasch, 1995; Huntington, 2006). Others argue, however, that the concept of multicultural nationalism can bring about a more just distribution of power and resources within a political and national community by ensuring minorities are able to have their interests recognised alongside those of the majority (Brown, 2000: 131-132).

In this thesis I will analyse the new South Korean nationalism, basing the analysis on the daily manifestations or expressions of nationalism amongst young people. I will argue that the new South Korean nationalism is not described by any existing type of nationalism. Instead this emerging South Korean nationalism represents a *new* category of nationalism, a globalised-cultural nationalism, based upon shared cultural values influenced in their formation and expression by globalisation. Using this categorisation, the capacity of South Korean nationalism for inclusion and exclusion can be better understood.

### **1.2.3 Manifestations of nationalism**

The manifestations or characteristics of nationalism describe how nationalism is exhibited in the daily lives of individual members of the nation. By focusing on the fields of social and political

life in which nationalism is expressed we can better understand the implications of the emergence or existence of a particular category of nationalism or national identity. Ethnic nationalism, for example, may be expressed through a variety of characteristics or manifestations including adherence to cultural traditions, political populism or hostility toward a certain ethnic group. The implication for a society in which ethnic nationalism is operating, therefore, depends upon how that nationalism manifests itself and how it is expressed.

In the case of South Korea, I argue that the new globalised-cultural nationalism has manifested itself through a number of characteristics – modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status – all essentially cultural expressions. I examine the close relationship of these manifestations of nationalism to ideas of the global and international in their formation and expression. Thus, based on these manifestations or characteristics, I argue that a globalised-cultural nationalism has emerged amongst the *isipdae* in South Korea.

### **1.3 Defining nationalism**

The core of this work looks at the emergence of a new nation and nationalism amongst South Korea's young people. A definition of nationalism is therefore essential. Ernest Gellner's (1983) definition of nationalism is particularly helpful, separating the tangible aspect of nationalism – when does a nation come into existence – from the intangible element, which is nationalism as sentiment:

Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.

Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind. (Gellner, 1983: 1)

Using this definition, it is possible to explain that the division of the unified Korean national unit into two political units gave rise to nationalist sentiment or anger, which in the past, has inspired calls for reunification amongst young people. Through my examination of South Korean

nationalism, however, I will show that for many contemporary South Korean young people, members of the new South Korean nation, division no longer gives rise to nationalist anger. Instead, these young people are comfortable with the current status-quo on the Korean peninsula. Their concept of the national unit, *uri nara*, is the territory of South Korea only and coincides with its representative political unit – the Republic of Korea and its government which is democratically elected by popular vote. For the *isipdae*, their nation, the South Korean nation, is already established. The establishment of the South Korean nation does, however, give rise to a sense of satisfaction expressed in ways such as pride in the modernity of South Korea and a demand for South Korea's status to be accorded appropriate status in the international community. These expressions of nationalist sentiment are discussed in Chapter Four in the exploration of the manifestations of this new South Korean nationalism amongst young people. Before examining contemporary Korean nationalism, however, it will be useful to review past scholarly discussion of the Korean nation and national identity.

#### **1.4 A brief history of Korean nationalism**

The writings of Shin Chaeho at the turn of the Nineteenth Century, in particular his *Doksa Sillon* (*A New Way of Reading History*), marked the beginning of the modern nationalist debate in Korea (Em, Henry 1999; Schmid, 1997). In this work, Shin equated the history of Korea (*guksa* or national history) with the history of the nation (*minjoksa*, meaning the people's or nation's history). It was for the first time 'a history of the ethnic nation, rather than a dynastic history' (Em, Henry 1999: 289). Shin traced the formation of the Korean nation back to the mythical figure of *Dangun*, so-called Father of the Korean people, and his birthplace in Northeast China from where *Dangun*'s people are said to have spread out both South onto the peninsula and North into China (Schmid, 1997: 34). These discussions took place at a time when Korea was threatened by an array of foreign adversaries. For Shin, the idea of ethnic homogeneity, and the Korean *minjok* or race as the basis of the Korean nation, was integral to his efforts to resist a Japanese colonial expansion that based its claim to Korea, in part, on Koreans being part of a greater Japanese race. The subsequent dominance of ideas of ethnic nationalism in South Korea

is rooted in the writings of Shin; primordial analyses of the formation of the modern Korean nation remain prevalent in contemporary academic writing<sup>9</sup> (Lankov, 2006).

There are, however, a number of scholars who provide an alternative to the primordial analysis of the roots of the Korean nation. One of these is Bruce Cumings (1997). Cumings challenges the myth of *Dangun* as the basis of the Korean nation<sup>10</sup> and argues that the formation of the Korean nation was a modern event. He presents the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) as an agrarian state with a weak central administrative reach, similar to Gellner's pre-nationalist agrarian society. He describes Joseon's subjects living inward looking lives, tied to the locality by economic need, the state's only interest being the extraction of taxes and maintaining the peace, with no interest in promoting any lateral communication between its subject communities<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, it is likely that the peasants of the Joseon dynasty would have cared little about any shared ethnic or cultural origin with the landowners who controlled their lives; rather, they were more concerned by famine and destitution frequently brought on by the massive taxes levied against them. As Cumings neatly explains, 'what would a slave or a butcher care for the pride of the Yangban now shamed by Japan?' (Cumings, 1997: 121).

The Japanese period of influence began in 1894 with a modernisation and development plan for Korea known as the Kabo Reforms. Cumings calls this period 'the birth of modern Korea' (Cumings, 1997: 120). The Kabo reforms were sweeping reforms that affected many vital aspects of the administration, economy and society of Korea (Lee, Ki-baik 1984: 292-3; Eckert

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<sup>9</sup>Lankov describes the role of this ethnic-based nationalist historiography in the pursuance of issues including so-called 'historical sovereignty' over Goguryeo. Korea's historical sovereignty over Goguryeo is disputed by China. The ancient Goguryeo dynasty covered a large section of Northeast China. The Goguryeo dynasty was one of the most successful dynasties in the history of this region. Encouraged by a number of domestic and nationalist considerations, both China and Korea seek to claim Goguryeo as their own national history (Lankov, 2006).

<sup>10</sup>Cumings writes in regard to the *Dangun* myth: 'Korea is indeed one of the most homogeneous nations on earth, where ethnicity and nationality coincide. It is pleasant for Koreans to think they were always that way; it is a dire mistake to think that this relative homogeneity signifies a common "bloodline" or imbues all Koreans with similar characteristics' (Cumings, 1997: 25).

<sup>11</sup>Cumings writes that 'Korea's agrarian bureaucracy was superficially strong but actually rather weak at the centre. The state ostensibly dominated the society, but in practice landed aristocratic families could keep the state at bay and perpetuate their local power for centuries' (Cumings, 1997: 73). For the average citizen of Joseon, their experience of 'Korea', therefore, would extend no further than their immediate environment and possibly to the agents of landowners collecting taxes, with a huge population of slaves and very low castes in trades such as butchery and leather, who were again separated from other parts of society by lateral divisions (Lee, Ki-baik 1984: 184-188).



et al. 1990: 226). Reforms included the modernisation of local government to remove its absolute authority over the local populace, the separation of the administration of justice from the executive and a thorough rationalisation of fiscal administration and taxation. Social reforms included the abolition of slavery, the removal of class distinctions, prohibition of child marriages, the establishment of a primary school system and legislation against a variety of other malevolent social practices and conventions (Cumings, 1997). They were reforms that fundamentally altered the social, economic and administrative fabric of Korea.

Henry Em is another of the voices challenging the dominant primordialist nationalist historiography in South Korea. He also marks the colonial period as the crucial moment in the emergence of the Korean 'nation' (*minjok*) (Em, Henry 1999: 284). Em argues that the period of Japanese colonialism was 'constructive' in terms of the imagery created by both the coloniser and colonised. As Japanese policy tried to eradicate the Korean identity by closing Korean schools and forbidding the use of Korean language, they had to label people, cultures, and languages as 'Korean'. And so, for the first time, Koreans could imagine a community – a nation – in which they had an interest, albeit under the control of a *foreign* power (Em, Henry 1999: 305-308). The 'imagining' of a wider community deepened amongst all classes of Koreans as they were forced to travel to find work or were transported by the Japanese to other parts of the peninsula, to Manchuria or to Japan, joining other Korean compatriots as forced labour. By the end of the period of Japanese rule, forced or coerced movement had affected as much as 40 per cent of the adult population (Cumings, 1997: 175). More generally, the arrival of the colonial era forced many Koreans to become aware of their Korean identity. They recognised themselves as a common Korean population, albeit one that was repressed as the colonial subjects of Japan. Their sense of a national community was deepened by the presence of the coloniser. Indeed, Kim Ku, the renowned Korean nationalist and President of Korea under the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea following liberation, said that 'until 1910, most adults did not even know what a nation was' (Wells, 1991: 83).

As a result, throughout the colonial era, many other types of nationalism developed in reaction to the challenges faced by the Korean peninsula. Kenneth Wells' *New God New Nation: Protestantism and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea 1896-1937* explores the rise of a highly cultural conception of Korean nationalism during the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

This Protestant-inspired nationalism was, as Wells terms it, a reconstruction nationalism. Although not denying the nation-state ideal, it separated the nation from the state believing that individual culture and self-improvement, through work and education, for example, was the most important element of forming a strong nation (Wells, 1991). Michael Robinson describes the rise of a similar nationalism in the early 1920s, what he calls a ‘cultural nationalism’, in response to the colonial authorities. Cultural nationalism in this period sought to work within the constraints of the colonial system to create ‘a gradual programme of reform, education, and economic development to lay the base for future independence’ (Robinson, 1988: 158). It was a movement that attempted to build a nation without directly confronting Japanese authority (Robinson, 1988: 163). However, whilst the programmes of the cultural nationalists were able to survive the control and censorship of the colonial government, it failed to gain wider support against the background of more appealing radical nationalist and socialist movements of the time (Robinson, 1988: 166).

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Korean peninsula was divided under the occupation of the US and USSR. The new government in the South was led by Rhee Syngman from 1948 to 1960. It relied on ethnic nationalism in the form of an anti-Japanese, pro-independence sentiment to achieve Rhee’s goals of legitimising his rule and maintaining power (Cheong, Sung-hwa 1992). He also used ethnic nationalism to oppose and manage the actions of the occupying US forces when it suited his aims (Cheong, Sung-hwa 1992). Shin Gi-wook (2006) argues that the Korean War (1950-1953) was inspired not by ideology but by the strong sense of ethnic nationalism that existed on the peninsula. Shin writes that ‘territorial partition on top of a strong sense of ethnic homogeneity produced irresistible pressure to recover lost national unity, which is a key factor in understanding...the Korean War’ (Shin, Gi-wook 2006: 152).

Park Chung Hee, Rhee’s successor as leader of South Korea, put less focus upon ethnic nationalism, not least because he had been a member of the Japanese Imperial Army, and he required the support of the United States and Japan to achieve his many development goals. Nevertheless, the Park Chung Hee era (1961-1979) was a period marked by the effective use of nationalism to legitimise and mobilise. Kim Hyung-a describes how Park’s coup was justified ‘as an act of “patriotism” to save the nation from crisis’ created by student protest and general unrest (Kim, Hyung-a 2003). Throughout Park’s regime, nation and nationalism remained a key theme

to legitimise his government and to justify development plans that placed a heavy burden upon South Korea's working populace. Furthermore, he needed to justify and support the build-up of the military to guard against the threat from the North. In 1972, when his economic miracle was slowing and his popularity waning, Park introduced his highly repressive *Yusin* constitution and then advanced his Heavy Chemical Industrialisation (HCI) plan for Korea. Alongside this, Park introduced a policy of *chaju* (literally 'self-strengthening') and the promotion of Korean cultural traditions. This held great appeal for some amongst the Korean people and, alongside the brutal use of force, helped consolidate Park's *Yusin* policy. This nationalism attached to the *Yusin* policy was also aimed at mobilising the population and economy for a greater assertion of military autonomy following US President Nixon's détente with China, the US withdrawal from Vietnam, and, later on, President Carter's discussions of military withdrawal from Korea (Koh, Byung Chul 1984; Kim, Hyung-a 2004).

Chun Doo Hwan's regime had even greater problems of legitimacy having come to power through a coup at a time when the Korean people had a strong expectation of democracy. Soon after taking power he brutally suppressed opposition in Gwangju, leading to many hundreds of deaths and disappearances in an incident that came to be known as the Gwangju massacre. Chun, however, was still able to secure his position of President of Korea for a total of seven years. This was achieved partly through good management of the economy (Chun mostly left the running of the economy to a talented team of bureaucrats) but mainly through the fierce suppression of opposition and by his effective use of nationalism. Chun's nationalism exploited the continued perceptions of threat from North Korea, hatred of Communism and populist sentiment surrounding unification (Bleiker, 2005: 67).

Albeit not explicit in the rhetoric and nature, these regimes both employed what was essentially an ethnic nationalism. For example, Park's regime 'identified national "security" and "development" as the main tasks that the nation faced, his actions were carried out 'in the name of the nation, national unity, or modernisation of the Fatherland' (Shin, Gi-wook, 2006: 167). Chun also followed a similar discursive pattern as he bid for legitimacy by committing to rid the nation of corruption and promising a future of economic growth for the people of South Korea (Eckert et. al, 1990: 376).

Opposition to the Park and the Chun regimes also relied heavily on nationalism for motivation and justification. Its own nationalism focused upon anti-American and anti-imperialist motifs, as well as ethnic nationalism, underlining the need for unification with the North. Students also frequently presented themselves as the true and pure representatives of the Korean nation against the corrupt and illegitimate government. This nationalist framing often won them warm support from across the population (Kim, Quee-young 1983: 78). The role of nationalism in the student protest movement, from the colonial era through the authoritarian period and into the early 1990s, is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Following democratisation in 1987, ethnic nationalism continued to play an important role in Korean society. Some positive mobilisations of ethnic nationalism were reflected in the huge public support for the successful 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and in attempts by Presidents Roh Tae-woo, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung to warm ties with the North. Throughout the 1990s, liberalising policies such as the opening of domestic markets to foreign competition were rejected, in part to avoid offending the nationalist sentiments of the Korean voters. By exposing the *chaebol* to increased competition, some argue, these policies would have forced them to become more efficient. Had they been adopted, they further argue, Korea could have avoided some of the worst excesses that contributed to the economic crisis (Clifford, 1998: 336-337; Kong, Tat Yan 2000: 22).

## **1.5 Current discussions of Korean nationalism**

Shin Gi-wook's *Ethnic nationalism in Korea*, published in 2006, remains the most recent and comprehensive review of nationalism in Korea. Shin details a Korean nationalist discourse that is primarily discussed in terms of ethnicity and blood ties (Shin, Gi-wook 2006). He writes of historical processes in the development of the Korean nation 'by which race, ethnicity, and nation come to be conflated in Korea to produce a strong sense of oneness based on shared bloodline and ancestry' (Shin, Gi-wook, 2006: 223). This ethnic nationalism, argues Shin, continues to drive desire for unification with the North although he points out that this is stronger amongst older people than younger people (Shin, Gi-wook 2006: 198-199). Shin posits that globalisation has intensified this ethnic national identity in South Korea; following Anthony Smith he argues that ethnic and national solidarity, based upon blood ties and shared history, is

the reaction to the cultural and social disruption brought on by modernisation and globalisation<sup>12</sup> (Shin, Gi-wook 2006: 214).

However, a number of authors have pointed to the increasingly pragmatic nature of nationalist sentiment in South Korea. Lee Sook-jong asserts that young people in South Korea continue to have a shared ethnic identity with those in the North. However, Lee suggests that this ethnic sentiment has weakened and is no longer strong enough 'to guarantee their willingness to pay the huge expected costs' of immediate unification. Instead, young people prefer a very gradual reunification which would minimise the costs of unification to South Korean society (Lee, Sook-jong 2006). Similarly, Kim Byung-ro argues that young people identify themselves with the whole of Korea but have a very practical and pragmatic, even conservative, approach to expressing nationalism in regards to North Korea and unification (Kim, Byung-ro 2007). Whilst these analyses briefly recognise the growing ambivalence toward unification, they fail to examine the root causes of these changing attitudes to North Korea and the event of unification.

Katherine Moon, in her chapter 'Korean nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and democratic consolidation', charts the anti-American movement as democracy has developed in South Korea. While not denying the persistence of nationalist sentiment, she shows how the anti-American movement has replaced grand narratives of anti-imperialism and unification with democratic concepts including human rights, labour rights, environmentalism and the rule of law. With the demise of authoritarian government and the rise of democracy, a national identity based on anti-authoritarianism, anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism is no longer required (Moon, Katherine 2003). Other authors highlight the growing tendency of young people and Koreans more generally to find more benign 'ethnic' expressions of nationalism, for example through pride in sports (Shin, Gi-wook 2006) or with culture such as *hallyu*, the so-called Korean Wave (Lee, Sook-jong 2006). Chung and Choe (2008) remark that even though young people fought bitterly for democratic and social justice in South Korea, culture, history and science and technology inspire much greater national pride than, for example, politics and social welfare.

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<sup>12</sup>Anthony Smith argues that 'if anything, globalising pressures have, through large-scale migration and mass communications, revitalised ethnic ties and sentiments across the globe' (Smith, 2008: 118).

As politics has become increasingly contentious in South Korea, Hahm Chaibong (2006) writes of the polarisation of nationalism. He points to the rise of what he calls a leftist-nationalism that he defines as a populist anti-American, pro-North Korean sentiment. This manifests itself, he argues, in antipathy toward economic globalisation, increased self-confidence vis-à-vis the relationship with the US and a proactive view toward engagement with North Korea (Hahm, 2005). Hahm also compares the current nationalism on the right and left to the Confucian period. At this time, the debate converged around the opposition between *gaeguk* and *swaeguk* – opening the nation to international influence versus efforts to try to build domestically without external influence. He argues that this represents the dichotomy between the pragmatic nationalism of the right in Korea versus the more inward looking nationalism of the left (Hahm, 2006).

Some academics are now considering alternatives to ‘ethnic’ nationalism to categorise nationalist sentiment in Korea but many of these alternatives are unsatisfactory. There are now over one million foreigners in South Korea with over 100,000 newly naturalised Korean citizens (Kim, Mi-ju 2011). As a result, increasing academic attention is being paid to the multicultural nature of South Korean society to discover how immigration into Korea is being addressed by society and elites (Choe, Hyun 2007). Many scholars argue that the rhetoric of multiculturalism is no more than surface deep and that a strong ethnic nationalism remains. As a result, multiculturalism is not being effectively translated into substantive action that can help to include new immigrants within the national unit (Kong et al., 2010; Han, Geon-su 2007; Kim, Andrew Eungi 2009; Belanger et al., 2010).

Han Kyung-koo (2007) argues that Korean nationalism is instead based on a sense of cultural superiority stemming from historical Korea and this is the basis of discrimination against others rather than racially based discrimination. Han reminds us that differentiation on the basis of culture might lead to as much discrimination as differentiation on the grounds of race. Han’s thesis however, is essentially no different from an ethnic ‘type’ of nationalism given that Han’s argument seeks to understand discrimination against non-ethnic Koreans. It thus adds little to the debate on new South Korean nationalism and national identity.

Post-modern critiques of Korean nationalism are also emerging alongside these more traditional analyses. In the face of globalisation Kim Kyoung Ju posits the construction of ‘polymorphous’ or ‘amorphous’ identities that are leading to ‘a highly differentiated society’ (Kim, Kyoung Ju 2006: 161). Sheila Myoshi Jager provides a feminist analysis of the process of nation building in Korea. Analysing discourse around reunification, economic development, and opposition to authoritarianism she shows how many of these processes constructed and reinforced ideas of patriarchy and conservative views on sexuality and gender in Korean society (Jager, 1996; 2003). This is evidenced by, for example, ‘the cult of military manhood’ under the Park Chung Hee regime and in the writings of Shin Chaeho (Jager, 2003) or the linking of conservative views of sexuality and gender with the rhetoric and nationalism related to the process of unification (Jager, 1996: 4). These post-nationalist analyses provide an alternative to ethnic understandings of identity and nation in South Korea.

There is also a growing body of work on identity in regards to the experiences of new *ethnic-Korean* immigrants. The ‘hierarchical nation’ proposed by Seol and Skrentny (2009) describes the establishment of a hierarchy of ethnic Koreans within South Korea. In this hierarchy, educated Korean-Americans are placed at the top whilst North Korean immigrants find themselves firmly at the bottom. A number of other authors have written of the difficulties faced by North Koreans in maintaining their identity whilst trying to find a place in the South Korean nation and society (Kim, Yoon Young 2009; Chung, Byung-ho 2008).

Whilst the exploration of the ethnic-Korean or non-ethnic-Korean migrant respective experience in the South can be highly enlightening, most literature on the topic of migration, identity, unification or nationalism in Korea tends to address *either* the issue of ethnic-Korean immigration (e.g. Seol and Skrentny, 2009) *or* non-ethnic Korean immigration (e.g. Kim, Andrew Eungi 2009). With the exception of Nora Hui Jung Kim (2008) few give attention to what she terms the ‘liberals’ dilemma’: how to deal with both ethnic and non-ethnic Korea immigration in a just and equal manner. Kim presents the sense of obligation to include ethnic-Korean arrivals as equals in the South Korean nation, particularly those from China and North Korea. However, such ethnic-based policies, no matter how well intentioned, contradicts the goal of including other non-ethnic Korean immigrants on a non-discriminatory basis.

Nora Kim's work highlights the importance of looking at nationalism, identity and immigration in South Korea through a wider lens so as to include both non-ethnic and ethnic-Korean arrivals in a more comprehensive analysis. Using such a lens, this thesis provides comprehensive analysis of the evolution of nationalism in South Korea with regard to the implications for all those living in South Korea. I demonstrate the shift from an ethnic-based nationalism to a globalised-cultural nationalism. This has resulted in some ethnic Korea – North Koreans and *Joseonjok* (Korean-Chinese), for example – finding that they are excluded from the South Korean national community. Some non-ethnic Korean immigrants who meet the demands of this new globalised-cultural nationalism, however, can be imagined by many young people as members of the South Korean national community. Through its specific focus on young people, and by looking at attitudes to both non-ethnic and ethnic Koreans, this work differs from much of the existing literature on this topic by presenting a wholly new understanding of nationalism and identity in South Korea.

## **1.6 Chapter outline**

This thesis will address the central puzzle of how long-held ethnically-based views that drove a demand for unification have been challenged so dramatically in recent years – especially amongst the young. Chapter Two provides the historical context for this research. In chapters Three to Five, I demonstrate the existence of this new South Korean nationalism and describe its globalised-cultural nature. Chapters Six to Eight then use constructivist and instrumentalist analyses to examine the rise and acceptance of this new nationalism and the shaping of its manifestations and characteristics. My conclusion summarises the findings and highlights the very substantial policy issues that arise from them.

### *Chapter Two – Korea's nationalist student movement*

The first substantive chapter builds on the brief review of nationalism presented above and uses key moments in the history of the Korean student movement, from the colonial period at the turn of the twentieth century until the early 1990s, to demonstrate the nationalist nature of students' aims and actions. It argues that three types of nationalist sentiment were motivating the students throughout this period: the fight against colonialism and later neo-colonialism; the demand for national development; and, following division, the hope of unification with the North. Crucially,



I will show that the student movement's concept of the 'national unit', despite the division of the peninsula, included both North and South Korea from the time of division until the mid-1990s. This chapter provides the context for examining the change in nationalism and identity amongst contemporary South Korean students and young people.

*Chapter Three – Changing attitudes to unification and the formation of uri nara in the image of the South*

Through an in-depth examination of the attitudes of students and young people in South Korea, this chapter demonstrates the emergence of a new sense of South Korean nationalism. There has been a shift from a peninsula-wide concept of the nation to the emergence of a South Korean nationalism. This argument is substantiated by a number of trends in the attitudes of young people including: an overall decrease in interest in unification and toward North Korea; the emergence of 'South Korea-oriented motivations' for unification amongst those who desire the unity of the North and South; and an increased sense of difference with the North. Finally, I show how for many young people, the conception of *uri nara* meaning 'our nation', a term commonly used in the Korean language, now extends only to the territory of the South.

*Chapter Four – Modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status: the manifestations of South Korea's new nationalism*

Chapter Four describes the nature of this new South Korean nationalism that is emerging among South Korea's young people. It demonstrates how nationalist sentiment and national identity are expressed through three characteristics: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status. Modernity refers to the pride in South Korea's economic achievements and advancement in all aspects of Korean life; the characteristic of cosmopolitan-enlightenment reflects the rise and importance of sophistication, international experience and learning in Korean youth culture; and last, status refers to the importance placed upon South Korea's national status and standing by young South Koreans.

### *Chapter Five – The emergence of a globalised-cultural nationalism*

This chapter directly challenges the primordial and ethnic analyses of Korean nationalism and instead argues that a new category of nationalism has emerged, what I term a globalised-cultural nationalism. This means that membership of the nation is determined by adherence to particular cultural norms that reflect the three manifestations of South Korean nationalism and the globalised culture of young people as discussed in Chapter Four. Using this globalised-cultural nationalism categorisation, I examine who in practice is and is not able to qualify for inclusion in the national unit and membership of *uri nara*, and examine the similarities between this new globalised-cultural nationalism and middle-class and neo-liberal values.

### *Chapter Six – The role of globalisation, democracy and banal nationalism in the emergence of a new South Korean nation*

In this chapter, I use a constructivist analysis to show how three major forces – democracy, globalisation and Michael Billig’s (1995) theory of banal nationalism – have acted to construct the new South Korean nation emerging amongst the *isipdae*. I look at the global networks that have arisen as a result of migration, political ties and international trade. These networks have facilitated travel and international exchange amongst young people. I analyse the impact of these networks and experiences upon national identity, and show how democracy and its founding principle, popular sovereignty or the sovereignty of the people, have been central to the construction of *uri nara* in the image of the South. Finally, I develop Billig’s theory of banal nationalism to show how the banality of everyday events such as language, news stories and the flying of the national flag, can contribute to the construction of a new identity.

### *Chapter Seven – Globalisation and the manifestations of South Korean nationalism*

In Chapter Seven, using a constructivist analysis, I examine two major ways in which globalisation has shaped the manifestations of a new South Korean nationalism. First, I examine the pressures of globalisation that have encouraged both the government and corporate sector to promote and build the profile of Korea in international political and economic forums. I describe, for example, the ‘Korea Brand’ campaign, aimed at promoting Korea internationally, but show how it has also contributed to the shaping of the three manifestations of South Korean

nationalism visible among the *isipdae*: modernisation, cosmopolitan-enlightenment, and status. Next, I show how economic globalisation and neo-liberal values have contributed to the formation of manifestations of South Korean nationalism, in particular cosmopolitan-enlightenment and modernity.

*Chapter Eight – Globalisation, the competitive society and risk: Embracing, adopting and accepting the South Korean identity*

In this penultimate chapter, I employ instrumentalist analysis in a new way to examine the causes of young people's adoption and acceptance of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism. I describe the role of globalisation in constructing a highly competitive society within which young people must survive – for example achieving success in the uncompromising South Korean educational system or obtaining good quality, well-paid and permanent employment in South Korea's merciless job market. As a result, I demonstrate that young people have chosen to embrace South Korean identity and reject unification with the North in order to protect their interests and welfare. Finally, I show that this choice has been further encouraged by unification-specific concerns amongst young people, including the negative perception of the German unification experience and the fear of economic crisis.

*Chapter Nine – Conclusion*

The final chapter summarises the key theoretical and empirical findings of this thesis regarding the emergence of a new South Korean globalised-nationalism amongst young people. In addition, it highlights two very important policy issues raised by this thesis that require further study and reflection. First, the exclusionary nature of the new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism could undermine long-term prospects for successful unification, particularly from the perspective of social harmony and cohesion. In addition, in the short-term, as the number of North Koreans and *Joseonjok* (Chinese-Koreans) increase as a proportion of the South Korean population, the emergence of a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism may prove socially divisive.

Second, I examine the implications of this new nationalism for the *prospects* of unification actually taking place. Paik Nak-chung (1993) theorised the separation of North and South Korea

through what he terms ‘the division system’. His theory of the division system has been influential in the debate that attempts to understand the persistence of division and the failure to achieve unification of the peninsula by North and South Korea and its people. The division system theory attempts to understand the division of the Korean peninsula in the context of both domestic circumstances such as democracy, and the wider global and international system. Drawing on Paik’s division system theory, I review the impact of the emergence of a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism amongst young people for the likelihood of unification.



## Chapter Two

### **Korea's nationalist student movement**

*History says, Don't hope / On this side of the grave,  
But then, once in a lifetime / The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up / And hope and history rhyme.*  
The Cure at Troy, Seamus Heaney, Irish Poet, Nobel Laureate

*I speak with real words. When someone shouts at a policeman he's not just a youth, he's a lout.  
Full stop.*  
Nicholas Sarkozy, French President

#### **2.1 Introduction**

As I eat my lunch at the Seoul National University cafeteria I wonder what scene I would have encountered during the past decades' heady days of student protests. I imagine smoky cafeterias filled with young people contemplating new political ideas, discussing strategy and planning the protests that would shape the path of South Korea's twentieth century political journey. Looking at the table of young men in front of me, dressed in Ralph Lauren and Nike and checking their Samsung smartphones, I wonder if the current generation of students are aware of their alumni's legacy. It is a legacy of struggle, idealism and a devotion to the Korean nation that has left a deep and lasting impact on Korea's political, social and economic landscape.

This chapter analyses the events that contributed to this legacy. Through an examination of the Korean student movement from the colonial era until the 1990s, it will describe the nationalism that motivated student participants throughout. I argue that whilst other issues – democracy, social justice, campus autonomy – played an important role, nationalism was the underlying

rationale behind the key events of a movement that enabled students to leave such a lasting mark on Korea.

In the Introduction I presented Gellner's definition of *political nationalism*. It describes how nations arise when the political unit and the imagined national unit coincide. Nationalist *sentiment* in the form of anger, Gellner explains, can arise when the national and political unit do not correspond. This might be where the political unit is controlled or influenced by a colonial or foreign government or if the national unit is governed by competing political entities. Nationalist sentiment can also be stirred by the satisfaction of realising of a nation. A practical example of this would be working to promote the nation's political and economic development. It could be in partnership with the governing authorities or in opposition to them.

In its analysis of the Korean student movement from the colonial era to the 1990s, this chapter will relate how three types of nationalist sentiment motivated these young people. The first relates to the perceived threat from neo-colonialist influences which sparked a nationalist anger expressed in the form of anti-Americanism or anti-Japanese rhetoric. The second type of nationalist sentiment was inspired by the division of the Korean nation and its people between two political systems and governments, and gave rise to a national unification movement. These two nationalist motivations reflected frustration around the discord between the national unit and the political unit. The third type of nationalist sentiment relates to expressions of satisfaction at the realisation of a nation, that is the Korean nation freed from Japanese colonialism. This inspired demands for the fulfilment of national goals beyond unification such as democracy and prosperity. Indeed, one scholar has already used descriptions of nationalist sentiment that align closely with Gellner's definitions to delineate the evolution of the South Korean student movement. In 1968, Kauh described the pre-1945 movement as a *resistance* to foreign aggression, students taking the role of 'national representatives'. The post-1945 students he describes as the 'nation's representatives' aiming to *fulfil* nationalist goals such as democracy. He is correct in that post-1945 Korean student actors reflected a sense of duty towards the fulfilment of an independent, democratic, socially just and developed nation, at least in the

South<sup>13</sup>. Following division, however, young people continued to believe that national independence was fragile. The student movement often focused attention on perceived neo-colonialist threats of foreign control or influence, in particular from Japan or the United States, well into the 1980s and 1990s.

Korean nationalists could never be satisfied whilst the peninsula remained divided. For Korean youth, despite division, the post-1948 ‘national unit’ continued to include both the North and South of the Korean peninsula. Thus the issue of North Korea and unification constituted an important nationalist element of the South Korean student movement. The battle for reunification also provides a reference against which to compare South Korea’s current youth and student movement, whose concept of the nation, as I will argue in the next chapter, Chapter Three, has increasingly become confined to south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

The following sections use these three elements of nationalism – the fight against neo-colonialism, the demand for national development, and the hope of unification with the North – to examine the history of the South Korean student movement. In doing so, it will demonstrate the importance of nationalism in the history of the South Korean student movement and provide the context for examining nationalism and identity amongst contemporary South Korean youth.

## **2.2 The colonial and pre-division era**

Still celebrated today in both South and North Korea, the March First Independence Movement is the most famous of the anti-colonial protests during Japanese occupation. The March First Movement of 1919 involved mass protests across the whole of Korea that demanded independence from Japanese colonialism. It was inspired in part by US President Woodrow Wilson’s call for self-determination for all nations at the Versailles Peace Conference at the end of the First World War (Eckert et al., 1990; Cumings, 1997).

However, a month prior to the March First Movement, the first proclamation of independence was made by a small group of Korean students studying in Japan. Korean students in Japan had

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted here that the period between 1945 and 1948, when official division begins, needs to be examined separately. This period was marked by sharp division between right-wing and left-wing student groups based upon their political ideologies. See Cumings (1997: 185-236) on ‘The Passions: 1945-1948’.



access to foreign literature that inspired their political thought and most became ardent nationalists who aspired to Korean independence from the Japanese colonial master. The students made use of their relative freedom in Japan to agitate and excite the nationalist debate.

On 8 February 1919, these overseas students established the Korean Youth Independence Corps (*Joseon Cheongneon Dongnipdan*) and the same morning drafted their Declaration of Independence. They distributed the declaration to officials in Japan, including Japanese cabinet members, and sent it to the Korean Government-General. In the afternoon of 8 February, they held a rally involving some two hundred Korean students, many of whom were summarily arrested (Kim, Doh-jung 1991: 116). Pre-empting the action of the Japanese authorities, however, a representative of the Korean student group in Tokyo had already been sent to Korea to meet with domestic nationalist activists. The actions of the students in Tokyo and the enthusiasm of the exile community gave encouragement to the leaders of the March First Movement in Korea to pursue their aim of Korea's independence through direct action<sup>14</sup>.

The March First Movement leadership mainly came from religious organisations which had been harbouring the covert nationalist activity taking place in occupied Korea. The large numbers on the streets were made up of many ordinary Koreans who had also been inspired to protest by the death of Emperor King Kojong, purportedly at the hands of the Japanese (Eckert et al., 1990: 277). Student groups acted as intermediaries organising demonstrations in cities across Korea. They played an important role in mobilising significant numbers of fellow university and high school students as well as community members. Indeed, one of the signatories to the March First Movement Proclamation of Independence was a student and this suggested that the 'leaders of this movement recognised the growth of student power and the significance of student mobilisation' (Kim, Doh-jung 1991: 113). Over one million Koreans participated in the uprising in protests across the whole Korean peninsula. It is estimated that as many as 7,500 people died,

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<sup>14</sup> Kim Doh-jung writes although 'the movement had no practical effect, news of the Korean students' declaration of independence in Japan provided a spark for the leaders in Korea. While the leaders were contemplating an independence movement, Son Kye-baek arrived from Japan with a draft of the [students' Independence] declaration. The declaration was used to secure the approval of Son Byung-hi, the supreme leader of *Chondogyo* [religious order], who is reported to have said: "At a time when young students are carrying out this kind of righteous action, we cannot just sit and watch." It was decided thereupon that a movement for independence would be carried out on a national scale in cooperation with other nationalist groups and religions' (Kim, Doh-Jung 1991).

15,000 were injured and 45,000 arrested (Eckert et al., 1990: 276-281). Many students were included in those numbers. Ultimately, the March First Independence Movement, faced with a determined and brutal colonial Japan, failed in its attempt to gain any autonomy for Korea from the Japanese occupiers. However, it marked the arrival of students as a major protest force and ‘provided a catalyst for the expansion of the nationalist movement as a whole’ (Eckert et al., 1990: 279).

The March First Movement was followed by a series of challenges against the Japanese authorities that continued for the remainder of the colonial period. These acts of defiance were in the main planned and led by students (Kim, Doh-jung 1991: 123). The most important of these is the 1929 Gwangju Incident. The incident began when a Korean girl was harassed by a male Japanese student. Korean youths who witnessed the event demanded an apology from the Japanese boy, and in response the Korean youths were attacked by Japanese students. When the colonial police intervened, only the Korean students were arrested (Kim, Doh-jung 1991). This spurred large-scale student protests in Gwangju that spread to other schools and colleges across the country, lasting for five months. The rhetoric of the protests had pro-communist elements, as leftist ideology had grown in popularity amongst the student community. However, the sentiment was also heavily nationalist reflecting anti-Japanese feelings, the terrible frustrations students felt toward colonial rule, and their strong sense of Korean patriotism (Kim, Sung-sik 1964).

As the Japanese colonial regime became increasingly brutal, protest became more difficult and ideological divisions arose within the student movement. In broader perspective, however, it is clear that the colonial period provided the critical incubus for the modern Korean student movement. Its nationalist roots can be traced to the colonial period, and this nationalist conviction very much defined the student movement that followed liberation from the Japanese.

### **2.3 *Sa-il-gu* and the demise of the Rhee Syngman regime**

The First Republic of South Korea and its President Rhee Syngman were inaugurated in 1948. Rhee was a devoted patriot and fervent anti-communist who had spent most of his life in the US, including an education at Princeton and Harvard (Eckert et al., 1990: 342; Cumings, 1997: 195). By the time he came to power in Korea at the age of 73, the corrupt, undemocratic and brutal

government that he directed showed little trace of his experience in the pluralist system of the US. Rhee presided over Korea for twelve years from 1948 to 1960. During this period he rejected the trusteeship plan that would have seen a unified Korea managed under a four-power trusteeship (Eckert et. al., 1990: 340) and he participated in the flawed UN-observed elections that institutionalised division by taking place without the North's involvement. Rhee led South Korea through the devastating Korean War (June 1950 to July 1953) that followed. The South Korean army lost 415,000 killed and 429,000 wounded and it is estimated that over one million South Koreans died in total<sup>15</sup> (Hastings, 1987: 407). The lives of South Koreans saw little improvement during his time in office. Poverty remained endemic and the South Korean populace was beholden to the US for aid (Choi, Chungmoo 1995). Elections were rigged, corruption abounded and opposition was brutally suppressed. It is estimated that as many as 60,000 people died in one incident of suppression of alleged Communist sympathisers on the island of Cheju (Cumings, 1997: 222). Life for many Koreans under the Rhee regime was not much better than it had been under colonial rule.

In 1960, when President Rhee 'was at his absolute worst' (Cumings, 1997: 340), a tidal wave of protest erupted that toppled the Rhee administration. This event is now known as the April Revolution or *Sa-il-gu*. It was initiated and led by high school and university students. *Sa-il-gu* began in early March 1960 with small scale high school demonstrations in Taegu targeting corruption, political coercion and electoral rigging by the Rhee authorities (Kim, Charles 2007). News of these actions soon spread and demonstrations followed in support, firstly in Masan amongst high school students, then nationwide with the participation of university students and intellectuals. This wave of demonstrations culminated in a large-scale student action in Seoul on 19 April 1960 that resulted in the deaths of at least 115 young people after authorities opened fire on the protestors upon the orders of Rhee (Cumings, 1997: 344). President Rhee was eventually forced to resign on the 26 April of the same year after sustained action by students and intellectuals, buoyed by widespread support from the general population (Eckert et al., 1990: 355).

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<sup>15</sup> Perhaps as many as 3 million Koreans died across the whole of the peninsula, at least half of them civilians (Cumings, 2010).

Charles R. Kim (2007) argues that nationalism was the underlying motivation for the April Revolution. The nationalist sentiment that characterised the April Revolution enabled its student participants to attract mainstream support, maintain its momentum and finally topple the government. He terms *Sa-il-gu* ‘a revolution’ which, through the actions of the students, delivered the nation from an *internal* peril, that of Rhee’s government (Kim, Charles 2007: 7).

Nationalist rhetoric was evident across the *Sa-il-gu* movement. In the discussions amongst activists leading up to the event one student justified their action saying: ‘It is best to take the initiative, if we would do it at all, for our nation. We should live up to the tradition of the nationalistic struggle against Japanese colonialism’ (Kim, Quee-young 1983: 78). Another example of nationalist sentiment was displayed in the support from a teacher in the Daegu marches who called out: ‘No! They are not communists; they are not bastards. They are the sons of Korea!’ (Kim, Quee-young 1983). One other story recounted how on the 19 May a wounded boy was taken to hospital only to die on the operating table. ‘Slowly and softly, the doctors, nurses, and students joined together in singing the national anthem, but the sorrow of the moment overpowered them and they could not finish’ (Kim, Quee-young 1983: 125).

The nationalist sentiment of the *Sa-il-gu* movement reflects the responsibility felt by the students toward protecting and building the Korean nation. This inspired the students to challenge the inept, corrupt and brutal government of Rhee. This sense of national responsibility, borne mainly by students, had come about through a particular set of circumstances including the legacy of the students’ colonial era role. It had also developed as a result of the form of education experienced by Korean students in the 1950s that had made them the ‘moral conscience’ of the nation. Throughout the Rhee era, national duty had been the cornerstone of the Korean school curriculum. Students were encouraged to carry out community work as ‘patriotic national citizens’ and to consider the national interest in all their actions. Textbooks instructed students that as national citizens it was their responsibility to carry out ‘moral protests on behalf of the nation against unjust, undemocratic authority’. The Rhee administration was of course referring to the Japanese or North Korean authorities, but it was not difficult to see the Rhee government also as an ‘unjust undemocratic authority’ (Kim, Charles 2007: 21). A sense of duty was felt amongst Korean students for the protection of the nation’s morality, conscience and well-being.

The students' recognition of this duty was reflected in the language and discourse amongst university students and intellectuals. Student and alumni writers discussed how to safeguard and contribute to a prosperous, strong, and unified future Korea. The language used commonly referred to university students as 'pioneers', 'pillars of the nation' and the 'protagonists of the nation's future' (Kim, Charles 2007: 172).

Another source of the students' nationalist sentiment was frustration with the continued division of the peninsula and the perception that the Rhee regime's policies were perpetuating division of the national unit. There was deep impatience about the long drawn-out division. Those on the left condemned the path that Rhee had followed: rejection of the trusteeship plan, the decision to embrace the UN elections which institutionalised separate governments, and his devout hatred of communists. Although in the end it had been the North that invaded on the 25 June 1950, 'Rhee had always had two political priorities: one, to maintain himself in power in South Korea; two, to unify the country by force during his lifetime' (Choy, Bong-youn 1984: 60). But the methods of the corrupt and ageing southern regime had failed to bring about any reconciliation. Writing of reunification Stephen Bradner, who was in Korea at the time, stated that 'probably no other issue revealed so dramatically the split between the older generation and the youth' (Bradner, 1961: 414). In general there was a distrust of the older generation and their ability to carry out their nationalist responsibility of unifying the nation. The memory of the Korean War also weighed heavily on the whole population. In the 1956 election, Rhee's vote collapsed despite his efforts to rig the ballot. Economic issues played an important role but, as Kim writes, 'many of those in Seoul who voted against Rhee blamed him for their misfortunes during the Korean War, especially during the early phase of the tragedy' (Kim, Quee-young 1983: 31).

The characterisation of the students' role in the April Revolution as nationalist and moral, together with an avoidance of dogmatic ideology in their rhetoric, enabled students to attract widespread support from the wider population. Such labels also provided them with some measure of protection against the extremes of brutality of the Rhee regime. Indeed, after the bloody suppression of students on 19 April 1960 it was public's rejection of increasing levels of violence against the students that finally forced Rhee to resign (Sohn, Hak-kyu 1989).

Students had for the first time changed the course of Korean politics. In addition, participation in higher education grew dramatically over the decades that followed the Korean War. From 1945 to 1960 the number of universities in Korea had increased from 28 to 85 and the number of college students rose from 7,800 to 142,000 (Kim, Quee-young 1996). Students were now an important political constituency in both size and influence. Following on from the colonial tradition of student protest, the April Revolution and its nationalist ideals provided inspiration for this growing body of potential activists and the many student actions that followed.

## **2.4 Park Chung Hee's rise to power, normalisation of relations with Japan and *Yusin***

The importance of the Park Chung Hee era (1961 to 1979) in the building of modern South Korea is reflected in the continued attention given to the scholarly and mainstream debate of his legacy (Kim, Hyung-a 2004; Moon, Seungsook 2009; Kim and Vogel, 2011). However, the role of students in establishing an effective civil society during this period is also of significant importance. Despite the rigidly authoritarian nature of his regime, students continued to play the role of the nation's 'moral conscience,' challenging the Park regime throughout its reign. Students also reinstated a role from the colonial era, that of defenders of the nation from external threats.

There were two key periods of the student movement's oppositional activity to Park: the protests during negotiations for normalisation of Korea-Japan relations beginning in 1962, and opposition to the repressive *Yusin* constitution which was instituted in 1972 and remained in place until Park's death in 1979. Ironically, students were also pivotal in Park's rise to power. Their passionate nationalist demonstrations in 1960, demanding unification and domestic political change, created deep social instability. In such an environment Park Chung Hee found his justification for a military coup.

### **2.4.1 Park Chung Hee's rise to power**

The story of student involvement in Park's rise to power begins during Korea's short period of democracy in the second half of August 1960. Following Rhee Syngman's ousting, Korea's Second Republic was instituted with a new constitution that provided for the establishment of a

Westminster-style parliamentary system. US-educated Chang Myon (John M. Chang) was popularly elected as Prime Minister.

The new democratic system of governance allowed for open dissent. Instead of a considered debate, however, a free for all among opposition groups developed and discord erupted. Protests were daily and the press directed attacks on the administration without reserve or responsibility. Considering themselves the 'fourth branch of government' and 'self-appointed caretakers of the political process,' students held highly disruptive demonstrations or launched themselves upon the National Assembly whenever legislation did not correspond with their demands (Kim, Se-jin 1971: 30; Cumings, 1997: 346). It was effectively an abuse of freedom (Kim, Se-jin, 1971: 33-35). Like in 1960, student agitations were driven by a sense of national duty and conscience. Accompanying this, however, was a demand for national independence, a Korea that did not rely upon foreign aid and could resist foreign influence. An example of these nationalisms in action was the 'New Life Movement' which endeavoured to restore public morality by challenging official corruption, encouraging economic austerity and boycotting foreign goods (Kim, Se-jin 1971: 31, 100). Students in the New Life Movement often carried out violent attacks on places of leisure such as *tabang* (coffee houses) and they confiscated foreign cigarettes (Kim, Sung-sik 1964: 27). The heavy reliance on US aid and the perception that Chang's relations with the US were '*sadae*' (serving the great) only served to fuel the passions of many students (Cumings, 1997: 54). For all their good intentions, however, the students' disruptive and often violent activities created an atmosphere of intense social and political instability.

Students took this opportunity of freedom to advance their goal of unification. In particular they campaigned for a militarily neutral Korean peninsula. Indeed, the unification debate took place with such fervour that Hong writes: 'this period still represents the most intense discussion of the issue in South Korea to date' (Hong, Seuk-ryule 2002: 1238). For many young people, blame for the continued division of the peninsula lay squarely at the feet of the older generation who lacked the necessary 'patriotism and national pride' to engage with the issue of unification (Bradner, 1961: 414). Students rapidly took up the debate forming a number of organisations, the most active of which was the *Mintongnyeon* (League for National reunification). The *Mintongnyeon* called for neutral reunification and the adoption of a non-alignment policy that would 'free

Korea from the grips of the Cold War...and facilitate political unification of the country' (Kim, Se-jin 1971: 31). The reunification movement, however, caused deep unease amongst elites; in particular the call for neutralisation directly challenged the Cold War realism that directed their ideology (Kim, Sung-sik 1964: 31). In August 1960, South Korean students held mass demonstrations calling for a meeting with their northern counterparts at the border, Pamunjom, to which the northern leader Kim Il-sung assented. Predictably, the potential for uncontrolled interactions with the northern enemy, when the war had halted only seven years previously, spread panic throughout the right wing and the military (Cumings, 1997: 346-347).

What had 'started out as a noble task' created a situation that the military could use as an excuse to assume power (Kim, Se-jin 1971: 34). The students' passionate nationalist sentiment that had driven them to proactively participate in democracy in order to achieve their national aims instead created deep instability and optimum conditions for a coup<sup>16</sup>. With the Korean War a recent memory, it is unsurprising that the societal instability created insecurity amongst the population. It is 'not too difficult to understand how the coup leaders would have won over the public' and 'how they were able to promote their coup as an act of "patriotism" to save the nation from crisis' (Kim, Hyung-a 2003: 125). The military had taken ownership of the students' nationalism, providing a nationalist legitimacy for their own coup d'état in the South Korean state.

South Korean students and intellectuals played a further paradoxical role in supporting the rise of the military. The students' challenge to the old order of Rhee and Chang was accompanied by a vibrant intellectual debate. Articles that appeared in forums like *Sasanggye* (The World of Ideas), a leading intellectual journal, demanded political reform, a clean-up of corruption and, significantly, strong leadership (Kim, Hyung-a 2003: 131). Indeed, the call for 'strong leadership' amongst intellectuals was at least as vocal as the debate calling for imposition of liberal democracy. The debate was framed in nationalist rhetoric like 'national independence' or 'national autonomy' and 'revolution of nationalist spirit' (Kim, Hyung-a 2003: 125-134). Kim Hyung-a argues that these ideas inspired the principles that directed Park Chung Hee's coup and

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<sup>16</sup> For discussion and comparison of coups that brought about military regimes see Dominguez (2011).



later his government's national development programmes (Kim, Hyung-a 2003). It is telling that students and the intellectual elites initially welcomed the coup (Kim, Doh-jung 1991).

An analysis of Park's rise to power demonstrates the importance of nationalism within the South Korean student movement at this time. In turn, the nationalism of the student movement played a complex but central role in Park's rise to power in South Korea. However, very soon the nationalist sentiment that had helped set the scene for the coup d'état began to inspire opposition from the student movement to the Park regime and its policies.

#### **2.4.2 Korea-Japan normalisation negotiations**

When Park Chung Hee came to power as President of South Korea's Third Republic in 1961, the country's economic and security outlook was precarious<sup>17</sup>. Park's plans to develop Korea required stability and investment, and the normalisation of relations with Japan would be an important step to achieving both. Memories of Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula, however, were still fresh amongst the population. Any effort to restore relations with Japan was likely to ignite strong nationalist feelings, and negotiations would require resolution of highly contentious national issues: identity (of Koreans living in Japan); sovereignty (over disputed territories and the wider jurisdiction of Korea); and decolonisation (the resolution of claims from both sides regarding reparations from the colonial period) (Lee, Chong-sik 1962: 315).

The negotiations began early in this Third Republic and were not finalised until 1965 during which time Park's government faced sustained hostility from students. Protests were motivated by a variety of nationalist concerns. The first was Japan's perceived intransigence which suggested to the student protesters that Japan was not sincere in renouncing its colonial history. Whilst it was not conceivable that in the post-war environment Japan would once again be able to re-impose direct colonial control upon South Korea, many envisaged creeping economic and political dependence – a colony in all but name (Mobius, 1966). For example, Japan refused to

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<sup>17</sup> South Korea was predominantly an agricultural economy with three out of every five Koreans living off the land. Per capita GNP was less than \$100 per year making it one of the poorest countries in the world and its per capita electricity consumption was around 2% of that of the US. Notably it was behind North Korea in many aspects of its economic development (Clifford, 1998).

show leeway on key issues including discrimination against Koreans in Japan and the sovereignty of Dokdo (islands located between Japan and Korea). The Japanese government refused to apologise for wartime atrocities and they sought compensation for Japanese colonial properties in Korea confiscated following Japan's defeat in the Pacific War (Lee, Chong-sik 1962: 321).

Secondly, students' nationalist sentiments were aroused by the apparent lack of procedural transparency in the negotiation process. Soon after the discussions began, student protestors called for a transparent and consultative procedural process that could assure the population that the Korean national interest would be protected (Kim, Sam-kyu 1965). It appeared to many in the student movement that the normal diplomatic process was being undermined when it was discovered that Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil was making secret deals and hidden agreements with the Japanese delegates (Kim, Sam-kyu 1965). Given the sensitivity of these negotiations, the lack of transparency elicited deep suspicion and unease amongst students.

Thirdly, many saw another emerging threat to the integrity of the Korean national unit from a new imperial power – the United States. J. Mark Mobius writing at the time of the protests noted 'a persistent anti-American tone' in the opposition to normalisation discussions (Mobius, 1966: 241). For example, when 500 high school pupils in March 1964 protested against the normalisation treaty, they chose to hold their 'sit-in' in front of the US Embassy in downtown Seoul. Student protests against normalisation used chants such as 'Yankee, keep silent.' They believed that the US was pushing Korea to normalise relations with Japan to serve America's own interests and were urging the US to refrain from involvement. Students accused the US of attempting to revive Japan's suzerainty over Korea (Yi, Kil J. 2002). The fear of US imperialism arose for the most part from the belief that the US and Japan required access to foreign markets such as Korea in order to maintain the growth of their burgeoning economies (Mobius, 1966: 242). Many Koreans also held the belief that the US thought Korea to be dispensable within the context of their foreign-policy aims. They believed that the US favoured Japan, and allowed Japan to 'assume a haughty posture in dealing with Korea' (Mobius, 1966: 245). Many recalled Woodrow Wilson's call for self-determination for all countries at the Versailles Peace

Conference but believed that the US had effectively ‘permitted’ Japan’s colonisation of Korea by not standing up to the Japanese or permitting Korean representation at the conference<sup>18</sup>.

The demonstrations against the normalisation treaty were rooted in a complex set of concerns regarding Korea’s national integrity, identity and sovereignty. At the same time as discussions were ongoing with Japan, beginning in April 1965, plans were being put into place for tens of thousands of Korean troops to be sent to fight alongside the US in Vietnam (Cumings, 1997: 321; Yi, Kil J. 2002: 658). The protesting students believed they were protecting their nation from a double imperialist threat, coming from both Japan and the US. These concerns also demonstrated the complexity of the issue that faced Korea in the post-war world. On one hand the country needed to come to terms with how much it had suffered at the hands of their neighbour Japan, whilst on the other hand Korean elites were trying to integrate and exploit the opportunities of an international political and economic system (Yi, Kil J. 2002: 648). With such strong anti-Japanese sentiment, however, the pragmatic considerations were irrelevant to the student activists. The student movement put up a powerful challenge to the Park government. In 1964, the cabinet resigned as a result of strong opposition to the negotiations and the government faced collapse. In 1965, the normalisation bill was pushed through the legislature whilst opposition members were physically barred from the Assembly. When students began to protest, Park imposed martial law and sent troops into a number of university campuses (Clifford, 1998: 306). From early on in Park’s administration students had shown that they would continue to contest his illegitimate presidential authority.

#### **2.4.2 The student movement under the *Yusin* constitution**

Student protests leading up to the imposition of the *Yusin* constitution in 1972 were regular, widespread and involved large sections of the student community (Oh, Chang Hun 1991: 95). The motivations of the students reflected their frustration with authoritarian rule, the militarisation of universities and were also in response to the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to Korea around this time (Oh, Chang Hun 1991: 94). In addition, students protested in support of labourers who continued to suffer a lack of rights in the face of appalling working conditions.

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<sup>18</sup> For a brief description of the Versailles conference in relation to Korea see Eckert et. al. (1990).

Actions included protests in sympathy with Chun Tae-il, the young textile worker who had self-immolated in 1970 to bring attention to the plight of factory workers. Students continued to receive widespread support from many sections of Korean society, demonstrating their on-going position as the 'nation's conscience' in opposition to authoritarian government.

The *Yusin* constitution tightened Park's grip on the levers of government and provided him with extraordinary powers. *Yusin*, meaning revitalisation, was designed to create socio-political restructuring as well heavy and chemical industrialisation (Kim, Hyung-a 2004). However it also allowed Park to perpetuate his monopoly of power, justified by the goals of 'national security' and 'peaceful unification' (Kim, Sunhyuk 1998: 18). As soon as the *Yusin* restrictions were imposed in 1972, students were arrested and organisations closed. Student demonstrations were not seen for more than a year following its imposition. *Yusin* enabled Park to run Korea as if it were under a permanent state of emergency. During the *Yusin* period, much of the student movement went underground (Oh, Chang Hun 1991: 96).

The first significant protests following the imposition of *Yusin* were in response to the August 1973 kidnapping in Japan of Kim Dae-jung by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). In April 1974 student protests grew and a declaration was issued by a new group calling itself the National Federation of Democratic Youth and Students (NFDYS) (Sohn, Hak-kyu 1989: 65). Protests spread across Korean campuses and students demanded the release of Kim and imprisoned students, the end of the *Yusin* system and the return to democracy (Oh, Chang Hun 1991: 203). In response, the Park government began the introduction of 'Emergency Measures' which further outlawed many student activities and gave the security forces extraordinary powers to deal with protestors. Targeting mainly the student movement, nine Emergency Measures were issued in total over the eight year period of *Yusin*. Park clearly feared the power of the students because student protests reflected the general discontent held by the wider middle-classes, from which, of course, the majority of students originated. Discontent centred on the levels of repression which touched many lives, even amongst the middle classes. This repression could not be simply justified by the needs of economic development and national security (Oh, Chang Hun 1991: 265).

The brutal and absolute nature of the *Yusin* system and the events that took place under its constitution marked a new stage for the student movement. Politically minded members of the Christian community joined the students in the fight, unable to stand on the sidelines as student and labour activists fought for their country and its democratic rights (Sohn, Hak-kyu 1989: 71; Kim, Sunhyuk 1998). Through a variety of organisations, ‘the church became a guardian of young full-time dissidents, mostly composed of expelled students from universities, and it acted as a care provider for the labour force by articulating its demands’ (Kim, Sunhyuk 1998: 229). The nationalism of the South Korean student movement had become much more national, as representatives of the middle classes, in the form of church groups, joined them in support. Kim Sunhyuk (1998: 229) writes that ‘as church activists were arrested and incarcerated for their opposition to the government, angry protest movements spread through the then rapidly growing Christian community, awakening it to what the persecuted church leaders considered the plight of the country’. This civil action that had been started by the students, continued to expand with civil society groups entering an anti-*Yusin* alliance with the conservative opposition party the New Democratisation Party (NDP). The alliance between students and more conservative elements of society allowed students to continue to present themselves as nationalist campaigners and representatives of the nation and this provided momentum for campaigns that continued throughout the 1970s.

However, whilst the student movement could use their fight against authoritarianism as a representation of their nationalist goals, Kim Sunhyuk (1998) argues that the demand for unification placed the opposition at a disadvantage. The issue of unification was played down by the opposition in order to avoid being labelled as ‘North Korean or communist sympathisers’ and thus allowing the Park authorities to justify suppression. By underplaying unification and focusing upon the ‘democratic struggle against the military dictatorship, multiple actors in civil society – students, church leaders, and labour activists – cooperated with the opposition party to delegitimise the Park regime’ (Kim, Sunhyuk 1998: 231).

In mid October 1979, the final protests of the *Yusin* period took place in Kim Young-sam’s home province of Gyeongsang, in the cities of Pusan and Masan. Kim Young-sam was an opposition politician from the National Democratic Party and the protestors campaigned against his exclusion from the mainstream political process. The protests involved many thousands of

students, workers and religious activists in a traditionally conservative region and thus posed a significant threat to the stability of the Park regime. It is rumoured that divergence on how the Gyeongsang student unrest should be dealt with led to major disagreements with the Park regime. In the midst of this turbulence, on the 26 October 1979 the Director of the Korean CIA, Kim Chae-gyu, assassinated Park thus bringing his regime to an end (Kim, Joo-hong, 2011: 197).

The most important opposition to the Park regime throughout his eighteen-year reign was South Korea's student movement. Many students suffered terrible consequences. Student activists were often temporarily or permanently suspended from their university ruining their future job-prospects. They were also frequently conscripted into the army or imprisoned and rumours of torture were widespread. Families also suffered, especially if the parents were government workers (Kim, Doh-jung 1991: 188). The power of nationalism to inspire helps to explain why many of these students made such huge sacrifices. It also sheds light on the widespread mainstream support for the movement despite the frequent violence. Indeed, one of the most important achievements of the student movement of this time was their cooperation with wider civil society and organised political parties. The cooperation enabled the growth of the dissident movement with the inclusion of intellectuals, social leaders, labour, religious groups. This resulted in the formation of a number of large civic organisations that would be the foundations of the wider civic movement in the 1980s (Sohn, Hak-kyu 1989: 126; Kim, Sunhyuk 1998).

## **2.5 The 1980s, Gwangju and anti-Americanism**

General Chun Doo Hwan came to power by coup d'état in December 1980, not long after the assassination of Park Chung Hee. As with his predecessor and mentor President Park, General Chun justified his assumption of power by 'denouncing past corruption, and promising a new age of economic growth, probity and justice' (Eckert et al., 1990: 376). At the first sign of opposition, Chun declared martial law and asserted his authority across the whole political and social fabric of Korea. After nearly twenty years of Park's dictatorship, students across the country reacted to this return to authoritarianism with passion. The fiercest of the demonstrations took place in Gwangju, the capital of Jeolla province. In May 1980, Chun's brutal suppression of

students and citizens of Gwangju resulted in the deaths of more than five hundred; many thousands more were wounded or arrested<sup>19</sup> (Shin, Gi-wook 2003).

The student movement was extremely active through the Chun era, providing what Lee Namhee terms ‘a counter-public sphere’ through which the voice of opposition to the Chun regime could be heard (Lee, Namhee 2007; 2002). The student and general opposition movement fashioned themselves as a ‘counter-image’ to what they saw as illegitimate authority, hence Lee’s use of the term ‘counter-public sphere’ to describe the opposition movement (Lee, Namhee 2007). The protest movement, or *undongkwon*, addressed ‘unpublic’ or difficult issues, for example those whose discussion would risk arrest, detention, or the label ‘communist’, thus offering a challenge to the state on the neglected issues that were central to the future of Korean youth and the Korean nation (Lee, Namhee 2007).

In characterising this period of student activism, some authors have focused upon the debate around ideology that grew in importance through the 1980s. However, the role of nationalism and nationalist sentiment continued to be at least as important as that of ideology. Nationalism as part of the 1980s student movement is explored through the examination of three key episodes and themes of confrontation between the Chun regime and the Korean student movement: (1) the Gwangju Democratic Uprising; (2) anti-Americanism; and (3) the unification movement.

### **2.5.1 The Gwangju Democratic Uprising<sup>20</sup>**

Memories of the terrible events that took place in Gwangju, Jeolla Province in May 1980 are still palpable as you walk through the streets of Jeolla’s capital city past the infamous backdrops to the Gwangju Democratic Uprising in May 1980 – Chonnam University, Gwangju Train Station

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<sup>19</sup> Other estimates put the number of dead or missing in the thousands (Cumings, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> I term this the Gwangju Democratic Uprising or Gwangju Uprising according to the English title given by the May 18 History Compilation Committee of Gwangju (Kim, Dong Won et. al, 2010).

The May 18 Gwangju Democratic Uprising. ‘Typically “5-18” or “Gwangju” are combined with such terms as “people’s uprising” (*minjung hangjaeng*) or “democratization movement” (*minjuhwa undong*) to produce such terms as 5-18 *minjung hangjaeng* (5-18 People’s Uprising), 5-18 *minjuhwa undong* (5-18 Democratisation Movement), *Gwangju minjung hangjaeng* (Gwangju Peoples’ Uprising), *Gwangju minjuhwa undong* (Gwangju Democratisation Movement) and so on to try and define the horror, the aims and the significance of the event’ (Shin, Gi-wook 2003).

and Provincial Hall. More than thirty years on, there are still many visitors to the graves at the two Gwangju memorials on the outskirts of the city<sup>21</sup>.

The Gwangju Democratic Uprising arose from a complex set of circumstances and there remains a lack of consensus as to the exact causes and motivations of those who participated. Possible factors include the demand for democracy and an end to repression; regional advocates demanding more recognition and support for Jeolla province; and a sense of national responsibility inspired by Jeolla's tradition of protest (Shin, Gi-wook 2003). Students were the instigators of the Gwangju Democratic Uprising and constituted the majority of the leadership (Choi, Jung-woon 2003). As well as students, however, the Gwangju Uprising also involved a wide range of community members from the clergy to labourers and intellectuals.

Significant scholarship has been devoted to the Gwangju Uprising and the aim of this section is not to challenge existing conclusions but to highlight the recurrence of nationalism as a theme across the many accounts. The rhetoric, language and self-characterisation of the uprising directly displayed its nationalist character. The language that emerged from confrontations with the authorities focused not only on localised or ideological interests but expressed what students and protestors thought to be the concerns of the wider nation. Choi Jung-woon writes of the protestors that it 'felt like the "Korean nation" to them. Gwangju citizens saw the image of 'our country' while fighting paratroopers to defend their hometown...they sang the national anthem and 'our wish is reunification' and waved the national flag' (Choi, Jung-woon 1999: 11). The sense of the broader nation was echoed in the concept of the 'Gwangju Republic' (Hwang, Kyung Moon 2003: 133) or the 'absolute community' (Choi, Jung-woon 1999; 2003) that appeared in the rhetoric of pamphlets and banners. The absolute community or Gwangju Republic was not conceived to be an entity independent of Korea. It instead reflected what the protestors believed to be the *true* Republic of Korea, representing the hopes of the people of a unified peninsula; the existing territory (including the North) merely occupied by illegitimate autocrats. The power of this idea was reflected in a journalist's writing at the time:

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<sup>21</sup> There are two memorials to the Gwangju Democratic Uprising. One is the official memorial, opened by Kim Young-sam in May 1997 and the location for all official memorial events. The second is the original location. Many mourners prefer to visit the original site believing that the new government memorial does not reflect the spirit of the Gwangju movement. The original site has become the focus for many contemporary political campaigns (Yea, Sallie 2002)



It was in Gwangju that I first felt myself trembling so vehemently at the singing of our representative folksong, Arirang....Standing alone on top of the darkened Provincial Office, I saw a crowd waving Korean flags coming in my direction. The moment I heard the strains of Arirang, I felt an intense shuddering coursing through my veins. My mind went blank and I began to weep uncontrollably. (Cited in Choi, Jung-woon 2003: 6)

Linked to the idea of defending the nation was the characterisation of the military and police forces sent by the Chun government to quell the protests as being foreign, outsiders, or invaders. The paratroopers were likened to communists (Lewis, 1988; Choi, Jung-woon 1999); not really ‘our’ soldiers (Clark, 1988); and crueller than the Japanese police (Choi, Jung-woon 1999). Against such ‘foreign attack’, the protests of the students and citizens of Gwangju were legitimised: ‘while fury expresses a strong emotional state, self-defence is a legal concept, an offensive defence carried out with a cool head’ (Choi, Jung-woon 1999). The representation of the soldiers not just as enemy but *invaders* has enabled the students’ response to be characterised as ‘self-defence’ and to create an image of violated community boundaries (Baker, 2003).

The nationalism that underpinned the Gwangju Democratic Uprising reflected a wider tradition of protest and rebellion in Jeolla that had spanned generations. It was noted by one author that the fathers and grandfathers of the Gwangju Uprising protestors would have been members of the Gwangju Student Uprising of 1929 or the Donghak movement, both nationalist movements of their time (McCann, 1988). Students of Chonnam University, Jeolla’s largest and most prestigious university, had always played important roles in the agitations against the colonial rulers and the authoritarian regimes of Presidents Rhee and Park (Hwang, Kyung Moon 2003; McCann, 1988). Once again, the youth of Jeolla province were paying a price to defend the interests of the wider Korean nation.

### **2.5.2 Anti-Americanism**

Anti-Americanism had not played a significant part in the Gwangju Uprising. Indeed, many in Gwangju hoped that the Americans would come to rescue them from the so-called ‘invaders’, akin to the US role in the Korean War (Shorrock, 1986). However, the US did not come to

Gwangju's aid and effectively *endorsed* Chun's decision to dispatch troops to Gwangju as all military on the Korean peninsula were part of the Combined Forces Command (CFC) in periods of threat. The CFC was under the command of United States Army General John A. Wickham<sup>22</sup> (Clark, 1988). As this became widely known, anger towards the US grew within the student movement (Lew, Seok-choon 1993; Dong, Wonmo 1987). The feelings were intense and as one American civil group wrote, 'anti-Americanism is a simplistic label for the emotions that have been generated....[it is] the intense feeling of having been deceived and betrayed by somebody you trusted and had high hopes in' (Shorrock, 1986: 1203). The experience of Gwangju encouraged students to review the role of the United States in Korea's history, coming to the conclusion that the earlier student movements had an 'illusion about the role of the United States' in regards to Korea (Park, Mi 2005: 271). Gwangju continued to drive anti-American feelings throughout the remainder of the decade. For example, in May 1985 students occupied the United States Information Service (USIS) building in Seoul. They demanded that the 'US government apologise for its role in Gwangju' (Lee, Namhee 2007: 122). In a letter to the US Ambassador, Richard L. Walker, they reminded the US and Korean governments that 'the Gwangju Incident is not a by-gone episode, but a pending, vital issue' (Dong, Wonmo 1987: 245). It was clear that Gwangju was going to provide fuel for anti-American sentiment at least until Chun Doo Hwan was called to account for his role in Gwangju or removed from office.

However, Chun Doo Hwan's impunity would continue whilst the United States extended support to the Chun regime. The rise in anti-Americanism in Korea was sustained by the munificent treatment of the Chun regime by the new Reagan administration (Clark, 1988)<sup>23</sup>. Chun Doo Hwan, fresh from the horror of Gwangju, was the first head of state to be invited by Reagan to the White House (Cumings, 1997). Korea's student movement began to link Korea's internal repression to what they argued was a history of American imperialism. The actions of the Reagan administration seemed to demonstrate a policy continuum. Students began to focus upon the notion of an inseparable relationship between the US and Korea's authoritarian governments

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<sup>22</sup> The US-Korea Combined Forces Command to this day remains under the command of a United States general. There are plans, however, to return wartime command of the Republic of Korea military to the ROK in 2015 under an agreement between President Barack Obama and President Lee Myoung-bak (Sharp, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Clark wrote that 'history may record that the anger against the US has been proportionate to the degree of warmth which the US government has shown toward the Chun Doo Hwan Regime' (Clark, 1988: 79).

and identified this relationship as ‘the root cause of almost all the political, economic and cultural problems confronting South Korea’ (Dong, Wonmo 1987: 237). South Korea’s authoritarian system was seen as an ‘inevitable product’ of the ‘American system’, US security and economic policy. Nationalism in the form of anti-Americanism came to be the ‘hegemonic position’ of student activism and an integral element of the student democratisation movement (Lee, Namhee 2007; Dong, Wonmo 1987).

### **2.5.3 Unification**

From the Gwangju Uprising until the 1987 democracy protests and even into the early 1990s, unification was central to the student movement. During Gwangju, the call for unification was expressed in both a literal and symbolic manner. By calling for unification whilst defending their own lives in the midst of such carnage, the protestors aimed to emphasise their own nationalist credentials as superior to those of the Chun regime. It emphasised that the Korean nation, their nation, extended across the whole of the peninsula. It was meant as a symbol against the brutality under which they were suffering, without condoning the North’s communist regime. From time to time, the demonstrators shouted “‘Kim Il Sung, do not misjudge” making it clear that with ‘our country’, what they were envisioning was far different from North Korea’. They wanted to instead express opposition to their own government who they believed was ruled by ‘military authorities and paratroopers’ (Choi, Jung-woon 1999: 11).

By the mid-1980s, the student movement had essentially divided into two ideological streams. The first was represented by *Jamintu*, or National Liberation (NL). At the core of the NL movement was nationalism and dedication to the North Korean ideology of *Juche*, the philosophy of political and economic self-determination. NL believed that South Korea was a puppet of the United States and that US presence on the peninsula was an obstacle to unification. NL also believed that without unification and national independence, South Korea could not achieve democracy and social justice (Lew, Seok-choon 1993; Hart-Landsberg, 1988). The second stream was represented by *Minmintu*, or the People’s Democracy (PD) grouping, which had an ideology based on Marxist-Leninist class struggle as a means of achieving its goals for the nation. It believed that unification would come about as a result of a rebellion originating with the people of South Korea. In essence, NL called for unification to bring about social and

political change, and PD for social and political change to bring about unification. However, NL controlled *Jeondaehyeop* (National Council of Student Representatives), the national student organisation, and dominated the student movement. Its anti-foreign, anti-imperialist and anti-neo-colonialist stance was more palatable and attractive to many students than the Marxist beliefs of the PD, particularly with NL's emphasis on unification which gave it mainstream appeal (Lew, Seok-choon 1993: 31).

In June 1987, the death by torture of a student, the continued brutal repression of the student movement and the nomination of General Roh Tae-woo as Chun's successor brought general citizens onto the streets. This time students were joined not only by their traditional allies such as labour and the activist religious groups, but also by the middle-classes<sup>24</sup>. In response to this overwhelming citizens' movement, Roh Tae-woo announced direct elections and granted amnesties for many political prisoners, including Kim Dae-jung. He also relaxed restrictions on organised labour. Roh won the December election following a split of the opposition vote between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam.

Following the achievement of direct elections, 'unification replaced democratisation as the number one theme'. Feeding from the anti-Americanism that had stemmed from Gwangju, many students blamed the US for the division of Korea (Maass, 1988). By 1988, student actions were becoming increasingly violent and on the margins of the student community. As the Olympics approached, radical students called for a meeting at Pamunjom with the North, and for the North to co-host the Olympics. The vehement nature of the student protests placed President Roh Tae-woo under tremendous pressure. Partly in response to the protests Roh advanced his Northern Diplomacy policy (Kim, Hakjoon 2010: 305). However, although once again the nationalism of the student movement had elicited a change in the political sphere of South Korea, now that democracy had been achieved, students were increasingly withdrawing from the movement to pursue academic and economic opportunities in their rapidly developing nation of South Korea.

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<sup>24</sup> Cumings writes that disaffected sectors of the middle-class included small and medium-sized businesses who had lost out to the state and the *chaebol*, the regionally disadvantaged, families that could not make ends meet and educate their children, and parents observing the abuse of students. In addition, the participation of many Christian leaders encouraged wider participation of the Christian middle classes (Cumings, 1997).

## **2.6 The 1990s**

With Korea's democratic transition much of the *raison d'être* for the student movement had been lost. From the late 1980s onwards, the power of the student movement began to weaken and the popular support it had attracted up until the democracy movement dissipated. The collapse of the communist bloc also created ideological fissures within the traditionally left-wing movement and began to cause serious divisions. The student movement found it increasingly difficult to locate itself within the wider civil society movement and their message of social revolution seemed wholly inappropriate to newly democratising Korea (Lee, Namhee 2007: 299-303). Small but vocal groups of students nevertheless continued to protest, some participating within the labour movement and others independently protesting under the banner of unification but these represented a tiny minority of the overall student population. As the movement came to be perceived as extreme, and on the fringes, there was growing unease amongst the general population and other students (Choi, Hyaeweol 1991: 183; Grinker, 1998: 213-214). The efforts of the Kim Young-sam administration to reach out to these students were rejected and students became increasingly violent. There were accusations that the student movement was being directed by the North. The student movement could no longer portray itself as 'pure' (Grinker, 1998: 185). Support for the crackdown on students came from across the political spectrum and society, all the more so when seven riot policemen were burned to death in Pusan in May 1989 as a result of Molotov cocktails thrown by students (Choi, Hyaeweol 1991: 183). They had effectively lost their right to be the nation's conscience: students could no longer present themselves as uniquely endowed with the mandate of the people.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Scholars of the Korean student movement are nearly unanimous in their assessment of its importance in Korea's twentieth century political, economic and social development (Lew, Seok-choon 1993; Dong, Wonmo 1993). Dong Wonmo writes that students have been 'the single most persistent, cohesive and autonomous political opposition force in Korea' (Dong, Wonmo 1987: 233).

Many academics acknowledge the existence of nationalism in periods of the student movement. This chapter highlights not only the presence of nationalism, but also nationalism's centrality to

each one of the student movement's key actions. It shows how the student movement has been 'a crucial force checking abuse of political powers and advocating social justice and *national self-respect*' [emphasis added] (Choi, Hyaeweol 1991: 176). In the colonial and pre-division era, the student movement was driven by the desire to rid Korea of their Japanese colonial masters. Following division and under the First Republic, nationalism encouraged students to demand democracy and to fight the inept and corrupt regime of Rhee Syngman. During the military government of Park Chung Hee, students fought against perceived neo-colonist threats and were also able to build on their role as representatives of the nation by drawing wider support from the middle classes. Throughout the 1980s, the student movement battled the brutal dictatorship of Chun and challenged his US allies, who were blamed for perpetuating both division and authoritarianism on the Korean peninsula. The ability of students to frame their role as the 'conscience of the nation' or 'defender of the nation' has at times provided them with a measure of protection from repression and enabled them to attract wider societal support. This in turn, has helped them to achieve their many political successes.

The prominence of unification in the post-1948 student movement demonstrated the importance of North Korea to the idea of nation. The ease with which students referred to unification suggests that they had little difficulty in imagining North Koreans as members of the same community, notwithstanding the absence of opportunity to interact with the Northern population. This imagining of a unified national unit endured in the midst of the Northern military threat, government propaganda and a rigorous anti-communist education that demonised the North and occasionally its people. This idea of the unified peninsula as the national unit is a crucial starting point for the purposes of this research, which compares the concept of nation amongst contemporary South Korean young people with the earlier periods of the student movement.



## Chapter Three

### Changing attitudes to unification and the formation of *uri nara* in the image of the South

*When I say uri nara, it should refer to a community in which everybody can communicate and share each other's ideas, but with South and North Korea it is not the case. They are not one country.*

South Korean university student in 2009.

#### 3.1 Introduction

When Koreans are asked to describe their characteristic approach to life, '*ppalli ppalli*' or 'hurry-hurry', is a typical response. And as Koreans survey the speed of their nation's development and progress, it is a trait that makes many Koreans proud.<sup>25</sup> *Ppalli* is indeed an apposite adjective for modern South Korea: from Korea's economic rise to the daily commute; from the pace of Korean building construction to the rate of *soju*<sup>26</sup> consumption on a night out. The rapid pace of change makes the Korea of five years ago significantly different from today; the Korea of ten years ago a distant memory; and the Korea of fifteen years ago, almost unrecognisable. As one Korean student explained to me 'this is a time of rapid change and I find that I am different from people only five or six years older than me. We have different tastes and culture. A five-year age difference almost constitutes a generation gap' (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010).

Born in the 1980s, South Korea's current batch of 20-somethings – *isipdae* – are the first generation of South Koreans whose lives have only spanned post-1987 democratic South Korea.

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<sup>25</sup> When asked what made her most proud about being Korean, one student replied 'I think Korea's hurry-hurry culture is good!' (Interview in Korean, YBM Sisa, 29/04/2010). Since first travelling to Seoul in 1998, I remember Koreans frequently explaining the traditional trait of hurrying in South Korean life, and their feeling of pride that it had delivered such rapid development.

<sup>26</sup> Korean vodka



They have grown up amid prosperity and relative peace and are Korea's most highly educated and internationally connected generation. I will argue that the current *isipdae* stand out against Korea's older generations and previous generations of young people in regards to issues of nation and identity. The difference, however, cannot be simply explained by the rejection of the previous generations' norms. Indeed, many young people still hold to some of these values whether by remaining closely tied to their families or devoted to study. However, they have grown up within a South Korea quite distinct from that in which other generations have lived. These twenty-somethings are the third or fourth generation of post-division South Koreans. They have been shaped by a prosperous, modern, democratic and internationalised nation. As a result, I argue that these young people have a separate *national* identity from previous generations. They are the first generation of Koreans who define themselves in terms of the southern part of the peninsula only. They are the first generation of the *South Korean nation*.

In the following, I present empirical evidence for this emerging South Korean nationalism that is based upon changing attitudes to North Korea and unification. Using Gellner's basic definition of political nationalism, we understand political nationalism, the establishment of a nation state, to require the coincidence of the 'political unit', the governing authority, and the 'national unit'. Nationalist sentiment or anger arises, says Gellner, when the political and national unit do not coincide (Gellner, 1983: 1). This was a phenomenon explored in the previous chapter where an active youth and student movement was driven by the nationalist sentiment that arose from the division of the peninsula and led to passionate calls for national unification.

By presenting data that shows falling levels of interest in unification and growing anti-unification attitudes, I show that division no longer gives rise to this type of passionate nationalist sentiment amongst the *isipdae*. I argue that this is because the concept of the national unit, their imagined community, only includes the people and territory of the southern part of the peninsula. The people of North Korea are seen as different, foreign and not part of the national unit. Thus, already, the political unit and national unit coincide in the South Korean nation. As a result, South Korean young people's sense of political nationalism is fulfilled. Division no longer leads to expressions of nationalism in the form of calls for unification with the North.

There are, however, many students and young people who remain supportive of unification. Understanding their interests and motivation is important in an analysis of attitudes to North Korea, to unification and to identity. I argue that many of these young people, although supportive of unification, are no longer driven by the nationalist sentiment derived from division that had motivated their forbears up until the 1990s. Instead they are driven by what I term South Korean motivations, that is, reasons for unification that will bring net benefits for *South Korea* and its people. Further to this, I look at the similarity between the desire to unify with the North for the benefit of the South and issues of colonisation and colonialism (Grinker, 1998: 52).

Finally, the thesis that the concept of ‘our nation’ has formed in the image of the South only, is confirmed by an exploration of the words *uri nara*, our nation, and their meaning to the current generation of young people in the South. We find that young South Koreans increasingly consider themselves to be different and separate from the North: South Korea, *uri nara*, has become a separate and independent people and nation.

### **3.2 ‘North Korea fatigue’: Falling interest in North Korea and unification amongst young people**

The passionate pro-unification sentiment that was conspicuously *present* throughout South Korea’s earlier youth and student movements is now conspicuously *absent* amongst young people. ‘North Korea Fatigue’ was how Yoo Ho Yeul, Professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University, termed the declining levels of interest in North Korea amongst young people in South Korea. He noted the differences between the generations in their attitudes to unification:

The first generation [following unification] have relatives in the North and their idea about unification is that unification is natural and it is kind of a requirement for them to achieve regardless of cost or burden. The second generation is the so-called 386 generation<sup>27</sup>. They are educated and they have experienced democratisation in South Korea. Ideologically they are very favourable to unification. The third generation are different. They think they are South Korean

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<sup>27</sup> The 386 generation label was created in the early 2000s to describe ardent supporters of Roh Moo-hyun in his ultimately successful run for presidential office. It was so termed because this group were in their thirties when Roh Moo-hyun was elected to presidential office, were at university during the student protests in the eighties and were born in the sixties.

and they can't identify themselves as a member of the one unified Korea. A unified Korea may be good in terms of economic or other personal interests but ...once they have considered the costs and burden they do not think it is natural to have a unified Korea. (Interview in English, Professor Yoo Ho Yeul, Korea University, 03/05/2010)

Over recent years there has been a host of valuable articles and commentaries recounting anecdotal experiences, similar to those of Professor Yoo, which describe changing attitudes to unification. Michael Breen, a long-term follower of Korean culture and social trends, writes that for most Koreans in their twenties and thirties 'North Korea has receded into irrelevance'. Breen suggests that the growing disinterest in North Korea and unification is a result of young Koreans' preoccupation with their own lives as they try to survive Korea's rapidly changing and competitive society (Breen, 2008). Lee Sook-jong arrives at a similar conclusion in a broader study of nationalism amongst Korea's youth. She finds that many are ambivalent toward the issue of North Korea and are only prepared to consider unification if it is likely to be peaceful, gradual and does not threaten their current standard of living (Lee, Sook-jong 2006). The following discussion develops and informs these brief but acute observations through qualitative and quantitative evidence.

In the early 1990s, around 80 per cent of students expressed an interest in the topic of unification<sup>28</sup> (Bae and Kim, 1992). In 1997, 69 per cent of students still expressed an interest in unification (Lee, Hyon Chae 1997). However, by 2007, only 52 per cent of students expressed an interest (National Unification Advisory Council, 2007). Furthermore, in 2004, over 75 per cent of students said they *never or hardly ever* discussed unification (Shim, 2004) compared with the early 1990s where more than 60 per cent of students discussed unification *sometimes or often* (Bae and Kim, 1992). The falling levels of interest in unification and North Korea demonstrate that North Korea and unification carry little importance in the contemporary lives of young people and this was confirmed in a number of interviews<sup>29</sup>:

I do not have any young friends around me that are interested [in unification].  
When we meet together we only talk about some gossip or entertainment – not

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<sup>28</sup> Bae and Kim (1992) survey of students in *Daegu* region of South Korea only.

<sup>29</sup> The following quotations are given in response to the question, 'are your friends interested in unification?'

about unification. We only talk about our private life and social life, not about unification. And I am related to North Korean affairs so sometimes I talk about it with my friends but you can guess from their behaviour and what they are talking about that they do not have any interest. That is why I think that they do not have any interest in unification. That is my guess. (Interview in English, Anonymous North Korea-related NGO officer, 17/09/2009)

Interviews demonstrate that personal issues such as education, jobs and future opportunities are the overwhelming concern of most young people. In the political arena, domestic issues involving *South Korean* democracy, the *South Korean* economy or government projects such as Sejong City and the Four Rivers Restoration Project<sup>30</sup> are prioritised over North Korea-related events. Indeed, interest in other international issues such as Afghanistan, Iraq, world poverty, human rights, the environment and South Korea's ability to help other nations far outweigh any specific interest in the North and in unification.

Those running charitable or activist organisations related to North Korea often find it difficult to attract support from young people. One such organisation is a large and established youth group in South Korea that 'aims to provide a platform to discuss topics such as democratisation, human rights and social issues'. This organisation runs a variety of programmes that bring together young South Koreans and North Koreans living in the South through educational programmes and other campaigns. In an interview with the Seoul-based Director General of this organisation the idea of 'North Korea fatigue' was again alluded to in our discussion. The organisation's Director General told me: 'I think young people are not much interested in reunification issues because there are many political conflicts between North and South Korea and so South Korean young people are tired of hearing about it' (Interview in English, Anonymous North Korea-related NGO Director General, 22/04/2010). I asked how they managed to recruit young people to participate in their programmes given these low levels of interest. She replied:

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<sup>30</sup> Sejong City is the controversial plan to build a new city that will become a business, education, and technology hub. The city will be located in the politically marginal province of Chungcheong in the centre of South Korea. More controversial is President Lee Myung-bak's Four Rivers Restoration Project aimed at renovating South Korea's four main rivers and their tributaries. For more on Sejong City see Foster-Carter (2010). For more on the Four Rivers Project, see Card (2009).

We go through university websites and volunteering websites. Actually last year we had a North Korean human rights campaign but at that time it was very hard to find volunteers. For the education programme it was very easy to find volunteers, but for the North Korean human rights and reunification issues it is quite difficult to find someone.

Education [programmes] sound very good [on CVs] but for human rights they expect some risk. And South Korean students don't want to participate in the political issues and political activities. So they think that human rights issues are political issues.

As a South Korean, they are afraid of involving themselves with politics. Many South Koreans hate the politicians. For them getting a good job is more important than the future of Korea. (Interview in English, Anonymous North Korea-related NGO Director General, 22/04/2010)

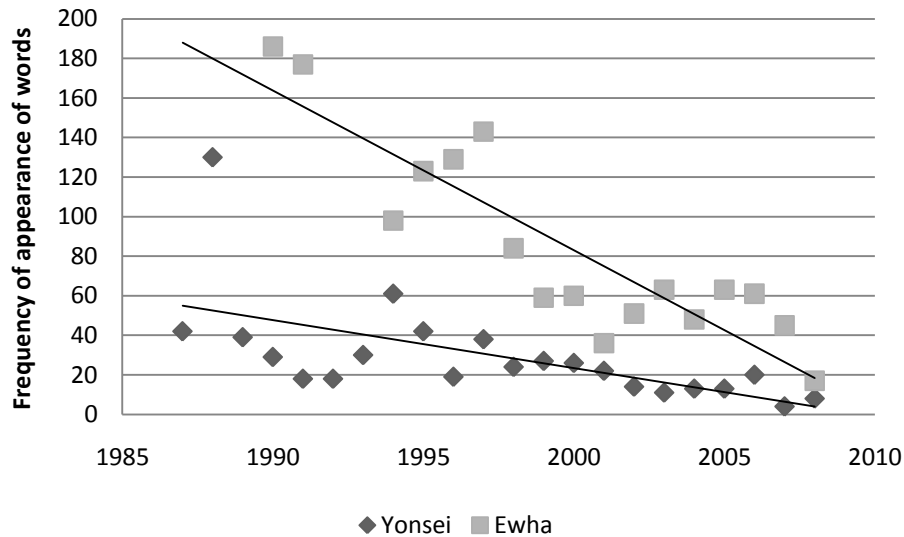
The absence of interest in unification is perhaps most conspicuous on the university campuses of Korea's big cities. During my months of fieldwork much of the time was spent on university campuses where I always took the opportunity to read the many banners and posters displayed along the streets, walls and billboards. Many of the posters were vocational in nature, advertising TOEFL, IELTS or TOEIC preparation and opportunities for internships and job fairs<sup>31</sup>. There were a significant number inviting students to attend various forms of Christian worship (often with the added bonus of a service held in English). However, it was the politically motivated posters that I searched out and it was notable that there were many more of this type on display than might be found on a typical Australian or British campus. These bills and banners raised issues including the environment, democracy and feminism. Also among them were government slogans and calls for social and economic justice. However, I did not see a single bill or banner relating to North Korea and unification. In a 2010 survey by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies (IPUS, 2010), Seoul National University, an overwhelming 96 per cent of young people said that they had not participated in any activities relating to the support or aid of North Korean refugees (IPUS, 2010). Furthermore, a historical review of two student newspapers from previous hubs of student activism, Seoul National University and Ewha

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<sup>31</sup> TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language); IELTS (International English Language Testing System); and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication).

Women’s University, neatly summarises the decline in importance of unification as a topic relevant to university campuses.

Table 1 Appearance of North Korea and unification-related words in two student newspapers<sup>32</sup>



As one university newspaper editor commented to me<sup>33</sup>:

Most student newspapers don’t really deal with unification. Many of us think that it is not really relevant to us, as it was a long time since we separated and there have been no big problems or change between North and South Korea...in old times we were crazy about Communism or conflict between Communism and other ideologies and so in the older editions there are many articles about North Korea in the 70s or 80s [editions of the newspaper]. But nowadays.....young people are not thinking about any serious matters to do with North Korea or unification. They don’t care much about these. [Students think] they’re not my issues. (Interview in English, Anonymous student newspaper editor, 28/05/2010)

<sup>32</sup> The frequency of appearance of the following words in the Yonsei University and Ewha University Korean language student newspapers were counted and analysed: North Korea, unification and *Cheondaehyop* which reformed under the name *Hanchongnyeon* in 1993 (the student group that focused upon unification and North Korean issues).

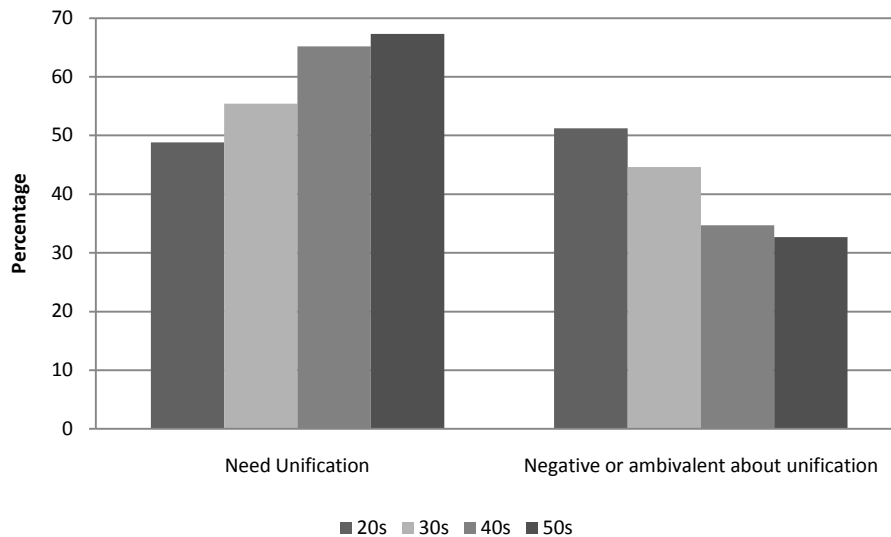
<sup>33</sup> This quotation was given in response to the question ‘are your readers interested in unification?’

We see across Korea's young people and students and on its university campuses that division of the Korean peninsula no longer gives rise to the same passionate nationalist sentiment seen in previous generations of students and young people. This provides the first piece of evidence that young people now consider only the southern part of the peninsula to be their 'national unit' or 'imagined community'. And if this is the case, it will also be expected that young people are increasingly ambivalent, or even have negative views, about the event of unification. The next section explores this further.

### **3.3 Ambivalence and antagonism toward unification**

The call for unification has been the cornerstone of South Korea's national identity and student movement. Until recently, unification was assumed to be the hope and duty of every South Korean. In the South, however, survey data, interviews in the field and observations of youth culture provide substantial evidence of the growing ambivalence or antagonism toward the event of unification and a growing willingness to openly express this. The open expression of such views is something that, only a few years ago, would have been considered as socially unacceptable or inappropriate for most South Koreans. Since the 1990s, however, the number of students opposing unification has increased. In 1994, a national survey found that only 11 per cent of young people thought that unification was unnecessary (Korea Institute for National Unification, 1994). By 2010, in a similar national survey, 27 per cent of all young people (those in their 20s) believed that it was unnecessary to achieve unification and a further 24 per cent did not feel strongly either way (IPUS, 2010). In other words, by 2010 over 50 per cent of young people gave a response that could be classed as either negative or ambivalent about unification. One might also assume that these are conservative estimates given that there is still some stigma attached to openly admitting opposition to unification (see Appendix 1 for further discussion).

Table 2 Attitudes to unification by age (IPUS, 2010)



Aside from being more negative about unification than previous generations of *isipdae*, we can see from this survey that young people are also less enthusiastic about unification, or at least more willing than contemporary older generations of South Koreans to actively express this opposition. Face-to-face interviews with students provided a chance for these students and young people to openly express their opposition to unification. And many of the responses were very direct<sup>34</sup>:

I don't want unification. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

I am against unification because I am very satisfied with my life as it is. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

I am not positive about unification. As I see it, there won't be any benefits for South Korea. (In Korean, Gyeongsang National University, 31/05/2010)

To be honest, I don't care if unification is achieved or not. (Interview in Korean, Chung-Ang University, 27/05/2010)

<sup>34</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the questions 'what do you think about unification?' and 'do you want unification?'



I'd rather not have unification. I think it would be best if the two Koreas worked to build an amicable relationship, existing side by side. I think that after 60 years of division, assimilation will be difficult and unification would present significant economic challenges for South Korea. I think a system of federation or confederation will be a more workable option. I can accept unification if it can't be avoided but I don't really want it. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 31/08/2009)

This increasing antipathy towards unification is being recognised and reflected in wider youth culture. Advertising can provide a useful insight into the interests of young people. Whilst nationalist themes might be attractive, unification is not. Steve Yi, Head of Strategy for Grey Group Korea (part of WPP, the world's largest advertising agency) commented that unification would not be considered for inclusion in any advertising aimed at South Korean young people because, 'a lot of Koreans are actually very very agitated about unification...they really think it might wreck the economy...it really hasn't been a theme in advertising' (Interview in English, Steve Yi, Grey Group WPP, 01/06/2010).

### **3.4 Pro-unification sentiment**

As mentioned in the previous section, whilst over 50 per cent of young people in 2010 were negative or ambivalent toward unification, one must acknowledge that 49 per cent of young people do, however, still express a desire to achieve unification. In fact, the attitudes of these young people who are pro-unification provide us with as many interesting insights into identity as those young people who openly express opposition to the event. This is particularly the case when young people's motivations for wanting unification are explored. Certainly their desire for unification has little similarity with the passionate unification nationalism of their predecessors. Long gone is the burning nationalism of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s where street protests were accompanied by shouts of 'our wish is unification' (Choi, Jung-woon 1999). To hear a student call for unification nowadays generally requires someone else to bring up the topic. And with the exception of some students and young people who do remain passionate about North Korean issues, most positive responses toward unification come with many qualifications.

In interviews with young people, those who expressed a desire for unification, almost without exception, did not want it to take place immediately. The desire for unification was dependent upon removal or mitigation of disruption to life in South Korea. Indeed, in a 2010 survey, only 5 per cent of young people said they wanted to achieve unification immediately. The vast majority, over 85 per cent, preferred to ‘carry it out gradually’ or ‘to maintain the status quo’ (IPUS, 2010). It seems that, given the ‘requirements’ for unification demanded by young people, many believe (or perhaps hope) that unification will not take place for many years. During one interview, when asked if he wanted unification, the student replied ‘Absolutely. But not in my lifetime’ (Interview in English, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010). Other typical responses included<sup>35</sup>:

I think that we should wait at least 20 years before we unify, and then it should be in the form of one country two systems. (Interview in Korean, Gyeongsang National University, 31/05/2010)

I want unification but not now. I want to wait until Korea becomes richer, rich enough to support North Korea before we think about unification. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

I will not agree if the unification process is complete in ten years. It will cause more tragedy for our society. I think we need 30 or 40 years. We don’t want to hurry especially because our generation is not ready for unification. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

I think that North Korea should achieve economic growth through reform and opening policies before we consider unifying with the North. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women’s University, 21/04/2010)

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<sup>35</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘what do you think about unification?’

An anthropological study of North Koreans refugees suggests that the attitudes of the South Koreans in my research are vastly different to those of North Korean refugees. North Korean expatriates living in Seoul are often shocked by the attitudes of many South Koreans to unification:

‘A [North Korean] immigrant student came to me one day, very angry over something that had happened in morning class. The teacher had asked the students to raise their hands if they wanted unification of the Korean peninsula. Few of the South Korean students raised their hands. This surprised and upset the North Korean immigrant students. They were disappointed that their South Korean classmates did not care about reunification. In addition, they had heard that South Koreans do not want unification because it would result in a deteriorating economy in South Korea.’ (Kim, Yoon-Young 2009)

We must do unification no matter what. But we can't possibly do it now.  
(Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

The nationalist sentiment that once drove unification activism by students and young people, often at immense personal risk, has diminished even amongst those young people who express a positive attitude to the event of unification. It seems that as long as the South's national interests are protected, the *isipdae* can accept a divided peninsula. Their nationalist sentiment is not expressed through concerns about division. Instead we see the beginnings of a nationalist sentiment derived from a concern over the interests and welfare of the South. It is a new nationalist sentiment, a sentiment that expresses a concern for *uri nara*, as the South Korean nation.

### **3.5 Perceptions (and realities) of difference between North and South Korea**

Primordialists believe that the Korean nation, based upon the Korean '*ethnie*', is perpetual and ongoing despite division (see Smith, 1986). They may argue that the disinterest and negativity towards unification that I have described merely reflects concerns held about the financial, political and social instability that unification may bring. Thus, they might say that upon unification the primordial elements of the Korean *ethnie* will sufficiently bond people to create a unified nation and nationalism. It is therefore important to explore how young people have not only changed their attitudes to North Korea and unification but also their attitudes towards North Korean people. Once upon a time North Koreans were considered equals, ethnic brethren, a concept expressed through the term *danil minjok*. Now South Korean young people commonly perceive a difference between the North and the South and that perception is strengthened by some tangible variances between the two peoples.

As just mentioned, the dominant discourse regarding nation, identity and unification in South Korea had been based upon the idea of *danil minjok* (*danil* meaning one or single). Shin Gi-wook (2006: 4) writes that 'race has served as a marker that strengthened ethnic identity, which in turn was instrumental in defining the nation. Race, ethnicity, and nation were conflated, and

this is reflected in the multiple uses of the term *minjok*, the most widely used term for “nation,” which can also refer to “ethnic” or “race”. Ideas of ethnic homogeneity between North and South Korea continue to be perpetuated, including in a public holiday called *Gaechonjeol* or the ‘Festival of the Opening of Heaven’. This is officially known as National Foundation Day and is celebrated on the 3 October each year. *Gaechonjeol* marks the mythical founding of Korea and the Korean race in 2,333 BC by the legendary god-king *Dangun*. The myths of unified nationhood, however, are being increasingly challenged by a growing sense of difference and distance from North Koreans that is felt amongst South Korean young people. Against the background of ideas of racial purity and ethnic sameness, the separation in identities between the North and the South that I have described appears all the more stark.

The first generation of Koreans in the South who grew up following division would not have considered those in the North to be any different to them in culture or identity except perhaps in regards to ideology. Indeed, many of this generation had fled from the North or had family that had remained in the North. The 386 generation that followed learned through their parents’ firsthand experiences. But perhaps more importantly, as they rebelled against the images of the North propagated by the authoritarian regimes of Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan, the 386 generation created their own image of the northern Brethren as brothers and sisters. Today, the contemporary generation of 20-somethings has instead formed its image of North Koreans through yet a different lens. Their perceptions of northerners have been constructed through chance encounters with the now more than 20,000 North Koreans living in the South, whether at a public event, a church service or at university or school. Some Korean students met North Koreans whilst travelling or studying in China<sup>36</sup>. Grinker (1998: 54) talks about the excitement felt by his South Korean research assistant in the late 1990s after she talked to a ‘real’ North Korean on the phone. Now 12 per cent of all *isipdae* say they have met a North Korean (IPUS, 2010). Their image of North Koreans has also been influenced by the significant media coverage devoted to the plight of North Koreans as a result of the chronic food and fuel shortages in the North, about the treacherous journeys taken by many North Koreans to escape their country, or broadcasts about the challenges of their lives in the South. In addition, the perceptions of South

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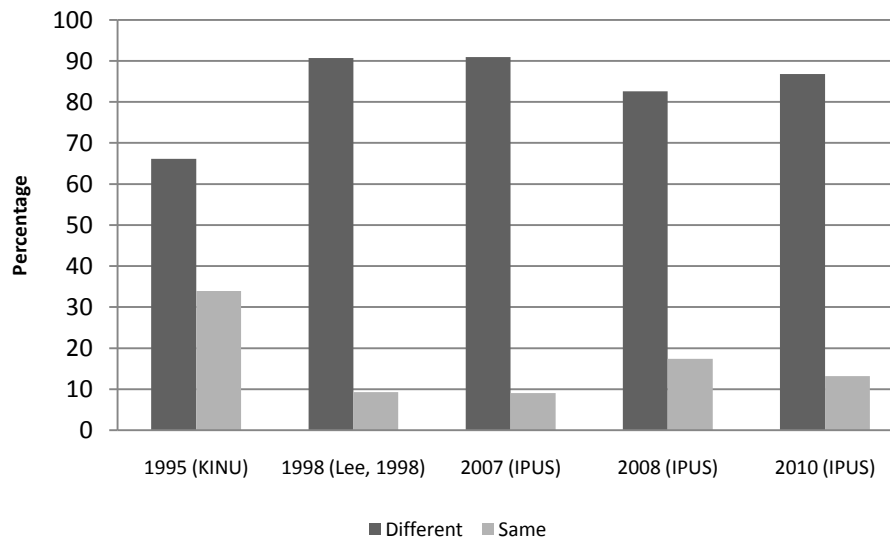
<sup>36</sup> There are many North Korean-run restaurants and other enterprises in the major cities of Northeast China that serve Chinese and foreigners, including South Koreans.

Korean young people about North Koreans have been constructed through interactions with other ethnic-Korean immigrants, in particular the *Joseonjok*, Korean-Chinese. It is through these experiences that young people in the South have developed their own perception of the North and North Koreans.

### 3.5.1 Language

Young people in the South are discovering that the North Korean language is different, and the culture, ideology and sociology of the North Koreans compounds this difference. The experience of dealing with *Joseonjok* further complicates perceptions of difference. Many *Joseonjok* speak limited Korean especially those from the younger generation who instead speak Chinese as their first language. As a result of various interactions with North Koreans either directly or through the media or vicariously through *Joseonjok*, young South Koreans have begun to perceive the North Korean language as increasingly different to their own.

Table 3 South Korean perceptions of language difference between North and South Korea<sup>37</sup>



<sup>37</sup> KINU and IPUS data based on surveyed 'young people' (aged in their twenties). Lee (1998) data based on surveyed 'students'. See Appendix 1 for further explanation and discussion.

Difference in language is increasingly an issue for young people in their discussions about unification. For some, it provides further evidence of the separation between the northern and southern identities or provides an example of why unification might not succeed<sup>38</sup>:

We have different languages, different cultures. After more than 50 years of separation, we have become separate countries. The problem is, I have no idea of what North Korea is like. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

It's hard to say because such a long time has passed since the division of the peninsula. On the one hand I feel we need unification because of the families that were separated by the war. On the other hand, we have to consider the huge problems that will arise because the South is democratic and the North has only known Communism. There are also differences in language. (Interview In Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

Yeon Jaehoon (2000) argues that although there are insufficient differences to claim that the two languages are separate, 'there exists a large linguistic gap between South and North Korea'. Differences appear in alphabetical order, vocabulary, phonetics and syntax. In particular, stylistics mark out the North Korean language from its southern counterpart, where 'in North Korean, style, as a powerful weapon for revolution, is regarded as one of the most important elements in carrying out the social function of language'. For example there is 'a preference for short sentences to express militant emotion; preference for a style embodying commands and exclamation, and for an emphatic style achieved through the use of repetition' (Yeon, Jaehoon 2000: 154). One particular difference is the use of 'loan words' in the South Korean language mainly from English but also from other languages including Japanese and German. The use of English 'loan words' is a phenomenon that South Korean young people have particularly embraced and these differences are recognised by many young South Koreans:

North Korean's language is slightly different to ours. In South Korea we use a lot of loan words [from English]. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyungwan University, 06/05/2010)

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<sup>38</sup> The following quotations are given in response to the question 'what do you think about unification?'

Amongst some North Koreans that have come to the South there is a perception that the South Korean dialect, with its many English-derived words, is more sophisticated than the North Korean dialect:

The South Korean dialect has authority and power in that its words are considered good, fashionable, intelligent, and elegant, whereas North Korean words are perceived (by North Korean immigrants) as uncultivated, uncivilised and unfashionable. By comparing the two dialects in class, North Korean immigrants begin to objectify themselves as excluded, uncivilised and culturally inferior in their new society. Their initial assertion of cultural sameness and inclusion became pointless as they realised they were separated from South Koreans. (Kim, Yoon Young 2009: 172)

The differences that have emerged between the two Korean languages, in particular stylistic differences, work to oppose a sense of a unified identity. This is all the more so because of the expectation of sameness, an expectation perpetuated through the myth of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. And whilst difference in language does not necessarily lead to the construction of separate nations, the shift in attitudes toward the North Korean language, and the growing sense of difference, does signify a widening of the gap between North and South Korean identities.

### **3.7 Perceptions of difference in lifestyle**

The perception of difference with the North extends beyond language to lifestyle and customs also. Where South Korea has imagined the North to be part of the national unit based on ethno-cultural sameness, the rising awareness of significant variances in lifestyles and customs has further eroded this idea of homogeneity. In 1998, only 18 per cent of students thought that family life in North Korea was very different to that in the South (Lee, 1998)<sup>39</sup>. By 2010, however, 36 per cent of young people thought that family life was very different (IPUS, 2010). Young people reiterated this sense of difference with North Koreans in interviews<sup>40</sup>:

[North Koreans] are weird and at the same time I pity them. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

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<sup>39</sup> IPUS data based on surveyed 'young people' (aged in their twenties). Lee Yong Gyun (1998) data for 'students'.

<sup>40</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the questions 'what do you think about unification?' and 'what are your feelings toward North Koreans?'

North Korea has held onto a communal culture whereas South Korea is adopting more and more individualism. North Korea tries hard to preserve the traditional culture while South Korea does not hesitate to accept foreign culture. I am concerned about these differences. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

I find North Koreans quite different and strange. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

Perhaps because of this sense of cultural difference, high levels of distrust toward North Koreans exist amongst young people in the South. Contemporary South Korean society places importance upon economic status in social interactions (Koo, Hagen 2007a) and the relatively low socioeconomic position experienced by many North Korean expatriates means they find it difficult to achieve acceptance in wider South Korean society. For example, in a 2010 national survey, 37 per cent of young people disliked the idea of a North Korean business partner, and 55 per cent disapproved of the idea of marriage with someone from North Korea (IPUS, 2010).

The system of welfare payments and support provided to North Korean immigrants to aid them in establishing their new lives is also a source of distrust for some South Koreans. These welfare programmes give rise to complaints of unfairness from South Koreans and further stigmatise North Korean immigrant recipients as being poor. These circumstances affect how their identity is formed in their own eyes and in the eyes of native-born South Koreans (Kim, Yoon Young 2009). Yoon-young Kim remarks that in an interview with a school teacher whose school included many North Korean immigrant children, a number of biases held amongst the South Korean students became evident. These included the belief that ‘North Korean immigrants are not really citizens of South Korea and that they will return to North Korea someday’ and that ‘North Korean immigrants are considered immoral troublemakers who lie and break the law’ (Kim, Yoon Young 2009: 180). Similar attitudes are confirmed in surveys. In 2010, 66 per cent of young people stated a belief that crime and disorder would become worse after the achievement of unification (IPUS, 2010). It seems those from the North are not trusted nor considered to be fully committed to the South and thus it makes it difficult for them to be considered citizens of *uri nara*, our nation.



### 3.7 Tangible differences

Statistics show the stark differences between those who live in the North and those who live in the South. Average life expectancy at birth in North Korea (male and female) is 67 against a South Korean's life expectancy at birth of 80 years<sup>41</sup>. One in every three children is chronically malnourished or 'stunted' meaning they are too short for their age (World Food Programme, 2011). The WFP recently launched emergency operations in North Korea to support 3.5 million people classed as 'vulnerable'<sup>42</sup>. Height and weight of North Koreans is significantly lower than South Koreans. Analysing data from a United Nations survey conducted inside North Korea in 2002, the economist Daniel Schwegendiek writes that 'for socioeconomic reasons, pre-school children raised in [the] developing country of North Korea are up to 13 centimetres shorter and up to 7 kilograms lighter than children brought up in South Korea. North Korean women are also found to weigh up to 9 kilograms less than their southern counterparts' (Schwegendiek, 2009). One South Korean student in an interview said to me 'I took a class on Confucianism and the teacher introduced [the new students] as North Koreans. They look different' (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 23/05/2010). The student may have been witnessing these increasing physical differences.

When there was absolute separation of the North from the South, with little information on the North and no opportunity to come into contact with North Koreans, it was possible to imagine that those on each side of the border were the same in most ways. However, with increased access to information and chances to meet North Koreans and other ethnic Korean immigrants, perceptions of difference with the North are now widely held by young people in South Korea. For many, these perceived differences mean that unification is no longer important. For some, it underlines the foreignness of North Korea. Perceptions of difference are now so great that one young student said in the event of unification 'North Koreans would need some time to adapt to our foreign culture' (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010). However, for many of the *isipdae* these tangible differences are creating confusion about earlier

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<sup>41</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN> (viewed 09/08/2011).

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.wfp.org/countries/korea-democratic-peoples-republic-dprk> (viewed 09/08/2011).

assumptions of homogeneity with the North and this in turn impacts upon the evolving sense of South Korean national identity. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

### 3.6 Motivations for unification – *han minjok* and *uri nara*

The confusion over a unified identity versus a South Korean identity is reflected in the motivations of those young people who do express a desire for unification. In other words, it is important to unravel the simple pro-unification versus anti-unification dichotomy by exploring different motivations driving those who still believe in unification. By doing so, we can achieve a more complex understanding of young people's attitudes toward North Korea, nationalism and identity. The most frequent reason given for wanting unification remains 'one people'. Some South Korean young people hold a profound concern for the plight of North Koreans and this drives them to push for unification. Some come from families who have been separated by division although these stories are increasingly rare with the passing of the older generation that had memories of family in the North. Other young people continue to believe in a sense of common nationality and community<sup>43</sup>:

I heard the UN recommended that Korea should not use these words [*danil minjok* or *han minjok* (one ethnic people)<sup>44</sup>]. The concept of *danil minjok*, or *han minjok*, was taught to me from when I was young. Though South and North have been separate for more than fifty years, we are still the same people because we share a long history. Moreover, North Koreans and South Koreans are the same people because we speak the same language and I feel close to North Koreans because I believe that if people speak the same language, they will have a similar way of thinking. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 16/09/2009)

However, others are left confused about ideas of homogeneity and its relationship with unification. In the textbooks that have guided these young people's unification education there has been a trend toward emphasising heterogeneity in the social and economic life of the North and South (Grinker, 1998). However, in other areas of education such as history and geography, primordial myths such as *Dangun*, views about the ethnic purity of the Korean race and the

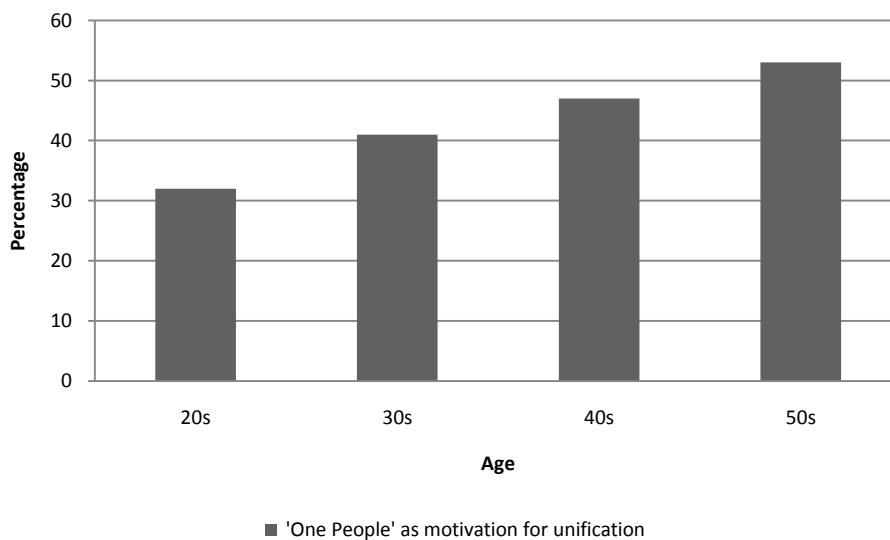
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<sup>43</sup> The following quotation was in response to the question 'what does *danil minjok* or *han minjok* mean to you?'

<sup>44</sup> [because it implies racism]

historical perpetuity of the Korean nation were all part of the curriculum for many of this generation of young people (Interview in Korean, anonymous secondary school history teacher, 22/06/2010). As a result, ideas of ethnic homogeneity of the Korean race and the primordial basis of the Korean nation still appear in the rhetoric of many young South Koreans. Given the lack of interest in North Korean issues, it is perhaps unsurprising that young people resort to learned responses like ‘one people’ or ‘ethnic sameness’ when asked what is nowadays an unexpected question about unification. That said, young people are less likely to provide this as their motivation for unification when compared with older age groups.

Table 4 ‘One people’ as a motivation for unification by age (IPUS, 2010)<sup>45</sup>



When observing students in interviews, the response of ‘one people’ as a motivation for unification was too often delivered as if it were ‘correct’, without displaying an obvious sense of conviction in this answer. The suspicion that these responses were not a true reflection of interviewees’ motivations for unification was often borne out by subsequent inconsistent and contradictory statements. For example, some students who claimed that the reuniting of one people was their motivation for unification, later referred to the North and South as separate nations, or stated that *uri nara* referred only to the South. Some gave answers to suggest they

<sup>45</sup> IPUS data based on surveyed ‘young people’ (aged in their twenties).

believed North and South Koreans to be different, thus contradicting their original assertion that 'one people' was their motivation for unification. The answer 'one people' was often qualified with the desire for a delay until a time when North Koreans had economically, socially and culturally caught up with the South. So although they were 'one people' for now, it seemed the northerners were not quite part of the same whole. Such answers show the complexity of ideas of nationhood and the national unit that exists in South Korea as young people confront a nation of people in the North very different from themselves but who are supposed to be the same.

The following draws on several statements from the same student interviews to show the internal struggle over identity, sameness and unification of some South Korean young people:

*Case One* (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010):

Statement one:

Question: What do you feel about unification?

'For one thing we have to do unification because we are the same people...[but] I think we need more time'.

Statement two:

Question: What does *uri nara* mean to you?

'When it comes to *uri nara* I only think of South Korea. I don't think of unification that much in my life. I think North and South Korea are two separate countries'.

Statement three:

Question: Have you ever participated in a North Korea-related organisation?

'I once met a North Korean when I was a high school student; a man from North Korea came to my school to give a speech. I saw him then...by the way, he looked like a South Korean because although he had spent a long time in North Korea he didn't look any different from us'.

Statement four:

Question: Do you think that foreign immigrants can become Korean?

'If immigrants get to know Korean culture well, spend a long time here, can fully communicate with us even though they were not born Korean and if they adopt Korean culture they can live as a Korean with Koreans together'.

Case one demonstrates the inconsistency of labelling those from the North as ‘one people’ whilst using ideas of ‘us’, *uri*, to refer only to those in the South. For this student, it appears that the idea of ‘us’ or ‘our’ only refers to the South. Although the student states that North Koreans are the same people, it is important to the student that the North Koreans resemble ‘us’. Only then will they qualify as a member of the same nation, *uri nara*, South Korea. In other words, North Koreans are not that different to other foreign immigrants as described by the student. They can be considered as ‘the same people’, however to do so they must correspond to the norms of South Korea. If not, we therefore assume they must be considered to be ‘different’ people and not part of the Korean nation.

The next set of statements is drawn from an interview with a second student:

*Case Two* (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010):

Statement one:

Question: What do you think about unification?

‘We must do unification no matter what. We are the same Korean people’.

Statement two:

Question: Would it be acceptable for unification to take place immediately?

‘We can’t possibly do unification right now, but we will be able to achieve it eventually relatively smoothly through diplomatic negotiations’.

Statement three:

Question: Do you think that North and South Korea are the same country?

‘I think that North and South Korea are the same country’.

Statement four:

Question: What are your feelings toward North Koreans?

‘I really pity them [North Koreans]. They must recognise us as the same people as them and want to be friendly, but they can’t because of their ideology so I really pity them’.

Statement five:

Question: Is democracy important to your identity?

‘Yes. Under a dictatorship, people have no choice but to adopt the ideology propagated by the rulers. Under democratic rule, however, we can extend our own personality, I think.’

Statement six:

Question: Do you think that immigrants can become Korean?

‘Sure. I have a friend who is an immigrant. I don’t remember where she is from – somewhere in Southeast Asia’.

Statement seven:

Question: Do you think that *Joseonjok* (Korean-Chinese) can become Korean?

‘If *Joseonjok* want to become Korean they can’.

Case two suggests some similar traits to case one, in particular the need for North Koreans to fulfil their responsibility of ‘becoming’ like the South and recognising that they are the same as the South (not, significantly, the other way round). According to this student, northerners and southerners are the same people – but not quite yet. The implication of statement five is that the highly repressive political system in the DPRK deprives North Koreans of a political voice. As a result, North Koreans are less developed as people because, in the student’s own words, they cannot ‘extend their own personality’. Furthermore, there is the suggestion that their political circumstances have prevented North Koreans from realising their ‘Korean-ness’ in the ‘correct’ image of the South. They must therefore ‘recognise the South as the same people’ and ‘want to be friendly’ in order to become one people again. It is the North’s lack of democracy and South Korean individuality ‘because of their ideology’ that this student blames for the barrier between the two peoples and the onus is on North Koreans to change this. In addition, the expression of pity toward those from the North, driven no doubt by a genuine sense of concern, could certainly be seen as condescending.

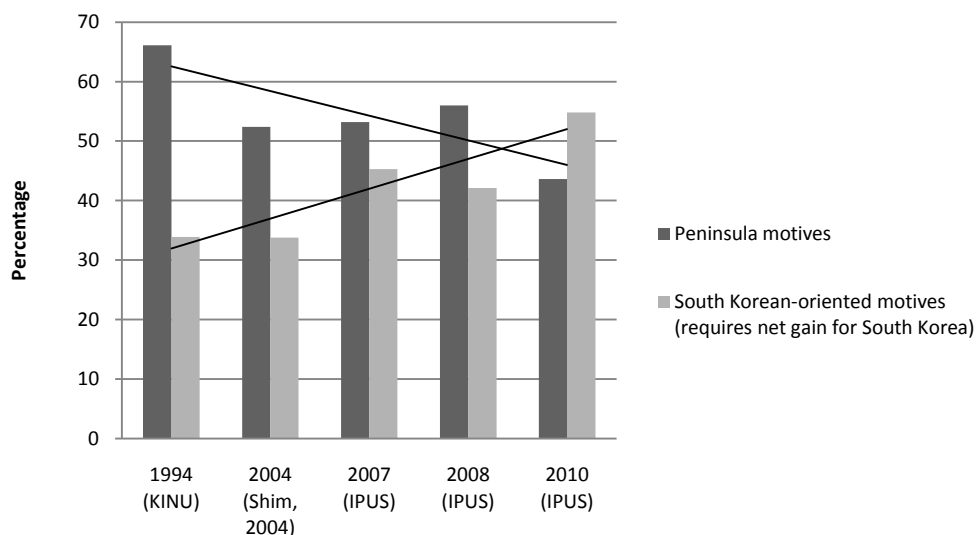
This student, however, appears to quite readily accept the idea that non-ethnic immigrants can become Korean. Indeed, a friend who the student describes as an immigrant is sufficiently Korean that the student cannot even remember her friend’s country of origin. On the other hand, Korean-Chinese, *Joseonjok*, are welcome to ‘become’ Korean if they choose. This suggests that ideas of sameness and one people refers less to ethnicity, than to ideas of adhering to South Korean cultural norms, an idea explored in the next chapters.

### **3.7 Motivations for unification – South Korean motivations for unification**

As we noted above, the idea of ethnic homogeneity, even in its confused or superficial form, is decreasing in importance amongst young people as a motivation for unification. Rising in importance are those reasons or grounds that I term ‘South Korean (nationalist) motivations’. South Korean motivations focus upon the benefits that South Korea will gain in the event of unification. Such incentives include, for example, economic growth and growth in national power and prestige. These goals would benefit both the South and the North. However, these motivations, such as increased power and prestige or economic growth, demand a *net* gain for South Korea. Other more explicit South Korean-driven reasons for desiring unification given by young people in interviews include exploitation of the North’s natural resources, access to cheap labour, the end of the civilian military draft in South Korea and the desire to preclude other nations’ expansion of interests in the North, particularly China.

The change over time in motivations for unification amongst young people is demonstrated in summary form in the following table. The data is taken from a variety of surveys. It shows that the relative importance of South Korean motivations such as economic gains and peace and stability have increased against more peninsula-wide reasons for desiring unification such as ‘one people’ and ‘divided families’.

Table 5 Motivation for unification with the North amongst South Korean young people<sup>46</sup>



For young people, their changing attitudes to the North and unification, as explored in this chapter, is reflected in their commitment to South Korea and its interests when contemplating unification. Many young people are straightforward in their desire to unify for South Korean-oriented reasons. Some of the more typical South Korean motivations are reflected in the following responses of students during interviews<sup>47</sup>:

I want unification because the current situation of being divided into two different nations is causing lots of difficulties for South Korea in many aspects like economics and politics. So when North Korea is having missile experiments then the stock market in South Korea falls significantly and I heard that there are some institutions that grade nations for their credit but they cannot give [South] Korea the best grade because of this problem. And we have to spend a lot of money on military [and] young men have to do the military service and I think it is a great waste of their life. And the tax problem as well. We spend a lot of money on the defence part in preparation for the war, since the war has not ended yet and so on. (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

<sup>46</sup> KINU and IPUS data based on surveyed 'young people' (aged in their twenties). Data for Shim, 2004 based on surveyed 'students'.

<sup>47</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'do you think that unification will benefit you?'



I am a Korean man and so I will have to complete my military service. If South and North Korea establish friendly relations life would be much easier for me in the military. I might be able to spend less time in the army. Unification might mean the end of conscription. When tensions between the South and the North are high, soldiers stay on duty for extended hours. So I really want the tensions between North and South to be eased so that my life in the army can be comfortable. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

If motivations for unification require a net benefit for South Korea then it would follow that these young people would have to be assured of this outcome in order to be wholehearted supporters of unifying the peninsula. However, according to surveys, most young people believe that the situation after unification, based on the current status of North and South Korea, will cause severe disruption to South Korea. Over 64 per cent of young people think that the gap between rich and poor would widen, 48 per cent that unemployment will worsen, and 66 per cent of young people think that crime will increase (IPUS, 2010). Indeed, on most indicators, both young people and old people think that the situation in the South will become markedly worse after unification. Given that a *net* benefit is required by those driven by South Korean motivations for unification, one might surmise that for the time being many of these young people are at best apathetic and at worst antagonistic to unification with North Korea, despite expressing a desire for its achievement.

### **3.8 Undertones of colonialisation**

As early as ten years ago, Grinker highlighted the colonial quality of the discourse on unification in South Korea. He pointed to discussions on unification phrased in terms of saving the North through capitalism or converting it through Christianity (Grinker, 1998; see also Clark, 2002). The hope for unification is still the default policy of the South Korean government and the majority view across wider Korean society<sup>48</sup>. I argue that these competing thought processes have distorted the discussion of unification. Young people have experienced an education system that taught the need for unification. At a government and institutional level the goal of

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<sup>48</sup> The 2010 IPUS survey shows for the South Korean population as a whole that 59 per cent of people want unification, 21 percent are negative about unification and 20 per cent are ambivalent (IPUS, 2010).

unification has been the conventional discourse. Young males are conscripted into the army where unification is the accepted rhetoric. Combined with this, however, are increasing perceptions of heterogeneity and growing concerns and antipathy toward unification. When talking about unification, therefore, traditional discourses of homogeneity are no longer relevant. I argue that young people need to find a justification for unification that they understand in relation to their new South Korean identity. As a result, they are turning to economic-related or power-related justifications, that is South Korean justifications, for unification. I argue that this has deepened the colonial tone of the discourse.

According to the *Penguin Dictionary of Politics* (1993), colonialism requires two conditions: ‘the land that is held as a colony should have no real political independence from the “mother country”, but also the relationship must be one of forthright exploitation. The entire reason for having colonies is to increase the wealth and welfare of the colonial power’. However, colonial government is often justified ‘sincerely or otherwise, as an attempt to spread “civilisation” to socially underdeveloped societies’.

If we think of the Korean peninsula using these terms of reference, the mother country is of course South Korea who is and would remain the economically and politically dominant of the two regions and of the two states would be expected to determine the direction of any type of unification or cooperation between the North and the South<sup>49</sup>. The desire for unification openly based upon ‘opportunities’ in the North, such as cheap labour or access to natural resources, places such discussion of unification within the colonial paradigm. In addition, the combining of these South Korean motivations for unification with terms such as liberation, paternalism and freedom fits the definition of colonialism too neatly to be able to avoid raising serious concerns.

Take for example North Korea’s natural resources, access to which is sometimes given as a motivation for unification. It has the larger share of the peninsula's mineral deposits on its territory. Unification would give South Korea access to these. The many natural resource

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<sup>49</sup> It is recognised that other nations such as China may also play a significant role in events on the peninsula. For the purposes of this discussion, however, even if China were to become involved, the assumption that the South Korean state would be dominant over the North Korean state is a reasonable one, the competing interests being between South Korea and China.

opportunities in the North include high grade coal, iron ore, non-ferrous metals such as zinc and copper and precious metals such as gold and silver. None is globally significant except for the large deposits of magnesite, a mineral used in industrial processes including steel making, chemical and fertilizer production and the production of refractory materials (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008). In addition, mountains, uplands and forests cover up to 75-80% of the total area of North Korea, and notwithstanding degradation and poor management under the current regime, will provide future forestry and hydroelectric opportunities as well as attractive tourist destinations for South Koreans known for their love of hiking (EIU, 2008). There is also a generous reserve of potential cheap labour. Already, South Korea has experienced the benefits of workers from North Korea in the Gaesong Industrial Complex. These facts are well noted by some young people and are often provided as a motivating factor for achieving unification<sup>50</sup>:

I think we must do unification. This country is much more likely to develop economically, culturally and politically if we achieve unification. For example, currently we can't make use of natural resources in North Korea. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

North Korea has abundant natural resources, and we'll need to achieve unification in order to obtain those resources. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

Unification will reduce the cost of defence and enable us to devote that spending to make a better society. We'll be able to do more cultural and economic exchanges after unification. And natural resources are abundant in North Korea – that will help to boost the economy. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 18/09/2009)

If we don't do unification and stay as we are the gap between the cultures of South and North Korean culture will continue to widen and become increasingly strained. So it would be much better if we could achieve unification. For example, because North Korea is separated from the South, the North is demanding too much in regards to the South's activities in the Geumkang mountain tourist district. Unification will put an end to these kinds of difficulties. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

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<sup>50</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'what do you think about unification?'

The reference to ‘put an end to these kinds of difficulties’ in the fourth interview extract might be interpreted as removing the challenges of dealing with the North because South Korea would be expected to run everything after unification. After reading this particular interview my research assistant became rather agitated and remarked, somewhat despondently, that ‘South Korean students seem to think natural resources and tourist attractions will become disposable for South Korea’s sake once unification is achieved!’

Further colonial undertones are reflected in the expressed desire by some South Korean young people to ‘protect’ the North from exploitation by others, be it China or the current northern regime. In this way these colonial undertones in the southern attitudes to the North are wrapped up neatly with terms of paternalism and humanitarianism<sup>51</sup>:

I believe that unification is something that is required from South and North Korea and based on the humanitarian point of view and the economic point of view from both of us, there can be an economic boom. South Korea can use the labour force and North Korea can use the advanced expertise in the South. So when unification actually happens there will be an economic boom in South Korea. (Interview in English, Yonsei 29/04/2010)

Yes I want unification because it is better for North Korea not to be a dependent upon China and to be with us. Because the Chinese will exploit them. The South can exploit the North but we will avoid [doing so] because [of the South’s] historical and humanitarian [responsibility] and so the political motive can drive us to give help to North Korea’s welfare. So in short the Chinese don’t think about the North Korean’s welfare and just exploit them and do what they want. But if the South takes the North and exploits it, some South Koreans will [speak out] about the humanitarian things in North Korea. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 29/06/2009)

Such responses reflect perhaps the justification or mindset that delivers these problematic ‘colonial attitudes’. Alongside this there is an attitude of sympathy for North Koreans that can be condescending and patronising in tone. North Koreans are often described as pitiable, needing

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<sup>51</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question ‘what do you think about unification?’

help and guidance from the South. The word *pulsanghada*, translated as pitiable, pathetic or to ‘feel sorry for’ comes up frequently<sup>52</sup>:

A North Korean refugee came to make a speech at my school. He had a difficult time trying to escape from North Korea and in the process he lost his father. Listening to that lecture, I really wanted to achieve unification quickly. However, now, seeing what the North Korean regime is doing, I realised that it would be really difficult to achieve unification with the North. I really feel sorry for North Koreans. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women’s University, 21/04/2010)

I really pity them. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

I really pity all North Koreans because of the people in power. It’s like that powerful people are treating the common people as their possessions or pets. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

Colonial attitudes are based upon the rejection of the northern population’s cultural and political values. There is little consideration of the elements that the North may bring to a unified nation aside from a reminder of some of Korea’s more dated traditions. This may seem reasonable given the association of the North’s cultural and political values with the brutal DPRK government. However, the people of the North might see their own cultural and political identity as something separate from that of the DPRK government. For example, we see amongst arrivals from North Korea many positive community traits and identities: adaptation, survival and communalism. The North has its own food and language culture. It also has a historical tradition of being the industrial and entrepreneurial heartland of Korea, a trait that has been reignited by many North Korean women in particular, who have become individual entrepreneurs and market traders in order to survive in the North (Lankov, 2009).

Many young South Koreans, however, see unification simply as a take-over or absorption of the North. Young people in South Korea are not, of course, knowing advocates of colonialism. However, the circumstances exist for South Korea to find itself as a colonising force if it does

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<sup>52</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the questions ‘have you ever met someone from North Korea?’ and ‘what are your feelings toward North Koreans?’

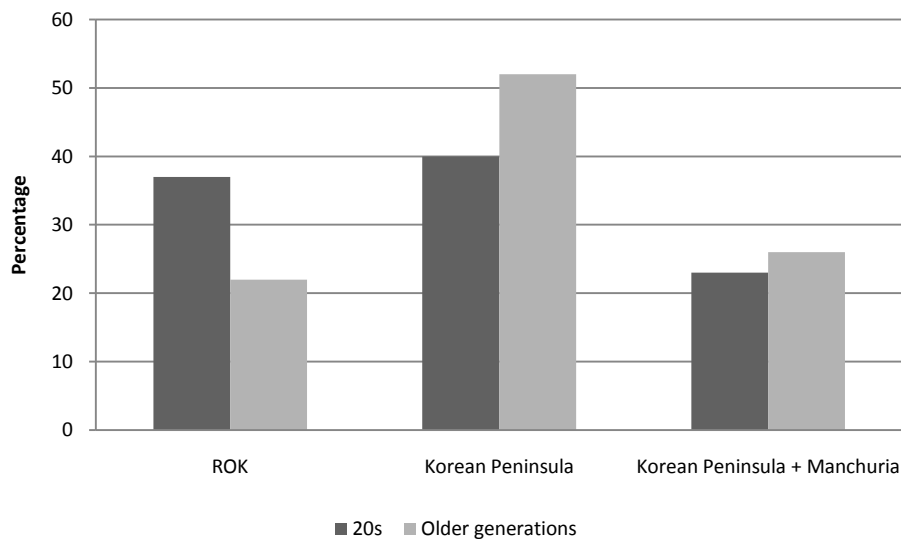
not stop to examine its current identity and situation with regards to the North. As Grinker (1998) first warned, the continued idea of unification based on ideas of ethnic homogeneity, without the exploration of heterogeneity and South Korean identity, have distorted the unification discussion. Surely South Korea is no more the genuine version of Korea than the North. The challenge, therefore, is to find some kind of equality and negotiation between the identities. This will be difficult, however, when the language surrounding unification still relates to ideas of ethnic homogeneity. It is clear that young people are becoming more ambivalent or antagonistic toward unification. However, those who have not yet succumbed to ambivalence or apathy toward unification are reaching for other justifications that enable them to reconcile their national identity and passion for *South Korea* with their desire to support unification. In trying to manage this dichotomy, many of these attitudes to unification are beginning to resemble a colonial paradigm.

### **3.9 The meaning of ‘*uri nara*’**

One direct way of proving the existence of a South Korean identity in this discussion of unification and identity is to ask young people what they consider to be their nation, and who they consider to be their compatriots. In other words, what does *uri nara* mean to them? Koreans will often characterise themselves as a collective people (Na, Eun-yeong 2008). They define themselves not only by what they might do or achieve as individuals, but by their relationships to others within their family, school, workplace or other association or grouping. No more clearly is this exemplified than by the word ‘*uri*’, found ubiquitously across Korean conversation. It is used to refer to family members, ‘our’ mother or ‘our’ father or family in way that some English-speakers might use ‘my’. *Uri Eunhaeng* (‘Our Bank’) is a major Korean financial institution. One student explained that ‘we often use the expression *uri* as the word ‘we’ or ‘our’. I think it is because of Koreans’ community spirit. We feel that we share many things with others in the community’ (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009). *Uri nara*, means ‘our nation’ or ‘our country’; in other words, it reflects the makeup of Anderson’s (1983) imagined community or Gellner’s (1983) national unit. Therefore it seems useful to ask these young people what *uri nara* means to them.

Amongst their responses was that *uri nara* ‘only means South Korea’ (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010), while to another ‘it means South Korea’ (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011) or ‘when we say *uri nara* we include just South Korea’ (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 09/06/2009). Indeed, a 2006 survey showed that 36 per cent of young people (those in their 20s) believed that *uri nara* referred to the territory of the Republic of Korea only, while substantially fewer people in other age groups shared this same belief (Kang, Won-taek 2007).

Table 6 What territory constitutes ‘*uri nara*’? (Kang, Won-taek 2007)



The findings of Kang’s 2006 survey is supported by more recent evidence. In 40 face-to-face interviews where I asked the question ‘what does *uri nara* mean to you?’ (and the question was answered), over 85 per cent of students said that it referred only to South Korea and South Koreans. During a visit to a university political science lecture, every single student raised their hands to indicate (only) South Korea when asked what *uri nara* meant to them. In one particular interview a student commented ‘I only mean a South Korean when I refer to a person from *uri nara*. I don’t want to call a North Korean a person from *uri nara*’ (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung University, 21/04/2010). Another student stated, ‘I mean South Korea. I guess. When I say *uri nara*, it should refer to a community in which everybody can communicate and

share each other's ideas, but with South and North Korea it is not the case. They are not one country' (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009).

### **3.10 Conclusion**

To conclude, I analyse the following statements taken from three young people who are also students and who have had contact with North Koreans. All three have worked directly with North Koreans. They are students with international experience and are progressive in their political outlook. As a result of their work and their general interest in the topic they are particularly thoughtful about issues to do with unification, North Korea and the arrival of North Koreans in South Korea. They were all aware that their statements to me were difficult and even shocking. The marked concern of these young people therefore demonstrates the severity of the fissure that exists between North and South Koreans. Their statements show the power of the argument that two separate national identities have come into existence, two identities that will have to be first accepted, understood, and then integrated in order to achieve a harmonious society that includes both South Koreans and arrivals from the North. They are quoted in length because of the importance of their statements:

There are lots of question marks [about unification]. From a cultural perspective there is a huge cultural gap between South and North Korea: in language, habits, ways of thinking. The gap is much bigger than one can expect. I experienced refugees from North Korea reacting sharply to my trivial gestures and language and also I sometimes misinterpreted the way they communicated. These differences, I suppose will be a barrier to unification. And I ask myself: 'Are Koreans ready to try their best to overcome this barrier to achieve unification?' I guess not. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

At first, due to the serious human rights situation in North Korea, I thought that we should unify together because the situation is very sad and has to be corrected as soon as possible and because of that I thought we should be unified. But whilst working I realised that we are not the same people, we are absolutely different people because [the northerners] have very unique ideas about daily lives and everything and their logical sense is totally different from South Koreans. I am aware that they had a different environment and [are] in [a] new environment, but there are some times and some moments that we argue. And



after arguing we did not agree with each other, I just kept my own idea and he or she, the North Korean, kept their own idea. We cannot agree, we cannot compromise. And the way they talk is very different. I don't just mean accent or dialect. It is not about dialect, it is about how they talk. They just insist on their own ideas. I try to persuade them or suggest my own idea but they never accept it. They just only insist on their own idea and I was so surprised. I think that unification has advantages and disadvantages for South Korea and the disadvantage would be on the surface we are unified, we can be unified, but deep down in our minds there is no unification, for about 100 years. I'm not sure we can live together....I am not sure they could understand our lifestyle when unification was done. (Interview in English, Anonymous North Korea-related NGO officer, 17/09/2009)

I used to think that we could unify because I was told that we need unification since I was a child because they [North Koreans] are our brothers and sisters. But then I got that unfriendly email<sup>53</sup>. I was so angry I felt like it was like a war. I really wanted to help as South Koreans are so good at using the internet. There was also a nice and intelligent writer from the North. I haven't met many North Koreans, about ten or so, [but] according to my feelings, most of them, it's my guess that most of them are like the unfriendly guy. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 21/06/2010)

Through an exploration of changing attitudes to unification and North Korea amongst young people, we have seen how *uri nara* has been formed in the image of the South only. There is a possibility that given a dramatic event, some of these attitudes may change – interest in North Korea or discussion of unification might increase in the case of increased belligerence by the North; the desire to unify might intensify if China, for example, became heavily involved in North Korea. Notwithstanding the potential for such events, the underlying conclusion of this analysis – the emergence of a South Korean nationalism and national identity – is likely to hold firm despite the potential for volatility in attitudinal survey data. South Korean young people are either ambivalent or antagonistic toward unification and increasingly consider those in the North to be different and foreign. In the eyes of some *isipdae*, North Koreans would have to ‘become’

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<sup>53</sup> The email which I viewed was from an NGO run by North Korean defectors. The student had written to the NGO to offer help with translation and other activities on a voluntary basis. In her application she highlighted her (impressive) educational credentials as a student at Seoul National University, one of Korea's most elite institutions. The email refused the student's offer of help and criticised her for bragging about her educational background stating that they were capable of running the NGO themselves.

South Korean in order to be accepted. Many South Korean young people no longer naturally consider North Korea to be part of their national unit. However, this South Korean national unit coincides with the political unit – a democratic government elected by the people of South Korea. In effect, a South Korean nation and nationalism has arisen. Gellner's definition of nation has been completed. In the next chapter, therefore, I examine the nature of the emerging South Korean national identity and South Korean nationalism amongst the *isipdae*.



## Chapter Four

### **Modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status: The manifestations of South Korea's new nationalism**

*The Republic of Korea is now standing tall at the centre of the global stage.*  
President Lee Myoung-bak, 2011 New Year Speech

*I'm not sure about the parties. But whatever they have in Korea, that's bad.*  
Justin Bieber on politics in his Rolling Stone Interview.

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the *isipdae* of South Korea increasingly consider their national unit to consist of the South only. This national unit coincides with the political authority that is elected in South Korea through democratic elections in which these young people participate. In other words, Gellner's definition of political nationalism has been fulfilled – the South Korean nation is emerging.

When political nationalism is fulfilled, says Gellner, it gives rise to feelings of satisfaction which he terms nationalist sentiment. And there is plenty of nationalist sentiment in evidence amongst this generation of young South Koreans. In the last World Values Survey in 2005, over 90 per cent of young South Koreans declared that they were quite proud or very proud of their nationality (World Values Survey, 2005)<sup>54</sup>.

In this chapter, I delineate and describe this South Korean nationalist sentiment providing *further* evidence of the existence of the South Korean nation and nationalism. National pride and national identity are manifested in three foremost characteristics of young South Koreans' lives: *modernity*; *cosmopolitan-enlightenment*; and *status*. To make this delineation I use examples of

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<sup>54</sup> World Values Survey data for 'young people' covers the age range 15-29.

explicit expressions of nationalism and also explore how nationalist sentiment manifests itself in the daily lives of young South Koreans.

## **4.2 Modernity**

Concepts of modernity in social science can be complex and challenging, but here I use modernity at its most basic definition. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004) defines modernity ‘as characterised by or using the most up-to-date ideas, techniques or equipment’ or ‘an advocate of a departure from traditional styles or values’. Modernity provides a neat description of one aspect of young South Koreans’ national identity: the desire to be the most advanced, innovative and cutting-edge. Below, I explore two examples and expressions of the importance of modernity in the South Korean national identity. The first is nationalist sentiment amongst young people derived from ideas of the modern South Korean nation. The second is the reinventing and modernisation of traditional Korean culture by young people to reflect the wide experiences of this new generation. As I will show, there are many expressions of pride in this re-imagined modern South Korean identity.

### **4.2.1 The modern nation and national pride**

The best known icons of modern South Korea are arguably the large conglomerates or *chaebol* such as Samsung, LG and Hyundai. The achievements of these companies inspire explicit expressions of nationalist sentiment amongst young South Koreans. More generally there is great pride in South Korea’s so-called ‘economic miracle’, the rise of Korea from its post-Korean War poverty and destruction to become one of the world’s largest economies.

The pride in the *chaebol* relates not only to their absolute size and profitability but also to the *chaebol*’s relative position as global leaders in cutting edge technologies. Samsung, for example, has the number-one global market share for semi-conductors<sup>55</sup>. Hyundai is the fifth largest and fastest growing car company in the world (Shim, H-J 2011). These two companies are the most

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<sup>55</sup> [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com)

prominent international representatives of South Korea's modernity and young people find great pride in their achievements. The following comments were typical of my interviews<sup>56</sup>:

What am I most proud of? It's definitely the fast economic growth. Korea achieved economic growth at least 50 years faster than other countries. I am so proud of that. (Interview in Korean, Chung-Ang University, 06/05/2010)

I don't think [foreigners] really knew about Korea in the past. However, we now have major companies like Samsung enhancing national prestige. (Interview in Korean, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

Large [Korean] companies are producing high quality products and exporting them globally. They are promoting Korea to the rest of the world. I am so proud of Korea's achievements. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

Korea is famous for its culture, electronic equipment, rapid development and IT industry. I am really proud of all of these aspects. (Interview in Korean, YBM Sisa, 29/04/2010)

[I am most proud of] the electronics part, Samsung, LG. And when they ask me in the US about Korea I just ask them about their cellphone and that it is made in Korea and they didn't know. Most of my friends [in the US] have a Samsung or LG phone and they don't know. That's what I'm most proud of. (Interview in English, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

Such expressions of South Korean nationalist sentiment show how the idea of modernity is one important manifestation of the new South Korean nationalism. And so, when outsiders fail to recognise these achievements, or confuse modern South Korea with 'backward' North Korea, nationalist anger or frustration is aroused (Lee, Ha-won 2010). For example, when young people discussed their experience of explaining or introducing Korea when they were overseas, the predominance of North Korea in foreigners' conceptions of the Korean peninsula often inspired palpable annoyance:

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<sup>56</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question 'what makes you most proud about Korea?'

[Foreigners] have no idea about Korea. When I was in the United States, I found people there only knew China, Japan and North Korea among the Asian nations. That really annoyed me and it made me think ‘what the heck is Korea doing?’ At that time I even admired Kim Jong-il for managing to become world-famous! Americans had no idea who the President of South Korea was, but all of them knew Kim Jong-il. I was really angry that my country was performing so badly and even Kim Jong-il was doing better! (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/05/2010)

I lived in Montreal for a year. Many people there had heard of Korea but didn’t know much about the country. The first thing that they asked me when they found out I was Korean was if I came from the North or South! And lots of people thought that companies like LG and Samsung were Japanese because they are not properly promoted as Korean. When they think of Korea (*Hanguk*), the first thing that comes to their mind is the division of the peninsula, and second that North Korea is an evil country. That makes me pretty unhappy! (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

Students express frustration at being confused with North Korea or being tarnished by the North’s reputation. For one young person, unification is a means to mitigate the damage done to South Korea’s reputation through its association with the failing North<sup>57</sup>:

I read some news articles about national branding and Korea. South Korea is ranked relatively low compared to its economic competitiveness because people associate South Korea with North Korean issues and all the nuclear problems and instabilities. So foreigners tend to see South Korea as a very unstable country and that people are living under an unstable peace. So people associate South Korea with North Korea and so South Korea’s national branding goes down. I guess [unification] will benefit South Korea economically and also help to improve its national branding. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

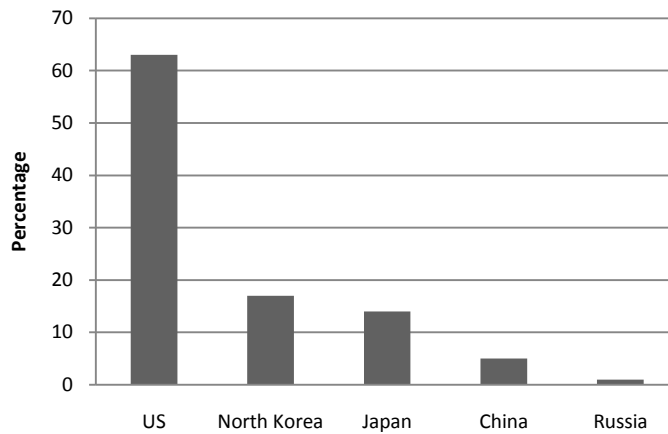
Unlike foreigners who may associate South Koreans with the North, young South Koreans are much more likely to associate themselves with modern and developed nations, in particular, the United States. Despite the periodic appearance of anti-American attitudes, young people

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<sup>57</sup> In response to the question ‘what benefits, if any, do you think unification will bring?’

increasingly express a sense of strong association with the United States. In a 2010 Seoul National University Institute for Peace and Unification Studies (IPUS) survey, when asked which nation they felt closest to, over 60 per cent pointed to the United States (IPUS, 2010). ‘To be honest’, remarked one student, ‘South and North are almost different countries. Americans or Europeans are more similar to us in their way of thinking than North Koreans’ (Interview in Korean, Chung-Ang University, 06/05/2010).

Table 7 The nation with whom South Korean young people feel most closely associated (IPUS, 2010)



#### 4.2.2 A modern culture and national pride

Alongside economic success, young people expressed delight in Korea’s achievements in the arts and sport. Food traditions are also an important expression of cultural identity in Korea and *kimchi*, a fermented cabbage dish and a staple of the Korean diet, has become a national symbol<sup>58</sup> (Cho, Hong Sik 2006). A deep sense of cultural pride is in evidence amongst many of the *isipdae*<sup>59</sup>:

I am proud of the Korean food culture. There is no other country whose national cuisine is as varied as Korean cuisine. This is really exceptional, especially

<sup>58</sup> For a history of *kimchi* and its importance in Korean culture and identity see [www.korea.net](http://www.korea.net).

<sup>59</sup> The following quotations were in response to the question 'what makes you most proud about Korea?'



compared to the cuisine of Western countries. (Interview in Korean, IBM Sisa, 29/04/2010)

I am most proud of food. Recently I read a book about Korean food. Korean foods are very healthy. If we were to introduce Korean food to the world, everyone would be healthier. (Interview in Korean, Chonnam National University, 07/06/2010)

I am very proud of Korea when I see Korean movies acclaimed abroad or Kim Yu-na [Olympic and World champion ice-skater] or Park Tae-hwan [Olympic champion swimmer] or Rain the singer. Korea has made and sold great movies. Taiwan bought the license of *daejanggeum* [a Korean TV drama]. I am so proud when a good Korean film is acclaimed abroad. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

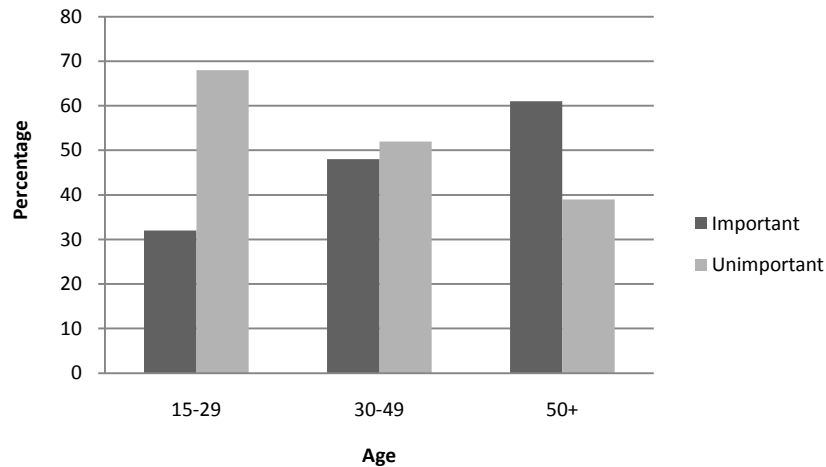
They also expressed pride in Korea's communal culture that led, for example, to the infamous mass public donations of gold during the 1997 economic crisis to assist the government in repaying loans from the IMF:

I am proud of our nation's people's potential because Koreans are much more passionate and hardworking and extremely *dangyeol* (work together in unity). (Interview in English and Korean, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

I am proud of Koreans' cooperative spirit. We all collected and donated gold to overcome the IMF crisis. (Interview in Korean, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

However, young South Korean national identity is marked by a desire to move away from 'traditional' cultural identities to closer associations with the modern. In the 2005 World Values Survey young people showed a marked ambivalence to tradition, especially when compared with older generations:

Table 8 Importance of tradition in South Korea by age group (World Values Survey, 2005)



The idea of modernity is deeply engrained in the culture of young South Koreans. This became apparent in an interview with Steve Yi, Chief Strategy Office at Grey Group, the Seoul representative office of the world’s largest advertising agency, WPP<sup>60</sup>. Yi explained how ‘tradition’ is avoided in marketing to young people:

They always want to move with the new so definitely you would avoid any sort of traditional communications....which means avoiding things like using Chinese characters. Even if they could understand them they would think that they are old.....Korean traditional dress or historical communications automatically says old. You would have to be really creative to make that work. Using traditional ideas is very dangerous because it can backfire really quickly. (Interview in English, Steve Yi, Grey Group WPP, 01/06/2010)

It is not surprising to find that young people are less traditional than older generations. However, so-called ‘traditional’ ideas of culture as an expression of national identity was an important element of the South Korean student movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The *minjung* movement embraced rural customs and historical rituals and practices such as *mandanguk* (folk drama), *talchum* (mask dances) and *pungmul* (four-instrument music groups). It used these forms to

<sup>60</sup> [www.grey.com/korea](http://www.grey.com/korea)

portray the unfairness of the authoritarian regime, to express solidarity with the oppressed elements of Korean society, the *minjung*, and to register protest. The students used these representations to present a national ‘counter-image’ to the military dictatorship, conglomerates and foreign powers that they believed dominated national power and national identity (Lee, Namhee 2007: 187-212). However amongst contemporary South Korean twenty-somethings, this portrayal of national identity has been thoroughly transformed to a modernised concept of South Korean culture and nation.

This demand for the modern is reflected in many of Korea’s arts, particularly those attracting the interest of young people as performers and audiences. This does not necessarily mean a rejection of older styles of music and arts, but it requires an adaptation and presentation of classical cultural forms in exciting and innovative ways. An example of this can be seen in drumming shows such as *Dulsori*<sup>61</sup>. *Dulsori* uses Korean percussion traditions that are performed by young classically trained drummers who present their music in modern and exciting ways. By representing Korea as youthful and contemporary, *Dulsori* have enticed young and modern audiences at events such as WOMAD<sup>62</sup> and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. They have also achieved significant success at home in Korea<sup>63</sup> (Brown, 2007).

Another example is b-boy dancing. This developed from break dancing, which has its heritage in African-American youth culture. B-boy dancing has become a completely new representation of Korean national culture. *Korean* b-boys are now world leaders in this style of dance, with teams from Korea winning six of the last ten ‘Battle of the Year’ competitions, the most prestigious competition in team b-boy dancing<sup>64</sup> ([www.braunbattleoftheyear.com](http://www.braunbattleoftheyear.com)). The b-boy style of dance has a huge following amongst young South Koreans. The influence of this modern Korean cultural phenomenon is so deep that it is now considered an integral part of any representation of Korean culture in overseas Korean cultural events. For example, at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival

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<sup>61</sup> See [www.dulsori.com/english2](http://www.dulsori.com/english2) and [www.youtube.com/user/dulsori](http://www.youtube.com/user/dulsori) (viewed 13/07/2011).

<sup>62</sup> WOMAD, World of Music, Arts and Dance, is an internationally established festival that began in 1980 and that brings together artists from all over the globe. See [www.womad.org](http://www.womad.org) (viewed 13/07/2011).

<sup>63</sup> Another example of modern presentation of traditional musical forms is ‘Cookin’ Nanta’. See <http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en> and [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XQ-hFrhE\\_Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XQ-hFrhE_Q) (viewed 13/07/2011).

<sup>64</sup> See also [www.planetbboy.com/](http://www.planetbboy.com/) for one of the most famous examples of Korean b-boy dancing which uses the backdrop of the North-South Korean border at *Panmunjom* (viewed 13/07/2011).

in 2007, the Korean government sponsored the ‘Korea@Fringe’ event presenting Korean b-boy dancers as a central feature<sup>65</sup> (Brown, 2007). At a similar *Chuseok* (Harvest) Festival that I attended at the British Museum in London in 2007, b-boys and *Dulsori* performed together to an audience of ecstatic foreigners and proud expatriate Koreans.

Other cultural traditions are being adapted and re-imagined by and for young people. An example of this was the recent resurgence in popularity of *makgeolli*. *Makgeolli*, a fermented rice drink, was a traditional alcoholic drink of the older generations with its roots in the countryside. It was a popular drink amongst young people in the 1980s during the protest era as part of the *minjung* tradition, but fell out of favour amongst youth in the 1990s. Beginning in 2008, *makgeolli* once again became hugely popular amongst young people. However, this trend was not based upon *makgeolli* as a traditional drink, nor an expression of folk culture or protest as it had been during the *minjung* period. Instead, new bars specialising in *makgeolli* opened in Seoul’s affluent and trendy areas of Apgujeong and Cheongdam. These bars were styled using modern design and served *makgeolli* in innovative and luxurious ways, for example flavoured or iced, and presented in stylish crockery. Celebrities and society’s elites flocked to these bars to enjoy, and to be seen to enjoy, *makgeolli* in these stylish establishments. These new trends later spread beyond the elites to more mainstream youth society.

The consumption of rice, the nation’s staple food, has also undergone modernisation (Kim, Kwang Ok 2010). Quality, presentation and use of rice have been adapted to reflect modern ways of eating, particularly amongst the young. Previously *juk*, a savoury porridge, was eaten as a way of making grains stretch further in times of shortage. Now *juk* is served with a host of additions, from pine nuts to abalone, as a so-called ‘well-being’ food. Another example of this adaptation is Korean rice cakes, *garaettok*. These were once given as ritual offerings in ancestor worship and are served in soup on traditional holidays. *Garaettok* have become extremely popular among younger people in a dish called *tteokbokki*, rice cakes cooked in a sweet, spicy sauce (Kim, Kwang Ok 2010: 28). *Tteokbokki*, a dish normally served from street stalls, is now being sold in stylish restaurants such as the ‘School Food’ chain where you can eat *tteokbokki*

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<sup>65</sup> [www.eng.gokams.or.kr](http://www.eng.gokams.or.kr) is the website for the Korea Arts Management Service which is a Korean government backed authority for promoting Korean arts including b-boys and other modern art forms overseas in partnership with many international arts festivals and organisations (viewed 12/07/2011).

and drink cocktails whilst listening to quality local DJs. New versions of this dish are appearing, such as one with the addition of melted cheese.

Figure 2 The ‘School Food’ chain and examples of its modern Korean menu ([www.seriousseats.com](http://www.seriousseats.com))



Expressions of modernity are not necessarily a wholesale rejection of norms and values passed down from previous generations of South Koreans. They can, instead, be a reinvention of values to represent the modern identity of the younger generation. For example, the importance of familial duty was reflected in the discussions of many young people. And whilst social values and attitudes in South Korea are changing, traditional family values, especially in terms of filial duty, remain strong (Eun, Ki-soo 2008). Using the example of mobile phone technology, Yoon Kyongwon (2006) shows how close family structures, community networks and even some hierarchical and patriarchal social structures have remained intact, but have been modernised rather than replaced by technology. The use of the mobile phone between parents and children often reflects the expectations of Confucian-family norms. This ‘new technology is perceived and consumed through local filters including social relations’ (Yoon, Kyongwon 2006: 767). Similar trends can be seen in the use of the internet. Whilst the internet might have been expected to demolish social hierarchies, instead the online world has developed its own power relationships. Status is achieved through skills in online gaming, by demonstrating deep knowledge of popular topical issues or by writing on subjects that appeal and attract a following. These leaders or ‘*jjang*’ (literally ‘the best’) can influence their followers in a variety of fields from consumption to voting patterns (Choi and Ross, 2006: 424; Kim, Sa-gwa et. al., 2010).

This modernisation or reinvention of traditional culture amongst young people has been written about by Dianne Hoffman (1993) in relation to the reinvention and reinterpretation of the concept of *uri*. As I noted earlier, *uri*, meaning ‘our’, ‘we’ or ‘us’, reflects the communal values in South Korean society. As Hoffman notes, the start of this trend toward the reinterpretation of *uri* in the early 1990s coincides with the beginning of the transformation of the youth and student movement. She compares the 1970s and 1980s concepts of national identity, such as anti-Americanism, with newly emerging ideas of identity and *uri*. In the 1970s and 1980s, ideas of *uri* were defined amongst young people in binary opposition to ‘threatening others’ such as the United States and the authoritarian government. In contrast, contemporary young people are instead reinventing and re-imagining Korean traditional culture to represent both the pride in their cultural heritage and the modernity of their new South Korean identity. By re-imagining the culture that defines ideas of *uri*, such as the examples described above, national identity can ‘accommodate divergent personal experiences as well as cultural alternatives from foreign sources’ (Hoffman, 1993: 16). In this generation, she says, ‘we find a strong conviction of the inherent superiority of Korean cultural traditions albeit a need to ‘adapt’ them to suit modern lifestyles’ (Hoffman, 1993: 17). In doing so, young people demonstrate their nationalist pride in a South Korean cultural identity that is particular to their nation. Yet it is also thoroughly contemporary, representing the modernity of young people’s South Korean nationalism and the South Korean national identity, and one that is in stark contrast to an ethnic identity rooted in historic myths.

### **4.3 Cosmopolitan-enlightenment**

There is a growing confidence and self-assuredness amongst young South Koreans, which is demonstrated in the sophistication and cosmopolitan-enlightenment of Korea’s culture and society. In the context of this study, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004) defines enlightenment to be rational, tolerant and well-informed. It reflects ideas of sophistication, civilisation, learning and experience. Cosmopolitanism here refers to the sense of ‘belonging to all parts of the world’ and not be necessarily confined by ‘national limitations’. In the following, I show how the ‘cosmopolitan’ of the cosmopolitan-enlightenment manifestation of South Korean nationalism, although on the surface a paradox, actually serves to define rather than

undermine this emerging South Korean nationalism. Here I examine the expressions of nationalist sentiment or national pride through the characteristic of cosmopolitan-enlightenment amongst the South Korean *isipdae*.

Unlike modernity, the manifestation of cosmopolitan-enlightenment is not necessarily reflected in explicit expressions of pride. Instead it is found in the commitment of the twenty-something youth to South Korea-oriented ‘enlightened’ movements that attract significant youth interest. The interest in these movements stands out in stark contrast to the unpopularity of the unification movement. One example of this cosmopolitan-enlightenment, as examined further below, is the growth of the environmental movement. The rise of the environmental movement marks the shift of a society from issues of wealth and quantity to issues of quality of life as a demonstration of its cosmopolitan-enlightenment. The environmental movement in South Korea pays little attention to North Korea, despite the North’s chronic environmental problems. An analysis of this area of youth activism, therefore, demonstrates the South Korean-focus of this youth movement. It also provides an opportunity to explore the rise in significance of ‘enlightened’ issues, such as the environment, ahead of important topics such as unification.

The second expression of cosmopolitan-enlightenment in the South Korean national identity is through the importance of ‘worldliness’ or *savoir faire*. Experiences of travel, being aware and adept culturally, and fluency or ability in foreign language are markers of ‘cosmopolitan-enlightenment’ in the young South Korean identity. A lack of worldliness creates embarrassment and distance from young people, whilst those young people who hold these characteristics inspire admiration and pride. Cosmopolitan-enlightenment in the form of *savoir faire* is also visible in the rejection by young people of traditional politics and the gauche behaviour of South Korea’s politicians. Young people distinguish themselves instead through their involvement in ‘enlightening’ issues such as women’s rights, educational issues, animal welfare and other minority rights.

#### **4.3.1 The environmental and well-being movement and national identity**

Whilst previous generations of young people devoted themselves to the nationalist cause of unification, the current generation of young people have new activist callings that focus more

specifically upon South Korean interests only. One topic currently popular amongst contemporary young people is the environment.

South Korean environmental activism began as a corollary to the more general democratic movement led by students in the 1970s and 1980s. Later, however, it began to focus on achieving local redress for specific environmental problems, many of which arose as a result of Korea's rapid industrialisation (Ku, Do-wan 2004). The contemporary environmental movement is now focused upon broader concerns of quality of life and civil and environmental rights. The growing sophistication and broadening of the environmental movement represents the relatively advanced state and broader interests of South Korean society (Ku, Do-wan 2004). Key environmental groups that attract large youth memberships include *Hwanggyeong undong yeonhap*<sup>66</sup> (Korea Federation for Environmental Movements); *Hwanggyeong jeongui*<sup>67</sup> (Movement for Environmental Justice); and *Nuksaek yeonhap*<sup>68</sup> (Green Korea).

The environmental movement can involve activists from across the age range but there are particular environmental issues that attract large-scale youth interest. One example is *Sadaegang* (the Four Rivers Project), a project to 'build a canal network across South Korea which would involve dredging, straightening and connecting up all of Korea's major rivers at huge financial and environmental cost<sup>69</sup>'. For young people the issues surrounding the *Sadaegang* project relate not only to the environmental sphere. There is, in addition, the perceived failure of the government to listen to young people's opinions when those opinions are in competition with other dominant interests. As part of an advanced, 'enlightened' society, young people have an expectation to be heard. The failure of government to listen to them raises concerns about the resilience of South Korea's democracy. Their right to be heard and the need to protect the environment have come together to inspire young people to participate in *Sadaegang* protests<sup>70</sup>:

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<sup>66</sup> [www.kfem.or.kr](http://www.kfem.or.kr) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>67</sup> [www.eco.or.kr](http://www.eco.or.kr) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>68</sup> [www.greenkorea.org](http://www.greenkorea.org) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>69</sup> For examples of *Sadaegang*-related movements and protests see <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=7935272621> (in English, viewed 13/07/2011); <http://8dang.jinbo.net> (in Korean, viewed 13/07/2011).

<sup>70</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question 'what issues most concern you?'



I have to talk about *Sadaegang*. It's really stupid. (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

Yes I worry about issues of democracy and the environment. He is ruining our environment...President Lee's regime is ruining our country. I don't like anything about him. Like he doesn't allow us the right of protest. I was there two years ago. It was so bad. I was at the candlelight vigils. My boyfriend was so into it. He got really hurt. If you were on the spot you would think much differently. Many people were injured. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 21/06/2010)

Nowadays the situation is different [from the political apathy during the late Roh Moo-hyun period] because our President, Lee Myung-bak has some awful policies like *Sadaegang*...[young] people don't like the policy and so in future elections, our generation will support a progressive candidate. (Interview in English, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

Another important part of the South Korean environmental movement is the so-called 'well-being movement'. *Welbing* (a Koreanised pronunciation of well-being) or the 'well-being tribe' describes those 'devoted to individualised consumption of nature and the personalisation of green values for the sake of their own well-being' (Cho, Myung-rae 2004:162). The well-being movement has given rise to the popularity of so-called well-being products such as organic rice, 'natural' beauty products and clothing made from traditional materials. Hagen Koo argues that the rise in popularity of these goods is a nationalist reaction, where 'the dominant ethos expressed in this cultural response is "ours is best"' (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 10). In addition, it is a reaction against the perceived threat from cheaper imports, particularly of agricultural products from China. Thus, says Koo, 'consuming indigenous Korean products has become something that requires more money and more discriminating taste, therefore part of "well-being"' (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 10). One would not expect this pride in consuming traditional products to extend to products imported from the North if these are too basic or of poor quality. The well-being culture is a demonstration of the sophistication and cosmopolitan-enlightenment of one's own culture and nation, South Korea.

The environmental movement is heavily focused upon the interests of South Korea and South Koreans, but there is growing interest in the wider global environmental situation. In the World

Values Survey, the majority of young South Koreans pointed to environmental issues as the most important problems facing the international community<sup>71</sup>. There is, however, little interest in the environmental movement in relation to North Korea, despite the North's well documented environmental challenges that continue to threaten the welfare of North Korea's population (Watts, 2004). Only one 'environmental' issue relating to the North was mentioned by young people in interviews. This stemmed from anger over flooding in the southern Imjin River and the subsequent deaths of six South Korean civilians following a large release of dam water by the North (*BBC News online*, 07/09/2009; *Hankyoreh*, 07/09/2009b). Moreover, this was discussed in regards to the national security of the South rather than concern for North Korea's current environmental situation (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009).

#### **4.3.2 *Savoir faire*, worldliness and national identity**

Amongst young South Koreans the demonstration of worldliness or '*savoir faire*' is an important element of the 'cosmopolitan-enlightenment' of their emerging South Korean national identity. It is an expectation that, as a young South Korean, you will be culturally adept in a variety of situations, especially those with an international context. One example of this is foreign language ability, in particular English. A great many authors have written on the importance of English in determining status in Korea (Seth, 2002; Lett, 1998; Abelman and Park, 2004; *Chosun Ilbo*, 01/05/2010a). Abelman and Park write 'what it means to be South Korean is transforming: increasingly, to be South Korean means to be South Korean "in the world" – a prospect that calls for the mastery of fluency in English as an index of cosmopolitan striving' (Abelman and Park, 2004: 650). Other means of demonstrating worldliness are through foreign experience and travel. It is increasingly important to study abroad, not only for skills and knowledge but as 'a superficial matter of conferring influence and status' (Kim and Song, 2007). In an interview one student proudly remarked:

I think there are so many talented people [in Korea]. Like yesterday I was having lunch with a professor and some of the students in our class and he was

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<sup>71</sup> When given the choice of five problems, young people (aged 15-29) were asked to select the 'most serious problem of the world'. The choices were: people living in poverty and need; discrimination against girls and women; poor sanitation and infectious diseases; inadequate education; and environmental pollution. 50 per cent of South Korean young people selected 'environmental pollution' (World Values Survey, 2005).

asking us to say what they are going to do in the summer. Every Korean of our age are living so busily and we're so competitive because our country is so small but there are so many talented people amongst the younger people. Everyone had plans to do internships or are studying Spanish or going to India for a conference... (Interview in English, anonymous student newspaper editor, 03/06/2010)

Whilst not every South Korean student can live up to this standard of *savoir faire*, many work extremely hard to attain something close to it. In Korea, an extraordinary 93 per cent of high school graduates go onto higher education (OECD, 2010). In 2010 over a quarter of a million young Koreans of university age went overseas to study, a number that has grown by over 25 per cent since 2005 (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2011). These large numbers show that overseas study is not an opportunity reserved for elite youth only, but is becoming a general expectation for this new South Korean generation. One can note the comparison with North Korean expatriates in South Korea who have very low levels of English ability and limited international acumen (their incidental experience as refugees in China hardly equates to a semester at an Ivy League college). In addition, North Koreans' native Korean language is perceived to be colloquial and backward. Their limited chance of developing such international fluency exacerbates their exclusion from the emerging South Korean identity.

In personal presentation, the trappings of cosmopolitan-enlightenment and sophistication are important to many South Koreans, especially amongst those in their twenties. Young people are overtaking older age groups as the main consumers of global luxury brands. According to a representative of the Lotte Department Store, one of Korea's most exclusive department store chains, 'the young, unlike their parents, have grown up surrounded by luxury goods, and to them designer brands are simply a means to express themselves rather than an unnecessary indulgence' (*Chosun Ilbo*, 27/09/2009c). Brand marketing research suggests that in the Korean luxury goods market there are 'positive relationships between purchasing intentions and social related values' (Park et al., 2008: 256). These values are conformity and uniqueness, and although appearing contradictory, they make sense in the context of the 'cosmopolitan-enlightenment' and *savoir faire* of the South Korean identity. The display of a luxury item *symbolises* uniqueness, in that the product is expensive and demonstrates a 'unique' ability to purchase luxury. Conformity

refers to the paradox that this display of so-called uniqueness – displaying the ability to afford such an item and the demonstration of sophistication in owning such a product – is required to *conform* in this South Korean society.

For those who cannot afford to access these symbols of sophistication or ‘uniqueness and conformity’, Koo notes the trend of purchasing fake luxury goods. Luxury goods are referred to as *myeongpum* in Korean (literally ‘named goods’). He writes that ‘those who were most intimately affected by the *myeongpum* craze in Korea were the young people in their twenties and thirties. Obviously, most of them would not be able to afford the real *myeongpum* products, but they were so pressured by this *myeongpum* syndrome that they turned to purchasing fake *myeongpum* products in black markets’ (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 9).

Away from the overt trappings of cosmopolitan-enlightenment there is a less tangible symbol of worldly cosmopolitan-enlightenment that a number of young people pointed to with pride. This was the perceived ability of young Koreans to empathise with both developed and developing nations. Some of the government rhetoric behind the hosting of the G20 was the opportunity for Korea to ‘share’ its experience of development with other nations. The rapid development from a nation of war and abject poverty in the 1950s to the host of the G20 Summit in 2010, the first Asian host of a G20 meeting, is said to place Korea and Koreans in this exceptional position. Notwithstanding the failed North-South relations, an irony that was lost on many of these students, there was some amount of pride in their sympathy for the less fortunate. Thus there was a belief in the potential capacities of South Korea and South Koreans for bridging the gap between nations at differing stages of development. Alongside this, also, is a pride in the transformation from an aid recipient to an aid donor<sup>72</sup>:

I can say that in relation to the globalisation issue, being Korean means being a link between people in developed countries and developing countries. Being Korean means being a member of a national Asian power...I can understand Chinese and Indians, but at the same time I can also understand Germans, Danish and British...so in regards to globalisation I feel like Koreans have a bridging role. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

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<sup>72</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘what does globalisation mean to Korea?’

I think it is important that South Korea provides more tangible opportunities to other countries. Korea used to receive aid. Now it gives aid to other countries. I think that Korea should be more active in giving help to other countries who have problems. (Interview in English, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

A demand of *savoir faire* was evident. Uncivilised or gauche behaviour by Koreans overseas inspired deep feelings of national shame amongst many young people I interviewed. In 2009, a number of newspaper reports emerged of the exploitation of Filipino women by Korean men travelling to the Philippines for study, business or leisure. A trend had emerged of Korean men engaging in relationships or paid sex with Filipino women that often resulted in the birth of children who were abandoned by their Korean fathers. The numbers of women involved are so substantial that welfare centres have been established to assist these women and their children. The issue of fatherless so-called ‘Kopinos’ is considered a disgrace by many Koreans (Hicap, 2009)<sup>73</sup>:

I am very proud of Korea, but sometimes I also feel quite ashamed...some ugly behaviour in Asia for example, some Korean men went to the Philippines and they just had fun with many woman...I think this is one of the problems we have. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

I think Korea has built a good reputation in the world...[but] Korea’s reputation has been damaged. Koreans have been reported as doing strange things when they travel in Southeast Asian countries... (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 31/08/2009)

These young people were demanding a high standard of behaviour – a demonstration of cosmopolitan-enlightenment – from those who ‘represented’ South Korea overseas. Poor or gauche behaviour that takes place within Korea is also a source of intense embarrassment for young Koreans, especially when it is broadcast to an international audience. The performance of South Korean politicians, their ability to attract scandal and the tendency for violence to erupt in the National Assembly, all gave rise to a deep sense of shame amongst many of the young people that I interviewed. In addition, it also made traditional politics highly unattractive to these young

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<sup>73</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘what makes you most proud of Korea?’

people. This is encapsulated by the cover story of the September 2009 edition of the monthly Korea University *Granite Tower Magazine*. The story was entitled ‘The Great Letdown: National Assembly Violence’ and discussed the frustration that many young people felt toward the behaviour of Korea’s politicians in the National Assembly. The student journalists provided a neat description of the violence:

The GNP [Grand National Party], eager to knock down a reinvestigation into the issue [of charges relating to alleged stock manipulation by then Presidential candidate Lee Myung-bak], barricades the main hall of the National Assembly with metal pipes and steel chains and stages a two-day sit-in. However, the arrival of an electric saw proves the UNDP [United New Democratic Party] master of creativity, and amid shrieked insults, assaulted cheeks, and strangled throats, the stand is won by those in favour of the new probe bill and the impeachment of the original prosecutors for the case. (Im and Oh, 2009: 10)

The article noted that another violent incident in the National Assembly of South Korea in July 2009 was covered widely by the foreign press including the Wall Street Journal, Associated Press and Agence France Press. The incident, and more importantly, the international press coverage that followed, prompted ‘a fresh wave of stolid but profound political disappointment within the younger generation’ (Im and Oh, 2009: 11). Interviews with students confirmed these sentiments<sup>74</sup>:

I am worried about political issues. The ruling party and the oppositional party should not exist just to fight with each other. They should be exchanging opinions to come up with the best options for governing Korea. But they simply blame each other rather than trying to find common ground. I always see them fight on television. Why can’t they just work it out? (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung University, 21/04/2010)

I want to be proud, but in reality...before the ‘Korean Wave’ there was nothing to be proud of in my country. Look at the news about Korea on the BBC or CNN showing the politicians fighting in the National Assembly. That makes me so ashamed! (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

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<sup>74</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘what issues most concern you?’ and ‘what makes you most proud of Korea?’

Appalled by the behaviour of South Korea's politicians, many young people are turning away from electoral politics and political parties. However, while the population of young people is under represented in the turnout at South Korean elections (Cho, Sung-dai 2008: 65), many young people remain politically active outside of traditional politics. This is obvious from the discussion above of the environmental movement and the number of posters displayed on university campuses. They are interested in a range of activities that focus on South Korea including, for example, social enterprise<sup>75</sup>, educational issues<sup>76</sup> or democracy and justice<sup>77</sup>. Another example of the groups that attract significant youth interest is what Cho Dae-yop (2008) calls the 'fourth-tier...electronic public and flexible, voluntary groups'. These online groups form around discreet issues. They are flexible and without online or offline restrictions. They activate, then disengage, as deemed necessary (Cho, Dae-yop 2008: 204-208). These online groups function in different ways to the traditional and well established civil groups but can be extremely powerful as demonstrated by the internet activism that brought out sufficient young people to secure Roh Moo-hyun's presidential election victory in 2002<sup>78</sup> (Yun, Young Min 2003).

I argue, however, that a new force is motivating young people to participate in activism. It has been said that 'a nation is judged by how it treats its minorities' (Lévesque, 1979). In other words, the treatment of society's vulnerable groups – women, migrant labourers, the disabled, even animals – reflects the cosmopolitan-enlightenment or otherwise of that society. Thus, for some young people, when Korean society appears to have failed to meet international standards in this regard, there is a deep sense of shame<sup>79</sup>:

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<sup>75</sup> See *Huimang Jejakseo*, The Hope Institute, [www.makehope.org](http://www.makehope.org); and *Areumdaun jaedan*, The Beautiful Foundation, [www.beautifulfund.org](http://www.beautifulfund.org).

<sup>76</sup> See *Hakbeolopnun Sahoe*, The movement to oppose academic cliques, [www.antihakbul.org](http://www.antihakbul.org)

<sup>77</sup> See *Minjusahuirul wihan Byeonhosa Moim*, Lawyers for a Democratic Society, [www.minbyun.org](http://www.minbyun.org); and *Chamyeo Yeondae*, Citizens Movement for Democracy, [www.peoplepower21.org](http://www.peoplepower21.org)

<sup>78</sup> Yun (2003) argues that although 'cyber-electioneering' may be an effective tool to encourage supporters to turn out in elections, or to win floating votes, it is doubtful that it can be effective in changing the actual political orientation of voters.

<sup>79</sup> In response to the question 'what makes you most proud about Korea?'

I am not [proud of Korea]. When Korea gets criticised I feel really ashamed. When Korea is involved in shameful things, I feel sad and guilty. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 16/09/2009)

There is a lot to be proud of but when I go overseas I am also ashamed of some of the things that Koreans do. I think there are lots of bad things about Korea and I think we're still in the process of developing and improving those things. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

Their interest in getting involved with some of these issues therefore reflects, in part, a desire to protect South Korea's national reputation and national interests. They are motivated to get involved in such movements and activities in order to improve standards in these matters and thus improve Korea's standing in the world. In so doing, they believe it will show Korea to be a cosmopolitan-enlightened society. These movements have an appeal to young people over those which may seem more peripheral or harmful to this aim, for example movements involved with unification.

As an example of how South Korea treats some of its vulnerable groups, it is consistently ranked the lowest amongst OECD nations for indicators of the position of women in society such as the gender pay gap and female representation in management (*Chosun Ilbo*, 02/07/2009a). The continued prevalence of patriarchal attitudes encourages young people into activism on these issues<sup>80</sup>. At the same time, the international display of South Korea's relative failure, compared to international standards, provides at least an equally strong motivation for participation in social activism amongst young people. This frustration at the failure to meet international standards, and the implications for Korea's national image, was mentioned on a number of occasions by young people, particularly in regards to women's issues and the treatment of migrant workers<sup>81</sup>:

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<sup>80</sup> In the 2005 World Values Survey 37 per cent of the general population believed that when jobs were scarce men should have more right to a job than a women; nearly 50 per cent thought that men made better business executives than men; and 58 per cent said that men make better political leaders than women (World Values Survey, 2005).

<sup>81</sup> This quotation was given in response to the question 'how do you rate the international reputation of Korea?'



I think that Korea has built a good reputation in the world. Like I said before, Korea is exemplary in that the country has achieved economic growth and democratisation. But recently Korea is hurting its own image by treating migrant workers badly. They return to their country and spread a bad image of Korea. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 31/08/2009)

The reputation of South Korea and the desire to portray South Korea in a civilised way are driving the interests of students and young people. Young people who do participate in political actions are now choosing these cosmopolitan-enlightened movements above those related to North Korea and unification. One student went out of his way to separate the two<sup>82</sup>:

My prime concern is not unification. Issues like women's rights, workers' rights, and young people's rights are much more important to me. I am also interested in the rights of conscripts in the Korean army, and peace – in a different sense to unification – means a lot to me. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

If social movements are to attract young people, it seems that an association with South Korean national interests will provide great appeal. South Korean national pride and South Korean national identity have usurped unification as an attraction to young people. The *isipdae* are expressing their South Korean nationalism yet this does not involve the less enlightened, less attractive and less relevant issue of North Korea. Building on this in the next section, I show how the image and position of Korea within the international community is becoming increasingly important for the South Korean young people and South Korean national identity.

#### **4.4 Status**

Many young South Koreans have an aspiration if not an expectation that Korea will be regarded as a 'high status' nation within the international community. This expectation of status recognition is perhaps the most obviously 'nationalist' of the three manifestations of Korean nationalism amongst young people. In interviews with these *isipdae* it is clear that they attach

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<sup>82</sup> This quotation was given in response to the question 'are you involved in any unification-related organisations?'

great importance to Korea and Koreans being active, engaged and respected in international forums and the wider global community.

In this section I show how the importance of national status underlines the identity of young South Koreans. Recognition by others of Korea's leading international position – and the *failure* to recognise what young people perceive to be Korea's deserved status – can inspire South Korean nationalist anger amongst the *isipdae*. I look at two examples to explore this manifestation of nationalist sentiment. The first example is the national pride expressed by many young people in the *hallyu*, or Korean Wave. *Hallyu* describes the spread in popularity of Korean popular culture across North, Southeast and South Asia.

In the second example, I look at a situation where young people feel that South Korea is not being given adequate recognition and respect by other members of the international community. This is in the so-called 'historical accuracy' debate. I show how this has led to passionate expressions of nationalist anger amongst young people and contrast this with the relative absence of nationalist sentiment aroused by the division of the peninsula.

#### **4.4.1 The importance of national status**

Many South Korean young people, who are well-travelled and aware of Korea's relative modernity, revel in displays of Korean achievement in the international arena. There are passionate expressions of national pride amongst young people when Korea obtains success in international forums such as the arts and academia or when Koreans gain appointment to high international office. Internationally renowned Koreans who inspire particular pride amongst young people include Grammy Award winning soprano Sumi Cho; 'Lost' and 'Shiri' actress Kim Yun-jin; principal ballerina of the Stuttgart Ballet Kang Sue-jin; United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon; and (at a different level) 'Pororo the little penguin', an animated cartoon for children that was a worldwide hit<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> See [www.pororo.net/en](http://www.pororo.net/en). The separate story of disgraced Professor Hwang Woo-suk also demonstrates the wider national pressure placed upon those who represent the Korean nation in the international community. Hwang Woo-suk, a professor at Seoul National University, became world famous, and a national hero, for supposed achievements in stem-cell and cloning technology. After investigation, however, it was revealed that his

One particular area that stirs immense national pride amongst young South Koreans is the nation's sporting achievements. Across Korea, one finds ubiquitous images of Park Ji-sung, the Manchester United striker and national soccer team captain and Kim Yu-na, the Olympic and World Champion ice skater. Advertisers use their images to play on the desires of young Koreans to emulate the international success of these talented sports stars<sup>84</sup>:

I am proud when Korean sports people do well in the World Cup or the Olympics. They win gold medals and silver medals even though Korea is just a small country. I am so proud when I see them winning medals. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

Though Korea is a small country, we have some of the greatest sports players like Kim Yu-na, or Choi Min-ho, the judo player. Korea has an influential position in the international sports realm. (Interview in Korean, Gyeongsang National University, 31/05/2011)

South Koreans have achieved sporting success and economic ascendancy in key markets and sectors and have risen to head the United Nations. South Korea is Asia's 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy, behind only China, Japan, India and Australia (EIU, 2011). Korea has become a member of the G20 and the OECD and demonstrated itself to be a nation with a highly educated and capable populace, particularly its youth. With such tangible achievements, the strong sense of South Korean nationalist sentiment drives young South Koreans to demand recognition for the nation by the wider international community as well as the engagement of the international community on the basis of partnership and equality. This attitude was explicitly communicated in many of the interviews that I undertook with young people as in the following example<sup>85</sup>:

Yeah sure [I am proud to be Korean]. Like I hear the news that Korea has been ranked at the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> in the world for economic power but after attending

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work had been produced using fraudulent data and that he had engaged in unethical behaviour in the course of his research. See [www.nature.com/news/specials/hwang/index.html](http://www.nature.com/news/specials/hwang/index.html) for details of the story and [Http://joongangdaily.joins.com/article/view.asp?aid=2681686](http://joongangdaily.joins.com/article/view.asp?aid=2681686) for a nationalist perspective on the story (both viewed 12/07/2011).

<sup>84</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'what makes you most proud of Korea?'

<sup>85</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'what makes you most proud of Korea?'

some international conferences I personally felt that Korea was underrepresented as compared with its relative competitiveness as an economic power. So I think Korea should play more of an international actor or responsible regional actor [role] to improve its influence and at the same time improve its national branding because I think that Korea is kind of underrepresented or underestimated in some countries compared to its economic power. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

Young people not only demand more from other nations in their attitudes toward Korea, but also from their own authorities in placing Korea at the centre of the international community. Such sentiments were expressed in a forthright manner during interviews<sup>86</sup>:

As for Korea's challenge, Korea should build strength and become adept at diplomacy (though I think Koreans are already very intelligent people). We should develop the strength of the country in both economic and academic aspects. You know, politicians actually fight in the National Assembly! Also Korea is acting in total servility to other world powers and can be unfair toward weaker countries. Maybe that is the only way for Korea to survive. But I want Korea to exceed the level of Japan and to act with confidence. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 18/09/2009)

We should introduce the excellence of Korean culture to the whole world. Japan is famous for sushi, and China is famous for their culture. But there is no such thing for Korea. Sure some people have heard of *kimchi*. But still we should make sure other countries recognise Korean culture and make Korean cultural icons popular. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 18/09/2009)

The members of this generation are at ease with the international community and with globalisation. However globalisation does raise some concerns for young people, including the impact of neo-liberal labour policies on salaries and job security and the threat of losing local culture to dominant foreign influences. In particular, the requirement for English language skills is seen as both a bane and an opportunity that is presented by globalisation. One student commented 'I have heard that we should adapt to the global age, that we should learn English.

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<sup>86</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the questions 'what are Korea's major future challenges?' and 'what does globalisation mean to Korea?' respectively.

Many people are stressed out learning English. For me globalisation means speaking English' (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009).

For other young Koreans, the concept of globalisation is warmly welcomed, not least for the opportunities it brings to spread Korea's political, cultural and economic influence internationally. These same Koreans also welcome the occasions it provides to experience international culture. The attitude of these young people reflects what Shin Gi-wook (2006: 211) terms 'the appropriation of globalisation' for nationalist interests. When asked to give their opinion on globalisation, some of the responses included<sup>87</sup>:

I really like globalisation. I'm a big fan of rock music so I'm happy that I can listen to rock music from South Africa and USA and Australia. I think I am kind of a liberalist so I like [that] globalisation is actually making it possible for people all around the world to see what is in the world...so I like it. (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

In my opinion, globalisation means that Koreans can go to work abroad and introduce Korean culture to the world. I think it is an excellent opportunity. Korea is a small country densely populated, so as globalisation continues, Koreans will be able to visit more and more places. Physical distance doesn't matter nowadays; we can go anywhere just in one day. I'd like to take the opportunities provided by globalisation to live anywhere in the world. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

#### 4.4.2 *Hallyu*

*Hallyu* is an example of how the process of globalisation has spread Korean culture more widely across Asia. *Hallyu*, the Korean Wave, describes the massive popularity of Korean drama, music, movies, fashion and style across Asia including China, Japan, Vietnam and as far as Nepal (Maliangkay, 2006). The success of *hallyu* inspires deep pride amongst many young people and the Korean Wave is often mentioned by young South Koreans as an example of how Korean culture can be 'properly' recognised in the international community. It also reminds South

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<sup>87</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'what do you think of globalisation?'

Korean young people of the sophistication and cosmopolitan-enlightenment of their own national culture<sup>88</sup>:

I am most proud of the Korean wave phenomenon. The Korean Wave has swept China, Taiwan and Japan. In the past, Korea rarely influenced the culture of other countries. Korea has always been accepting and adopting music, film and architectural styles from Japan and China; now we're the one to influence those other countries. I am so proud of the Korean Wave. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

### 4.4.3 Historical Accuracy

*Historical accuracy*, on the other hand, demonstrates the passionate negative nationalist sentiment, nationalist anger, that can arise amongst the *isipdae* where international actors are deemed not to have properly acknowledged the rights and status of Korea within the international community. In the last chapter we noted that division of the peninsula no longer gave rise to nationalist sentiment, suggesting that the national unit is commonly now perceived to consist only of the South. However, the territorial integrity of the South, *uri nara*, remains an important issue for many young South Koreans. When it is threatened, strong nationalist sentiment is aroused. Paradoxically, disputes relating to territory in Northeast China on the border with North Korea (the Goguryeo dispute) raise nationalist anger while division continues to fade into the background. Such status-derived nationalism is clearly demonstrated in relation to issues such as the sovereignty of Dokdo / Takeshima; the naming of the Sea of Japan / East Sea; 'historical sovereignty' over the ancient kingdom of Goguryeo; and disputes with Japan about the content of their history textbooks. Some of these issues have been of interest to young people for many decades, but continue to be fervently pursued in the contemporary context by young South Koreans. Each of the topics I have selected is briefly outlined below.

#### **Dokdo**

The controversy over Dokdo relates to the Japanese claim of sovereignty over Dokdo, a group of islands in the East Sea, 87 kilometers east of the Korean island of Ulleungdo and are currently under the administration of South Korea. Dokdo has been a source of contention since the

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<sup>88</sup> This quotation was given in response to the question 'what makes you most proud of Korea?'

seventeenth century. The contemporary dispute, however, relates to ambiguity over the islands' sovereignty following the end of the Second World War and the failure to include Dokdo in the 1952 San Francisco Treaty that settled issues of sovereignty over Japan's former colonies following Japan's defeat. The issue of Dokdo stirs up intense passions in South Korea. As a result, there are many organisations that campaign on the issue of Dokdo, including the Dokdo Research Institute, the Dokdo Institute, the Voluntary Agency Network of Korea (VANK), the Dokdo Museum, and the Dokdo Children's Museum. Since 2005, activists have gone so far as to fund advertisements in foreign newspapers including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post protesting Japan's claim of sovereignty over the islands (*Chosun Ilbo*, 26/08/2008, Kim, Hee-sung, 2007).

Figure 3 Example of Dokdo campaign advertisements placed in international media



### **History textbooks in Japan**

The textbook controversy surrounds the presentation of Japanese history in Japanese school textbooks. In particular, Korea claims that these textbooks try to deny or justify Japan's wartime actions in Korea. This has led to both public and political anger toward Japan (Lee, Won-deog 2001; Schneider, 2008).

## **The East Sea / Sea of Japan**

The Sea of Japan lies between the east coast of the Korean peninsula and Japan. The East Sea / Sea of Japan dispute relates to the naming of the currently termed Sea of Japan. In Korea, there is a general consensus that the sea should be named the East Sea reflecting the importance of Korea in the region. In 2007, then President Roh Moo-hyun proposed re-naming the East Sea the ‘Sea of Peace’. This was rejected by Japan and proved unpopular in South Korea (*Chosun Ilbo*, 01/09/2007b). Advertising campaigns in major international newspapers have also been carried out by Korean activists with regard to the East Sea / Sea of Japan naming dispute.

## **Goguryeo**

Goguryeo relates to a dispute with China about so-called ‘historical sovereignty’ over a large swathe of Northeast China that once constituted part of the ancient kingdom of Goguryeo. Goguryeo is particularly attractive to those with a Korean nationalist agenda as it was one of the most powerful and successful of dynasties that existed on the Korean peninsula. During its height in the fifth and sixth centuries, its sphere of influence covered the largest territory of any previous or subsequent dynasty in this region. Many in Korea also claim that Goguryeo is the ‘origination country of Korea<sup>89</sup>’. Korea claims that China has a ‘scheme to alter the history of Goguryeo and turn it into a ‘Chinese regional kingdom’<sup>90</sup>. The ‘scheme’ refers to the Chinese Government’s ‘Northeast Asian Project’ which purports to carry out scientific and historical research in this area and shows increasing interest in the history of Goguryeo as part of its own national history<sup>91</sup>. Like the Dokdo issue, a number of organisations have been created to carry out research and to campaign on this issue. They include the Goguryeo History Association and the Society for Korean Ancient History. The Voluntary Agency Network of Korea (VANK) is also very active in promoting Korean ‘historical sovereignty’ over Goguryeo.

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<sup>89</sup> [www.mygogureyo.com](http://www.mygogureyo.com)

<sup>90</sup> [www.prkorea.com](http://www.prkorea.com), the website of the Voluntary Agency Network of Korea.

<sup>91</sup> For a full discussion of the China-Korea dispute over Goguryeo see Lankov (2006).



These topics outlined above raise intense anger and nationalist sentiment amongst young people and emotions were often visible when discussing some of these issues. The following reflect the typical views of the young people that I interviewed<sup>92</sup>:

I have something to say about Dokdo. Only a few days ago a Japanese geography academic drew a map and marked Dokdo as Korean territory. That should surely mean that the dispute is settled! I heard that the Japanese tried to hide the evidence, but some Koreans managed to offer a large amount of money to smuggle it into Korea. Despite that, Japan still asserts that Dokdo is part of Japanese territory. If you ask a thousand Koreans, you will get the same answer. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

China is working on the Northeast project to steal the history of Goguryeo....by claiming the history of Goguryeo China is trying to regard Koreans as Chinese. History is connected to the present. For example... if Goguryeo is considered as an ethnic minority in China, Korea can be looked upon as a tributary state to China, without its own distinct national identity. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

Dokdo is mine. Dokdo is ours. It is proven in history. It is mine. As you know the Japanese, they are trying to get Dokdo, but I don't think so. It is ours. It is definitely right...[and Goguryeo] yes it is part of Korea. Definitely. It is our history I think. I feel strongly. I feel more strongly about this than unification. (Interview in English, Hyundai Asan officer, 20/06/2010)

Dokdo in particular attracts passionate activism from young people. Trips to Dokdo are a favourite amongst young people and students even though it is a considerable distance from most of the major Korean cities. One of the more famous Dokdo-related actions involved a small group of students from Seoul National University who embarked on 'global races' around the world to carry the message regarding Korea's sovereignty over Dokdo. They took a year off from university and travelled to 30 cities in 50 countries. On their journey they passed out T-shirts printed with the South Korean flag and the phrase 'Dokdo is Korea's beautiful island' in 16 languages. They also presented seminars on the Dokdo issue at foreign universities and

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<sup>92</sup> The first quotation is in response to the question 'what social, political or economic issues concern you?'. The remaining quotations are in response to the question 'what are your views on the issue of Dokdo/Goguryeo?'

performed Korean folk music and martial arts. The students also visited mapmakers and publishers to ask for the name of the islands to be labelled Dokdo rather than the Japanese name 'Takeshima' or the English name 'Liancourt Rocks' (*Chosun Ilbo*, 14/08/2009b).

An interesting participant in these controversial issues is VANK, the Voluntary Agency Network of Korea. VANK is a civic organisation, funded by donations, that channels the efforts of school and university students to 'correcting errors about South Korea produced abroad'. It is strongly nationalist in its tone and encourages so-called 'cyberdiplomats' to write letters and emails on controversial issues. Historical issues currently listed on their website for action include the Dokdo-Takeshima sovereignty dispute, the Japanese textbook controversy, the East Sea-Sea of Japan naming dispute and the Goguryeo 'historical sovereignty' issue. In addition, it pursues the issue of Gando, a second, smaller land dispute with China. VANK also promotes a range of other interesting subjects including *Jikji*, a type of ancient printing that demonstrates Korea's achievements in the history of printing.

Where other institutions have failed to achieve the so-called 'correction of errors produced abroad', VANK claims to have been successful. It has attracted sufficient numbers of school and university students to act as cyberdiplomats, bombarding organisations with emails and letters until they meet the demands of VANK. They claim that their credits include the addition of the term *East Sea* to numerous maps and references including those used by the World Health Organisation, Business Week and the Office of the French President. On a visit to the VANK offices I interviewed two students who are active in the organisation. They said:

VANK activist one: I think it's about nationalism. But I think it's more than important to change this name to be East Sea because [the] Sea of Japan was changed during the Japanese Occupation period. I think that this kind of Japanese occupation period remains still in our present life so I think we should change [the name] because they destroyed this during the colonial period. We should fix it up and we can get rid of any kind of distorted information about Korea from textbooks and websites in the world.

And even the World Bank had a map which showed Korea as territory of China. And we sen[t] an email and changed that.

VANK activist two: I feel really proud of Korean history and I feel really proud of what VANK is doing as they are making changes to what people think about Korea. There are making lots of printed materials that are really helpful and I took many of them back to my school [in the US] and I showed them to my teachers, and I have the map hung in my dorm. You can see Korea's location in the world map. (Interview in English, VANK activists, 01/08/2009)

Quite significantly, when unification might be expected to be a core concern of young nationalist Koreans, a search reveals that there are only *two* minor references to unification with North Korea on the VANK website. VANK has had huge success using its more than 40,000 so-called cyberdiplomat members. From a VANK perspective, it is clear that nationalist sentiment is firmly rooted in the integrity of South Korea, in South Korea's position on the global stage and in the dissemination of South Korean culture. The national territory for them is the political unit of the Republic of Korea.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe and delineate South Korean nationalism as it is expressed amongst young people. In doing so we are also provided with a glimpse into the lives of these modern, young South Koreans. We see both the opportunities and challenges of this newly emerging South Korean identity that manifests itself in ideas of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status. In exploring this new South Korean identity, its relationship with the wider global community becomes clearer. This is an identity that has clearly been influenced by, and also hopes to influence, an international audience. We begin to see the importance of globalisation in both the formation and expression of the South Korean identity.

This chapter has also highlighted the potential difficulties faced by some communities in adopting this new national identity. The privileging of modernity, status and in particular cosmopolitan-enlightenment reflect the opportunities provided by a relatively wealthy, developed and successful nation. Young South Koreans have grown up in this environment and have made the most of the opportunities available for education, travel, technology and so on. For the more recent arrivals to South Korea who have missed out on these opportunities,

especially those arriving from the North, China or other developing nations, it will be much harder to acquire and demonstrate these emerging manifestations of South Korean nationalism and identity.

In the next chapter, therefore, I look at the practical implication of this new South Korean nationalism, with its manifestations in modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status, for the inclusion and exclusion of potential other members. I analyse the type of nationalism that is operating in South Korea and I discuss what the Korean experience tells us about nationalism and nations, particularly in situations where the discourse around nation and identity has historically been 'ethnic' in nature.



## Chapter Five

### **The emergence of a globalised-cultural nationalism**

*[Joseonjok] are a bit similar to North Koreans. We have the same ancestors but I don't feel that they are my people.*

South Korean University Student in 2010.

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In a recent Korean naturalisation ceremony, 26 people from countries as diverse as China, Japan, Taiwan, Russia and the Czech Republic became newly naturalised Korean citizens. The immigration department website proudly declared that ‘among them were a Russian scientist in physics and applied mathematics who is well-established in the field of 3D display, as well as two sisters from Taiwan who are both pharmacists and plan to open a drugstore<sup>93</sup>’. These were model examples of new citizens to welcome as members of the South Korean nation. There are more than 1.25 million ‘foreigners’ (including many Korean-Chinese and other ethnic-Korean immigrants) living in South Korea (*Chosun Ilbo*, 06/01/2011a). They have arrived in Korea as spouses, labourers, refugees and professionals. Many of them will eventually return to their home country. But amongst those whose life in Korea inevitably becomes more settled with time, some will go onto become permanent residents or even naturalised citizens of South Korea.

History tells us, however, that for many nations, legal residency or citizenship does not necessarily equal acceptance by the majority as legitimate members of the national unit. Those who become naturalised or who receive permanent resident status may still be deemed outsiders. They are neither accepted as members of the national unit nor imagined as part of a common community. Depending on the type of nationalism in operation, this may be because they are of the ‘wrong’ ethnicity, religion or culture or because they may not be trusted as loyal civic citizens. However in other nations, assimilation or acceptance of others has been more successful because concepts of the national unit have been able to accommodate new arrivals with relatively

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<sup>93</sup> <http://immigration.go.kr/HP/IMM80/index.do> (viewed 12/08/2011).

little discord. The task of this chapter is to determine what changing conceptions of South Korean nationalism mean in practice for potential new members of the South Korean nation, such as those 26 newly naturalised citizens.

This new South Korean nationalism is one that has been embraced most heartily by twenty-somethings. In the previous chapter I delineated the new South Korean national identity and highlighted how the *isipdae*'s expressions of South Korean nationalist sentiment are manifested through the characteristics of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status. In this chapter, I determine the 'category' of the new nationalism emerging amongst many young South Koreans<sup>94</sup>. The traditional categories of ethnic, civic, multicultural and religious nationalism cannot adequately characterise this emerging phenomenon. Instead, I define the new South Korean nationalism as a *globalised-cultural nationalism* in which membership is determined by adherence to particular cultural norms. Those cultural norms are the concepts of modernisation, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status described in Chapter Four. The term *globalised-cultural nationalism* reflects the importance of the global and international in both the nature and formation of this new category of nationalism. The *globalised* element in the nature and characteristics of this new nationalism is discussed here and in its formation in Chapter Seven.

I use this globalised-cultural nationalism categorisation to examine who in practice is, and who is not, able to qualify for membership of *uri nara*. I also demonstrate *congruence* between the scope for inclusion offered by globalised-cultural nationalism and actual attitudes of South Korean young people to would-be members of the South Korean nation. This analysis provides further evidence of the operation of a globalised-cultural nationalism in South Korea. I then examine who is excluded from concepts of the South Korean nation and the national unit. Finally, a comparison is drawn between South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism and middle-class or neo-liberal values.

This chapter is important because it directly confronts and challenges the traditional ethnic discourse surrounding Korean nationalism in both scholarly and mainstream debates. It also presents empirical evidence of a newly emerging category of nationalism. The Korean example shows that globalised-cultural nationalism as a basis for membership of a nation can exist

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<sup>94</sup> See the thesis Introduction for a discussion of 'categories' of nationalism.

independently of race and ethnicity and without strong reference to political and civic loyalties. This chapter therefore emphasises the growing importance of globalised-cultural nationalism as a category of nationalism alongside traditional forms such as civic and ethnic nationalism and newer varieties such as religious and multicultural nationalism. Developing this argument, I highlight the work of David A. Hollinger (1995), which examines the demise of ethnic and multicultural identity in the United States.

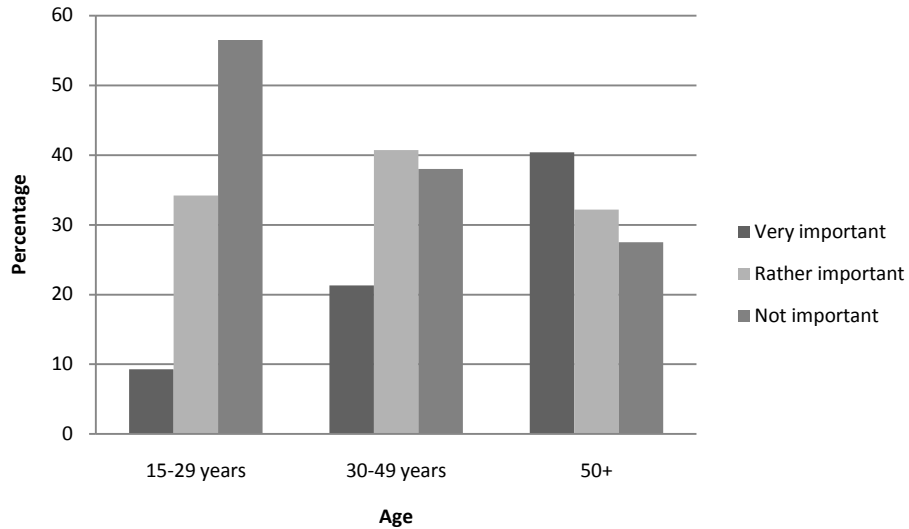
## **5.2 Globalised-cultural nationalism, inclusion and the new South Korean national unit**

An appreciation of the manifestation of South Korean nationalism in the globalised-cultural ideals of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status provides an explanation for why fellow ethnic-Koreans such as North Koreans or Korean-Chinese (*Joseonjok*) might be excluded from the concept of the South Korean national unit. Globalised-cultural nationalism is defined by the extension of membership to the nation on the basis of adherence to cultural norms by an individual. Those who are perceived not to share the cultural attributes of this common identity will fall outside of *uri nara*. However, by understanding the cultural boundaries that delineate the new South Korean nation and nationalism emerging amongst young people we can also determine a positive side – that is, who *can* be imagined as a member of the South Korean national unit. And whilst this globalised-cultural nationalism is operating to exclude many who once were integral to the Korean unified identity, it is also operating to include some who previously could never have been imagined as part of the Korean nation.

For a country whose nationalist rhetoric has for so long been ethnically-based, it may be a surprise to find that many young people in South Korea do not have a problem imagining *woeguk saram*, literally ‘people from outside the country’, as fellow members of the national unit. Interview and survey data both show that young South Koreans have little difficulty accepting foreigners as part of *uri nara*. When asked whether having ancestors from one’s own country should be a requirement for citizenship, 57 per cent of young people said that it was not at all important (World Values Survey, 2005). This result contrasted with older generations who placed considerably more emphasis upon having ethnic Korean ancestry.



Table 9 Requirement for South Korean citizenship of Korean ethnic ancestry by age group (World Values Survey, 2005)



In interviews, *almost all* young people had no difficulty conceiving of non-ethnic Korean foreigners as potential *Hanguk saram*, or South Koreans<sup>95</sup>:

They can completely become Korean. I live in the countryside where there are many people married to women from the Philippines, Vietnam... (Interview in Korean, Gyeongnam National University, 31/05/2010).

Nowadays I don't think there is any difficulty considering immigrants as Korean. (Interview in Korean, Chonnam National University, 08/06/2010)

These recent interviews were supported by other survey data on general attitudes to nationality and ethnic diversity. For example, in a 2006 *Joongang Ilbo*-East Asia Institute survey only 7 per cent of *isipdae* said that they would consider ethnic Korean individuals who had chosen to give up their South Korean citizenship as members of the South Korean nation. In the same survey, nearly 70 per cent of people in their 20s expressed a positive or neutral attitude toward marriage with a foreigner (Kang, Won-taek 2007). This is in contrast to the strong aversion to marriage with a North Korean that is shown by the twenty-somethings: over 50 per cent disliked the idea

<sup>95</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'do you think that foreigners can become Korean?'

and only 20 per cent approved (IPUS, 2010). Furthermore, in the 2005 World Values Survey, over 66 per cent of young people were positive about ethnic diversity in Korea (World Values Survey, 2005). In summary, the evidence strongly points to a nation of young people who are embracing the idea of a South Korea no longer based upon concepts of Korean ethnicity.

Through extensive interviews we are able to get an insight into the basis upon which these young people imagine that membership of the Korean nation may be extended. It is clear that for many young people, culture was considered as the main criteria for determining inclusion<sup>96</sup>:

Immigrants are coming to Korea to live permanently. Immigrants get to know Korean culture as they spend time here, enabling them to fully communicate with Koreans. Even though they are not born in Korea they can live as Koreans if they learn and adopt the culture. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

I am okay with [a foreigner becoming Korean]. Because they love Korea, they work hard to learn Korean language and culture. I guess it must not be easy to leave their country to become Korean but it does prove their love and passion for Korea and so I am grateful. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

The most important thing is that they like Korea for real. Then I can accept that person as Korean. Even some Koreans hate Korea and leave here for another country. I think foreigners who love Korea are more Korean than Koreans who hate Korea. (Interview in Korean, Chonnam National University, 31/05/2010)

These comments were representative of the majority of interviews with young people. In many cases, they referred to the adoption of cultural norms and a passion for the South Korean nation as the key to being considered a Korean. The determinants for membership of the Korean nation as held by many young South Koreans correspond closely with the concept of a globalised-cultural nationalism. In other words, it is the adoption of South Korean cultural norms of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status that allow acceptance into the national unit and this is independent of ethnicity. This is discussed further in the next section.

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<sup>96</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'do you think that foreigners can become Korean?'

### 5.2.1 Globalised-cultural nationalism and the Korean media

Korean popular media provides a useful insight into the portrayal of new Koreans and their acceptance into the national unit. The programme *Minyeodeului Suda* or *Chitchat with beautiful ladies*<sup>97</sup> broadcast on the Korean Broadcasting Service (KBS), involves a panel of young foreign women discussing their life in Korea with Korean celebrities. The show was on air from October 2006 until late 2010 and proved especially popular amongst young people. Dressed in fashionable outfits, the young women's discussions are polite and uncontroversial. Overall, they present an appealing vision of potential new Korean citizens. They speak good Korean. The women are nearly all university educated. They are encouraged to say positive things about their life and experiences in South Korea and their relationships with Korean friends and colleagues. Based upon current Western and Asian ideals, they can be considered to be physically attractive. Many of them adopt feminine *gwiyeopda* or 'cute' mannerisms so that they do not look threatening. In particular, they are encouraged to acknowledge the charm of Korean males as potential partners. This is a highly idealised portrayal of potential new Korean nationals. The show is extremely persuasive in convincing young people of the benefits and opportunities that would follow from accepting an inclusive Korean nation with new 'foreign' members like these young women. In an interview with one young female student she commented that 'When I watch a TV programme like *Minyeodeului Suda* I want them to become Korean because they like and know Korea so well' (Interview in Korean, Gyeongnam National University, 31/05/2010).

Another long-running and popular television show is 'Love in Asia'<sup>98</sup>, also on KBS, which examines mixed marriages in Korea. Each week the programme visits one mixed-race family which is then invited to the studio to discuss their life in Korea with the Korean hosts and other foreign spouses. The show is heart-warming and positive, celebrating the success of such marriages in Korean society. However, 'focusing on the positive' generally takes the form of demonstrating how much the foreign wives (and occasionally husbands) have adopted South Korean cultural norms. Devotion to parents-in-law is lauded, alongside Korean cooking skills, Korean language prowess and integration into the local Korean community. Foreign spouses

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<sup>97</sup>미녀들의 수다 [http://kbsworld.kbs.co.kr/programs/programs\\_intro.html?no=61](http://kbsworld.kbs.co.kr/programs/programs_intro.html?no=61) (viewed 15/08/2011).

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.mvibo.com/player.html?vid=84&eid=19971> (access 15/08/2011).

who are highly educated or successful in business are particularly celebrated. The requisite video-link to the distant family left behind brings tears to viewers' eyes and demonstrates to the audience how committed this young women is to the Korean culture and her life and family in South Korea. There are a number of similar programmes where foreigners, especially those who are permanent residents in Korea with good Korean language ability, participate side by side with Korean hosts and guests. Their sophistication and modernity and the ease with which they interact with Korean culture makes them easy to imagine as part of the wider Korean community.

However, this portrayal of new Koreans is in clear contrast to the media presentation of the struggles and hardships faced by North Korean immigrants. Much of the media coverage relating to them concentrates on, for example, their difficult life in the North, the challenging journey to escape and the struggles they face on arrival in the South. This hardship is portrayed in documentaries, news reports or films such as the 2008 production *Keurosing*, 'The Crossing'. *Keurosing* depicts the harrowing life of a North Korean family and the father's desperate attempts to save them by crossing to China to find food and medicine ([www.koreafilm.or.kr](http://www.koreafilm.or.kr)).

In popular South Korean media, North Koreans are often targets of sympathetic, and not so sympathetic, humour. Their innocence and simplicity is often played against a sophisticated and modern South Korea for comedic effect, such as in the film *Donghaemulgwa Baekdusani* or 'North Korean Guys' (2003). In this film, two North Korean sailors find themselves in South Korea and the film gets its comedy from their difficulty in dealing with the modern South Korean culture as they attempt to return home to the North<sup>99</sup>. Alternatively, the contrast between North and South is exploited to produce high emotion as in the Samsung Anycall mobile phone advertisement. This features the *hanbok*-clad North Korean traditional classical dancer Cho Myung-ae passing by the seductively dressed South Korean singer Lee Hyo-ri at a unification concert. The two women, depicted as nations apart in dress and demeanour, longingly glance toward each other like long lost sisters (Epstein, 2009). The theme is unification but the overwhelming image in this advertisement is difference: the sophistication and modernity of

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<sup>99</sup> In addition, Epstein writes of some other implicit divisions between the North and South suggested by the film: 'first, the locus of the Korean nation naturally resides within South Korea and unification thus signifies reabsorbing territory that belongs with it. Moreover, in projecting a happy ending for its Northern protagonists, the film sends them to a third destination: because the North is no longer suitable for them after their taste of Southern pleasures, and the South can not yet accommodate them' (Epstein, 2009).

South Korea in comparison with the North. Whatever the intention of these portrayals, whether evoking sympathy or emotion, entertainment or comedy, the result is clear – it is a display of difference and heterogeneity between the two nations, often to the detriment of traditional, unsophisticated North Korea.

### **5.2.2 Mixed-race Koreans and globalised-cultural nationalism**

In addition to foreigners, other minorities who were previously rejected by the ethnic Korean nation are finding a place within the new cultural South Korean nation. In the past, for example, children of mixed-raced couples, particularly those of African-American (usually US military) fathers and Korean mothers, but also Eurasian couples, suffered terrible discrimination in South Korean society (Lee, Mary 2008). In 2003, whilst working in Seoul, I observed a Eurasian man who would protest outside a popular tourist spot from time to time to bring attention to the discrimination he suffered in Korea.

Recently, however, an increasing number of mixed-race Koreans have achieved huge popularity and wide acceptance in South Korea, especially amongst young South Koreans. Two famous Afro-American Koreans – R&B singer In Sooni<sup>100</sup>, who grew up in Korea, and 2006 Super Bowl ‘most valuable’ American football player Hines Ward<sup>101</sup>, who grew up in the US – are testament to this trend. An important element of their acceptance lies in their perfect representations of the new modern, cosmopolitan-enlightened and status-oriented South Korean identity. In Sooni is an outstanding singer and bright personality; and Hines Ward is a star National Football League player who has made the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek* and *GQ* magazines. They are model cultural icons for many young Koreans. These are, of course, exceptional examples. But these extraordinary individuals set a precedent that allows other mixed-race Koreans to be accepted into the type of South Korean nation that so many *isipdae* are keen to embrace. Accepted, that is, provided these mixed-race Koreans can demonstrate adherence to the globalised-cultural norms within their own local social circles and communities within South Korea.

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<sup>100</sup> [www.insooni.com](http://www.insooni.com) (viewed 20/05/2011).

<sup>101</sup> [www.hinesward.com](http://www.hinesward.com) (viewed 20/05/2011).

Over the last decade, there has been a surge in international marriages in Korea. This is partly as a result of son preference during earlier decades. In the years of birth of the current generation of men and women of marriageable age<sup>102</sup> – 29-33 for men and 26-30 for women – the ratio of men to women will be 111 men per 100 women in 2011; 119 men per 100 women in 2012; and 123 men to 100 women in 2013 and 2014 (*Chosun Ilbo*, 14/06/2011c). The shortage of women and the subsequent difficulty in finding a partner experienced by certain groups of males (for example, those who are divorced, who live in rural Korea and/or are from lower socio-economic backgrounds) means that Korean men are marrying women from other Asian nations including China, Vietnam, the Philippines and North Korea in increasing numbers (Lee, Yean-ju et. al. 2006).

There is a growing body of scholarly work that is examining the challenges faced by these ‘new’ mixed-race children, those offspring of Korean and other Asian parentage. Much of this work highlights the potential problems such children face growing up in Korean society. Based on this scholarship, it is clear that Korean society has not yet fully escaped from the homogenous ethnic ideals that have prevailed for so long. Also apparent in these analyses, however, is that the discrimination faced by these children is not necessarily racial in nature, a point frequently missed by scholars who hold onto ethnic analyses of Korean society. Mary Lee (2008) writes about the anger that arises amongst other parents when they see that a mixed-race child is receiving additional educational support, for example with language. She attributes this to racism or ethnically-based discrimination (Lee, Mary 2008). However, similar situations have been noted in attitudes toward North Korean arrivals who receive additional support (Kim, Yoon Young 2009: 238-245). This suggests that the anger is not necessarily racially-based but instead related to a general sense of unfairness and disadvantage, particular given the highly competitive nature of the South Korean education and social system.

Discrimination against Eurasian children is also changing. Previously, such children were most likely to be offspring of a Korean mother and US military personnel. More recently, educated Korean women (and occasionally men) are marrying expatriates in Korea or foreigners who they have met whilst travelling or studying overseas. For some, being children of these mixed-race

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<sup>102</sup> Marriageable age refers to the average age for marriage in South Korea.

families with educated and relatively affluent parents is seen as a great advantage. Race is becoming relatively less important, whilst having the right attributes to qualify as a member of the modern South Korean nation is important. These children have access to a foreign passport, bilingual skills and exciting opportunities for foreign education. In short, in this context, being mixed-race provides the *opportunity* to easily acquire and develop the attributes needed to compete and be accepted in this new South Korean society.

The point here is not to argue that all discrimination has disappeared. There are still examples of racism amongst children, perhaps reflecting the attitudes of parents and older generations. But the challenges that face this complex society are much deeper than simple ideas of ethnic nationalism and belonging. They reflect culture, society and even class – a whole new set of rules for inclusion and cohesion that is overlooked by those whose assumptions are still based on the premise of ethnic nationalism. Hollinger (1995) argues something similar with regards to multiculturalism in the United States. He acknowledges the continued existence of racism in American society. However, he argues that by looking at schisms in society based on simple racial categories alone, we will fail to obtain the complexity of understanding required for attaining a more equal and fair society.

There seems likely to be a continued trend toward inclusive attitudes amongst young people. In the last few years, South Korean schools have ceased teaching ethnic homogeneity and the purity of the Korean bloodline as the basis for the Korean nation (Lim, Timothy 2009). This change has partly come about from international pressure. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) expressed concern on a number of occasions that the ‘persistent ethnic-centric thinking in South Korea...might be an obstacle to the realisation of equal treatment and respect for foreigners and people belonging to different races and cultures’ (*Chosun Ilbo*, 20/08/2007a).

The young people who took part in both the surveys and interviews that this study draws upon have been raised in an environment thoroughly steeped in the concept of the ethnic nation. Yet, quite dramatically, they have embraced non-ethnic cultural concepts for belonging. One might therefore expect that the next generation, with less exposure to ideas of ethnic homogeneity, will be able to imagine a South Korean nation that is even more inclusive. As one student commented:

I was amazed when I talk to elementary students today, it doesn't matter what they look like, black or white, if they can communicate with them they see them as a fellow citizen<sup>103</sup>. It doesn't matter who the person's mother is. It just matters that it's the person's friend. They are more open. So you see some older generations wondering why someone is dating someone who is foreign but that idea is fading away and maturing as the younger generation grows and they will have kids. And by the time teenagers become [adults]...the idea of 'foreigner' will dissipate a lot more. (Interview in English, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

### 5.3 Exclusion and the new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism

The shift amongst young people to a conception of the national unit based upon globalised-cultural nationalism has provided new opportunities for inclusion into the South Korean nation. However, globalised-cultural nationalism can also be exclusionary in nature and it is ironic that within *uri nara*, a concept that was once built upon ethnic identity, those who are suffering the most from cultural exclusion are ethnic brethren such as North Koreans, *Joseonjok* (Korean-Chinese) and *Koryoin* (Koreans from the former USSR). These once core members of the ethnic Korean nation now find themselves on the periphery of Korean identity.

There is immense diversity amongst so-called ethnic Korean *dongpo* or 'compatriots'. A history of invasion, war and division caused huge outward movements of Koreans over the past few centuries. As a result, the Korean diaspora is large, complicated and multi-faceted. The largest contingent of the Korean diaspora is the *Joseonjok*. *Joseonjok* (or *Chaoxianzu* in Chinese) are one of the 55 officially recognised *xiaoshuminzu* or ethnic minorities of China. Many Koreans moved to China through the nineteenth century, fleeing floods or famine, but the majority went to Manchuria, now Northeastern China, during the Japanese colonial era. They often did so under duress, including as forced labourers (Eckert et al. 1990: 273, 310-312). The contemporary younger generations of *Joseonjok*, especially those who live in larger Northeast Chinese cities like Shenyang and Changchun, often reject a Korean identity in favour of their Chinese identity.

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<sup>103</sup> Previously unheard of, there are a number of instances where refugees from Africa have settled in Korea. The children of these new citizens are included in the general Korean school system where all interaction is in Korean. It is an extraordinary sight, in a country with such a tradition of homogeneity, to see children of African heritage be linguistically and culturally conversant with fellow ethnic-Korean classmates. This is not, however, to underestimate the challenges still faced by these new young citizens of Korea.



Other *Joseonjok* who live in areas with larger concentrations of ethnic Koreans, such as in the city of Yanji near the North Korean border, use Korean language widely and associate more closely with a Korean identity.

There are also the *Koryoin*, who are dispersed across the territory of the former USSR. Similarly to the *Joseonjok*, they began to move North in the nineteenth century as a result of famine and natural disaster. However, the majority of Koreans in this region moved to the now Russian Far East during Japanese colonialism (Eckert et al. 1990: 273). This included a large settlement of Korean forced labourers on the island of Sakhalin. During the Stalinist era, Koreans, like many other people in the Soviet Union, suffered from mass deportations and political purges. As a result, populations of Koreans are dispersed across the former USSR including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia. Unsurprisingly, therefore, within the *Koryoin* there are disparate groups. Some *Koryoin* have kept in touch with their Korean traditions, but many have fully assimilated into local life and society losing their Korean language skills and contact with Korea (Kim and Kang, 2009).

Table 10 Distribution of the global Korean diaspora in 2011

Nation	Number of Korean diaspora
China	2,500,000
United States	2,051,000
Japan	905,000
Canada	223,000
Russia	222,000
Uzbekistan	176,000
Australia	126,000
Philippines	115,000
Kazakhstan	104,000
Vietnam	85,000

Source: [www.mofat.go.kr](http://www.mofat.go.kr)<sup>104</sup>

There are also considerable populations of Koreans living in the United States, Canada and other Western nations. This migration began in earnest in the 1960s, although there was earlier immigration to such places as Hawai'i. Ability in Korean and an affinity with a so-called 'Korean' identity varies across region and community, as well as amongst families and individuals.

Another important diaspora community is the *Zainichi* Koreans or *Jaeil gyopo*, Korean-Japanese, most of whom moved under duress to Japan during the colonial period, with others following as refugees around the time of division and the Korean War (Morris-Suzuki, 2007; Cumings, 1997: 176). Originally, the majority of Korean-Japanese allied themselves with North Korea, represented by *Chongryon*, the Korean residents association in Japan affiliated with the North Korean government. Now, *Mindan*, the Korean residents association in Japan affiliated with the South Korean government claim that half a million out of the 700,000 'Korean compatriots' in Japan, are associated with the South ([www.mindan.org/eng](http://www.mindan.org/eng)).

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.mofat.go.kr/consul/overseascitizen/compatriotcondition/index6.jsp?TabMenu=TabMenu6> (viewed 14/08/2011).

Those ethnic Koreans who come to South Korea but are not perceived to be part of *uri nara* often receive short shrift from some South Koreans. We have seen in Chapter Three that there are both perceptions of difference with North Koreans as well as negativity and mistrust toward them. Negative attitudes also abound regarding other ethnic-Korean residents. Reports of discrimination against *Joseonjok* in South Korea are common. In daily conversations, I have heard terms such as criminal, dirty or lazy to describe Korean-Chinese and have spoken to a number of *Joseonjok* about their experiences of prejudice in South Korea. My interviews with some young South Koreans demonstrate that many ethnic Korean minorities, and in particular the *Joseonjok*, fall firmly outside conceptions of the South Korean national unit<sup>105</sup>:

[*Joseonjok*] are a bit similar to North Koreans. We have the same ancestors but I don't feel that they are my people. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

I used to pity *Joseonjok* and I was positive toward them. But now I've changed my attitude. When I worked at an organisation for North Korean refugees I heard that many *Joseonjok* cheat North Korean refugees. (Interview in Korean, Chung-Ang University, 06/04/2010)

Yes I think that Gyopo [Korean-Americans], Southeast Asian, Westerners can become South Korean if they want to. Except *Joseonjok*. In my opinion I don't like the *Joseonjok*. They have some social problems. Except the *Joseonjok* any kind of people who want to be Korean are okay. (Interview in English, Dongguk University, 23/04/2011)

Other ethnic Korean minorities, for example Korean-Americans, can also be considered as outsiders:

I don't think Korean-Americans are Korean....These people don't seem to adapt to Korean society successfully when they come to Korea. At one time they will say they are American and then later they say they are Korean, for example when they need an excuse to depend upon their parents. This irony sometimes makes me angry. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

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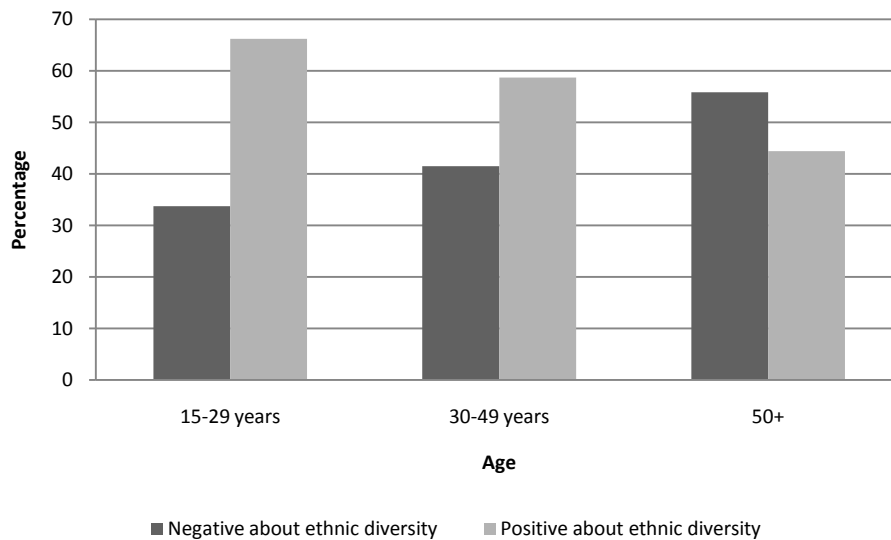
<sup>105</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'do you think that *Joseonjok*, Korean-Chinese, can become Korean?'

It seems that for many young people in South Korea, Korean ethnicity is an insufficient basis for a sense of commonality and nationhood. They often feel estranged from the new ethnic-Korean immigrants in the South Korean nation.

### 5.3.1 The ‘hierarchical nation’

It is clear that whilst the concept of the cultural nation is strong within the young generation, many in the older generation appear to hold tightly to the ethnic concept of the national unit, at least in their rhetoric. Many older people state that ethnicity remains the main criteria for membership of the Korean nation. Over 50 per cent of those aged over 50 years expressed negative attitudes towards ethnic diversity in Korea (World Values Survey, 2005).

Table 11 Attitudes toward ethnic diversity by age group (World Values Survey, 2005)



Ideas of inter-marriage remain challenging for many older Koreans. In the 2006 *Joongang Ilbo* – East Asia Institute survey, once again over 50 per cent of those over 50 years of age disapproved of marriage with a foreigner. This compared to only 30 per cent of those in their twenties (Kang, Won-taek 2007). One student commented ‘[marrying a foreigner] is okay with me. But my sister

married a foreigner and my parents are not happy about it' (Interview in Korean, YBM Sisa, 29/04/2011).

Despite the rhetoric of older people that claims to welcome ethnic Korean immigrants, many examples of discrimination against North Koreans and ethnic Korean immigrants from China have been documented. These often take place at the hands of older Koreans, for example employers of ethnic-Korean migrants. A recent study found that whilst *Joseonjok*, Korean-Chinese, are preferred over non-ethnic Koreans as workers, *Joseonjok* are at least as likely to report discrimination as foreign workers (Seol and Skrentny, 2009: 161-162). Many *Joseonjok* felt that they had suffered 'disregard or insult' by Koreans for no clear reason when patronising a restaurant or shop (Seol and Skrentny, 2009: 162). This suggests that even older generations of South Koreans have some difficulty imagining these new arrivals as fellow nationals and equals.

There may be signs that the reality of cultural difference between ethnic-Korean groups is having an impact across the wider South Korean nation. Seol and Skrentny have coined the term the 'hierarchical nation' to describe the hierarchy amongst ethnic Koreans within South Korea. This hierarchy is enforced through both legal and social dimensions, the legal dimension reflected, for example, in the differing immigration rules that apply to the right of return of ethnic-Koreans. These rules are dependent upon the applicant's origin<sup>106</sup>. South Koreans are of course placed at the top of the hierarchy. Korean-Americans and other Western-raised Koreans follow. Next are the *Joseonjok*. North Koreans are placed firmly last (Seol and Skrentny, 2009). In previous generations these ethnic Koreans were seen by many young people in the unification movement as the representatives of the authentic Korean nation. Now they find themselves at the bottom of Seol and Skrentny's hierarchical nation.

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<sup>106</sup> Korean Americans, for example, have the automatic right to an F-4 visa because they are an overseas Korean and citizen of an OECD-member country. For Korean-Chinese and others, they must have certain financial, professional or educational qualifications to successfully apply for an F-4 visa. If they do not qualify for the F-4 visa, then they must apply for another entry permit dependent upon their reason for going to South Korea. Ethnic Koreans who apply for an entry permit other than the F4-visa will receive additional rights as compared to a non-ethnic Korean applicant on a similar visa. The F-4 visa, according to the Korean Immigration Department website, offers the 'most comprehensive benefits that a foreigner can have' including indefinite stay. Other visas have restrictions on employment, the period of stay, accompanying relatives and re-entry.

Seol and Skrentny leave out newer arrivals such as the Korean-Japanese and the *Koryoin*, perhaps because of their relatively small numbers. However, if one were to expand Seol and Skrentny's list, it might be surmised that Korean-Japanese, followed by *Koryoin*, would sit somewhere below Western-raised Koreans. Based upon my interactions with *Zainichi* Koreans and Korean-Russian friends living in Seoul, life has many challenges for them. However, they have not experienced the systemic and systematic discrimination reported by North Koreans and *Joseonjok*. This is perhaps due to the relative wealth and education levels of the *Zainichi* and *Koryoin* who live in South Korea. Further research into all ethnic-Korean returnees is needed, especially the *Zainichi* and those from the former USSR<sup>107</sup>.

I argue that this ethnic hierarchy, a sort of league table for acceptance, correlates strongly with perceptions about particular ethnic-Korean groupings and their similarity to South Korean cultural norms. Modern, educated and relatively affluent Korean-Americans are therefore to be found near the top. Thus many Korean-Americans thrive in South Korea despite some speaking only limited Korean. The tall and handsome mixed-race Korean-American actor Daniel Henny speaks no Korean. And yet he has achieved substantial fame in Korea appearing in films, dramas, adverts and TV shows. On the other hand, arrivals from the failed North Korean state (who all speak fluent Korean) commonly find themselves struggling for acceptance.

This does not mean that all non-ethnic-Korean foreigners are included in conceptions of *uri nara*. One student felt that immigrants could become Korean only if 'they try their best to become Korean'. The same student felt that having worked in a factory with a number of workers from China and the Philippines, his work colleagues did not qualify 'since they were just visitors, they felt no responsibility for their work. I can see lots of news on the Internet about immigrants committing crimes. They are doing us harm' (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009). And a number of students noted that there is a tendency (in others) to accept those from developed nations, or those of Caucasian origin more readily than those, say, from Africa or developing nations (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010). Achieving the cultural requirements for inclusion in the globalised modern South Korean nation is

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<sup>107</sup> Some excellent scholarship has been carried out by Kweon Sug-in and Han Young-hae of Seoul National University on *Zainichi* returnees in Korea. A comprehensive list of resources on *Koryoin* in English, Russian and Korean has been compiled by Dr Leonid Petrov. See [http://north-korea.narod.ru/soviet\\_k.htm](http://north-korea.narod.ru/soviet_k.htm).

undoubtedly more difficult for those coming from a developing nation than those from relatively wealthy countries.

Nor does it mean that all ethnic-Korean immigrants are excluded. One student noted that ethnic-Korean-Chinese or overseas Koreans could ‘become’ Korean if they wanted to (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010) and there have been some examples where North Korean individuals have been warmly accepted into South Korean society, fitting well into the South Korean globalised-cultural nation. Examples of successful North Koreans in the South are the author and *Chosun Ilbo* journalist, Kang Chol-hwan<sup>108</sup> and actress and musician Kim Hye-young. Many of the so-called ‘successes’, however, are amongst the unseen North Koreans – those who cannot be found at human rights events or interviewed at welfare centres. They do not participate in the wider North Korean community, and are instead finding their own way through the challenges of life in South Korea. This is particularly the case for North Korean women who marry South Korean men, blending into their new community, bringing up their children and living as South Koreans (Interview with Professor Andrei Lankov, 19/05/2009).

#### **5.4 Class and cultural nationalism**

The South Korean youth identity of the 1970s and 1980s involved students associating with the oppressed people, the *minjung*, which included labourers, farmers and dissidents. The national identity of the contemporary national *isipdae*, however, is now allied with the modern, so-called cosmopolitan-enlightened and status-giving aspects of society. The features of the new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism might seem very familiar to scholars outside of the field of nationalism in its close resemblance to neo-liberal, middle-class values. This resemblance deserves some discussion.

Some of the best recent scholarly work on South Korea has examined the evolution of class in contemporary South Korean society. Leading this field is sociologist Hagen Koo, who has charted the evolution of the Korean middle-classes (Koo, Hagen 1993; 2007a; 2007b). His most recent work examines the role of globalisation in transforming the South Korean middle-class

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<sup>108</sup> Kang Chol-hwan is a staff journalist for *Chosun Ilbo* and author of the *Aquariums of Pyongyang*, a book on his life as a child in the North Korean Yodok prison camp <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/asia/0,9263,501061113,00.html> (viewed 14/08/2011).

(Koo, Hagen 2007a). His description of the South Korean middle-class highlights the many similarities between middle-class aspirations and the new South Korean national identity. Koo describes the importance of status for many South Koreans displayed in the form of *myeongpum* or luxury brands. He also writes about the importance of education for conferring status in South Korean society (Koo, Hagen 2007a).

The globalisation of Korea and the expansion of neo-liberal policies have widened inequality and made the attainment of middle-class status increasingly difficult. It has also created a widening gap between those who are comfortably middle class and those trying to maintain this class status (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 4, 15-16). With the growing deregulation of the labour market and the increase in non-regular working conditions, the traditional starting point of a 'middle-class' job that assigns status to a person and family is difficult for most to find. In addition, achieving the necessary level of international education or requisite standards of sophistication creates huge barriers to social advancement. Middle-class status is reproduced through the consumption of certain goods and services, educational attainment, social networks and so on, things often accessible only to those who have already achieved the necessary material and social advancement. Koo remarks that structures of inequality have become 'both complicated and hardened through the intricate interconnections of domestic and global factors in favour of reproduction of class privilege' (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 16). Thus class reproduction becomes self-perpetuating, almost requiring a middle-class pedigree to begin with in order to maintain the standards required in this increasingly competitive and globalised South Korean society.

We see a similar concept for South Korean identity. For some – educated foreigners, for example, or Korean-Americans – obtaining the neo-liberal, middle-class elements of this globalised-cultural national identity will be relatively straightforward. For others, not least the average *Joseonjok* labour migrant or North Korean refugee, it will be much more challenging. And so there is an effort to *teach* these cultural traits of South Korean nationalism to North Korean arrivals. The clear association of middle-class ideals and South Korean identity is laid bare in the education provided to new North Korean arrivals to the South. On arriving in Seoul, North Koreans are sent to *Hanawon*, the resettlement facility for North Korean refugees. At *Hanawon*, following security assessments, North Korean expatriates are given training and support in developing the necessary life skills to survive and adapt to the modern, capitalist South Korean



society. The Korean sociologist Chung Byung-ho (2008) describes how North Koreans receive education on how to become ‘a cultural citizen’ whilst at the *Hanawon* facility. This involves being taught a set of cultural norms and values as defined by the *Hanawon* authorities and communicated by South Korean citizen volunteers.

Chung shows that the new North Korean arrivals are being taught what are essentially ‘middle-class norms and values’ and, moreover, values derived from a ‘particularised view of middle-class society’ (Chung, Byung-ho 2008: 16). Accepting these culturally nationalist, middle-class norms is presented as the method through which North Koreans can become ‘properly’ Korean, good South Korean citizens, and thus accepted into the national unit. Chung argues that the so-called cultural citizen education results in ‘contemporary South Korean cultural practices being presented as modern, advanced and civilised norms while North Koreans are objectified as the traditional, backward and uncivilised’ (Chung, Byung-ho 2008: 16-17). This process underlines the perception of cultural differences in both the minds of South Koreans and the North Korean refugees themselves and defines Korean identity using the model of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism. In essence it is an assertion of Seol and Skrentny’s (2009) South Korean hierarchy: in order to be accepted within the South Korean nation, the onus is upon the North Korean to aspire and develop the characteristics necessary to climb the league table of cultural acceptance.

The impact of this cultural citizen education and the desire to be accepted into the South Korean national unit is often seen in the immediate choices made by many North Koreans, particularly younger ones, when they leave *Hanawon* and join mainstream South Korean society. North Koreans attempt to present themselves as South Korean by adopting new clothing; changing their accent; and purchasing modern accessories such as the most recent mobile phones (Chung, Byung-ho 2008; Kim, Yoon Young 2009: 216-217). At a time when they are likely to be short of financial resources, these new arrivals to the South invest ‘a significant portion of their initial resettlement money on purchasing the commercialised symbols of cultural capital they feel are necessary to survive in a discriminatory class society’ (Chung, Byung-ho 2008: 18-19; Kim, Yoon Young 2009: 216). Some manage it well, but for the majority their obvious attempts to change their accent or to assume the trappings of South Korean modernity and success brings

ambivalence, pity or even ridicule from some existing members of the South Korean nation that they are trying to join<sup>109</sup> (Kim, Yoon Young 2009: 176-185).

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the new South Korean national unit of young people is based upon a globalised-cultural nationalism. With a better understanding of the category of nationalism that is in operation, we have been able to gain a sense as to who is included and who is excluded from the conception of *uri nara*, the South Korean nation. Attitudes toward the many ethnic-Korean immigrants in South Korea show that the ideal of an ethnic Korean nation is not a reality. Instead, South Korea is developing into a nation where new non-ethnic Korean immigrants can be imagined as fellow South Koreans and many ethnic-Korean arrivals are excluded. However, globalised-cultural nationalism, and its manifestations of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status, ensures that developing the right characteristics and qualifications for acceptance is not necessarily straightforward. The cross-over between middle-class values and ideas of the globalised-cultural identity means that this new South Korean nationalism, notionally open for membership, is in fact exclusive in nature and selective of who it accepts as new members.

In addition, the emergence of the new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism challenges so-called homogenous ethnic nations. It shows the potential for dynamism and evolution of nationalism within those nations where an ethnic idea of nationalism has been taken for granted. Similar to the inability of ethnic nationalism to usefully describe contemporary South Korean identity, Hollinger's 1995 book, *Postethnic America: beyond multiculturalism* challenges anew the growing inability of ethnic labels in modern multicultural America to consider issues of identity and nation. He argues that American society has become far too complex to categorise people, for the purposes of multicultural policies, using simple terms such as white, Hispanic, African-American and so on. Interracial marriage, the immense diversity within ethnic groups

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<sup>109</sup> A recent article in the *Chosun Ilbo* was entitled 'Defector's material obsessions raising concerns in Seoul'. The article reported on a conference that had argued North Korean defectors in Seoul 'tend to obsessively pursue money and remain alienated from their communities'. It continued that as North Koreans 'attempt to fit into a new democratic society, and raise funds to try and be reunited with those family members they left behind, many have become overrun with unhealthy ideas of materialism or "distorted mammonism"' (*Chosun Ilbo*, 15/06/2011d).

and the varied experiences of discrimination across ethnic groups in the United States, requires a much more complex notion of identity. Alongside this complexity are post-modern affinities such as gender and sexuality as well as the massive social and economic gulfs that exist between communities. Hollinger calls this the ‘diversification of diversity’. The South Korean nation, also, has moved quickly from homogenous to diverse and finally onto the beginnings of Hollinger’s concept of the ‘diversification of diversity’ in society. The result has been the development of a globalised-cultural nationalism, as young South Koreans try to determine their personal and national identities and try to contemplate a sense of belonging and cohesion in their dynamic nation of South Korea.

In the remaining chapters I examine how and why this globalised-cultural nationalism has come into existence. Firstly, in Chapter Six, I examine the forces that have operated to create the sense of South Korean nation amongst young people. In Chapter Seven, I analyse the role of globalisation in the shaping of the manifestations of South Korean nationalism: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I examine the reasons behind the adoption and acceptance of this new South Korean nationalism by many of the South Korean *isipdae*.

## Chapter Six

### **The role of globalisation, democracy and banal nationalism in the emergence of the new South Korean nation**

*Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances...Nationalism holds that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent.*

Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I employ a constructivist analysis to explore the forces that have given rise to the emergent *uri nara* in the image of South Korea. I also examine how, as this South Korean identity has emerged, ethnicity has been marginalised as the basis for the South Korean national unit. Three phenomenon are identified as central to these dual outcomes: globalisation, democracy and Michael Billig's theory of 'banal nationalism'.

Beginning with globalisation, I focus particularly upon one aspect that has especially impacted Korea's youth: the global networks that have facilitated travel, overseas education, migration and international exchange. One example of this is the Korea-United States relationship, but I also explore the new networks that are developing with China and Australasia.

Next, guided by the work of Bernard Yack, I argue that since the emergence of direct elections in 1987, democracy and its founding principle popular sovereignty have been central to the construction of a South Korean nationalism and national identity in the Republic of Korea. This has had a particular impact upon the twenty-something generation because their lifetime has spanned only post-democratic Korea.

Finally, I use Michael Billig's powerful theory of 'banal nationalism' to bring further understanding to the formation of a South Korean national identity and the construction of *uri*

*nara* (Billig, 1995). Banal nationalism refers to the banality of everyday events such as language, the flying of a flag or the presentation of news stories in the national media. Billig shows how everyday behaviour and practices reinforce identity and nationalism on a daily basis in all nations, including established and developed nations such as the United Kingdom or the United States. The existence of nationalism in these types of nations is often overlooked especially when compared with so-called ‘hot’ nationalisms that result in conflict (Billig, 1995: 44-46). Extending Billig’s thesis, I argue that banal nationalism not only maintains and reinforces nationalism but can also contribute to the construction of a new nationalism and national identity.

## **6.2 Globalisation**

### **6.2.1 Attitudes to globalisation**

Globalisation is not new to the world nor to Korea (Hall, 1991: 20). The impact of global forces, be they cultural ideas from China or military advances from Japan, have constantly shaped and challenged the Korean peninsula. As discussed in the introduction, varied foreign protagonists, from Western missionaries to Japanese colonialists, acted upon Korea to construct and transform the modern Korean nation. Since then, we have seen a variety of types of nationalisms bear upon the nation at various times. It should be no surprise, therefore, that this recent period of intense globalisation is powerfully influencing national identity, particularly amongst Korea’s youth who are at the heart of the globalisation experience.

Like many other nations, Koreans have a complex relationship with globalisation. The protests against liberalisation of the agricultural sector by Korean farmers and their supporters have been some of the most vociferous anti-government campaigns of recent years. There is, however, a recognition by many South Koreans of the opportunities that globalisation has proffered to South Korea. If positive attitudes toward trade and free markets suggest enthusiasm for globalisation, then South Koreans might be considered keen supporters. In 2010, nearly 90 per cent of respondents to a survey were in favour of international trade<sup>110</sup> and in 2007 over 70 per cent

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<sup>110</sup> <http://pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=16&country=116> (viewed 08/08/2011).

were in favour of free markets<sup>111</sup>. Beyond the economic realm also, support for globalisation appears to be widespread. In the 2005 World Values Survey, 85 per cent of South Korean young people aged 15 to 29 said that they viewed themselves as ‘a world citizen’ (World Values Survey, 2005)<sup>112</sup>.

Interviews of young people show that support for globalisation is complex. There are concerns about threats to national culture or the impact of economic globalisation upon wealth distribution. However, an overwhelming characteristic of the response of South Korean youth to globalisation was the recognition of an opportunity to travel, to discover new things, and to promote Korean culture. The following represent some typical responses to globalisation including some more cautious replies<sup>113</sup>:

I really like globalisation. I’m a big fan of rock music so I’m happy that I can listen to rock music from South Africa, the US and Australia. I think I am kind of a liberalist so I like globalisation. It is actually making it possible for people all around the world to see what is in the world, so I like it. (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2011)

I think we cannot help but accept the trend of globalisation. However, as Korea becomes more globalised we are lacking a strong foundation of education about our own history. By only emphasising the ideal of progress, Korea has been ignoring its own cultural heritage whilst accepting foreign cultures. Even though we have achieved successful economic development, now we can notice the gap that has resulted from the neglect of our own culture. We seem indifferent to our own unique characteristics and those characteristics are being replaced by the process of globalisation. History was not a mandatory subject so we didn’t learn it properly. I think that this is a weak point of globalisation. (Interview in Korean, Gyeongnam National University, 31/05/2010)

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<sup>111</sup> In the same 2007 Pew Global Research survey, Koreans were overwhelmingly the most pro-immigration of the 47 countries surveyed. 70% of Koreans disagreed with the statement ‘that further restrictions should be placed upon immigration into their country’ see <http://pewglobal.org/2007/10/04/world-publics-welcome-global-trade-but-not-immigration/> (viewed 08/08/2011).

<sup>112</sup> This figure represents those who responded ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statement ‘I see myself as a world citizen’.

<sup>113</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘what do you think about globalisation and what is Korea’s role in globalisation?’

We should introduce the excellence of Korean culture to the whole world. Yeah, some people have heard of *kimchi* but still we should make sure other countries recognise Korean culture and make Korean cultural icons popular. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

I think [globalisation] is good because you can broaden your view and experience new things. (Interview in Korean, Chonnam University, 08/06/2010)

I am ambivalent to globalisation. Sometimes I am happy with globalisation because foreign trade helps our country to thrive. But sometimes I am not happy with it because it feels like only world powers such as the US and Japan are taking the lead in the process. (Interview in Korean, Choong-Ang University, 06/05/2010)

The globalisation of Korea means the opportunity to work abroad and a chance to introduce the Korean culture to the world. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/04/2010)

The relationship between globalisation and the *nation-state* is well covered in the academic literature. On one side there are those who argue that globalisation signals the end of the nation-state's relevance, especially in regards to economic activity (Ohmae, 1993; 1995). On the other side, the persistence of the nation-state suggests that globalisation, in fact, requires the continued existence of the nation-state (Billig, 1995) or merely alters the role of the nation-state (Holton, 1998; Hedetoft, 1999). However, the relationship between globalisation and the national unit needs to be considered separately to that of globalisation and the nation-state. In discussions of the relationship between ideas of nationalism and globalisation, Smith (2008) and Shin Gi-wook (2006) argue that globalisation, if anything, can lead to an intensification of (ethnic) nationalism as a defensive mechanism to protect against the challenges and instability that globalisation can threaten. Brown (2000) adopts an instrumentalist analysis of the role of globalisation on the nation and nationalism. He argues that the impact of globalisation on nationalism varies depending upon how a nation's elites react to its challenges. Brown uses the example of Singapore to show how ideas of the global and the international (and both threats and opportunities) have been used by the elite to shape nationalism and national identity in Singapore. Billig argues that the post-modern identities stemming from globalisation that may appear to threaten nations and nationalism actually still operate firmly within the context of nations and

nationalism. Young Americans may associate with the label African or Korean or feminist, but they remain African-American, Korean-American, and American feminist. There are no calls for independence or the emergence of separatist groups as a result of these post-modern identities (Billig, 1995: 139-149).

The case of South Korea builds upon the literature examining the link between globalisation and the nation, national identity and nationalism. The construction of a South Korean nation shows how globalisation can *construct and transform* nationalisms, as well as maintain or intensify them. In the case of South Korea, the effect of globalisation has been to form a new image of nation, thus transforming it from its original ethnic-type, based upon the unification of North and South, to one based on an imagined community of the South only.

### **6.2.2 Globalisation, global networks and travel**

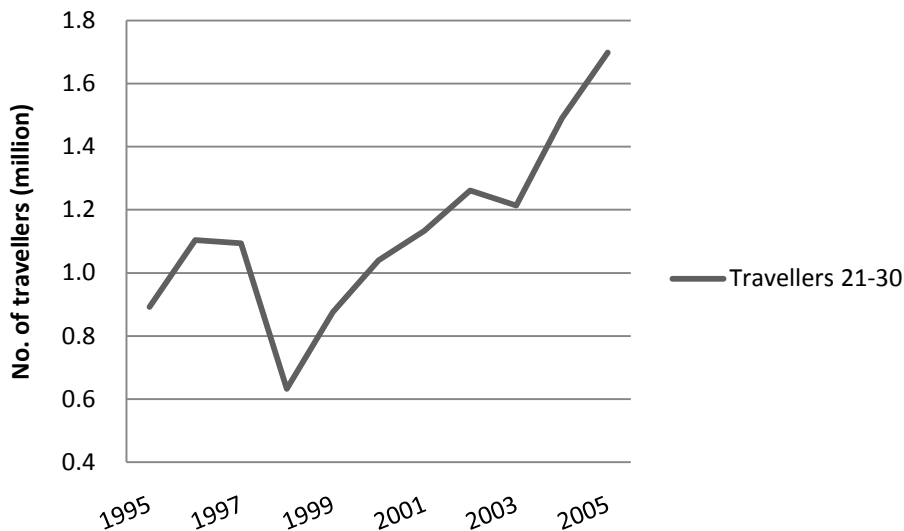
Since the start of Korea's democratisation process there has been dramatic growth in foreign travel driven by political and social freedoms, increased wealth and a growing desire for new experiences. In the past, only a prized few had the chance to go overseas. These included officials, businessmen and select students sponsored by the United States or Korean governments to study at American institutions. Nowadays, foreign travel is ubiquitous across Korean society. Korean tour groups have replaced the Japanese in their conspicuousness in Asian resorts. *Ajumma* (middle-aged women), who may be friends from the same apartment block or the same Buddhist organisation, travel on holiday in large groups. Backpackers, honeymooners, businessmen, students and families fill flights departing from Korea's eight international airports<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup> Korea's major international airports are Incheon, Gimpo, Jeju and Gimhae (Busan). Smaller international airports include Cheongju, Daegu, Gwangju and Yangyang Airports.



Table 12 Growth in number of travellers aged 21-30 (unit: million)<sup>115</sup>



High rates of overseas travel and mobility are not particular to Korea, but the rapid pace of the growth in travel over the last decade – especially amongst young people in Korea – is exceptional. For example, the total number of students going abroad to study jumped from 190,000 to 243,000 between 2005 and 2009 (*Joongang Ilbo*, 22/06/2010). These globalised movements have followed particular routes and networks and these have influenced and shaped young Koreans’ sense of national identity; one such network is the South Korea-United States link. The US relationship with South Korea was rooted in early missionary contacts and expanded as a result of migration to Hawai’i and the mainland United States throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This set in place early pathways for Koreans to travel or study in the US. The leading role of the US in the United Nations defence of South Korea in the Korean War inexorably deepened these ties and networks and led to an enduring military, political and economic relationship between the two nations. In 2009, 10.4 per cent of all Korean exports went to the United States and Korea is the United States’ seventh largest trading

<sup>115</sup> Korea national Tourism Organisation, Annual Statistical Report on Tourism, 2005  
[http://korean.visitkorea.or.kr/kor/tt/knowledge\\_db/tour\\_industry\\_info/official\\_report/content/cms\\_view\\_246390.jsp](http://korean.visitkorea.or.kr/kor/tt/knowledge_db/tour_industry_info/official_report/content/cms_view_246390.jsp); Korea National Tourism Organisation Website Statistical service  
[http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/inout.kto?func\\_name=search](http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/inout.kto?func_name=search), (viewed 16 May 2011).

partner<sup>116</sup> (Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 2011). These links play an important role in young people's decisions to travel to the United States. One former student explained how he had wanted to study elsewhere but heard of scholarships and funding opportunities for PhD courses at US institutions from other Korean students who had studied in the US. And so he too decided to follow the same well-trodden path to a US university (Interview in English, Australian National University, 12/04/2011). Others travelled to the US to study because they had family living there to help and support them (Interview in Korean, Australian National University, 12/04/2011). Just over 69,000 Korean students went to study in the US in 2009 (*Joongang Ilbo*, 22/06/2010).

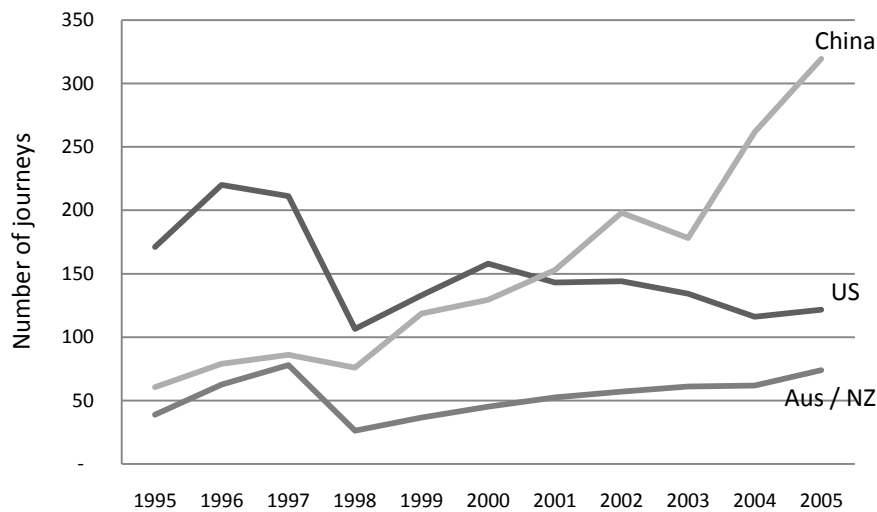
The political opening of nearby China and the dramatic development in the China-Korea economic relationship, has translated into new pathways increasingly followed by young South Koreans. China is Korea's largest trading partner and the destination for nearly a quarter of all Korean exports and Korea is China's fourth largest export market after the US, Japan and Hong Kong (EIU, 2011). Nearly 67,000 Korean students went to China to study in 2009 (*Joongang Ilbo*, 22/06/2010).

In a more recent example, globalisation has inspired new networks between Korea and Australasia. Both Australia and New Zealand participated in the United Nations force during the Korean War. However, it is recent economic and cultural ties that have solidified the networks. POSCO (Pohang Steel Company) is Australia's largest single export customer from any nation (AKBC, 2011). Even without the contribution of POSCO, Korea is still a key export market for both Australia's and New Zealand's natural resource, service and agricultural sectors. Accompanying these economic ties has been a growth in tourism, study and emigration to Australia and New Zealand, not least amongst young people.

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<sup>116</sup> Other notable ties include the Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) signed in June 2007. This is the largest FTA ever agreed by Korea and the largest in the US since NAFTA in 1994 (US Department of State). It has not yet been ratified, however, by either the Korean National Assembly or the US Congress. Further, the Combined Forces Command (CFC) was established in South Korea in 1978. The commander of the CFC is led by a US General who oversees Korea's 680,000 strong armed forces, the United Nations Command (UNC) and the 28,000 strong United States Forces in Korea (USFK).

Table 13 Destinations of 21-30 year old travellers (unit: thousand)<sup>117</sup>



These networks have impacted upon ideas of identity amongst young South Koreans in two specific ways. The first is the contribution toward the construction a South Korean identity separate from the North. Travelling to a ‘foreign’ place can have the effect of reinforcing one’s own sense of home and identity. We need only look to the groupings of immigrants of common origin when they move to new nations, taking refuge in their own language, cultures and customs. One young Korean commented on his experience travelling overseas to study:

I still feel Korean and I have a sense of Korean identity even though I am living abroad. I found it hard to integrate with Kiwis even after living in New Zealand for a long time. I always hang out with Koreans not New Zealanders. (Interview in Korean, Australian National University, 12/04/2011)

For many Koreans, however, this has meant not only the reinforcing of a Korean identity but also the realisation of a South Korean identity. Previously many of these young people had given little thought to North Korea and division before going overseas (see Chapter Three). On arriving in a foreign country, however, they are forced to consider North Korea for a number of reasons.

<sup>117</sup> Korea national Tourism Organisation, Annual Statistical Report on Tourism, 2005  
[http://korean.visitkorea.or.kr/kor/tt/knowledge\\_db/tour\\_industry\\_info/official\\_report/content/cms\\_view\\_246390.jsp](http://korean.visitkorea.or.kr/kor/tt/knowledge_db/tour_industry_info/official_report/content/cms_view_246390.jsp); Korea National Tourism Organisation Website Statistical service  
[http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/inout.kto?func\\_name=search](http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/inout.kto?func_name=search), (viewed 16 May 2011).

Young South Koreans are often shocked that North Korea garners so much attention in the West. North Korea-related stories, particularly those regarding the nuclear issue, receive more prominent coverage in the mainstream overseas media, or at least more dramatic coverage, than they do inside of Korea. Furthermore, coverage of North Korea overwhelms that devoted to the South in the foreign media<sup>118</sup>:

CNN focuses on North Korean policy, the six-party talks under the Bush administration the 'Axis of Evil', and all the information that you get about Korea was about the North. You see on TV that it talks about Kim Jong-il and the nuclear missile project of North Korea, so when you see Korea for the first time in your life the image is the nuclear crisis, Kim Jong-il, dictatorship...[Did you start to think about North Korea more when you went overseas?] Yes. People are constantly reminding me about the existence of North Korea. When I switch on CNN it never talks about South Korea. (Interview in English, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

When I was in Hawai'i, people always asked me which part of Korea I am from. Like South or North. So I realised that for many foreigners South and North Korea are different countries. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

I lived in many countries with people from different cultures when I was working for charitable organisations. Some people from wealthy countries or Western countries would ask 'where is Korea?' 'Do you have a fridge in your house?' 'Do they teach IT in your country?' I could see they didn't know anything about Korea! (Interview in Korea, Seoul National University, 2009)

When I met somebody for the first time in the US, I would say that I'm Korean but then someone would ask 'are you from the North or the South?' And then I'd have to say South Korean. That was the question they asked most frequently. So maybe people in Korea, they consider it just as one country but people outside Korea already think of Korea as two countries. When I first went to the US I was really shocked. (Interview in English, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

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<sup>118</sup> The following quotations were in response to the questions 'what do people know about Korea when you travel overseas?' and 'are you proud of Korea?'

These encounters, with the extensive foreign coverage devoted to North Korean issues and with questions from foreigners about their northern or southern origins, inspire new realisations. For the first time, many of these young people become conscious of being not just Korean but South Korean. They become aware of the existence of two nations and the foreignness of the North. They develop a pride in the development of South Korea in contrast to the North, and their experiences strengthen the construction of an identity in the image of the South.

The second impact upon identity and nationalism of these globalised networks is the deconstruction of ideas of ethnic nationalism and the undermining of the ethnic basis for the national unit. These globalised networks, built upon relationships between Koreans in different parts of the world, have brought South Korean young people into close contact with ethnic-Korean foreigners: Korean-Americans, Korean-Australians, *Joseonjok* and so on. Whilst it might be expected that such networks would broaden the conception of nation, for many South Koreans this experience can instead bring a realisation that common ethnic roots need not necessarily mean a sense of common identity or nation. As a result of travelling overseas, their concept of nation and belonging is transformed.

Testimony of young South Koreans living or travelling overseas demonstrates some of the encounters that have influenced their conception of nation and identity. One South Korean student told me that a common complaint amongst South Koreans in the US was the referral by Korean-Americans to South Koreans as ‘you Koreans’, often followed by a critical comment about South Korean traits (Interview in English, Australian National University, 08/04/2011). A Korean-Australian student commented that she believed her elders in South Korea and those South Koreans she met in Australia recognised her to be different. She found it difficult to interact with her elders from South Korea (including older cousins in their twenties and thirties) because they often thought her to be bad mannered. As a result, she felt different and she believed that they saw her as foreign (Interview in English, Australian National University, 11/04/2011). When overseas Koreans return to South Korea, encounters between locals and visitors create similar questions of identity. Another Australian-Korean student commented:

If you go out shopping they know that you’re not fully Korean because of our accent and they act differently to me. Sometimes they’re nicer, sometimes not. I

do feel different [to my family in Korea] because we've grown up in different cultures. They do understand that our past experiences are different, like what kind of activities we've spent our social time doing. (Interview in English, Australia National University, 12/04/2011)

The experience of young Koreans travelling to China often has a similar effect of making them question their ideas of ethnicity as the basis for common identity. Young Korean students often encounter *Joseonjok* working in Korean restaurants or shops. One student noted her experience of meeting *Joseonjok* in China:

When I was in China I met several Korean-Chinese doing translation jobs. At first I thought they were just like Koreans because they spoke Korean and have Korean ancestors. So I assumed they regarded themselves as Korean, but that was not the case. They identify themselves as Chinese, looking down on Korea. But still they are coming to Korea to find well paid work. That is very weird. It's funny they look down on Korea but are still coming to Korea to work....they have Chinese nationality. At first I guessed they were favourable to Korea and missed their Korean homeland but they were not. They firmly believed in being Chinese. I was so shocked. I think that they are cheating Koreans. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

The experience of travelling overseas, particularly to countries of immigration such as the United States and New Zealand, has had a further transformative influence on ideas of nationhood. For some, these experiences have influenced ideas of inclusion and immigration and changed their attitude toward the acceptance of non-ethnic Koreans as Korean nationals:

When I was in Korea I considered immigrants just as foreigners even though they had stayed in Korea for a long time. Now after I moved to New Zealand I changed my mind: even a foreigner can become Korean if they want to. (Interview in Korean, Australian National University, 12/04/2011)

The experience of travelling to a nation like New Zealand or the United States invites the question: If Koreans can be American, then why should not Americans be Korean? Certainly if an ethnic Korean can adopt the culture, behaviour and attitudes to define them as Chinese in the eyes of South Koreans, then it becomes conceptually possible for a Chinese to adopt the cultural

requirements required to be a South Korean national. The attitudes of many young South Koreans have shown that they do indeed accept a new conception of nationality no longer based upon ethnicity.

At first glance these networks and journeys resemble those of Anderson's colonial pilgrimages of administration and education in colonial nations. These were the journeys made for the purposes of colonial administration by the bureaucratic elite to places not previously visited. They also reflected the set pathways through schooling, higher education and officialdom for the future administrators of newly independent former colonies. In both cases, Anderson argued that these pathways or pilgrimages created a sense of what nation they were part of and who else was part of it – 'a consciousness of connectedness emerges' (Anderson, 1983: 56, 52-56, 122-125). Using this theory of administrative and educational pilgrimages, we may have expected a wider diasporic nationalism to develop as these young people travelled these globalised networks. Indeed, this is something that the South Korean government is working to achieve. Korea is a country of migration and great efforts are being made to ensure that close ties are maintained with migrating Koreans, many of whom are highly educated<sup>119</sup>.

Paradoxically, these globalised networks have allowed young South Koreans to realise that ethnicity is an *insufficient* basis upon which to form a nation. There has been the experience of difference as a result of these networks as opposed to the sense of similarity that developed through the colonial pilgrimages of Anderson's imagined communities. That does not mean, however, that Anderson's ideas are any less relevant in the modern period. Instead, the South Korean example provides an interesting adjunct to Anderson's theory of colonial pilgrimages. Albeit for different reasons and in a different era, the experience of South Korean young people today reinforces the importance of his concept of travelled networks in the shaping of nations and nationalism.

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<sup>119</sup> The Overseas Korean Foundation ([www.korean.net](http://www.korean.net)) is a South Korean government-sponsored organisation set up 'until the day when seven million overseas Koreans become one'. It works to foster ties with overseas Koreans through a variety of means from language teaching to investment promotion. Its goals appear pragmatic rather than emotive, not least because of its particular focus on overseas Korean residents with potential for developing economic or educational-based relationships with their 'ancestral' home, South Korea. As part of this overseas Korean project, many overseas Koreans will now be able to vote in domestic South Korean elections beginning in 2012 (Oh, Jun Kyung 2010).

### 6.3 Democracy

After nearly three decades of authoritarian government, South Koreans enjoyed their first direct Presidential and National Assembly elections in 1987 following massive civil protests in summer of the same year. Since those first elections, there has been significant progress in the development of democracy in South Korea. Elections at all levels have progressed freely and fairly and many of the institutions and behaviours of the authoritarian era have been dismantled. Progress has been made in breaking down potentially corrupting state-business ties (Jung and Jeong 2002; Lee and Lee 2008) and there have been some achievements in the institutionalising of political parties and the dismantling of the traditional regional and personalised system that previously defined political loyalty and voting behaviour (Reilly, 2007). Checks and balances on the business of government have progressed. There have been improvements in judicial autonomy (Kim, Joongi 2007), an independent media and vibrant civil society has developed (Kim, Sunhyuk 2007; Kwak, Ki-sung 2005; Steinberg, 2002) and important institutional changes have been made regarding the discovery and investigation of corruption (*Global Corruption Report*, 2006; Lee and Lee, 2008; Lie and Kim, 2007)<sup>120</sup>. Much remains to be done, but the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2006 democracy index ranks South Korea 28<sup>th</sup> out of 167 countries, placing it amongst 31 countries the EIU considers to be full democracies (EIU, 2008: 8). Freedom House has categorised South Korea as 'free' since 1998<sup>121</sup>.

Interviews with South Korean young people show that whilst they may not show a great interest in mainstream political participation, the concept of democracy and the goal of a democratic South Korea is important to them and central to their South Korean identity. In particular, a number of young people point to democracy as a key marker of difference between the North and the South. When asked about their greatest concerns for Korean society, the state of democracy and democratic progress in South Korea was frequently cited. An earlier chapter has noted the deep embarrassment over the behaviour of politicians in the National Assembly.

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<sup>120</sup> Changes under the Roh government included legal and constitutional changes such as the Anti-Corruption Act Amendment extending whistleblower's protection; the creation of the post of Citizen's Ombudsman for local government; and the passing of a bill establishing the Corruption Investigation Office to probe high-ranking public officials suspected of corruption. In addition, the Korean Pact on Anti-Corruption and Transparency (K-PACT) was signed in March 2005 and was created as a collaborative effort involving the private sector, civil society and government to fight against corruption (*Global Corruption Report*, 2006).

<sup>121</sup> [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)



Similarly, many other aspects of South Korean democracy inspire interest, concern, shame and pride. Democracy is clearly relevant to this generation of *isipdae* as suggested by the following responses that are typical of the many provided by interviewees<sup>122</sup>:

I am proud [of Korean democracy]. People fought against the dictatorial government and now we have the right to vote under democratic rule. I think democracy in Korea is well established. (Interview in Korean, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

Apart from democracy I cannot think of any other system. And democracy was achieved in Korea as a result of the sacrifice of so many people. But now I feel we are going back to the 1950s. Democracy is somehow dying. (Interview in English, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

I am so ashamed [of Korean democracy]. Korean people have expressed their opinion through demonstration and protest. And so, the government is now trying to discourage an exchange of diverse opinions by introducing the internet real name system<sup>123</sup>. People's opinions are being ignored. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

I think democracy in Korea is still immature. Democracy is still kind of new in Korea. But of course it is much better that we have democracy compared to the political system in North Korea. However, it's still immature. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

I lived in China, which is also [like North Korea] a socialist country. Of course they have adopted reform and opening-up policies, but China is still a totalitarian society in some aspects and I hated it. So I am against the current regime of North Korea. I really pity North Koreans. They don't even know what is wrong. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

[Democracy is] still learning. I am proud of what they have achieved but we still have a long way to go. Yesterday was the anniversary of the pro-democracy movement *Sa-il-gu* (the April 19<sup>th</sup> Revolution in 1960 led by students and intellectuals that toppled the Rhee Syngman government). I'm really grateful for

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<sup>122</sup> The following quotations are in response to 'what does democracy mean to you?' or 'what do you feel about North Korea?'

<sup>123</sup> The real name system requires websites to confirm users' personal information such as their real names and resident registration numbers when they want to post comments or upload content (*Hankyoreh*, 10/04/2009a).

what they did but there's still a long way to go. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/04/2010)

Democracy has been crucial in constructing a South Korean identity amongst young South Koreans. This has taken place through a number of mechanisms, including the influence of procedural democracy and democratic institutions on immigration and on school curriculums; these, in turn, have effected change to concepts of nation and national identity. The starting point for any examination of the relationship between democracy and nationalism, however, must be the concept of popular sovereignty, or the sovereignty of the people.

### **6.3.1 Popular sovereignty**

Bernard Yack, in his 2003 chapter 'Nationalism, Popular Sovereignty, and the Liberal Democratic State', argues that the doctrine of popular sovereignty which underpins democracy contributes to the rise and spread of nationalism. Popular sovereignty describes the legitimacy given by a community of people to a governing authority to represent and govern them. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Social Sciences (2001) the doctrine of popular sovereignty allows the formation of the ruling state 'as constituted by a loan of authority from the inalienably sovereign people, contingent on its faithfulness to the people's interests'. Yack's argument hinges upon the process of transformation of that constituency or political community into a national community and nation. This takes place, says Yack, as a result of democracy's ability to 'nationalise political loyalties' and 'politicise national loyalties' (Yack, 2003: 39).

To *nationalise political loyalties* refers to the association of the political community, the 'sovereign people', with the national community. The 'sovereign people' is not an abstract concept. Article 1, Section 2 of the Korean Constitution states that 'the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea shall reside in the people and all state authority shall emanate from the people'. The sovereign people are the body politic of the government and state, the constituency of the Republic of Korea. The nationalising of political loyalties is especially powerful if there is no solid concept of the community that came before democracy. Unlike their elders who came of age in a time that recalled the Korean peninsula as a unified political unit as well as national unit, South Korea's youth have little or no appreciation of an earlier unified peninsula. South Korean

democracy since 1987 has only been practically able to represent the South Korean people. North Koreans outside of the South are unable to participate in the South Korean political community. Since 1987 therefore, South Korean democracy has effectively governed for and on behalf of *South* Korea and the government has been given its legitimacy through the voting and participation in the democratic process of the *South* Korean people. Michael Billig writes that ‘the very conditions of democracy, as envisaged in the twentieth century, are those which are based upon the nation-state, and which routinely embody a mysticism of place and people’. The people of the ‘sovereignty of the people,’ says Billig, are not just any people; they are ‘the people of the particular democratic state’ (Billig, 1995: 94). Concepts of state, community, identity, and ultimately nation, are shaped and defined in the image of the Republic of Korea through the processes of governing, administering and electing. In other words, the concept of the nation in the image of South Korea is formed through the everyday democratic politics of the Republic of Korea.

This is similar to the case of Taiwan after 1949, when the Republic of China (ROC) government claimed to be the representative government of Taiwan and the Chinese Mainland. Just as in Korea, where there was only a faint memory of a unified political or national identity, this fiction of a unified political community between Taiwan and China had diminished by the time the current generation of Taiwanese young people began to construct their attitudes to identity. As I discuss later, a similar nationalising of political loyalties has occurred amongst Taiwanese young people (Jacobs, 2005).

*Politicising of national loyalties* refers to the politicisation of the image of the national community. The sense of the South Korean nation and nationalism is constructed through the many and various forces discussed in this thesis – for example globalisation, neo-liberal values, concepts of difference and separation with the North, and banal nationalism. Ideas of popular sovereignty, however, build upon this by introducing a much stronger and more political sense of communal control of national territory. The legitimacy for governing provided by political sovereignty requires that governance must also be expressed through laws, rules, politics, and ideas of state and sovereignty. With the arrival of democracy, national and territorial loyalties no longer need to be based upon ‘natural’ ideas like ethnicity. Instead they can be expressed through other types of national ties that bind people to each other, to the political system and to the

national territory. In some cases this may be through a more civic nationalism. In the South Korean case it is through a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism. With the politicising of national loyalties, the movement away from an ethnic sense of nationalism need not diminish confidence in the strength of their South Korean identity because the political unit, the Republic of Korea, provides a certainty of national boundaries.

One example of the effects of the politicising of national loyalties in South Korea is shown through the passion expressed by young people in embracing the cause of *Dokdo*'s sovereignty whilst showing ambivalence towards the ethnically-based unity with the North. Legal sovereignty over *Dokdo* in the face of perceived Japanese dominance inspires deep nationalist anger. However, since ethnic homogeneity which provided the underlying nationalist motivation for unification is diminishing, unification no longer inspires that same strong nationalist sentiment. For some, the territorial claim based on legal sovereignty over a collection of tiny islands, totalling just under 0.2 square kilometres and with a population of three, has come to mean more than the territory to the North totalling 122,760 square kilometres and with a population 24 million people. One student, when asked which of unification or *Dokdo* was more important, replied '*Dokdo* issues of course!' (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011).

This current generation of *isipdae* have only experienced a democratic South Korea. Thus their sense of nationhood and identity has developed within this political context. Older generations had a broader sense of community that more often than not included the North. They have, of course also experienced division, but the non-democratic regimes that ruled them had less success in defining a political community or a sovereign people from whom they could source legitimacy<sup>124</sup>. Given that South Korean young people have only known South Korean democracy and a legitimate South Korean political community, it is easy to conceive how this political identity could be nationalised. When one student was asked what *nara* meant to him, he replied 'a political community' (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009). Thus

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<sup>124</sup> Park Chung Hee did achieve quite substantial legitimacy through the economic achievements under his leadership and by purporting to defend the South from the North. This, however, could not match the kind of widespread popular legitimacy for both the leader and system provided by democracy and ideas of popular sovereignty that emanates from democracy. The continued student, labour and eventually mainstream protests throughout the Park regime demonstrated this legitimacy-deficit.

increasingly, those such as North Koreans not participating in the democratic process, not subject to the same laws, unable to vote in the same elections, and thus not part of the political community, are not imagined as part of that same national community<sup>125</sup>. New non-ethnic Korean arrivals who participate in South Korea's political community, either directly through voting or through civil society organisations such as migrant worker groups, can be more easily imagined as part of the nation. The concepts of political community and national community feed into and reinforce each other and in turn have shaped South Korea's national identity.

### **6.3.2 Immigration**

Democracy is working in other practical and procedural ways to shape nationalism and national identity in South Korea. We have seen how many of the younger generation have embraced the possibility of a South Korean national unit inclusive of non-ethnic Koreans. In contrast, the political community as a whole has been slower in embracing a multi-ethnic conception of the Korean nation. The policies and institutions that govern immigration in South Korea still operate on a 'needs-based' platform emphasising temporary working visas with a continuing bias towards ethnic-Korean immigrants (Seol and Skrentny, 2009; Lim, Timothy 2008). However, democracy and its accompanying institutions have impacted the way in which migration to Korea is evolving. The procedural elements of democracy are gradually changing and immigrants are being included within concepts of nation and national identity at a legal and institutional level as well as a conceptual level. The institutionalising of these inclusive attitudes, and the political debates that accompany this evolution, adds positive momentum to the change in views of young people, and the wider Korean society, toward immigrants.

Korea's immigration model has explicitly followed that of Germany. Until recently, Germany adhered to a needs-based immigration policy allowing foreigners to come to Germany as 'guest workers' whilst at the same time maintaining an ethnic concept of citizenship thus preventing most of these immigrants from obtaining permanent German citizenship<sup>126</sup> (Lim, Timothy 2008). It was surely hoped that, at the prescribed time, immigrant workers would return to their

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<sup>125</sup> This may be one of the reasons why President Lee is encouraging the participation of overseas Koreans in domestic South Korean elections.

<sup>126</sup> Many of the workers that went to Germany as 'guest workers' were from South Korea who took jobs in areas such as nursing and mining.

respective nations. Inevitably, however, lives became established and many so-called guest workers wanted to remain. In Germany, the institutions of democracy, the most important of which was the judiciary, operated to extend protections to workers whilst they lived and worked in Germany, and extended rights of residency to immigrants as they and their families established more permanent homes. As Lim explains, while these institutions did not in themselves aim to ‘dictate specific outcomes; rather, the existence of democratic norms and procedures creates a (domestic) framework that *constrains* the power or capacity of states in ways that make it exceedingly difficult (although not impossible) to block the migratory process’ (Lim, Timothy 2008: 32). The outcome has been a legal change in Germany to a citizen-based, rather than ethnic-based, criterion for membership of the German nation (Huysen, 2007)<sup>127</sup>. Something similar is happening in Korea in the context of its democratic institutions. The judiciary, civil society groups and labour unions, in partnership with immigrants, have succeeded in extending rights and protections to immigrants often in the face of state opposition (Lim, Timothy 2008).

As part of the democratic process, Korea established the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) in 2001. Its remit includes the investigation of racial discrimination and unfair treatment of migrants<sup>128</sup>. The NHRCK has called for government action on racially discriminatory articles in the media and separate legislation to define the illegality of racism. It also recently announced its intention to formulate a set of guidelines for the human rights of migrants ‘with an aim to influence the government’s policy on migrants<sup>129</sup>’. Although the decisions of the commission are not legally enforceable, negative findings can embarrass the

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<sup>127</sup> See Huysen (2007) also for a discussion of how unification has affected social attitudes to immigration. Whilst legally and institutionally immigrants are now included in the concept of the German nation, pockets of German society, most notably in the former East Germany, have not been so accepting of new immigration and non-German immigrants. This provides interesting insight into the challenges that might face South Korea or indeed a unified Korea.

<sup>128</sup> Examples of findings relating to immigration include criticism in 2009 of the police and immigration authorities whose ‘actions constituting human rights violations occurred during enforcement procedures involving undocumented workers’. See ‘NHRCK issues recommendation for rectification of human rights violations that occurred during enforcement procedures involving undocumented foreign workers in the Ansan Area of Gyeonggi Province, (17 December 2009) [www.humanrights.go.kr/english/activities/view\\_01.jsp](http://www.humanrights.go.kr/english/activities/view_01.jsp) (viewed 30/07/2011).

<sup>129</sup> [www.humanrights.go.kr/english/activities/view\\_01.jsp](http://www.humanrights.go.kr/english/activities/view_01.jsp) (viewed 30/07/2011).

government and exert pressure on it, so much so that the Lee administration has been accused of working to weaken the Commission's power to criticise and shame the government<sup>130</sup>.

In combination with domestic pressures, the fear of international embarrassment and the portrayal in the international arena of Korea's management of immigrants as crude and undemocratic is also encouraging action on the issue of immigrants' rights. In a 2009 report of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNESCR) the Korean government was criticised for the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, the failure to apply rights under the constitution to migrant workers and the ongoing exploitation of migrant workers<sup>131</sup>. Amnesty International and the International Labour Organisation have criticised South Korea for the treatment of migrant labour activists, some of whom have been jailed and deported. The humiliation of being continually criticised by United Nations institutions such as the CERD (United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination), the ILO (International Labour Organisation) and groups like Amnesty International are also stirring discussion not only within interested civil society spheres but also the mainstream media. South Korean media closely follow comments on their nation by international bodies such as the OECD and United Nations<sup>132</sup>. A number of young people have mentioned to me the embarrassment caused by such criticism and the need for South Korea to adhere to international norms.

Furthermore, the South Korean Constitution states in Article 11, Section 1 that 'all citizens shall be equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic, social or cultural life on account of sex, religion or social status' and in Article 32, Section 3 that 'standards of working conditions shall be determined in such a way as to guarantee human

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<sup>130</sup> Amnesty International criticised the Lee Myung-bak government's policy of bringing the NHRCK under the wing of the presidential office, changing its independent status and potentially undermining the objectives and authority of the NHRCK to speak out [www.amnesty.org.au/new/comments/8373](http://www.amnesty.org.au/new/comments/8373) (viewed 12/08/2011).

<sup>131</sup> UNESCR report E/C.12/KOR/CO/3. See also [www.december18.net](http://www.december18.net). Examples of the discrimination commented on in this report might include the case of Filipino migrant worker and labour activist Michel Catuira, President of the Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon Migrants' Trade Union (MTU). South Korean civil rights organisations working with Catuira are trying to prevent the revoking of his visa and forced return to the Philippines as they recognise him and those he represents as a rightful participants in the South Korean political process. See <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/24988/> (viewed 12/08/2011).

<sup>132</sup> See for example 'Korean women's status still low in among OECD nations' (*Chosun Ilbo*, 02/07/2009a); 'UN Concern at 'Ethnocentric' Korea' (*Chosun Ilbo*, 20/08/2007a); 'Korean Kids Unhappiest in OECD' (*Chosun Ilbo*, 06/05/2010b).

dignity'. Despite the absence of specific anti-discrimination legislation, activists are making use of the Constitution to challenge laws and actions that are seen as discriminatory. Lawyers and civil society groups like the Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea<sup>133</sup> are already challenging the legality of restrictions such as the EPS, or E9 visa, which restricts the movement of migrant workers between employers. These restrictions have been described as a form of 'slavery' (Yun, Ji-yeong 2010). There is also a growing movement within a number of civil society groups and political parties to push for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation which would allow for powerful challenges to the current immigrant labour system<sup>134</sup>. As a result, the government has been forced to legislate on a piecemeal basis for protections of foreign workers<sup>135</sup>. Expectations of fairness and access have also forced the government to set up advice centres that provide information and advocacy to foreign workers<sup>136</sup>. Their efforts to improve the rights of foreign migrants were recently acknowledged by the United Nations which awarded South Korea's Human Resource Development Department first place in the 2011 public service awards. This award recognised the department for its operation of its migrant worker scheme, the EPS, in a transparent and fair manner<sup>137</sup>. Although there is a long way to go, rights for non-ethnic Korean migrants are gradually becoming institutionally accepted and integrated, and will be increasingly difficult to reverse. The German experience seems to be gradually repeating itself in the South Korean case. As inclusion and non-discrimination become more entrenched in the legal and institutional life of democratic South Korea, the concept of South Korea as a nation inclusive of non-ethnic Korean members continues to strengthen.

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<sup>133</sup> [www.jcmk.org](http://www.jcmk.org) (in Korean) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>134</sup> [www.jcmk.org](http://www.jcmk.org) (in Korean). See also [www.lgbtact.org](http://www.lgbtact.org) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>135</sup> [www.moel.go.kr](http://www.moel.go.kr) (in Korean); [www.moel.go.kr/english/main.jsp](http://www.moel.go.kr/english/main.jsp) in English for recent government legislation on the protection of foreign workers.

<sup>136</sup> <http://english.seoul.go.kr/lh/work/employment.php?pidx=5> viewed 8<sup>th</sup> May 2011. For further details of the sort of measures that the Korean government have put in place for the protection and support of migrants and their families, see ROK (2003; 2006; 2009) 'Report submitted by states parties (South Korea) under article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination'.

<sup>137</sup> [http://www.moel.go.kr/english/topic/employment\\_policy\\_view.jsp?&idx=780](http://www.moel.go.kr/english/topic/employment_policy_view.jsp?&idx=780). This contradicts the view of many NGOs and labour activists that the EPS system is restrictive and unfair although some improvements in its administration have been made in response to pressure.



### 6.3.3 Education

The arrival of democracy has brought other changes to wider Korean society not least to the education system. Korean textbooks and curriculum, particularly in the realms of history, ethics and politics, have been tightly managed, even manipulated, by the state (Kang, Soon-won 2002: 128). As a result, changes in the nature of the state through the process of democratisation impact heavily upon educational content. We saw in Chapter Two how educational content on nation-building influenced the youth of earlier generations. Likewise, subsequent democratic governments have instigated substantial changes to the presentation of ideas of nation and also of North Korea in school textbooks.

The young people involved in this research project were educated using textbooks produced after democratisation, the majority using products of the 1997 fifth and sixth textbook reforms of the Kim Young-sam government. With the arrival of democracy there was less need to manipulate topics such as security, North Korea and anti-Communism in order to legitimise the existence of the government. This meant that there was a new space to discuss North Korea in a more objective manner although it also provided the opportunity to present North Korea in ways to achieve other political or social goals. Following on from earlier reforms already made under the democratically elected Roh Tae-woo government, the Kim Young-sam reforms thus toned down the focus on anti-Communism and instead concentrated upon the concepts of peaceful unification and cooperation (Grinker, 1998: 157-159). However, despite the renewed focus upon unification, new discussions were introduced, for example, the need to approach unification through a 'step by step' process (Grinker, 1998: 162). Elements of textbooks discussed heterogeneity between the North and the South and encouraged individuals 'to think about the differences between the South and North' and to 'think about the complexities of their feelings about the North'. For the first time, discussions of the possible financial and social burdens associated with unification were introduced to the classroom (Grinker, 1998: 162).

Democracy has impacted upon education in other ways also. Concepts of democracy and human rights have been introduced to the school curriculum as well as many social concerns and issues such as immigration (Kang, Soon-won 2002: 320-321). Korean civil society has looked to external bodies such as UNESCO to support efforts to change the South Korean school

curriculum. Since the early 2000s, various UN bodies including the CERD have placed considerable pressure upon the Korean education authorities to teach ideas of nationality and belonging based upon civic or cultural ideas rather than ethnic or blood ties (*Chosun Ilbo*, 20/08/2007a). Serious public discussion only began in 2006 about the teaching of civic values and multiculturalism alongside ideas of the Korean *minjok* as the basis of the Korean nation following the visit of the mixed-race Korean-African American football star, Hines Ward (Lim, Timothy 2009; *Chosun Ilbo*, 26/05/2006). Some other new freedoms have also been allowed into the classroom. It is now acceptable for teachers to invite debate on unification and to openly discuss topics surrounding North Korea, often with results that challenge even the most experienced of teachers:

I was [previously] an ethics teacher in the Middle School so I taught [students] that we have to reunify. We had one ethics textbook and we focused on reunification. So [in the past] South Korean students thought that reunification is kind of a duty. But yesterday I attended a class in Ganggyeong High School [in my new capacity working on reunification] and we made some English lesson plans on unification and we asked their opinions on unification [to encourage them] because in the school we cannot easily express our opinion. We are just educated that we have to reunify. So then I asked these high school students about unification and almost 80 per cent of them said that they disagreed with unification. That was one class, and of course it could be different in other schools, but these high school students were afraid of the economic problems after the reunification. These students were 17 or 18 years old and from a rural area. (Interview in English, Anonymous North Korea-related NGO Director General, 22/04/2010)

The topic of North Korea is taught in the *Dodok* or ‘ethics’ curriculum. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the teaching of unification was framed by anti-Communist propaganda. The North Korean government was presented as Soviet puppets that had waged war on the South, abused and terrorised the Northern people and continued to threaten the South. Unification was therefore required to free North Koreans (Grinker, 1998: 146-155). This current generation of *isipdae* were the first generation to be in receipt of this fundamentally different presentation of North Korea and North Koreans. Outside of the popular media (where the presentation of North

Korea has already been discussed), the school curriculum has been their major source of information on the issues surrounding North Korea and its people. Democracy, however, has had a profound impact upon the way in which North Korea is presented in South Korean textbooks and classrooms. And it is particularly telling that the change post-democracy of the presentation of the North in school textbooks coincides with the attitudes toward North Korea held amongst many of the present day *isipdae*.

#### **6.3.4 Taiwan, ‘Taiwanisation’ and democracy<sup>138</sup>**

Yack’s thesis on democracy and nationalism is also readily applicable to a second empirical case, that of Taiwan. ‘Taiwanisation’ – for some the formation of a Taiwanese identity and for others political independence from China – gained momentum only after the development of democracy in Taiwan. In particular, ‘Taiwanisation’ has been most notable amongst Taiwan’s youth (Chang and Wang, 2005; Jacobs, 2005).

There are of course some differences between Taiwan and Korea, not least the greater ethnic diversity historically found within the Taiwanese population<sup>139</sup>. However, there are many similarities: a Japanese colonial experience; divisive post-World War Two conceptions of two opposing political units; the desire to reunite on the part of both the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China but under their own respective regimes; and a separation under the Cold War system that persists until today. Most striking is the correspondence between the political-economies of Taiwan and Korea, including partnership with the United States and dramatic economic growth, and the move from military authoritarianism to democracy.

Across all generations in Taiwan the deepening of democracy has led to a shift from an officially imposed Chinese or unified identity toward a dual identity that increasingly embraces a sense of ‘Taiwanese-ness’. This, however, has been especially prevalent amongst young people where there has been a movement away from a solely Chinese identity to a dual Chinese-Taiwanese identity. In addition, there has been a growth in political support for the maintenance of the status

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<sup>138</sup> Taiwanisation is translated from 本土化, *bentuhua*. For a discussion of this translation see Jacobs (2005: 18-19).

<sup>139</sup> Taiwan’s population consists of indigenous Taiwanese, Hakka migrants, Taiwan-born Han Chinese and the Mainland Chinese and their descendants who fled the Mainland in 1949 following the defeat of the *Guomindang* by the Chinese Communists.

quo between Taiwan and Mainland China, and to a lesser extent support for Taiwanese independence. This is notably different to older generations who remain more inclined to support the eventual unification with China (Chang and Wang, 2005: 42).

Noting the absence of concepts of Taiwanisation amongst dissidents and pro-democracy activists prior to democratisation, Jacobs shows how discussion and discourse on identity has grown amongst Taiwan's electorate following democratisation<sup>140</sup>. He points to a number of specific factors that link democracy with this formation of a Taiwanese identity (Jacobs, 2005: 22, 34).

The first lies in the fight for democracy on Taiwan. The demand for democracy was presented not in terms of a unified identity with the Mainland but as a demand to recognise the rights of the 18 million people on the island of Taiwan to have a say over their governance. From this movement a concept of a Taiwanese community emerged. As discussion of democracy progressed, ideas of popular sovereignty were promulgated and national and political sovereignty began to become entwined. This involved the concept of legitimacy coming from a political community – the Taiwanese people. In addition, democracy provided political space for discussion by those who were interested in developing a more independent identity (Jacobs, 2005).

Democratisation in Taiwan also affected education and civil society, which in turn added momentum to the process of Taiwanisation. With new freedoms of expression, the topic of Taiwanisation could be addressed more directly and spread into new domains. Democracy allowed for contested versions of the Taiwanese people's identity and history to be expressed in the public realm (Wang, 2005). This, for example, led to the introduction of new textbooks in the late 1990s that reflected new ideas of Taiwanisation and new versions of Taiwanese history that were not dependent upon a unified Chinese identity (Wang, 2005: 73-88). This 'shift in high school textbooks from being China-centred to being Taiwan-centred seems to be mainly a result of a parallel change that occurred earlier in the broader political environment', in other words the arrival of democracy (Wang, 2005: 87). Given that it is Taiwan's youth that seem to be most heavily influenced by ideas of Taiwanisation, this link between democracy, textbooks, and identity seems especially relevant and comparable to the South Korean experience.

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<sup>140</sup> Taiwan's first democratic elections took place in 1992 and in 1996 the first direct Presidential election was held.

In Taiwan, the institutions of democracy have shaped the progress of Taiwanisation. Amendments to the Taiwanese constitution, creation of new laws and the activism of the courts have protected the right to discuss a Taiwanese identity and independence and have also contributed to the reform of incumbent institutions that protected the unified Chinese identity. In 1991, for example, Taiwan's constitutional court ended the terms of the old Mainland-elite politicians who had previously been given permanent seats in the Taiwanese legislature. Like everyone else they would now have to stand for election based upon their (increasingly unpopular) policy platform of unification with Mainland China (Jacobs, 2005: 37). The formation of a parliament under a democratic constitution and the enactment of procedural rules to elect the parliament made it necessary to limit the parliament's sovereignty to the existing territory of the Republic of Taiwan and offshore islands only and not extend it to Mainland China (Jacobs, 2005: 36-37). The rule of the People's Republic of China on the Mainland was also recognised as legitimate and 'thus the ROC government recognised the fact that two equal entities exist in two independent areas of one country' (Jacobs, 2005: 36). A clear Taiwanese community was delineated. Next, a provincial level of government for the island of Taiwan that mirrored the national government had been operating in preparation for unification. As originally envisaged, this would become the administration when Taiwan was once again a province of China. In 1997, this level of government was 'frozen' and the only administrations that remained were at the state and local levels. Taiwan was now conceptualised as a state unto itself. Finally, democracy forced the introduction of legal protection for the expression of pro-independence opinions. In 1991, in the lead up to the first fully democratic elections, the opposition DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) openly called for Taiwanese independence although in theory this was illegal. The arrival of democracy forced an amendment to the criminal law which meant that non-violent advocacy of Taiwanese independence was now legal and acceptable within the Taiwanese system (Jacobs, 2005: 38). Democracy has played a central role in the shaping of a new Taiwanese identity on the island of Taiwan, especially amongst the youth who have adopted Taiwanisation most enthusiastically of all generations (Chang and Wang, 2005). As Jacobs writes, the democratisation of Taiwan created a celebration of all things Taiwanese and 'coincided with a burst of "Taiwan-consciousness"' (Jacobs, 2005: 38). There are thus clear-cut parallels with the role of democracy in 'South Koreanisation', the rise of South Korean nationalism amongst South Korean young people.

## 6.4 Banal nationalism

On a trip from Yeoksam in Southeast Seoul to City Hall in central Seoul I decided to count the number of times I passed the South Korean national flag. I gave up when I got to fifty although there were plenty more. Admittedly, I went from a key commercial area to the diplomatic zone, but aside from those flags flying from lampposts I counted many on uniforms, advertisements, shop signs and public transport.

Michael Billig, in his book *Banal Nationalism*, calls these reminders of identity and nation the ‘flagging of the homeland daily’ (Billig, 1995: 93). Billig shows how everyday symbols, actions and words reinforce nationhood and nationality and inspire nationalist sentiment. He describes how these markers of nation, such as the ‘waved and unwaved flags’ that I encountered on my short trip across Seoul, are ‘reminders of nationhood [that] serve to turn background space into homeland space’ (Billig, 1995: 43, 39-43).

Like Brubaker, Billig wants to remind us of the nationalisms operating in all national environments, the everyday types of nationalism that define the people of long-established entities as well as would-be nations (Billig, 1995: 44). The experience of South Korea, however, develops Billig’s theory to show how banal nationalism not only perpetuates and maintains nationalism but also *constructs* nationalism and national identity. Using elements of Billig’s thesis I demonstrate how the banal nationalism of everyday life in South Korea has constructed *uri nara* in the image of South Korea and contributed to the rise of South Korean nationalism amongst young South Koreans.

### 6.4.1 Patterns of belief and practice and flagging the nation in South Korea

#### 6.4.1.1 In politics

A useful starting point for any discussion of ‘flagging the nation’ is the discursive practices of a nation’s politicians. Those disengaged from traditional politics will remain constantly exposed to politicians’ rhetoric on television, in newspapers and online. Billig shows how the language of politics and politicians holds the power to define and ‘remind’ an audience of their nationhood and national identity even where the inspiration for nationalist sentiment is not the explicit intention of the politician (Billig, 1995: 96-99).

To demonstrate the banal nationalism of political rhetoric in the context of the construction of a South Korean nationalism, I have chosen to analyse the inaugural speeches of President Lee Myung-bak, the incumbent president, and his predecessor, President Roh Moo-hyun<sup>141</sup>. Of all political speeches, these would have been widely reported, and watched or read by a significant number of South Koreans, including young people.

President Roh Moo-hyun, from the progressive Millennium Democratic Party, took office on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2003. President Lee Myung-bak, from the conservative Grand National Party, delivered his inaugural speech on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. Notwithstanding that the two presidents represent opposite sides of the political spectrum, both speeches provide countless examples of ‘flagging’ the South Korean nation and banal reminders of the South Korean nation that demonstrate how banal nationalism can contribute to the construction of South Korean nationalism and national identity<sup>142</sup>.

### **We, our, us: *uri***

Billig argues that one of the crucial questions relating to national identity is how the concept of ‘we’, or in South Korea *uri*, is constructed and the meaning of such construction (Billig, 1995: 70). Both presidents frequently refer to *uri*, which can mean ‘us’, ‘we’, or ‘our’, throughout their respective speeches:

Roh: Our society (*uri sahoe*) is also encountering diverse social problems that may have a great impact on our destiny...

We (*uri*) can resolve them. When our whole nation joins forces (*uri gungmin-e himeul hapchimyeon*) there is nothing we cannot achieve. (Roh, 2003a; 2003b)

Lee: The miracle will continue...I will take the lead, and with you beside me as one, we (*uri*) can do it.

My fellow citizens! There is one thing that requires our determination (*uri hamkke dajimhaeya hal geosi*) at this juncture...

We (*uri*) having flinched rather carelessly, we now witness the rest of the world excelling us (*uri*) by a long way. Developing countries are fast catching up. Our

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<sup>141</sup> See Appendices Seven to Ten for full Korean language transcripts and English translations of both presidential speeches.

<sup>142</sup> See also Chung and Park (2010) for a textual comparison of linguistic style and content of the two speeches.

nation's competitiveness has fallen, and instability in the resource and financial markets threatens our economy (*uri gyeongje*). (Lee, 2008a; 2008b)

When the South Korean president speaks about 'uri', for example *uri sahoe*, our society, his audience knows that he is talking to the people who elected him and provide him with the legitimacy to rule, that is his fellow South Koreans. It excludes those Koreans in Australia or the United States or indeed anyone in North Korea (Billig, 1995: 97). Both Presidents remind the audience that 'we' is the Republic of Korea, South Korea, and they thus define and renew the sense of national community in the image of the South. Furthermore, this banal invoking of a common South Korean community in the proclamations of a president allow us to observe one of the mechanisms through which democracy can transform the political community into a national community.

### **Naming of the nation**

Both Presidents open their speeches with the declaration that they stand before their fellow citizens as the new president of the Republic of Korea, *Daehanminguk* (대한민국 /大韓民國). Names are the basic currency of nations and one only has to look at the dispute between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the name Macedonia to appreciate their importance in defining community (Billig, 1995: 73). In the Korean language, the name that each of the two Koreas has ascribed itself is different to the other. South Koreans refer to themselves as *Daehanminguk*, the great *Han* (韓) nation, and to themselves as a collective *Hanguksaram* (한국사람), the South Korean people. You will often hear the term *uri hanguk saram* (우리 한국사람) 'we South Koreans', used perhaps to prefix the description of a 'common' trait of the collective South Korean people. North Koreans refer to their nation as *Joseon Minjujuui Inmin Gonghwaguk* (조선 민주주의 인민공화국 /朝鮮民主主義人民共和國), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and to themselves as *Joseonsaram* (조선사람), literally a person from *Joseon*, (more commonly romanised as Chosun), though of course translated into English as North Korean. The name *Joseon* is derived from the *Joseon* Dynasty, the last Dynasty on the Korean peninsula. The difference in the two names immediately highlights the existence of two nations and the term *Daehanminguk*, oft repeated, serves to define the specific political and national community that is South Korea. It is an interesting side note that in divided Germany both



nations included the historic root name *Deutsch* in their respective political titles<sup>143</sup>. Billig suggests that ‘Two “Germanys” existing side by side, indicated and preserved an ideology for unification’ (Billig, 1995: 73). That is not the case for the two Koreas.

## History

In the speeches of both Presidents the history of ‘our’ nation is called upon to motivate and inspire. ‘National histories’, says Billig, ‘tell of a people passing through time – “our” people; with “our” ways of life, and “our” culture’ (Billig, 1995: 71). However, the choice of history – which history and whose history – is crucial in providing the context for the construction of ‘we’ and ‘us’ in the respective Presidents’ speeches. In both speeches, the proud history of ‘our nation’ refers overwhelmingly to the history of post-division South Korea. In Lee’s speech, particularly, the presentation of the nation’s history in the image of the South shapes and constructs a powerful and patriotic South Korean identity:

Lee: This year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea [in 1948]. We fought for and regained our land that was taken from us and established our nation. We gave our best to our day’s work. As a result, our great nation achieved what no other nation ever achieved in history. In the shortest period of time, this nation achieved both industrialisation and democratisation...

Our forefathers who gave their lives for the sake of our independence. Our men and women in uniform who were martyred on the battlefield. Our farmers who toiled for a good harvest come rain or shine. Our labourers and workers who worked late into the night in our factories. And those who sacrificed their youth to fight for democracy, these are the stories of greatness that bring tears.

The ordinary citizens who willingly came up with their treasured gold objects to pitch in to help pay the national debt during the 1997 financial crisis, the volunteers who recently suffered the harsh cold winds to clean up the oil leak on the winter beaches, and many citizens and civil servants who staunchly carried out their duties, these are the protagonists in this success story. (Lee, 2008a; 2008b)

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<sup>143</sup> Deutsche Demokratische Republik. In English: German Democratic Republic (GDR).  
Bundesrepublik Deutschland. In English: Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

Lee reminds his audience that this year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Daehanminguk*, South Korea. He points to the Korean War when *we* fought and regained *our* lost land and ‘established *our* nation’. Those fellow citizens that built *uri nara* can only be from the South. The history of *uri nara* can only be that of the South. Thus *uri nara*, through this presentation of patriotic history, can only be in the image of the South.

## North Korea

Just as banal reminders and patriotic markers of Southern identity run through these speeches, the presentation of North Korea by politicians also unconsciously shapes concepts of the nation’s identity. As would be expected in a South Korean inauguration speech, both Presidents express a hope for unification with the North. In Roh’s speech, references to the North are contained mainly in the foreign policy section alongside discussion of other foreign relationships including Japan, China and the United States alliance. Roh reminds his audience that to achieve peace on the Korean peninsula, ‘our society’ (*uri sahoe*) must be healthy<sup>144</sup>. Similarly, ‘we’ must maintain close relations with other nations in ‘our’ efforts to lessen tensions with the North. The North is thus presented as an ‘other’ outside of *uri*, us, our and we.

In President Lee’s speech, the absence of Northern issues is stark, the focus instead is on economic policy and plans (Chung and Park, 2010). He opens his speech with a greeting to his fellow citizens of *Daehanminguk* and the 7 million overseas Koreans. In doing so, there is a forgetting of the North Korean people. Within Lee’s lengthy speech, only about ten lines are devoted to the North – and these are not found until the ninth page of a twelve-page speech. We are, however, reminded by President Lee of the huge differences that exist between the North and the South – Lee announces his plan to bring per capita income of North Koreans to \$3,000 a year. At the time of Lee’s speech, South Korea’s per capita income was around \$26,000<sup>145</sup> (EIU, 2011). Given such a difference, perhaps it is easier to forget to remember the North.

These banal reminders of ‘us’ and ‘we’, the flagging of the nation, and the patriotic celebration of that nation writes Billig, is one ‘part of the “normal”, habitual condition of contemporary state

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<sup>144</sup>한반도에 평화를 정착시키려면, 우리 사회가 건강하고 미래 지향 적이어야 합니다.

<sup>145</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit estimate, GDP per head US\$ at PPP (purchasing power parity)

politics' (Billig, 1995: 96). The South Korean experience shows how the banal nationalism of contemporary state politics can not only influence the way an existing national unit renews and inspires itself but can also construct a new national community, particularly where an established political people or community has already existed.

#### **6.4.1.2 In newspapers and other media**

The theory of banal nationalism points to the power of the news media to define, remind and intensify national identity and nationalist sentiment. Analysing a number of British newspapers, Billig shows how they 'flag the homeland' and remind 'us' of who 'we' are on a daily basis. He shows how, when reading a domestic newspaper such as *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom, we know and at the same time are reminded that a story about 'the' government or 'our' Prime Minister refers to the British Government and the British Prime Minister. We find a similar situation in South Korea, where the news and media are constructing and intensifying concepts of the South Korean nation through the flagging and unconscious reinforcing of nation and nationality on a daily basis. In the following, I analyse three South Korean language news sources to demonstrate this phenomenon: *Chosun Ilbo*, *Kyunghyang Sinmun* and *Ohmynews.com*.

The *Chosun Ilbo* is South Korea's most widely circulated newspaper, with an average daily print circulation of 1.84 million copies in 2010 (*Chosun Ilbo*, 30/11/2010c). Its editorial viewpoint is conservative and its journalism is of high quality, thus making it analogous to Britain's *The Telegraph* or Australia's *The Australian*. The *Chosun Ilbo*'s ubiquity and position in the news market means that although it might not be the main source of news for young readers they might incidentally access it at home, in the library or through secondary reporting by other news sources. The *Kyunghyang Sinmun* has a progressive viewpoint underlying its reporting. It has a relatively low circulation of just over 290,000 (*Chosun Ilbo*, 30/11/2010c) but its youthful and educated audience might be expected to consume *Kyunghyang* content both in print and online. *Ohmynews.com* is one of Korea's foremost alternative online news and current affairs providers, with a substantial youth audience. It is also considered progressive in its political stance<sup>146</sup>.

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<sup>146</sup> I have not been able to locate readership numbers for *Ohmynews.com*.

## *Uri nara*

The banal nationalism of the news media through stories, images and even advertising, constructs *uri nara* in the image of South Korea on a daily basis. One front page headline in the *Chosun Ilbo*, 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 states that ‘Small traces of radioactive Material from Japan have been detected in the atmosphere of *Our Nation* [my emphasis] as they pass by on their way to the North Pole and Siberia<sup>147</sup>. The article continues that for the first time radiation has been detected ‘in the country’, *guknae*, literally ‘nation inside’<sup>148</sup>. The unconscious remembering of the nation as South Korea is confirmed by the article when a technician from the *Republic of Korea* Nuclear Safety Agency is reported as saying ‘that for the first time radioactive particles that may have originated in Fukushima have been detected in our nation (*uri nara*)’<sup>149</sup>. There is no mention of the impact on the territory of the North.

Later in the same edition of the *Chosun Ilbo*, the nation’s weather is presented using a map that depicts only South Korea. The headline says that the whole of the centre will have rain or snow – the centre of South Korea, the reader assumes. Here readers are reminded who ‘we’ are through image as well as words, with the physical absence of North Korea in the presentation of the nation’s weather.

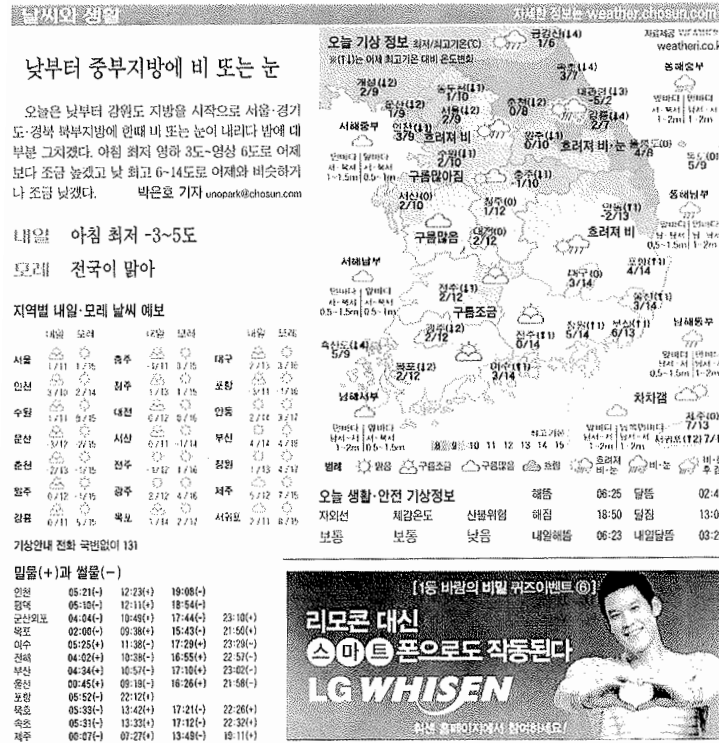
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<sup>147</sup> 미량의 방사성 물질, 우리나라 대기서도 검출 북극.시베리아 거쳐온 듯.

<sup>148</sup> 일본 후쿠시마 원전에서 나온 방사성 물질이 국내에서 처음으로 검출됐다.

<sup>149</sup> 한국원자력안전기술원은 “우리나라 대기 중에 후쿠시마 원전에서 나왔을 가능성 물질의 하나인 제논(Xe)이 검출됐다” 고 27 일 밝혔다.

Figure 4 The nation's weather (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A18)



On the front page of the *Kyunghyang Sinmun*, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011 edition, in an article about unplanned development on the DMZ (De-Militarized Zone between North and South Korea) there is the unconscious flagging of the South as naturally ‘us’, the readers. All references to South Korean institutions in the article require no notation or reference. The *gukhoe* (national assembly) and *gukbang* (national defence) and other government departments, including the office of the Prime Minister, have no South Korean marker<sup>150</sup>. The readers assume and at the same time are unconsciously reminded that the nation and its institutions are those of the South. However, references to the North are explicit and delineated. They are not to be imagined as part of the nation, *guk*, of the *gukhoe* or *gukbang*, the ‘national’ of the National Assembly or national defence.

<sup>150</sup>국방부는 지난해 6 월이 공문을 국무청리실, 행정안전부 등문정부 부처와 경기-강원도 등에 보낸 것으로 확인됐다.

## North Korea and the ‘other’

The presentation of North Korea is handled differently by each news source. In the *Chosun Ilbo* and the *Kyunghyang Sinmun*, North Korea is addressed under news sections such as ‘society’, ‘politics’, ‘economics’ and is mixed with domestic South Korean issues. However, in these sections when articles refer to South Korea, no prefix or particular marker is generally required. For example, in the politics section of the *Chosun Ilbo* one headline reads ‘The Names of Large Contributors to Political Parties Should be Made Public’<sup>151</sup>, (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A6). It is assumed that the reader knows this relates to political contributions to South Korean political parties. And in knowing or assuming this, the reader unconsciously reminds themselves of the South Korean nation of which they are part. North Korea-related stories, however, require specific markers to separate them from the domestic South Korean news stories.

*Ohmynews.com*, the online news source, however, categorises its North Korean news very differently. In some ways it seeks to portray a more inclusive attitude to North Korea by including it in a section entitled *minjok*. The meaning of *minjok* has a connotation of the wider Korean ethnic race, not confined to any one territorial space. However, this categorisation also means that North Korean news is not included in the domestic political or society news section. Indeed it is placed alongside international news in a section called *minjok-gukjae*, roughly translated as ‘*diaspora-international*’.

Where foreign countries are referenced in these sections and elsewhere in the newspapers, their full name or the corresponding Chinese Character is used: *Il* (日) for Japan; *Jung* (中) for China; and *Mi* (美) for America and so on. This is also the case for stories relating to North Korea. In those sections, the Chinese character for the North, *Buk* (北), or the term *Bukhan* (북한), is used. The North is treated like the foreign nations that need to be marked out or flagged, and not assumed to be part of *uri nara*, and different from ‘us’, ‘we’ or ‘our’.

In all three newspapers we see the difficulty in presenting news of the North in an inclusive manner. In the *Chosun* and *Kyunghyang*, North Korea was included in domestic news section but marked out as separate. On *Ohmynews.com*, despite giving the inclusive title *minjok*, North

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<sup>151</sup> 당비 많이 낸 사람' 공개추진.

Korean news was linked to the foreign news section. Whichever way North Korean news is handled, the flagging of the South as ‘our’ nation and the unconscious remembering of the North and South as separate nations is taking place.

### **Patriotism and nationalist sentiment**

Alongside this flagging of nationhood and nationality are many expressions of South Korean nationalist sentiment and patriotism. The front page of the *Chosun Ilbo* has a number of displays of patriotism. Emotion is immediately inspired by the moving photograph of a bereaved and tearful Korean mother touching the bronze image of her son’s face at a new military memorial. Her son was one of the forty-six naval personnel killed in the 2010 sinking of the Republic of Korea naval ship the *Cheonam*. A second patriotic marker is an advertisement for S-Oil, one of Korea’s largest oil companies. The advertisement seeks to attract customers not on the basis of price or product, but instead highlighting that it exports 60 per cent of its product overseas, and is thus a patriotic South Korean company supporting the nation’s economy. Many other nationalism-stirring (and nation-flagging) stories are spread throughout the newspaper: Korean young people score lowest in the world for community and communalism because of educational competition (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A14); Korean travellers in China are at risk from eating contaminated pork (note the story is not about the risk to Chinese consumers) (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A13); the memorial for the fallen sailors in the *Cheonam* incident is inaugurated (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A13); South Korean experts are helping the Japanese solve the nuclear crisis (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A5); China has not honoured a reciprocal agreement between the South Korean and Chinese police forces (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A12); an opinion piece on how to encourage the consumption of Korean books overseas (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A35); an interview with a Korean captain of a ship saved from Somali pirates by Korean marines (*Chosun Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: A33) and so on. We see similar patriotic markers on the front page of the *Kyunghyang*, the same nationalism-stirring S-oil advert, an advertisement for Hanyang University where the university describes itself as ‘a force of growth for Korea’s future’ and ‘the engine of Korea’. A third advertisement, also on the front page, by the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education celebrates Gyeonggi province producing students who are ‘the hope of South Korea’. In a sports section full of celebrations of South Korean sports stars, a patriotic photograph is published of a dying father being wheeled to watch his son’s debut in the

South Korean national soccer team (*Kyunghyang Ilbo*, 28/03/2011: 26). For a newspaper to have a progressive viewpoint, it seems, means being no less of a South Korean patriot.

If much of this seems rather obvious – handling of North and South Korean news separately, home news being related to South Korea – then that is the crucial point. It is in its obviousness that the unconscious banal effects are overlooked and the power of banal nationalism is able to take its effect in constructing a conception of the nation in the image of South Korea. ‘*Uri nara*’ one student says ‘only means South Korea. But actually I don’t really think about it’ (Interview in Korean, Chonnam University, 08/06/2010). Billig says that such ‘utterances are not merely produced by contexts, but they also renew those contexts’ (Billig, 1995: 108). Thus as ideas of South Korean nationalism are constructed they are continually renewed by these banal utterances and reminders of *uri* in political rhetoric, news reporting and in the non-self conscious use of *uri* in daily language.

#### **6.4.2 The universal code of nationality**

Just as there is an unconscious imagining and reminding of what we are, thus there must also be an unconscious differentiation with others. Billig calls this the ‘universal code of nationality’ which stipulates ‘that to a particular person, a particular people and particular homeland are to be imagined as special and others, therefore as not so special’ (Billig, 1995: 78). Imagining a world of nations necessarily means the construction of ideas of us and them. We cannot imagine being part of our own national community unless we imagine a world of nations within which *uri nara* exists (Billig, 1995: 63). Throughout this thesis, there is explicit evidence of North and South Korea being perceived by young people as two different communities. But why do these banal imaginations contribute to the forming of separate nations and nationalism and not just separate communities? Why can it be classed as a nationalism and not just as a regionalism? So far I have relied heavily on Gellner’s definition of nationalism and the importance of the coincidence between the national and political unit. Billig also reminds us of Anderson, who writes that communities, be they religious, regional or national, are distinguished by the way they are imagined by their constituent members (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995: 68). South Korea is a nation that is lived daily in its political administration, its economic activity, and in the context of a wider international system of nation-states. South Koreans demonstrate their national



particularity with their national anthem and flag and their seat at the UN, the ultimate sign of a nation in the international community (Billig, 1995: 86). In speeches, the use of *Daehanminguk* and *uri nara*, in its reference to the South Korean political community, is used not in the context of a region or local community but in the context of a nation. South Korea has created its own story as a nation with its recent history of dramatic development and economic growth. This is the history of modernisation that both Presidents and young people cite as a point of pride and identity. They are celebrating South Korea and imagining South Korea as a nation, not a region like Jeolla, or a metropolis like Seoul. And its identity is not compared to other regions, but to other nations like the US, China and North Korea. It is an imagining of South Korea as a nation.

### **6.4.3 Forgetting the North**

There is not only a differentiation occurring with the North, and a banal nationalising of both North and South. There is also a banal *forgetting* of North Korea. Were it not for the fact that I hold a particular interest in North Korea, I suspect that for the majority of my stay in South Korea I would have forgotten about the other part of the peninsula. Indeed, even though I hold a deep interest in the North, and have travelled there on a number of occasions, the North seems almost mythical as I move between the exclusive shops, prestigious hotels and glamorous restaurants of Seoul. Just as many South Koreans fail to realise that they are unconsciously imagining or remembering South Korea, they also fail to realise that they are forgetting the North and the unified nation.

This was not the case during the early student movement where images of the North and the concept of a unified Korea were kept alive through discussions, activism and protest despite the physical division. In more recent times, however, the absence amongst young people of discussion, discourse and inquiry about North Korea is becoming as powerful as physical division in removing North Korea from the consciousness of young South Koreans through banal forgetting. The *isipdae* have little sense of connection with the North, no direct experience of politics of the North (such as involvement in the student politics of the 1980s and 1990s), no recollection of family in the North, and are generations removed from those who directly experienced a unified nation and the Korean War. As many young people commented, it was not until they went overseas that they become engaged with North Korea because of the coverage

given to the North in the foreign media. This separation in time and experience only adds to the hardening of this South Korean sense of identity amongst the *isipdae* as compared with the older generations. As Billig says, ‘just as a language will die rather for want of regular users, so a nation must be put to daily use’ (Billig, 1995: 95). Just as their South Korean identity is flagged on a daily basis, so young people are banally forgetting the North and a unified concept of *uri nara*.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The transformation of South Korean nationalism has demonstrated the importance of globalisation, democracy and banal nationalism in the construction of nation and identity. In the context of South Korea, this transformation is important because it has taken an unexpected direction. South Korea arose as a result of the division of the Korean nation through the interventions of foreign armed forces. The nationalism that existed in South Korea following division held onto the notion of a unified nation and motivated an energetic student-led unification movement. Yet the forces that have constructed South Korean nationalism have now acted against unification to construct a nation with a separate and independent identity from the North. This is a very interesting development, and understanding this transformation is crucial because it has consequences for many other nations that have forms of division operating within their borders. Examples include autonomous regions like Scotland or Wales, with their own devolved political administrations within the United Kingdom; and of course Taiwan which we have discussed from a comparative perspective in this chapter.

This understanding of the shifts in South Korean identity must be central to preparations for unification or warming of ties between the North and South. Too much scholarship and rhetoric focuses upon North Koreans as products of their system in the way that East Germans were presented as ‘products’ of their respective Socialist system (Bender in Grinker, 1998: 68). It is important to understand that South Koreans are as much a product of their respective system and experiences. Their national identity has been constructed by their experiences of globalisation; the nationalising power of democracy; and the banal encounters with nationalism in everyday life. As we have seen, identity and nation is a dynamic concept. South Korean national identity is

therefore no more of a representation of true Korean identity than North Korean identity. Both have been influenced by their own set of experiences over the period of time since division.

The forces of democracy, globalisation and banal nationalism have shaped the concept of *uri nara* in the image of South Korea. In the next chapter, I continue to use a constructivist approach to examine the formation of this emerging South Korean nation. I examine how globalisation has acted to give rise to the manifestations of this South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status.

## Chapter Seven

### **Globalisation and the manifestations of South Korean nationalism**

*I think Korea should be more of an international actor or responsible regional actor to improve its influence...and at the same time improve its national branding. I think that Korea is underrepresented or underestimated in some other countries compared to its economic power.*  
South Korean University Student in 2009

*The past year was truly a memorable year for us. The Republic of Korea was able to stand tall in the international arena by hosting the G20 Seoul Summit. Korea has now emerged as a nation that helps to establish the international order rather than always having to follow others.*  
President Lee Myung-bak, 2011 New Year Speech

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The term *globalised*-cultural nationalism as a description for this new nationalist phenomenon deliberately aims to emphasise the importance of globalisation in both the formation and expression of the emerging South Korean nationalism amongst young people. In Chapter Five, the globalised-cultural quality of this new nationalism was discussed in relation to inclusion and exclusion within the South Korean national unit. In the last chapter, Chapter Six, I analysed the role of the international networks formed as a result of globalisation in shaping *uri nara* in the image of South Korea. Using a constructivist analysis, this chapter examines globalisation in relation to the *manifestations* and *characteristics* of the South Korean nationalism found amongst young South Koreans: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status.

In this chapter, I first detail the efforts by the government and large conglomerates to raise the global profile of South Korea and examine how this, in turn, is shaping the characteristics of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism. As decisions and processes that affect individual countries increasingly take place outside of the country's border, globalisation challenges nation-

states to ensure that they position themselves economically and politically so as to maximise their influence.

The Lee Myung-bak government launched the ‘Korea Brand’ campaign to meet the challenge. It has been supported in this effort by a number of companies, including Hyundai and Korean Air. The aim of the ‘Korea Brand’ campaign is to raise the profile and standing of South Korea to an international audience. It seeks to garner respect for Korea’s economic power and recognition of Korea’s cultural standing<sup>152</sup>. Although this campaign is ostensibly aimed at an international audience, I argue that it has had a marked impact on domestic conceptions of identity. Indeed, these are compelling similarities between the South Korean nationalist sentiment expressed by the *isipdae* and the Lee administration’s ‘Korea Brand’ and other similar campaigns. I further demonstrate how ideas of status, modernity and cosmopolitan-enlightenment have been fuelled by these government and *chaebol*-led campaigns and their accompanying promotional advertisements.

Second, I examine how economic globalisation, through the neo-liberal values that accompany the globalisation process, has influenced expressions of identity amongst young people. Drawing on the work of Hagen Koo (2007a), Nancy Abelmann et. al. (2009) and my own interviews, I show how neo-liberal values such as consumerism, individualism, and competition have inspired the South Korean globalised-cultural nationalist manifestations of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status in the daily lives of Korea’s *isipdae*.

## **7.2 Globalisation, national branding and the characteristics of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status**

Since the establishment of the Republic of Korea government on the 15 August 1948, South Korea has worked to position itself within the international community to help achieve its national goals. This process began with the United Nations. South Korea joined as an Observer Mission to the UN in 1951 and became a full-fledged member in 1991. In 1989, during the administration of Roh Tae-woo, South Korea was one of the founding members of APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. A number of authors, however, have marked the presidency of Kim Young-sam (1993-1998) as the start of Korea’s earnest efforts to globalise its

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<sup>152</sup> [www.koreabrand.net](http://www.koreabrand.net)

economy (Kim, Samuel 2000; Clifford, 1998). Under Kim, Korea achieved WTO membership in 1995 and accession to the OECD in 1996. The term '*seggyehwa*' or globalisation, became the watchword of his administration. It was under Kim Dae-jung, however, that globalisation might be argued to have gained real momentum. Indeed, reforms of the Korean economy following the 1997 economic crisis effected some of the most liberalising and globalising changes to the political economy ever seen in Korea.

As economic and political globalisation has increased, many nations are realising the importance of being active and influential participants in the processes and organisations that shape the globalisation project<sup>153</sup>. Various Korean administrations have implemented proactive policies in regards to globalisation. These were aimed at achieving desired economic and political outcomes, but they also sought to demonstrate to political constituencies that Korea is in control of its own destiny. This is especially important given the legacy of *sadae*, 'worshipping the great', which reflects the perception of some South Koreans that Korean governments are subservient to outside interests such as the US. Mistrust of international institutions also remains strong in Korea as a result of the often unpopular economic reforms imposed by the IMF following the 1997 economic crisis. Notable examples of these reforms were the liberalisation of the labour markets and changed rules on foreign ownership of domestic companies.

Many Koreans feel that there is substantial work to be done in terms of building the so-called 'national brand' and establishing a strong presence on the international political and economic scene. Chapter Four examined the experience of South Korean students living abroad and encountering the ignorance of foreigners about the difference between the North and South. We saw that this was just one of the causes of their frustrations with Korea's relative anonymity within the international community. The Simon Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index is the leading measure by which national brands are compared and ranked<sup>154</sup>. The Index surveys over 20,000 people across 20 different countries to discover their attitudes towards fifty other countries. In most areas, South Korea is perceived poorly by the people of other nations in both absolute terms and in relative terms compared to Japan, arguably Korea's closest 'brand' rival. In

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<sup>153</sup> See for example Australia's campaign to become a member of the UN Security Council and the efforts of countries such as Turkey and Serbia to be considered for membership of the European Union.

<sup>154</sup> <http://www.gfkamerica.com> (viewed 01/08/2011).

<http://www.simonanholt.com/research/research-introduction.aspx> (viewed 01/08/2011).

addition, the gap between the perception of Korea by its own people and the perception of others is significant.

Table 14 Ranking of fifty national brands in 2009 (Simon Anholt-Gfk Roper, 2009)

(With 1 as the highest rank and 50 the lowest rank)

	Korean people	Japanese people		Korean products	Japanese products
US	32/50	18/50		23/50	2/50
UK	45/50	13/50		24/50	2/50
China	42/50	48/50		13/50	6/50
India	28/50	2/50		14/50	1/50
Brazil	47/50	5/50		18/50	1/50
Japan	47/50	1/50		23/50	1/50
Korea	1/50	18/50		1/50	3/50

	Korean culture	Japanese culture		Korean governance	Japanese governance		Korea as tourist destination	Japan as tourist destination
US	36/50	7/50		27/50	19/50		39/50	13/50
UK	37/50	11/50		35/50	19/50		45/50	11/50
China	21/50	26/50		32/50	47/50		32/50	35/50
India	23/50	5/50		28/50	2/50		37/50	9/50
Brazil	25/50	6/50		40/50	12/50		43/50	8/50
Japan	20/50	4/50		28/50	5/50		39/50	1/50
Korea	5/50	9/50		20/50	15/50		3/50	9/50

Given these national brand challenges presented by globalisation, President Lee Myung-bak launched the Presidential Council on National Branding (PCNB) in 2009 with the explicit aim ‘to enhance Korea’s national status and prestige in the international community’. The strategy of the PCNB is as follows:

1. To play the role of a governmental control tower for nation branding based on a master plan designed to raise the nation's international standing.
2. To pursue differentiated branding strategies according to the awareness of Korea by continent/country as part of a plan to achieve systematic management of the national reputation.
3. To reflect public opinion in government policies by gathering feedback from citizens and foreigners imbued with a love of Korea and all things Korean<sup>155</sup>.

The programme of developing the 'Korea Brand' is predominantly aimed at an international audience to promote an understanding of South Korea as an innovator, economic powerhouse, social democracy and attractive cultural destination<sup>156</sup>. However, efforts by the government to build the Korea Brand have also impacted upon domestic perceptions of the Korean nation and national identity.

### **7.2.1 Branding Korea**

The Korea Brand rhetoric permeates South Korea's domestic political agenda. It is visible across the nation's media in, for example, government and commercially sponsored advertisements. The pinnacle of President Lee Myung-bak's Korea Brand campaign was the hosting of the 2010 G20 summit, the first to be hosted in Asia. In 2009 President Lee announced that Korea would be hosting the G20 with a speech entitled, 'a paradigm shift for moving toward centre stage from the periphery of the international arena'. Korea's role as host of the G20 Summit was promoted 'as a chance for Korea to be a major player' and to realise 'a bigger, greater Korea<sup>157</sup>'. The audience for President Lee's speech was of course a domestic one. As I noted above, the Korea Brand theme pervades domestic political life and rhetoric even though its primary audience is an international one. In the six months leading up to the G20 Leaders Summit, for example, there was a ubiquitous presence of G20 Seoul Summit logos on public notices across Korea. The hanging of G20 summit lanterns, flags and banners across Seoul signalled the political authorities' pride in hosting the first ever G20 summit.

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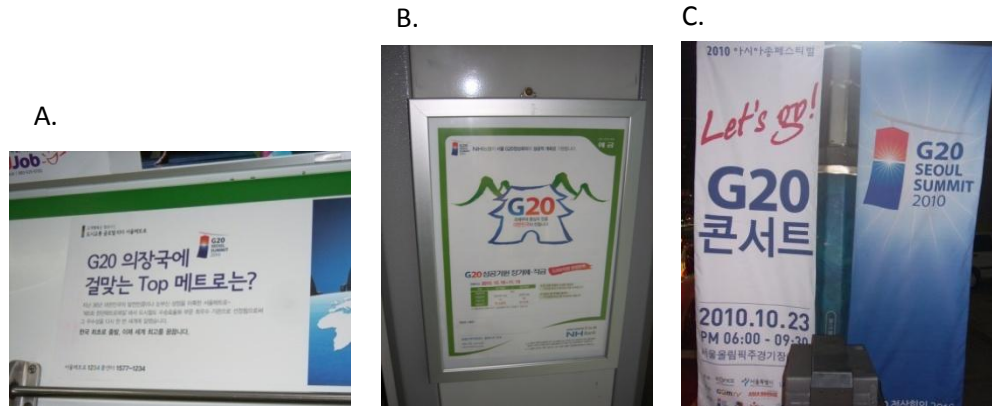
<sup>155</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/util/util\\_about\\_pcnb.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/util/util_about_pcnb.do) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>156</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/how/how\\_search\\_index.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/how/how_search_index.do) (viewed 14/08/2011).

<sup>157</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_contributive.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_contributive.do) (viewed 15/08/2011); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrY5rsbGHHM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrY5rsbGHHM) (viewed 01/08/2011).



Figure 5 Examples of G20 Summit logos and promotion across Seoul



Figs. A & B: Advertisements on the Seoul Subway for the G20 Summit and G20 Summit-related events. Advertisement ‘A’ reads: ‘Do we have a Top metro that is fit for a host of the G20 summit?’ This was followed by another advertisement that urged Korean travellers to follow certain behaviours on the metro when in front of foreigners. Fig C: This advertisement in western Seoul advertises a concert celebrating the G20 summit.

Alongside the posters and banners, and the pervasive use of the G20 Summit logo by various government authorities, the PCNB launched a television advertising campaign celebrating Korea’s hosting of the G20 Leaders Summit and its status as a global leader. This advertisement was broadcast across television channels in the lead up to the summit. The following is a transcript of the advertisement:

**Transcript of G20 Summit advertisement<sup>158</sup>**

Narrator: We asked questions and then we asked more questions.

Narrator: In order to nurture our ideas and our energy we never stopped challenging ourselves and never stopped the questions coming.

Image: Korean children in class asking questions of their foreign teacher.

Image: Two Korean female nurses interacting with a Caucasian nurse.

Image: A Korean businessman and a foreign businessman consulting.

<sup>158</sup>해설자: 물어보고 또 물어 봤습니다.

우리의 생각, 우리의 힘을 갖기 위해 우리는 끊임없이 질문해 왔습니다.

이제 세계가 우리에게 묻습니다.

세계 경제의 전환점이 될 대한민국 서울에서 세계의 정상들이 그 해법을 찾습니다.

세계의 이목이 집중될 서울 G20 정상회의. 우리의 글로벌 리더쉽과 높은 시민의식으로 완성될 것입니다.

서울 G20 정상회의.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJk7ydfXUlg&feature=related> (viewed 23/06/2011).

<<Uplifting music>>

Narrator: Now the world is coming to ask us questions.

Narrator: This is a turning point for the global economy where a solution can be found at this world summit in Seoul, Korea.

English with Korean subtitles: How did Korea overcome the global economic crisis so quickly?

Nordic language with Korean subtitles: What direction should the world economy take after the economic crisis?

Spanish with Korean subtitles: To get past the economic crisis what kind of plan for growth should we design?

Narrator: The eyes of the world will be concentrated on the Seoul G20 Summit

Narrator: We will do this through our global leadership and civilisation.

Narrator: The Seoul G20 Summit!

Image: A group of Korean and foreign workers consult at a shipyard.

*All images have a sepia tint indicating these images are from historical Korea when it was developing and learning from others.*

Image: At the (staged) G20 Summit.

Image: At the G20 Summit a Caucasian male delegate asks a question.

Image: At the G20 Summit a Caucasian male asks a question.

Image: At the G20 Summit a Caucasian female asks a question.

Image: Variety of scenes from the G20 Summit.

Image: Foreigners watching the G20 Summit on a TV screen at Korea's modern Incheon airport.

A Korean family apologising to others in a restaurant when their child shouts.

A young Korean man stands up on a bus and offers his seat to an older woman.

Downtown Seoul.

Image: G20 Seoul Summit logo.

Figure 6 Images from the G20 Summit advertisement



Alongside the promotion of the G20 Seoul Summit there have been other domestic advertising campaigns that have promoted particular representations of Korea. Under the ‘Global Korea’ section of the Korea Brand project, the ‘Global Citizenship’ motif involves a domestic advertising campaign, ongoing since 2009, that has promoted ‘Koreans in the world, global citizens in Korea’ where ‘global standards and global etiquettes are provided as a guideline to become a mature global citizen’<sup>159</sup>. This campaign includes a collection of advertisements encouraging particular ‘polite’ cosmopolitan and enlightened behaviours amongst Korean tourists when travelling overseas in order to ‘protect’ the Korean Brand. The advertisements include, for example, advice not to point at people when abroad; to use the word ‘please’ when making a request to a foreigner; and not to leave litter or graffiti at tourist sites. The tagline for one advertisement, entitled ‘etiquette for global travel’, tells its audience ‘you are a small Korea’<sup>160</sup>, meaning that every individual Korean represents Korea as a whole when travelling overseas.

Another advertisement, as part of the same ‘Global Korea’ campaign, done in partnership with Hyundai Motor Company, is entitled ‘Global Citizens’. This advertisement was broadcast across terrestrial Korean channels in 2010<sup>161</sup>. This advertisement demonstrates the frustration of finding that South Korea is little known overseas and the recent successes in efforts to achieve greater recognition for South Korea.

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<sup>159</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_globalkorea.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_globalkorea.do) (viewed 23/06/2011).

<sup>160</sup> 당신은 작은 대한민국입니다. [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_globalkorea.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_globalkorea.do) (viewed 23/06/2011).

<sup>161</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_globalkorea.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_globalkorea.do) (viewed 23/06/2011).

## Transcript of PCNB ‘Global Citizens’ advertisement<sup>162</sup>

Young boy in English: Let me introduce myself, I’m from Korea.

Young Caucasian girl in English: Korea?

Narrator: We come from a country which we have to introduce and explain, and explain and still explain yet again. And so, explaining Korea was left in the hands of a small boy.

<<Stirring music>>

As the small boy grew up, however, so did his nation.

Young boy grown up speaks in English: I am from Korea.

Caucasian Business Man in Korean:  
*Daehanminguk!* [The Republic of Korea!]  
<<Applause>>

Narrator: Now, this nation needs no more qualification. And we are growing into an even greater *Daehanminguk*.

Image: Young boy making a presentation to his fellow classmates at what appears to be a prestigious overseas school.

Image: School children appear disinterested and confused.

Image: The young boy tries to introduce and explain Korea with his globe to another school friend, and then a policeman and they both shake their heads in confusion. He sits alone with the globe and walks along a street with the globe looking despondent.

At home, the globe is lit and he looks longingly at Korea.

Image: The following subtitles flow across the image of a globe:

<<2002 World Cup semi-finals>>

<<2009 Contract to supply nuclear energy technology to the UAE>>

<<2010 5<sup>th</sup> place in the Winter Olympics>>

<<2010 Host of the G20 Leaders Summit>>

Image: The Korean businessman is standing at the head of a grand conference table in a modern office. A variety of foreign business people are sitting around the table.

Image: Caucasian businessman.

Image: The businessmen around the table applaud a Caucasian businessman shaking hands with the Korean businessman.

Image: Conference table at the G20 summit.

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<sup>162</sup> 소년: Let me introduce myself. I’m from Korea.

같은 반 친구: Korea?

해설자: 설명하고, 설명하고, 또 설명해야 하는 나라가 있었습니다. 그래서 소년의 손엔 언제나 지구본이 들려있었습니다. 소년은 자랐고, 그만큼 소년의 나라도 자랐습니다.

<자막: 2002 월드컵 4강 신화, 2009 아랍에미리트 원전 수출, 2010 동계올림픽 5위달성, 2010 G20 정상회의 개최>

어른이 된 소년: I am from Korea.

백인 남성: 대한민국! (박수)

해설자 2: 이제 그 나라는 긴 수식어가 필요 없는 나라. 더 큰 대한민국으로 자라고 있습니다. 이 캠페인은 국가브랜드위원회와 현대자동차가 함께하고 있습니다.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyEcbHghMAM> or [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_globalkorea.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_globalkorea.do) (viewed 16/08/2011).

Narrator: This campaign is presented by Hyundai and the Presidential Council on Nation Branding.

Image: Korea as seen from space.

Figure 7 Images from the ‘Global Citizens’ advertisement



Alongside advertising campaigns linked to the Korea Brand campaign, the government agency KOBACO, Korea Broadcast Advertising Corporation, also uses advertisements to promote issues of social concern such as recycling, opposition to corruption and phone phishing<sup>163</sup>. One particular advertisement, which was broadcast in 2009 and 2010, was entitled ‘I am Korea’. This presentation of idealised South Korean behaviour mirrors the cosmopolitan-enlightenment manifestation of South Korean nationalism expressed by young people.

<sup>163</sup> Phone phishing involves the use of the telephone in fraudulent schemes to obtain personal information from victims.

## Transcript of KOBACO ‘I am Korea’ advertisement<sup>164</sup>

Narrator: We have developed, but we must keep developing.

Narrator: We are advanced, but we must become more advanced.

Narrator: We are approachable, but we need to become more approachable.

Narrator: Our heart is passionate and warm, but it needs to become more passionate and warm.

Narrator: Let’s make a Korea that we can be even more proud of.

Narrator: The Korea Brand.

Narrator: You make it.

Image: Modern Korean cityscape switching into the image of a Korean car driver in the modern city beeping his car horn and shouting at other drivers.

Image: A young Korean girl is talking to a friend over a video link on a personal computer in a coffee shop. The image enlarges to show the same girl talking too loudly and attracting disapproving stares from Caucasian coffee shop customers.

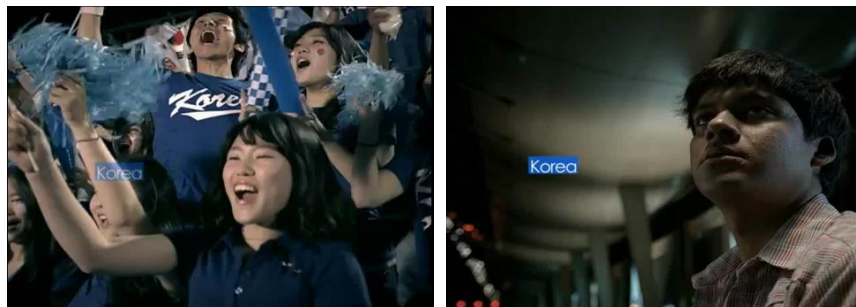
Image: A foreign tourist is checking a map of Seoul showing the ease of transit from the airport to the city. Image enlarges to show a Korean man brushing past and bumping into the tourist without stopping to apologise.

Image: Young Korean sports fans passionately supporting their team. Image switches to a South Asian man sitting alone at the airport as cars pass him by.

Image: Narrator’s words.

Image: Narrator’s words.

Figure 8 Images from the ‘I am Korea’ advertisement



<sup>164</sup> 해설자: 우리는 달라졌지만, 더 달라져야 합니다.  
우리는 앞서갔지만, 더 앞서가야 합니다. 우리는 가까워졌지만, 더 가까워져야 합니다.  
우리의 가슴은 뜨겁지만, 더 뜨거워져야 합니다.

Korea 보다 더 자랑스러운 Korean.

코리아 브랜드, 당신이 만듭니다.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RsyGt6bqtY> (viewed 23/06/2011)

These selections of advertisements demonstrate the widespread desire for recognition of Korea's status as a modern, developed and successful nation. They demand cosmopolitan-enlightenment, sophistication and *savoir faire* from Korea's citizens. They express Korea's equal status, indeed leadership role, amongst other nations. The content is both shaping and reflecting many of the manifestations of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism expressed by young people.

## **7.2.2 The 'Korea Brand' and expressions of globalised-cultural nationalism**

The Korea Brand website is the face of the Presidential Council on National Branding and the website describes the Korea Brand under five headings<sup>165</sup>: 'Contributive Korea'; 'Innovative Korea'; 'Captivating Korea'; 'Multicultural Korea'; and 'Global Korea'. Similarities between the government's Korea Brand campaign and the expressions of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism by many young people in interviews suggest that these campaigns are playing a role in the shaping of expressions of South Korean nationalism emerging amongst young people.

### **Contributive Korea**

'Contributive Korea' celebrates Korea's development experience as a model for other nations to emulate. It claims that Korea is 'the only country in Asia to have achieved both economic development and democracy; the only country in Asia to have grown from being a recipient country to a donor country [of aid]. What took developed countries more than 100 years to work on, Korea was able to make it in the 40 post-war years. Now, Korea is prepared to share its insights on development with other countries'<sup>166</sup>.

Similar sentiments to this promotional campaign that expresses pride in Korea's development and its potential role as a model for other nations were visible in the statements of a number of young people that I interviewed. The following represents some of these responses<sup>167</sup>:

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<sup>165</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_index.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_index.do) (viewed 15/08/2011).

<sup>166</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_index.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_index.do) (viewed 15/08/2011). This direct quote from the koreabrand.net website raises some questions as to their measurement of 'achieving both economic development and democracy'. Many would agree that other Asian nations including Japan and Taiwan could also make similar claims.

<sup>167</sup> This quotation given in response to the question 'what makes you most proud of being Korean?'

I am so proud that we recovered from the [1997] economic crisis so quickly...our nation developed dramatically changing from a poor nation to a wealthy nation. Nowadays there are many poor nations in Africa. Just like a rich country gives money to help poor nations, I think that we should be helping and supporting them. (Interview in Korean, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

### **Innovative Korea**

‘Innovative Korea’ celebrates Korea’s advanced technology in manufacturing, its world leader status in shipbuilding and its innovative role in areas such as animation. The ‘Innovative Korea’ section states that ‘although the territory of South Korea is small, only the 100<sup>th</sup> largest in the world, the country has become a rule maker. That’s a big leap from its past role as a rule follower...the country’s position has particularly expanded in economic and financial sectors...Korea’s voice is being heard when the global agenda is set<sup>168</sup>’.

Achieving its ‘rightful’ position in the international arena with recognition for Korea’s achievements, as celebrated in ‘Innovative Korea’, was very important for many young people in my interviews. The following excerpt is an example of this sentiment amongst young people<sup>169</sup>:

Like I hear from the news that Korea has been ranked at the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> [place] in the world for economic power but after attending some international conferences I personally felt that Korea is underrepresented as compared with its relative competitiveness as an economic power. So I think Korea should be more of an international actor or responsible regional actor to improve its influence, enhance its influence, and at the same time improve its national branding. I think that Korea is underrepresented or underestimated in some other countries compared to its economic power. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

### **Captivating Korea**

‘Captivating Korea’ aims to promote Korean culture in an appealing and modern way. For example the ‘Captivating Korea’ section declares ‘Hangeul [the Korean alphabet] is reborn in the

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<sup>168</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_innovative.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_innovative.do) (viewed 23/06/2011).

<sup>169</sup> This quotation given in response to the question ‘what makes you most proud of being Korean?’



world of art. Let's re-evaluate Hangeul! The superiority of Hangeul as an alphabet is undisputed. It is a language unique to Koreans and is the most scientific and efficient system of writing. It is also artistic and aesthetically pleasing<sup>170</sup>. A selection of photographs showing modern presentations of Hangeul, for example in furniture and fashion design, accompanies the write-up. Other cultural examples used to celebrate 'Captivating Korea' include Seoul's designation as the 2010 World Design Capital, Taekwondo, Korean cinema and traditional food culture. Korea's achievements in modern medical technology, and its potential as a destination for medical tourism, are further highlighted. 'Captivating Korea' also points to the presence of Korean exhibits at 50 major museums in 17 countries and calls culture 'the window for national marketing'. This is a very modern and globalised presentation of Korean national culture<sup>171</sup>.

This pride in Korean cultural traditions is echoed in many interviews with students and young people. In particular, Hangeul was a point of pride for a number of interviewees<sup>172</sup>:

For me it's the Korean writing system. It is very easy to text in Korean because of our effective phonetic alphabet. And it is easy to develop computer programmes in Korean. The Korean writing system was recently exported to Indonesia<sup>173</sup>. I am so proud of that. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

I am most proud of our food. I recently read a book about Korean food. Korean food is very healthy. Many people today suffer from diseases brought on by the Western diet. If we introduce Korean food to the world, everyone will become healthier. (Interview in Korean, Chonnam University, 08/06/2010)

There are definitely several things to be proud of but the one thing I am most proud of is the 'Korean Wave' (*hallyu*) phenomenon. *Hallyu* has swept China, Taiwan and Japan. In the past, Korean culture did not have wide appeal, and Korea accepted music, film and architectural styles from Japan and China. Now we're the one to influence other countries. I am so proud of *hallyu*. (Interview in Korean, Soongsil University, 20/04/2010)

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<sup>170</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_captivating.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_captivating.do) (viewed 15/08/2011)

<sup>171</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_captivating.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_captivating.do) (viewed 15/08/2011).

<sup>172</sup> The following quotations were given in response to the question 'what makes you most proud of Korea?'

<sup>173</sup> In 2009, the Cia-Cia tribe of Indonesia's Buton Island chose *Hangeul* as the official script to transcribe their aboriginal language (*Chosun Ilbo*, 09/10/2009d).

## Multicultural Korea

This section celebrates efforts made by both government authorities and volunteers to support multicultural families. In particular, it highlights the work of South Korea volunteers in ‘cultivating multiculturalism’ which ‘leads to a culture of sharing in a multicultural society’. Examples include volunteer workers ‘who teach [immigrant women] how to cook Korean food and give classes on paper art and internet use’ and the Association of Hometown Housewives who ‘teach immigrant wives how to make *kimchi* and rice cakes<sup>174</sup>. Whilst there is some reference to the contribution of immigrants, for example Filipino immigrants teaching English in Korea or immigrants sharing their own culture in schools, ‘multicultural Korea’ puts the major focus upon the goal of assimilation. This concept of multiculturalism – adoption by immigrants of Korean cultural norms – was discussed in Chapter Five, and the following quotations are a reminder of the similarity between young people’s emerging South Korean identity and the message of multiculturalism within the ‘Brand Korea’ and similar campaigns<sup>175</sup>:

It depends on how the person behaves – immigrants can [be considered Koreans] if they try their best to become Korean. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

Foreigners can become Korean if they think like us and are proud of Korea. (Interview in Korean, Chonnam University, 08/06/2010)

Immigrants are coming to Korea to live here. After living here for a long period of time, they get to know Korean culture and so they can communicate with Koreans without any difficulty. Even though they were not born in Korea, they can live as Koreans, with us, if they learn and adopt Korean culture. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

## Global Korea

‘Global Korea’ highlights various campaigns that promote the Korea Brand internationally. One example is entitled ‘Korea leads you to a more convenient life’ and is designed to promote Korea

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<sup>174</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_multicultural.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_multicultural.do) (viewed 15/08/2011).

<sup>175</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘do you think foreigners can become Koreans?’

as a global leader of high-technology ‘by introducing top-notch high-tech products that you commonly use in your daily life<sup>176</sup>’. Such campaigns aim to improve identification and awareness of products from leading Korean brands including Samsung, Hyundai, LG and Kia. Reflecting the goals of this ‘Global Korea’ section, young people in interviews expressed a similar desire for Korean brands and Korean innovation to be appropriately recognised internationally:

Did you watch the Winter Olympics like Kim Yu-na and other sports stars who educate the image of Korea to the world. And the electronics part, Samsung, LG and when they ask me about South Korea in the US, I just ask them about their cell phone and that’s made in Korea and they didn’t know. Most of my US friends have a Samsung or LG phone and they don’t know [that it’s Korean]. That’s what I’m most proud of. (Interview in English, Yonsei University, 29/04/2010)

### **7.2.3 Interaction between the *isipdae*’s national aspirations and the ‘Korea Brand’**

The ‘Korea Brand’ campaign and other efforts to raise the profile of Korea internationally have been at their most energetic since the start of the Lee Myung-bak regime. These campaigns mark the pinnacle of efforts to build a position for Korea in the international community that began in earnest with the Kim Young-sam government’s globalisation project. One result of such ongoing efforts domestically is seen in the correlation between the goals of the ‘Korea Brand’ project and the manifestations of nationalism visible amongst young people. In the PCNB ‘Global Citizen’ advertisements a young boy expresses frustration when he discovers that foreigners have not heard of or know little about South Korea. This is similar to the experiences recounted by students in many of my interviews. The recent achievements of Korea such as the 2002 World Cup, the laudable performance in the 2010 Winter Olympics and the hosting of the G20 Summit, the advertisement suggests, is how Korea can improve its status in and be noticed by the rest of the world. These achievements of status are thus aligned with South Korean nationalism and national identity and are visible in the attitudes and responses of many of the young people that I interviewed. The highlighting of particular behaviours in these advertisements, for example the

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<sup>176</sup> [http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow\\_globalkorea.do](http://www.koreabrand.net/en/wow/wow_globalkorea.do) (viewed 23/06/2011).

actions of Koreans when travelling overseas or in front of foreigners, which seek to encourage the manifestation of cosmopolitan-enlightenment, is constructing individual conceptions of South Korea and how South Korean national identity should be represented.

These advertisements are *influencing* the attitudes of young people or at least providing the language through which they can express their South Korean nationalism. It is of course also likely, however, that the government authorities and *chaebol* who are funding these advertisements feel that these messages resonate with the South Korean public, and are therefore *reflecting* the public's national sentiments, so that their own brand will benefit from this type of nationalist presentation of Korea. The presentation of South Korea by elites in response to globalisation, and the construction of South Korean identity by globalisation amongst young people, is thus mutually reinforcing.

The concerted efforts by the incumbent Lee administration, over the last few years have, it seems, had a marked influence on expressions of national identity amongst young people. The parallels between the Presidential Council on National Branding's 'Korea Brand' drive and other similar campaigns, and the South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism emerging amongst young people, are compelling: from the pride in high-tech companies and the demand for *savoir faire* in fellow Koreans, to the importance of international experience and the pride in a modernised version of Korean traditional cultures. These elite responses to globalisation through these various campaigns are interacting with the nationalist sentiments emerging amongst young people to shape the characteristics and manifestations of the globalised-cultural nationalism visible amongst South Korean *isipdae*.

### **7.3 Globalisation, neo-liberal values and South Korean nationalism**

Life on campus for Korean students nowadays is very different from that of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. On a visit to most Seoul-based university campuses you will be likely to find a *Burger King*, *Dunkin' Donuts* or a *Twosome Place*<sup>177</sup>. It is hard to imagine the radical student leaders of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s discussing Marxism over a chain-outlet cappuccino. Yet these glaring symbols of globalisation in Korea's centres of learning are popular amongst the *isipdae*.

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<sup>177</sup> A *Twosome Place* is a Korean coffee chain owned by *Cheil Jedang* a company close to the Samsung group.

They display the growing importance of profit and market forces – the rise of neo-liberal values – in the lives of young South Koreans.

Globalisation can be divided into three types: social, economic and political (Baylis and Smith, 1999). This section examines economic globalisation which is closely linked to the spread of market economics and neo-liberal ideology (Tooze, 1999: 227). Neo-liberalism emphasises economics, based on individual market rationality, above all other forms of social organisation. At the international level, neo-liberalism argues for ‘unfettered global markets and a consumer-based individualistic ethic which transcends national communities’ (Tooze, 1999: 227). The belief in the benefits of neo-liberal ideology and economic globalisation drives governments to remove barriers to movements of trade, capital and labour where politically feasible.

A range of concepts and ideas accompany economic globalisation and neo-liberalism. These include, for example, commercialism, consumption and consumerism. Hagen Koo has written about the role of consumerism and consumption in transforming a relatively egalitarian system in Korea to one that has become increasingly unequal. He remarks that a ‘new pattern of social inequality has emerged in the context of globalisation and is closely related to the economic, cultural and ideological changes brought about by this macro-global force’. His work examines how globalisation has transformed ‘the nature of inequality and the way inequality is translated into cultural practices in today’s South Korean society’ (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 2). In the following section I use Koo’s analysis alongside other scholarly work and empirical evidence to demonstrate how neo-liberalism has expressed itself in the emergence of a South Korean national identity through the characteristics of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status.

### **7.3.1 Cosmopolitan-enlightenment**

The characteristic of cosmopolitan-enlightenment as an expression of the South Korean national identity demands that young people demonstrate *savoir faire*, sophistication and civilisation. Neo-liberalism has introduced into Korea increased competition, individualism and the intensification of profit motive<sup>178</sup>. In turn, the importance of developing the symbols of so-called

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<sup>178</sup> See Chapter Eight for a full discussion of the rise of competition and individualism amongst the South Korean *isipdae*.

cosmopolitan-enlightenment has intensified as a way of equipping oneself to survive in the neo-liberal environment (Koo, Hagen 2007).

A good demonstration of sophistication and *savoir faire* in Korea is to graduate from an elite domestic or foreign university. In recent years, a plethora of scandals involving forged academic histories amongst celebrities shows the importance of an elite education for establishing one's position in Korean society. Examples of such celebrities include Oh Mee-hee, an actress and radio presenter, who falsely represented herself as a graduate of Cheongju University; Shin Jeong-ah, a high profile art professor at Dongguk University, who had bogus degrees from US universities including Yale; and Choi Su-jung, a star Korean actor, who was found not to have graduated from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, as he had claimed. A *Joongang Ilbo* article quotes Yonsei sociology Professor Whang Sang-min who explains that 'even celebrities in Korea face nagging doubts that they might not succeed without a proper degree' (Chun su-jin, 2007).

Of course, the importance of university ranking is neither specific to Korea nor new. However, since the widening of participation in tertiary education, and the growth in the number of tertiary institutions, attendance of elite colleges such as Ewha, Yonsei or Korea University has become increasingly prized. As one Korea University professor of sociology remarks in a student magazine article, 'as is the case in any other country, our country also has ranks 1, 10, and 100. However, the difference in the extent of reward given to graduates of the first ranker and that given to those from the 100<sup>th</sup> ranking university is dramatically bigger here than in most other societies'. The article concludes, 'this notion can be linked to the reason why people in South Korea greatly prefer gaining entry to prestigious universities' (An, Hang Rin 2010: 29).

Abelmann et. al. argue that although education stratification is longstanding in Korea, the rapid embrace of neo-liberal restructuring and globalisation by the education sector has accentuated differences in the 'brand capital' of universities. They argue that 'central to that brand capital is globalisation itself, namely universities' differential ability to go global (e.g. the extent of study abroad opportunities, of English-language course offerings etc.)' (Abelmann et. al, 2009: 229). A second aspect of a university's 'brand capital' is the alumni network that can be accessed upon

graduation from an elite university. The alumni networks of elite universities act as key sources of information and opportunity in Korea. Unlike in the past, where alumni networks were a *support* to graduates entering the employment market, they have become increasingly important for *securing* income and employment opportunities. In a student magazine article, Professor Kim Joonho commented that these alumni networks were now more directly associated with capitalist motives stating that ‘these university cliques have deteriorated into a profit-seeking faction’ (An, Hang Rin 2010: 30). For those who go to second or third-tier universities, however, there is often a perception that the resulting networks are unlikely to provide much useful support to them upon graduation. Abelman et. al. interviewed one student who complained about other poor quality students at her university, a lower-tier college in the outskirts of Seoul. Abelman et. al. argue that through her complaint ‘she was also remarking on the lack of network or social capital’ at her university where ‘there were neither strategic ties nor helpful information to be garnered’ (Abelman et.al., 2009: 237).

The editor of a mid-tier Seoul university newspaper explained that students at his university are most interested in articles that help them improve their curriculum vitae - their ‘spec’ - and vocational chances. They want articles to also include stories about scholarships and exchange programme opportunities. In particular, they liked articles about the areas in which the university had won acclaim believing that their chances in life were improved if the prestige of the school increased. This, he said, demonstrates the interests of students and ‘how students are very aware of the position of their university’ (Interview in English, anonymous university newspaper editor, 28/05/2010). In a separate analysis, amongst the top five most read articles of the Dongguk University Korean language newspaper in May 2010, was a story on Dongguk University’s second place national ranking for teacher training; a story celebrating Dongguk University students’ success in the judiciary examination; and an article on the achievement of Dongguk students in the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) examinations.

The rise of neo-liberal attitudes has led to a commoditisation and market valuation of one’s background including of course university attendance. The importance of enrolling in the right university, of demonstrating cosmopolitan-enlightenment, sophistication and *savoir faire*, is growing in importance not because of the quality of education received, but because of prestige

and the alumni network opportunities (Seth, 2002: 249-251). Neo-liberalism and marketisation have emphasised the importance of cosmopolitan-enlightenment in the making of one's identity in South Korea in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive environment.

Another example of the impact of neo-liberal ideology in the everyday lives of young people is the commoditisation of individuals through the idea of 'spec' (스펙 or *seupaek*). 'Spec', from the English word 'specifications' is described in an university magazine as the achievement of 'better academic grades than other competitors, more qualifications than others, and even more certifications and licenses as well. The race is getting ever fiercer and fiercer' (An, Hang Rin 2010: 29). It is a term used mainly by young people in their teens and twenties. It expresses the commoditisation of the individual and the creation of the individual as a profit-seeker that must be made efficient and competitive to contend with others for opportunity, and has become the currency for identifying and valuing a friend or competitor. Moreover, the concept of 'spec' has a strong resemblance to the manifestation of cosmopolitan-enlightenment within the South Korean globalised-cultural national identity.

Similarly, Abelman et. al. show how young people have accepted a related idea of 'self-management' (*jagi gwalli*) where the 'new model student is an autonomous student-consumer who is responsible for managing his or her own lifelong creative capital development' (Abelman et. al., 2004: 232-233). The authors further demonstrate how many young Koreans make educational choices and appraisals using economic rationality and concepts of market value. Abelman et. al. point out that neo-liberal concepts such as self-management – which might be considered similar to 'spec' or aspects of cosmopolitan-enlightenment – seemed to have been internalised by students across all tiers and types of university who 'accept the "burden" of managing their personal formation'. Abelman et. al. reveal the irony of this acceptance of self-responsibility at a time when structural differences in the education system and the competitive labour market create huge barriers for all but those from the most elite institutions (Abelman et. al, 2004: 242).



The search for ‘spec’ or cosmopolitan-enlightenment also has been encouraged by a huge market that has grown up around education in South Korea. Korean households spent a record US\$ 33 billion on education in 2008<sup>179</sup>. Figures from the first half of 2009 showed that households spent on average 7.4% of income on education. This is up to nine times higher than other major advanced countries<sup>180</sup> (*Chosun Ilbo*, 19/10/2009e). In an interview with Steve Yi, Head of Strategy at the advertising agency WPP-Korea, he expressed the view that the growing education market has created a superficial and commercial attitude to education with a sense that skills and sophistication can be easily purchased. He notes that ‘students think there are a lot of easy fixes to very difficult or complex issues. You can’t fix the fact that your English skill might not be very good by going to an English private institute for six straight months intensively, it just doesn’t work that way. I believe that this is an example of complex issues that they try and simplify. Young people try to simplify education just like they consume products’ (Interview in English, Steve Yi, Grey Group WPP, 01/06/2010). The neo-liberal idea of individual competition has in turn encouraged the emergence of the manifestation of cosmopolitan-enlightenment as an important value and identifier for successful young South Korean members of the national unit. Thus other non-ethnic Koreans who have the right ‘spec’, for example graduates from Ivy League universities or those with experience at high profile companies, can be easily respected and included. They are imagined as worthy equals and competitors, sophisticated and global, and thus fellow participants and members of the national unit. Here we see, once again, how ideas of class and identity are overlapping.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the ownership and display of *myeongpeum* or famous brand names, is another expression of the cosmopolitan-enlightenment manifestation of South Korean nationalism. The growing popularity of traditional Korean products through the so-called ‘well-being’ phenomenon was highlighted in Chapter Four as I demonstrated the importance of *savoir faire* and sophistication to South Korean young people. Hagen Koo argues that both of these phenomenon have come about as a result of globalisation and the rise of neo-liberal values. Koo points to the effect of globalisation on opening the Korean market to imports of foreign goods.

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<sup>179</sup> [www.koreabrand.net](http://www.koreabrand.net) (viewed 01/08/2011).

<sup>180</sup> These statistics from the Bank of Korea compare Korea’s statistics with household educational spending in the US (2.6 per cent); Japan (2.2 per cent); the U.K. (1.4 per cent); France (0.8 per cent) and Germany (0.8 per cent).

The opening of markets, which includes the reduction of tariffs on many foreign luxury items, has increased the ease of access to luxury goods. He remarks that the easing of market restrictions means that ‘new fashions and life-styles were now instantly disseminated to the Korean market from the global center’, the global centre being the West (Koo 2007a: 8). In addition, Koo points out that the post-IMF crisis period from 1998 not only saw dramatic growth in high quality foreign imports, but there was also a ‘loosening of social sanctions toward consuming foreign luxury products’ (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 8). This passion for *myeongpum*, and the growing acceptance of consumption of luxury items, was encouraged through extensive marketing. The marketing of foreign and domestic luxury goods promoted the consumption of labels such as Louis Vuitton, Prada and BMW as a route to achieving an aspirational, upper-class, and sophisticated identity, particularly amongst the young. Similarly, the trend for well-being goods came as a result of the market taking advantage of health and environmental concerns (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 9). The emergence of the well-being market emerged in the early 2000s around the time of the SARS outbreak which coincided with a series of yellow dust clouds blown from China and Mongolia to Korea and a spate of media revelations about contaminated foods (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 9-10). Well-being and ‘health and wholesomeness’ was commoditised, through for example, the commercialisation of items such as traditional foods (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 10). Now so-called ‘slow-food’, traditional health foods, could be consumed conveniently whilst at the same time allowing consumers to display a sense of sophistication and *savoir faire*. And so in the realm of education, consumption and even health, the effects of economic globalisation and the neo-liberal project are laid bare through the expression of cosmopolitan-enlightenment as a manifestation of South Korean nationalism amongst young people.

### **7.3.2 Modernity**

The neo-liberal project has helped to shape ideas of modernity as a manifestation of South Korean nationalism. The power of consumerism and choice amongst young people has enabled them to drive change in the shape of national culture. Thus culture has been formed in a way that adequately represents their identity as South Korean young people. Steve Yi, Head of Strategy at WPP-Korea, emphasises the clear link between consumption and consumerism and ideas of modernity in youth culture. When asked what attracted young people when making choices

about consumption Yi replied, ‘it’s all about fun. They are driven by fun and how much entertainment they can get out of a brand. The twenties are definitely driven by entertainment. Commercials for telecommunications or brands like *Coca Cola* [whose target audience is youth], they always focus on entertainment, music and fun. The idea that the brand is creating a zone of fun for you makes it much more attractive’ (Interview in English, Steve Yi, Grey Group WPP, 01/06/2010). Such an example can be linked to the manifestations of modernity, where cultural commodities have been made ‘fun’ and modern in order to be attractive to young people. This includes, for example, traditional Korean drumming made modern by *dulsori*, the modernised presentation and use of hangeul, the establishment of b-boying as a representation of Korean culture and the modern adaption of traditional food and drink. Furthermore, Yi says that in public, young people prefer Korean brands because it remains important to demonstrate loyalty to South Korean products. However, ‘the iphone is an example of one of those items that transcends cultural barriers. There are those brands that transcend cultural barriers. Whether you like it or not, things like the Sony Playstation, you can’t copy it, there’s no Korean equivalent....if it’s copyable then they will try to copy it and make a better version but if it’s not then young Koreans accept the fact that it’s the best out there and there’s no reason why they should settle for second best’. Indeed, the desire to be modern, current and fashionable is central to their South Korean identity. Whenever a choice is to be made, displaying a modern and cutting-edge product trumps the display of a Korean brand as an expression of identity. Globalisation, neo-liberal ideas, market forces and consumerism has helped to shape the characteristic of ‘modernity’ seen in the displays of South Korean nationalism amongst the *isipdae*.

### **7.3.3 Status**

Abelmann et. al. point to the link between the introduction of neo-liberal values to the education environment, and the nationalist manifestation of ‘status’ which refers in particular to the reputation of the South Korean nation in the wider international community. They find that the elitist structure of the Korean university education system, a structure that has been encouraged by globalisation (Park, Sang-young 2010) is defended by some young people because of the belief that the development of excellence, even if it provides advantage to only a select few, is of

ultimate benefit to South Korea. They further demonstrate that some young people believe that more egalitarian policies in education would threaten the competitiveness of South Korea and Korea's position in the race for global standing (Abelmann et. al., 2009: 235). Abelmann and Park have also explored this in regard to English education in Korea. Here the argument is made that the rampant desire for English education in South Korea is in part an expression of nationalism – a recognition that Korea needs young people to be equipped with English skills for the nation to succeed in this English language-oriented, highly internationalised environment (Abelmann and Park, 2004). Abelmann et. al. argue, therefore, that cosmopolitan behaviour and nationalism are not contradictory concepts in the minds of South Korean young people, and indeed, that elitism and competition at the individual level are seen as beneficial for national status. This attitude was confirmed in my own interviews. One student suggested that despite the rise of individual values, young people did not find any contradictions with wider ideas of nation and national good<sup>181</sup>:

People in their fifties seem to think that if the nation benefits then they will also benefit. Contrary to this way of thinking, young people believe that if they benefit, then their benefit will lead to a benefit for the nation. Young people think that their benefit comes first and benefits for the nation follow. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyungwan University, 06/05/2010)

Other interviewees echoed a belief in the linkage between individual attainment and national attainment. A young female, when asked what globalisation meant for Korea, linked individual educational achievement in areas such as English with the 'equipping' of Korea and the goal of making Korea 'competent':

[Globalisation means] that Korea should increase its competency...I have heard that we should adapt to the global age, that we should learn English...for me globalisation means speaking English and for Korea it's about gaining competency. (Interview in Korea, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

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<sup>181</sup> The following quotation was given in response to the question 'do you think there is a generational difference between those in their twenties and older generations?'

For many of the *isipdae*, it seems, neo-liberal values have encouraged ideas of individualism, competition and self-interest in their educational and personal lives. This does not conflict with the interests of the wider Korean nation; indeed, they believe it promotes them. Thus, economic globalisation through its impact on young people in South Korea has not diminished the sense of nation but encouraged a sense of South Korean nationalism based upon ‘status’ as an extension of their own individual achievements.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has underlined how globalisation is constructing and shaping the characterisations and manifestations of the new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism that is emerging amongst young people. The challenge of globalisation has inspired an official response in the form of the Korea Brand project to raise South Korea’s global profile. This in turn is influencing and interacting with the attitudes of South Korean society as the government aims to position Korea within an increasingly competitive international environment. The Korea Brand campaign is not exclusive to young people and all generations in South Korea will have been exposed to its message. The relevance of the Korea Brand and other similar campaigns to the emergence of this new identity is therefore in the *interaction* between the constructed South Korean nationalist sentiment of these young people and these efforts to raise the global profile of South Korea. These phenomena serve to reinforce and support each other to shape the characteristics of this emerging nationalism.

In addition, the introduction of neo-liberal values in the everyday lives of young people – the globalisation of education, the rise of free market attitudes, consumerism and choice – are constructing the manifestations of the new national identity seen amongst increasing numbers of the *isipdae*. The effect of globalisation through the introduction of neo-liberal values has shaped the lives of these young people and given rise to the three characteristics of South Korean nationalism: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status.

As was suggested in the above analysis, globalisation has increased the importance of competition in the lives of the *isipdae*. In the next chapter, therefore, I explore the rise of

competition within South Korean society as a result of increased globalisation. I argue that this competitive society has encouraged many young people to actively and instrumentally embrace this globalised-cultural South Korean nationalism. As they try to succeed and survive in a globalised South Korea these young people are rejecting a unified nationalism that includes North Korea and are thus rejecting the possibility of future unification.



## Chapter Eight

### **Globalisation, the competitive society and risk: Embracing, adopting and accepting the South Korean identity**

*If I am honest actually I hate globalisation. Globalisation brought the economic crisis to Korea and because of globalisation we have to learn English.*

South Korean university student in 2010

*Young people are so selfish and individualistic. They care about themselves and how they can achieve their aims in life, much more than issues like unification.*

*That is what we South Koreans are like!*

South Korean university student in 2010

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This final chapter examines the *embracing, adoption and acceptance* of the South Korean globalised-cultural national identity by growing numbers of young people in South Korea. The gradual construction of a new identity does not mean that populations will easily or quickly adopt or accept these novel expressions of their national and personal distinctiveness. The speed at which South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism appears to be emerging amongst young people, however, suggests that other forces may be at work, encouraging the adoption and acceptance of this new South Korean nationalism. Thus, in this chapter, I conduct an instrumentalist analysis on the emergence of South Korean nationalism and I argue that young people are actively embracing this South Korean identity and rejecting unification and a unified identity in a reaction to the challenging and complex social and economic circumstances in which they find themselves.

Here I show that globalisation has intensified levels of competition in the education, employment and social arenas. Compounding these struggles are two particular concerns of young people that relate directly to the event of unification: the experience of the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis and perceptions of the German unification experience. By examining interview data and analysing the choices young people are making in their social activism, I show the causation between these



economic concerns and the conscious adoption and acceptance of the concept of *uri nara* in the image of the South only. I demonstrate that economic self-interest has encouraged a deliberate rejection of unification and a unified identity. Further I show how the pressures of the South Korean globalised society mean that young people have little opportunity to consider unification and a unified identity. Youth society has become so individualised that either by circumstance or deliberate choice, young people are loathe to find space or time for a concept of a nation beyond their own immediate interests; in other words, beyond South Korea.

## **8.2 Globalisation and the rise of competition in South Korean youth society**

The purpose of this section is to introduce and explain the deeply competitive nature of the education and employment environment faced by young people in South Korea. In particular, I examine the role of globalisation in the perpetuation of a ‘survival of the fittest’ culture<sup>182</sup> (Park and Woo, 2007; An, Hang Rin 2010). This presents the background against which young people are accepting and adopting the concept of *uri nara* in the image of South Korea.

### **8.2.1 Education**

The importance of formal education is emphasised across Korean society and the high rates of school and university attendance are reflected in the emphasis placed on receiving a good education. There is a strong link between the high status applying to education and Confucian beliefs. Confucian ideas and philosophies were introduced to the Korean Peninsula during the *Joseon* dynasty (1392-1910) and vestiges of Confucian social organisation remain visible in modern Korean society. One example is the heavy emphasis placed upon hierarchy and social standing and the importance of education and scholarly learning in achieving and advancing social status (Cumings, 1997: 59-60; Seth, 2002: 250-252). The position of a university academic, for example, is highly regarded by wider society. Just as wealthy or aristocratic families in Europe might send their children to join the army or the church, some of the most prominent families in South Korea encourage their children to enter the academic profession in Korea’s best

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<sup>182</sup> The ‘survival of the fittest’ term has been used a number of times in relation to the challenges facing young people in South Korea. For example, the cover story of the April 2010 edition of *The Granite Tower*, a student magazine of Korea University, was entitled ‘The survival of the fittest: An outlook on our society’s extreme competition’.

universities. In addition, they may act as patrons to their own academic institutes. When asked what they might like to be when they grow up, it is not unusual for children to reply ‘professor’. Entrepreneurism, professional careers and blue collar jobs are seen as subordinate to academic careers even if the former might lead to more prosperous life-styles.

The social and economic advancement of Korean society and more importantly the globalisation of Korean society, however, have had a dramatic impact upon the education sector. This has changed the educational experiences of the current generation of young people when compared with that of previous generations. Whilst the education system continues to demand excellence and elitism in the Confucian tradition, the number of students and the percentage of the population participating in higher education is larger than ever. It is therefore no longer enough to be *absolutely* accomplished; you must also be *relatively* more accomplished as compared to everyone else. Competition has become the driving force of education in South Korea in the face of rising numbers of participants, growing expectations and the demands of globalisation, for example ability in English. This is the background against which young people shape their understanding of and make decisions about their nation and identity and related issues such as unification and immigration.

Globalisation has been central to the growth in competition within the educational setting. Park Sang-young argues that the ascendance of neo-liberal ideology in South Korean politics has ‘led to the rapid dismantling of the egalitarian framework for the country’s education policymaking’ (Park, Sang-young 2010: 579). Under Korea’s developmental state, an educational system had been built and sustained based upon egalitarian principles. A more comprehensive and equal education system was seen as the best tool for developing a disciplined and cohesive society by connecting with the general population whilst keeping the middle-class in check (Park, Sang-young 2010: 589). Park points out that since the 1990s, however, the policy emphasis has changed from an egalitarian social agenda to one based upon ‘such neoliberal values as competition and efficiency’ (Park, Sang-young 2010: 596). One of the drivers of this phenomenon, with the rise of democracy and an active civil society, has been the increased power of the middle-class. They have demanded, and received, a more selective and elite-based system. Examples of the resultant changes include the rise in selective schools, the extension of private education, the legalisation and social acceptance of private after-school coaching and the

creation of elite specialist schools. Access to private education and these elite primary and secondary educational opportunities in turn improves the chances of a young person to enter a more highly ranked tertiary institution (Park, Sang-young, 2010)

Another important example of the impact of globalisation upon the education system is the growing importance of English. Proficiency in English is now a requirement across a range of disciplines. It is no longer sufficient to be a competent engineering student; to succeed you must be a competent engineering student with skills in English. A good score in the TOEIC or TOEFL exam system is a requirement of entry to many academic courses as well as being a sign of cosmopolitan-enlightenment and international competence. From the perspective of the young person, survival and success in the Korean education system have become increasingly challenging and competitive.

Young people constantly referred to these many educational pressures in interviews. Indeed, some young people feel that the challenges they face in the current educational environment exceed those faced by their parents in the education system under the successive authoritarian governments. When asked whether this generation of young people faced greater challenges than previous generations, many young people believed that they did<sup>183</sup>:

There are a lot of differences. My friend just said that young people are indifferent to social issues because they feel too comfortable. I don't agree. I think that we just do not have time to spare. In my parents' day, people only had to do quite well to find a decent job and reach a certain status. But that is not enough for our generation. We have to be really good. It is so tough for our generation. I think that's the difference. Parents urge us to keep working 'hard' but what they mean by 'hard' is very different from what we know to be the meaning of the word if we want to succeed in this day and age. (Interview in Korean, Sookmyung Women's University, 21/04/2010)

I have heard that we should adapt for the global age, that we should learn English. Many people have become stressed out learning English. For me, globalisation means speaking English. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

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<sup>183</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question 'do you think that this generation of twenty-somethings are different to previous generations of twenty-somethings?' and 'what does globalisation mean to Korea?'

I think we have more challenges [than previous generations of 20 year olds]. When we get a job we have to prepare English, high school grades, plus internships and other experiences of volunteering. It is even more difficult to get a job but I guess less challenging regarding other things like democracy. (Interview in English, Dongguk University, 23/05/2010)

The immense competition in the education sphere is often blamed for the challenging psychosocial difficulties evident amongst many young people. Young people in South Korea are deemed to be the least happy and content with their lives as compared to young people in other OECD countries (McDonald, 2011). Suicide continues to be the largest cause of death amongst South Korean young people and young women are almost as likely to take their life as young men (OECD, 2009).

A recent spate of suicides at the Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), and the discussion that ensued as a result of these tragic events, provides some insight into the pressures that face young people. In the first semester of 2011, four students (and one faculty member) took their own lives. KAIST is Korea's second ranked educational institution and as such is one of Korea's more prestigious universities<sup>184</sup>. KAIST students are selected on a different basis from students who attend other universities in Korea because they are handpicked from Korea's special science high schools. These young people are seen as Korea's future leaders in the fields of science and technology.

In its pursuit of excellence and global competitiveness the university changed a number of its teaching policies. First, KAIST decided that all courses should be taught in English, even though many students, and indeed staff, had insufficient English language ability. Second, penalties in the form of higher fees were introduced for students who failed to perform adequately in examinations. At times, these penalties could result in fee increases of up to thousands of dollars (McDonald, 2011). Whilst the causes of suicide are complex, the intense educational pressure placed upon these young people was suspected of having contributed to their depressed state. Following these tragic deaths the university reversed their policy of fining poor performance and reduced the number of courses taught in English (McDonald, 2011).

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<sup>184</sup> The Times Higher Education Supplement in 2010 rank the top three Korean universities in descending order as Pohang University of Science and Technology (28<sup>th</sup>/200); KASIT (79<sup>th</sup>/200); Seoul National University (109<sup>th</sup>/200).

Success (or otherwise) in education also has wider social consequences. We saw in the previous chapter the importance of ‘spec’ in the evaluations of friends and colleagues and of others as potential members of the national unit. Educational status is especially important in one’s efforts to find a marriage partner in South Korea. South Korean society remains relatively socially conservative on the topic of marriage. For the majority of young people, both male and female, marriage remains an ultimate goal. In the 2005 World Values Survey, 86 per cent of young people stated that marriage was still a relevant institution and around 90 per cent ‘tended to agree’ with the statement that a child needs a home with both a mother and father (World Values Survey 2005).

These attitudes are seen amongst many of my close friends and colleagues for whom getting married is extremely important for both them and their families. The huge success of large commercial matchmaking companies also demonstrates the importance of marriage in South Korean society. The marriage market in South Korea, however, is highly competitive especially for men seeking wives. As already discussed in Chapter Five, this is partly as a result of son preference during earlier decades. According to the *Chosun Ilbo*, in the years of birth of the current generation of men and women of marriageable age – 29-33 for men and 26-30 for women<sup>185</sup> – the ratio of men to women will rise from 111 men per 100 women in 2011; to 119 men per 100 women in 2010; and to 123 men to 100 women in 2013 and 2014 (*Chosun Ilbo*, 14/06/2011c). The shortage of women and the subsequent difficulty for certain groups of males to find a partner (for example those who live in rural Korea and/or from lower socio-economic backgrounds) have already spurred a trend for marriage with women from other Asian nations including China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and North Korea.

With such a gender ratio the marriage market is extremely competitive even for the modern, urban, educated *isipdae*. To compound this, the business of marriage in South Korea involves many more actors than just the couple themselves. Like in many countries some young people in Korea will meet their partners through association at school, work or university. However, parents, family or friends might also play a role by introducing potential partners, and professional matchmakers or marriage bureaus are often employed by the family to assist in

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<sup>185</sup> Marriageable age refers to the average age for first marriages in Korea.

finding someone suitable. The ‘suitability’ of a partner is very important - family background, university, salary, job, age and surname are all extremely important<sup>186</sup>. Potential marriage partners more often than not require wider family approval and parents can veto potential matches. Young people often ‘self-censor’ in their choice of partner before parents even meet the potential match. To marry well, therefore, requires commitment to building one’s ‘spec’ from an early age. It is not uncommon for a partner to be rejected because he or she attended a university lacking sufficient prestige, had not achieved a postgraduate qualification or had even studied the ‘wrong’ subject.

One of Korea’s largest marriage bureaus is the company ‘Duo’<sup>187</sup>. Duo carried out research into the expectations of young people in South Korea who were entering the marriage market. The results showed that educational success was closely related to expectations of happiness in married life. Their conclusions included the following:

- The more respondents were satisfied with their education, the more they think that they should naturally get married.
- The more respondents are satisfied with their education the happier they believe that they will become due to marriage.
- The higher the level of education the more they think they should get married.
- The higher their level of education the greater their expected happiness from marriage.
- The higher their level of education the more positive an influence they think marriage has on life. (*Duo*, 2009)

These results point to the fact that young people believe that education makes them both more deserving of marriage and more likely to get married. In addition, the Duo research suggests that young people believe that by being highly educated they are more likely to attract a person with whom they will find satisfaction and contentment, as remaining unmarried is not considered an option for most young people.

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<sup>186</sup> It is preferred that a potential match does not have the same surname, which can be a challenge in a nation that takes surnames from a limited pool. Given the ubiquity of the surname Kim and Lee, is it sometimes possible to marry someone with the same surname providing the genealogy is different, for example from a different Kim clan.

<sup>187</sup> [www.duo.co.kr](http://www.duo.co.kr)

Overall, there is a perception that for more general success in life, achievement in education is essential. The pressures for young people in such an educational and social environment are immense. These pressures are not restricted to the education environment only, however. In the next section I examine globalisation and the increased competition faced by the *isipdae* with regards to the employment market once they complete their education.

### **8.2.2 Employment**

Ask most South Korean young people about their greatest fear or worry and they will say ‘finding a job’. Indeed, in my 76 interviews with young people, when asked what their greatest worries were for the future, the vast majority gave a response similar to the following:

Finding a job and deciding what to do in life. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

Since the current economic environment is not good I am concerned about getting a job. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

Getting a job of course! (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

I am so worried about the economy. You hear everywhere that the economy is in a bad shape. I agree with this analysis. In the past when I spent my parents’ money I didn’t really think about where it came from. Now I should be financially independent, but I have nowhere to go after graduating. I won’t be able to find a job once I’ve completed my undergraduate degree. So I want the economy to boom. If the economy can improve then hopefully new jobs can be created. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/05/2010)

One of the greatest pressures for young people whilst at school and university is the need to equip oneself for the job market upon graduation. Whilst South Korea more generally fared well during the recent economic uncertainty that has spread across the US and Europe, the situation for young people is much more uncertain. As of May 2011, unemployment for job seekers aged 15-29 stood at 7.3 per cent, a total of 311,000 people and a year-on-year increase of 13.4 per cent. Young people accounted for 38 per cent of South Korea’s unemployed. In the same period, unemployment amongst older people had fallen (*Chosun Ilbo*, 16/06/2011e). The Samsung

Economic Research Institute (SERI) argues that this official rate vastly underestimates the real number of economically unproductive young people<sup>188</sup>. They calculated that in the first half of 2010, the actually-felt rates of youth unemployment were 37 per cent whilst the official youth unemployment rate was only 8.6 per cent (Sohn et. al., 2010). Further, SERI reported that Korea has the highest rate in the OECD of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) for the five-year period after graduation.

Table 15 Number of young people with NEET status (not in education, employment or training) in South Korea (Sohn et. al., 2010)

After Graduation	NEET rates according to period of time since graduating
One year	36.8 per cent
3 years	28.5 per cent
5 years	36.8 per cent

The Korea Development Institute (KDI) attributes the high youth unemployment rate to the growing number of graduates as compared to graduate employment opportunities (*Chosun Ilbo*, 16/06/2011e). Given that 93 per cent of high school graduates go onto higher education this is perhaps understandable (OECD, 2010). Here we see how *absolute* performance is no longer enough to find a job. With so many graduates it is one's relative ability that becomes increasingly important. As a result, educational competition continues in an upward spiral as young people fight to get noticed in the job market.

One of the greatest challenges for young South Koreans is the social expectation related to employment. Young people strongly tend to favour so-called 'decent jobs' at large firms, such as the *chaebol* (the large conglomerates such as Samsung) and shun entrepreneurial roles, jobs at

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<sup>188</sup> For example, unemployment rates do not include discouraged job seekers who have ceased actively looking for work.



small and medium size enterprises even if they are innovative or cutting edge, or jobs at companies outside of Seoul.

However, as a proportion of available positions for young graduates, ‘decent jobs’ – for example a graduate scheme at Samsung or a tenure-track position at a university – are few and far between. The proportion of those entering the so-called ‘decent jobs’ takes up a mere 10.3 per cent of the total number of newly hired young workers (Sohn et. al., 2010). One SERI analyst explained how this demand for so-called ‘decent jobs’ has manifested itself in the cycle of educational competition:

If students fail to enter a large company they stop searching and would rather remain economically inactive...they live with their parents...[and] then they return to study again to try and improve their chances of a better job in a large company...for example, they invest a huge amount of time studying English or to get as many various ‘certifications’ as possible. But the competition to get into the large company section is so intense that in the end only a small portion of them can be successful. (Interview in English, Dr. Park June, SERI, 26/05/2010)

For those who cannot rely upon his or her parents, or cannot return to further study, or ultimately fail in securing that elusive *chaebol* job, wages and conditions are frequently dismal. The liberalisation of the labour market has increased the temporary nature of many employment opportunities and has placed downward pressure on salaries, particular those at the lower end or entry level of the job market. On average, small and medium size enterprises pay one third less than large conglomerates (Interview in English, Dr. Park June, SERI, 26/05/2010). More often than not, graduate employees find themselves in jobs where wages are well below their expectations and the gap between reality and expectations continues to grow.

Table 16 Comparison between actual and reservation wage of young workers<sup>189</sup> (SERI, 2010)

(Unit: 10,000 won; per cent)

Classification	Graduate of 4-year college		Graduate of 2-year college	
	2002	2007	2002	2007
Actual Wage (A)	1,726	2,199	1,196	1,617
Reservation Wage (B)	2,004	2,949	1,459	2,623
Satisfaction Rate (A/B)	86.1	74.6	81.9	61.6

In 2007, a book entitled *The 880,000 Won Generation* was published in South Korea and sold over one million copies. It attracted large scale discussion and debate and highlighted some of the fissures that exist between young people and older generations in regards to employment. The book argued that economic globalisation and the influence of neo-liberalism on South Korea has been the cause of an uncompromising and unforgiving ‘survival of the fittest’ culture amongst the *isipdae* as they attempt to make their way in the world of work. In particular the liberalisation of the labour market has created a culture of temporary employment and low salaries, a combination which sums up young people’s general experience of employment (Park and Woo 2007).

The book’s title comes from an estimate of the average monthly salary paid to young temporary workers. The idea stemmed from an advertisement for a job at the National Assembly with a monthly salary of just 900,000Won (around US\$830) but whose requirements demanded skills including competence in statistics and policy-making (Park and Woo, 2007: 20). The average monthly household income in Korea is 3,675,807 Won (US\$3,622) and expenditure 3,175,951 Won (US\$2,982)<sup>190</sup>. Such a starting salary for a highly competent young person is way below that which could sustain an average lifestyle in South Korea, especially if you live in Seoul. In

<sup>189</sup> This table in the SERI report is based on statistical data from the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Korean Ministry of Labour. Reservation rate refers to the minimum level of pay desired by potential employees.

<sup>190</sup> Korean Statistical Information Service, <http://www.kosis.kr/eng/> (viewed 14/08/2011).

addition to low wage levels, young people increasingly find themselves facing job insecurity. As a result of globalisation and neo-liberal reforms, the number of workers hired on an irregular basis has increased sharply since the financial crisis and the tradition of life-time employment for new recruits has disappeared. The number of irregular workers is estimated to be as high as 50 to 60 per cent of the total workforce (Seol, Wontai 2011). The average salary of a temporary worker is around half that of a permanent worker. Temporary workers are also less likely to receive benefits such as bonuses, a pension and health insurance (Ser and Baek, 2011). The trend toward temporary employment has impacted young people disproportionately. An analyst at SERI explained how young people find themselves moving between jobs:

They move from one spot to another spot between very unstable part-time jobs. The Japanese call these *freiter* – free-arbeiter – and the South Korean young people, if they do not find a regular job, they tend to get into irregular jobs without a fixed employment contract where they can be fired at any time without any severance pay. There is also a significant wage gap between regular and irregular workers...the probability of being hired on a temporary contract for college graduates is around 65 per cent when they first enter the employment market. (Interview in English, Dr. Park June, SERI, 26/05/2010)

Failure in these early stages of one's career in South Korea can have lifelong consequences, particularly for young males. As discussed in relation to educational achievements, employment makes a significant difference to one's marriage prospects:

Working in a large company is like having a product with a great brand. Working at a small company is a stigma for Korean youth. It might seem strange to other people in foreign countries but this is especially the case for Korean young men in order to get married. This is the reality. (Interview in English, Dr. Park June, SERI, 26/05/2010)

Marriage expectations exceed the actualities of life for many *isipdae*. In a 2009 survey<sup>191</sup>, women said they wanted as a spouse a man whose yearly income is at a minimum 45,790,000

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<sup>191</sup> This survey involved people enrolled with Duo and so would perhaps reflect those from mid-level socio-economic backgrounds. However, it is a good representative of expectations relative to realities across all levels of society. The high expectation relating to assets might reflect the hope that in-laws will gift property or other assets when a marriage is confirmed.

Won (US\$43,000) and whose assets are worth 215,000,000 Won (US\$202,000). Men want as a spouse a woman whose yearly income is 32,420,000 Won (US\$30,475) and whose assets are worth 144,380,000 Won (US\$135,717). In reality, however, the ideal income of a future spouse is much greater than the average income of men aged 31.7 and women aged 28.3 (average age of first marriage): 29,940,000 Won (US\$28,114) and 21,030,000 Won (US\$19,747) respectively (both around 65 per cent of the desired salary) (*Duo*, 2009). Most young people will have limited personal assets unless they are given property by their parents upon marriage. And given that only 6.4 per cent of women said that the income of a future spouse is *not* a critical factor when deciding a marriage, this must be of great concern to many potential partners (*Duo*, 2009). Within the marriage market also, there is a marked preference towards partners employed in the public sector whose job and salary is more certain than elsewhere (*Duo*, 2009) and correspondingly there has been a dramatic shift in preference amongst young people toward jobs in the public sector (Koo, Hagen 2007a: 7).

In addition to the social pressures that engulf young people as they embark upon their careers, there are also huge financial pressures in the form of tuition fee debt that all those but the very wealthy must face up to upon graduation. Adjusted for purchasing power parity, Korean tuition fees are the second highest in the OECD, with only US institutions charging more. Indeed, the issue of fees is so salient amongst young voters and their families that the incumbent President Lee's Grand National Party pledged to offer half-price tuition to struggling families in his presidential manifesto. The GNP's apparent back track on this policy, and a separate plan to privatise the publically run Seoul National University, stirred student and wider public protests in mid-2011 (Morgan, 2011). The pressure of student fees mean that increasing numbers of students are taking out loans to cover the cost of their higher education. Unable to find suitable employment after graduating, however, defaults on student loans are growing at a rapid rate. Credit delinquency (where repayments are more than six months behind schedule) has 'exploded', with a 38-fold increase in cases since 2006<sup>192</sup> (*Chosun Ilbo*, 01/06/2011b).

There is certainly an argument that globalisation and neo-liberal reforms have created growth and opportunity in South Korea and have forced the country to become much more competitive

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<sup>192</sup> According to the Korea Student Aid Foundation, there were 670 cases of credit delinquency in 2006 and 25,366 cases in 2010 (*Chosun Ilbo*, 01/06/ 2011b).

in the global market place. Many of South Korea's economic indicators are positive – general unemployment, productivity, inflation, national indebtedness and so on. One of more challenging sides of globalisation, however, is the flexibility that it brings to the workplace – the risk of downward pressure in salary levels, increased job movement, demand for key specific skills – all of which appear to have affected young people disproportionately. Korea has the highest proportion of irregular workers in the OECD and the lowest proportion of workers who have been in the same job for ten years or more (Seol, Wontai 2011). From my interviews with young people it was evident that future employment and job prospects were of grave concern to the overwhelming majority; against such a background, it is not a surprise to see the *isipdae* rejecting any national or political path that might bring additional instability, uncertainty and competition.

### **8.3 The 1997 Economic Crisis and German Unification: Concerns of the South Korean *isipdae***

Compounding the challenge of educational, economic and social competition and uncertainty, there are two overarching concerns that encourage young South Koreans to be risk averse with particular reference to unification: the 1997 Economic Crisis and the perception of the German experience in relation to unification. It is evident that both these events remain points of reference when considering issues of economic insecurity and the challenges of unification.

#### **8.3.1 The 1997 Asian Economic Crisis**

A 25 year old in 2010 would have been around twelve years old at the time of the 1997 Korean Economic Crisis. For the most part, the current generation of *isipdae* would have been old enough at that time to have a reasonable appreciation of the difficulties faced within their own family and the challenges faced by the wider economy and society. For those who were younger, the legacy of the economic crisis remains part of the political and national narrative – the pain of unemployment not seen in Korea since the Korean War; the gold donation campaign (where South Korean citizens donated gold to the government to help them repay their debt to the IMF and other creditors); pride in the rapid recovery; and continuing anger at foreign companies who profited from the crisis.

The memory of the 1997 economic crisis was still relevant for many of the young people that I interviewed. I was surprised to hear the vivid recollections of the period and the almost mythical status of the gold donation movement. The following replies were given in response to a direct question asking about their recollections and feelings about the so-called 'IMF Crisis' in South Korea:

My friend's father was made redundant so I was sad. I was proud of the gold collection movement that aimed to help clear the nation's debts. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

It was when I was a high school senior. Some of my friends said that their lives became very different because they couldn't afford college tuition. And there was the gold collecting campaign which I found very encouraging. There were mothers selling their wedding rings to support their children through the difficult period. I was so moved to see how the small acts of average people could come together to make something greater. [Do you worry about a similar crisis happening in future?] Sure, once you experience it, you never forget it. It is especially hard for college students. Our generation went through the IMF crisis and then had fun at the 2002 World Cup. We are stuck between the two extremes; we feel we should be ready for crisis, while we want to enjoy our lives. It feels very unsure and unstable. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

My father was running a small business in 1997 and my family went through a difficult time dealing with the economic crisis. I was young and studying at primary school so I don't remember it well but I do remember the news reports on homeless people, workers getting fired, and the increase in the suicide rate. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 18/09/2009)

I remember that the school trip was cancelled because of the economic hardship. That's the clearest memory I have of the time. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

I remember the economic crisis. I was at middle school. Compared to others we didn't feel the crisis as much because my parents are public sector workers. My Father was working as a teacher and could see the aftermath of the crisis. Like the increase in the number of students who applied for free subsidised meals. [Do you worry about a similar crisis happening in the future?] Yes...financial crises lead to job shortages you know. People say that it is

more difficult to get a job these days than in 1997. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

After the crisis my father lost his job in the process of rationalisation. He did get another job...and my father could earn enough to make a living for the family. I was ten years old at the time so I didn't think about it much, it didn't feel like the crisis was affecting us. And then my father died. He died from overwork. He worked too hard at his new place. Even though the IMF crisis didn't affect my family directly and I didn't go through economic hardship, I lost my father. Therefore the crisis was one of the biggest incidents in my life. Korea had enjoyed constant growth since the Korean War. But with the crisis, the idea of guaranteed prosperity disappeared. The number of poor people is increasing and the middle-class is collapsing.....we achieved democratic government, became members of the OECD and so what? The crisis gave us a chance to reconsider where we are. The IMF crisis ruined so many people. It was a nightmare. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 16/09/2009).

Against a background of intense educational, social and economic competition, in part brought about by the globalisation process, the memory of the 1997 economic crisis and its impact creates a fear of instability and a strong push for risk aversion amongst young people. The memory is particularly salient in the current circumstance of the recent global credit crisis. This tangible risk felt by many young people trying to succeed within the South Korea's hyper-competitive society is compounded by a second very real event – German unification – that holds many lessons for the Korean peninsula.

### **8.3.2 German Unification**

Fear of the consequences of unification and its potential for creating economic, social or political crises in part stems from the perception of the German unification experience. Many young people perceive the German unification experience to have been a difficult one and thus hold great fears for any similar experience on the Korean peninsula<sup>193</sup>:

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<sup>193</sup> The following quotations are in response to the questions 'do you think that Korea is prepared for unification?', 'do you think that unification will benefit South Korea?' and 'what do you think of unification?'

No [Korea is not prepared for unification]...West Germany used to be a powerful economy but West Germany had to pay a heavy price for absorbing East Germany. We'll suffer a similar fate at unification. Many North Koreans will come to Korea and at first we will be able to hire them paying a minimal salary. But they will want more and we can't afford that. Moreover, we will have to establish an infrastructure in the North. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

I don't know that South Korea will benefit from unification in the short-run because there is such a huge economic gap between the two Koreas...Let's take Germany's case as an example. I have a friend from West Germany. This guy really doesn't like people from Eastern Germany. He says 'I don't like East Germans and they hate us'. He gets really angry about the fact that capital and resources are flowing from West Germany to East Germany. I believe that this is the case with Koreans. I don't think that there are many benefits in the short-term. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

I believe in unification but recently I am beginning to doubt my belief. Some people argue that Korea will go through economic hardship just like Germany. And others say that some North Koreans who come to the South want to go back to the North. These people are making me doubt the necessity of unification. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 16/09/2009)

It should not be like Yemen that achieved unification by power. Germany also has a lot of negative sides to its unification experience. If we can unify without the negatives of the German experience I can support the idea of unification. But the economic power disparity is far more than Germany and interchange and communication is far less than Germany. (Interview in English, Seoul National University, 20/06/2009)

Outside of Korea, German unification is usually perceived as a relative success. The German economy has grown significantly since unification, unemployment is low, and most dramatically, the current Chancellor is originally from the East. However, many difficulties still remain including high unemployment in some eastern regions; anger about the amount of money invested in the East to the detriment of the rest of the nation; social fissures between 'Ossies and Wessies'; and the rise of neo-Nazi movements in the East. It is these negatives that many young



South Koreans have chosen to focus upon, and not without grounds. The economic gap between the North and the South overwhelms that which existed between East and West Germany. South Korea does not have the financial capacity of West Germany and its European Union partners. No war was ever fought between East and West Germany and movement and communication between the East and West, at least for West Germans, was common, even during the height of the Cold War. The German situation is quite unlike that which exists between North and South of Korea where both sides have been politically, economically and socially estranged since the 1950s. The challenge on the Korean peninsula appears to be much graver and this is evidenced through the fears and concerns of young people. Once again, faced with a deeply competitive society, the 'threat' from unification seems for many too great. The sensible choice therefore is the status quo, the reassuring protection of *uri nara* in the image of the South and the rejection of unification with North Korea.

#### **8.4 Adoption and acceptance of a South Korean identity: Instrumental choices and constructed identities**

We cannot assume that just because these risks and circumstances exist, young people will necessarily reject unification, and a unified identity. There is, however, strong evidence of causation between the adoption and acceptance of *uri nara* in the image of the South and rejection of unification, and concerns over educational, economic and social competition alongside other risks. As discussed in Chapter Three, young people linked their concerns about unification to economic uncertainty and social instability. For completeness, some examples of these responses are included below<sup>194</sup>:

I am against [unification] because I am very satisfied with my life here and now and if we unify with the North, which is so poor, South Korea is going to suffer huge economic losses. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 23/03/2010)

I am really worried about the economic situation. And if we have unification the GDP is very different between the North and the South so most North

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<sup>194</sup> The following quotations were in response to the questions 'what do you think about unification?', 'do you think that South Korea is prepared for unification?' and 'do you think you will benefit from unification?'

Koreans will come to the South. That would be a problem. (Interview in English, Dongguk University, 23/05/2010)

North Koreans are so poor. It will just be a burden for us. (Interview in Korean, Dongyang Mirae University, 07/05/2011)

No [Korea is not prepared for unification]...first there will be huge economic disruption if unification is achieved suddenly. North Korea chose communism and has ended up as the poorest country in the world, whereas South Korea, which followed the capitalist system is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the world for competitiveness. (Interview in Korean, Seoul National University, 21/09/2009)

I am against unification. I attended a lecture by a North Korean defector. He asked the audience 'how can you think about economics when it comes to the issue of unification?' But I don't think that you can talk about unification without discussing economics. My friend talked about love and one people. But I am much more interested in the practical issues like economics and politics. Let's say that unification means that everyone in the South had to pay 60 per cent tax. Then who would want unification? There is a huge gap between the economies of the North and South and I don't think that many people are willing to carry the burdens associated with unification. I think that most people agree with me. I want the South and the North to remain separate. (Interview in Korean, Choong-Ang University, 27/05/2010)

I am not sure whether or not we need unification. When I was young we were told that we should achieve unification. We were taught a song called 'our wish is unification' and similar...but as I grew older I realised how much of a burden unification will be. Things are already tough for the middle class in South Korea and if we unify then it will just get tougher. So now I am not really positive about unification. (Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 21/09/2009)

Aside from the evidence of causation displayed in these forthright comments in interviews with young people, the actions and choices of the *isipdae* in their activism and interests also demonstrates both their rejection of unification issues and a pragmatic, economic and vocational bias to their participation in extra-curricular activities. This section builds upon earlier discussions of the topic of youth activism. Chapter Three highlighted the low participation rates in unification and North Korea-related activities. In Chapter Four, the growing preference of

young people for non-political activism, what I termed cosmopolitan-enlightened movements, was examined through their involvement in causes such as the environment and well-being. In the following, I demonstrate how young people are making pragmatic, defensive and self-interested choices in their extra-curricular activities. They are rejecting politically-motivated movements, unless there is a direct personal benefit, and more often choosing their interests based on vocational considerations. Through their choices of activism and interests, they are demonstrating a rejection of a unified identity with the North and identifying with that which is familiar, practical and related to their future success in their nation, South Korea.

In 2010, Korea University produced a brochure describing all of its affiliated student clubs and societies. The purpose was to celebrate thirty years of official student society activity within the university. It introduces around thirty-five different student groups. There are many that you might expect to find: amateur radio, sports, model aircraft, music and art. Given the tradition of political protest at Korean universities, and especially Korea University, it might be a surprise to find only three societies that could be classed as overtly political. The first relates to the candlelight vigil movement ‘Candlelight’ that uses arts and performance to express the interests of the group<sup>195</sup>. Rather than using a political message, it advertises itself to potential members with the tagline ‘people who know how to enjoy themselves join the Candlelight society’. A second society is named ‘Greenmac’ which focuses upon producing art to express support for student activism. A third club brings students together to discuss current affairs. The vast majority of the clubs and societies, however, are recreational or, interestingly, vocational. For example, there are two clubs that focus on practicing English. One involves discussion of articles in Time magazine and has the particularly cosmopolitan-enlightened title of ‘Eyes toward the World’. Other clubs centre around academic disciplines and departments, develop skills in marketing and design (Ad-Zone) and one even runs seminars to help students to ‘become successful and achieve their dreams’ in a self-help style environment (Korea University, 2010).

Other clubs operate outside of the official student society structure. Some of these may be less organised, temporary and more overtly political. The recent civil protests relating to tuition fees

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<sup>195</sup> The Candlelight movement was a movement of young people protesting about food safety and sovereignty following the lifting of the ban on imports of US beef in 2008. The ban had originally been imposed as a result of the discovery of BSE, also known as Mad Cow Disease, in US cattle.

provide one example. During my research on university campuses, however, whilst I saw almost no student activity relating to unification I did encounter a number of clubs that related to finance and investment careers. These types of clubs are increasingly common. One such club on the Korea University campus is run privately by student members and staff, and aims at developing investment skills that can be used to secure positions in the finance sector. The Investment and Finance Research Association is well known on campus for its exclusivity (you have to submit your curriculum vitae and pass an interview to become a member) and claims to be the entrance to the world of finance and banking. With the help of a finance professor, students who have joined this group study finance, attend conferences (often overseas), arrange for finance professionals to speak to them, and even visit investment banks. English is the only language used during all activities (Chae, Gaeun 2009). With such high barriers to entry in the first place, and the tremendous experience gained through membership of the society, many of the participating young people do in fact go onto careers in the financial sector. Similar clubs have appeared on other campuses. Dongguk University, for example, has a similar investment group (Interview in English, Dongguk University, 28/05/2010). In sum, the new student movement appears to be largely vocational or leisure-oriented in nature. Interest and focus centres on the individual rather than wider community issues.

Where student activities do focus upon wider issues, however, they often relate to the direct interests of students. One example is the creation of the 'Youth Community Union' which aims at protecting students and young people in low paid temporary work (*Hankyoreh*, 2/11/2010). One of the small successes that the union has had relates to the job of pizza delivery. In Korea, delivered food is extremely common and deliveries are made by young people (normally male) who are either still studying or earning money whilst looking for alternative work. They usually earn between 4,300-4,500 Won (\$3.76-\$3.94) per hour and 400 Won (30c) for each delivery. The pizza chain Dominos had a guaranteed 30 minute delivery and if this was not met the customer received the pizza for free and the value was deducted from the delivery worker's salary. As a result, drivers were encouraged to drive fast and therefore dangerously. As a result, there was a reported increase in the rate of accidents. The union, along with foreign partners, successfully launched a campaign against Dominos to end the 30-minute guarantee (Yim, Seung-hye 2011). Another example of self-interested student activism was a small-scale banner protest

that I witnessed at Yonsei University in the Spring of 2010. As the following examples show, the slogans on the banners all related to issues of employment, campus politics, English language learning and wages:

내가 왜 ‘88 만원세대’ 여야하지 행복하게 노동할수 있는사회 만들라!

Why do I have to be the ‘880,000 won generation!’ Why can’t we construct a society in which we can work happily!

경제위기 회복되었 서 실업률은 왜 그대로?

If we have recovered from the Global Credit Crisis, why is unemployment still so high?

영어인증제 절대평가 폐지한다 기업에 인재위한교육 반대!

Get rid of the sliding (relative) scoring for English language ability by the English language examination companies and reinstate absolute scoring!

The shift away from student movements that are interested in wider social and political issues such as unification is partly as a result of the need to survive in this ultra-competitive society. In a student magazine article entitled ‘Between we and I: The emergence of the “myself generation”’ one student commented, ‘I am...always overloaded with a lot of assignments and pressure to take qualification exams. I am just too busy to pay attention to others’ (Kim, Geun-young 2010: 10). In the same article, another remarked, ‘the classes I take are too difficult to keep up with unless I preview and review the textbooks day to day, so I usually spend most of the time studying. Studying seems endless and unfortunately, I guess it has already become one of my habits. If I had enough free time I would rather spend it on myself.’ (Kim, Geun-young 2010: 10).

This individualisation of student life in South Korea was evident in many of my interviews<sup>196</sup>:

The main argument of 88 *man won saedae* is too idealistic along the lines of ‘we should stop being so individualist and instead work together to change society’. I don’t agree with it. I just find it idealistic. Most people are not going to share or give up their own profit or benefit for others....so most people today have just adapted themselves to the changed world, spending their time studying their

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<sup>196</sup> The following quotations are in response to the question ‘how do you spend an average day?’, ‘do you think that this generation of twenty-somethings has a tougher time than previous generations of twenty-somethings?’ and ‘do you discuss unification with your friends?’

major or TOEIC to get a good grade and then a good job. I take a few classes. Apart from sleeping I spend the rest of my time on the campus...I catch up with friends in the student union. If I have an assignment, I go to the library to work on it. I study at the library when I have exams. I am living like a typical twenty-something. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

It depends. I sort of enjoy being alone so I take classes and go home and surf on the internet and work on my essays and meet some friends and have dinner or a drink or coffee. Most of the Korean college students are using Cyworld<sup>197</sup>, or blogging sites, but no websites about the economy or politics. (Interview in Korean, Choong-Ang University, 06/05/2010)

Young people are so selfish and individualistic. They care about themselves and how they can achieve their aims in life, much more than issues like unification. That is what we South Koreans are like! (Interview in Korean, Gyeongsang National University, 31/05/2010)

[Young people] in general they are so indifferent and only a few of them participate in political activity. We just go to school and sit in class, and hang out with friends. When we have no class, and when the class is over we look for some fun. That's all. (Interview in Korean, Sungkyunkwan University, 06/05/2010)

What is a normal day for Korean students...they are normally on campus during the day, they study or take class, then go to the library or back home or maybe hang around with their friends. That's the normal life of students today. They're not thinking about important matters, about North Korea or unification. They don't care much about these. [They think] 'they're not my issue'...finding a job is a big issue to us. We are crazy about finding a job and we are told about finding a job or other exams from when we are freshmen. (Interview in English, anonymous student newspaper editor, 28/05/2010)

The structure and nature of student activism on campus has also rapidly transformed and reflects this trend of neo-liberalisation of youth society. According to the Korea University magazine, 'at the 35<sup>th</sup> KU Student Association election the first "non-activist" student candidate was elected' (Kang, You Kyung 2010: 14). This article described the three 'types' of student politician: 'political student activists' who are interested in national and international political issues; 'non-

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<sup>197</sup> The Korean version of Facebook.

political student activists' who focus on campus issues; and 'non-activists' who are not interested in any student or political activity, instead joining student politics for the administrative, organisational and corporate experience of the position (Kang, You Kyung 2010: 14; Interview in Korean, Dongguk University, 28/05/2010). The article suggests that so-called 'political student activists' are now few in number, replaced by so-called 'non-political activists' who themselves are now considered by many (such as the non-activists) as relatively radical. The article concluded that, 'since the financial crisis in 1997, many students would not even bother themselves to give any interest in student activity' (Kang, You Kyung 2010: 15).

Whilst pursuing my research I was particularly intrigued by a heavily publicised case of student activism involving a female student by the name of Kim Ye-seul from Korea University. She made front page news in South Korea when she put up a hand-written poster on the walls of Korea University decrying the unjust and meaningless life of a Korean student as someone who was working only to get a minor white collar job on graduation. Kim Ye-seul was a student of business at Korea University and 'resigned' from her place at the university in order to make her point. But her student activism was highly rational and calculated. She was already a student activist at the time of the incident and left Korea University to join the NGO sector. Her previous history of activism made sure that her notoriety would guarantee her a job and role in that sector. This activism was her internship, a highly pragmatic piece of action that could only have been carried out successfully at an elite university. That 'internship' led to the career of her choice. It is hard to be critical of her actions in the competitive environment that many young South Koreans face. The point she was making in her protest reflects many of the discussions in this thesis. But even this full-scale activism was a self-interested and realist shadow of the activists and activism of earlier student movements. The students of this period placed national goals, not least a unified nation, ahead of more individualistic and self-interested agendas. The change in student activism highlights the nature of contemporary students' priorities and interests. There is time only for personal interests not wider community activities or issues relating to unification or North Korea.

Abelman et. al describe this as part of the neo-liberal project or ethos, that 'by rendering individual subjects responsible for themselves, neo-liberal governing technology passes the responsibility for social risks or problems, such as poverty and unemployment onto the shoulders

of individuals' (Abelmann et al., 2009: 243). And thus young people must focus upon their own interests in the highly competitive educational environment. Abelmann et. al conclude that 'this individualistic character of neo-liberal subjectivity precludes collective alliance...[and in] the logic of neo-liberal political rationality, the political subject is less a collective or social citizen than an individual citizen who obsessively pursues personal fulfilment' (Abelmann et al., 2009: 243). This conclusion highlights the effect that neo-liberalism has had on youth society in South Korea. It does, however, ignore the agency of young people. There are some young people who do find time to participate in collective activities outside of their own-self interests. And most young people have the agency or power to make a choice between using Cyworld, learning a new language, or getting involved in, for example, a movement related to North Korea. Instead, and perhaps understandably, they are choosing a path which maximises their interests within this highly competitive neo-liberal environment.

It is thus understandable that this generation of *isipdae*, faced with the pressures of globalisation, have chosen the path that rejects discussion of North Korea and unification. However, this is a conscious and willing choice to embrace and adopt this South Korean nationalism and national identity. It is a national identity that rejects unification and North Korea, but in so doing protects young people from the wider concept of nation that implies an acceptance of responsibility for those in the North. They have chosen to embrace *uri nara* in the image of the South, an image that most effectively protects and represents the interests of the *isipdae* in the current national and global context.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

It is useful at this point to make a comparison of the young people of this generation with the students and youth of earlier generations in South Korea. In Chapter Two, the student movement and its nationalist credentials were explored. The early student movement's conception of the national unit as a unified one was expressed clearly in both words and actions. This current generation of young people, however, find it difficult to find the time or motivation to participate in wider social or community issues unless they are vocational in nature or of direct personal interest.



South Korean young people face an education system whose demands and intensity is unlike most others. Walking back from dinner as late as ten o'clock at night, you will be surrounded by young children returning home after an evening of after-school classes. Buses and subways are full of children and young adults in such deep sleeps that they miss their destination stop<sup>198</sup>. For many young people, the educational pressures that they face can be overwhelming. This is compounded by the uncertain social and economic world that they enter upon graduation – will they be able to find a good job? Do they have enough skills and qualifications and status to gain acceptance by their prospective parents-in-law? Is their English good enough to be successful? Even if many young people wanted to involve themselves in issues to do with North Korea and unification there is often little time, or there is yet another study task that will always seem more pressing. Their focus must be upon activities of educational and vocational value. There is not much in regards to North Korea that meets that requirement. Issues relating to North Korea are complex and difficult and come with significant political baggage. It might be too risky to use such interests and activities to bolster one's curriculum vitae.

For other young people, the rejection of unification is a clear decision to protect themselves, their families and their future interests. They know the challenges that a much wealthier West Germany faced as a consequence of unification with East Germany. That understanding simply serves to reinforce the knowledge that unification in the Korean case has a much poorer prognosis. Young people have already seen, through their contacts with North Koreans and *Joseonjok*, the vast social, cultural and economic differences that exist between North and South. Some young people feel that their task in life is tough enough. No new challenges, such as unification, are wanted. They have instrumentally and deliberately rejected unification and a unified identity. And they are increasingly adopting and accepting a South Korean conception of national identity and *uri nara*, our nation.

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<sup>198</sup> I once sat next to a teenager on a subway that was so fast asleep I thought that she might have been unconscious or even dead. I shook her until she woke up to check she was well - much to the amusement of the other travellers in the carriage and the annoyance of the young girl!

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

#### 9.1 Introduction

On each new trip to South Korea, I inevitably find that some dramatic change has taken place. My local neighbourhood, *Donggyodong*, was almost unrecognisable with the appearance of a completely new road system, new shops and cafes after only a six-month gap between stays. Since my first visit to Korea 13 years ago I have witnessed constantly changing food, fashion and cultural trends and the continued emergence of new hot topics being debated and discussed amongst young people. Korea is indeed undergoing rapid political, economic and social change.

It is not surprising that one can observe, as well, an evolution in the country's sense of nation and national identity. This work has shown just how dramatic that evolution has been amongst one group of South Koreans in particular, the *isipdae*. My thesis charts the emergence of a new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism amongst young people, a change that will have important consequences for the future of South Korea and the Korean peninsula and wider significance for the understanding of nations and nationalism.

#### 9.2 Overview of theoretical framework and contributions

This research was motivated by the central puzzle of why ethnically-based views of nationalism, which form the basis of longstanding demands for unification on the Korean peninsula, have been challenged so dramatically in recent years. I have demonstrated that the change has come about as the result of the emergence of a globalised-cultural South Korean nationalism, particularly amongst the younger generation.

My theoretical framework, which separates the analysis of nationalism into three levels, has provided the foundations for this analysis. At the top of the framework, the origins and evolution of the nationalism are unearthed using primordialist, constructivist and instrumentalist theories of the roots of nations and nationalism. The next tier categorises nationalism according to types such as ethnic nationalism, civic nationalism or globalised-cultural nationalism. The third

element of the framework assists in examining how a nationalism expresses itself in the daily lives of the members of the nation. Through this framework, I am able to demonstrate, describe and understand the emergence in South Korea of a globalised-cultural South Korean nationalism amongst young people.

At the first level, the analysis of South Korean nationalism has highlighted the relevance of the constructivist approach for understanding both the emergence and the evolution of nationalist sentiment, relying upon key constructivist theorists such as Gellner and Anderson. Their theories of nationalism argue that nations and nationalisms are socially constructed and formed by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction. In the case of Gellner, it is industrialisation and the accompanying 'high culture' that results from a common education system that serves industry's need for an educated workforce. Anderson emphasises the importance of print capitalism, and administrative or educational journeys that lead to the formation of an imagined community of compatriots and fellow nationals.

These constructivist models provide the tools for approaching this analysis of the newly emerged South Korean nationalism, but I combine them in new and creative ways with more contemporary constructivist theories that put particular emphasis on modern processes. Examples include the role of globalisation, Billig's focus on banal nationalism and Yack's analysis of the role of democracy in transforming established political units or constituencies into national units. These theories show how new nations can evolve and transpire from within existing nations. In South Korea, this has resulted in a new globalised-cultural nationalism amongst young people that has emerged from a unified concept of nation that previously included the North and the South and was based upon an ethnic nationalism. Thus the Korean example presents a useful comparative example for analysing the potential for the emergence of new nationalisms in other devolved or separated political units such as the Republic of Taiwan.

In addition, the theoretical framework also provided an opportunity to discover the importance of instrumentalist analyses, as an adjunct to constructivist ideas, in the understanding of the rise of nations and nationalism. The findings in this research are very different from most instrumentalist analyses in the existing literature, which tend to focus on *top-down* or *elite* manipulation of nations and nationalism to achieve distinct aims. The South Korean example

reveals a *bottom-up, societal level* and collective choice amongst growing numbers of young people to actively accept and adopt this new South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism and reject unification and a unified ethnic identity. Young people have made this instrumental choice in the belief that their interests and welfare will be protected by a South Korean national identity against the perceived threats posed by unification.

Finally, this thesis has refuted the usefulness of the primordial analysis of the emergence of nations and nationalism in South Korea. This challenges much of the earlier literature that relied heavily on the primordial nature of the South Korean nation to explain the existence of Korean ethnic nationalism. The analyses of scholars such as Em and Cumings on the rise of the modern Korean nation deserve more attention in light of these contemporary results. The South Korean case thus has much to contribute to both conceptions of Korean nationalism as well as comparative understandings of how nationalism arises and evolves.

The second level of the theoretical framework aims to understand the category or type of an emergent nationalism. In this thesis, I have demonstrated the change from an ethnic-conception of nation and nationalism that spanned the whole peninsula to one based upon globalised-cultural norms confined to South Korea amongst growing numbers of young people. This has resulted in some ethnic Koreans – North Koreans and *Joseonjok* for example – finding themselves excluded from imaginings of the South Korean national community. At the same time, some non-ethnic Korean immigrants who meet the demands of this new globalised-cultural nationalism are warmly embraced as members of the nation by many of the *isipdae*. This change has occurred in the period of just a few decades, a remarkable pace for such a dramatic shift. In addition, this new nationalism is emerging primarily amongst young people, and the Korean example demonstrates how different expressions or types of nationalism and national identity can develop between generations inside a community that was once united in its national identity.

My theoretical framework also introduces a third level of analysis – the manifestations or characteristics of nationalism. The aim of this level of analysis is to understand how nationalism and national identity is expressed in the daily lives of these young people. By detailing the manifestations or characteristics of a nationalism, one can achieve a thorough understanding of the mechanism for determining inclusion and exclusion. The manifestations of the new South

Korean globalised-cultural nationalism are modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status. These manifestations have been shaped by, and reflect, the neo-liberal society in which these South Korea young people find themselves. The cultural attributes of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status provide an understanding as to why many North Koreans and *Joseonjok*, who have not enjoyed the opportunities afforded by growing up in a developed and wealthy nation like South Korea, might find themselves on the outside of the globalised-cultural South Korean nation.

### **9.3 Empirical Findings**

#### **9.3.1 The emergence of the South Korean nation**

From the colonial period until contemporary times the Korean student movement has been motivated by nationalist sentiment. In particular, since the entrenchment of division in 1948 until the mid-1990s, the call for the unification of the Korean peninsula has been a stimulant for student protest. The importance of unification to the student movement demonstrated an understanding of the national unit that encompassed the whole of the Korean peninsula. It was an ethnic nationalism where ideas such as *danil minjok*, one ethnic nation, the single bloodline and ethnic homogeneity were dominant and central to the understanding of the Korean identity. There were generational divides at this time in regards to unification albeit very different from those of later decades. In the 1950s and 1960s young people were eager to bring about rapid unification and believed that many members of the older generations stood in the way of unification and were not sufficiently committed to this nationalist cause.

This presents an interesting juxtaposition with present day generational differences on the issue of unification and North Korea. As I showed in Chapter Three, there has been a change in the ethnic-based unification nationalism that had previously motivated the student movement. A new *South Korean* national identity is emerging amongst young people. Now it is *young people* and their emerging concept of South Korean nationalism and identity that stands in the way of a unified understanding of the Korean nation. Young people are much less interested in unification than the *isipdae* of past decades and rarely discuss the issue with friends or family. There is a North Korea ‘fatigue’ where South Korean young people would much rather talk about ‘gossip or entertainment – not about unification’ (as one informant noted in Chapter Three). They do not

participate in unification-related activities nor do university newspapers feel that North Korea-related topics are of interest to their student readers. Indeed, North Korea is barely mentioned in many contemporary student newspapers. Most importantly, over fifty percent of young people in 2010 were either negative or ambivalent about unification, whilst older generations remain much more supportive achieving its goals.

There are still a considerable proportion of the *isipdae* who appear to support unification. Many young people who did express support for unification, however, qualified their statements. They hope that it will take place very gradually, at some distant point in the future. One student thought 'we should wait for twenty years before we unify', whilst another supported unification but 'not in my lifetime'. It also became clear that many of those who expressed support for unification are motivated by what I term 'South Korean motivations'. In other words they support the goal of unification only if there is a net gain for South Korea, for example, economic advantage as a result of access to cheap labour and natural resources. These young people, who have not yet succumbed to apathy or opposition to unification, are reaching for other justifications that enable them to reconcile their national identity and passion for South Korea with their desire to support unification. In trying to manage this dichotomy, many of these attitudes to unification are beginning to resemble a colonial paradigm.

This increasing negativity and ambivalence toward unification, and the desire to unify for the benefit of South Korea, suggested a new conception of *uri nara*, our nation, based only upon South Korea. This was confirmed directly by many interviewees who declared that the idea of *uri nara* referred only to the people and territory of South Korea. The emergence of a new sentiment is further supported by the increased sense of difference felt by South Korean young people between themselves and those in the North. Many *isipdae* perceive language and lifestyle to be separate and they dislike the idea of marriage or a close business partnership with a North Korean. South Korean young people sense the increasing physical differences emerging between North and South Koreans. These perceptions are often reinforced through the direct experience of meeting people from North Korea as well as other ethnic Koreans who are, indeed, increasingly physically and culturally different from these globalised young South Koreans.

### 9.3.2 Globalised-cultural nationalism

Gellner's definition focuses on the emergence of a nation and nationalism when one finds the correspondence of the national unit with the political unit. The fulfilment of the nation gives rise to nationalist sentiment. Using Gellner's definition of nationalism, the conditions for the emergence of a South Korean nationalism amongst these young people were thus present. This imagining of the South Korean national unit corresponds with the existing political unit of the Republic of Korea. The next task, therefore, was to confirm the emergence of South Korean nationalism by detailing the nature and expression of this new national identity. My analysis described the expression of South Korean national identity by the *isipdae* through three characteristics or manifestations: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status.

We see the modernity of this new national identity expressed through the pride in Samsung and LG phones, the modernisation of *makgeolli* drinking and the adoption of the 'b-boy' style of dancing as a representation of Korean culture. Cosmopolitan-enlightenment is demonstrated in the Louis Vuitton or Marc Jacobs labels on students' bags that are filled with English language learning textbooks, or in the conversation overheard in Starbucks detailing a young person's overseas travel plans. The importance of national status, also, is visible in the pride of the *isipdae* in *hallyu*, the Korean Wave, and Korea's sporting success as well as young people's fervent participation in the Dokdo or Goguryeo issue.

These three manifestations of South Korean nationalism depict a type of nationalism that has not yet been identified in the literature. This is a new type of nationalism that I have termed *globalised-cultural nationalism*. The consequences of the emergence of this new nationalism are particularly interesting in regards to inclusion within and exclusion from the national unit. The emergence of a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism has resulted in the extraordinary situation where, in a nation that had previously been defined by ideas of ethnic-nationalism, many ethnic-Koreans now find themselves excluded from the South Korean national unit. A number of young people were quite explicit in favouring the exclusion of *Joseonjok* (Korean-Chinese) community, with one student commenting 'in my opinion, I don't like *Joseonjok*...except the *Joseonjok*, any kind of people who want to be Korean are okay'. Other students excluded North Koreans from the national: 'I only mean South Korean when I refer to a

person from *uri nara*. I don't want to call a North Korean a person from *uri nara*.' Some non-ethnic Korean immigrants, however, providing they are willing to adopt or already possess the South Korean globalised-cultural norms of modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status, are able to be imagined by many young people as South Korean nationals. There was the example of one student barely recalling the origin of her naturalised-South Korean friend and another who stated that they would be much prefer a foreigner who loved Korea to be part of the South Korean nation, than an ethnic-Korean who was ambivalent toward South Korea. The emergence of this new nationalism has exposed a fissure between the generations in South Korea where older South Koreans still hold onto an ethnic concept of nation. Young people, in contrast, are quite willing to embrace non-ethnic Koreans as South Korean and to exclude those ethnic Koreans whom they consider are not properly qualified for South Korean national identity – in other words not globalised, cosmopolitan, enlightened or modern.

The link between middle-class values and this new globalised-cultural South Korean national identity also deserves highlighting. Elements of this cross-over are already found in the systems in place to aid North Koreans in their assimilation into South Korean society. North Koreans are taught middle-class norms and values to help them assimilate and become so-called South Korean 'cultural citizens'. They often attempt to engage with this globalised-cultural society by acquiring the surface trappings of sophistication and modernity, for example the latest mobile phone or new clothes, only to be ridiculed or criticised for their efforts by wider South Korean society. This cross-over, however, also suggests that whilst this South Korean nationalism is an emerging nationalism, predominantly amongst young people, it has the potential to emerge within groups in South Korean society other than the *isipdae*.

### **9.3.3 The role of construction and choice in the emergence of South Korean nationalism**

Using a constructivist analysis to analyse the rise of this new nationalism, the importance of globalisation, democracy and banal nationalism in the origins and emergence of nations becomes clear. The networks created by globalisation have encouraged South Korean young people to travel to countries such as China, the United States, Australia and New Zealand where they have had a variety experiences: meeting overseas Koreans, witnessing North Korea's overwhelming presence in the portrayal of the Korean peninsula in the foreign media, and coming face to face



with other foreign attitudes toward the Korean peninsula. Rather than creating a diaspora-based identity or enhancing a unified Korean nationalism, those experiences have instead encouraged a deeper sense of South Korean identity. There has been a realisation amongst these young people that ethnicity is not a strong enough common tie to define a nation. There has been a rise in South Korean nationalist sentiment as South Koreans overseas encounter ignorance about their country e.g. ‘Americans had no idea who the President of South Korea was, but all of them knew Kim Jong-il’ or foreigners who ask whether people in South Korea, one of the world’s leading electronics innovators, own fridges. And young people have discovered that their own identity and nation is closer to developed, modern nations like the US and the UK rather than failing and decrepit North Korea.

The experience of South Korea, and the comparative example of Taiwan, demonstrates the power of democracy to construct nations from political communities. As a result of democracy, the defined political constituency of the sovereign people of the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China, respectively, have been transformed into national communities – a ‘Taiwanisation’ or a ‘South Koreanisation’ of the respective political unit. This has affected twenty-something South Korean and Taiwanese young people particularly because they have only ever known democracy. They have come of age in a political community without an appreciation or memory of the wider unified identity that existed earlier, in South Korea’s case with the North and in Taiwan’s case with the Mainland. The outline of the South Korean political community has become increasingly synonymous with the imagining of the national unit; in the view of one young person *nara* can be defined as ‘a political community’.

Democracy, however, is also impacting ideas of identity and nation in other ways. Through the democratic institutions of the courts, civil society and international norms, South Korea’s ethnic concept of identity has been challenged by these democratic forces as immigration into Korea has increased. This is especially impacting young people who through their own international experiences are much more open to this liberal view of nation and nationality. Young people are also the product of an education system shaped by democracy that has presented unification and North Korea to pupils in ways that are distinct from previous generations. This generation has been introduced to concepts of cultural heterogeneity between the North and South; to the

possible financial and social realities of unification; and to the acceptability of a step by step, gradual unification process.

Applying Billig's theory of banal nationalism to the case of South Korea, I have demonstrated how the use of collective terms – we, us, the people, and so on can shape a new collective understanding of the national unit. This is particularly the case, as in South Korea, where a delineated political unit already exists. I have shown how a number of factors have contributed to the rise of South Korean nationalism amongst young people: the separate naming of the nations (*Daehanminguk* in the South and *Joseon Minjujuui Inmin Gonghwaguk* in the North), the presentation of a Korean history where the story of the South predominates, the banal forgetting of the North in everyday life, South Korean patriotism, and the imagining of South Korea not as a region of a larger Korea but as a nation in itself.

Continuing with the constructivist analysis, I demonstrated the importance of globalisation in the formation of the characteristics, expressions or manifestations of this new South Korea nationalism. Globalisation has challenged nation-states like Korea to ensure that their voice is heard within key economic and political global forums. In response to this challenge, the Korean government, particularly under the current administration of Lee Myung-bak, has made extensive efforts to raise the international profile of South Korea. This has also influenced domestic attitudes to nation and identity within South Korea; indeed, as I have demonstrated, these are startling similarities between the rhetoric of campaigns such as the 'Korea Brand' and the expressions of South Korean nationalist sentiment by young people. I have highlighted the 'Global Citizens' advertisement involving a young boy frustrated by the lack of foreigners' knowledge of Korea, and the 'I am Korea' advertisement calling Koreans 'to keep developing...become more advanced...more passionate' (with images including a lonely South Asian immigrant worker at Incheon airport). These images of Korea portrayed by the government, in their efforts to increase the profile of South Korea, both serve to *enhance* and *reflect* the emerging South Korean identity that is being constructed amongst young people. Thus the construction of this new identity amongst young people, through democracy, globalisation and banal nationalism, is mutually reinforced by government and commercial campaigns to raise the global profile of Korea. The campaigns are responding to the demands of the South Korean constituency, to ensure that Korea is adequately represented in global forums. However, these

types of campaigns also provide the language through which young people can express this new South Korean globalised-cultural national identity.

Globalisation also brings with it neo-liberal values, and in the case of South Korea such neo-liberal values have acted to shape the manifestations of the emergent South Korean nationalism. The opening of the Korean market to foreign products, the rise of competition in the educational and employment arena and the idea of ‘spec’ all demonstrate the importance of neo-liberal values to the construction of cosmopolitan-enlightenment. Similarly, the characteristic of modernity has been encouraged by consumerism, marketing and choice. Neo-liberal economic values have created demand for a modern, cutting-edge culture, and marketing, commercialism and consumerism have also made it acceptable for young people to express their identity through the purchase of these modern, often foreign-made, items rather than in the past where nationalism might have been expressed through the purchase of Korean-made brands.

I argue that for young South Koreans there is no contradiction between neo-liberalist individualist attitudes and what would normally be assumed to be collectivist nationalist expressions, e.g., a demand for recognition and improvement in Korea’s global status. Young people believe that their individual economic, educational and social success will also ‘equip’ South Korea for national success: ‘that their benefits come first and benefits for the nation follow’. Thus, despite the rise of neo-liberalism and individualism, young people see their individual success as expressions of the national status and national success of South Korea as a whole.

Finally, increasing numbers of young South Koreans are making an active choice or decision to adopt and accept this new South Korean national identity and reject the peninsula-wide concept of the national unit, unification and North Korea. The rise in neo-liberal values has created a highly competitive environment within which young people have to survive and succeed. There are intense pressures to excel and stand out from the crowd in an education system where 93 per cent of high school graduates go onto university. Finding the right job in the liberalised and highly competitive employment marketplace appears an almost impossible task. And these things matter not only for one’s career but the whole social future of a young person – even marriage. In addition, the *isipdae*’s memory of the 1997 economic crisis and their generally negative

perception of German unification mean that the prospect of Korean unification is perceived by many as a threat to the stability and success of South Korean society. Although young at the time, the gold donation campaign or friends' hardships of the so-called 'IMF era' remain fresh in their minds, as do the stories of Germany's challenges through unification and beyond. This 'survival of the fittest' cultural and uncompromising environment, combined with the perceived threat of unification, is thus encouraging young people to make the conscious and instrumentalist decision to adopt and accept the newly emerging South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism.

#### **9.4 The wider implications of the emergence of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism**

As this research project progressed and I found evidence for the emergence of a globalised-cultural South Korean nationalism it became clear that my findings had major implications not just for the wider South Korea society but for the Korean peninsula as a whole. Two themes in particular are important to highlight: exclusion and unification. Building on the results of this thesis, there are many opportunities for future academic inquiry and policy reflection in these areas.

##### **9.4.1 Exclusion**

Given that there is a population of nearly 24 million people north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel that divides the Korean peninsula, with whom South Koreans will eventually have to form some sort of expanded social, political and economic relationship, the tendency of globalised-cultural South Korean nationalism to be exclusionary demands further scholarly analysis.

Those who find themselves outside of the conception of the South Korean nation, for example North Koreans, *Joseonjok* and other immigrant workers, have not enjoyed the opportunities experienced by young South Koreans. Future academic and policy research might examine ways of encouraging inclusion, for example, in the form of positive discrimination in employment or in access to higher education, as is already the case in some instances for North Koreans. Issues of fairness, class, social justice and economic redistribution also require attention. Acceptance, however, must go beyond merely the legal or procedural. There must be protection from discrimination and bigotry in all professional, social, political and other relationships so that names, appearance, accent, and place of origin do not attract bias or prejudice. Strong anti-

discrimination education and legislation protecting both ethnic-Korean and non-ethnic Korean immigrants must be considered with urgency.

The findings of this thesis also call for further research into issues of identity and nationalism amongst North Koreans in particular. Such research might examine the current status of the North Korean identity or consider how an assertive and self-assured North Korean identity could be encouraged to coexist alongside South Korean identities, not least the emergent globalised-cultural nationalism. There are many positive social and economic traits around which this identity could be formed. These include entrepreneurship (seen amongst many North Koreans, especially women who exploit small commercial opportunities such as market stalls to support their families outside of the failed North Korean state-economy); resilience; language and dialect; regional food culture; territorial features (the North contains some of the peninsula's most important natural and historical treasures); as well as communal values built, not least, as a result of North Koreans' marginalisation from wider South Korean society and their need to support each other in extremely harsh circumstances<sup>199</sup>. These are ideals that a North Korean identity can embrace as its own.

A reconstructed and reinvigorated North Korean identity in the context of the dominant South, could act as a basis for negotiation and compromise to form a common Korean identity or establish an 'equality of identity' between North Koreans and South Koreans and indeed other immigrant groups. The inclusion and consideration of other immigrant groups in such an endeavour is also crucial. Future research might wish to consider the North Korean identity not only in regards to the South but also in relation to other immigrants in Korea: will there be an alliance between those groups who face discrimination and exclusion? Will non-ethnic Koreans find a place in a unified Korea? Will there be an emergence of a defensive ethnic nationalism or right-wing nationalism amongst marginalised ethnic-Koreans, especially North Koreans, against non-ethnic immigrants as has been the case in parts of the united Germany? If the exclusion of North Koreans continues, then the rise of such defensive nationalism becomes more likely, particularly if North Koreans and other ethnic Korean immigrants witness the successful inclusion and participation of non-ethnic Koreans in the South Korean nation whilst still finding

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<sup>199</sup> See Lankov (2007) for an in-depth analysis of contemporary North Korean society.

themselves excluded. Such questions and challenges underline another contention of this thesis, which argues for the importance of considering both ethnic and non-ethnic Korean immigrant groups together when analysing issues of immigration, nation and identity in South Korea and the wider Korean peninsula.

#### **9.4.1 Unification**

The second prominent theme in this analysis of South Korean nationalism has been attitudes to unification with North Korea. The emergence of a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism amongst the young people of South Korea has considerable implications for any understanding of possible unification.

As discussed in the Introduction, Paik Nak-chung (1993) theorised the separation of North and South Korea through what he terms ‘the division system’. His theory of the division system has been influential in the debate that analyses the perpetuation of division and the failure of North and South Korea and its people to achieve unification of the peninsula. The division system theory resonates when examining the emergence of a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism amongst young people.

The division system theory attempts to understand the division of the Korean peninsula in the context of the wider global and international system. Paik argues that the division of Korea, or at least the perpetuation of the division of Korea, is in part a result of the interests and influence of the international system –the economic interests of the US, Japan and South Korean capital for example. South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism is a nationalism that perpetuates division and rejects unification; and the role of globalisation and neo-liberal ideals in its rise has been central. The emergence of this South Korean nationalism, therefore, affirms the continuance of division system theory especially amongst those young people who are accepting and adopting this new national identity.

Through his division system analysis, Paik was indeed pointing to early signs of what has turned into a full-fledged South Korean nation and nationalism, at least amongst some young people. He argued that Koreans in the North and South had ‘diverged between themselves sufficiently to make full political unity unfeasible, the implication must be that the single ethnos has already

branched out into two “proto nations” at least’ (Paik, Nak-chung: 83). He believed that the division system meant that already ‘coming into question are the very notions of nationhood and ethnicity, despite – or rather because of – the unusual degree of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity and the consequent strength of national feeling that characterise Koreans North and South’ (Paik, Nak-chung 1993: 83). Furthermore, he pointed out how *internal social and political events* in the South (and North) were integrally linked with *intra-peninsula relations and dynamics* (Paik, Nak-chung 1993: 78). Paik already suggested in 1993 that ‘the preservation through amelioration of the division system’, the peaceful coexistence of North and South – which was after all ‘safest and most profitable’ – had become the preferred goal of the South Korean elites (Paik, Nak-chung 1993: 77-78).

The emergence of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism, in part spurred on by the particular challenges of South Korean youth society, supports his prescient observation. This PhD thesis, *Uri nara, our nation: unification, identity and the emergence of a new nationalism amongst South Korean young people*, tells us that the division system, written about by Paik so eloquently almost two decades ago has, in 2011, become more entrenched and deeper than ever within the emergence of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism.

(89,000 words)

## Appendix One

### **Methodology**

#### General Methodological Issues

This project has engaged two major methodological approaches. The first is the case study method and the second is a political ethnography of South Korean youth. The case study method is particularly useful when questions such as ‘how’ or ‘why’ are posed, and where the problem for investigation is set in a contemporary context (Yin, 1994: 1). The case study method is thus appropriate for this project which is motivated by the puzzle that asks *how* and *why* long-held views of the Korean nation and national identity have been challenged so dramatically in recent years at least amongst the young. In addition, the rise of South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism involves the analysis of an ‘in-case variation’, studying changes over time within a specific country and a specific group, South Korea and its young people. The case study method is ‘an all-encompassing method’ that allows for the analysis of a puzzle that may involve many contingent variables and where data collection and analysis is both guided by the construction of a preliminary theoretical framework and also informs the theory as the research progresses (Yin, 1994: 13, 27). The emergence of globalised-cultural nationalism amongst young people has resulted from a number of phenomena working in combination and thus is most effectively approached using the case study methodology.

This thesis also uses ethnographic methods, specifically the observation of the daily lives of young people and interviews with young people alongside survey data, media reports, government reports and so on, as a means of researching the emergence of South Korean nationalism. Ethnography, or ‘political ethnography’, is useful because many methods typically used in political science research, such as survey data, economic statistics or pooled expert opinions might ‘*register the occurrence of change; they do not specify the mechanism of change*’ (Kubik, 2009: 33). What Kubik terms ‘positivistic’ political ethnography allows researchers to reach often overlooked, hidden, ambiguous sources of power in efforts to understand how large-scale processes take place. Political ethnography and understanding of micro-level activity is



essential to any macro-level analysis, because, ‘it is, after all the reproduction and transformation of daily lives that are observable, not “structural change”’ (Kubik, 2008: 33).

Individual case studies are often criticised for their narrow application. However, Korea is the one of the world’s largest economies and an integral part of the economically and strategically important Northeast Asian region. The relationship between the North and the South of Korea, and the stability of the Korean peninsula, is of global importance. And whilst the study of South Korea is in itself of intrinsic importance, this research also provides opportunity for political comparisons with other nations. Such comparisons provide valuable insights into larger processes of identity formation. Analysis of other countries, for example Taiwan, is therefore used to compare and corroborate the analyses of Korea found in this dissertation.

From a theoretical perspective, the aim of this work is not to replace existing theoretical knowledge on nationalism but to encourage cumulative knowledge, or a new ‘generation of knowledge dependent upon the existence of prior knowledge’ (Mahoney, 2003). According to Mahoney, ‘cumulative research offers knowledge that is more valid and more substantively enlightening than non-cumulative contributions. Indeed, the production of such knowledge can be considered the ultimate outcome for evaluating scholarly progress in the social sciences’ (Mahoney, 2003). In its examination of the evolution of nationalism in South Korea, my work takes the current body of nationalist theoretical literature as its starting point. The new empirical data provided by this work thus contributes to existing theory of the evolution of modern nationalist sentiment.

### Methodological challenges

The goal of this research was to examine the changing attitudes of South Korean young people with regards to unification, nation and identity. A number of challenges existed, however, with regards to the methodology. The first related to the issue of comparison between the current generation of *isipdae* and previous generations of young people. In general, the bulk of academic research and data available on attitudes to unification pre-1990s related only to students and student activists rather than the general population of young people. Therefore, the unit of

analysis would involve data relating to students only. To make a useful comparison of both individuals and the wider youth movement, my research on contemporary youth has focused upon young people enrolled in higher education. This means that for the purposes of studying an ‘in-case variation’ I will be comparing a similar grouping of people over time.

Aside from the issue of comparison, there were a number of other reasons for choosing tertiary students as a target interview group. First, they are an easily accessed group. This is an essential consideration to ensure efficient data collection when time and finances are limited. Second, interviewees were much easier to categorise individually if they were engaged at a tertiary institution. For example, they could be identified and organised by markers such as the nature of their tertiary institution and their academic interest. This enabled me to ensure that the sample of interviewees was sufficiently diverse. Third, I believe that contact made through a university network created an immediate sense of trust and context, and allowed students to feel comfortable and able to speak freely and frankly. Finally, by working in the tertiary sector, the attitudes of the interviewees could be analysed alongside the background of youth activism taking place on university campuses. This framework for data collection, achieved by working with young people engaged at a tertiary institution, would have been difficult to achieve if the interview pool had aimed to sample simply ‘young people’. The boundaries, characteristics and meaning of such a grouping would have been much harder to contextualise and quantify for the purposes of a relatively small-scale qualitative analysis.

This research also makes a comparison between young people and older generations of South Koreans in the contemporary context. Such a comparison can reveal whether the emergence of a South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism is a widespread social phenomenon or if there are fissures developing within South Korean society between age groups in regards to understandings of national identity. In addition, when approaching the ‘how’ question as to the emergence of this new South Korean nationalism amongst young people, a comparison with different age groups helps to identify the factors that might be influencing young people more intensely than the older generations and thus resulting in the rise of this new nationalist phenomenon.

### The extrapolation of data to reflect wider youth society

Despite a focus on students in my interviews, I argue that my results can be extrapolated to reflect wider youth society in South Korea. The first, and most important point to make in this regard, is that participation in tertiary education is extraordinarily high. In 1991, the gross enrolment rate in tertiary education was 38 per cent. By 2009, it was 100 per cent<sup>1</sup> and in 2008 OECD statistics showed that 93 per cent of all high school graduates go onto tertiary education<sup>2</sup> (OECD, 2010). Therefore, a sample of students taken from a wide range of tertiary educational establishments is likely to be representative of wider youth society. To ensure this, a diverse selection of universities was targeted when recruiting interviewees. These included former technical colleges (now called universities), the elite SKY universities<sup>3</sup>, top- and mid-tier Seoul-based colleges, universities with a religious affiliation, a women's university, and regional universities in both the Gyeongsang and Cholla province regions known for having different political affinities from each other and the capital.

It should be noted, however, that much of the quantitative data used in this thesis to support my discussions around contemporary student and youth attitudes uses data for 'young people' in their twenties rather than students only. This is because data for students is often included together with unemployed and those without employment such as home-makers. Given the high participation rate in higher education, it seems more useful to use the data collected from the broader category of 'young people', than to use a sample that might also include housewives and middle-aged unemployed.

In addition to student interviews and the use of survey data, I use a variety of other sources both to prove my thesis and to demonstrate the application of student interviews to the wider population of young people. This includes ethnographic research methods. For example, I

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<sup>1</sup> The gross enrolment rate is calculated by expressing the number of students enrolled in primary, secondary or tertiary level of education, regardless of age, as a percentage of the population of the age for attendance at the respective level of education. This level of 100 percent suggests that many more people than would be normally expected for that age group are attending university. This may represent those young people who are returning to university for further study following their failure to find appropriate employment.  
[http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF\\_Language=eng&BR\\_Country=4070&BR\\_Region=40515](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=4070&BR_Region=40515) (viewed 08/08/2011)

<sup>2</sup> OECD statistics show that between the years of 2000 and 2008, that over 90 per cent of high school graduates have gone onto tertiary education in South Korea (OECD, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University.

participated in the youth G20 Summit which was convened by the *Joongang Ilbo* newspaper in Seoul in the lead up to the G20 Seoul Summit. This enabled me to interact with a large number of young Koreans, not all of whom were enrolled in university. In addition, many of my friends and colleagues were young people in their twenties. They were all aware of my research and were eager to discuss issues and ideas with me. I also met a wide variety of young people in my daily life in Korea – from colleagues in youth-related NGOs to hairdressers, and neighbours and house mates. I made a point to discuss my research (including the topics of North Korea, unification and identity) where possible. This provided me with many opportunities to test the results of student interviews to see if they had wider application. Finally, extensive interviews with experts including academics, advertisers, public policy researchers, NGO activists and school teachers were used to both corroborate my results and to confirm their extrapolation to wider youth society in South Korea.

#### List of Student Interviews

<b>University (in alphabetical order)</b>	<b>Type of Institution</b>	<b>Number of students interviewed</b>
Australian National University	International	6
Chonnam National University	Regional	8
Chongsin University	Technical College, Christian	5
Chung-Ang University	Top tier	5
Dongguk University	Mid tier, Buddhist	6
Dongyang Mirae University	Technical College	4
Gyeongsang National University	Regional	6
Seoul National University (SNU)	Elite	13
Seoul National University of Education	Top tier, teacher training	1
Sookmyung Women's University	Mid tier, Women's college	3

Soongsil University	Mid tier, Christian	5
Sungkyunkwan University	Top tier	8
Wonkwang University	Technical College, Regional, Buddhist	1
Yonsei University	Elite	4
YBM Sisa	English language college	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number of students interviewed</b>
SKY (SNU, Korea, Yonsei)	17
Top-tier	14
Mid-tier	14
Technical College	10
Regional	14
English language college	1
International	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

### Recruitment and selection of interviewees

Recruitment was carried out with two goals in mind: first, to access as many willing interviewees as possible and second, to attract a wide diversity of students. There were a number of

considerations and challenges when recruiting students. First, it was hard to find students willing to give up their free time to participate in a survey. Second, I had to include the subject of my research when advertising for interviewees, but in doing so I was more likely to attract students with a particular interest in unification which would impede my aim of diversity in the sample.

I therefore used a number of different methods to recruit students which yielded a good number of interviewees from diverse backgrounds:

- a. Advertising on university websites with the offer of a voucher (KRW10,000<sup>4</sup>) in return for participating in an interview.
- b. Colleagues who taught at universities recruited students on my behalf for interviews (these academics came from a range of disciplinary backgrounds including politics and computing science).
- c. Approaching students at random on university campuses or in nearby coffee shops.
- d. Interviewing university-age friends, colleagues and housemates.
- e. University-aged siblings of friends and colleagues recruited interviewees on my behalf.
- f. Five interviewees were part of the Seoul National University ‘Unification Academy’, an evening course on North Korea and unification, held at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies where I was based. The Unification Academy is open to students from all Korean universities.

No specific methods were used to ensure a balance between gender or subject discipline. However, the varied nature of recruitment attracted a wide range of interviewees. The only personal information collected was age, gender, university and academic discipline. The following is a breakdown of interviewees based on gender and academic discipline:

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<sup>4</sup> Approximate value is USD10

Study discipline	Number	Sex	Number
Arts and humanities	14	Male	37
Social Sciences	18		
Science and Engineering	21		
Business / Accounting	8		
Vocational Language	1	Female	39
Other	2		
Not known	12		
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>		

Male interviewees included those who had completed military service as well as those yet to attend. Interview responses did not appear to have a relationship with experience of military service. A number of young males were asked whether their attitude to the event of unification had changed following military service, and they all responded that there had been no change.

#### Format of interviews

With the exception of four interviews at Dongyang Mirae University, all other interviews were carried out by the thesis author. Interviews took place in a variety of formats and places dependent upon the manner of the recruitment.

The vast majority of interviews were carried out individually and face to face. Others were done in pairs if the student so wanted (for example two students might reply to a recruitment advertisement together). The young people were always asked whether they would like to be interviewed individually and sometimes they preferred to do so. In one case only, a group interview took place in the form of a class discussion. This group interview had been arranged by a university academic and all the students had agreed to participate in this format. These were

postgraduate students of politics at a top tier university who were confident and experienced in discussing the topic of unification.

In interviews with more than one interviewee I saw little evidence of peer pressure. Students appeared to speak freely, and frequently disagreed within the group. Effort was made to ensure that there were no heated or fractious arguments and discussion generally took place in an inclusive and friendly atmosphere. In some interviews involving more than one student there were occasions when an individual student would change their response after hearing the opinion of another. These incidences appeared to be one-off and as a result of genuine persuasion and consideration rather than domination and peer pressure.

All interviewees were able to choose whether the interview should take place in Korean or English. Most were conducted in Korean. Written consent was sought from interviewees. Information sheets in English or Korean containing an explanation of my research and contact details in case of enquiries were supplied to interviewees. Most interviews with students were recorded with permission, for assistance with transposition and translation. One interview took place via email and a number of others were recorded with written notes.

#### Points for consideration when carrying out and analysing interviews

South Korea is a democratic nation with a vibrant civil society where freedom of speech is generally valued and protected. However, a National Security Law, enacted in 1948 still remains in force. The NSL applies to those who engage in activities deemed to benefit the enemy (North Korea) such as spying or praising the North Korean regime. I believe that the NSL did not influence the responses to the questions asked, and questions were framed to avoid topics covered by NSL legislation. This background of anti-Communism and the criminalising of expressions of support toward the North, however, should be borne in mind when considering responses to the questions posed. The NSL was mentioned by one young person only, who stated that he avoided speaking to North Korean immigrants in the South as he believed this to be illegal (it is not).

More relevant than the NSL law are the social pressures around the topic of unification. Until recently, opposing unification, or even showing disinterest or apathy in unification would have



been considered socially unacceptable. This research shows how much these social attitudes have shifted. Even now, however, for some young people, it is still considered taboo to express disagreement with unification or antagonism toward North Koreans. It might be expected, therefore, that responses in interviews will *understate* the negative attitudes toward unification and North Koreans. The results of this thesis, therefore, are all the more significant.

Similarly, racism towards both ethnic Korean and non-ethnic Korean immigrants is also considered socially unacceptable particularly amongst young people who have been exposed to concepts of multi-culturalism, tolerance and anti-racism. It might be expected, therefore, that expressions of support for immigrants in interviews may be *overestimated*. However, the fact that many young people were inclined to express strong negative sentiments toward ethnic-Korean immigrants including North Koreans and *Joseonjok* is therefore particularly notable.

Finally, the major challenge of the recruitment methods (a) to (e) related to levels of interest amongst young people. Many young people refused to participate in interviews stating that they would not be useful as interviewees because they were not interested in unification or knew little about North Korea. These were some of the very young people who I wished to interview. As a result, and despite all efforts, it is imagined that there is a slight bias in terms of recruitment toward those who have an interest or involvement in unification issues. The results therefore would likely *underestimate* opposition and apathy toward unification and North Korea.

All of these considerations have been taken into account when arriving at my conclusions and discussions throughout this thesis.

Summary of other interviewees

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Type of organisation</b>	<b>Title(s) of interviewees (total number of interviewees)</b>	<b>Language</b>
Anonymous NGO	NK-related NGO	Secretary General (1)	English
Anonymous NGO	NK-related NGO	Officer (1)	English
British Council	UK cultural representative office	Director (1)	English
Korea University, Dept. of North Korean Studies	University	Professor (1)	English
Samsung Economic Research Institute, Public Policy Research Department	Think-tank	Chief Researcher (1)	English
Korea Institute for National Unification	NK-related government research institute	Senior Researcher (1)	Korean
Voluntary Agency Network of Korea (VANK)	Youth NGO	Director; Officer; Volunteer (3)	Korean (2) English (1)
Grey Group – WPP	Advertising Agency	Chief Strategy Officer (1)	English
Soongsil University, Dept. Political Science	University	Senior Lecturer (1)	English
Hyundai Asan	NK-related Company	Officer (1)	English
Kookmin University, Dept. of Political Studies	University	Professor (1)	English
Anonymous magazine editor	University student newspaper	Student Magazine Editor (1)	English
Anonymous newspaper editor	University student newspaper	Student Newspaper Editor (1)	English
Yonsei University, Department of Education (North Korea specialist)	University	Researcher (1)	Korean

The Seoul Peace Museum	NGO	Director (1)	Korean
Anonymous teacher	Public Secondary School	History Teacher (1)	Korean
Anonymous teacher	Public Primary School	English Teacher / Deputy Head (1)	English
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	

Recruitment of other interviewees

Other interviewees were approached following a personal introduction or contacted independently based upon their public profile. All interviews were recorded with the exception of the two public school teachers who did not provide permission. Written consent was received where interviews involved young people working for NGOs or other types of organisations. In other cases, where interviewees were judged to be familiar with the goals of academic research and where a request for written consent was considered to be inappropriate (such as when interviewing academics), verbal consent only was sought. Full details of the research project along with an information sheet containing contact details were provided in all instances.

Survey data

Survey data was collected from a variety of sources including the National Assembly of Korea Library, the library of the Korea Institute for National Unification, the library of the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University and from other online sources. All surveys were published in Korean and were translated into English by the thesis author.

When the historical and contemporary surveys was provided data for the group ‘students’, this was used. In later surveys, however, the category ‘students’ is grouped together with unemployed and those without formal employment such as homemakers. In such surveys, data collected for the category ‘young people’ was instead used. The age range covered by the term ‘young people’ can differ. In the World Values Surveys it was 15-29 and in the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies and Korean Institute for National Unification Studies it was 20-29. These details and anomalies are clearly referenced throughout this thesis. Because this

quantitative data is a supplement to the qualitative data, other academic literature, and ethnographic research, these anomalies do not adversely impact my results.

### Fieldwork

The bulk of the field research for this project took place during two trips to South Korea, the first from March to September of 2009 and the second between March and June of 2010. In addition, three short trips were made to Korea in 2008, 2010 and 2011, at which time contacts were renewed and small amounts of data collected. The general mood amongst young people toward North Korea could be also be gauged in relation to events that had taken place whilst I had been back in Australia. In addition, two trips were made to Northeast China and one trip to North Korea during the period of my research. Although these trips did not contribute directly to the research for this thesis, they provided a context and background information on issues relating to differences between North and South Korea and the topic of Chinese-Koreans, the *Joseonjok*. In between trips to Korea, I remained in contact with my research assistant, colleagues and friends in Korea and checked Korean news websites regularly.

### Logistics of fieldwork

This PhD was funded by a three-year Korea Foundation-Korean Studies Association of Australasia PhD Fellowship. The fieldwork for this research project was funded by two scholarships from the Australia-Korea Foundation, a branch of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and a Cheung Kong Endeavour Research Fellowship jointly supported by the Cheung Kong Group and the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

On all but one of my trips I lived in a *hasukjip* – family-owned student accommodation – alongside both foreign and local students. During the March to June 2010 period I lived on my own in a studio apartment in a block inhabited mainly by young South Korean workers and students.

For the first period of fieldwork I was based at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University. During other periods I was based at home, moving between universities according to my schedule of interviews and research.

Given the intrusive nature of interview-based or ethnographic research, it is important to understand any ethical implications of my research before commencing my fieldwork (Creswell 1994: 165). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Office of Research Integrity of the Australian National University before this research was commenced. Regular monitoring reports were submitted throughout the project (see Appendices Two and Three).

### Language and translation

Assistance in transcribing and translating interviews was provided by Ms Yelin Sohn, who acted as research assistant to this project. In addition, Ms Sohn assisted with the translation of two Korean texts used in this thesis: the ‘88 *Manwon Saedae*’ (*The 880,000 Won Generation*), and the ‘Duo’ report. On my behalf, she also carried out the four interviews at the Dongyang Mirae University whilst I was in Australia. Having participated and translated a number of interviews beforehand, she was able to comprehend the issues and sensitivities of this research. She was provided with a list of questions.

Ms Sohn is a graduate of English Literature from the Department of English at Seoul National University and has a particular interest in unification and North Korean issues. She was approved by the Office of Research Integrity of the Australian National University to work as a translator and assistant in this research.

## Appendix Two

### **Information sheet for interviewees (in English translation)**

Dear participant,

Before you decide whether you wish to participate in this research please read carefully the following information.

This research is conducted as part of a PhD research project at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. It is funded by the Korea Foundation and an Australia Endeavour Cheung Kong Fellowship.

The object of the research is to investigate the changing attitudes to nationalism amongst young people in South Korea by examining their changing attitudes to unification with North Korea.

The interview will last about one hour. It will investigate your opinion on issues including the unification movement, attitudes toward nationalism, attitudes to unification, the importance of unification relative to other social and political issues etc. The interview will be unstructured and you will have the right not to respond to the questions if you do not wish to. There is no correct or incorrect answer.

The interviewer will ask you whether you allow the taping of the interview. Taping allows a better rendering of the contents of the interview and of your views. Please specify to the interviewer whether you allow the interview to be taped. You may choose for the interview to take place in either Korean or English.

Any information provided will be completely anonymous. Your name and other identifying information will not be given to anyone and will be stored and protected, as far as the law allows, in a secure location in Australia. The information will be stored for a period of five years. Only you will be entitled to access a copy of the tape or of the transcript, if you wish. In publications or research reports resulting from this research none of the identifying information will be released. Should you for whatever reason wish to withdraw your consent, during or after the interview at any time, you have the right to do so. Please contact Ms Campbell to inform her of your decision.

The person who will interview you is Ms Emma Campbell, a PhD candidate of the Australian National University. She has had experience of living, working and studying in Korea. Ms. Campbell's details are provided at the end of this sheet. Should you at any time require more information about Ms Campbell's background and experience or on any other matter related to this research please do not hesitate to contact either Ms. Campbell or her Supervisor in Korea Prof. Park Myoung-kyu.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints please contact:

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Should you not be able to contact me please contact

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Many thanks for your contribution to this research.

Emma Campbell

## Appendix Three

### Information sheet for interviewees (in Korean)

인터뷰 참여자를 위한 안내 문서

참여자 여러분께

이 연구에 참여할지의 여부를 결정하기 전에 다음의 정보를 검토해 주시길 바랍니다.

이 연구는 호주 캔버라에 위치한 호주국립대학(ANU)에서의 박사 과정 연구의 일환으로 진행됩니다. 이 연구는 한국국제교류재단과 Australia Endeavor Cheung Kong Fellowship 에서 기금을 지원받았습니다.

이 연구의 목적은 남한의 젊은이들의 남북간의 통일에 대한 태도의 변화를 검토함으로써 그들의 민족주의에 대한 태도의 변화를 조사하는 것입니다.

인터뷰는 약 한 시간 동안 진행됩니다. 인터뷰 수행자는 남북통일 운동, 민족주의에 대한 태도, 통일에 대한 태도, 여타의 사회적·정치적 이슈에 비해서 통일 문제가 가지는 상대적 중요성 등을 포함한 이슈에 대한 당신의 의견을 조사할 것입니다. 인터뷰는 비구조화 면접(unstructured interview) 방식으로 진행되며, 당신은 원하지 않을 시에는 질문에 응답하지 않을 권리를 가집니다. 질문에 대한 옳거나 그른 대답이 존재하는 것은 아닙니다.

인터뷰 수행자는 당신에게 인터뷰를 녹음해도 될지 양해를 구할 것입니다. 녹음을 하면 인터뷰의 내용과 당신의 관점을 더 잘 이해하는 데에 도움이 됩니다. 인터뷰 수행자에게 당신이 인터뷰를 녹음하는 것을 허용할지의 여부를 알려주시길 바랍니다. 당신은 영어나 한국어로 인터뷰에 참여할 수 있습니다.

제공되는 모든 정보는 철저히 익명으로 처리될 것입니다. 당신의 이름과 모든 인적 사항은 어느 누구에게도 제공되지 않을 것이며, 호주의 안전한 장소에 법에 의거하여 보관될 것입니다. 정보는 5년 간 보관됩니다. 오직 당신만이 원한다면 녹음된 내용의 사본이나 대본을 구할 수 있을 것입니다. 이 조사에 기반한 출판물이나 연구논문에는 어떠한 개인 정보도 포함되지 않을 것입니다. 만약에 당신이 어떠한 사정 때문에 인터뷰가 진행되는 동안이나 인터뷰가 끝난 후에 인터뷰에 대한 동의를 철회하기를 원한다면, 당신에게는 원하는 대로 할 권리가 있습니다. Campbell 씨에게 당신의 결정에 대해 알려주시길 바랍니다.

당신을 인터뷰할 사람은 호주국립대학 박사과정에 재학중인 Emma Campbell 씨입니다. 그녀는 한국에서 생활하고 일하고 공부한 경험이 있습니다. Campbell 씨에 대한 정보는 이 문서의 마지막 부분에서 볼 수 있습니다. 이 연구와 관련한 Campbell 씨의 경력, 경험과 제반 사항에 대해



질문하고 싶은 분은 Campbell 씨나 그녀의 한국에서의 지도교수인 박명규씨께 연락을 드리면 됩니다.

이 연구에 관심이 있거나 질문 혹은 불만이 있으신 분은 아래로 연락을 주십시오.

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만약 위의 주소로 연락이 안 된다면 아래의 주소로 연락해 주십시오.

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이 연구에 협조해 주셔서 감사합니다.

Emma Campbell

## Appendix Four

### Consent form in English

#### CONSENT FORM

##### INTERVIEW REGARDING ATTITUDES TO UNIFICATION AND NATIONALISM AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLES IN SOUTH KOREA

Before signing this form, please refer to the accompanying information sheet.

I am conducting research to investigate the changing attitudes to nationalism amongst young people in South Korea by examining their changing attitudes to unification with North Korea.

The interview will last about one hour. It will investigate your opinion on issues including the unification movement, attitudes toward nationalism, attitudes to unification, the importance of unification relative to other social and political issues etc. The interview will be unstructured and you will have the right not to respond to the questions if you do not wish to.

This interview will be recorded.

Thank you for your assistance.

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Participant Signature

---

Date



## Appendix Five

### Consent form in Korean

#### 동의서

남한의 젊은이들의 통일과 민족주의에 대한 태도를 연구하기 위한 인터뷰

이 서식에 서명하기 전에 먼저 첨부된 안내 문서를 검토해 주십시오.

저는 남한의 젊은이들의 남북간의 통일에 대한 태도의 변화를 검토함으로써 그들의 민족주의에 대한 태도의 변화를 조사하는 연구를 수행하고 있습니다.

인터뷰는 약 한 시간 동안 진행됩니다. 저는 남북통일 운동, 민족주의에 대한 태도, 통일에 대한 태도, 여타의 사회적·정치적 이슈에 비해서 통일 문제가 가지는 상대적 중요성 등을 포함한 이슈에 대한 당신의 의견을 조사할 것입니다. 인터뷰는 비구조화 면접(unstructured interview) 방식으로 진행되며, 당신은 원하지 않을 시에는 질문에 응답하지 않을 권리를 가집니다.

면접시험은 기록될 것이다.

협조에 감사 드립니다.

참여자 서명: \_\_\_\_\_

날짜: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix Six

### **Interview questions for students**

#### Personal Information

Name (optional)

Age

Sex

University

Discipline

Year of Study

Undergraduate / Postgraduate

Degree Type

#### Questions

##### *Unification*

**What do you feel about unification and do you want unification?**

**What does 우리 나라(uri nara, our nation) mean to you? [Does it include North Korea?]**

**How prepared do you think South Korea is for the possibility of reunification?**

**Do you consider the North and South to be separate nations?**

**Do you think that unification will benefit South Korea, you and your family?**

##### *General Political Activities*

**Are you a member of any groups or organisations involved in political campaigns? What are they, what is your role?**

**What kind of political issues interest you and might inspire your involvement?**

**What political and social issues currently concern you the most?**

**Have you heard of the following and what are your views on the following issues:**

- **Dokdo / Takeshima** (Dispute with Japan over Dokdo, a set of islands in the East Sea / Sea of Japan)
- **Textbook issue** (Dispute with Japan over the presentation of the Japanese colonial period)
- **The East Sea / Sea of Japan Issue**
- **Unification with North Korea**
- **Goguryeo** (Claim of 'historical sovereignty' over a large portion of Northeast China)
- **Gando** (Dispute with China over a small piece of land in Northeast China)

**How do you rate the importance of these issues and why?**

*General Questions*

**What are Korea's biggest future challenges?**

**What social or political issues worry you the most?**

**What does democracy mean to you?**

**How do you rate the reputation of Korea in the World and how do you think Korea is viewed by other nations and peoples?**

**What do you recall about the 1997 economic crisis and what are your feelings towards this event?**

**What do you think of globalisation and what is Korea's role in globalisation?**

**What makes you most proud of being Korean?**

**How do you feel about North Koreans and *Joseonjok* living in Korea?**

**Do you think that non-ethnic Koreans can become Korean?**

**What is your schedule in a normal day?**

## Appendix Seven

### **Inauguration speech of President Roh Moo-hyun 25 February 2003 (in Korean)<sup>5</sup>**

존경하는 국민 여러분.

오늘 저는 대한민국의 제 16 대 대통령에 취임하기 위해 이 자리에 섰습니다. 국민 여러분의 위대한 선택으로, 저는 대한민국의 새 정부를 운영할 영광스러운 책임을 맡게 되었습니다. 국민 여러분께 뜨거운 감사를 올리면서, 이 벅찬 소명을 국민여러분과 함께 완수해 나갈 것임을 약속드립니다.

아울러 이 자리에 참석해 주신 김대중 대통령을 비롯한 전임 대통령 여러분, 고이즈미 준이치로 일본총리를 비롯한 세계 각국의 경축 사절과 내외 귀빈 여러분께도 심심한 감사를 드립니다.

특히 이 자리를 빌려, 대구 지하철 참사 희생자 여러분의 명복을 빌면서, 유가족 여러분께도 깊은 위로를 드립니다. 다시는 이런 불행이 되풀이되지 않게, 재난관리체계를 전면 점검하고 획기적으로 개선해 안전한 사회를 만들도록 최선을 다하겠습니다.

국민 여러분.

우리의 역사는 도전과 극복의 연속이었습니다. 열강의 틈에 놓인 한반도에서 한고난을 이겨내고, 반만년 동안 민족의 자존과 독자적 문화를 지켜왔습니다. 해방 이후에는 분단과 전쟁과 가난을 딛고, 반세기만에 세계 열두 번째의 경제 강국을 건설했습니다.

우리는 농경시대에서 산업화를 거쳐 지식정보화 시대에 성공적으로 진입했습니다. 그러나 지금 우리는 다시 세계사적 전환점에 직면했습니다. 도약이나 후퇴나, 평화나 긴장이냐의 갈림길에 서 있습니다.

세계의 안보 상황이 불안합니다. 이라크 정세가 긴박합니다. 특히 북한 핵 문제를 둘러싼 국제사회의 우려가 고조되고 있습니다. 이럴수록 우리는 평화를 지키고 더욱 굳건히 뿌리내리게 해야 합니다.

대외 경제 환경도 어려워지고 있습니다. 선진국들은 끝없이 새로운 영역을 개척하며 뺏어가고 있습니다. 후발국들은 무섭게 추격해 옵니다. 우리는 새로운 성장 동력과 발전 전략을 요구받고 있습니다.

우리 사회 내부에도 국가의 명운을 결정지을 많은 문제들이 가로놓여 있습니다.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://news.donga.com/3//20030225/7916327/1> (accessed 07/08/2011)



이들 과제는 국민 여러분의 지혜와 결단을 기다리고 있습니다.

이 모든 도전을 극복해야 합니다. 우리는 해낼 수 있습니다. 우리 국민이 힘을합치면, 못할 것이 없습니다. 그런 저력으로 우리는 외환 위기를 세계에서 가장 빨리 벗어났습니다. 지난해에는 월드컵 4강 신화를 창조했습니다. 대통령선거의 모든과정을 통해 참여 민주주의의 꽃을 피웠습니다.

존경하는 국민 여러분.

이제 우리의 미래는 한반도에 간혀 있을 수 없습니다. 우리 앞에는 동북아 시대가 도래하고 있습니다. 근대 이후 세계의 변방에 머물던 동북아가, 이제 세계 경제의 새로운 활력으로 떠올랐습니다. 21 세기는 동북아 시대가 될 것이라는 세계 석학들의 예측이 착착 현실로 나타나고 있습니다. 동북아의 경제규모는 세계의 5분의 1 을 차지합니다. 한.중.일 3 국에만 유럽연합의 네 배가 넘는 인구가 살고 있습니다.

우리 한반도는 동북아의 중심에 자리잡고 있습니다. 한반도는 중국과 일본, 대륙과 해양을 연결하는 다리입니다. 이런 지정학적 위치가 지난날에는 우리에게 고통을 주었습니다. 그러나 오늘날에는 오히려 기회를 주고 있습니다. 21 세기 동북아 시대의 중심적 역할을 우리에게 요구하고 있는 것입니다.

우리는 고급 두뇌와 창의력, 세계 일류의 정보화 기반을 갖고 있습니다. 인천공항, 부산항, 광양항과 고속철도 등 하늘과 바다와 땅의 물류기반도 구비해 가고 있습니다. 21 세기 동북아 시대를 주도적으로 열어 나갈 수 있는 기본적 조건을 갖추어가고 있습니다. 한반도는 동북아의 물류와 금융의 중심지로 거듭날 수 있습니다.

동북아 시대는 경제에서 출발합니다. 동북아에 '번영의 공동체'를 이룩하고 이를 통해 세계의 번영에 기여해야 합니다. 그리고 언젠가는 '평화의 공동체'로 발전해야 합니다. 지금의 유럽연합과 같은 평화와 공생의 질서가 동북아에도 구축되게하는 것이 저의 오랜 꿈입니다. 그렇게 되어야 동북아 시대는 완성됩니다. 그런 날이 가까워지도록 저는 혼신의 노력을 다할 것임을 굳게 약속드립니다.

국민 여러분.

진정한 동북아 시대를 열자면 먼저 한반도에 평화가 제도적으로 정착되어야 합니다. 한반도가 지구상의 마지막 냉전지대로 남은 것은 20 세기의 불행한 유산입니다.

그런 한반도가 21 세기에는 세계를 향해 평화를 발신하는 평화지대로 바뀌어야 합니다. 유라시아 대륙과 태평양을 잇는 동북아의 평화로운 관문으로 새롭게 태어나야합니다. 부산에서 파리행

기차표를 사서 평양, 신의주, 중국, 몽골, 러시아를 거쳐 유럽의 한복판에 도착하는 날을 앞당겨야 합니다.

이제까지 우리는 한반도의 평화를 증진시키기 위해 많은 노력을 기울였습니다.

그 성과는 괄목할 만합니다. 남북한 사이에 사람과 물자의 교류가 일상적인 일처럼 빈번해졌습니다. 하늘과 바다와 땅의 길이 모두 열렸습니다. 그러나 정책의 추진과정에서는 더욱 광범위한 국민적 합의를 얻어야 한다는 과제를 남겼습니다. 저는 그동안의 성과를 계승하고 발전시키면서, 정책의 추진방식은 개선해 나가고자 합니다.

저는 한반도 평화증진과 공동번영을 목표로 하는 '평화번영정책'을, 몇가지 원칙을 가지고 추진해 나가겠습니다.

첫째, 모든 현안은 대화를 통해 풀도록 하겠습니다.

둘째, 상호신뢰를 우선하고 호혜주의를 실천해 나가겠습니다.

셋째, 남북 당사자 원칙에 기초해 원활한 국제협력을 추구하겠습니다.

넷째, 대내외적 투명성을 높이고 국민참여를 확대하며 초당적 협력을 얻겠습니다. 국민과 함께하는 '평화번영정책'이 되도록 하겠습니다.

북한의 핵무기 개발 의혹은 한반도를 비롯한 동북아와 세계의 평화에 중대한 위협이 되고 있습니다. 북한의 핵 개발은 용인될 수 없습니다. 북한은 핵 개발 계획을 포기해야 합니다. 북한이 핵 개발 계획을 포기한다면, 국제사회는 북한이 원하는 많은 것을 제공할 것입니다. 북한은 핵무기를 보유할 것인지, 체제안전과 경제지원을 약속받을 것인지를 선택해야 합니다.

아울러 저는 북한 핵 문제가 대화를 통해 평화적으로 해결되어야 한다는 점을 거듭 강조하고자 합니다. 어떤 형태로든 군사적 긴장이 고조되어서는 안됩니다. 북한핵 문제가 대화를 통해 해결되도록, 우리는 미국, 일본과의 공조를 강화할 것입니다.

중국, 러시아, 유럽연합 등과도 긴밀하게 협력해 나가겠습니다.

올해는 한미동맹 50주년입니다. 한미동맹은 우리의 안전보장과 경제발전에 크게 기여해 왔습니다. 우리 국민은 이에 대해 깊이 감사하고 있습니다. 우리는 한미동맹을 소중히 발전시켜 나갈 것입니다. 호혜평등의 관계로 더욱 성숙시켜 나갈 것입니다. 전통우방을 비롯한 다른 국가들과의 관계도 확대해 나가겠습니다.

국민 여러분.

동북아 시대를 열고, 한반도에 평화를 정착시키려면, 우리 사회가 건강하고 미래지향적이어야 합니다. 힘과 비전을 가져야 합니다. 그러자면 개혁과 통합을 위한지속적 노력이 필요합니다. 개혁은 성장의 동력이고, 통합은 도약의 디딤돌입니다.

새 정부는 개혁과 통합을 바탕으로, 국민과 함께 하는 민주주의, 더불어 사는 균형발전사회, 평화와 번영의 동북아시대를 열어 나갈 것입니다. 이러한 목표로 가기 위해 저는 원칙과 신뢰, 공정과 투명, 대화와 타협, 분권과 자율을 새 정부 국정운영의 좌표로 삼고자 합니다.

우리는 각 분야의 새로운 성장 동력을 창출해야 합니다. 외환위기를 초래했던제반 요인들은 아직도 극복해야할 과제로 남아 있습니다. 시장과 제도를 세계기준에맞게 공정하고 투명하게 개혁해, 기업하기 좋은 나라, 투자하고 싶은 나라로 만들고자 합니다.

정치부터 바뀌어야 합니다. 진정으로 국민이 주인인 정치가 구현되어야 합니다.

당리당략보다 국민민복을 우선하는 정치풍토가 조성되어야 합니다. 대결과 갈등이아니라 대화와 타협으로 문제를 푸는 정치문화가 자리잡았으면 합니다. 저부터 야당과 대화하고 타협하겠습니다.

과학기술을 부단히 혁신해 '제 2 의 과학기술 입국'을 이루겠습니다. 지식정보화기반을 지속적으로 확충하고 신산업을 육성하고자 합니다. 문화를 함양하고 문화산업의 발전도 적극 지원하겠습니다.

이러한 국가목표에 부응할 수 있도록 교육도 혁신되어야 합니다. 우리 아이들이입시지옥에서 벗어나 저마다의 소질과 창의력을 마음껏 발휘할 수 있게 해주어야 합니다.

경제의 지속적 성장을 위해서도, 사회의 건강을 위해서도 부정부패를 없애야 합니다. 이를 위한 구조적 제도적 대안을 모색하겠습니다. 특히 사회지도층의 뼈를 깎는 성찰을 요망합니다.

중앙 집권과 수도권 집중은 국가의 미래를 위해 더 이상 방치할 수 없습니다.

지방분권과 국가균형발전은 미룰 수 없는 과제가 되었습니다. 중앙과 지방은 조화와균형을 이루며 발전해야 합니다. 지방은 자신의 미래를 자율적으로 설계하고, 중앙은 이를 도와야 합니다. 저는 비상한 결의로 이를 추진해 나갈 것입니다.

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항상 국민 여러분과 함께 하겠습니다. 감사합니다.

2003년 2월 25일

대통령 노무현



## Appendix Eight

### **Inauguration speech of President Roh Moo-hyun 25 February 2003<sup>6</sup>**

My fellow Koreans. Today I stand here having just been sworn in as the president of the Republic of Korea in the 16th inaugural ceremony.

As a result of the great choice of the people, I have been given the honoured responsibility of presiding over the new administration of the republic.

I am very grateful to each and every one of you; with your support, I promise to follow this great call to duty.

Present here today are President Kim Dae-jung and other former presidents of the republic, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan, congratulatory missions from many countries and numerous distinguished guests from home and abroad.

I offer my deepest thanks to you all. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the victims of the recent subway fire disaster in Daegu and offer my condolences to the bereaved families.

To prevent any recurrence of such a tragedy, the government will re-examine and drastically improve the disaster management systems throughout the nation and strive to ensure enhanced public safety.

Fellow citizens. Historically, we Koreans have lived through a series of challenges and have responded to them. Having to live among big powers, the people on the Korean peninsula have had to cope with countless tribulations.

For thousands of years, however, we have successfully preserved our self-respect as a nation as well as our unique culture. Within the half century since liberation from colonial rule, and despite territorial division, war, and poverty, we have built a nation that is the 12th-largest economic power in the world.

In recent years, we have successfully entered the age of information and knowledge, evolving from an agricultural community through the age of industrialisation. Today, however, we are at a historical turning point. We are at a crossroad of having to decide whether to take off or retreat; to move towards peace or tension.

The international security environment is rather unsettling. The Iraqi situation is extremely tense. In particular, global concern is rising over the North Korean nuclear issue. This is the time to make a determined effort to safeguard peace and have it firmly rooted on the peninsula.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2797053.stm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2797053.stm) (accessed 07/08/2011)

The international economic situation is also deteriorating. Developed nations are continuously exploring new frontiers and new markets while developing countries are rapidly closing the gap. Our nation, therefore, is in urgent need of a new economic growth engine and viable development strategies.

At the same time, we are also encountering diverse social problems that may have a great impact on our destiny. They are waiting for your determination and wise decisions. We must cope with all these challenges. I know we can do it.

Nothing is impossible when the whole nation joins forces. We demonstrated our remarkable potential and recovered in record time from the major foreign exchange crisis that hit many Asian countries. Just last year, we succeeded in reaching the semi-finals of the Fifa World Cup.

And, throughout the process of the presidential election, we saw participatory democracy fully blossom.

### **'The Age of Northeast Asia'**

Fellow Koreans. In this new age, our future can no longer be confined to the Korean peninsula.

The Age of Northeast Asia is fast approaching. Northeast Asia, which used to be on the periphery of the modern world, is now emerging as a new source of energy in the global economy. Renowned international scholars have long predicted that the 21st Century would be the Age of Northeast Asia, and their predictions are coming true.

Business transactions in the region already represent one fifth of the global volume, and the combined population of Korea, China and Japan is four times larger than that of the European Union.

The Korean peninsula is located at the heart of the region. It is a big bridge linking China and Japan, the continent and the ocean.

Such a geopolitical characteristic often caused pain for us in the past. Today, however, this same feature is offering us an opportunity. Indeed, it demands that we play a pivotal role in the age of Northeast Asia in the 21st Century.

South Korea is endowed with highly creative and well-educated people as well as a state-of-the-art information infrastructure.

Logistics bases are being perfected on land and sea as well as in the air, as seen in the up-to-date facilities at Incheon International Airport, Busan and Gwangyang Ports, and the projected super-speed railway systems.

The country is being equipped with all the basic requirements to lead the age of Northeast Asia in the 21st Century. The country is poised to emerge as an international logistics and financial hub in Northeast Asia.

Initially, the dawn of the age of Northeast Asia will come from the economic field. Nations of the region will first form a "community of prosperity", and through it, contribute to the prosperity of all humanity and, in time, should evolve into a "community of peace".

For a long time, I had a dream of seeing a regional community of peace and co-prosperity in Northeast Asia like the European Union. The age of Northeast Asia will then finally come to full fruition. I pledge to devote my whole heart and efforts to bringing about that day at the earliest possible time.

Fellow Koreans. In order to bring about a genuine age of Northeast Asia, a structure of peace must first be institutionalised on the Korean peninsula.

It certainly is most unfortunate that the peninsula remains the last legacy of the Cold War of the 20th Century. In the 21st Century, we have to change the peninsula into a land that sends out messages of peace to the rest of the world.

It has to be reborn as East Asia's gateway of peace that connects the Eurasian landmass with the Pacific Ocean. We have to soon bring the day when passengers will be able to buy a train ticket in Busan and travel all the way to Paris, in the heart of Europe, via Pyongyang, Shinuiju and the many cities in China, Mongolia and Russia.

So far, we have made great efforts to promote peace in the land and the results have been remarkable. Exchanges of people and merchandise between the two Koreas are taking place routinely, almost on a daily basis. Inter-Korean travel routes are open on land and sea and in the air.

In this process, however, we have come to learn that we need to pursue North Korea policies based on a broader national consensus.

While trying to build on the good results reaped so far and to bring further progress, I intend to improve the way the policies are actually implemented.

### **New North Korea policy**

I have several principles that I plan to adhere to in pushing the "policy for peace and prosperity" on the Korean peninsula:

- First, I will try to resolve all pending issues through dialogue.
- Second, I will give priority to building mutual trust and upholding reciprocity.
- Third, I will seek active international co-operation on the premise that South and North Korea are the two main actors in inter-Korean relations.



- And fourth, I will enhance transparency, expand citizen participation, and secure bipartisan support.

I will implement my policy for peace and prosperity with the support of the general public.

The suspicion that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to world peace, not to mention the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia.

North Korea's nuclear development can never be condoned. Pyongyang must abandon nuclear development. If it renounces its nuclear development programme, the international community will offer many things that it wants.

It is up to Pyongyang whether to go ahead and obtain nuclear weapons or to get guarantees for the security of its regime and international economic support.

I would like to emphasise again that the North Korean nuclear issue should be resolved peacefully through dialogue.

Military tension in any form should not be heightened. We will strengthen co-ordination with the United States and Japan to help resolve the nuclear issue through dialogue. We will also maintain close co-operation with China, Russia, the European Union and other countries.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Korea-US Alliance. It has made a significant contribution in guaranteeing our security and economic development. The Korean people are deeply grateful for this.

We will foster and develop this cherished alliance. We will see to it that the alliance matures into a more reciprocal and equitable relationship. We will also expand relations with other countries, including traditional friends.

Fellow citizens. Our society must remain healthy and future-oriented if we are to build a structure of peace on the Korean peninsula and usher in the era of Northeast Asia.

We must build strength and maintain vision. That requires inexorable efforts for reform and integration. Reform is a driving force behind growth, and integration is a stepping-stone for a take-off.

### **Domestic goals**

On the basis of reform and integration, the new administration will pursue democracy with the people, build a society of balanced development and open an era of peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

To achieve these goals, I have set the following tenets for the operation of the new administration.

They are principle and trust, transparency and fairness, dialogue and compromise, and decentralisation and autonomy.

We should create new driving forces for fresh growth in each sector. The various factors that caused the foreign currency crisis are still around for us to overcome.

I want to make the country a favourable place to do business and an attractive place in which to invest by reforming the markets and systems in a fair and transparent manner based on international standards.

The first order of business is to reform politics. We have to realise politics that respect our citizens as a genuine source of power. We should nurture a political climate in which the well-being of the people takes precedence over partisan interests.

I hope to see the kind of political culture that solves problems through dialogue and compromise, not through confrontation and conflict.

I myself will pursue dialogue and compromise with the opposition parties.

I will help the rebirth of our country by promoting uninterrupted innovation in science and technology. I will promote the continued expansion of the infrastructure for a knowledge and information-oriented society and cultivate new industries.

I will promote culture and extend active support for the progress of culture industries.

Education should also be renovated commensurate with these national goals. We will try to free our children from the yoke of entrance examinations and allow them to display their talents and creativity to the fullest possible extent.

Irregularities and corruption must be eliminated not only for the sustained growth of the economy but also for the health of society. For this purpose, I will search for a structural and institutional alternative. In particular, I ask all leaders in society to seriously reflect on themselves.

For the future of the country, the centralisation and concentration in the Seoul metropolitan area can no longer be left unattended.

Decentralisation of power to the provinces and balanced national development have become tasks that cannot be put off any longer.

The central and the provincial parts of the country should be developed in a harmonious and balanced manner. The provinces should design their own future autonomously, and the central part should help them out. I will press ahead with the task with special resolve.

National integration is one of the most important tasks of our times. My new administration will take all possible measures to eliminate parochialism, including personnel management without regional consideration.

In order to narrow the gap between different income brackets, I will review improvement measures in terms of benefits in education and tax systems. I will do my best to ensure labour-management conciliation and nurture a culture of co-operation.

We should try to build a compassionate society that pays more attention to the disaffected, including senior citizens and those who are challenged in various ways.

For this purpose, I will try to improve our welfare policy. I will eliminate all kinds of unreasonable discrimination. I will pursue a gender-equal society. In this age of liberalisation, I will develop measures to help agriculture and fisheries, farmers and fishermen. I will make particular preparations for the arrival of a "silver society".

The time when privileges and violations of rules are tolerated must now come to an end. The preposterous climate in which justice is ignored and opportunism prevails must be cleaned up.

Let us establish proper principles and build a society of trust. Let us build a society in which those who work hard are justly assured of success. Rewards should go to the majority of honest and sincere citizens.

Fellow citizens. For a long period of time, we have lived on the periphery. At times, we were forced to go through a history of dependence, unable to determine our own destiny.

But today, we are at the threshold of a new turning point. The opportunity has come for us to take off as the hub of Northeast Asia. We should seize this opportunity.

We have overcome numerous challenges with inner strength. We have the wisdom to turn even crisis into opportunity. With such wisdom and strength, let us again overcome the challenge facing us today. Let us make future generations remember us as proud ancestors just as, today, we remember our forefathers.

We are a people who can bring about miracles if united. Let us all pull together with all our hearts. I invite you all to join this historic march and make a new take-off towards an age of peace and prosperity. I will always stand with you all. Thank you.

## Appendix Nine

### **Inauguration speech of President Lee Myung-bak (in Korean)<sup>7</sup>**

선진화의 길, 다 함께 열어갑시다.

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그리고 이슬람 카리모프 우즈베키스탄 대통령,

앵흐바야르 남바르 몽골 대통령,

삼텍 훈센 캄보디아 총리,

후쿠다 야스오 일본 내각총리대신,

빅토르 줍코프 러시아 연방 총리,

무하마드 유수프 칼라 인도네시아 부통령을 비롯한

각국 경축사절과 내외 귀빈 여러분,

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한없이 자랑스러운 나라,

한없이 위대한 국민 앞에

엄숙한 마음으로 경의를 표하며

세계 주어진 역사적, 시대적 사명에

신명을 바칠 것을 굳게 다짐합니다.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.president.go.kr](http://www.president.go.kr) (accessed 07/08/2011)

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경제를 발전시키고 사회를 통합하겠습니다.  
문화를 창달하고 과학기술을 발전시키겠습니다.  
안보를 튼튼히 하고 평화 통일의 기반을 다지겠습니다.  
국제사회에 책임을 다하고 인류공영에 이바지 하겠습니다.

올해로 대한민국 건국 60 주년을 맞이합니다.  
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모두가 하나같이 열심히 살았습니다.

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전선에서 산화한 장병들,  
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밤낮없이 산업현장을 지켜낸 근로자들,  
젊음을 바쳐 민주화를 일구어낸 청년들의  
눈물겹도록 위대한 이야기입니다.,

장롱속 금붙이를 들고 나와 외환위기에 맞섰던 시민들,  
겨울 바닷가에서 기름을 걷고 닦는 자원봉사자들,  
그리고 사회 각 영역에서  
말은 바 소임을 묵묵히 수행해온  
수많은 직장인들과 공직자들,  
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계층갈등을 녹이고 강경투쟁을 풀고자 합니다.

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이명박 정부가 이룩하고자 하는 선진 일류국가의 꿈입니다.

기적은 계속될 것입니다.  
신화는 이어질 것입니다.  
세계를 놀라게 한 발전의 엔진에 다시 불을 붙여  
더욱 힘차게 돌아가게 하겠습니다.  
제가 앞장서고 국민 여러분이 하나 되어 나서면  
우리는 반드시 해낼 수 있습니다.

존경하는 국민여러분!

이 시점에서 우리 함께 다짐해야 할 것이 있습니다.  
급변하는 시대 흐름을 냉철하게 인식하고  
스스로 변해야 한다는 각오를 새로이 하는 일입니다.

우리가 방심하는 사이,  
세계는 우리를 저만치 앞질러가고 있습니다.  
후발국들도 바짝 추격해오고 있습니다.  
국가경쟁력은 떨어지고  
자원과 금융시장의 불안이  
우리 경제를 위협하고 있습니다.

국내 사정도 쉽지만은 않습니다.



중산층은 위축되고 서민생활은 어려워졌습니다.

계층간, 집단간의 관계는

여전히 갈등과 투쟁의 늪에 빠져 있습니다.

시민사회는 양적으로 성장했지만

권리주장이 책임의식을 앞지르고 있습니다.

저출산 고령화 사회가 오고 있습니다.

분단국으로서 지고 있는 짐도 무겁습니다.

다음 60년의 국운을 좌우할 갈림길에서,

이 역사적 고비를 너끈히 넘어가기 위해서

저는 국민 여러분이 더 적극적으로

변화에 나서 주실 것을 요청합니다.

변화를 소홀히 하면 낙오합니다.

변화를 거스르면 휩쓸리고 맙니다.

변화의 흐름을 타고, 변화를 만들어가야 합니다.

어렵고 고통스럽더라도 더 빨리 변해야 합니다.

불합리하거나 시대에 맞지 않으면

익숙한 것들과 과감히 헤어져야 합니다.

방향은 개방과 자율, 그리고 창의입니다.

존경하는 국민 여러분!

경제 살리기가 무엇보다시급합니다.

신성장동력을 확보하여

더 활기차게 성장하고

더 많은 일자리가 만들어져야 합니다.

정부부터 유능한 조직으로 바꾸고자 합니다.  
‘작은 정부, 큰 시장’으로 효율성을 높ی겠습니다.  
‘일 잘하는 정부’를 만들겠습니다.  
앞으로 정부는 잘 하는 곳은 더 잘 하게 해주고  
도움이 필요한 곳에는 힘이 되는 역할을 맡겠습니다.

꼭 정부가 해야 할 일이 아닌 것은  
민간에 이양하겠습니다.  
공공부문에 도 경쟁을 도입하겠습니다.  
세금도 낮춰야 합니다.  
그래야 투자와 소비가 살아납니다.

공무원 수를 점진적으로 줄이고  
불필요한 규제는 빠른 시일 내에 혁파하겠습니다.  
국민 여러분께서는 머지않아  
새 정부가 효율적으로 일하는 모습을 보게 될 것입니다.

기업은 국부의 원천이요,  
일자리 창출의 주역입니다.  
누구나 쉽게 창업하고  
공장을 지을 수 있어야 합니다.

기업인이 나서서 투자하고  
신바람 나서 세계 시장을 누비도록  
시장과 제도적 환경을 개선하겠습니다.

기술혁신을 추구하는 중소기업들이 활기를 가져야 합니다.  
이들이 중견기업으로 성장해서  
대기업들과 협력하고 경쟁하도록 돕겠습니다.

투명하고 공정하게 경영하는 기업인들이 존경받고,  
투자하고 일자리를 만드는 기업이 사랑받아야 합니다.

노(勞)와 사(使)는 기업이라는 수레를 움직이는 두 바퀴입니다.  
어느 하나가 제몫을 못 하면  
수레가 넘어집니다.

선진국에서는 노사분규가 현격하게 줄어들었습니다.  
“과격 한 투쟁은 결국 자멸을 가져온다,” 는 인식을  
노사 모두가 공유했기 때문입니다.

노사문화의 자율적 개선은 선진화의 필수요건입니다.  
이제 ‘투쟁의 시대’를 끝내고 ‘동반의 시대’를 열어야 합니다.  
기업도 노조도 서로 양보하고 한걸음씩 다가서야 합니다.

어려울 때일수록 기업이 힘을 내야 합니다.  
기업이 먼저 투명하고 공정한 경영으로  
노동자를 끌어안아야 합니다.

이런 때 노동자도 더 열심히 일해 주어야 합니다.  
불법투쟁은 지양하고 생산성을 높여야 합니다.  
그래야 노사관계가 건강해집니다.  
정부도 원칙과 성의를 가지고 노력하겠습니다.

시장개방은 피할 수 없는 큰 흐름입니다.  
수출산업이 경제의 큰 몫을 차지하는 우리나라로서는  
자유무역협정을 통해 국부를 늘려가야 합니다.

그러나 개방에 취약한 부문에서는 걱정이 많습니다.  
특히 농어민들이 그렇습니다.

그렇다고 여기서 주저앉을 수도 없지 않습니까?

우리 국민 모두가 농어민의 아들딸입니다.  
농업, 농촌, 농민 걱정이 곧 나라 걱정입니다.  
대응책을 마련하는데 정부가 함께 하겠습니다.

농림수산업이 더 이상 1차 산업으로 머물러선 안 됩니다.  
첨단 생산기술을 접목하고 유통 서비스 경영과 결합시켜  
경쟁력 있는 2차, 3차 산업으로 업그레이드 해야 합니다.

해외시장 개척에도 발 벗고 나서야 합니다.  
농어민과 정부가 뜻을 합치고 지혜를 모으면  
오히려 전화위복의 계기로 만들 수도 있을 것입니다.

존경하는 국민 여러분!

누구나 인간다운 생활을 누리고,  
다 함께 건강하고 편안한 사회가 되어야 합니다.  
도움이 절실한 사람은 국가가 보살펴야 합니다.

시혜적, 사후적 복지는 해결책이 아닙니다.  
능동적, 예방적 복지로 나아가야 합니다.  
그래야만 낙오자 없는 세상을 만들 수 있습니다.  
꼭 필요한 사람들에게 혜택이 돌아가게 됩니다.

여성은 시민사회와 국가발전의 당당한 주역입니다.  
여성의 사회참여는 사회를 성숙하게 만듭니다.  
양성평등 정책을 추진해서  
시민권과 사회권의 확장에 힘쓰겠습니다.  
더 많은 여성이 의사결정의 지위에 오를 수 있도록

기회를 늘리고 관련 제도를 개선하겠습니다.

생애주기와 생활형편에 따른 수요에 맞추어  
맞춤형 보육시스템을 구축하고자 합니다.  
정부가 보육의 짐을 덜어주면  
저출산 문제가 개선될 뿐만 아니라  
삶의 질과 인적 자원의 질을 높일 수 있습니다.

청년세대의 고통을 외면하지 않겠습니다.  
국내외에 일자리를 더 많이 만들어  
젊은이들의 사회 진출을 돕겠습니다.  
주거생활을 안정시킴으로써  
개인 생활은 물론  
사회의 안정 기반을 확보하도록 하겠습니다.

고령화 사회를 맞아  
노인복지대책도 시급합니다.  
노령연금을 현실화하고,  
공공복지를 개선하겠습니다.

고령자를 위한 의료혜택과 시설을 늘리고,  
근로욕이 있는 노인들을 위한  
일자리 창출에도 힘쓰겠습니다.

장애인들에게도 더 따뜻한 배려와 함께  
더 많은 기회를 주고자 합니다.  
일할 수 있는 사람에게는 일자리가 최고의 복지입니다.  
그렇게 할 수 없는 사람들은  
국가가 책임지고 보살피겠습니다.

존경하는 국민 여러분!

선진화는 사람이 하는 것입니다.  
그리고 사람을 위해 하는 것입니다.  
대한민국의 선진화는  
얼마나 훌륭한 인재를 얼마나 많이  
확보하느냐에 달려 있습니다.

청소년은 대한민국의 미래를 쏠어질  
꿈과 활력의 발전기입니다.  
청소년들의 적성과 잠재력을 개발하고  
디지털, 글로벌 역량을 강화하는 일에 적극 나서겠습니다.

교육개혁은 무엇보다 시급합니다.  
획일적 관치교육, 폐쇄적 입시교육에서 벗어나야 합니다.  
글로벌 스탠더드를 받아들이고  
교육현장에 자율과 창의, 그리고 경쟁의 숨결을  
불어 넣어야 합니다.

학교유형을 다양화하고  
교사들의 경쟁력을 높이는 데에 주력하겠습니다.  
그래야 공교육이 정상화되고,  
사교육 열풍이 잦아들게 됩니다.  
학생들의 적성과 창의력이 살아납니다.

대학의 자율화는 국가경쟁력 뿐 아니라  
한국 사회 선진화의 관건입니다.  
교육과 연구의 역량을 늘려서  
세계의 대학들과 치열하게 경쟁해야 합니다.

지식기반사회의 전선에 서야 합니다.

교육의 기회를 질적으로 확대해야 합니다.

형편이 어려워도 공부할 수 있어야 합니다.

교육복지로 가난의 대물림을 끊겠습니다.

과학이 사회를 합리적으로 바꾸고 선진화 시킵니다.

한국의 몇몇 과학기술은 세계적 수준에 도달했지만,

아직도 갈 길이 멉니다.

20년, 30년을 내다보면서

과학기술의 창의적 역량을 키워 가겠습니다.

우수한 과학도를 길러내고,

과학자를 존경하고 우대하는

사회적 풍토를 만들어 가겠습니다.

과학기술이 미래로 가는 문을 열어줍니다.

기초과학과 원천기술, 거대기술에 대한 연구개발에

국가가 장기계획을 가지고 밀어 주어야 합니다.

대학과 기업과 정부의 연구개발 협력체제도

보다 실질화 하는 방안을 모색하겠습니다.

주택은 재산이 아니라 생활의 인프라입니다.

주거생활의 수준을 높이고 주택가격을 안정시키는

주거복지정책을 적극적으로 펴나가겠습니다.

국토의 구조를 미래지향적으로 개편하고자 합니다.

해양지향, 광역화는 세계적인 추세입니다.

미래의 생활양식에 필요한 공간 활용 방안도 마련해야 합니다.

어떤 경우든 친환경, 친문화적 기조를 유지하여

국토의 건강성과 품격을 높여나가겠습니다.

환경보전은 삶의 질을 개선하고  
환경산업은 새로운 성장동력을 만들어냅니다.

지구 환경 변화가 인류를 위협하고 있습니다.  
기상재해가 잦아지고 피해 규모도 커지고 있습니다.  
우리도 탄소 배출을 줄이는 일에 적극 동참해야 합니다.

우리 경제가 이에 적응하려면  
당장은 어려움을 겪게 될 것입니다.  
그러나 그 아픔을 참고 창의적으로 적응해야만 합니다.

식량, 환경, 물, 자원, 에너지 등과 관련된 정책 전반을  
환경친화적으로 바꿔나가야 합니다.

우리나라는 오랜 역사를 가진 문화국가입니다.  
최근 세계무대에서 주목받는 한류는  
그런 전통과 맥이 닿아 있습니다.

전통문화의 현대화와  
문화예술의 선진화가 함께 가야  
경제적 풍요도 빛이 날 것입니다.

이제는 문화도 산업입니다.  
콘텐츠 산업의 경쟁력을 높여  
문화강국의 기반을 다져야 합니다.

문화수준이 높아지면 삶의 격조가 올라갑니다.  
문화로 즐기고,



문화로 화합하며,  
문화로 발전해야 합니다.

정부는 우리 문화의 저력이  
21 세기의 열린 공간에서 활짝 피어날 수 있도록  
최선을 다하고자 합니다.

존경하는 국민 여러분!

대한민국은 더 넓은 시야, 더 능동적 자세로  
국제사회와 더불어 함께하고 교류하는  
글로벌 외교를 펼칠 것입니다.

우리는 인종과 종교, 빈부의 차이를 넘어  
세계의 모든 나라, 모든 사람들과 친구가 되겠습니다.  
민주주의와 시장경제라는 인류 공동의 가치를 존중하면서  
지구촌의 평화와 발전에 동참하겠습니다.

미국과는 전통적 우호관계를  
미래지향적 동맹관계로 발전, 강화시키겠습니다.  
두 나라 사이에 형성된 역사적 신뢰를 바탕으로  
전략적 동맹관계를 굳건히 해 나가겠습니다.

아시아 국가들과의 연대도 매우 중요합니다.  
특히 일본, 중국, 러시아와 고루 협력관계를 강화하여  
동아시아의 평화와 공동번영을 모색하겠습니다.

우리 경제의 엔진을 안정적으로 가동하기 위해  
자원과 에너지의 안정적인 확보에도 힘쓸 것입니다.  
아울러 평화와 환경을 위한 국제협력에도 앞장서겠습니다.

우리의 경제규모와 외교역량에 걸맞게  
인류 보편의 가치를 구현하는 기여외교를 펴겠습니다.  
UN 평화유지군(PKO)에 적극 참여하고  
공적개발원조(ODA)를 확대하겠습니다.

문화외교에 역점을 두어  
국제사회와의 소통을 더 원활히 하겠습니다.  
우리의 전통문화와 첨단기술이 어우러지면  
한국의 매력을 세계로 내보낼 수 있을 것입니다.

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2008년 2월 25일

대한민국 대통령 이명박



## Appendix Ten

### **English translation of the inauguration speech of President Lee Myung-bak, Seoul, 25 February 2008<sup>8</sup>**

The following is the full text of the speech delivered by South Korea's new President Lee Myung-bak during his inaugural ceremony on Monday in Seoul.

Together We Shall Open A Road to Advancement Fellow Koreans, seven million Korean compatriots living abroad, former Presidents Roh Moo-hyun, Kim Dae-jung, Kim Young-sam, and Chun Doo-hwan, President Islam Karimov of the Republic of Uzbekistan, President Enkhbayar Nambar of Mongolia, Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan, Chairman Viktor Zubkov of the Government of the Russia Federation, Vice President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla of the Republic of Indonesia, thank you for being here.

I have received your call and today, I stand here before you as the 17th-term President of the Republic of Korea.

To a nation that I am immensely proud of and to its great people, I offer my most solemn respect.

I sincerely pledge to you that I will dedicate my body and soul to this historic mission of the time.

These are my promises to you: I will serve the people and bring peace to this nation, I will invigorate the economy and unite our society, I will enliven our culture and advance our science and technology, I will strengthen our security and lay the foundation for peaceful unification.

I will faithfully carry out our duties to the international community and contribute to the prosperity of all peoples.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea.

We fought for and regained our land that was taken from us and established our nation.

We gave our best to our day's work.

As a result, our great nation achieved what no other nation ever achieved in history.

In the shortest period of time, this nation achieved both industrialization and democratization.

Never before seen in human history, we achieved all this with only our own fierce determination and sheer fortitude.

That is how one of the poorest countries in the world has come to bid for its place among the 10

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<sup>8</sup> [www.president.go.kr](http://www.president.go.kr) (accessed 07/08/2011)



largest economies in the world.

A country that lived by the mercy of others is now able to give to others in need and stand shoulder to shoulder with the most advanced countries.

Some say this is a "miracle." Others say this is a "legend."

But we know what it truly is.

This is not a miracle but the shining crystallization of our blood, sweat and tears.

This is not a legend but a genuine testimony to how each and every one of us has lived.

Our forefathers who gave their lives for the sake of our independence, Our men and women in uniform who were martyred on the battle field, Our farmers who toiled for a good harvest come rain or shine, Our laborers and workers who worked late into the night in factories, And those who sacrificed their youth to fight for democracy, these are the stories of greatness that bring tears.

The ordinary citizens who willingly came up with their treasured gold objects to pitch in to help pay the national debt during the 1997 financial crisis, the volunteers who recently suffered the harsh cold winds to clean up the oil leak on the winter beaches, and many citizens and civil servants who staunchly carried out their duties, these are the protagonists in this success story.

Now, we can trumpet these stories with a grateful heart and a sense of dignity. This self-esteem is indeed an engine for Korea's drive into the future.

Now, I propose that all of you to have confidence and set about with me on this journey into the future. Free from the yoke of the past, keeping our composure in the face of the shackles of reality, we shall march forward to the great possibilities of the future.

Fellow Koreans, as the President of this great nation, at this juncture when we are beginning another 60 years of the Republic, I hereby declare the year 2008 as the starting year for the advancement of the Republic of Korea.

I do declare our solemn start towards a society that cherishes the fruit of democratization and industrialization, with each of its members doing their bits voluntarily in collaboration for the general welfare and towards a country that abounds in wealth, caring, and dignity.

At times over the last ten years, we found ourselves faltering and confused, but now, we will take with us our achievements as well as the lessons that we learned from our failures and start anew.

We must move from the age of ideology into the age of pragmatism.

Pragmatism is a rational principle prevalent in the histories across the globe, and practical wisdom useful in charting our course through the tides of globalization.

Pragmatism is Zeitgeist that unites man and nature, matter and mind, individuals and

communities for a healthy and beautiful life.

In making Korea an advanced country, we ought not to discriminate among ourselves.

We will arm ourselves with pragmatism for cooperation and harmony so that we may thaw out differences between classes and resolve Militant strifes.

The future that I envisage for Korea is a nation where the government serves its people with devotion, a nation where the economy is robust and the weak and marginalized are taken care of and a nation where labor and management collaborate in harmony. It will be a nation where the best and brightest are fostered and welcomed by the rest of the world and which attracts the world's best and brightest to come and work.

That is the vision of a Great Korea that Lee Myung-bak administration will work for.

The miracle will continue.

The legend will go on.

I will reignite the engine of growth that once marveled the whole world and make it pump harder.

I will take the lead, and with you beside me as one, we can do it.

My fellow citizens, There is one thing that requires our determination at this juncture.

Based on a dispassionate realization of the rapid changes that face us everywhere, we must resolve anew to change ourselves first on our own initiative.

Having flinched rather carelessly, we now witness the rest of the world excelling us by a long way.

Developing countries are fast catching up.

Our nation's competitiveness has fallen, and instability in the resource and financial markets threatens our economy.

On the domestic front, things are not quite looking up.

Our middle-class crumbled, and the lives of our ordinary citizens are becoming more and more tiresome.

Relations between social groups as well as between different classes are still mired in conflict and animosity.

Civil movement has grown in number and in size yet, fulfillment of civic duties and responsibilities still lags far behind the demand for more rights.

We are rapidly becoming an aged society with our country's birth rate hitting record lows. There

is the added burden of being a divided nation.

We are at the crossroads where the destiny of the nation over the next 60 years will be determined.

I beseech you to take a more positive attitude to change so that we can surmount this critical moment in history with ease.

If we slight this call for change, we will fall behind.

If we stand up against change, we will be swept away.

We must ride the tide of change in all areas and be able to initiate our own changes.

Although it is going to be difficult and painful, we must change much more and much faster.

If some things are unreasonable or found outmoded, they must be discarded, without hesitation.

The direction of change is openness, autonomy and creativity.

My fellow Koreans, Economic revival is our most urgent task.

New engines of growth must emerge assuredly, the economy grow vigorously and more jobs be created.

We will start with the government and transform it into a lean and capable organization.

We shall increase our effectiveness by abiding to the small government, big-market principle.

We will make a government that gets the job done well.

From now onwards, the Government will act as a helper, allowing those who do well to do even better and lending a hand where help is needed.

The jobs that are not meant for the Government, shall be privatized.

We shall also enhance competition in the public sector.

We must lower taxes as well.

Only then will we see investments and consumption increase once again.

The number of public servants will be incrementally reduced and unnecessary regulations will be either cast away or reformed as early as possible.

Soon, you will witness the new Administration working efficiently.

Corporations are the source of national wealth and the prime creator of jobs.

All who wish must be allowed to start a business and build a factory without difficulty.

We also need to create an environment where entrepreneurs can invest freely, and our companies can roam the world market with much excitement.

Innovative small and medium-sized enterprises must be encouraged and invigorated.

We will certainly help such companies grow in size, competing and cooperating with large corporations. Business leaders who are transparent and who put in an honest days work will be admired, and companies that invest more and create more jobs will be loved by the people.

Labor and management are the two wheels of a wagon that we call a corporation.

If one side slips then the entire corporation falls.

In advanced economies, labor strikes have sharply abated.

This is because labor and management commonly understood that too much contention would ruin them all.

Autonomous improvement in labor-management culture is prerequisite for national advancement.

We must end the era of strife and open an era of companionship.

Management as well as labor must make a compromise and take a step towards each other.

When the going gets tough, corporations ought to brace themselves.

Management must first strive for transparency and reach out to the workers.

Workers must endeavor harder to increase productivity, mitigating militant struggles and illegal demonstrations.

Then, we will see a healthy labor-management relationship.

The Government for its part will do its best, with integrity while keeping to principle.

Opening of the market to the foreign sector is an unavoidable mega-trend.

Such an economy as ours, which depends so much on exports, should increase our national wealth through free trade regimes.

However, I have many concerns regarding those industries whose competitiveness will be weakened once exposed to the global market.

In particular, I am deeply worried about our farmers and fishermen.

We cannot simply give up.

We are all sons and daughters of the land and the sea, of farmers and fishermen.

The worries about our agriculture, our farmers, our fields are worries about our country.

The Government will be there with you to find tangible solutions.

Farming and fishing should not continue to remain as a primary industry.

We must integrate advanced manufacturing technologies into our agricultural industry and also incorporate advanced distribution service management techniques in such a way as to develop the agricultural sector into secondary and tertiary industries.

We must also venture out to open up new overseas markets.

When the farmers and the Government come together, our collective wisdom will help us transform what seems like a crisis into a new opportunity.

My fellow Koreans, all human beings have the inherent right to live decently.

Society must be a place where all are healthy and live in comfort.

The state must provide for those who desperately need help.

Welfare that is nothing but a free hand-out is not the solution.

Nor is welfare that compensates post-factum an answer.

Instead, welfare must be positive and preventative.

Only then will we make a society where no one is left behind.

We will make sure that the benefits go to those genuinely in need.

Women are the proud leaders of civil movements and the nation's development.

Women's engagement in society brings us maturity.

Policies geared for gender equality will facilitate expansion of civic and social rights for women.

Opportunities will be increased and legal systems improved so that more and more women can become decision-makers.

We will tailor our childcare system according to the specific needs not only of families but also of each age group.

If the Government can alleviate the burden of childcare, not only would the problem of low birthrates be fundamentally resolved, we would be able to raise the quality of life as well as the caliber of human resources.

We will not overlook the plight of the young adults.

We will make job opportunities for them at home and abroad so that they can become viable

members of the society.

Housing shall be stabilized in such a way as to secure a foundation for individual living as well as social security.

There is an urgent need to enhance welfare for the elderly as Korea is fast becoming an aging society.

We will bring a sense of reality to the pension for the elderly and improve upon public welfare.

We will expand medical benefits and facilities for them.

Certainly, jobs will be made available for those elderly who wish to work.

Persons with disabilities, must be treated with warmth and dignity, and they must be provided more opportunities.

For those who are able to work, giving them a place to work is the greatest form of welfare.

For those who are not able to work, it is the state's responsibility to care for them.

My fellow citizens, advancement is the work of all individuals, and it is for the sake of the individual.

The future of Korea depends on education of talented persons.

Our young people are the ones that will shoulder the future of this country. They are like a powerhouse of dreams and energy.

We will do our best in tapping their potential and developing their IT capabilities and global readiness.

Our education system must be reformed.

One size fits all, government-led uniform curriculums and an education system that is locked only onto the college entrance examination are not acceptable.

We must accept global standards and instill a spirit of self-discipline and a fresh breath of creativity into the classrooms.

Schools must be diversified and teachers must be armed with real skills and competitiveness.

Our public school system must be rectified in such a way as to temper down household spending on extra-curricular education.

We can then expect to see the potential of the students and their creativity rediscovered and encouraged.

Autonomy for universities and colleges is key not only to national competitiveness but to the

advancement of the Korean society.

Universities and colleges must be able to enhance their education and research capabilities so that they can compete with other institutions of higher learning abroad. Indeed, they must rise to lead the forming of a knowledge-based society.

I will increase the opportunities for quality education.

One must be able to study even if one is poor.

There is no welfare policy that is as sure as this.

Through education welfare, I will break the vicious circle of poverty being handed down generation after generation.

Science is what makes a society rational. It also helps us develop.

Some of our sciences excels on the world level, but we have a long way to catch up.

We must look beyond and into the future, 20 and 30 years down the road and facilitate creative capabilities for scientific development.

We will create a social environment where scientists receive respects as well as priority treatment and science talents are properly fostered.

Through science and technology we open the door to the future.

Research and development for basic science and mega science as well as for basic core technologies must be carried out by the Government with a long-term vision.

Practical ways to facilitate cooperation between universities and corporations in the area of R&D should be sought and implemented.

Housing is not a source of wealth but a necessary infrastructure for our daily lives.

We will briskly move ahead with the housing policy that will bring about stability in prices and an upgrade in our living standard.

We must reorganize the layout of our land, befitting the future.

Maritime expansion and integration of administrations are global trends.

We also need to plan for new uses of space to meet changing lifestyles in the future.

In pursuance of policies that are both eco-friendly as well as culture-friendly, we will seek to make the land we live on more healthy and awe-inspiring.

Preservation of the environment improves the quality of life while the environment industry creates new engines of growth.

Climate change is threatening our very future.

Natural disasters and abnormal weather patterns are on the rise and the damage caused by them is becoming more serious.

We must actively take part in reducing carbon emissions.

In the short term, our economy may undergo a period of difficulty while adjusting to these changes.

But, we must endure. We must creatively adapt.

The various issues that affect our state policy - such as food, environment, water, natural resources, energy - must undergo an overall paradigm shift so that they become more eco-friendly.

Korea is a nation of culture with an extensive history.

The Korean Wave that is now well placed around the globe testifies to the advantage of skilful replications of such a long tradition.

Modernization of traditional culture is useful for facilitating arts and culture and such attempts surely dignify the country's economic prosperity.

Now, culture has become an industry.

We must develop our competitiveness in our contents industry, thereby laying the foundation to become a nation strong in cultural activities.

An increase in income will lead to a rise in cultural standards, which in turn heightens our quality of life.

Through culture we are able to enjoy life, through culture we are able to communicate with each other and through culture, we will be able to advance together.

The new Administration will do its best to bring the power of our culture into a full blossom in this globalized setting of the 21st century.

Fellow Koreans, the Republic of Korea will take a more positive stance with a greater vision and carry out global diplomacy under which we actively cooperate with the international community.

Transcending the differences in race, religion, and wealth, Korea will befriend all nations and peoples.

Respecting the universal principles of democracy and market economics, we will take part in the global movement for peace and development.

We will work to develop and further strengthen traditional friendly relations with the United



States into a future-oriented partnership.

Based on the deep mutual trust that exists between the two peoples, we will also strengthen our strategic alliance with the United States.

We will attach importance to our policy towards Asia.

In particular, we will seek peace and mutual prosperity with our close neighbors, including Japan, China and Russia and promote further exchange and cooperation with them.

In order to ensure that our economic engine runs smoothly, we will work to acquire a safe and stable supply of resources and energy.

Moreover, we shall take the lead in environment-friendly international cooperation.

As befitting our economic size and diplomatic capacity, our diplomacy will contribute to promoting and protecting universal values.

Korea will actively participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations as well as enlarge its official development assistance (ODA).

By emphasizing the importance of cultural diplomacy, we will work to allow Korea to communicate more openly and easily with the international community.

Our traditional culture, when coupled together with our technological prowess, will no doubt transmit to the world an image of a more attractive Korea.

Unification of the two Koreas is the long-cherished desire of the 70 million Korean people.

Inter-Korean relations must become more productive than they are now.

Our attitude will be pragmatic, not ideological.

The core task is to help all Koreans live happily and to prepare the foundation for unification.

As already stipulated in my Initiative for Denuclearization and Opening up North Korea to Achieve US\$3,000 in Per Capita Income, once North Korea abandons its nuclear program and chooses the path to openness, we can expect to see a new horizon in inter-Korean cooperation.

Along with the international community, we will provide assistance so that we can raise the per capita income of North Korea to US\$3,000 within 10 years.

That, I believe, will both benefit our brethren in the North as well as be the way to advance unification.

Together, the leaders of the two Koreas, must contemplate what they can do to make the lives of all 70 million Koreans happy and how each side can respect each other and open the door to unification.

If it is to discuss these issues, then I believe the two leaders should meet whenever necessary and talk openly, with an open mind.

Indeed, the opportunity is open.

The foundation of politics lies in making lives more comfortable and livable.

However, politics, unfortunately, is not satisfying the people's expectations.

Without changing politics, we will not be able to become an advanced nation.

Politicians must discuss the future direction of our nation, where it must proceed and then present serious policy options.

Politics must ease the pain of the people and instill in them hope for the future.

This is the basic of the politics of pragmatism.

The path seems far.

Let us begin by doing what is possible.

Let us now resolutely part with wasteful political disputes.

Let us heed our people's call.

Let us work to heal their pain.

Let us engage in productive politics.

I will open wide the door to dialogue not only to the ruling party but also to the opposition party.

I will sincerely discuss matters of state with the National Assembly and respect the wishes of the Judiciary.

My fellow Koreans, a boy from the countryside who could not even eat regular meals, went from being a street vendor, a self-supporting student and a salary man to becoming the chairman of a prominent conglomerate, a member of the National Assembly and the Mayor of Seoul.

And finally, this person became the President of the Republic of Korea.

As such, the Republic of Korea is a country where we can dream our dreams and bring those dreams to reality.

I sincerely hope that everyone of my fellow Koreans will have his or her own dream and work hard to realize that dream.

My wish is to fill this great and honorable nation with opportunities for all.

A nation where there is hope even for the destitute, a nation where even those who fall can get

up, a nation where opportunity to succeed is guaranteed for anyone who truly works hard - such is the nation that I yearn for.

There is a map of the Republic of Korea within each of us. I will take that map and expand it so that it reaches out to the world.

By allowing the world to come into Korea without hindrance, we will together create brand new values. And then, the Republic of Korea will be a nation that sends these new values out into the world-a genuinely top-notch nation.

This has been the prayer of our ancestors; this is the hope of our contemporaries; and this will be our promise to the future generations.

I, Lee Myung-bak, will lead the way.

The Government cannot do this by itself.

The true owners of this nation, the people, must act together.

Parents must raise their children to be more healthy and wise, in both body and mind.

Teachers must love and teach their students even more earnestly.

Business leaders and workers must join hands and be more ambitious.

The young generation must work harder to develop themselves.

Those serving in the military as well as the police must be steadfast in defending this nation.

Religious leaders, social workers and members of the media must also carry out their solemn responsibilities with sincerity and conviction.

Public servants must earnestly serve the people.

This President will be the first to do so and will do my utmost.

My fellow Koreans! Our great march has commenced towards fulfilling this historic task of advancing Korea. Beyond the miracle of the Han River, let us now embark together on creating a new legacy for the Korean Peninsula. I, Lee Myung-bak, will take the lead.

When we come together as one, we can do it. We will do it.

Thank you.

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