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REBUILDING LOST IDENTITY: Rethinking Korean Reunification as an Imagined Community of Shared National Identity

Aileen S. Kim

ABSTRACT

In 2018, North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un expressed his desire to write a new history of Korean reunification. South Korean President Moon Jae-in reciprocated Kim's desire in August 2019 when Moon set the ambitious deadline of the year 2045 for a peaceful reunification of the Koreas. The rhetoric of the two Koreas placed a renewed spotlight on the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. While contemporary literature on Korean reunification primarily focuses on the differences between the two Koreas, little attention has been paid to how a unified Korean identity can play a crucial role in sustaining the reunification effort. This article seeks to bridge that gap by arguing that a unified Korea should be understood as a reimagined community of two distinct nations joined by a shared identity. To support this argument, this article looks first to the theoretical framework of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* and applies the framework to the history of Korea's shared identity. Second, the article analyzes the evolution of the national identities of both South Korea and North Korea since 1945, when the Koreas were divided along the thirty-eighth parallel. Third, the obstacles to reunification are examined. Finally, suggestions on how reunification of the two Koreas could be sustained through shared national identities are explored.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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I. INTRODUCTION

In a nationally televised address commemorating Korean Liberation Day on August 2019, President Moon Jae-in pledged to achieve reunification of the Korean peninsula by 2045.¹ For more than half a century, a military demarcation line (“DMZ”) spanning 155 miles along the 38th parallel has separated South Korea and North Korea.² A product of decades of colonization and war, the DMZ is a symbol of Korea’s tragic and bifurcated past.

Existing literature on Korean reunification focuses on the impact to regional and international security, economic and political costs, and reunification scenarios. Missing from the discussion is the significant role a unified Korean identity can play in sustaining reunification when it occurs. This article presents a different way of looking at Korean reunification: As “reimagined communities.” I argue that debates about a unified Korea have paid insufficient attention to the importance of creating a shared national identity. Using Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* as the framework for analyzing national identity, I suggest that a unified Korea should be understood as a reimagined community of two distinct nations joined by a shared identity.

Part II of this article explores the origins of Korea’s shared national identity. This section defines Korea’s shared identity around their experiences during the Chosun dynasty, Japanese colonial rule, and division along the thirty-eighth parallel. Part III shows how South Korea and North Korea are, themselves, distinct imagined communities, with South Korea defined around their democracy, modernity, and increasingly multicultural identity. In contrast, North Korea’s identity developed around communism, tradition, and racial purity. In Part IV, I examine the obstacles to forming a shared identity in a reunified Korea, particularly the barriers of assimilation, discrimination and distrust, and shared memories. Lastly, Part V illustrates how these obstacles might be overcome in forming an imagined unified Korea, unified by its shared commitment to accepting decades of their shared suffering of colonization and war, education and print capitalism, and embracing commonalities rather than differences.

1. See Edward White & Leo Lewis, *South Korea’s President Seeks Korean Unification by 2045*, FINANCIAL TIMES (Aug. 15, 2019) (describing President Moon’s televised address promising reunification of the Korean peninsula by 2045), <https://www.ft.com/content/0fd71f12-bf10-11e9-89e2-41e555e96722> (this is behind a paywall. I have it as a pdf but I don’t know what the larger policy is); see also *Gwangbokjeol*, ASIA Soc’Y (2020) (stating that *Gwangbokjeol* is a South Korean national holiday that commemorates the liberation of the Korean Peninsula from thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule), <https://asiasociety.org/korea/gwangbokjeol> [<https://perma.cc/EL44-JHMW>].

2. Christine Ahn, *Disrupting War: Women Cross the Korean DMZ*, 71 AM. Q. 1045, 1045 (2019).

II. THE HISTORY AND ORIGINS OF KOREA'S SHARED IDENTITY

When the Korean Peninsula (“Korea”) was divided along the thirty-eighth parallel, both South Korea and North Korea adopted two distinct national identities. Prior to the division, Korea was a single kingdom that understood itself as a nation. This section lays a foundation for the article’s argument about reunification by briefly examining Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* and exploring the history of Korea’s shared identity.

A. *Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities*

Anderson defines a nation as an “imagined political community” due to the key role language and culture play in understanding how populations perceive themselves as a community.³ Imagined communities deemphasize socio-economic disparities in favor of a “deep, horizontal comradeship,” where the identity of a nation takes priority over an individual identity.⁴ This is symbolized by the tombs of Unknown Soldiers. Tombs of Unknown Soldiers are revered despite “no one know[ing] who lies inside them.”⁵ In other words, national identities are imagined constructs, but that does not make them any less real.⁶

Another central element of Anderson’s imagined community is the role of “print-capitalism.”⁷ Newspapers, novels, and television programs in a common language enable populations to “imagine” their community and understand its particularities even though these members may never meet each other.⁸ Newspapers enable their readers to imagine a shared experience irrespective of geographic distance and social hierarchies.⁹ Similarly, a novel’s ability to depict familiar social environments with identifiable characters also allow readers to imagine a community.¹⁰ Finally, television programs “conjures imagined communities to illiterates and populations with different mother-tongues.”¹¹

Anderson also describes nations as modular and “capable of being transplanted . . . to be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.”¹² In other words, postcolonial nations are often modelled after European nations.¹³ For example, the postcolonial nations of Africa and Asia were imagined after the

3. BENEDICT ANDERSON, *IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: REFLECTIONS ON THE ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF NATIONALISM* at 6–7 (rev. ed. 2016).

4. *Id.* at 7–9.

5. *Id.* at 9.

6. *Id.* at 9–10.

7. *Id.* at 43.

8. *Id.* at 32–35, 45.

9. *Id.* at 32–36.

10. *Id.* at 24–32.

11. *Id.* at 135.

12. *Id.* at 4.

13. *See id.* at 163 (stating Anderson backtracked on the view that postcolonial nations were modelled after Europe).

“creole communities.”¹⁴ Anderson argued that creole communities were the earliest forms of nations, indicating that European nations were a derivative of the creole nation.¹⁵ The creole, instead of rallying around linguistic distinctiveness or ancient cultural identities, fought and died for the nation that they imagined—nations which were previously “administrative units” of colonial states.¹⁶ Thus, a nation as a modern *form* is modular and can be transplanted across nations, although the *content* of national identity varies from nation to nation.¹⁷ To Anderson, independence movements against colonial rule were both a rejection of colonialism and a creation of new national identities.¹⁸ While colonized nations resisted colonial rule, European “bilingual intelligentsia” brought the English language to the colonies.¹⁹ Bilingual literacy, in turn, enabled colonies to form their own imagined communities through the vernacular English language.²⁰

B. *A tragic shared past and the origins of divided Korean national identities*

The primary logic for Korean reunification draws upon the presumption of a pre-existing shared identity. The Korean Peninsula endured two profound tragedies: The Japanese colonization and the nation’s division along the thirty-eighth parallel. Korea’s history of colonization shattered a millennium of a shared Korean identity. Following the division, the two Koreas were forced to develop new identities modelled after their colonizers. This section examines Korea’s shared identity during the Chosun dynasty, its unified fight for independence against Japanese colonial rule, and the ideological divide between the two Koreas following the U.S. and Soviet military interventions that resulted in the Korean War.

1. The Chosun dynasty (1392–1910): The blueprint of Korea’s shared identity

The Chosun dynasty was a unified Korean kingdom that consisted of eight provinces and three islands.²¹ For over 500 years, the kingdom of Chosun was an absolute monarchy ruled directly by a king, where

14. *Id.* at 50.

15. *Id.*

16. *Id.* at 52.

17. *Id.* at 4.

18. *See id.* at 142 (“In the case of colonized peoples, who have every reason to feel hatred for their imperialist rulers, it is astonishing how insignificant the element of hatred is in these expressions of national feeling.”).

19. *Id.* at 116.

20. *Id.* at 116–17.

21. *See* David Shaffer, *The Eight Regional Traits of Korea*, GWANGJU NEWS (Nov. 5, 2019) (outlining the Chosun dynasty’s territory), <https://gwangjunewsgic.com/features/jeolla-history/the-eight-regional-traits-of-korea/> [<https://perma.cc/XRR2-GC2T>]; *see also* *Kingdom*, NAT’L GEOGRAPHIC (2021) (defining a kingdom as a state “that is ruled by a king or a queen.”), <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/kingdom/> [<https://perma.cc/N84D-HRAJ>].

succession was hereditary.²² The kingdom used an elaborate and hierarchical political system in which government officials were ranked according to seniority.²³ Although a political kingdom, the kingdom of Chosun understood itself as nation. The kingdom was a “nation” in that they developed their own national identity.²⁴ The creation of the Korean alphabet and the kingdom’s isolationist policy illustrated the kingdom’s unified national identity.

The Chosun dynasty saw the birth of the Korean alphabet (“Hangul”).²⁵ Consisting of twenty-eight letters, fourteen consonants, and ten vowels, King Sejong the Great created Hangul in 1446.²⁶ Before 1446, Korea did not have a writing system of their own.²⁷ Chinese characters (“Hanja”) were the nation’s dominant script.²⁸ At the time, Korea lived in a “Sino-centric world” where Korean culture was “inextricably tied to China.”²⁹ But because Hanja was difficult to learn, the language was primarily accessible to aristocrats and government officials.³⁰ Hanja was also inadequate for “conveying the exact meaning” of a Korean word or phrase.³¹ Hangul was created to address the limitations of Hanja.³² In particular, King Sejong encouraged “mass literacy” among the Korean people using Hangul.³³ King Sejong proclaimed that his wish was for the Korean people “learn [Hangul] easily and that they be convenient for daily use.”³⁴ Although Hanja did not disappear, Hangul became a strong vehicle of a shared Korean identity.³⁵

The Chosun dynasty was also unique due to its isolationist policy. Unlike neighboring nations, Korea refused to engage in diplomatic

22. Tobin Im, Jesse W. Campbell & Seyeong Cha, *Revisiting Confucian Bureaucracy: Roots of the Korean Government's Culture and Competitiveness*, 33 PUB. ADMIN. DEV. 286, 288–89 (2013).

23. JAMES B. PALAIS, CONFUCIAN STATECRAFT AND KOREAN INSTITUTIONS: YU HYONGWON AND THE LATE CHOSUN DYNASTY 632 (2015).

24. See ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6 (defining a nation as “an imagined political community.”).

25. Chin W. Kim, *The Legacy of King Sejong the Great*, 30 STUD. IN THE LINGUISTIC SCI. 3, 3 (2000).

26. *Id.* at 6.

27. S.C.S., *How Was Hangul Invented?*, THE ECONOMIST (Oct. 8, 2013), <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2013/10/08/how-was-hangul-invented> [<https://perma.cc/J4D3-SCVG>].

28. Kim, *supra* note 25, at 6.

29. *Id.*

30. S.C.S., *supra* note 27.

31. FLORIAN COULMAS, GUARDIANS OF LANGUAGE: TWENTY VOICES THROUGH HISTORY 49–57 (2016).[Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#)

32. Kim, *supra* note 25, at 7.

33. See *id.* (King Sejong created a writing system that did not discriminate between commoners and aristocrats).

34. S.C.S., *supra* note 27.

35. See generally ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 44 (stating that print capitalism allowed people to imagine a new nation, because print capitalism brought together people who had never met before).

relations with foreign powers.³⁶ Korea's isolation and seclusion earned it the nickname "the hermit kingdom."³⁷ Korea's refusal to engage with foreign powers was the result of great pride in their identity as Koreans and a desire to retain cultural homogeneity at a time when Europe and Japan were pursuing colonial conquests around the world.³⁸ Korea's isolationist policy and the development of *Hangul* reinforces that pre-division Korea understood itself as a nation. But Korea's efforts to remain homogeneous were in vain; Japan annexed Korea in 1910 and Korea's fight to reclaim their national identity began.

2. The March First Movement and Korea's unified fight for independence.

In the early dawn hours of March 1, 1919, a manifesto was read to a crowd along the streets of Seoul denouncing Japanese rule.³⁹ The opening of the manifesto read, "We hereby declare that Korea is an independent state and that Koreans are a self-governing people."⁴⁰ The manifesto was read to a crowd of cheering Koreans who took to the streets of downtown Seoul shouting "long live Korean independence!"⁴¹ In the following months, over one million Koreans carrying Korean flags participated in peaceful protests for independence.⁴² The Japanese government responded with brutality, resulting in over 7,500 fatalities, 15,000 injuries, and 45,000 arrests.⁴³

From 1910 to 1945, Japan's annexation of Korea cast a dark shadow over the soul of the Korean nation.⁴⁴ For thirty-five years, the Japanese government attempted to destroy the Korean peoples' national identity by stripping them of their land, language, history, and culture. In 1912, Japan implemented a large-scale resettlement program that settled more than 98,000 in Korea between 1912 and 1918, displacing thousands of Korean farmers in the process.⁴⁵ It is also estimated that over 670,000 Koreans were conscripted to forced labor between 1939 to 1945 result-

36. Michael J. Seth, *Korea: From Hermit Kingdom to Colony*, 13 *Edu. About Asia* 28, 28 (2008).

37. *Id.*

38. Loughlin J. Sweeney, "Problems of the Far East": *Imperial Geopolitics Reflected in the Korean Travelogues of British Officials, 1889–1900*, 22 *Acta Koreana* 89, 91, 102–04 (2019).

39. Timothy S. Lee, *A Political Factor in the Rise of Protestantism in Korea: Protestantism and the 1919 March First Movement*, 69 *CHURCH HIST.* 116, 133 (2000).

40. Jun-Hyeok Kwak, *Republican Liberation and Non-Domination: Democratic Republicanism and the March First Movement*, 50 *KOREA OBSERVER* 269, 273 (2019).

41. Gi-Wook Shin & Rennie Moon, *1919 in Korea: National Resistance and Contending Legacies*, 78 *J. OF ASIAN STUD.* 399, 399 (2019).

42. *Id.* at 401.

43. *Id.* at 402.

44. *Id.* at 400.

45. Doug Kim & Cho-lee Yeoul, *For Future Generations: 100 Years After Samil, Descendants Reap the Legacy of Korea's Independence Movement*, *KOREAN Q.* (2019), <https://www.koreanquarterly.org/features/for-future-generations/> [<https://perma.cc/HK2J-PGJL>].

ing in over 60,000 deaths.⁴⁶ In addition, Japan implemented language policies requiring Japanese as “the national language” in print, media, and speech.⁴⁷ The laws targeted children, mandating them to learn Japanese.⁴⁸ In secondary schools and higher education almost all classes were taught in Japanese and students took courses in Japanese history and geography.⁴⁹ Controlling the educational curriculum was part of Japan’s strategy to prevent the resurgence of Korean national identity and assimilate the Korean people into Japanese citizens.⁵⁰ It is estimated that over 200,000 books documenting Korean history, culture, and language were either burned or confiscated for this purpose.⁵¹

Adding insult to injury, the Japanese government demolished parts of Korea’s royal Gyeongbokgung Palace to create space for the Japanese General Government Building, Japan’s chief administrative building.⁵² As Japan destroyed artifacts of Korean pride, the Korean people responded with greater pride. While Japan succeeded in suppressing many aspects of the Korean language and culture, they failed to suppress Korean national identity. In the March First Movement, Koreans marched with one voice to reclaim their lost identity. Japan’s surrender at the conclusion of World War II provided hope for the rebirth of Korean national identity, but that hope was short lived with the arrival of the United States and the former Soviet Union.

3. Division along the thirty-eighth parallel and the Korean War

When U.S. troops arrived in Korea in 1945, Koreans were “deeply engaged” in erasing remnants of Japanese colonialism.⁵³ However, the United States refused to treat Koreans as a “liberated people” and proposed dividing Korea at the thirty-eighth parallel between the former

46. R.J. Rummel, *Statistics of Japanese Democide Estimates, Calculations, and Sources*, HAWAII: POWERKILLS (2002), <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/SOD.CHAP3.HTM> [<https://perma.cc/DZJ5-G6KV>].

47. See, e.g., THE GOVERNMENT GENERAL OF CHOSEN BUREAU OF EDUCATION, *MANUAL OF EDUCATION IN CHOSEN* app. at 1 (1920) (stating, “. . . special attention being paid to the engendering of national characteristics and the spread of national language.”).

48. *Id.* app. at 2.

49. See, e.g., THE GOVERNMENT GENERAL OF CHOSEN BUREAU OF EDUCATION, *MANUAL OF EDUCATION IN CHOSEN* app. at 27–29 (1920) (stating, “The teaching of the national language should be commenced . . . [in] matters concerning morals, history, geography . . . [.]”).

50. M.J. Rhee, *Language Planning in Korea Under the Japanese Colonial Administration, 1910–1945*, 5 *LANGUAGE, CULTURE & CURRICULUM* 87, 89 (1992).

51. HONG BEOM RHEE, *ASIAN MILLENARIANISM: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF THE TAIPING AND TONGHAK REBELLIONS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT* 13 (2007).

52. HYUN KYUNG LEE, *Gyeongbokgung Palace and the Japanese Government-General Building (JGGB): Power Struggles and the Contested Places of Korean National Identity*, in ‘DIFFICULT HERITAGE’ IN NATION BUILDING 159, 159 (2019).

53. William Stueck & Boram Yi, ‘An Alliance Forged in Blood’: *The American Occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the US-South Korean Alliance*, 33 *J. OF STRATEGIC STUD.* 177, 180 (2010).

Soviet Union.⁵⁴ Through the division, the United States sought to “contain Soviet expansion” in the ensuing Cold War between the two superpowers.⁵⁵ The United States also believed that the Korean people were “incapable of governing themselves” because they were colonized by Japan for over three decades.⁵⁶ The United States, thus, viewed Korea as a mere colony of Japan rather than as an independent nation.⁵⁷ But the United States disregarded the fact that the Korean people had effectively governed themselves for over one millennium prior to Japanese colonial rule.⁵⁸ The occupying powers proceeded to shape Korea in accordance to their own visions. In South Korea, the United States chose Rhee Syngman to build a democratic republic.⁵⁹ In North Korea, a Communist state emerged with Soviet powers installing Kim Il-sung.⁶⁰

This imposed ideological divide led to the Korean War, when North Korea invaded South Korea with weapons assistance from the former Soviet Union in 1950.⁶¹ Kim Il-sung waged war to “unify the Korean Peninsula under his communist regime.”⁶² North Korea sought to define a single Korean identity under the umbrella of communism.⁶³ The Korean War underscored the deep distrust that existed between the divided nation. But the distrust was not completely ideological. Prior to the war, there were cultural differences between the two Koreas. For example, the U.S.-occupied South Korea adopted the English language and replaced the traditional Korean attire (“*hanbok*”) with Western clothing.⁶⁴ Conversely, North Korea preserved the Korean language and continued wearing *hanbok* on a daily basis.⁶⁵ North Koreans viewed South Koreans as “puppets” to the United States and have criticized increasing military

54. *Id.* at 182,184.

55. *Id.* at 184.

56. *Id.*

57. *Id.*

58. *Id.* at 183.

59. *See id.* at 202–03 (indicating that the United States chose Rhee due to his fervent opposition to communism).

60. *See* S. MAHMUD ALI, *US-CHINESE STRATEGIC TRIANGLES: EXAMINING INDO-PACIFIC INSECURITY* 69 (2017) (stating that Soviet forces installed Kim Il-sung as leader of North Korea, because they deemed Kim as a “pliant and obedient elite” that would help the former Soviet Union achieve their agenda in the North.).

61. Howie S. Levie, *The Korean Armistice Agreement and its Aftermath*, 41 *NAVAL L. REV.* 115, 116–17 (1993).

62. Ji-Young Lee, *Five Things to Know About North and South Korea*, *AM. U. SCH. OF INT’L AFF.* (July 5, 2017), <https://www.american.edu/sis/news/five-things-to-know-about-north-and-south-korea.cfm> [<https://perma.cc/HTY3-P8E5>].

63. *Id.*

64. *See generally* YOUNG ICK LEW *THE MAKING OF THE FIRST KOREAN PRESIDENT: SYNGMAN RHEE’S QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE* 23 (2014) (stating that Rhee Syngman “developed a liking of dress suits” during his U.S. education).

65. *See* Yeon Jaehoon, *How Different Is Pyongyang Speech from Seoul Speech*, 7 *BAKS* 147, 150 (2000) (outlining North Korea’s Hangul-only policy), <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/10277/1/11Chapter.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/LFN8-ZGAD>]; *see also* SAMUEL SONGHOON LEE, *HANBOK :TIMELESS FASHION TRADITION* 73–74 (2013) (stating that North Koreans continued wearing *hanbok*).

presence in the region.⁶⁶ The Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953 temporarily halted the violence.⁶⁷ But this stalemate has persisted for over six decades with no resolution in sight.⁶⁸ Korea's ongoing war is symbolic, because the conflict has played a key role in shaping the national identities of present-day South Korea and North Korea. This will be explored closely in the next section.

III. THE IMAGINED COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH KOREA AND NORTH KOREA

Since the Korean War, the two Koreas have continued on their different paths and have proceeded to develop distinct national identities. Anderson stated that national identities are "imagined" to the extent that they entail a communion between peoples.⁶⁹ But what makes a nation unique is *how* they are imagined. This section explores the evolution of South Korean and North Korean national identity, showing how the two Koreas are imagined in different ways.

A. *The evolution of South Korea's national identity and westernization*

South Korean national identity is the result of the nation's colonial experiences and war. This section shows how Western democracy, the English language, and multiculturalism serve as the binding agents that enabled the South Korean people to imagine their community.

1. The Western influence on South Korean national identity

Partha Chatterjee critiqued Anderson's argument that postcolonial nations were imagined from certain modular forms already in existence from Europe.⁷⁰ Chatterjee argued that nations "[were not rooted on] an identity but rather on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West."⁷¹ Nations are, thus, imagined differently by different nations.⁷² This is consistent with how

66. Tom O'Connor, *North Korea Blasts U.S. Military Influence Over 'Puppet' South, Laughs Off War Threats*, NEWSWEEK (Sept. 5, 2017), <https://www.newsweek.com/north-korea-blast-us-influence-puppet-south-laugh-war-threats-659729> [https://perma.cc/F2KN-RNUN].

67. *Korean War*, A&E TELEVISION NETWORKS (Nov. 9, 2009), <https://www.history.com/topics/korea/korean-war#:~:text=Korean%20War%20Casualties,-The%20Korean%20War&text=Nearly%205%20million%20people%20died,more%20than%20100%2C000%20were%20woundedhttps://www.history.com/topics/korea/korean-war#:~:text=Korean%20War%20Casualties,-The%20Korean%20War&text=Nearly%205%20million%20people%20died,more%20than%20100%2C000%20were%20wounded> [https://perma.cc/KF8B-XP7N].

68. *Id.*

69. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6.

70. *See id.* at 157 (illustrating how the Cambodian resistance resembled that of the Bolshevik Revolution, showing the modularity of European nationalism).

71. PARTHA CHATTERJEE, *THE NATION AND ITS FRAGMENTS: COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL HISTORIES* 5 (1993).

72. *Id.* at 5–6.

South Korea transplanted Western democracy from their occupiers. As a postcolonial nation created by U.S. and Soviet intervention, the content of South Korea's new national identity was partly in reaction to the U.S. occupation.

Today, South Korea is a successful trade economy with the ninth highest GDP in the world.⁷³ Although it now has free elections, the country did not become a democracy until 1987.⁷⁴ The promulgation of the South Korean constitution in 1948 established a parliamentary system modeled after Europe, in which the political party with the greatest representation in South Korean parliament ("National Assembly") chose the President.⁷⁵ The adoption of the European model was South Korea's attempt to distance themselves from U.S. influence and create an independent government of their own.⁷⁶ But remnants of the U.S. occupation remained, underscored by the Rhee government's hardline stance against communism.⁷⁷

During his rule, President Rhee repeatedly stressed that South Korea was a "unitary nation" ("*tanil minjok*") despite the division.⁷⁸ *Tanil minjok* referred solely to the unity of South Korea under democratic values.⁷⁹ In December 1948, three months after the South Korean nation was established, President Rhee passed the National Security Law ("NSL").⁸⁰ Drafted with U.S. assistance, the NSL outlawed "communist activities."⁸¹ The NSL's goal was to promote democracy and distinguish South Korea from North Korea.⁸² Anti-communism was, thus, a vehicle that helped shape South Korean identity under democratic principles.

Although President Rhee's one-nation principle set the blueprint for democracy, that effort was cut short when he was ousted from power through a military coup led by South Korean military general Park Chung-hee in 1961.⁸³ President Park believed the key to a great nation was economic growth.⁸⁴ As a result, a new Constitution was adopted.

73. Choi Jae-hee, *OECD Forecasts S. Korea's GDP Ranking to Take 9th*, THE KOREA HERALD (Aug. 10, 2020), <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200810000670> [<https://perma.cc/74B4-7ZZ9>].

74. Jose Aleman, *Protest and Democratic Consolidation: A Korean Perspective*, 9 INT'L J. OF KOREAN STUD. 71, 73 (2005).

75. Hakjooon Kim, *The Influence of the American Constitution on South Korean Constitutional Development Since 1948*, ASIAN PERSP., FALL-WINTER 1992, at 27-29.

76. See *id.* at 28 (stating that U.S. input was not "intensively sought").

77. Gi-Wook Shin & Paul Yunsik Chang, *The Politics of Nationalism in U.S.-Korean Relations*, 28 ASIAN PERSP., no. 4, 2004 at 126-27.

78. *Id.*

79. *Id.*

80. IAN NEARY, HUMAN RIGHTS IN JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, AND TAIWAN 79-80 (2002)

81. *Id.* at 79-82.

82. *Id.* at 79-80.

83. Yong-sup Han, *The May Sixteenth Military Coup in THE PARK CHUNG-HEE ERA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTH KOREA* 35 (Byung-kook Kim & Ezra F. Vogel eds., 2011).

84. Fuji Kamiya, *The Korean Peninsula After Park Chung Hee*, 20 JAPANESE

Known as the Yushin Constitution, the document dissolved the National Assembly and eliminated term limits, allowing Park's authoritarian rule for nearly two decades until his assassination in 1979.⁸⁵ Park's rule saw South Korea open its borders to international trade and investment, including with Japan.⁸⁶ Park's policy of open borders was unpopular with the South Korean people, who were still reeling from decades of subjugation by foreign powers.⁸⁷ But Park mobilized public support by appealing to the ethos of Korean national identity, particularly the eternal nature of the "great *han* race."⁸⁸ By pushing for "cultural [and economic] superiority," Park inspired South Koreans to push towards international prominence.⁸⁹ Although controversial at the time, the Park era is largely credited for South Korea's current economic prosperity and the robust democracy that followed his downfall.

When South Korea democratized in 1987, their Constitution was revised for a third time.⁹⁰ The new Constitution was modeled after the U.S. system based on a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.⁹¹ The President was also to be elected by popular vote for a single five-year term with no opportunities for reelection, which was South Korea's direct response to authoritarian rule.⁹² South Korea's democratic republic enabled the South Korean people to imagine a nation where they were equal before the law. Thus, South Korean democracy is consistent with Anderson's concept of "horizontal comradeship," where people come together based on shared values.⁹³ But another aspect of South Korea's national identity as a reaction to U.S. influence is language.

PERSPECTIVES ON INT'L DEV. 744, 744 (1980).

85. Hyung Baeg Im, *The Origins of the Yushin Regime: Machiavelli Unveiled*, in THE PARK CHUNG HEE ERA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTH KOREA 233–35 (Byung-kook Kim & Ezra F. Vogel eds., 2011) (stating that "yushin" translates to "revitalizing reform.").

86. Jung-Hoon Lee, *Normalization of Relations with Japan: Toward a New Partnership*, in THE PARK CHUNG HEE ERA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTH KOREA 432 (Byung-kook Kim & Ezra F. Vogel eds., 2011).

87. *Id.*

88. See Shin & Chang, *supra* note 77, at 122–25 (stating that the "great *han* race" goes back to the age of *Tan'gun*, the "mythic founder of the Korean nation.").

89. Seow Jing Yin, *Pride of the People: South Korea and Nationalism*, INST. STRATEGIC & INT'L STUD. FOCUS, Aug. 2013, at 5.

90. *Constitutional History of Republic of Korea*, CONSTITUTIONNET (2016), <https://constitutionnet.org/country/republic-korea> [<https://perma.cc/H53K-FPZV>].

91. DAEHANMINKUK HUNBEOB [HUNBEOB] [CONSTITUTION] arts. 40–113 (S.Kor.) (governing the laws of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of South Korean government).

92. *Id.* at art. 70.

93. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 7.

2. Globalization and the prevalence of English in the Korean language

Another way South Korea imagined their nation was through bilingualism. Anderson recognized the role of “bilingual literacy” in forming the national identities of postcolonial nations.⁹⁴ In 1993, the National Assembly implemented an ambitious globalization initiative, known as *seggyehwa*.⁹⁵ Thus, one objective of *seggyehwa* was to encourage students to study abroad to learn about different cultures and systems of governance to aid in the nation’s growth.⁹⁶ Accordingly, the National Assembly mandated English be taught at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.⁹⁷ This requirement changed the way South Koreans communicate with one another. Called “Konglish,” this dialect combines the Korean language with English.⁹⁸ Although not the nation’s official language, Seoul dialect has become prevalent enough to be labeled the standard language of South Korea.⁹⁹ In other words, South Koreans used bilingualism to imagine a nation that was global and diverse.

However, the Korean people criticized the English language curriculum for its “negative impact on constructing a Korean national identity.”¹⁰⁰ The 2005 Framework Act on Korean Language (“Framework Act”) addressed this criticism.¹⁰¹ The Framework Act recognized Hangeul as the “official language” of Korea and required programs to preserve the Korean language.¹⁰² South Koreans praised the Framework Act, because the law acknowledged their ethnic language as a tool of resistance against

94. *Id.* at 116.

95. See Jae Jung Song, *South Korea: Language Policy and Planning in the Making*, 13 CURRENT ISSUES IN LANGUAGE PLAN. 1, 15 (2012) (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..

96. Juyoung Song, *Language Ideology and Identity in Transnational Space: Globalization, Migration, and Bilingualism Among Korean Families in the USA*, 13 INT’L J. BILINGUAL EDUC. & BILINGUALISM 23, 26 (2010) (the connection between the studying abroad, *seggyehwa*, and economic growth is not made in the article itself.

97. The School Curriculum of the Republic of Korea, Proclamation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology #2008–160, p. 8 (2008) [hereinafter South Korean School Curriculum], http://www.gangwonepik.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/8/5/13851570/national_school_curriculum-english2008.pdf [https://perma.cc/W52U-VWJW].

98. Margaret Rhodes, *The Beauty and Perils of Konglish, the Korean-English Hybrid*, WIRED (Sept. 29, 2016), <https://www.wired.com/2016/09/beauty-perils-konglish-korean-english-hybrid/> [https://perma.cc/58ZV-VT5Z].

99. *South Korean Language: Dialects and Peculiarities of South Korean*, JUST LANDED, <https://www.justlanded.com/english/South-Korea/South-Korea-Guide/Language/South-Korean-Language> [https://perma.cc/9T9R-32L4] (last visited Mar. 21, 2022).

100. Song, *supra* note 96, at 26.

101. Gugeogibonbeob [Framework Act on the Korean Language] (S. Kor.) [hereinafter Framework Act], translated in Korean Legislation Research Institute’s online database, https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_service/lawView.do?hseq=25382&lang=ENG [https://perma.cc/4A5C-PJHL].

102. See *id.* at arts. 3(1), 6–10 (designating Hangeul as the official language of South Korea and mandating the Korean government to “establish and implement master plans” to promote the Korean language.).

forced assimilation by Japan and the United States.¹⁰³ Article 2 of the Framework Act's legislative history stated, "the lawmakers recognize the contributions of Hangul throughout Korea's history of colonization."¹⁰⁴ The Framework Act was, thus, an effort by South Korea to construct a national identity apart from the English language. Interestingly, the Framework Act treated Chinese characters as exceptions. Article 14 allowed government institutions to use Hanja to convey the "exact meaning" of a word.¹⁰⁵ Article 14 reinforced the value South Koreans placed on their history, given that the Korean people used Hanja to communicate with one another before Hangul was invented in 1446.¹⁰⁶

3. South Korea's growing multiculturalism

South Korea's multiculturalism is a recent phenomenon that the nation embraced to fulfill their shared vision of "cultural diversity."¹⁰⁷ South Korea's vision began with the *seggyehwa* initiative.¹⁰⁸ South Korea believed that cultural diversity would "strengthen democracy" and "promote a culture of tolerance" in an increasingly globalized world.¹⁰⁹ The percentage of foreign residents in the nation increased from 0.24 percent in 1995 to 3.6 percent in 2016.¹¹⁰ This percentage expected to rise to 6.1 percent by 2030.¹¹¹ This trend is remarkable given South Korea's belief that they are a "single-race nation."¹¹² Anderson used the tombs of Unknown Soldiers to show that imagining a nation requires the sacrifice of individual interests.¹¹³ But South Korea's multiculturalism is not a sacrifice of individual interests. South Korea's pride in the "purity of [the ethnic Korean] bloodline" goes back to the Chosun dynasty.¹¹⁴

103. Minjung (Michelle) Hur, *Hangeul as a Tool of Resistance Against Forced Assimilation: Making Sense of the Framework Act on Foreign Language*, 27 WASH. INT'L L.J. 715, 718–19 (2018).

104. Gugeogibonbeob [Framework Act on the Korean Language] art. 2 (S. Kor.).

105. *Id.* at art. 14.

106. Kim, *supra* note 25, at 6.

107. Tae-jun Kang, *Korea's Multicultural Growing Pains: A Recent Incident Involving Little Psy Highlights South Korea's Struggles With Its Growing Racial Diversity*, THE DIPLOMAT (Aug. 20, 2013), <https://thediplomat.com/2013/08/koreas-multicultural-growing-pains/> [<https://perma.cc/2CEB-P6CK>].

108. Hyun Ok Park, *Seggyehwa: Globalization and Nationalism in Korea*, 4 THE J. OF THE INT'L INST. 1, 2 (1996), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/jjii/4750978.0004.105/-seggyehwa-globalization-and-nationalism-in-korea?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [<https://perma.cc/374N-5YHF>].

109. Song, *supra* note 96, at 13.

110. Timothy Lim, *The Road to Multiculturalism in South Korea*, GEO. J. INT'L AFF. (Oct. 10, 2017), <https://www.georgetownjournalofinternationalaffairs.org/online-edition/2017/10/10/the-road-to-multiculturalism-in-south-korea> [<https://perma.cc/K4E5-7DND>].

111. *Id.*

112. MinSoo Kim-Bossard, *Challenging Homogeneity in Contemporary Korea: Immigrant Women, Immigrant Laborers, and Multicultural Families*, 23 EDUC. ABOUT ASIA 38, 38 (2018).

113. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 9.

114. Gi-Wook Shin, *Korea's Ethnic Nationalism is a Source of Both Pride and*

Indeed, ancient Korean leadership “always lay in a hereditary monarch, whose supreme authority came from being the child or relative of the preceding monarch.”¹¹⁵ Thus, South Korea’s willingness to accept foreigners despite its belief in its ethnic homogeneity shows a sacrifice of a particular national identity.¹¹⁶ South Koreans are willing to sacrifice a certain national identity to imagine a nation according to their shared vision of a robust democracy. This sacrifice, however, is not an act feasible by North Korea, as they developed into a secretive nation to ward off foreign influence.¹¹⁷

B. *North Korea, the Kim dynasty, and the imagined community*

North Korea’s system of government, language, and attitude towards the international community developed very differently. This section explores how North Korean national identity came to be imagined in distinct ways and subject to different influences from South Korea. This section shows how North Korean communism, the language purification movement, and North Koreans’ belief that they are the “pure-blooded Korean people” helped imagine their nation.¹¹⁸

1. The Soviet influence on North Korea’s national identity

Like South Korea, North Korea adopted a national identity that was influenced by its post-partition alliance. It adopted a system of hereditary succession that revolved around Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un.¹¹⁹ Influenced by Marxism-Leninism, North Korea evolved into an isolationist and communist nation that was ruled as a dictatorship.¹²⁰

Modeled after the 1936 Stalinist Constitution of the former Soviet Union, North Korea’s 1948 Constitution defined the nation as a “dictatorship of people’s democracy” run by a single, centralized party apparatus

Prejudice, According to Gi-Wook Shin, STANFORD WALTER H. SHORENSTEIN ASIA-PACIFIC RES. CTR. FREEMAN SPOQLI INST. (Aug. 2, 2006), https://aparc.fsi.stanford.edu/news/koreas_ethnic_nationalism_is_a_source_of_both_pride_and_prejudice_according_to_giwook_shin_20060802 [<https://perma.cc/RX3Z-P6RF>].

115. *Toppling Tyrants* in KYUNG MOON HWANG, *PAST FORWARD: ESSAYS IN KOREAN HISTORY* (2019).

116. Elise Hu, *In Homogenous South Korea, A Multicultural Village Hints At Change*, NPR (May 15, 2016), <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/05/15/475232274/in-homogenous-s-korea-a-multicultural-village-hints-at-change> [<https://perma.cc/SWX2-9UPX>].

117. Vyomica Berry, *Why is North Korea Known as the Most Isolated Country in the World?*, WION (Nov. 21, 2021), <https://www.wionews.com/world/why-is-north-korea-known-as-the-most-isolated-country-in-the-world-430945> [<https://perma.cc/BND9-C5HT>].

118. B.R. MYERS, *THE CLEANEST RACE: HOW NORTH KOREANS SEE THEMSELVES AND WHY IT MATTERS* 9 (2011).

119. Charles Armstrong, *Hereditary Succession in North Korea: Lessons of the Past*, 38 NORTH (Apr. 25, 2012), <https://www.38north.org/2012/04/carmstrong042412/> [<https://perma.cc/9KWW-VBHQ>].

120. Dae-kyu Yoon, *The Constitution of North Korea: Its Changes and Implications*, 27 *FORD INT’L L.J.* 1289, 1291–98 (2004).

known as the Workers' Party of Korea.¹²¹ To unite the North Korean people, Supreme Leader Kim Il-sung implemented the *juche* ideology.¹²² Kim defined *juche* as "being the master of revolution and reconstruction in one's own country."¹²³ In other words, Kim united North Koreans on the premise that North Korea would be a nation defined not by a single class, but the nation as a whole.¹²⁴ Therefore, the *juche* ideology is consistent with Anderson's argument that a nation shares a "horizontal comradeship" where the nation comes before any individual interests.¹²⁵ This is different from South Korea, where horizontal comradeship was defined by equal protection of citizens under the law. Although the *juche* ideology embraced Marxist-Leninist principles, Kim implemented it in order to distance North Korea from Soviet influence, to give the North Korean people a sense of national identity of their own.¹²⁶

Two years prior to his death, Kim Il-sung sought to have his son, Kim Jong-il, succeed him.¹²⁷ The 1992 amendment to the constitution authorized Kim Jong-il to succeed his father upon his death.¹²⁸ The 1992 amendment was not only consistent with the Chosun dynasty's succession laws where the eldest son inherited the throne,¹²⁹ but it was also illustrative of North Korea's attempt to retain their prior Korean heritage despite the current state of their nation.¹³⁰ Kim Jong-il also used the *juche* ideology to strengthen his grip on the nation. Foreign scholars have described *juche* as meaning "self-reliant."¹³¹ North Korea's "self-reliant[ce]" meant that they did not need to rely on outside influences and allowed North Korea to become a hereditary dynasty.¹³² Just as Anderson believed that European national identity was a derivative of creole national identity, North Korea's *juche* ideology was a derivative of the Chosun dynasty's policy of isolationism and hereditary succession.¹³³

121. Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea arts. 11–12 (N. Kor.) [hereinafter Constitution of 1948], translated in Arcturus's online database, <http://arcturus.su/world/dprk/1948w.txt> [<https://perma.cc/RA3U-Y556>].

122. Grace Lee, *The Political Philosophy of Juche*, 3 STAN. J. E. ASIAN AFF. 105, 105 (2003).

123. *Id.*

124. Young Chul Cho, *North Korea's Nationalist Discourse: A Critical Interpretation*, 42 KOREA OBSERVER 311, 317 (2011).

125. ANDERSON *supra* note 3, at 7.

126. Lee, *supra* note 122, at 105.

127. Yoon, *supra* note 120, at 1291.

128. *Id.* at 1299–1300.

129. Kuentae Kim & Hyunjoon Park, *Family Succession Through Adoption in the Chosun Dynasty*, 15 HIST. FAM. 443, 447 n.7 (2010).

130. Seo-hyun Park, Comment, *Dueling Nationalisms in North and South Korea*, 5 PALGRAVE COMM. 1, 2 (2019).

131. Lee, *supra* note 122, at 105.

132. Zack Beauchamp, *Juche, the State Ideology That Makes North Koreans Revere Kim Jong Un, Explained*, Vox (June 18, 2018), <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/6/18/17441296/north-korea-propaganda-ideology-juche> [<https://perma.cc/8W7T-496T>].

133. See Im, Campbell & Cha, *supra* note 22, at 289 (stating that the succession

In other words, North Korea's *juche* ideology reinforces how pre-existing materials were used to help imagine the North Korean nation in a particular way.

In addition, whereas Kim Il-sung's *juche* ideology aligned closely with Marxist-Leninist principles, Kim Jong-il adapted the *juche* ideology to foster narratives of ethnic cohesion. In his 1998 speech to the North Korean people, Kim stated, "The Korean nation is a homogenous nation that has inherited the same blood and lived in the same territory speaking the same language for thousands of years."¹³⁴ Kim's rhetoric expressed North Korea's new form of imagining itself—away from Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and toward a national identity consistent with traditional Korean values. *Juche* was, thus, critical to how North Korea imagined itself.

North Korean national identity continued to shift with Kim Jong-un's rise in 2011.¹³⁵ Three primary amendments were made to North Korea's 2019 constitution. One amendment involved referencing Kim Jong-un as North Korea's "commander-in-chief,"¹³⁶ rather than the "Supreme Leader."¹³⁷ Given the term "commander-in-chief" was uncommon in communist nations, the change was aimed at "preparing for a peace treaty with the United States."¹³⁸ This interpretation is consistent with Kim's desire to expand trade relations and boost the economy. Article 36 of North Korea's 2016 constitution stated, "the State shall develop foreign trade on the principles of complete equality and mutual benefit."¹³⁹ But in 2019, North Korea revised article 36 to "protecting credit, improving the trade structure and expanding . . . external economic relations based on the principles of complete equality and mutual benefit."¹⁴⁰

of monarchs was hereditary); see also Armstrong, *supra* note 119 (stating that the Chosun kingdom adopted an isolationist policy).

134. Kim Jong-il, *Supreme Leader of North Korea, Let Us Reunify the Country Independently and Peacefully Through the Great Unity of the Entire Nation*, COLUM. L. SCH., http://www2.law.columbia.edu/course_00S_L9436_001/North%20Korea%20materials/let_us_reunify_the_country_indep.htm [<https://perma.cc/D63M-E5K4>] (last visited Mar. 22, 2022).

135. Choe Sang-hun, *At Huge Rally, North Koreans Declare Kim Their Leader*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 29, 2011), <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/30/world/asia/north-korea-declares-kim-jong-un-as-supreme-leader.html> [<https://perma.cc/A7XF-P224>].

136. Korea (Democratic People's Republic of)'s Constitution of 1972 with Amendments Through 2016, art. 102 (rev. 2016) [hereinafter Constitution of 2016], CONSTITUTE PROJECT (last updated Aug. 26, 2021), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Peoples_Republic_of_Korea_2016.pdf?lang=en [<https://perma.cc/QEC4-PAWB>].

137. Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, art. 100, Apr. 2009 [hereinafter Constitution of 2009], ICL Project, https://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/kn00000_.html [<https://perma.cc/MXV5-CBHL>].

138. Hyonhee Shin, *New North Korea Constitution Calls Kim Head of State, Seen as Step to U.S. Peace Treaty*, REUTERS (July 11, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-constitution/new-north-korea-constitution-calls-kim-head-of-state-seen-as-step-to-u-s-peace-treaty-idUSKCN1U70HD> [<https://perma.cc/E2JU-8V2Q>].

139. Constitution of 2016, *supra* note 136, at art. 36.

140. Sung-jo Cho, Bukhan sahoejuuiheonbeob gaejeong naeyong [북한 사회주의헌법 개정 내용] [*North Korean Constitution Summary*], YONHAP NEWS

The addition of “credit” underscores Kim’s ambitions to grow North Korea’s economy through trade.¹⁴¹

Finally, the word *juche* is not found anywhere in the 2019 Constitution.¹⁴² Before, the word *juche* appeared consistently in North Korea’s constitutions. The nation’s 1948 constitution stated, “[The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea] is guided in its activities by the Juche idea[.]”¹⁴³ Additionally, the nation’s 2009 and 2016 constitutions each stated that “[t]he Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is the socialist motherland of Juche[.]”¹⁴⁴ North Korea’s evolving constitution indicates the fading importance of the *juche* ideology. This suggests that North Korean leadership is evolving to be more personal rather than ideological.¹⁴⁵

2. North Korea’s language purification movement

Whereas South Korea incorporated English into the Korean language, North Korea refused to adopt foreign languages both to distinguish themselves from South Korea and as a symbol of resistance against the colonial period.¹⁴⁶ Unlike South Koreans, North Koreans were determined to preserve the ethnic Korean language developed during the Chosun dynasty and implemented a “language purification movement” in 1949 that continues to this day.¹⁴⁷

The language purification movement began with the Hangul-only policy in 1949, which banned the use of Chinese characters in all State publications, such as school textbooks, literature, and media.¹⁴⁸ Mandating Hangul was part of North Korea’s larger effort to facilitate the use of the Korean language and rebuild lost identity.¹⁴⁹ But the Hangul-only policy has been relaxed since Kim Jong-un came to power. Since 2016, North Koreans study English starting in elementary school.¹⁵⁰ Because

(July 11, 2019), <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20190711134500504> [<https://perma.cc/8LT5-UJXH>].

141. See Choe Sang-hun, *North Korea’s Leader Had Big Economic Plans. He Admits They’ve Failed*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 19, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/world/asia/north-korea-economy-coronavirus.html> [<https://perma.cc/PFP6-HUXE>].

142. Cho, *supra* note 140.

143. Constitution of 1948, *supra* note 121, at art. 3.

144. Constitution of 2009, *supra* note 137, at Preamble; Constitution of 2016, *supra* note 136, at Preamble.

145. Atsuhito Isozaki, *North Korea Revamps Its Constitution*, DIPLOMAT (Aug. 26, 2019), <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/north-korea-revamps-its-constitution/> [<https://perma.cc/4GUG-G5ZQ>].

146. See Yong Soon Yim, *Language Reform as a Political Symbol in North Korea*, 142 WORLD AFF. 216, 219 (1980) (stating that Kim Il-sung ordered the banning of “undesirable and arbitrarily used words.”).

147. Yeon, *supra* note 65, at 150.

148. See Yim, *supra* note 146, at 225–26 (stating that Kim Il-sung demanded that only native Korean be used).

149. *Id.* at 217.

150. Elizabeth Shim, *Kim Jong Un Reformed North Korea’s K-12 Education*,

this policy is still so new, it is difficult to assess the future of the nation's language purification movement. But this recent development underscores North Korea's evolving language movement and Kim's recognition of the English language.

Anderson showed how bilingualism can aid in developing a national identity.¹⁵¹ Whereas South Korea embraced the English language, North Korea preserved the language of the Chosun dynasty.¹⁵² North Koreans, thus, viewed themselves as the "purer" Koreans who were "untainted" by Western influences.¹⁵³ On the other hand, North Korea appears to be embracing bilingual literacy with their new English-language policy. North Korea's English-language policy shows how the nation continues to imagine themselves apart from their southern neighbor.

3. Racial purity and North Korea's intolerance for foreigners.

Unlike South Korea, where multiculturalism is thriving, North Korea has embraced a secretive and isolationist identity similar to the Chosun dynasty.¹⁵⁴ According to B.R. Myers, author of "The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters," North Koreans believe that they are "too pure blooded, and therefore too virtuous, to survive in this evil world without a great parental leader."¹⁵⁵ North Koreans, thus, see themselves as "superior" to South Koreans.¹⁵⁶ This superiority is key to how North Koreans imagine themselves as a nation.

North Koreans believe that they are "purer" than South Koreans in two ways: They wear the traditional *hanbok* and listen to traditional Korean music.¹⁵⁷ *Hanbok* originated in 37 B.C.E. during the kingdom of Goguryeo.¹⁵⁸ Consisting of a jacket ("jeogori"), pants ("baji"), and a skirt ("chima"), *hanbok* was the daily attire of monarchs and the Korean people.¹⁵⁹ To this day, North Koreans view the *hanbok* as a "ceremonial and everyday dress."¹⁶⁰ North Koreans wear the *hanbok* to events, such

Mandating English, Report Says, UNITED PRESS INT'L (May 27, 2016), https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/05/27/Kim-Jong-Un-reformed-North-Koreas-K-12-education-mandating-English-report-says/1491464363105/ [https://perma.cc/NB9Z-W76H].

151. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 116–17.

152. Yeon, *supra* note 65, at 150.

153. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 12.

154. Berry, *supra* note 117.

155. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 9.

156. *Id.* at 56.

157. *Id.* at 56–75.

158. See LEE, *supra* note 62, at 73–77 (describing how *hanbok* was created in the kingdom of Goguryeo and how the Korean Peninsula was divided into three kingdoms prior to the Chosun dynasty: Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla).

159. Mimsie Ladner, *Hanbok: An Introduction to South Korea's National Dress*, CULTURE TRIP (Jan. 25, 2017), <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/south-korea/articles/hanbok-an-introduction-to-south-koreas-national-dress/> [https://perma.cc/P3Z2-TCBA].

160. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 60.

as weddings, funerals, and concerts.¹⁶¹ While South Koreans also wear the *hanbok* to similar occasions, the attire does not carry the same ceremonial meaning as it does in North Korea.¹⁶² For example, South Koreans wear suits, jeans, and dress on a daily basis.¹⁶³ In contrast, North Koreans, particularly ordinary citizens, wear *hanbok* in their daily lives.¹⁶⁴

Similarly, North Korea does not embrace South Korean music. Unlike South Korea who embraces Korean pop (“K-pop”), North Korea listens to music of the Chosun dynasty.¹⁶⁵ For example, North Koreans still use traditional Chosun dynasty instruments, such as the hourglass-shaped drum (“*changgo*”) and the six-stringed guitar (“*gayageum*”).¹⁶⁶ To North Koreans, K-pop is the music of “capitalist vandals” that “corrupts” North Korean culture.¹⁶⁷

North Korea’s steadfast commitment to traditional Korean attire and music emphasizes their “purity” as Koreans.¹⁶⁸ Propaganda further enabled this illusion of superiority. In 2018, North Korean academics released a novel titled, “The US Imperialists Started the Korean War.”¹⁶⁹ The novel falsely blamed the United States for starting the war, when it was really North Korea that invaded South Korea.¹⁷⁰ The novel also referred to South Koreans as “puppets” to the United States.¹⁷¹ To North Koreans, the absence of foreign influence equated to superiority.¹⁷² This illusion of superiority led to the Korean War.¹⁷³ North Korea sought to reunite the Korean Peninsula under their imagined notion of the “pure Korean.”¹⁷⁴ North Korea’s actions were consistent with Anderson’s argument that it was the horizontal comradeship “that [made] possible . . . for

161. *Id.*

162. *Id.* at 24.

163. In-Woo Chang, *Change in Hanbok of South and North Korea After the Division and the Interchange—Focusing on Women’s Jeogori*, 30 J. OF THE KOREAN SOC’Y OF CLOTHING & TEXTILES 1, 5 (2005), <http://www.koreascience.or.kr/article/JAKO200612842609717.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/64ET-SJZR>].

164. *Id.* at 6.

165. Anna Seonglim Noh, *Cultural Policies for National Music in South and North Korea (1960s-70s): A Comparative Study*, 25 INT’L J. CULTURAL POL’Y 20, 22 (2017).

166. *Music in North Korea*, ROCKY ROAD TRAVEL (2022), <https://www.rockyroadtravel.com/music-in-north-korea/>.

167. Simon Denyer & Min Joo Kim, *How K-pop is Luring Young North Koreans to Cross the Line*, WASH. POST (Aug. 22, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/how-k-pop-is-tempting-young-north-koreans-to-cross-the-line/2019/08/19/0f984654-839f-11e9-b585-e36b16a531aa_story.html [<https://perma.cc/J3D4-33LP>].

168. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 9.

169. Sean Illing, *America, Explained By A North Korean Propaganda Book*, VOX (June 12, 2018), <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/1/9/16773364/trump-kim-summit-sign-agreement-denuclearization-propaganda>.

170. *Id.*

171. *Id.*

172. *Id.*

173. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 25.

174. *Id.* at 9.

so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.”¹⁷⁵ This is symbolized by the tombs of Unknown Soldiers—that national identities are not false just because they are imagined constructs.¹⁷⁶ Millions of North Koreans gave their lives to recognize their shared vision of superiority.¹⁷⁷ North Korea harbors a deeper resentment towards foreign powers, and its association with South Korea with foreign influence creates barriers towards reconciliation with its southern neighbor.

IV. OBSTACLES TO CREATING A SHARED IDENTITY IN A REUNIFIED KOREA

Should President Moon Jae-in’s pledge to reunify the Korean Peninsula by 2045 become reality, a newly unified Korea faces the monumental task of overcoming the differences that have defined them for over seven decades. This section examines some of the obstacles that a unified Korea may face, covering specifically assimilation, distrust, and the generational gap.

A. *Assimilation and obstacles to creating a shared identity*

Assimilation is the first obstacle a reunified Korea will face. There are two primary challenges to assimilation: The different ways in which the two Koreas evolved and finding common values that they share with one another. This section analyzes what assimilation might entail for both South Korea and North Korea. The Pew Research Center describes assimilation as “members of one group adopting the cultural patterns of the majority or host culture.”¹⁷⁸ In particular, this section considers how the identities of South Korea and North Korea would evolve if both Koreas were to assimilate one another into a reunified Korea.

1. South Korean identity and the assimilation of North Koreans

If South Koreans assimilated North Koreans, South Koreans must adopt certain aspects of North Korean culture and society. South Korea formed a nation around democratic values, globalization, and the English language.¹⁷⁹ But to assimilate into a reunified Korea, South Korea may want to adopt the North Korean approach of preserving ethnic Korean culture. Anderson stated that an “imagined political community” is only possible if the nation forms “an image of a communion.”¹⁸⁰ Thus, South Korea must find common values that they share with North Korea.

175. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 7.

176. *Id.* at 9–11.

177. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 25.

178. *Assimilation and Language*, PEW RSCH. CTR. (Mar. 19, 2004), <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2004/03/19/assimilation-and-language/> [<https://perma.cc/G967-YWGF>].

179. Song, *supra* note 96, at 26.

180. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6.

Although they embraced Western values, South Korea also worked to preserve their ethnic Korean culture. For example, South Korean historians are defensive about the Chosun dynasty. Prominent South Korean historian Shin Byung-joo praised the kingdom's isolationist policy, stating, "At a time when the West and parts of the East were actively colonizing other nations, [the kingdom of Chosun] instilled a sense of national pride to the Korean people[.]"¹⁸¹ Hence, if South Korea assimilated North Korea, South Koreans could redefine their national identity around North Korea's political isolationism where they limit outside contact to preserve traditional Korean culture. South Koreans could also redefine their identity around North Korea's hereditary succession system given their history of over two decades of authoritarian rule under President Park Chung-hee.¹⁸² North Korea's hereditary succession system would provide a reunified Korea with a figurehead reminiscent of the kings of the Chosun dynasty.¹⁸³

In addition, South Korean assimilation of North Koreans could spur a cultural and linguistic purification movement in which South Koreans purge the English language and Western culture. Although South Korea adopted the English language, the nation took measures to preserve the Korean language. The purpose of the 2005 Framework Act was to mandate Hangul as South Korea's official language.¹⁸⁴ The Framework Act was a response to the nationwide criticism of South Korea's *segryehwa* initiative.¹⁸⁵ South Koreans believed that the English language and continued foreign presence "corrupt[ed] South Korean national identity."¹⁸⁶ Accordingly, South Korea could purge their "Konglish" and reimagine their national identity around the Korean language, similar to North Korea's Hangul-only policy.¹⁸⁷

South Korea could also abandon Western music and beauty standards in favor of traditional Korean culture. South Korea is known as "the plastic surgery capital of the world."¹⁸⁸ South Korea's obsession with Western-style double-eyelids and an upright nose is a product of continued foreign influence.¹⁸⁹ Contrary to North Korea, whose citizens wear

181. *Living as the King of Joseon, Dr. Shin Byeong-ju, Ph.D. in History* [조선의 왕으로 산다는 것, 역사학박사 신병주 [최강 1 교시][띠비띠]], YOUTUBE (Apr. 17, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UySPQ2vSi14> [<https://perma.cc/L55C-R84Q>].

182. Im, *supra* note 85, at 233–35.

183. Beauchamp, *supra* note 132.

184. Framework Act, *supra* note 101, at art. 3(1).

185. Song, *supra* note 96, at 26.

186. *Id.*

187. See Rhodes, *supra* note 98 (describing "Seoul dialect" as a combination of English and Korean in the same sentence) ; see also Yim, *supra* note 146, at 225–26 (describing North Korea's Hangul-only policy).

188. Drake Baer, *Why South Korea is the Plastic Surgery Capital of the World*, BUS. INSIDER (Sept. 22, 2015), <https://www.businessinsider.com/south-korea-is-the-plastic-surgery-capital-of-the-world-2015-9> [<https://perma.cc/HK8F-8VWE>].

189. Jasmine Kwak, *The Influence of Western Culture on Plastic Surgery*

hanbok on a daily basis, South Koreans only wear *hanbok* on special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and Chinese New Year.¹⁹⁰ K-pop contributes to the nation's beauty standards due to its dominance in South Korean media.¹⁹¹ For K-pop artists, plastic surgery is a contractual obligation.¹⁹² Entertainment agencies pressure their artists to meet the nation's Westernized beauty standards to make their artists are more "marketable" overseas.¹⁹³ Prevalent since 1992, K-pop derives influence from Western hip hop, rhythm-and-blues, and dance.¹⁹⁴ But K-pop is not warmly received by South Korea's elderly population.¹⁹⁵ The older generation believes traditional Korean music, like trot, is an vital element of ethnic Korean identity.¹⁹⁶ South Korea has not abandoned traditional Korean music. Recently, South Korean media aired a trot singing competition featuring veteran trot singers that enjoyed immense popularity.¹⁹⁷ The veteran singers wore *hanbok* on the show and displayed more traditional Korean beauty standards.¹⁹⁸ The show's popularity is reminiscent of Anderson's argument that television programs "conjure[] images of imagined communities."¹⁹⁹ It is, thus, possible that South Koreans abandon K-pop and Western beauty standards in favor of a resurgence of traditional Korean music and culture currently embraced by North Koreans. Accordingly, the assimilation of North Korean culture in a reunified Korea would result in a South Korean identity that is radically different from South Korea's current identity. Nevertheless, these drastic changes may be necessary to fuel the reunification effort.

2. North Korean identity and the assimilation of South Koreans

Like South Korean identity, North Korean identity could also undergo major changes if North Korea were to assimilate South Korea. The North Korean nation revolved around isolationism, hereditary

Consumption in South Korea, 21 GYNECOLOGY & WOMEN'S HEALTH 1, 2 (2021).

190. *Traditional Korean Clothes*, KOREA TOURISM ORG. (Sept. 7, 2021), https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/AKR/AK_ENG_2_2.jsp [<https://perma.cc/9AAZ-R38J>].

191. Zara Stone, *The K-Pop Plastic Surgery Obsession*, THE ATLANTIC (May 24, 2013), <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/05/the-k-pop-plastic-surgery-obsession/276215/> [<https://perma.cc/5W9B-H9SB>].

192. *Id.*

193. *Id.*

194. Michael Hurt, *How K-Pop Got Away with Cultural Appropriation—of R&B, Hip Hop and Bubblegum Pop*, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (Oct. 16, 2018), <https://www.scmp.com/culture/music/article/2168815/k-pop-ultimate-cultural-appropriation-or-south-korea-improving> [<https://perma.cc/G65P-5PXL>].

195. Mirachelle Joya, *What Does the Older Generation Think About Kpop*, KPOPSTARZ (Jul. 18, 2019), <https://www.kpopstarz.com/articles/289432/20190718/what-does-the-older-generation-think-about-kpop.htm> [<https://perma.cc/4JC2-H9X2>].

196. *Id.*

197. Kelly Kasulis, *Move Over K-Pop: Korean Youth Turn to Old-Time Trot Music*, THE WORLD (May 25, 2020), <https://theworld.org/stories/2020-05-25/move-over-k-pop-korean-youth-turn-old-time-trot-music> [<https://perma.cc/N22G-BNWW>].

198. *Id.*

199. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 135.

succession, and language purification.²⁰⁰ But to achieve reunification, North Koreans will also need to adopt certain aspects of South Korean culture and society.

As North Korea's identity revolved around the belief that they were the "pure Koreans," the nation adopted many Chosun dynasty policies. One was isolationism, where the nation closed off contact with the outside world.²⁰¹ But this appears to be changing. North Korea's 2019 constitution underscores Kim Jong-un's ambition to grow the nation's economy through trade.²⁰² In January 2021, Kim publicly outlined plans to "expand foreign relations."²⁰³ To do so, North Korea needs to relax their isolationist policy. Hence, North Korea would want to adopt South Korea's *seguehwa* globalization initiative to pursue their economic ambitions.

North Korea would also want to adopt South Korea's "Seoul dialect," which combines the Korean language with the English language. Anderson stated that bilingualism "made possible the imagined community floating in [the] homogenous, empty time" of colonized nations.²⁰⁴ In 2016, Kim lifted the Hangeul-only policy and mandated the study of the English language starting in elementary school.²⁰⁵ Although the exact motivations of Kim are unknown, the revised North Korean constitution and Kim's recent public remarks indicate Kim's ambition to relax the nation's isolationist policy. If Kim's plan is to expand North Korea's reach in the international community, North Korea would also benefit from South Korea's study abroad programs. North Korea might also consider reinstating Chinese characters if their goal is to expand relations with foreign powers.²⁰⁶ As North Korea continues to evolve, certain elements of South Korean national identity become useful for North Koreans in the reunification effort.

North Korea may be open to adopting South Korean democracy. Although a communist nation, North Korea's constitution embraces a number of democratic rights. For example, article 66 guarantees the right to be elected to public office and article 67 guarantees "freedom of speech, the press, assembly, demonstration and association."²⁰⁷ However, the *juche* ideology contradicts these democratic principles. Article 3 stipulates *juche* as the guiding principle of North Korea and article 12 obligates the nation to "strengthen the dictatorship of the people's

200. Im, Campbell & Cha, *supra* note 22, at 288–89.

201. Berry, *supra* note 117.

202. Shin, *supra* note 138.

203. Jeong-ho Lee, *Kim Jong-un Vows to Expand Foreign Relations Ahead of Biden Era*, BLOOMBERG (Jan. 7, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-07/kim-jong-un-vows-to-expand-foreign-relations-ahead-of-biden-era> [<https://perma.cc/4DHQ-7HE5?type=image>].

204. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 116.

205. Shim, *supra* note 150.

206. Yim, *supra* note 146, at 225–26.

207. Constitution of 2016, *supra* note 138, at arts. 66–67.

democracy[.]”²⁰⁸ However, the *juche* ideology has faded in the past decade. In fact, the nation’s most recent constitution does not mention *juche* at all.²⁰⁹ This indicates that North Korean leadership has evolved to be more personal rather than ideological.²¹⁰

North Korean censorship ranks among the highest in the world, with the government refusing to grant their citizens access to foreign products.²¹¹ K-Pop is no exception. But North Korea’s attitude towards K-pop has changed. In April 2018, K-Pop artists performed a two-day concert in North Korea.²¹² The last concert in North Korea was in 2005 by South Korean trot singer Cho Yong-pil.²¹³ Whereas the North Korean people’s reception of Cho’s solo concert was “lukewarm,” the reception of K-Pop stars was more positive.²¹⁴ Kim Jong-un expressed that he was “deeply moved” by the K-Pop stars’ performances and the artists were given a standing ovation by the North Korean audience.²¹⁵ K-Pop also has a positive reception among the North Korean people. North Koreans have expressed that while North Korean music “[has] no emotions . . . American or South Korean music[] literally gives you chills.”²¹⁶ Just as television helped South Koreans imagine an identity beyond K-Pop, K-Pop concerts in North Korea have a similar effect. This is consistent with Anderson’s statement on the power of television in forming imagined communities.²¹⁷ K-Pop’s positive reception in North Korea indicates that North Koreans could purge traditional Korean music and adopt Western music.

Lastly, North Korean beauty standards have also evolved. Unlike South Koreans, North Korean citizens wear *hanbok* on daily basis.²¹⁸ But since Kim Jong-un came to power, Western-style clothing has grown in popularity. These changes are attributed to Ri Sol-ju, the wife of Kim Jong-un.²¹⁹ Whereas the nation’s previous First Ladies were rarely seen

208. *Id.* at arts. 3, 12.

209. Cho, *supra* note 140.

210. Isozaki, *supra* note 145.

211. *Internet Censorship in North Korea*, LE VPN (2021), <https://www.le-vpn.com/internet-censorship-north-korea/> [<https://perma.cc/JM47-J3G9>].

212. Yuliya Talmazan, *K-Pop Diplomacy: Kim Jong-un “Deeply Moved” After South Korean Concert*, NBC NEWS (Apr. 2, 2018), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/k-pop-diplomacy-kim-jong-un-deeply-moved-after-south-n861936> [<https://perma.cc/QZ6E-M7UR>].

213. Kyu-chang Lee, 이규창, ‘조용필 평양공연’ SBS 총력전 펼친다, 스타뉴스 [‘Jo Young-pil’s Pyongyang Performance’ SBS All-Out Battle], STARNEWS (Aug. 3, 2005), <https://star.mt.co.kr/stview.php?no=2005080316162524461&type=1&outlink=1> [<https://perma.cc/UZX6-5N5E>].

214. *Id.*

215. Talmazan, *supra* note 212.

216. Simon Denyer & Min Joo Kim, *For Young North Koreans, K-Pop Provides an Awakening—And an Inspiration to Defect*, THE SEATTLE TIMES (Aug. 20, 2019), <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/for-young-north-koreans-k-pop-provides-an-awakening-and-an-inspiration-to-defect/> [<https://perma.cc/RA7W-VS9L>].

217. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 135.

218. LEE, *supra* note 62.

219. Gayeong Seo, *North Korean First Lady’s Fashion Evolution: Is Kate*

in the media, Ri made herself more visible to the North Korean public.²²⁰ Forgoing the *hanbok* and monochromatic outfits, Ri donned stylish dresses and eye-catching accessories.²²¹ Ri's preference for Western fashion introduced North Korean women to new styles.²²² The most noticeable change has been makeup trends, with more North Korean women applying makeup in public than before.²²³ Ri's visibility is consistent with Anderson's "image of a communion," as Ri allowed North Korean women to imagine a community beyond their nation.²²⁴

North Korea's evolving fashion trend suggests that they could readily adopt South Korea's plastic surgery culture and Western fashion. Like South Korea, North Koreans assimilating the South Koreans would imply a drastic shift in the identity they currently possess.

B. *Distrust and discrimination between the two Koreas*

In addition to assimilation, the two Korea's history of distrust is another obstacle that would hinder a reunified Korea from developing a shared identity. Distrust runs deep between the two Koreas and is a shared inheritance of U.S. and Soviet interventions.²²⁵ Against their will, the Korean Peninsula was divided by occupiers who refused to acknowledge them as an independent nation capable of governing themselves.²²⁶ The pressure of foreign powers forced South Korea to evolve into a democratic republic and North Korea into a communist nation.²²⁷ Just as Anderson implied that European national identity was modelled after the "creole pioneers," the two Koreas modelled their nations after their occupiers.²²⁸

Ernest Renan in his "What is a Nation?" essay argued that a "shared suffering unites more than does joy."²²⁹ The shared suffering of division and foreign occupation led to the Korean War. Anderson described how the creole pioneers sacrificed themselves to maintain the "deep, horizontal comradeship" they forged from their "imagined" nation.²³⁰ The Korean War was more than a clash of ideologies; it was a battleground

Middleton Her Model?, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (Dec. 1, 2017), <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-luxury/article/2121968/north-korean-first-ladys-fashion-evolution-drives-new-elite> [https://perma.cc/H6TT-MTUM].

220. *Id.*

221. *Id.*

222. *Id.*

223. Elizabeth Shim, *North Korea First Lady Ri Sol Ju Leads Makeup Trends*, *Defector Says*, UPI (Dec. 21, 2020), https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2020/12/21/North-Korea-first-lady-Ri-Sol-Ju-leads-makeup-trends-defector-says/4771608575477/ [https://perma.cc/QX23-DB97].

224. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6.

225. Stueck & Yi, *supra* note 53, at 178.

226. *Id.* at 184.

227. *Id.* at 202–03.

228. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 47.

229. ERNEST RENAN, *What is a Nation?*, in *QU'EST-CE QU'UNE NATION?*, (Ethan Rundell trans., Presses-Pocket 1992) (full text).

230. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 7, 47.

where the two Koreas attempted to justify their newly formed identities and vision of reunification.²³¹ South Koreans and North Koreans fought and died for their respective nations.²³² The Korean War never ended; it is an ongoing conflict that has persisted for over seven decades with no end in sight.²³³

The ongoing clash of identities only strengthened the distrust between the two Koreas with no end in sight. This deep distrust resulted in discrimination. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines discrimination as “acts, practices, or policies that impose a relative disadvantage on persons based on their membership in a salient social group.”²³⁴ Discrimination runs on both sides. In February 2020, the Korea Times reported that 17.2 percent of 3,000 North Korean defectors polled said that they experienced discrimination in South Korea for “cultural differences.”²³⁵ The defectors were discriminated for “their way of speaking, manners, and lifestyle.”²³⁶ South Koreans who responded to the same survey cited “lack of skills and poor job performance” as reasons for discriminating against the defectors.²³⁷ In a different survey, 37 percent of female defectors stated that they experienced “lower wages and sexual harassment” in the workplace.²³⁸ The female defectors faced prejudice “due to their gender and country of origin.”²³⁹ The extent of discrimination was revealed in 2019 with the deaths of two defectors. In September 2019, a mother and her six-year-old son were found dead in their apartment complex; they allegedly starved to death.²⁴⁰ Investigations revealed that the mother struggled to find employment for over six months prior to her death and that she was repeatedly denied welfare benefits.²⁴¹ The mother could not find employment, because “she was

231. *Korean War*, *supra* note 67.

232. *Id.*

233. *Id.*

234. Andrew Altman, *Discrimination*, STAN. ENCYC. OF PHIL. (Apr. 20, 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/discrimination/> [<https://perma.cc/DH7J-QJRB>].

235. *One in Five North Korean Defectors Experience Discrimination in South Korea: Poll*, THE KOREA TIMES (Feb. 26, 2020), https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/02/103_284113.html [<https://perma.cc/45J9-NBLB>].

236. *Id.*

237. *Id.*

238. Kim Hyun-bin, *37% of Female NK Defectors Struggle with Workplace Discrimination*, THE KOREA TIMES (Dec. 9, 2019), https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2019/12/371_279967.html [<https://perma.cc/3SFN-DUJ6>].

239. *Id.*

240. Anthony Kuhn, *In South Korea, Anguish Over Deaths of North Korean Defectors Who May Have Starved*, NPR (Sept. 17, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/17/761156048/in-south-korea-anguish-over-deaths-of-north-korean-defectors-who-may-have-starve> [<https://perma.cc/5GBR-KZYB>].

241. 탈북자 한성옥 모자의 ‘아사 비극’ 전말, 선데이저널 [North Korean Defector Han Sung-ok and Her Son’s “Tragic End.”], SUNDAY J. (Sept. 5, 2019), <https://sundayjournalusa.com/2019/09/05/%ED%83%88%EB%B6%81%EC%9E%90-%ED%95%9C%EC%84%B1%EC%98%A5-%EB%AA%A8%EC%9E%90%EC%9D%98-%EC%95%84%EC%82%AC-%EB%B9%>

a defector . . . and a single mother.”²⁴² It was also revealed that Seoul’s Health and Welfare Center “did not prioritize her application [because she was a defector].”²⁴³

Discrimination against South Koreans is prevalent in North Korea as well. Propaganda is the vehicle through which North Koreans express discrimination against their southern neighbor. North Korea’s propaganda novel, “The US Imperialists Started the Korean War,” refers to South Koreans as “puppets” to the United States.²⁴⁴ North Koreans view South Koreans as a “colony” of the United States and not as an independent nation.²⁴⁵ The North Korean government also consistently refer to South Korea as “capitalist vandals” for allegedly abandoning their Korean heritage for Western values.²⁴⁶ Thus, North Koreans discriminate against South Koreans due to South Korea’s close ties with Western nations. The source of North Korea’s distrust is their belief that they are the “pure Koreans.”²⁴⁷ The notion of purity and superiority is how the North Korean nation imagined their nation for over seven decades. Because distrust and discrimination run deep between the two Koreas, they pose monumental obstacles towards reunification. The extent of the distrust may be difficult to overcome, because both nations were divided for seventy-five years.

C. *Overcoming the generational gap and creating shared memories*

Another obstacle a reunified Korea may face is the generational gap between older and younger Koreans. As the generation who lived through the Korean War, the division, and the latter half of the Japanese occupation fades, so do the memories of those times. In a 2017 survey conducted by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, only 27 percent of South Koreans aged nineteen to thirty-nine viewed reunification favorably compared to 48 percent of those aged sixty and over.²⁴⁸ In other words, younger South Koreans do not share the same sentiments as their elders. Unlike the older generation, younger South Koreans were born into cosmopolitan cities and a thriving democracy. The younger generation is also more receptive towards the United States and the international community due to the mandatory English language requirement and their experiences studying abroad.²⁴⁹ As a result, the younger gen-

84%EA%B7%B9-%EC%A0%84%EB%A7%90/ [https://perma.cc/C6AC-4NPK].

242. *Id.*

243. *Id.*

244. Illing, *supra* note 169.

245. *Id.*

246. Denyer & Kim, *supra* note 216.

247. MYERS, *supra* note 118, at 9.

248. Juhwa Park, MinKyu Park & Won-Bin Cho, 박주화, 박민규, 조원빈, 2017 남북통합에 대한 국민의식조사, KINU통일연구원 [2017 Survey of Inter-Korean Integration], KOREA INST. FOR NAT'L UNIFICATION 194 (2017) <https://www.kinu.or.kr/pyxis-api/1/digital-files/c2c40d54-669b-4f61-9bb4-7fc830248378> [https://perma.cc/J85J-YEMG].

249. Song, *supra* note 96, at 26.

eration's concerns about reunification are more practical than nostalgic. The most pressing fear among younger South Koreans is the nearly \$5 trillion economic burden the state would bear should reunification occur, which inevitably impacts the job market and overall quality of life.²⁵⁰

In contrast, the North Korean view on reunification appear more inconsistent. Due to limited data from North Korea, the positions of the three previous leaders offer a window into the nation's views on reunification. According to David Hawk, author of the book "Thank You Father Kim Il-sung," Kim developed the North Korean nation with reunification in mind.²⁵¹ To Kim, a reunified Korea would be communist, hereditary, isolationist, and linguistically pure.²⁵² But when he realized South Korea did not share his views, he waged war to prove that his vision of a reunified Korea was correct.²⁵³

Forty-six years later, Kim Jong-il succeeded his father.²⁵⁴ Whereas Kim Il-sung viewed reunification as a "collective effort," Kim Jong-il viewed reunification as an "independent" feat.²⁵⁵ In a public speech to the nation in 2000, Kim Jong-il stated, "All nations have a right to shape their destiny by their own hands and independently according to their will . . . Since the reunification of our country is an affair of our nation[,] our nation must achieve it by its own efforts[.]"²⁵⁶ This speech is consistent with how Kim handled reunification matters. In 1998, Kim and then-South Korean President Kim Dae-jung negotiated the Sunshine Policy.²⁵⁷ Rather than discuss reunification, Kim made repeated demands for economic assistance to overcome poverty.²⁵⁸ President Kim Dae-jung accommodated Kim Jong-il's demands, only to discover later that Kim Jong-il never used the money for humanitarian purposes—he used it to restart North Korea's nuclear program.²⁵⁹ Unlike his father who took

250. John Power & Michael Holtz, *Reunification? Many Young South Koreans Say, "Let's Not,"* THE CHRISTIAN SCI. MONITOR (May 3, 2018), <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2018/0503/Reunification-Many-young-South-Koreans-say-Let-s-not> [<https://perma.cc/VLT7-YNAF>].

251. David Hawk, *Systems of Thought, Values, and Belief in Korea Prior to Kim Il-Sung's Accession to Power in the North* in THANK YOU FATHER KIM IL-SUNG: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF SEVERE VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, AND RELIGION IN NORTH KOREA 49–50 (2013).

252. *Id.* at 51.

253. *Id.* at 53.

254. Yoon, *supra* note 120, at 1291.

255. *See* HAWK, *supra* note 251, at 52 (describing Kim Il-sung's belief that reunification of the Korean Peninsula was a "collective effort" that included South Korea); *see also* QUOTATIONS OF KIM JONG-IL ON REUNIFICATION, COLUM. L. SCH. (June 13, 2000) (describing Kim Jong-il's belief that reunification is an "independent" feat), http://www2.law.columbia.edu/course_00S_L9436_001/North%20Korea%20materials/quotations_of_kim_jong_il_on_reu.htm [<https://perma.cc/NT4P-J767>].

256. QUOTATIONS OF KIM JONG-IL ON REUNIFICATION, *supra* note 255.

257. Yong-Sup Han, *The Sunshine Policy and Security on the Korean Peninsula: A Critical Assessment and Prospects*, 26 ASIAN PERSPECTIVE, no.3, 2002 at 37–40.

258. *Id.* at 42.

259. *Id.* at 58–59.

reunification seriously, Kim Jong-il used reunification as a tool to build North Korea in accordance with his vision.

Unlike his predecessors, Kim Jong-un appears to have a more progressive view on reunification. Since he came to power, Kim focused on North Korea's economic growth and trade relations with foreign powers.²⁶⁰ Indeed, Kim's public announcement that he is actively seeking to expand foreign relations shows his desire "to do business" foreign powers.²⁶¹ Kim's approach to reunification reflects his foreign policy ambitions. Since coming to power, Kim has made a series of symbolic gestures to South Korean President Moon Jae-in that has not been seen before. In 2018, Kim became the first North Korean leader to cross over into South Korea in the village of Panmunjom.²⁶² The two leaders, then, signed a historic document called the Panmunjom Declaration.²⁶³ In the Panmunjom Declaration, the two Koreas agreed to make sincere efforts to end the Korean War and avoid future conflicts.²⁶⁴

In other words, different generations show different perspectives on reunification in both South Korea and North Korea. The obstacles presented above—assimilation, distrust and discrimination, and the generational gap—show the difficulties in achieving a shared identity in a unified Korea. But it may still be possible for the two Koreas to form a shared identity when they reunify by focusing on their commonalities rather than differences.

V. THE REIMAGINED COMMUNITY OF A UNIFIED KOREA

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in pledged reunification of the Korean Peninsula by 2045.²⁶⁵ Although Korea faces many obstacles toward reunification, the obstacles are not impossible to overcome. This section explores how a reunified Korea can understand itself as two distinct nations joined by a shared identity. A reunified Korea is reimagined in the following ways: Through the two Korea's shared suffering of colonization and war, education and literacy, and by embracing their commonalities rather than differences.

260. Cho, *supra* note 140.

261. *Id.*

262. Dagyum Ji & Oliver Hotham, *Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-in Share Historic First Handshake at Panmunjom*, NK NEWS (Apr. 26, 2018), <https://www.nknews.org/2018/04/kim-jong-un-moon-jae-in-share-historic-first-handshake-at-panmunjom/> [<https://perma.cc/24ZW-WC5S>].

263. Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sept. 11, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5478/view.do?seq=319130&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&page=1&titleNm= [<https://perma.cc/L69B-QPSR>].

264. *Id.*

265. White & Lewis, *supra* note 1.

A. *Build a common national identity through shared suffering: A hybrid regime*

Although South Korea and North Korea evolved in different ways, a reunified Korea can still develop a common identity based on their shared suffering of colonization and war. Renan argued, “The nation, like the individual, is the outcome of a long past of efforts, sacrifices and devotions . . . shared suffering unites more than does joy.”²⁶⁶ First, the two Koreas share a history of protest during Japanese colonial rule.²⁶⁷ In the March First Movement, the Korean people marched together with one voice to reclaim a national identity they once shared.²⁶⁸

In addition to Japanese colonization, the two Koreas endured the trauma of division and civil war. The division saw the U.S. occupation of South Korea and the Soviet occupation of North Korea.²⁶⁹ The continued presence of foreign powers pressured both nations to adopt distinct identities modelled after their occupiers. South Korea developed into a democracy that adopted the English language and globalization, while North Korea became a communist state that embraced isolationism and hereditary succession.²⁷⁰ Despite developing differently, both nations had certain pride in the new identities they “imagined.”²⁷¹ This pride led to the Korean War. Just as the “creole pioneers” in Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* sacrificed themselves to preserve their nation, millions of North Koreans and South Koreans gave their lives to protect their newly formed national identities.²⁷² But the Korean War served another purpose. Both Koreas pursued reunification, albeit with different visions.²⁷³ Thus, the Korean War was a battleground where the two nations tried to justify their vision of a unified Korea.²⁷⁴

Anderson defined a nation as “an imagined political community[.]”²⁷⁵ The nation is “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”²⁷⁶ In South Korea, the principle of *tanil minjok* was used to unite the South Korean people under democratic values.²⁷⁷ Likewise, the *juche* ideology united

266. RENAN, *supra* note 229.

267. Shin & Moon, *supra* note 41, at 399.

268. Kwak, *supra* note 40, at 273.

269. Stueck & Yi, *supra* note 53, at 178.

270. See Song, *supra* note 96, at 26 (stating that South Korea embraced the *seguehwa* initiative and English); see also Beauchamp, *supra* note 132 (stating that North Korea’s *juche* fostered hereditary succession and isolationism).

271. See ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6 (defining a nation as “an imagined political community.”).

272. *Id.* at 47.

273. *Korean War*, *supra* note 67.

274. *Id.*

275. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6.

276. *Id.*

277. Shin & Chang, *supra* note 77, at 126–27.

the North Korean people under communism.²⁷⁸ Because the national identities of South Korea and North Korea are products of their shared suffering of colonization and war, a hybrid regime that combines South Korean democracy and North Korean communism is one way a reunified Korea can reimagine themselves.

Scholars have defined a hybrid regime as “a system that combines important elements of both [a] democracy and [an] autocracy.”²⁷⁹ A common characteristic of hybrid regimes is elections that are limited to the ruling party or the regime’s favored candidates.²⁸⁰ Opposition parties or candidates are allowed to participate in elections, but they may be shut out of the ballot box or the media.²⁸¹ Recognized examples of hybrid regimes include Russia, Indonesia, and Venezuela.²⁸² A 2019 survey conducted by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University revealed that 30.9 percent of South Koreans were open to “a hybrid of both governments [of South Korea and North Korea].”²⁸³ Prior to 1987, South Korea boasted a hybrid regime under President Park Chung-hee.²⁸⁴ Democratic institutions existed, but elections were not free, fair, or competitive.²⁸⁵ Despite ruling with an iron fist for over two decades, the South Korean people view the Park era favorably. A 2015 survey conducted by Korean newspaper JoongAng Ilbo revealed that 74.3 percent of South Koreans positively assessed the Park era.²⁸⁶ South Koreans believed Park’s politics led to South Korea’s unprecedented economic growth that laid the foundations for a thriving democracy after his death.²⁸⁷ Similarly, North Korea’s communism led the nation to adopt a system of hereditary succession that revolved

278. Lee, *supra* note 122, at 105.

279. Henry E. Hale, *Eurasian Polities as Hybrid Regimes: The Case of Putin’s Russia*, 1 J. OF EURASIAN STUD. 33, 33 (2010).

280. *Id.* at 34–35.

281. *Id.*

282. Larry Diamond, *Thinking About Hybrid Regimes*, 13 J. OF DEMOCRACY, Apr. 2002, at 21.

283. Hak-jae Kim, 김학재 외, 2019통일의식조사, 서울대학교 통일평화연구원 [2019 Unification Perception Survey], INST. FOR PEACE AND UNIFICATION STUD. AT SEOUL NAT’L U. 1, 65 (2019)] (in Korean), http://ipus.snu.ac.kr/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-%ED%86%B5%EC%9D%BC%EC%9D%98%EC%8B%9D%EC%A1%B0%EC%82%AC_%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%9B%B9%EC%9A%A9.pdf.

284. Byung-Kook Kim, *Introduction: The Case for Political History, in THE PARK CHUNG HEE ERA*, *supra* note 84, at 30.

285. *Id.* at 579.

286. Steven Denney, *The Mixed Legacy of a South Korean Dictator*, THE DIPLOMAT (Sept. 17, 2015), <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/the-mixed-legacy-of-a-south-korean-dictator/> [https://perma.cc/K22L-L2UF].

287. S. Nathan Park, *South Korea’s Nostalgia for Dictatorship Has (Mostly) Predictable Results*, FOREIGN POLICY (Nov. 15, 2016), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/15/south-koreas-nostalgia-for-dictatorship-has-mostly-predictable-results/> [https://perma.cc/F82N-3NCC].

around the Kim family.²⁸⁸ As the North Korean people's "Supreme Leader[s]," the Kim family are the figureheads that North Koreans have rallied around since the division.²⁸⁹

Anderson stated that nations are formed around common values, ideas, and visions.²⁹⁰ Although they developed distinct national identities, South Korean democracy and North Korean communism are both products of decades of colonization, division, war, and continued foreign presence. In other words, the two Korea's shared suffering can help create a new shared national identity that transcends their differences. Given South Korea's history of authoritarian rule and North Korea's hereditary dynasty, a reunified Korea can be reborn under the shared idea of a hybrid regime that combines the shared suffering of the two Koreas.

B. *Combine language, education, and literacy to create a shared identity*

In addition to a shared suffering, the two Koreas also share a common language. The official language in South Korea is "Hangugeo," whereas the official language of North Korea is "Chosuno."²⁹¹ Although both Hangugeo and Chosuno use Hangul, the difference is that Hangugeo incorporates English, while Chosuno uses no foreign languages.²⁹² For example, South Koreans call shampoo *shampu* (or 샴푸 when written in Hangul).²⁹³ On the other hand, North Koreans call shampoo *meorim-ulbinu* (or 머리물비누 when written in Hangul), which literally translates to "head water soap."²⁹⁴ Despite these small differences, having Hangul as the common written script means that both South Koreans and North Koreans can read and understand each other's literature and texts. This commonality can help build a shared identity through literature and texts taught in educational settings.

To Anderson, education and literacy went hand-and-hand towards the creation of national identities.²⁹⁵ According to Anderson, the spread of "modern-style education [occurred] because of the moral importance of modern knowledge even for colonized populations."²⁹⁶ European intelligentsia introduced the vernacular English language and encouraged

288. Beauchamp, *supra* note 132.

289. Ellen Cranley, *How North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un Became One of the World's Most Feared Dictators*, BUS. INSIDER (Apr. 27, 2020), <https://www.businessinsider.com/kim-jong-un-life-2017-8> [<https://perma.cc/B4TS-E6ES>].

290. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6.

291. *The Korean Language: The Key Differences Between North and South*, BARNES, THOMPSON & BROWN (Jan. 17, 2022), <https://legal-translations.com.au/korean-language-key-differences-north-south/>. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

292. *Id.*

293. Shreyas Reddy, Tae-jun Kang & Alistair Coleman, *Crossing Divides: Two Koreas Divided By A Fractured Language*, BBC (Mar. 8, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47440041> [<https://perma.cc/P9UT-LKXF>].

294. *Id.*

295. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 116.

296. *Id.*

“bilingual literacy” in the colonies.²⁹⁷ Since the Korean War, both South Korea and North Korea boast well-developed education curriculums unique to their own systems of government.²⁹⁸ The structured education systems showed the extent to which the two Koreas valued education and high literacy rates.²⁹⁹ After World War II, less than twenty percent of all Korean youth under Japanese colonial rule completed an elementary school education.³⁰⁰ The two Koreas adopted different measures to combat the high illiteracy rate. In North Korea, the government banned Chinese characters and mandated the sole use of the Korean alphabet in educational settings.³⁰¹ In South Korea, citizens adopted the English language in their educational curriculum and studied abroad to broaden their knowledge of the world.³⁰² But like North Korea, South Korea also preserved the Korean language through the 2005 Framework Act.³⁰³ Thus, the preservation of the Korean alphabet is a trait that the two Koreas share despite their different approaches to literacy.

As of 2020, the CIA World Factbook reports North Korea’s literacy rate as 100 percent and South Korea’s literacy rate as 98 percent.³⁰⁴ High literacy rates equate with the ability to read classical Korean literature, some of which could serve as a shared cultural reference point. One classical text both Koreas read is the *Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong* (“*Memoirs*”), a collection of autobiographical memoirs written by Queen Hyeongeong of the Chosun dynasty.³⁰⁵ In the chapter entitled “The Memoir of 1802,” the Queen lamented how her second son, Prince Uiso, forgot his “filial duties” to her following his two-month stay in Qing Dynasty China.³⁰⁶ Prince Uiso volunteered to go to China as an ambassador to negotiate continued diplomatic relations between the two nations.³⁰⁷ The Queen recounted, “Oh! Grief! My son used to

297. *Id.*

298. *Pyongyang Schools*, KOREA KONSULT (2020), http://www.koreakonsult.com/Attraction_Pyongyang_schools_eng.html [<https://perma.cc/W52U-VWJW>]; *South Korean School Curriculum*, *supra* note 99, at 9–17.

299. *See North Korea*, CENT. INTEL. AGENCY (2020) (recording North Korea’s literacy rate at 100 percent), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/korea-north/#people-and-society> [<https://perma.cc/2249-XA5V>]; *see also South Korea*, CENT. INTEL. AGENCY (2020), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/korea-south/> [<https://perma.cc/LX3U-E63W>].

(recording South Korea’s literacy rate at 98 percent).

300. Yim, *supra* note 146, at 232 n.5.

301. *Id.* at 218.

302. Song, *supra* note 96, at 26.

303. Framework Act, *supra* note 101, at art. 3(1).

304. *See South Korea*, *supra* note 299; *see also North Korea*, *supra* note 299.

305. *Theorizing the Development of History Curriculum to Improve History Teaching and Learning*, 146 INST. OF KOREAN HIST. 89, 116 (2018) [역사 교육과정 개발 방법, 146 역사교육연구회 89] [in Korean] [http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE07470909&language=ko_KR#].

306. LADY HYEYONG, *THE MEMOIR OF 1802 in THE MEMOIRS OF LADY HYEYONG*, 201 (JaHyun Kim Haboush trans., Univ. of Cal. Press 2013).

307. *Id.*

look in on me four or five times a day and was always concerned lest he do something contrary to my wishes . . . he has adopted the barbarian ways and dares to disrespect me.”³⁰⁸ This is similar to Anderson’s portrayal of the Spanish novel *El Periquillo Sarniento*.³⁰⁹ From the novel, Anderson cites “the hero . . . is exposed to bad influences—ignorant maids inculcate superstitions [and] his mother indulges his whims[.]”³¹⁰ Anderson described the novel as “a national imagination at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape . . . that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside.”³¹¹ The *Memoirs* invoke a “nationalist imagination” that alludes to the certain superiority of the Korean nation as opposed to neighboring nations.³¹² Thus, classical Korean texts, like the *Memoirs* can help the unified Korea imagine a community with people they have never met before who nonetheless share the same long history.³¹³ In other words, shared language and literature can be a potent source for the development of a shared national identity in a reunified Korea.

Anderson argued that print capitalism formed “the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”³¹⁴ This was because print capitalism “gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation.”³¹⁵ Like their southern neighbor, North Korea recently adopted the English language.³¹⁶ Thus, a reunified Korea can also develop a shared identity based on bilingualism, where a hybrid of the English and Korean languages can unite the nation.³¹⁷ Because the *Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong* is already translated into the English language, a reunified Korea can work to publish the *Memoirs* in both languages across the nation.³¹⁸ Anderson cited how the over 200 million volumes of books that were disseminated throughout Europe in the 1600s “changed the appearance and state of the world.”³¹⁹ Thus, book-publishing can also act as the critical binding agent that allows the people of the newly unified Korea to build a shared national identity.³²⁰

Lastly, newspapers can also bring the Korean people together. To Anderson, the date at the top of a newspaper provides the essential

308. *Id.*

309. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 29–30.

310. *Id.* at 29.

311. *Id.* at 30.

312. *Id.* at 29–30.

313. *Id.* at 44.

314. *Id.*

315. *Id.*

316. Shim, *supra* note 150.

317. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 116–17.

318. See LADY HYEGYONG *supra* note 306) (showing that the memoir is translated into the English language).

319. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 37.

320. *Id.* at 37–38.

connection against the “onward clocking of homogenous, empty time.”³²¹ Anderson also describes the content of newspapers as “juxtaposed,” reinforcing that the linkage between the news stories are imagined.³²² In other words, the reunified Korean nation can choose which news stories they want to disseminate to the public, irrespective of geographical distance and social hierarchy.³²³ The date at the top of the Korean newspapers will link the Korean people to the outside world through their common vernacular language. A reunified Korea can choose to disseminate only those stories that happen within their nation, the international community, or both. Whichever route the nation chooses, the newspaper can unite the Korean people under a shared idea or vision.

C. *Embrace commonalities rather than differences*

Finally, an imagined unified Korea would be a nation that accepts their commonalities rather than their differences. The two Koreas have more similarities than differences. Even though South Korea and North Korea developed differently, they share a rich history that goes back to the Chosun dynasty. Renan argued that “[f]orgetting . . . is an essential factor in the creation of a nation.”³²⁴ This is applicable to a reunified Korea. Because Korean history dates back 629 years, one way to rebuild a unified Korean nation would be remember certain aspects of the Chosun dynasty and “forget” about the division.³²⁵ The Chosun dynasty saw policies of isolation, language purification, and hereditary succession.³²⁶ Both South Korea and North Korea share a fondness for these policies even though they developed in different ways.

On the other hand, both nations see the division and war in a different light. Although South Korea developed into a thriving democracy and North Korea into a communist state, the two Koreas share an animosity to their newly formed identities. Both Koreas believe that that they did not have a choice in how to form their nations. In the present, the United States has fifteen military bases in South Korea.³²⁷ In a survey conducted by South Korea’s Financial News Magazine in July 2020, 43 percent of South Koreans want the U.S. military to leave, while 27 percent disagree.³²⁸ The most frequent reason cited was the “bitterness”

321. *Id.* at 33.

322. *Id.*

323. *Id.* at 32–36.

324. RENAN, *supra* note 229.

325. Im, Campbell & Cha, *supra* note 22, at 288–89.

326. *See* Kim, *supra* note 25, at 6 (describing King Sejong’s desire create a writing system for all Koreans); *see also* Seth, *supra* note 36 (describing the Chosun dynasty’s isolationist policy and hereditary succession).

327. *US Military Bases in South Korea*, MILITARY BASES (2020), <https://militarybases.com/overseas/south-korea/> [<https://perma.cc/E9ZE-4ZZG>].

328. Kang Joong-mo, “Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea”: 43% Approve and 27% Disapprove, FIN. NEWS (July 18, 2020), <https://www.fnnews.com/news/202007180826037359> [<https://perma.cc/ZB4W-VQZZ>].

the participants felt from the U.S. occupation.³²⁹ South Korea may be a thriving democracy, but the majority of South Koreans believe that it was not by choice. North Korea carries a deeper animosity and resentment towards the outside forces that divided them seventy-four years ago. North Korea's answer to their disapproval of the division was their isolationist policy and language purification movements.³³⁰ Even though they developed into a communist state, North Korea sought to preserve remnants of the ethnic Korean identity they had prior to the division.³³¹

Renan stated that a nation was an artifice that was continually reconstituted through the mutual consent of the people.³³² This is reminiscent of Anderson's argument that a nation is imagined, because it entails a sense of communion or "horizontal comradeship" between people who do not know one another.³³³ Thus, a reunified Korea must develop itself through common values, ideas, and visions. Thus, a reunified Korea can rebuild their nation that resembles the Chosun dynasty more so than the distinct identities they developed following the division.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the narratives surrounding Korean reunification, the role of national identity has largely been ignored. The significance of creating a shared identity is critical for a nation that has been fractured for over seven decades. Prior to division, South Korea and North Korea were a unified nation that shared a language, history, and culture. Since the arrival of the United States and the former Soviet Union, however, the two Koreas were forced to go their separate ways and eventually developed distinct national identities. Using Benedict Anderson, this paper has shown *how* South Korea and North Korea were "imagined" following the division. This paper has also argued that obstacles to reunification can be overcome through shared suffering, print capitalism and literacy, and through commonalities rather than differences. All nations are imagined, according to Anderson. The difference lies on how, around what values, ideas and visions a particular nation is "imagined." This paper has attempted to show that through a reunified Korea. Indeed, the two Koreas have more in common in terms of their language, a history of protest, colonization, and war. Thus, the two Koreas can use their shared experiences to create a new imagined nation. Korean reunification has had different meanings for Koreans since the nation's division. To the older generation, reunification has been a seventy-five-year-old dream. To the younger generation, reunification has simply been an idea they

329. *Id.*

330. See Yim, *supra* note 146, at 225–26 (stating that Kim Il-sung demanded that only native Korean be used); see also Beauchamp, *supra* note 132 (describing how *juche* influenced North Korea's isolationist policy).

331. Park Young Ho, *South and North Korea's Views on the Unification of the Korean Peninsula and Inter-Korean Relations*, KRIS 1, 7 (2014).

332. RENAN, *supra* note 229, at 10.

333. ANDERSON, *supra* note 3, at 6.

could do without. But when reunification is looked at through the lens of national identity, different layers of a complex history are observed. Korean reunification is not a simple security, economic, political, or cultural issue. It is a complex problem where the origins of the nation's national identity must be examined to understand the nature of a nation that the two Koreas would eventually create together. A reunified Korea must be "imagined" to be fully understood.